

STUDIA DIPLOMATICA

PREFERENCES, APPROACHES
AND INFLUENCE:
THE CENTRAL AND EASTERN EU MEMBER
STATES AND THE EU'S POLICIES TOWARDS
THE POST-SOVIET SPACE

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Preferences, approaches and influence: the Central and Eastern EU member states and the EU's policies towards the post-Soviet space

Introduction article

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Introduction

Ever since the end of the Cold War, the European Union (EU) has organized its relations with the countries surrounding it in concentric circles: candidate members, associated countries and partner countries (Lavenex, 2011; Holzinger & Schimmelfennig, 2012). Countries whose accession to the EU was politically feasible had the membership perspective as an incentive, whereas others were rewarded for the desired reforms with preferential trade regimes and progress towards a free trade zone, financial support and facilitated or liberalized visa regimes (see e.g. Delcour & Wolczuk, 2013; Popescu, 2014).

The EU's policy of Eastern enlargement, which led to the accession of nine new member states² from Central and Eastern Europe between 2004 and 2007 that were previously part of the Soviet Union or its sphere of influence can be

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² Slovenia is omitted here due to its different geographical location and different historical legacy as a former part of ex-Yugoslavia.

viewed as one of the most effective cases of EU foreign policy (Smith, 2004). For these new member states, (the preparations for) accession to the EU coincided with the transition from a communist socio-economic and political system to a free market economy and liberal democracy. This has inspired a lively academic debate on the extent to which the transition of these countries was the result of the EU's enlargement policy or of domestically driven factors (see e.g. Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2005; Vachudova, 2005; Haughton, 2007).

As the 2004 and 2007 enlargements made the EU a neighbour of several countries in the post-Soviet space, they prompted the EU into enhanced engagement with the post-Soviet region. At the same time, it was clear that the use of enlargement as a policy tool in Eastern Europe would become increasingly difficult: the debates on the borders of Europe became more divisive, and increasing concerns were raised regarding the EU's capacity to absorb more member states on the one hand, and regarding democratic, political and economic transitions in the new neighbouring countries on the other (see e.g. Lavenex & Schimmelfennig, 2009). The intensified engagement of the EU with the post-Soviet region materialized with the launch of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) in 2004 and later the Eastern Partnership (EaP) in 2009 as part of the ENP. These initiatives were a clear attempt at bringing the participating countries – Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Belarus, Armenia and Azerbaijan – closer to the EU's normative and regulatory framework without offering a membership perspective (see e.g. Dragneva & Wolczuk, 2012; Haukкала, 2013; Delcour & Kostanyan, 2014). In the same period, the EU also further developed its relations with Russia and the Central Asian countries. After Russia rejected the EU's proposal to join the ENP, the EU launched the so-called four common spaces with Russia. However, the EU's policy towards Russia had little success, and overall EU-Russia relations have tended to fluctuate between being pragmatic and problematic. In 2007, the EU developed a political strategy for its relations with the Central Asian republics, which translated into an intensified engagement with the five countries.

While the Eastern EU enlargement in 2004 and 2007 has spurred new EU policies towards closer relations with the countries of the post-Soviet space, little is known about the role that the Central and Eastern European EU member states (CEECs) have been playing in shaping and implementing these new EU policies and how they approach the region now that they are members of the EU. The shared history, common past and economic links between these new EU member states and the (other) countries in the post-Soviet space entail

that the CEECs have more pronounced foreign policy goals towards the region than EU member states that were not part of the Soviet bloc. Moreover, given their proximity and/or logistical links, the region poses significant security challenges to the CEECs, including organized crime and uncontrolled migration and instability alongside their borders. However, how these factors all play out concretely at the EU level and how they are reflected in the CEECs' involvement in EU decision-making and policy-making concerning the post-Soviet region remains under-researched. This special issue aims to contribute to filling this gap in the literature by bringing together a collection of papers that study, on the one hand, recent developments in the EU's relations with the countries in the post-Soviet space and, on the other hand, the role of the CEECs within the development of these policies.

While a large body of literature remains preoccupied with understanding the EU's impact on the politics, polities and policies of the CEECs and how (the road towards) EU membership has affected these countries (see e.g. Bulmer & Lequesne, 2005; Mungiu-Pippidi, 2008; Schimmelfennig & Trauner, 2009), recent scholarship has started to treat the CEECs not merely as downloaders of EU institutions and policies, but also as countries capable of uploading their national preferences onto the EU level and leaving their imprint on the EU's foreign policy (see e.g. Kaminska, 2007; Kaminska, 2010; Angelescu 2011; Baun & Marek, 2013; Butler, 2014; Bossuyt, 2017). After a decade of institutional adaptation to the workings of the EU foreign policy-making process, it seems that most CEE member states increasingly master the Brussels game and are able to play along with the older member states (see e.g. Malová et al., 2010; Vilpišauskas, 2011; Baun & Marek, 2013; Pastore, 2013; Bossuyt, 2017). Some scholars have examined whether CEECs are successful at influencing EU policies towards the post-Soviet space, and in particular, the EaP (Denca, 2013; Copsey & Pomorska, 2014; Vandecasteele, Bossuyt & Orbie, 2015).

However, as mentioned, research on the involvement of the CEECs in the EU's policies towards the post-Soviet region remains very limited. This small body of literature has so far been largely focused on the role of (usually individual) CEECs countries in the development of the EaP (Raik & Gromadzki, 2006; Galbreath & Lamoreaux, 2007; Dangerfield, 2009; Adamczyk, 2010; Copsey & Pomorska, 2010; Copsey & Pomorska, 2014; Vandecasteele et al., 2015). Beyond the EaP, academic interest remains very scarce (exceptions are Więclawski, 2011; Bossuyt, 2017). Moreover, as most of these studies tend to

look at the EaP as a whole rather than dissecting it at the level of policy issues or countries, little is known about the role and position of the CEECs regarding issues like visa facilitation, transport policy and civil society involvement, or about their involvement in specific EaP countries. In addition, Poland appears to attract a disproportionately large amount of interest (Adamczyk, 2010; Copsey & Pomorska, 2010; Klatt, 2011; Vandecasteele, Bossuyt & Orbie, 2013; Copsey & Pomorska, 2014). In turn, countries like Slovakia, Romania and Hungary have received comparatively little attention.

Beyond the country-level and policy-level focus, many other aspects of the CEECs' involvement remain uncovered. Moreover, due to the lack of systematic and comparative research, it is not yet possible to make generalizations and differentiations across policy fields, CEECs, post-Soviet countries etc. All in all, we still know little, for instance, about how the CEECs approach the post-Soviet space in the post-accession period and to what extent their EU membership has altered their perceptions of national interests in relation to their neighbours to the East. Also more research is needed to understand the nature of their motivations to influence EU policies towards the post-Soviet space (e.g. self-interested vs. altruistic). Another interesting question concerns the role of their transition experience and the extent to which they seek to leverage this in their contribution to EU policies towards the post-Soviet region.

Approaches, national preferences and influence

This special issue aims to contribute to the literature by exploring several of these questions. In particular, it seeks to gain a better understanding of three sets of questions centred on the approaches, national preferences and influence of the CEECs with respect to the EU's policies towards the countries in the post-Soviet space.

First, how do the CEECs approach the countries in the post-Soviet space? And (how) do the approaches differ between the CEECs, and between the CEECs and the other EU member states? As the CEECs are by no means a homogeneous bloc, it can be expected that they do not all approach the post-Soviet region in the same way. Although they all share a recent common past with the post-Soviet countries, there are many historical, political, geographical and cultural reasons to believe that the CEECs are not a coherent group in their approach towards the post-Soviet space (Král, 2009; Tulmets, 2011;

Baun & Marek 2013). Some authors, for instance, have conceptualized and explained the main differences and similarities between the CEECs based on the ‘Carpathian Mountains dividing line’, which separates the Baltic States and Poland, north of the Carpathian Mountains, from Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania and Bulgaria (Raik & Gromadzki, 2006; Rácz, 2011). At a general level, this geographical division helps to explain why Poland and the Baltic countries – which have only one neighbourhood, i.e. Eastern Europe and Russia – tend to be more vocal than the other CEECs – which border also the Western Balkans and/or Black Sea region – not only in pushing for closer cooperation with the EaP countries but also in maintaining a critical stance towards Russia.

Second, what are the motivations of the CEECs to influence the EU’s policies towards the post-Soviet space? What factors can explain why (some of the) CEECs strongly support closer EU relations with countries in the post-Soviet region? While preference formation in the case of the CEECs and the post-Soviet space remains underexplored, a number of scholars have started to unravel this issue (see e.g. Jonavičius, 2008; Copsey & Haughton, 2009; Janeliūnas, Kasčiūnas & Dambrauskaitė, 2009; Bilčík, 2010). Research has shown that national preferences and interests of EU member states are shaped by a broad range of factors, including size, geography, economy, historical experience, domestic politics, institutional settings, external alliances, international developments, and perceived national identities, vulnerabilities and weaknesses (see e.g. Risse, Engelmann-Martin, Knopf & Roscher, 1999; Aspinwall, 2007; Copsey & Haughton, 2009; Bilčík, 2010; Wong & Hill, 2011; Mišík, 2013). As Wong and Hill (2011, p. 3) have suggested, national preferences and interests also “reflect a country’s sense of national identity, including its basic values and perceptions of what it stands for in the world”. Regarding the CEE member states, existing studies have pointed out that national preferences and interests in the area of foreign policy are strongly determined by the experience of and the economic and security dependencies from the communist and Soviet era, as well as by the political geography of the countries’ historical statehood (Copsey & Haughton, 2009; Bilčík, 2010; Vilpišauskas, 2011). In addition, Bossuyt (2017) and Baun and Marek (2013) have argued that the likelihood of (CEE) member states attempting to project national foreign policy preferences onto the EU level depends on the importance of the issue, niches and expertise, (perceived) capabilities, and Europeanization of a member state’s administration.

Third, to what extent are the CEECs involved in the EU's policies towards the countries in the post-Soviet space, including both decision-making on the policies and policy implementation? And (how) do they try to influence these policies? The discussion on the involvement of CEECs in the EU's policies towards the post-Soviet space relates to a mix of efforts to make the policies more effective on the one hand, and to pursue national interests on the other – which is closely linked to the question of influence. According to Börzel (2002, p. 194), member state participation in EU policy-making can be categorized into three types: (a) pace-setters, or countries that 'actively push policies at the European level, which reflect a Member State's policy preferences'; (b) foot-draggers, or countries that block or delay costly [for them] policies in order to prevent their implementation altogether or achieve a compromise or some compensation if they are adopted at the EU level; and (c) fence-sitters, or 'countries that neither systematically push policies nor try to block them at the European level'. Based on insights from existing studies on the CEECs and the EU's policies towards the post-Soviet space, it is clear, for instance, that Poland and Lithuania have emerged as pace-setters in the case of the EaP, while they have mostly behaved as foot-draggers in the case of the EU's policy towards Russia (Leonard & Popescu, 2007; Vandecasteele et al., 2013; Copsey & Pomorska, 2014). Then there is the question how they try to influence the EU's policies. Scholars have identified several ways in which member states attempt to influence EU foreign policy. This includes agenda-setting, example-setting, alliance-building, ideational export and institution-building (see e.g. Miskimmon, 2007, p. 12). Poland, for instance, as has already been documented, decided to form an alliance with Sweden in order to get the EaP initiative on the EU's agenda (Copsey & Pomorska, 2014). Other research has shown how Poland and Lithuania each took ample use of their time in office under their Rotating Presidency of the Council to try and set the agenda of the EU's EaP policies (Vandecasteele, 2015).

In this collection of articles, these three sets of questions are explored through five original studies with a large empirical variety. The contributions include single-issue or country-based analyses, as well as comparative research. The articles discuss several institutional contexts and focus on various CEECs. In terms of the empirical focus on the post-Soviet region, attention is paid to several (groups of) countries of the EaP as well as to Russia (including Kaliningrad) and the Eurasian Economic Union. Finally, a variety of policy areas or modes for cooperation between the EU and the countries of the post-Soviet

space are covered, including visa and border policy, trade policy and civil society support.

The relevance of the post-Soviet region for the EU – both in terms of stability at the EU's borders and credibility of the EU, but also relating to issues of interdependence – came to a new height with the events that have been taking place in and around Ukraine since late 2013. Therefore, in dealing with recent developments of EU policies towards the post-Soviet space, the contributors to this special issue do not only aim to contribute to the academic literature, but also to the broader societal debate. The next section summarizes the approach, focus and main findings of the contributions to this special issue.

Contributions to this issue

The three sets of questions are addressed to varying degrees across the five articles in this special issue. The first article, by **Dorina Baltag**, engages with the debate on coherence in EU external policies. She examines policy coherence of civil society cooperation in the context of the ENP. Baltag analyses the extent to which EU member states' national strategies and policies correspond to those of the EU. More specifically, she looks at the policies that Poland, the Czech Republic, Sweden and the Netherlands pursue for civil society cooperation in Ukraine and Moldova. The author finds the policies of all four member states converge with that of the EU. However, this positive outcome is partly neutralized by the lack of collective action between the EU member states, which negatively affects the overall coherence of the EU's policy in this field.

Starting from the observation that Lithuania's traditional support for closer EU relations with the EaP region was intensified during its Presidency of the Council of the EU in 2013, **Bruno Vandecasteele** offers an in-depth understanding of Lithuania's preference-formation concerning the EaP during this Presidency period. Based on a large-scale survey and interviews with Lithuanian officials, he specifies their underlying motivations for supporting EU-EaP cooperation and discusses different theoretical explanations for preference formation during Lithuania's Presidency by drawing on the opposing logics of action (consequentialism vs. appropriateness). His analysis reveals that the Lithuanian officials' intensified support of closer relations between the EU and the EaP region is motivated by a mix of mainly norm-based but also rational geostrategic considerations. They see it as their duty to stimulate the EaP countries in going through a similar transition as their own country did, in

order to establish a stable and peaceful region with limited influence from Russia. They view it as natural to promote the EaP region in the EU, even more so during their Council Presidency: the Presidency position was deliberately used to place the EaP region higher on the EU's agenda.

Next, **Roxana Hincu and Giselle Bosse** examine the foreign policy responses of Romania and Bulgaria to Russia's annexation of Crimea and the outbreak of war in Eastern Ukraine. In particular, they seek to explain why the two countries have responded so differently to these events. Whereas Romania was highly supportive of EU sanctions against Russia and an increased presence of NATO along the EU's Eastern border, Bulgaria adopted a 'soft' approach towards Russia. By relying on realist assumptions, the authors argue that Romania's response to the Ukraine conflict reflects a critical stance towards Russia, resulting from its desire to balance the power of Russia. Bulgaria's soft approach, in turn, should be seen in light of Bulgaria's economic dependence on Russia, and especially its dependence on gas supplies from Russia and its entanglement with Russian business conglomerates.

Fabienne Bossuyt assesses how the CEECs perceive the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). In addition, she explores whether and to what extent these EU member states try to influence the EU's position on the EAEU and thus to what extent they try to project their views regarding the EAEU onto the EU level. Her analysis reveals that perceptions of the EAEU among the CEECs vary significantly. Whereas Hungary and Bulgaria are the most supportive of the EAEU, Poland, Romania and the three Baltic countries are the least supportive of the EAEU, and are very skeptical of Russia's political intentions behind the EAEU, which they view as a tool of Russian regional hegemony. Slovakia and the Czech Republic are skeptical of Russia's political intentions, but are interested in economic cooperation with the EAEU. The author argues that the divergence of these countries' perceptions is not surprising given the variation that they display on a number of preference-shaping factors, including history, geography and economy, and in particular their historical relationship with Russia and their energy dependence on Russia. Her study also finds that the extent to which the CEECs seek to upload their views of the EAEU onto the EU level diverges. The author explains this divergence by referring to one particular condition that determines whether a EU member state will seek to upload its national foreign policy preferences onto the EU level, namely the perceived salience of a policy goal or issue.

The final article, by **Edina Lilla Mészáros**, scrutinizes how Poland and Lithuania have shaped the EU's border policy and visa regime with the Russian Kaliningrad Oblast. In doing so, she also addresses the broader inclusionary and exclusionary aspects of European integration. The author reveals the differences in interests and approaches between two countries bordering the same region, which leads to diverging behaviour and, accordingly, diverging degrees of influence on the EU's policies in this regard. For Lithuania, which was more influential than Poland, the issue of passenger transit was a crucial aspect of its accession negotiations because all land routes from mainland Russia to Kaliningrad go through Lithuania. For Poland, the stakes were more economic than political.

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Political cohesion and coordination of Nordic Plus and CEEC EU member states in Eastern Europe

DORINA BALTAG¹

Introduction

The international role and status of the European Union (EU) have been at the core of the EU's foreign policy agenda. It is the issue of coherence or, the insufficient level of it in external relations that is central in the European integration discourse. The recent Lisbon Treaty reaffirms this quest for coherence that addresses EU's issues of "ensur[ing] the consistency, effectiveness and continuity of its policies and actions" (European Council, 2007). The need of ensuring coherence and complementarity, ensuring coordination and creating synergies were also highlighted by EU's High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, at her European Parliament hearing (European Parliament, 2014). It is also an overall goal of the political guidelines of the Juncker-led Commission (European Commission, 2014). However, scholarly research and policy papers emphasize that what happens in practice might differ from what is written down in the EU treaties and policies and that the EU continues to be criticized on the issue of (in)coherence (Keukeleire & MacNaughtan, 2008; Keukeleire, Smith, &

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Vanhoonhacker, 2010; Drieskens & Schaik 2010). In fact, the issue of ‘*coordination reflex*’ (White, 2001), which underlines that there may or may not be a collective commitment not only to reach agreements but to effectively coordinate actions remains an area of research interest.

Against this background, the article is interested in exploring how congruent the member state policies are with those of the EU. Using the concept of coherence, this article analyses the degree of correspondence between the national policies and strategies of Sweden, the Netherlands, Poland and the Czech Republic on the one hand and the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) on the other. The analysis focuses on the EU’s Eastern neighbourhood, where scholars claim that the EU has formulated a coherent strategy (Parmentier, 2008; Tulmets, 2008). Two Eastern European EU neighbours – Moldova and Ukraine – are chosen for examination, as these are considered by scholars the most prominent ones when it comes to exploring the ENP (Bottger & Falkenhain, 2011; Solonenko, 2010; Gänzle, 2009; Freyburg et al., 2009; Kratochvil & Lippert, 2008). The more narrow focus within the ENP and the national policies that is examined refers to civil society as EU’s policy framework to the East has involved civil society (CS) as stakeholders in EU democracy and good governance building processes (Raik, 2006).

Although the idea of CFSP upgraded by the 2009 Lisbon Treaty was to spur convergence of member state interests that should lead to stronger collective action, the reality often shows the opposite. The EU collective action in its external relations is exposed to the negative effects of member states’ autonomous moves. When important national interests are at stake, member states often opt to avoid EU-level instruments and act unilaterally in external relations (Hill, 1998; Rummel & Wiedermann 1998; Smith, 2006; Keukeleire & MacNaughtan, 2008; Thomas, 2010). Moreover, in their bilateral policies towards third countries member states might even find themselves in competition with each other (Youngs, 2009; Youngs, 2011; Casier, 2011). Bilateral policies and divergent approaches towards the third countries, regions or international organisations, as is the case in Eastern Europe, significantly undermine the common EU policy and, consequently, the EU’s impact in those settings. Academic debates put emphasis on issues like the EU’s ability of ‘getting the message across’ via formulating sustainable policy goals or projecting these effectively towards the outside; cooperation among EU actors abroad; EU’s capacity of presenting a unified front when discussing the level of coherence and how it jeopardises EU’s international status (Duke, Pomorska &

Vanhoonacker 2012; Vanhoonacker & Duke 2010; Smith 2008; Cosgrove-Sacks 2001; Marsh & Mackenstein 2005; Baltag & Smith 2015; Papadimitriou, Baltag & Surubaru 2017).

Therefore, the aim of this article is also to discover how coordination occurs between EU member states in Moldova and Ukraine where the collective actions of Sweden, the Netherlands, Poland and the Czech Republic are pursued via their diplomatic representations. On the background of convergence between policies, the empirical evidence presented here shows divergence when it comes to actions related to coordination in Moldova and Ukraine. The article is based on several field trips conducted in Moldova and Ukraine between 2011 and 2015 where interviews were conducted with EU and national diplomats².

Coherence: conceptualisation and methodological considerations

Criticism regarding the EU's international actorness on the basis of incoherence is a concern at the highest practitioner's levels as well as a research interest within academic circles. Despite a series of EU Treaty changes, coherence remains a challenge. Analysing coherence between the EU and member states' national policies, scholars indicate contradictions that may arise between the EU and the national level, especially when ambitious goals are set such as trade, security, development and others (Tietje, 1997; Nuttall, 2005; Marangoni & Raube, 2014). Moreover, tensions may arise between different EU policies, such as trade and foreign policy, foreign policy and development and others (Keukeleire & MacNaughtan, 2008; Marangoni, 2014).

Taking into consideration the different definitions provided for coherence and consistency and their interchangeable use by scholars (Tietje, 1997; Krenzler & Schneider, 1997; Smith, 2001; Gauttier, 2004; Nuttall, 2005; Marangoni, 2014), the broader understanding of the concept of coherence is being used in this article: it is defined in terms of 'systemic outputs' (Christiansen, 2001), *i.e.* the core substance of all EU policies representing a coherent whole. Conceptualising coherence in such a manner allows to incorporate not only the *consistency* dimension of the concept – the absence of contradictions but also the *complementary* one – referring to positive connections (Tietje,

² An overview of the interviews is provided at the end of the article.

1997), to the achievement of synergies between policies and actors (Gauttier, 2004) and to compatibility and added value among them (Missiroli, 2001). In this manner, the emphasis is on the goal-oriented nature of coherence in terms of policy and coordination when it comes to actions. In order to address the issue of correspondence between national policies and strategies and the EU ones, the article uses the indicator *uniformity*. Policy coherence examined through uniformity comes close to what Jupille and Caporaso (1998) called cohesion when discussing one of the four components of an actors' capacity in international relations, namely the ability to articulate consistently policy preferences. Uniformity, thus, is examined via the dimension of *political cohesion* as conceptualised by Thomas (2012) and coordination as explained by Metcalfe (1994). Political cohesion refers to consistent alignment of common policies, their faithful implementation and offering full support to commonly agreed policies. The expectation of this indicator is that the policies designed by member states are in line with the overall EU policies that they subscribed to. This means that member states are communicating and projecting to their partner countries the same goals as the EU, embracing the same vision and support it with respective actions. In addition to political cohesion, uniformity is also about *coordination*. The focus on coordination in discussing coherence can be found in public administration literature (Trondal, 2007; Eppink, 2007; Kassim et al., 2000). As Metcalfe (1994) explains, coordination is a key dimension in examining policy coherence as actors need to make sure that their different policy objectives do not hamper or negate one another. Some emphasize the 'coordination imperative' as the need to overcome fragmentation in order not to negate one another or hamper each other's actions (Dimitrakopoulos & Passas, 2003; Metcalfe, 1994).

The empirical section discusses the analysis of the civil society related dimension of the national strategies of four EU member states: Sweden and the Netherlands (the Nordic Plus group) and Poland and the Czech Republic (the Visegrad group). Sweden and the Netherlands are chosen from the first group because they have invested in the democratic development of these countries for a longer period of time. Poland and the Czech Republic are chosen from the second group because they have developed their relationship with civil society in Moldova and Ukraine more recently, have close historical ties with the region and are actively supporting transformation processes in these countries. Based on the "uniformity" indicator, the national strategies are examined first, in relation to the degree of correspondence to the

ENP, and second, in relation to political cohesion and coordination of CEEC and the Nordic member states.

*Political cohesion of member states policies with the ENP:
state of the art*

Sweden

The Swedish policy entitled “Policy for Support to Civil Society in Developing Countries within Swedish Development Cooperation” outlines the Swedish strategy on civil society in its partner countries. The overall objective of the policy is to reduce poverty in developing countries via offering support to civil society actors. This support is mainstreamed through capacity development of civil society organisations and developing their legal and institutional environment (MFA Sweden, 2009). The policy aims at “strengthen[ing] democracy, equitable and sustainable development, and closer ties with the EU and its fundamental values” (ibidem). It highlights the different roles that civil society may play in developing countries. More specifically, for Moldova and Ukraine, the overall objective of such support aims at deeper integration with the EU (Embassy of Sweden, 2011). In each partner country, the Swedish development cooperation assistance is implemented directly through civil society or jointly with the European Commission and other multilateral organisations. It is noteworthy that the policy guidelines are based on several principles, one of them being close cooperation with the EU Delegation and strengthening the civil society role in the EU integration agenda. In this sense, in both countries, the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida), the implementing Swedish institution shares its expertise, know-how, experience, lessons learned and ideas with its main European partner, the EU Delegation (interview B, 2011). Furthermore, the document specifies that for a coherent Swedish strategy in offering support to civil society, donor coordination is one of the crucial aspects “for civil society to become an active player in deepening democracy” (ibidem). Hence the principle of ‘good donorship’ that covers the relationship between donors is established in the guideline. It refers to, among other things, donor coordination of actions and strategies, mainstreaming the support so that all sectors of civil society activities are covered as well as donor visibility is being offered.

The Netherlands

The Netherlands also has a designed policy on civil society: the “Policy Memorandum of the Netherlands on Civil Society Organisations: cooperation, customization and added value”. As in the Swedish case, the aim of this policy is poverty reduction through offering systemic support to civil society. Activities that focus on capacity-building and strengthening of the civil-society and governments in ENP countries are comprised within the MATRA programme. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands has launched MATRA through which “projects in support of a plural democracy, grounded in the rule of law” are financed (MFA Netherlands, 2009, p. 4). For the Dutch counterpart, offering support to civil society aims at supporting the democratization process in countries from Central and Eastern Europe, establishing bilateral relations with these countries and encouraging social dialogue and government accountability (ibidem). MATRA operates in partner countries via different instruments divided into MATRA for Good Governance and MATRA for European Cooperation that aim at the development of democracy and the rule of law; building dialogue between government and civil society; consolidating civil society institutes and strengthening bilateral cooperation (Embassy of the Netherlands, 2011). The programme has been adjusted in order to correspond to the ENP and include all countries envisaged in this policy (MFA Netherlands, 2009). For Moldova and Ukraine, the document outlines the importance of the use of the ENPI in these countries, but also pays attention to the fact that there is a donor community established and the Commission is one of the many actors. Furthermore, the programme was designed to support projects to help these countries meet the Copenhagen criteria and then changed “to bilateral support that complements European pre-accession and neighbourhood policy” (MFA Netherlands, 2009, p. 6).

Czech Republic

The Czech Republic does not have a separate policy on cooperation with civil society; it is incorporated within a Development Cooperation Strategy, the objective of which is poverty reduction, fulfilment of the Millennium Development Goals and promoting security and prosperity (MFA CZ, 2010). The Czech Strategy considers two forms of development cooperation – on a bilateral level and on a multilateral one via international actors, including the EU.

Starting with 2004, when Czech Republic became an EU member, eight priority countries have been selected, among which Republic of Moldova (but not Ukraine). Such a territorial selection is argued by the position of the Czech Republic within the donor community in the sense that it not only can exhibit a comparative advantage, but also harmonize and coordinate donor activities in that respective country. The Strategy specifies the Czech European involvement in the programming of the financial instruments such as the ENPI while locally the Czech embassies will be working as facilitators in implementation of EU development projects (*ibidem*). It also explains that cooperation with civil society is done on an individual level, directly with nongovernmental organisations, and through the established system of cooperation – the Czech Forum for Development Cooperation. For Moldova, there are several sectoral priorities established for cooperation – environment, agriculture and social development (MFA CZ, 2011). Besides this, civil society projects are also carried out under the Transition Promotion Programme (former Transformation Cooperation Programme), run by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic. The aim of this programme is to encourage change in transforming countries like Moldova through funding projects that lead to consolidating democracy and the rule of law and strengthening of the civil society and the principles of good governance (*ibidem*). Overall, it aims at increasing the role of civil society in the democratization process in these countries.

Poland

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland adopted the “Polish Aid Programme”, which includes its financial aid programme in partner countries, including Moldova and Ukraine (MFA Poland, 2008). Poland does not have a separate policy on cooperation with civil society in partner countries; however, it is targeted through the implementation of Polish foreign aid. As the document explains, it is an operational plan that outlines the distribution of resources and has incorporated several principles, among which embracing “initiatives promoting democracy, growth of civil society, independent media and human rights” (*ibidem*, p. 4). Starting with 2008, in both Moldova and Ukraine, consolidation of civil society becomes one of the key areas of support selected. The update of the Programme emphasizes that it is adapted to the new EU documents regulating aid and also the EaP initiative (MFA Poland, 2010a; MFA Poland, 2010b). The Programme emphasizes that the EaP offers

extra opportunities for the development of the partnership with Moldova and Ukraine. In both Moldova and Ukraine, developing civil society, promoting democracy and fostering free media and human rights remain one of the guidelines for providing aid (MFA Poland, 2010a). In terms of multilateral cooperation, the document outlines that Poland will get involved in projects operated by the United Nations System as well as “funds established under the aegis of the EU” (MFA Poland, 2010b, p.16). It is noteworthy that the activities implemented in partner countries with the support of Polish assistance have been based on several principles one of which is harmonization, i.e. coordination of donor assistance.

National strategies versus ENP/EaP

The ENP, besides promoting good governance, rule of law and human rights refers to promoting civil society cooperation. This is a visible and clear objective outlined in the individual Action Plans. Even though from the policy goal it is difficult to comprehend a clear vision related to civil society in the ENP, the Action Plans follow up on the ENP’s broad vision on civil society reiterating at the beginning of the document the possibility for these countries of participating in the Community programmes in areas such as – culture, education, environment, technology and science (European Commission, 2005, p.3). This is natural, as it is the Action Plans that are the mechanisms of implementation of the ENP and that embrace a bilateral relation between the EU and its neighbours. In the EaP, policy goals become activity oriented, designed as several thematic platforms and dedicating a separate section to civil society. It is within the EaP, where the EU vision on civil society becomes more focused, embracing the idea of providing an environment where EaP countries face and address their common challenges, including those related to civil society.

Overall, the national policies are uniform with the EU ones in the sense that they provide a framework and mechanisms to foster civil society development. Yet, national strategies go deeper than the ENP that aims at creating connection between people from the EU and partner countries in different areas – culture, education etc. (for a detailed overview of ENP East and its instruments please see Table 1). They are also more focused and country specific than the Moldovan and Ukrainian Action Plans. Unlike the ENP and the Action Plans, the national documents focus on actions that enhance the development of civil society institutions as well as their environment. It is visible

that national strategies are more in line with the ENPI objectives and take into consideration the EaP. This is particularly visible in the case of the Swedish and Dutch policies that give civil society importance in the sense of bringing about change in these countries and because of their longer experience in providing assistance to partner countries. It is worth mentioning that in the case of all national policies examined the main aim for providing assistance to Moldova and Ukraine focus on the overall goal of promoting democracy, good governance and human rights. This comes in line with the EU's emergence of the ENPI and the EaP where Community assistance is focused on supporting democratization, including through increasing the role of civil society and fostering its development. The tendency of involving civil society in different projects or implementing projects in Moldova and Ukraine via funding of civil society institutions becomes more visible also with the new EU donors Poland and the Czech Republic.

Table 1³. Overview of ENP East (incl. instruments)

ENP	ENP Action Plans Moldova/Ukraine	ENPI	EaP
<p>The specific goals are specified under particular key areas ('people-to-people' in the case of CS):</p> <p>"to connect peoples of the Union and its neighbours" (p. 19);</p> <p>"will promote cultural, educational and more general societal links between the Union and its neighbourhood" (p. 19)</p>	<p>The goal is specific:</p> <p>"promote civil society cooperation" (p. 43)</p>	<p>Policy goals are specific:</p> <p>"Community assistance shall promote enhanced cooperation and progressive economic integration between the European Union and partner countries [...] within the following areas of cooperation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supporting democratisation, inter alia, by enhancing the role of civil society organisations; • fostering the development of civil society and of nongovernmental organisations; • promoting cooperation between the Member States and partner countries in higher education and mobility of teachers, researchers and students; • promoting multicultural dialogue, people-to-people contacts, including links with communities of immigrants living in Member States, cooperation between civil societies, cultural institutions and exchanges of young people; • supporting participation of partner countries in Community programs and agencies" (pp. 3-4) 	<p>The specific policy goal is specified under the multilateral track:</p> <p>"four platforms are proposed below, on democracy, good governance and stability; economic integration and convergence with EU policies; energy security' and contacts between people" (p. 3)</p>

³ The table presents data from the following analysed documents: Commission of the European Communities [European Commission]. (2004). Communication from the Commission. European Neighbourhood Policy. Strategy Paper. Brussels: COM(2004) 373 final; European Commission. (2005). EU in the World. European Neighbourhood Policy. EU/Moldova Action Plan. EU/Ukraine Action Plan; European Commission. (2007). EU in the World. European Neighbourhood Policy. European Neighbourhood Instrument. Financing. And Commission of the European Communities [European Commission]. (2008). Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council. Eastern Partnership. Brussels: COM(2008) 823 final

ENP	ENP Action Plans Moldova/Ukraine	ENPI	EaP
<p>Policy vision: "gradual opening of certain Community programmes, based on mutual interests and available resources" (p. 20)</p>	<p>Policy vision: "gradual opening of or reinforced participation in certain Community programmes, promoting cultural, educational, environmental, technical and scientific links" (p. 3)</p>	<p>Policy vision: "to provide Community assistance for the development of an area of prosperity and good neighbourliness involving the European Union and the countries and the territories listed in the Annex (partner countries)" (p. 3)</p>	<p>Policy vision: "provide a new framework where common challenges can be addressed" (p. 3)</p>

Coordination: convergence or divergence?

Nordic Plus and Visegrad Groups

Besides national strategies, in Moldova and Ukraine, these four countries are part of two different clustered groups for mainstreaming their support offered to civil society. The Visegrad group, comprised of Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary, commonly known as V₄ reflect “the efforts of the countries of the Central European region to work together in a number of fields of common interest within the all-European integration” (Visegrad Group, 2013). In their international cooperation dimension, the V₄ includes countries from the EaP, such as Moldova or Ukraine, and has a common Fund. In Moldova, according to some interviewees, the use of the V₄ group “might be helpful in closer donor coordination” (interview A, 2011) as it can offer space for some countries to gain regional leadership and “may serve as a beginning for the Central European countries to get involved and make the donor community stronger” (ibidem). In Ukraine there is a close cooperation among the V₄ countries in providing civil society support and there is a tendency to direct strategically the Fund based on similar interests followed. Within the cooperation itself “there are meetings planned for strategic coordination and redirecting funds to both projects and individuals” (interview B, 2011). Overall, the Visegrad Fund provides the framework of donor cooperation in assisting civil society in these countries on “common cultural, scientific, research and educational projects, youth exchanges, promotion of tourism and cross-border cooperation” (Visegrad Fund, 2013).

The Nordic Plus group represent a group of ‘like-minded donors’ that are committed to enhancing aid effectiveness from which in 2009 emerged the principle of ‘good donorship’ (MFA Denmark, 2011; Norad, 2006). Norway, Sweden, Finland, the UK, Ireland, the Netherlands and Denmark represent this Group. It meets twice a year and has a joint action plan on harmonization and alignment of donor activities and has sub-groups on a number of issues, some of which include other donors like Germany and Canada (ibidem). The premises of cooperation of this group is based on international commitments such as the Paris Declaration under which donors should make use of each other’s comparative advantage and establish lead donors in certain areas/countries for implementation of programmes, activities and tasks (Norad, 2006). As one interviewee emphasized, the ‘good donorship’ principle is covering the

relation between donors and civil society organization as well as among donors (interview B, 2011). In Ukraine in particular this group is seen under the leadership of Sida mainly that is currently promoting the ‘good donorship’ principle and based on it, is encouraging its donor partners to assess and review strategies and approaches to civil society support.

The political will to strategically coordinate

Although the upgraded structural development by the Lisbon Treaty is to spur convergence of MS’ interests that should lead to collective action, the reality often shows the opposite. When important national interests are at stake member states often opt to avoid EU-level instruments and act unilaterally in external relations (Hill, 1998; Keukeleire & MacNaughtan, 2008; Rummel & Wiedermann, 1998; Smith, 2006; Thomas, 2010). For example, in Moldova research shows that the EU donor meetings witness a problem of clustering between big and small EU donors that makes cooperation and collaborative action problematic (Baltag & Smith, 2015; Baltag, 2018). Under some circumstances the EU donor meetings become an arena for marketing of individual actions and interests, without “a political will to strategically coordinate” (interview C, 2013). While rhetorically portraying coordination and unity, because of the clustering effect, one or another interest is being strongly promoted during the common EU donor meetings. These interests might belong to formal groupings (like Visegrad or Nordic Plus) or non-formal groupings (big MS such as France, Germany and the UK were identified by interviewees as often clustering). Whereas in third countries, member states find the EU Delegations relevant in representing the Union (Baltag, 2018 forthcoming), the EU collective action towards other actors is exposed to the negative effects of member states autonomous moves. Hence, “when member states disagree, or are at cross purposes, this can be a disaster for EU” (Stewart 2010, p.15). As interviewees explain, member states use the meetings within the Delegations as an opportunity of showcasing of one’s unique expertise (interview A, B, C and D, 2011; interview A, B and C, 2013; interview A, B and D, 2015).

Empirical evidence shows that the interaction of member states in Eastern Europe often results in different interest constellations. Member state embassies in Moldova and Ukraine admit that when it comes to formulating and implementing a common approach they cluster into different groups of interest (ibidem). It is the EU donor meetings within regional frameworks of coopera-

tion that offer the platform for doing so (for an overview see: Baltag & Smith 2015: 10). The Visegrad Group (Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia), commonly known as the V₄, “reflects the efforts of the countries of the Central European region to work together in a number of fields of common interest within the all-European integration” (Visegrad Group, 2013). The other regional framework, the Nordic Plus Group, represents a group of the ‘like-minded donors’ (Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark the UK, Ireland and the Netherlands) that are committed to enhancing aid effectiveness from which recently emerged the principle of ‘good donorship’ (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, 2011; Norad, 2006). These two groups exhibit various examples of formulating a common approach and implementing it, i.e. sharing resources and engaging in joint projects (for instance, the V₄ reconstruction of summer camps in Moldova). It is important to note that these groups do not include the EU Delegations, which are not invited even as observers to these meetings. During the common meetings under the auspices of the EU Delegations, these groups do not report on their collective activities, strategies or plans. The Delegations in Ukraine is aware of the existence of the Nordic Plus Group, as Sida, its Swedish leader, is the EUD’s partner in co-organising the general meetings. Yet, the representative of the EUD in Kiev did not find it appropriate that Nordic Plus reports on its activities, as the EU-MS meetings are a forum for the EU and individual MS (interview D, 2015). It also happens that member states cluster non-formally, under certain themes. For example in Moldova, Poland, Sweden, Romania and on occasions Lithuania coordinate together on EaP related issues, outside EUD’s premises

Coordination is often rather complicated, especially in those sensitive areas where member states have certain interests: migration, education, visa, energy, trade. Some (Poland, Romania, Hungary or Slovakia) lobby the EUD strongly; being very active in pushing for their own interests since, as neighbouring countries of the host countries, they feel more confident in their national line of diplomacy than in the EU one. Being so focused on the primacy of their national diplomatic expertise, often hampers achieving a common approach and these member-states are shortsighted. This, in turn, leaves room for mistakes: such as confusing instanced of bilateral track diplomacy with the (EU) multilateral one. And, as result, there is little synergy between the national and European diplomacy. Others are more secretive in their conduct of diplomacy, like the United Kingdom, which has its own agenda: ‘they say something but then do something else’ (interview D, 2013).

These instances are not uncommon for Poland as well, which prefers to pursue a parallel national agenda (several instances observed esp. in Moldova).

In conclusion: political cohesion and coordination, quo vadis?

In the case of all national policies examined, the main aim for providing assistance to Moldova and Ukraine focuses on the overall goal of promoting democracy, good governance and human rights. This convergence with the EU comes in line especially with the EaP where the EU has clear objectives and vision regarding civil society, where EU assistance is focused on supporting democratization through increasing the role of civil society and fostering its development. The tendency of involving civil society in different projects or implementing projects in Moldova and Ukraine through funding civil society institutions becomes more visible also with the new EU member states like Poland and the Czech Republic. The approach of both CEECs and Nordic countries are in many ways similar vis-à-vis civil society in Moldova and Ukraine. What is different and poses certain challenges for political cohesion and coordination is their clustering within the Nordic Plus and Visegrad groups. The two formations know about each other but do not connect despite the bilateral diplomatic connections among their diplomatic missions in Moldova and Ukraine. None of them involve the EU Delegations in their collaboration in these two countries. Whereas the Nordic Plus group considers that it sets an example with the good donorship principle, in practice there is ongoing thematic overlap and duplication of activities, of projects and areas of interests (interview A, B, C and D, 2011; interview A, B and C, 2013; interview A, B and D, 2015). As some scholars observe, these member states are performing well in terms of consulting each other, whereas in coordination, cooperation is not yet the key, which would imply strategizing, implementation of activities and complementarity (Baltag & Smith, 2015; Baltag 2018). Furthermore, the recurrent criticism of EU actors not acting collectively remains a challenge. For some countries, like the Czech Republic, the common meetings that aim at coordination have become an arena of marketing of one's profile. Others, like Poland for example, even though involved in all coordination meetings, prefer not to pursue coordination but rather embrace the '*go alone*' tactic (label attributed to the actors' strategies of acting individually and in competition with the EU). While the positive trend of such groups is the

possibility to reach alignment of common policies and complementarity of policies as well as actions, the downside is being consistent in doing so. Hence, the issue of '*coordination reflex*' underlines that there may or may not be a collective commitment not only to reach agreements but to effectively coordinate actions.

List of interviews conducted during field work in Moldova and Ukraine between 2011 and 2015⁴

2011:

Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Kiev, national diplomat
Embassy of the Czech Republic in Chisinau, national diplomat
Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Chisinau, national diplomat
Embassy of the Kingdom of Sweden, Sida Office in Kiev, national diplomat
EU Delegation to Moldova, local staff
EU Delegation to Ukraine, EU diplomat
Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Kiev, national diplomat

2013:

Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Kiev, national diplomat
Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Chisinau, national diplomat
Embassy of Lithuania, Chisinau, national diplomat
Embassy of Lithuania, Kiev, national diplomat
Embassy of the Czech Republic in Kiev, national diplomat
EU Delegation Chisinau, EU diplomat

2015

Embassy of the Kingdom of Sweden, Chisinau, national diplomat
Embassy of Romania, Chisinau, national diplomat
Embassy of France, Chisinau, national diplomat
Embassy of Latvia, Kiev, national diplomat
Embassy of Denmark, Kiev, national diplomat
EU Delegation Kiev, EU diplomat

⁴ To ensure full anonymity of the respondents, the exact letter code references to the interviews mentioned in the analysis are omitted here.

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Preference formation of officials working for an EU Council Presidency

The Lithuanian Presidency of 2013 and the Eastern Partnership

BRUNO VANDECASTEELE¹

Introduction

Lithuania held the Presidency of the Council of the European Union (EU) (hereafter: Presidency) during the second half of 2013. Closer cooperation between the EU and the countries of the Eastern Partnership² (EaP) countries was among Lithuania's key priorities from the start of the Presidency preparations (Seimas, 2011) and occupied a prominent place in nearly all chapters of the Presidency programme (Lithuanian Presidency website, 2013). During the Presidency period, Lithuanian officials made remarkable efforts to achieve their goals. The determination of the Presidency was especially obvious in four instances where Lithuanian officials actively countered resistance from EU Member States or institutions (for a detailed overview of Lithuanians' actions to promote the EaP, see e.g. Vandecasteele, 2014; Lithuanian Presidency

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² The EaP is the EU's framework for bilateral and multilateral cooperation with its Eastern neighbours: Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan.

website, 2014): Lithuanians struggled with the European Commission about the organisation and format of a multilateral EU-EaP meeting of Justice Ministers and Home Affairs Ministers (joint declaration available via Council of the European Union, 2013, 8 October), and played a crucial role in the organisation of an EU-EaP Transport Ministers' meeting in October (joint declaration available via European Commission, 2013). Lithuanian officials also publicly (implicitly and sometimes explicitly) expressed their position that Ukraine's fulfilment of the conditions for signing an Association Agreement with the EU should not be interpreted too strictly (Financial Times, 2013, 2 July; EurActiv, 2013, 4 July; Interfax, 2013, 5 November), even though the detention of former Ukrainian Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko was seen by many as the most symbolic case of selective justice (EurActiv, 2013, 30 April). A fourth example of Lithuania's activism was the country's rush to reach a political agreement in the EU on visa liberalisation for Moldovan citizens, which was obtained during the last Coreper meeting of 2013 (Lithuanian Presidency website, 2013, 20 December). Thus, next to prioritising the EaP region during its Presidency, Lithuania was also ready to actively defend its favoured positions, even on sensitive issues such as the application of conditions on the rule of law or visa liberalisation.

Closer relations between the EU and its Eastern neighbours have been promoted by all Lithuanian governments since the country joined the EU in 2004 (Budrytė, 2006; Jonavičius, 2008; Janeliūnas, Kasčiūnas & Dambrauskaitė, 2009; Vilpišauskas, 2011; Vilpišauskas, 2013) and this became clearly more pronounced during the country's Presidency. This phenomenon of intensified national preferences during a Presidency period, resulting in (attempts to exert) additional influence, has been observed in several earlier studies (see e.g. Arter, 2000; Tallberg, 2004; Schalk, Torenvlied, Weesie & Stokman, 2007; Warntjen, 2007; Thomson, 2008; Bunse, 2009; Buchet de Neuilly, 2011). Bengtsson, Elgström and Tallberg (2004) call this the 'amplifier' effect of the Presidency position on the incumbent country's preferences, which is opposite to a possible 'silencer' effect that could lead officials of the Member States to downplay their national preferences when performing Presidency functions and instead focus on common European concerns.

The intensification of Lithuanian national preferences during its Presidency is not necessarily self-evident (Bengtsson *et al.*, 2004). On the one hand, Lithuania is a small country that assumed the Presidency for the first time. Given

that it is a generally pro-European country and has one of the best implementation records of EU legislation (e.g. Vilpišauskas, Vandecasteele & Vaznonytė, 2013), it would be plausible if Lithuania tried to establish itself as a ‘good European’ who just executes what the EU expects. In addition, the Presidency plays a less prominent role in EU external policies since the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon; the Presidency period would then function as a silencer of Lithuania’s preferences with regard to the EaP, with the incumbent country focusing on the EU’s (internal) daily business. On the other hand, however, the amplifier effect is not so surprising; since the EaP is very important for Lithuania – the region is considered Lithuania’s *niche* in EU external policies (Vilpišauskas 2011; Vaïsse, Dennison & Kundnani, 2013) – the Presidency period could be seen as an opportunity to put the region higher on the EU’s agenda.

In this article, I address three questions related to the broader puzzle of Lithuanians officials’ perceptions of their country’s preferences towards the EaP and their motivations to vehemently defend their points of view, even when they met resistance from others. I first of all analyse the *general aims* of the EaP policies according to Lithuanian officials. In addition, I discuss the reasons of these officials for prioritising and promoting closer EU-EaP relations *during their Presidency*. In doing so, I engage with the debate on the widely-discussed opposing logics of action (consequentialism vs. appropriateness) and assess how these logics played in officials’ preference formation. Finally, I explore possible differences in preference formation between civil servants that did and did not assume chairmanship of a preparatory body of the Council, as well as between those that did and did not reside in Brussels during the Presidency period. This analysis will show whether the Presidency period has a distinct ‘socialising’ impact on those who live in Brussels or chair meetings.

The article consists of two main parts. The first part reviews the literature on preference formation in the EU – both in general and specifically for the Presidency – and formulates hypotheses on (i) the logics underlying short- and long term goals and preferences related to the promotion of closer EU-EaP relations and (ii) the impact of officials’ duties and work place during the Presidency on their formation of preferences. The second part briefly discusses the method for data gathering, consisting mainly of an online survey among Lithuanian civil servants, and then moves on to discussing the survey results, substantiated with insights from in-depth interviews. The conclusion summa-

rizes the main findings of the article: the rationale behind Lithuania's promotion of EaP policies is to transfer own transition experiences to the Eastern neighbourhood, but also to limit Russian influence in the region and to promote EU-EaP trade ties. In addition, the analysis shows that there are no differences in preference formation between Lithuanians that did and did not chair meetings, and only marginal differences between Brussels-based and not Brussels-based officials.

Perspectives and hypotheses on preference formation

The theoretical framework and hypotheses of this article draw from a rich literature on national preference formation. Copsey and Haughton (2009) summarize this literature for EU-related policies and provide a synthetic framework to analyse preference formation. They mention unique historical experiences and the resulting (perceived) vulnerabilities and shortcomings, the size of the country, the net contributor/recipient status of a country, the 'visionary zeal' of the government, the ideology of politicians and governments, geography, and general attitudes towards deeper integration as determining preference formation. Specifically for Central and Eastern European countries, the authors argue that post-communist transition and EU accession experiences should also be taken into account. With regard to external policy, they point out that history and geography are especially important in the formation of preferences. Similar conclusions were reached in studies focusing on the Baltic States (Janelūnas *et al.*, 2009; Vilpišauskas, 2011).

Debates on agents' preferences and behaviour in international negotiations are often – covertly or overtly – inspired by a rationalist/constructivist divide, which is linked to the famous distinction between a logic of expected consequences and a logic of appropriateness (see e.g. the seminal work of March & Olsen, 1998). In the former logic, actors are seen as rationally calculating how to satisfy their fixed and exogenously given interests, whereas in the latter logic preferences are viewed as endogenous to negotiations and thus subject to change according to interpretations and contexts (see also Fearon & Wendt, 2002; Hay, 2002; Pollack, 2006). There is a broad consensus among scholars that these logics of action are not mutually exclusive and that, depending on scope conditions, either one or the other logic dominates (see e.g. March & Olsen, 1998; Risse, Engelmann-Martin, Knopf & Roscher, 1999; Börzel & Risse, 2000; Chong, 2000; Carter & New, 2004: 5; Bache, Bulmer & Gunay,

2012: 74). The underlying assumption seems to be that both logics cannot ‘prevail’ simultaneously. Authors like Elgström and Tallberg (2003: 204), Goldmann (2005) and more recently Choi (2015) go further and state that extreme forms of either logic are rarely observed; actors’ preferences and behaviour are mostly motivated by a mix of both. More fundamentally, it is difficult to link empirical data unequivocally to one of the two theoretical logics.

Debates on preference formation, including discussions on the logics of action, have also been present in research on the Council Presidency. In this respect, the role of formal and informal norms guiding the chair’s behaviour is important. The most prominent of these Presidency norms, and the only one that is formally mentioned in the Council Secretariat’s Presidency handbook (Council of the European Union 2011), is the neutrality or impartiality norm (Bengtsson *et al.*, 2004; Bjurulf & Elgström, 2004; Elgström, 2006; Niemann & Mak, 2010; Charléty, 2011):³ the chairperson is supposed to act in the common European interest and should not (ab)use his/her position to defend national interests. Verhoeff and Niemann (2011) discuss adherence to the neutrality norm in their study on the German 2007 Presidency and EU energy policy towards Russia: they conclude that holding the Presidency was a sufficiently strong incentive to make German officials refrain from expressing their genuine preferences and instead act as neutral mediators. Verhoeff and Niemann explore the logics of consequences and of appropriateness as explanatory factors for this norm conformation. They argue that it is unlikely that actors be driven simultaneously by rational and normative concerns, and that the ‘prevailing’ logic is triggered depending on the context; the question of which logic plays when is left for future research.

I do not aim to designate which logic of action (exclusively/dominantly) plays under which circumstances, all the more because establishing straightforward linkages between empirical data and the theoretical logics is inherently problematic. Instead, references to the logics of action in this article only serve to structure the findings and to denominate the different elements of goals and preferences.

Similarly, the first hypothesis of this article, dealing with appropriateness and consequentialism relative to the long- and short term aspects of preference formation of Presidency officials, is not formulated in order to give a definitive

³ Other frequently discussed Presidency norms are those of effectiveness and consensus.

‘yes’ or ‘no’ answer, but to provide an analytical anchor in interpreting the data. The hypothesis is based on the work of Elgström and Tallberg (2003), who suggest that both rivalling perspectives are partly complementary: a logic of appropriateness may be most prominent in long term and change-resistant trends such as self-images and role conceptions, whereas a consequentialist logic may explain short term strategic Presidency behaviour. Other authors made similar arguments: long term self-images are seen as shaping the interests and preferences that are described by rationalists as exogenously ‘given’ in specific bargaining situations (see e.g. Verhoeff & Niemann, 2011: 1289). Or, to paraphrase Katzenstein *et al.* (1998: 680-682), both rationalists and constructivists accept that human beings operate in a socially constructed environment. The former analyse how this environment affects decision-making, while the latter focus on how it is created. In other words:

H1: Officials’ perceptions of their country’s long term goals can be explained through self-images and role conceptions (logic of appropriateness), while short term decisions about priorities are more rationally calculated (logic of expected consequences).

The second hypothesis investigates whether the assessments of the aims and benefits of the EaP policies, and of the reasons why Lithuania prioritized the EaP region, differ between officials depending on their role and work location during the Presidency period. This hypothesis builds on the work of Niemann and Mak (2010), who in turn draw from a broader literature on socialisation (see e.g. Checkel, 2005). From this literature it can be derived that the motivations for adhering to (or neglecting) the norms depend on the duties performed by officials and on the location where they are based: if people have long and intense contacts with each other and work in a relatively insulated environment, there is a higher chance that they are more familiarized with the norms – in the case of the Presidency, the neutrality norm is the most compelling. If, however, officials have sporadic and less intensive contacts with each other or if they work in a more politicized setting, less norm internalisation can be expected. This can be translated into the following hypothesis:

H2: Officials who performed the function of chair in the Council or were permanently based in Brussels during the Presidency will emphasize national preferences less than officials who did not chair Council bodies and did not reside in Brussels during the Presidency.

The former group of officials had more intensive and sustained contacts with other EU representatives, and were more exposed to and immersed in the Presidency norms – most notably the neutrality norm – than the latter group. The Brussels-based officials and former chairs of Council bodies can thus be expected to emphasize their national preferences less when assessing the aims of the EaP policies and Lithuania's prioritisation of the region during its Presidency. The comparison between these different groups will advance insights in the debate on the socialising potential of a Presidency period for Member State officials.

Lithuanian officials' preferences: empirical analysis

Data gathering through an online survey

The main source of data for this article was an online survey among Lithuanian civil servants in different Ministries and Lithuanian representations to the EU and third countries. This survey was preceded by a series of semi-structured interviews with officials involved in the Lithuanian Presidency.⁴ The interviewees replied to open questions on why Lithuania supports closer relations between the EU and the EaP countries, why the EaP received so much attention during the Presidency, and how they assessed the preparations and achievements of the Presidency in EaP-related matters. The information obtained during these interviews was translated into survey questions, which were presented to a large group of Lithuanian civil servants. 223 officials were contacted by e-mail, of which 105 started the survey (response rate= 47,1%) and 92 completed it until the last question (dropout rate= 12,4%).

The first part of the survey gathered background information of respondents, including their position (did they chair a Council body?) and work place (were they based in Brussels?) during the Presidency. Of those who filled in the questionnaire, 22% chaired meetings and 78% did not. 72% of the respondents were capital(Vilnius)-based, 26% Brussels-based, and 2% worked elsewhere during the Presidency.

The second part of the survey explored the attitudes of Lithuanian officials with regard to their country's involvement in EaP policies (see *infra*). The first

⁴ This article is part of a long term research project. More information on the method – including selection and background of respondents, timing and structure of interviews, survey questions and data – is available with the author.

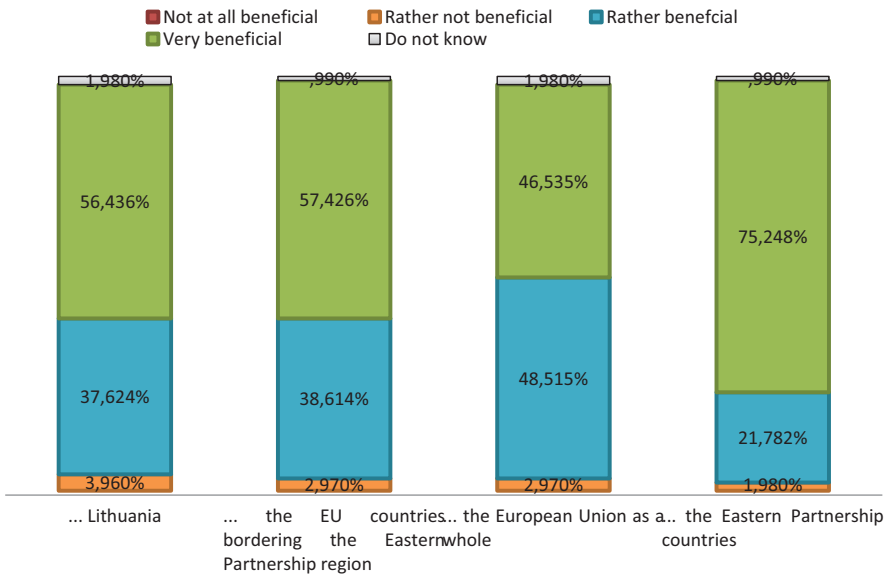
two questions polled about respondents' general views towards the benefits and long term aims of EaP policies, while the third question enquired about the motivations for Lithuania prioritizing the EaP during its Presidency.

The survey results provide three types of information that are important for answering the research questions as outlined *supra*: firstly, they inform us about how Lithuanian officials view the benefits and aims of the EaP policies and how this matters for Lithuania; secondly, the results allow us to explore the presence of different logics of action in the prioritisation of the EaP region during the Lithuanian Presidency; and thirdly, they provide insight into whether and how preferences diverge between groups of respondents with different backgrounds.

Civil servants' views on the benefits and aims of Eastern Partnership policies

The first survey question was: 'In your opinion, to what extent do the following actors benefit from closer cooperation between the European Union and the Eastern Partnership countries?' As shown in the subscripts of the bars in Chart 1, respondents were asked to evaluate the benefits for four (groups of) actors.

Chart 1: 'Closer EU-Eastern Partnership cooperation is (...) beneficial for...'



The replies to this question indicate that, while there is a generally very positive view towards EaP policies, the EaP countries are considered to benefit the most from them. This widespread view can be illustrated by a quote from one official: ‘these countries need our support to carry out democratic reforms, to modernize their administrations which are still soviet-style’ (Interview D). 75,2% of respondents found the EaP policies ‘very beneficial’ for the EaP countries. The second largest beneficiaries of EaP policies are thought to be the countries bordering the region, followed by Lithuania (‘very beneficial’ according to, respectively, 57,4% and 56,4% of respondents). Also the EU as a whole is seen as benefitting from closer relations between the EU and the EaP countries; 46,5% qualified it as ‘very beneficial’. These results show that the EaP initiative is viewed first and foremost as a regional project and by extension a project to the benefit of the EU as a whole. Most others selected ‘rather beneficial’ for the different actors, neutral or negative replies were rare: only 1% to 2% selected ‘do not know’, between 2% and 4% of the respondents found closer EU-EaP cooperation ‘rather not beneficial’, and nobody selected ‘not at all beneficial’ for any of the actors.

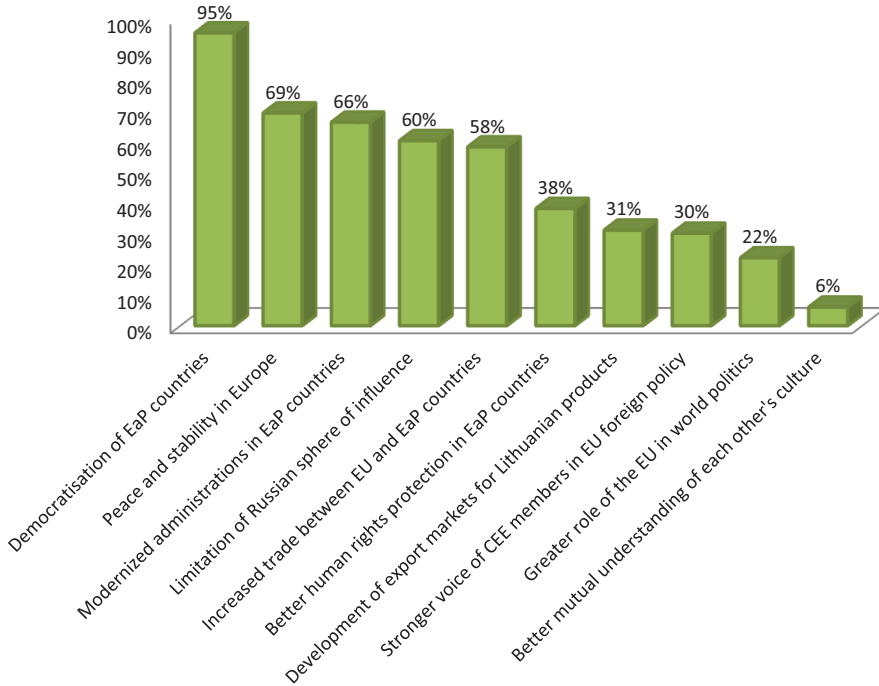
The second survey question was: ‘Below are listed 10 possible aims of the Eastern Partnership initiative. Please indicate up to 5 aims that are most important for Lithuania to pursue through Eastern Partnership policies’. The answer options are provided in Chart 2 below; the bars indicate which share of the respondents selected the answer options as one of the most important aims of the EaP policies. All options had been mentioned as separate aims during the preceding interview.

A first striking observation – which is not immediately visible in the chart – is that a very high number of aims were selected as ‘important’. Given that 98 respondents answered this question and they could select up to five aims each, the maximum number of options to be selected was 490. The respondents to the survey selected a total of 466 answer options, only 24 less than the maximum. This shows that most respondents support the development of EaP policies for a variety of reasons,⁵ and that many of them are considered highly important for Lithuania.

‘Democratisation of the EaP countries’ received the absolute top score: it was selected by 95% of the respondents as one of the most important aims of EaP policies. Four other aims were chosen by a majority of respondents:

⁵ Most respondents selected five options; 13 respondents selected four options; four respondents singled out three options; and only one respondent indicated two options.

Chart 2: Most important aims of the Eastern Partnership policies



‘peace and stability in Europe’ (69%), ‘modernisation of public administrations in the EaP countries’ (66%), ‘limitation of Russia’s sphere of influence’ (60%) and ‘increased trade between the EU and EaP countries’ (58%). A minority of respondents selected ‘human rights protection’ (38%), ‘export markets for Lithuania’ (31%), ‘a stronger voice of the CEE countries in the EU’ (30%), ‘a greater role of the EU in the world’ (22%) and ‘better mutual cultural understanding’ (6%). The aims of EaP policies, according to most respondents, can thus be summarized as norm transfer (democratisation, modernisation) that should lead to the promotion and consolidation of pan-European peace and stability, increased trade between the EU and Eastern Europe, and a limitation of Russia’s influence in the region. These findings largely correspond to the conclusions of earlier research on this topic: Lithuania’s approach towards its Eastern neighbourhood is shaped by its own transition experiences, a common recent history with the region, and strong energy and transport interconnections (see e.g. Janeliūnas *et al.*, 2009). The results also confirm the regional interpretation of the benefits of EaP policies as indicated for question 1 on the perceived beneficiaries of the EaP policies (see *supra*). Respondents may have

attempted to give socially desirable answers, based on the officially stated goals of the EaP initiative. In official communications of the EU (e.g. European External Action Service, 2013; European Commission, 2014), the main stated objectives are political and economic reforms, mobility and strengthened sectoral cooperation. Cooperation is based on a shared commitment to fundamental values, including democracy, rule of law, respect for human rights and market economy. In this regard, it is interesting to note that human rights and cultural exchange were mentioned only by a minority of respondents and that other objectives, not mentioned in official communications, were mentioned by a large minority (e.g. development of national export markets, greater role for (some members of) the EU) or even a majority of respondents (limitation of Russian influence). We can thus assume that respondents expressed their ‘genuine’ opinion and did not echo official EU communications.

The lower importance attached to national economic benefits is not surprising. Even though some interviewees (Interview B; Interview C; Interview E) and official communications (e.g. ENPI info centre, 2013, 3 July) cite strong economic links as a reason for Lithuania’s interest in the region, its trade relations with the EaP countries are much less important than with the EU or with Russia.⁶ When Russia restricted imports from Lithuania during summer and autumn 2013, which was widely viewed as a response to Lithuania’s efforts in promoting closer EU-EaP cooperation (Reuters, 2013, 7 October; Delfi.lt, 2013, 11 October; EUObserver 2013, 16 September), Lithuania’s government did not change its approach towards the EaP. Given that, at least on the short and medium term, the country has much to lose (income from trade with Russia) and little to win in economic terms (its share of trade with the EaP countries is relatively low), Lithuania cannot expect direct economic gain from EU-EaP cooperation. It is not what its government aims for either; an interviewee commented that ‘there is a real danger of retaliations from Russia, but the geopolitical importance of the region is much more important than our trade ties with Russia’ (Interview F).

Linking preference formation to the logics of action

With the third survey question, respondents were asked to indicate to what extent they agree with seven statements about the reasons why Lithuania prior-

⁶ Lithuanian Official Statistics Portal, 2014. “Exports, imports by country”. Available from <http://osp.stat.gov.lt/documents/10180/1553413/Imp_exp_2013_e.pdf>.

itized the Eastern Partnership during its Presidency. Each statement can, to a certain extent, be linked to (i) a time frame (long- or short term) and (ii) elements of the logics of action. The time frame is quite straightforward: ‘short term’ relates to the Presidency period as such, whereas ‘long term’ refers to a time frame beyond this. However, as discussed *supra*, it is inherently problematic to establish which empirical information refers to which logic. I assign labels to the statements based on their correspondence the neutrality norm – the most formalized and compelling Presidency norm – and the extent to which they refer to instrumental use of the Presidency position. This being said, these linkages should not be interpreted too strictly: they mainly serve to provide some structure to the findings. Answer options referring to an instrumental use of the Presidency to achieve Lithuania’s national goals in the EU are rather ‘consequentialist’, whereas answer options displaying conformity to (perceived) identities or expectations by other actors are rather ‘appropriate’ (see Table 1).

All answer options are summaries of insights from interviews that were held earlier. For this reason, there are no equal numbers of options reflecting the different time frames and logics of action: five out of seven statements refer to considerations on the short term, and five statements include elements of appropriateness. This is as such not problematic, because respondents were able to express their agreement but also their disagreement with the statements.

Table 1 shows the seven statements in the left column. The right column indicates how I link these statements to long/short term and consequentialism/appropriateness.

Table 1: Reasons for prioritising EaP policies during the Lithuanian Presidency

Statement	Interpretation
a. The EU pays too little attention to the EaP region as compared to other regions in the world.	Long term/consequentialism
b. This fitted in the political calendar of the EU.	Short term/appropriateness
c. Lithuania wanted to share its expertise with the EU and with the EaP.	Long term/appropriateness
d. The Presidency period was an opportunity to place the EaP region higher on the EU’s agenda.	Short term/consequentialism
e. The EaP countries expected us to prioritize this region.	Short term/appropriateness (EaP-oriented)
f. Other EU countries or EU institutions expected us to prioritize the EaP region.	Short term/appropriateness (EU-oriented)
g. It is Lithuania’s task to emphasize the benefits of closer EU-EaP cooperation.	Long term/appropriateness

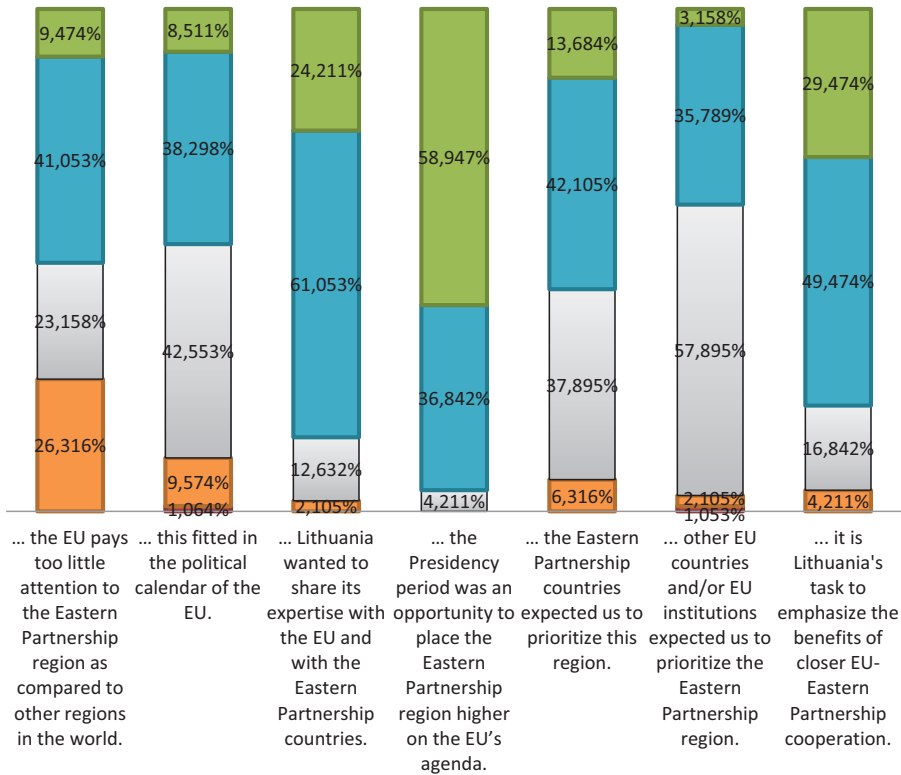
As we see in Chart 3 below, the statement with which most respondents agreed or strongly agreed (95,7% combined), and the only one nobody disagreed with, is labelled as short term/consequentialism (see Table 1): ‘The Presidency period was an opportunity to place the Eastern Partnership region higher on the EU’s agenda.’ Two other statements, both linked to long term/appropriateness, were also evaluated very positively: 85,3% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that ‘Lithuania wanted to share its expertise with the EU and with the Eastern Partnership’, and 79% were positive about ‘it is Lithuania’s task to emphasize the benefits of closer EU-Eastern Partnership cooperation.’

A small majority judged that ‘the Eastern Partnership countries expected us to prioritize this region’ (short term/EaP-oriented appropriateness: 55,8% agreed or strongly agreed) and that ‘the EU pays too little attention to the Eastern Partnership region as compared to other regions in the world’ (long term/consequentialism: 50,6% positive). However, the latter option also received a record 26,3% ‘disagree’ responses, which points to an important lack of consensus among respondents on this.

Two answer options linked to short term/appropriateness were supported by a minority of respondents: ‘this fitted in the political calendar of the EU’ (46,8%) and ‘other EU countries or EU institutions expected us to prioritize the Eastern Partnership region’ (39%). These statements also received the highest percentages of neutral replies: 42,6% and 57,9% respectively. It is striking that the respondents agreed more with the statement that they prioritized the EaP region because of expectations from the EaP countries than because of expectations from other EU countries or institutions. Apparently, the (perceived) EaP countries’ expectations were more important for developing and defending Lithuania’s Presidency priorities towards the EaP region than expectations from within the EU.

The replies can be summarized as follows: Lithuanian civil servants clearly saw the Presidency position as instrumental in focusing on issues that are important for their country, but also to enhance the role they usually play in the EU. Indeed, the reasons for prioritising the EaP region were related to an identity of Lithuania as a bridge builder between the EU and the EaP countries: its officials aim to share their experience on the region with others, and view it as their duty to do so. Other considerations, such as a (perceived) lack of attention for the region on behalf of the EU, or adaptation to an EU agenda or to the expectations of other actors, were less prominent. The general motivation behind Lithuania’s support for EU-EaP integration and for the prioritization

Chart 3: 'The Lithuanian Council Presidency prioritized the Eastern Partnership because...'



sation during its Presidency is well illustrated with a interviewee's quote: '[Europeanisation of the EaP region is the] natural follow-up of Lithuania's integration in the EU' (Interview A). In other words, Lithuanians feel that promoting the EaP is *what Lithuania does*. Interestingly, the survey results also suggest that Lithuanians do not necessarily perceive their role in the EU as 'assigned' to them by other EU Member States or institutions: most respondents estimated that Lithuania should share its expertise in dealing with the EaP countries at the European level, but at the same time only a minority of them agreed that expectations from within the EU played a role in the definition of Presidency priorities.

These findings provide some support to the first hypothesis of this article – that the perceptions of officials on Lithuania's long term goals can be explained through self-images and role conceptions, while preference formation on the short term is more rationally calculated. Indeed, respondents' support for the

statements linked to short term/consequentialism and long term/appropriateness was the highest, and some statements referring to short term/appropriateness received little positive responses. However, there is a caveat: there is also evidence from a majority of respondents that appropriateness played a role in short term considerations (e.g. expectations from EaP countries), and some rational or instrumental motivations were identified in the long term view to the EU's EaP policies (i.e. a lack of attention that could be 'solved' through prioritisation during the Lithuanian Presidency).

What impact of duties and environments on preferences?

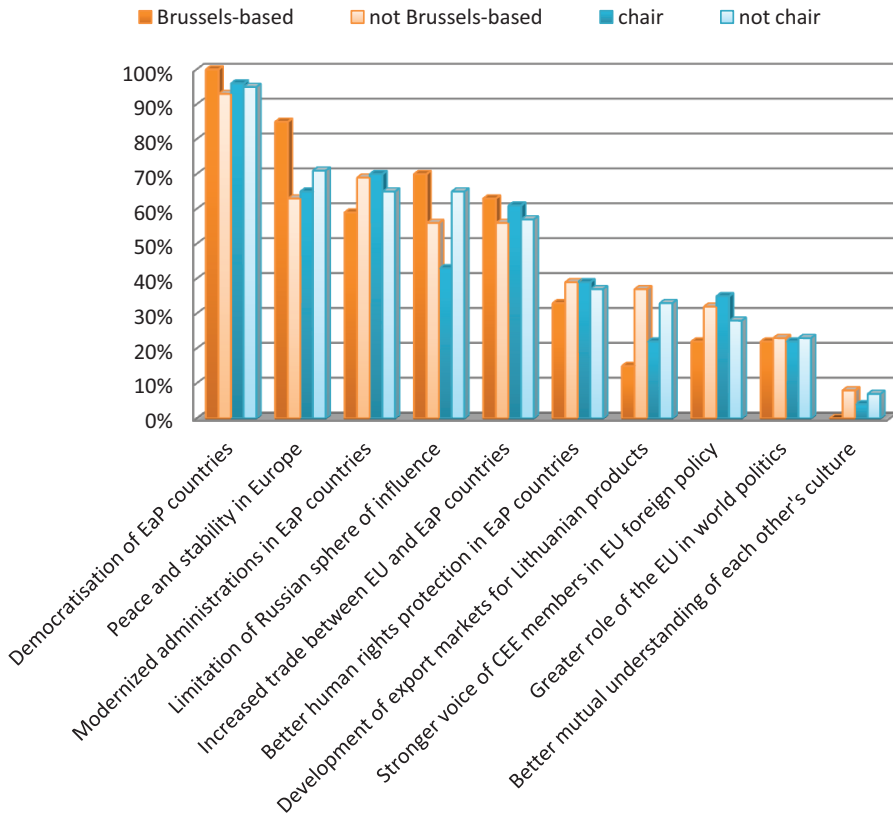
The replies to the survey questions were compared for officials who acted as chairs vs. those who did not, and for Brussels-based officials vs. not Brussels-based officials.

For the questions where respondents were asked to evaluate statements, the Mann-Whitney U test was applied with SPSS to discover differences in the degrees to which the groups of respondents agreed with the respective statements. This test checks whether the degree of agreement of one group tends to be higher or lower than those of another group. The relevant survey questions are the first (countries or regions benefitting from closer EU-EaP cooperation) and third one (reasons why Lithuania prioritized the EaP region during its Presidency). For both questions, the analysis showed that there are no significant differences for any of the statements. Thus, the assessments of the groups of respondents neither tend to differ on the beneficiaries of closer EU-EaP relations, nor with regard to the reasons⁷ why Lithuania prioritized the EaP region during its Presidency.

On the most important aims of the EaP policies (the second question of the survey), we first of all note that the five most selected answer options were the same for all groups of respondents (see chart 4).

⁷ When (statistically non-significant) differences were detected, they sometimes contradicted the hypothesis on the role of chairmanship or work place in preference formation: Brussels-based officials and chairs more strongly agreed that 'the Presidency period was an opportunity to place the EaP region higher on the EU's agenda' than the other respondent groups, and the tendency of emphasizing expectations of the EaP countries more than those of the EU was most obvious among Brussels-based officials and chairs.

Chart 4: Comparison between groups of respondents on the aims of Eastern Partnership policies



Subsequently, we can look for statistically significant differences between these groups of respondents through the Pearson Chi-Square test or Fisher’s Exact Test, both based on 2x2 contingency tables. These tests evaluate how likely it is that observed differences between the categories (e.g. Brussels-based officials select one aim more often than not Brussels-based officials) arose by chance. The Pearson Chi-Square was used for contingency tables where all cells contained at least five cases, and Fisher’s Exact Test when this was not the case. The values of significant differences (p-value <0.05), are **underlined and bold**.

Table 2: Aims of EaP policies according to officials acting as chairs vs. officials not acting as chairs

	Better human rights protection in the EaP countries	Better mutual understanding of each other's culture	Democratisation of the EaP countries	Development of export markets for Lithuanian products	Greater role of the EU in world politics	Increased trade between the EU and the EaP countries	Modernisation of public administrations in EaP countries	Limitation of the sphere of influence of Russia	Peace and stability in Europe	Stronger voice of CEE member states in EU foreign policy
Pearson Chi-Square	.196	.102	1.459	.674	.011	.514	.733	1.933	.003	.756
Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.658	.749	.227	.412	.916	.473	.392	.164	.959	.385
Degrees of freedom	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Fisher's Exact Test (2-sided)	.805	1.00	.457	.602	1.00	.636	.471	.234	1.00	.432

Table 2 reveals that there are no significant differences between officials who acted as chairs and officials who did not as to the frequency with which they did or did not select important aims of the EaP policies.

Table 3: Aims of EaP policies according to Brussels-based vs. not Brussels-based officials

	Better human rights protection in the EaP countries	Better mutual understanding of each other's culture	Democratisation of the EaP countries	Development of export markets for Lithuanian products	Greater role of the EU in world politics	Increased trade between the EU and the EaP countries	Modernisation of public administrations in EaP countries	Limitation of the sphere of influence of Russia	Peace and stability in Europe	Stronger voice of CEE member states in EU foreign policy
Pearson Chi-Square	.058	2.203	4.690	3.370	.035	1.103	.108	2.969	6.643	.530
Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.810	.138	.030	.066	.851	.294	.743	.085	.010	.467
Degrees of freedom	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Fisher's Exact Test (2-sided)	1.00	.335	.034	.085	1.00	.372	.819	.115	.010	.619

As we see in Table 3, there are significant differences for (only) two aims between Brussels-based and not Brussels-based officials. The former group

selected ‘democratisation of the Eastern Partnership countries’ slightly more, and ‘peace and stability in Europe’ much more than the latter group.

To conclude this section, the second hypothesis – that Brussels-based officials and chairs emphasize national preferences less than the other officials – can for the most part not be maintained. The survey results do not show differences between the groups with regard to the beneficiaries of the EaP policies, nor on the reasons why Lithuania decided to prioritize the EaP region during its Presidency. Only two out of ten general aims of EaP policies – viz. the emphasis on democratisation of the neighbourhood and the dedication to promoting peace and stability in Europe – are emphasized more by Brussels-based officials than by their colleagues not based in Brussels. In other words, the duties performed by the respondents (chair or not chair) did not play a role in their views on the importance of the different EaP policies; their work place (Brussels or not Brussels) did so to a very limited extent.

Conclusion

Lithuania strongly prioritized the EaP during its Presidency and defended its favoured positions with regard to the region, even on sensitive issues such as visa liberalisation or the application of conditions on the rule of law towards Ukraine. This phenomenon of intensified or ‘amplified’ (Bengtsson *et al.*, 2004) preferences during a Presidency period is not unusual, but also not self-evident. In explaining the Lithuanian Presidency’s strong prioritisation of the EaP region, I addressed three main questions: (i) which aims do Lithuanian officials generally pursue through EaP policies, (ii) how can the prioritisation of the EaP region during the Presidency be accounted for in terms of the logics of appropriateness and of consequences, and (iii) is there a difference in preference formation between civil servants that did or did not assume the function of chair and did or did not reside in Brussels during the Presidency?

A preliminary conclusion emerging from the research is that EaP policies were prioritized by Lithuanian officials for very diverse reasons. ‘The’ reasons why ‘the’ Lithuanians put the EaP region high on the Presidency’s agenda cannot be straightforwardly determined. However, some general conclusions can be drawn, based on a survey among Lithuanian civil servants. Firstly, the results show that the motivations for Lithuanians officials’ support of closer relations between the EU and the EaP region are a mix of mainly norm-based but also rational geostrategic considerations. They see it as their duty to stimu-

late the EaP countries in going through a similar transition as their own country did, in order to establish a stable and peaceful region with limited Russian influence – through active interference in the EU’s agenda if necessary. Indeed, the survey reveals that respondents view it as natural to promote the EaP region in the EU, even more so during their Council Presidency: the Presidency position was deliberately used to place the EaP region higher on the EU’s agenda. Insofar as the statements of the questionnaire can be linked to the logics of action, this finding to a large extent supports the hypothesis on this matter – long term goals and identities are conceived of in a logic of appropriateness, whereas short term preference formation follows a more consequentialist logic – but there are important nuances: role conceptions also played a (somewhat smaller) role in the short term preferences of officials during the Lithuanian Presidency, and long term goals were also inspired by elements of a consequentialist logic. This result is not surprising: it was expected that the hypothesis on the opposing logics of action would be neither totally confirmed nor rejected. However, the hypothesis has been helpful in theoretically structuring the empirical data.

The second hypothesis – that Brussels-based officials and chairs emphasize national preferences less than the others – is for the most part rejected. There are only minor differences between Brussels-based and not Brussels-based officials on some aspects of the general aims of EaP policies, but no differences could be discovered between the respondent groups regarding short term preference formation and the reasons for prioritising the EaP region during the Presidency. Apparently, the duties performed by civil servants during the Presidency did not affect their preferences, and the place where they were based played a very limited role. It is true that this research covers only a limited period of six months: the reason why the ‘chair’ criterion proves irrelevant may be connected to this, and civil servants may have spent several years in Brussels before the Presidency but resided in Vilnius during the Presidency; socialisation may thus have happened before the Presidency.

In any case, the survey results nuance earlier insights on preference formation of officials working for a Presidency. They show that preference formation is inspired by a mixed logic, simultaneously including some elements of the logics of expected consequences and of appropriateness. In addition, the impact of the duties performed and the environment in which Presidency officials work (in short: the socialising effect of the Presidency) on preference formation is (much) less strong and unequivocal than might be expected.

List of interviews

- Interview A. Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Vilnius, 12 March 2013.
- Interview B. Lithuanian Ministry of Transport and Communications, Vilnius, 18 March 2013.
- Interview C. Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Vilnius, 5 April 2013.
- Interview D. Lithuanian Ministry of the Interior, Vilnius, 20 February 2014.
- Interview E. Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Vilnius, 17 March 2014.
- Interview F. Lithuanian Permanent Representation to the EU, Brussels, 9 April 2014.

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“Hard security” vs. “Big Business”?

Explaining Romania’s and Bulgaria’s responses to the conflict in Ukraine

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Abstract: This article focuses on the foreign policy responses of Romania and Bulgaria to the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula by the Russian Federation and the outbreak of the conflict in Eastern Ukraine in 2014. Although both countries are members of the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), and should equally perceive Russia’s advances in the Eastern neighbourhood as a security threat, their responses to the Ukraine conflict differed significantly. Whereas Romania was highly supportive of EU sanctions against Russia and an increased presence of NATO along the EU’s Eastern border, Bulgaria opted for a ‘soft’ approach vis-à-vis Russia. The goal of this article is to account for these differences. We draw on assumptions from realist and pluralist approaches to foreign policy analysis to explain the responses of Bulgaria and Romania to the conflict. We argue that Romania’s response to the Ukraine conflict can be explained by realist propositions (‘hard security approach’): It reflects a critical stance towards Russia, resulting from its desire to balance the power of Russia – viewed as a revisionist power – by seeking a solution with and through EU integration and the military alliance of NATO. In contrast, Bulgaria’s economic dependence on Russia, and especially its reliance on gas supplies from Russia as well as entanglement with corrupt Russian business conglomerates, has resulted in a foreign policy dominated by economic interests (the ‘business-first approach’), much to the detriment of Bulgaria’s security vis-à-vis Russia.

Keywords: Ukraine conflict, Romania, Bulgaria, foreign policy analysis.

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Introduction

The Ukrainian conflict, developing from 2013 onwards, has resulted in Ukraine's territorial fragmentation. Ukraine's current situation is a classic example of a country caught between the diverging interests of the dominant regional powers: The Russian Federation on the one hand, and the United States (US) and the European Union (EU) on the other hand.

The events in Ukraine had shock effects on Europe's geopolitics and international relations. The EU was criticised for its slow and indeterminate reactions to the EuroMaidan protests. It was only after Ukraine's abrupt shift from East to West and the departure of ex-president Viktor Yanukovich, that the EU undertook supportive measures towards Ukraine in collaboration with other international organisations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Council of Europe (CoE) and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Much of the academic literature on the EU's response to the Ukraine conflict has centred on examining the role of the EU as unitary actor (e.g. Haukkala, 2015; MacFarlane and Menon, 2014; Averre, 2016; Kuzio, 2017) or the role of Germany (Forsberg, 2016; Szabo, 2014) and discord among 'old' and 'new' EU member states (Schmidt-Felzmann, 2014).² Remarkably little attention is given to Central and Eastern European (CEECs) countries' differing responses to the Ukraine conflict. Our article contributes to this special issue by analysing the approaches of two CEE countries – Romania and Bulgaria – to the Ukraine conflict.

The Romanian and Bulgarian reactions to the Ukrainian conflict are particularly insightful case studies because they illustrate the stark differences in CEE countries' approaches to the post-Soviet region (Bossuyt, 2017). Both countries are located to the south of the so-called 'Carpathian Mountains dividing line' (Bossuyt, 2017; Jonavičius, 2008, p.5) and both countries define the integration with the EU and alignment to its security and defence positions as top foreign policy priorities. Yet, their responses to the Ukraine conflict have been very different. Whereas Romania was highly supportive of EU sanctions against Russia and an increased presence of NATO along the EU's Eastern border, Bulgaria opted for a predominantly 'soft' approach towards Russia, emphasising the detrimental effect of sanctions on the relationship with the EU.

² A notable exception is Forbrig, 2015.

Scholars writing on Romanian and Bulgarian foreign policy often explain these differences by drawing on the diverging relations of both countries with the former Soviet Union, with Bulgaria being much closer to (and more friendly towards) the Soviet Union than Romania (Denca, 2013; Dimitrov, 2001, Micu 2013). The historical approach certainly contributes to understanding continuity and path-dependency of Bulgarian and Romanian foreign policy. Yet, the approach can only partly account for the two countries' more recent foreign policy choices in the fundamentally different and rapidly changing regional and international order of today (Mankoff, 2009).

Since the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, both countries have followed the same pattern of Euro-Atlantic integration, with NATO 2004 and EU 2007 enlargements. They have also shared the status of Black Sea countries with interests in stabilizing the region (Ivan, 2012). Moreover, both countries have been confronted with the same security dilemmas arising from an increasingly assertive Russian Federation (Lanoszka, 2016). In light of the similarities in their geopolitical position vis-à-vis the 'West' and the Russian Federation, the differences in Bulgaria's and Romania's foreign policy towards the Ukraine conflict (and concurrently towards Russia) remain highly puzzling.

In this article, we seek to explain the differences between the two countries' foreign policy choices. We draw on realist and pluralist approaches to foreign policy analysis to identify factors that account for these differences. We then examine the applicability of realist and pluralist propositions in the analysis of both countries' foreign policies. We demonstrate that whereas Romania's position on the Ukraine conflict can be sufficiently explained by realist propositions (the 'hard security approach'), Bulgaria's foreign policy response corresponds more closely to assumptions of the pluralist school of foreign policy analysis (the 'business-first approach').

Realist and pluralist approaches of foreign policy analysis

In order to explain the responses of Bulgaria and Romania to the Ukraine conflict, we conduct a foreign policy analysis (FPA). FPA is the study of the conduct of relations between different actors, primarily states, in the international system. The goal of FPA is to examine the process and conditions that affect foreign policy. According to Alden and Aran, the focus of FPA on the foreign policy process and 'closer scrutiny of the actors, their motivations, the

structures of decision making and the broader context within which foreign policy choices are formulated’ provides a ‘greater analytical purchase’ than utilising an IR approach (Alden and Aran, 2016, p. 3).

We share this observation: The emphasis of a majority of IR approaches on examining the structures or nature of the international system is certainly relevant in understanding the broader power relations between and foreign policies of the US, the EU, the Russian Federation and their so-called ‘shared neighbourhood’ (e.g. Mearsheimer, 2014; Mead, 2014; Ikenberry, 2014). However, IR approaches are too broad in focus to account for difference or nuances in the foreign policy choices of individual EU member states such as Romania or Bulgaria. Instead, leading IR scholars often assume that individual EU countries’ responses to the Ukraine conflict converge in what is defined as a unified foreign policy of the ‘West’ or the EU towards Russia. Moreover, IR approaches do not sufficiently recognise how shifts in domestic politics, such as changes in the ruling government coalition, can affect foreign policy.

The focus on domestic politics is particularly relevant, however, when analysing CEE countries’ responses to the Ukraine conflict. For example, despite its ‘soft approach’ towards Russia overall, the leaders of successive government coalitions have articulated quite different positions vis-à-vis Russia, ranging from lukewarm support for condemning Russian actions to a more assertive stance (Lessenski, 2015, p.7). We therefore consider FPA to be the most suitable tool for analysing the differences between (and within) Romanian and Bulgarian foreign policy responses to the Ukraine conflict.

The realist approach to FPA

Even though the roots of FPA lie ‘in its reaction to the dominance of realism and its depiction of the state and its interactions with other states’, much of the original FPA has kept with the ‘realist paradigm’, whilst acknowledging that foreign policy is not ‘given’ but rather the outcome of a decision-making processes (Alden and Aran, 2016, p.5). The concept of the ‘national interest’ remains central to realist FPA, which is the key reference point for interpreting state action. Realist FPA scholars also assert that the anarchic character of the international system is the ‘most important guide to interpreting foreign policy (Alan and Aran, 2016, p.5). Realists therefore expect state governments to feel threatened if another state is perceived to be gaining more and/or superior power. In response, the threatened state is likely to engage in balancing,

either individually, or, as in the case of smaller and or weaker states, they will engage in external balancing. External balancing means that the threatened state seeks ‘an alignment with other states against the superior state or coalition’ (Schimmelfennig, 2003, p.28). The goal is less to balance power but rather to balance a threat: ‘the higher not only a state’s aggregate power, but also its geographical proximity, offensive capabilities and aggressiveness of perceived intentions, the stronger the tendency for a state to align with others to deter or defeat the threatening power’ (Walt 1987, quoted in Schimmelfennig, 2003, p. 29). In particular, a weak state is likely to pursue the strategy of balancing against a threat ‘if allies are available, which will effectively deter the threat or defend the weak state against aggression’ (Schimmelfennig, 2003, p.29).

Similar to rationalist approaches of international relations, realist FPA scholars share the premises of materialism, egoism and instrumentalism. Therefore, the identities and interests of those involved in foreign policy decision-making are taken as given. The materialist part refers to the assumptions of anarchy and the distribution of power that characterise the international environment. Egoism supposes that the preferences of actors regard their own benefit and not the others. Moreover, state governments are thought to behave instrumentally and act in order to protect or maximize their own, predominantly ‘hard’ military security (Lindley-French, 2004). Rational choice is the realm of strategic interaction, where achieving the best outcome depends on finding the right combination of individual choices (Tamm and Snidal, 2014, p.133).

The realist FPA approach therefore posits that Romanian and Bulgarian foreign policy responses to the Ukraine conflict can be explained by examining the governments’ perceptions of (i) the character of the international/regional system and the relative power of Romania and Bulgaria vis-à-vis the EU, the US and Russian Federation as well as ‘hard’ security concerns (threat perceptions); and (ii) the national interest of Romania and Bulgaria, based on the respective material conditions (military resources) and geographic position.

The pluralist approach to FPA

While the realist FPA approach seeks to understand foreign policy making by examining the national interest and hard security concerns of individual states, other FPA approaches challenge the primacy of the unitary state as the only

significant actor in international politics. Such approaches, which are often grouped under the label ‘pluralist FPA’, tend to focus on decision-making processes within states, or the societal sources of foreign policy (Josselin and Wallace, 2001). Common to all pluralist FPA is the desire to open up the ‘black box’ of the unitary state in order to examine a broad variety of actors involved in foreign policy-making, including individual decision-makers, sub-state or non-state actors. Alden and Aran refer to Robert Putnam’s ‘two level game’ to illustrate how state-level ‘national’ interests are closely intertwined with domestic sources of foreign policy. The decision-making process ‘involves both a domestic arena, where one set of interests govern, and an international arena, where a different set of interests prevail.’ The challenge of ‘balancing the logic and demands of the two arenas (...) forms the central dilemma of foreign policy making as seen by pluralists’ (Alden and Aran, 2016, p.9-10).

The pluralist approach thus draws attention to the domestic sources of foreign policy. Among these, economic interests tend to play a dominant role (Fordham, 1998: 385). Economic interests are articulated by individual companies, national business organizations or via lobbyists seeking to influence national-level foreign policy-makers. Their goal is to protect or maximise profit margins and investment opportunities by ensuring good political and economic relations with partner states. Pluralist FPA posits that ‘economic interests matter even when security issues seem paramount’ (Fordham, 1998, p. 384). In practice, economic and security concerns are of course often closely related: Policy-makers define the preservation of economic interests as an important goal of national security policy. Still, in principle, policies aimed at protecting the basic political sovereignty and territoriality of the state are distinguishable from those directed at economic goals, especially in instances when ‘hard-security’ interests are compromised (rather than complemented) by economic interests (the ‘business-first’ approach).

The pluralist FPA approach thus draws attention to the role of domestic-level economic interests and actors on Romania’s and Bulgaria’s foreign policy responses to the Ukraine conflict.

Our analysis draws on a variety of primary and secondary sources to probe the relevance of realist and pluralist FPA approaches to explain Romanian and Bulgarian foreign policy choices. Official national foreign policy documents and speeches by high-ranking government representatives provide insights into national security strategy, interpretations of the international environment and threat perceptions. A triangulation of data available in secondary literature,

such as newspaper articles and publications by authoritative international and national Romanian and Bulgarian think tanks help us to determine the role of domestic economic interests on both countries' foreign policies.

The choice of two case studies does imply certain limits to the explanatory power and generalizability of our findings. It is not our goal to 'prove' that only propositions of realist or pluralist FPA explain the foreign policy choices of Romania, Bulgaria and other CEE countries. Rather, our case studies are meant to *illustrate* that FPA contributes a useful 'toolbox' to a better understanding of the differences and nuances in CEE countries' policies towards the post-Soviet region.

Romania's position on the Ukrainian crisis

Following the violence against EuroMaidan protesters, Romania condemned the actions taken by the ex-president Viktor Yanukovich's government. Romania also condemned Russia's annexation of Crimea and blamed the Russian government for fuelling the war in Eastern Ukraine (President of Romania Statement, 2014). Since then, Romania has been a strong supporter of Ukraine's territorial integrity, and has sought to develop good relations with the post-Yanukovich government, and to assist Ukraine in the current process of political and economic transition (Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2016). At the same time, the Romanian government continued to condemn Russian actions in the region (President of Romania Statement, 2014). Romania fully supported all EU sanctions against Russia, and has, together with Poland and the United Kingdom, frequently lobbied for an even tougher sanctions regime (Inayah, 2015, p. 40).

Romania's response to the Ukraine conflict: The realist FPA approach

Romania has a foreign policy tradition 'providing a multi-vector nature' (Kirillov and Putintsev, 2015, p.292). That is why Romania's foreign policy towards Russia was considered as 'duplicitous' since the communist ruling of Romania especially between 1965 and mid-1980s, as Ceaușescu sought to maintain a balance between the East and the West. As in the Bulgarian case, the Socialist-Democratic Party sought a constructive relation with Russia (1992-1996 and 2000-2004). Since president Băseșcu (Democratic-Liberal

Party) came to power in 2004 until 2014, the foreign policy orientation changed with Romania being strongly proactive towards the ‘Axis Washington-London-Bucharest’.

Because of geopolitical considerations, the ‘hard security’ element was central in the Western orientation of Romania. In 1994, it was the first Eastern European country to join the NATO Partnership for Peace programme. In 1995, Romania initiated a new basic treaty with Russia as the 1970 USSR-Romanian Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance had expired, but its signature was postponed till 2003, which showed that their partnership was not a priority for either.

Since becoming a NATO member, Romania has sought to play a role of sub-regional leader and key US partner in South-Eastern Europe. In December 2005, Romania decided to allow the presence on its territory of four US military bases, which was the first instance of the deployment of foreign troops in the country since 1958. Also, Romania is one of the Eastern European countries that accepted to host NATO missile defence system at Deveselu military base, which caused serious concern to Russia (Manea and Serafimescu, 2010, p.5).

In the view of most analysts, Romania is situated at the border lines of Europe, where any shift in the geopolitical balance has an immediate effect on its interests (e.g. Necula, 2016). Romania is the EU and NATO member country, which has the longest border with Ukraine, and it is also closest to Donbas and Crimea. As a result, there are serious concerns regarding instability and insecurity in the region. The Black Sea is also a site of possible tension. Since the annexation of Crimea, Russia has control of a larger portion of the Black Sea, gaining sovereignty over an estimated 36,000 square miles of maritime zone (Bugriy, 2016). As a result, the Russian and Romanian exclusive economic zones in the Black Sea are now adjacent to one another, increasing the risk of tension, for example over oil exploration activities.

During the Ukrainian crisis, Romania was one of the most vociferous states from Central-Eastern Europe calling for NATO defence commitment following Russia’s actions in Ukraine. Following the Crimea annexation by Russia, Romania and Russia now share a common maritime border and the security threat perception is amplified regarding Russia. Romania’s threat security perception was the main point of debate in the domestic politics. The political elites stressed the security threats posed by Russia and the media stressed the security risks for Romania (Necula, 2016). According to the INSCOP (2015)

opinion pools, Russia is still perceived to be among the countries most unfriendly to Romania by Romanians: 64,4% considered that the Ukrainian crisis is dangerous, 17,9% considered it not dangerous and the rest were indecisive.

Following Crimea's annexation, NATO troops trained in Eastern Europe to echoes of the Cold War. Besides the Romanian commitment to NATO exercises, Romania had valuable gains in terms of military infrastructure and training. Romania is a direct beneficiary of the US approved \$925 million in the Department of Defence's FY2-15 Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) budget to fund the European Reassurance Initiative (ERI) (Belkin, 2014). The Romanian military forces had joint exercises with NATO allies in which they analysed and practiced tactics, techniques and procedures for military and submarine warfare to enhance interoperability and common capacity to ensure security and stability in the Black Sea. Therefore, from the beginning of the Ukrainian crisis, the Romanian naval forces improved their military know-how benefiting from exercises with the best military equipment from its allies (Ziare.com, 2015).

During the presidency of the incumbent Romanian president Klaus Iohannis, the National Security Strategy for 2015-2019 was adopted. In this document, Russia is recognised as an important actor but whose actions 'defy the international order, international law and security arrangements from the end of the twentieth century and possess challenges for NATO allies' (Romanian Presidency, 2015, p.12). Therefore, Romania's security situation is considered in the context of the Euro-Atlantic integration.

Romania's response to the Ukraine conflict: The pluralist FPA approach

By supporting EU sanctions against Russia, Romania has acted against its economic interests. Although Romania's dependence on trade with Russia is lower in comparison to other CEECs, Russia remains the second non-EU economic partner of Romania after Turkey, with exports representing 9,18% from Romania's exports and imports 17,6% (Tempea, 2016). Romanian exports to Russia more than doubled between 2008 and 2013, with significant increases in exports in the automotive sector (Hunya, 2014, p.1). Unsurprisingly, the Romanian government was heavily lobbied by the automotive sector to weaken its stance on Russia. The automotive brand Dacia, revived after the

1999 takeover by Renault, is considered the most valuable Romanian brand, and the only one worth over EUR 1 billion (BR Business Review, 2017).

In spring 2014, even the National Bank of Romania acknowledged that Romanian exporters are likely to be affected negatively by growing insecurity of trade and diminishing demand in Ukraine and Russia. In case of a 10% fall in the value of exports to Ukraine and Russia, Romania's GDP would decline by 0.2% (Isărescu, 2014).

It is often argued that due to the limited role of Russia in Romania's energy supply, the country would not be particularly hurt in case of trade disruptions and EU sanctions (Barber 2016). However, several commentators have pointed out that much depends on how long such disruptions may last: whereas imports may be substituted by reserves for a few months, Romania is not yet set to replace Russian imports by alternative resources for a longer time (Hunya, 2014, p.2). Considering that the energy intensity of the Romanian economy (gross domestic consumption of energy divided by GDP) is 2,6 times higher than the EU 28 average and the third highest after Bulgaria and Estonia (Eurostat, 2016), the disruption of supply can certainly cause considerable damage to Romania's energy-intensive industries. Furthermore, despite efforts to decrease Romania's dependence on Russian gas (Economica, 2015), in 2016 the country still imported more than 75% of total national imports of natural gas from Russia (Eurostat, 2017).

Another indicator that economic concerns played a subordinate role in Romania's response to the Ukraine crisis is defence spending. In early 2015, the country's parliamentary parties signed an agreement to boost Romanian defence spending to 2% of its GDP and to maintain that percentage for the following decade. In May 2017, the Romanian parliament approved a spending programme valued at €9.3 billion for the next decade, 2017-2026. There is a broad consensus among commentators that the Romanian government's economic policy is ill adapted to sustain such a high level of defence spending over the next decade (Vişan, 2017: 1). Romania lacks a multi-year budgeting process and it will be hard for the country to remain within the 3% deficit limit required by its membership in the European Union (Wall-Street.ro, 2016)

Already back in spring 2014, Romania had cancelled the debt of 15 defence companies to keep them out of bankruptcy. The value of the debts was estimated at around 1 billion lei (€222 million) (Chiriac, 2014, p.1). The move was explicitly motivated by 'hard-security' considerations, which trumped concerns over the impact on the Romanian financial budget. According to then

Prime Minister Victor Ponta, ‘given the current geopolitical context we need to improve Romania’s defence capacity by taking immediate steps to assure the economic and financial revival of operators of strategic importance’ (Ponta quoted in Chiriac, 2014, p.1)

The examples above illustrate that the ‘hard-security’ approach in Romanian foreign policy clearly dominated over a variety of economic interests. Romania’s economic and resource dependence on Russia is lower than the EU/CEE average. Yet, the negative impact of EU sanctions against Russia on key economic players in the Romanian economy, such as the automotive industry or energy intensive industries more generally, should not be underestimated. At the same time, recent increases in defence spending have put the sustainability of the country’s economic and financial policies in great jeopardy. The Romanian government has justified the subordination of economic interests with reference to ‘hard security’ concerns, such as the country’s military capabilities and vulnerabilities vis-à-vis the Russian Federation.

Bulgaria’s position on the Ukrainian crisis

This section analyses the way Bulgaria responded to the Ukrainian events with a special focus on the overall foreign policy stance and reference to EU and NATO policies.

Bulgaria’s position on the Ukraine conflict had two key dimensions: First, it demonstrated its loyalty to the EU, the US and NATO by strongly condemning the annexation of Crimea and joining the sanctions against Russia. Already in the first stages of the crisis, the government of Plamen Oresharski expressed support for Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity. At the same time, however, Bulgaria has also taken a ‘soft’ standpoint on Russia. In March 2014, for example, Oresharski stated in a Russian media interview that Bulgaria opposed further sanctions against Russia (Lessenski, 2015, p.7). Prime Minister Boyko Borissov, who took office in November 2014, openly declared that he was against confrontation with Russia, including sanctions (Sofia Globe, 2014). He also disagreed with identifying Russia as a threat in debates on Bulgaria’s security strategy (Lessenski, 2015, p.7).

It is important to place the Bulgarian response to the Ukraine conflict into the context of internal political dynamics. The development of the Ukrainian crisis coincided with political instability in Bulgaria and with the most massive protests in its recent history (Ganev, Dimitrov, Bönker, 2014, p.3). From May

2013 to August 2014, Bulgaria was governed by the Oresharski government and a coalition of the leftist Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP) and the Turkish-minority Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF), supported by the extremely-nationalist party Ataka. That government resigned after civil protests and a care-taker government was appointed until snap-elections in October 2014 resulted in a new government coalition by the centre-right Citizens for the Democratic Development of Bulgaria (GERB) and the center-right Reformist Bloc, joined by the left Alternative for Bulgarian Revival (ABV) party, supported by the nationalist Patriotic Front. Although the official Bulgarian position condemning Russian actions in Ukraine remained unchanged, the different governments have taken different approaches. Whilst the Oresharski government had a ‘lukewarm attitude towards condemning Russia’, the two following governments ‘took a more assertive stance’ (Lessenski, 2015, p.7).

Bulgaria’s response to the Ukraine conflict: The realist FPA approach

The first dimension of Bulgaria’s response to the Ukraine conflict – the close alignment with the EU, the US and NATO – closely corresponds to realist FPA propositions on foreign policy behaviour.

The ‘Vision 2020’ (2014) report was prepared by the Bulgarian Ministry of Defence ahead of the NATO Wales Summit in September 2014 (under the caretaker government). It provided an assessment of the security environment, stating that the ‘unlawful annexation of Crimea by Russia and the conflict in Eastern Ukraine became the most serious threat to peace and security in Europe after WWII’. The document also identified Bulgaria’s energy dependence on Russia and the dependence of its armed forces on Russian supplies of Soviet-era equipment as ‘security risks’.

Ex-president Rosen Plevneliev has also been an outspoken critic of Russian actions in the region. In his address to the European Parliament in Strasbourg in June 2016, Plevneliev described the annexation of Crimea as a ‘game changer’ and starkly accused Moscow of using hybrid warfare ‘to destroy and bring down the foundations of the European Union — unity, solidarity and the rule of law’ (Plevneliev quoted in POLITICO, 2016).

Bulgaria also joined the Western allies in the military exercises undertaken by NATO shortly after the outbreak of the Crimea conflict. Bulgaria participated in NATO’s Readiness Action Plan staging a series of joint military drills

with US marine units deployed in Bulgaria and biggest allied airborne drills in Europe since the Cold War ended. About 350 US army officers, US tanks, helicopters and armoured personnel carriers took part in military drills with about \$30 million spent by the US for the modernisation of Bulgaria’s military infrastructure (NBC NEWS, 2015). Bulgaria also took part in naval drills with warships, submarines and aircrafts.

The Bulgarian government’s position and actions outlined above strongly resonate with the assumptions of the realist approach to FPA. Hard-security concerns, threat perceptions and concerns about military capabilities and sovereignty dominate in this first dimension of Bulgaria’s response to the Ukraine conflict.

Bulgaria’s response to the Ukraine conflict: The pluralist FPA approach

The second dimension of Bulgaria’s response to the Ukraine crisis – the ‘soft approach’ towards Russia did, however, always play a significant role in the successive governments’ foreign policies. The Vision 2020 document was toned down, EU sanctions against Russia were criticised for their negative impact on Bulgaria’s economic and trade relations with Russia, and an emphasis placed on the ‘deep historical relationship with Russia’ (President Rumen Radev quoted in: New York Times, 2017).

Bulgaria’s standpoint towards Russia can be explained by the role of economic interests. Although Bulgaria’s trade with Russia is relatively modest in comparison to those of other EU and CEECs (exports to Russia in 2015 only amounted to 2.6% of the total, placing it ninth among Bulgaria’s markets), Russia is Bulgaria’s top source of imports of energy resources. Hydrocarbons account for 76.4% of imports from Russia corresponding to USD 5.3 bn (Bechev, 2016, p.6). Two companies, Lukoil and Gazprom, dominate trading relations between Sofia and Moscow. Bulgaria receives more than 85% of its gas from Russian Gazprom (EUbusiness, 2014) and it is the only of the EU28 incapable of substituting imports during a short gas supply interruption (Martinez, Paletar and Hecking, 2015, p.38).

The high energy dependency on Russia has prompted many commentators to describe Bulgaria as ‘a captured state’, in which many politicians pivoted eastward because of domineering oligarchs and a dependence on Russian oil and gas (Heather and Ruslan, 2016, p. 12).

Bulgaria has been involved in number of large energy projects with the Russian Federation, including the Belene Nuclear Power Plant (NPP) and South Stream, which successive governments have not seen as a threat but as an opportunity to strengthen their own position and gain investment (Pieńkowski, 2016, p.1).

The Belene NPP was an energy project for the construction of an NPP located in the Bulgarian town of Belene on the Danube. The Belene NPP was supposed to become Bulgaria's second NPP after the Kozloduy NPP. It was a joint project between Bulgaria's National Electric Company NEK and Russian state nuclear corporation Rosatom and its subsidiary Atomstroyexport. With the Russian partners insisting on an up to 80% share of the plant, the project was seen by many as exacerbating Bulgaria's dependence on Russia and opening opportunities for high-level corruption fuelled by money from Moscow (Bechev, 2016, p.17). The Belene Nuclear Power Plant project was terminated in late March 2012, due to disagreements between Bulgaria and Russia on the price of the project.

South Stream was a Russian-sponsored project. As initially planned, the pipeline would run under the Black Sea to Bulgaria, carrying Russian gas from Bulgaria through Serbia to central Europe and Italy. South Stream was high on the agenda of successive Bulgarian governments, as it promised to generate lucrative income from transit fees. However, the European Commission put pressure on Bulgaria to freeze South Stream, citing breaches of EU law in the intergovernmental agreement for the construction of the pipeline. In 2014, Bulgaria froze construction on the pipeline due to EU and US pressure, though plans exist to revive the project as part of Turkish Stream (Radio Bulgaria, 2017).

The examples above show that economic interests clearly played an important role in Bulgarian governments' foreign policy decision-making: because of a number of lucrative business deals with Russian (often state-owned) companies, a 'soft approach' towards Russia was favoured. The responsiveness of Bulgarian governments to economic actors was further intensified by close links between Bulgaria's political and economic elite with former and present Russian elites. For example, a large number of Bulgarian companies (just under 5000) involve Russian individuals and entities holding from 5 to 100% of shares (Bechev, 2016, p.6).

The analysis of Bulgaria's response to the Ukraine conflict has demonstrated that some dimensions of the countries' foreign policy – its continued

strategic loyalty to the EU, the US and NATO – can be explained by the realist FPA approach. However, Bulgaria’s ‘soft approach’ vis-à-vis Russia was found to jeopardise its ‘hard security’ interests. Various energy projects and other structural entanglements between Bulgarian and Russian political and economic elites have ensured that the ‘business-first’ approach could not be ignored by successive Bulgarian governments.

Conclusions

This article examined the foreign policy responses of Romania and Bulgaria to the Ukraine conflict. Although both countries are members of the EU and NATO, and should equally perceive Russia’s advances in the Eastern neighbourhood as a security threat, their responses to the Ukraine conflict differed significantly. Whereas Romania was highly supportive of EU sanctions against Russia and an increased presence of NATO along the EU’s Eastern border, Bulgaria opted for a ‘soft’ approach vis-à-vis Russia. We introduced the realist and pluralist approaches to foreign policy analysis to explain the two countries’ differing foreign policy choice. Unlike the historical approach, FPA does not assume one homogenous groups of CEECs or a ‘dividing line’ between countries north and south of the Carpathian Mountains. The focus of FPA on individual countries’ foreign policy choices and the recognition of the role of non-state (economic) interests and actors in foreign policy making provided us with the analytical means to understand differences (rather than similarities) between the two countries’ foreign policy approaches.

We demonstrated that Romania’s response to the Ukraine conflict can be explained by propositions of realist FPA (‘hard security approach’): Romania took a critical stance towards Russia, resulting from its desire to balance the power of Russia – viewed as a revisionist power – by seeking a solution with and through EU integration and the military alliance of NATO. In contrast, Bulgaria’s economic dependence on Russia, and especially its reliance on gas supplies from Russia as well as entanglement with corrupt Russian business conglomerates, has resulted in a foreign policy dominated by economic interests (the ‘business-first approach’); much to the detriment of Bulgaria’s ‘hard security’ vis-à-vis Russia.

Our case studies duly illustrated marked differences in the policies of CEECs towards the EaP region, despite their shared commitment to full integration into the EU and transatlantic security and defence structures. Other

contribution to this special issue has highlighted the relevance of CEECs ‘uploading’ their national interests to the EU level. It is therefore of paramount importance to move beyond historical and broader IR approaches, which tend to treat CEE as a homogenous region. By examining the different responses of Romania and Bulgaria through the lenses of realist and pluralist FPA approaches, our article aimed to introduce a more advanced ‘toolbox’ to encourage a more nuanced understanding of the differences and nuances in CEECs’ policies towards the post-Soviet space.

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Central and Eastern European perceptions of the Eurasian Economic Union

Between economic opportunities and fear
of renewed Russian hegemony

FABIENNE BOSSUYT¹

Abstract: This article aims to examine how the Central and Eastern European member states (CEECs) of the European Union (EU) perceive the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). In addition, it seeks to explore whether and to what extent these EU member states try to influence the EU's position on the EAEU and thus to what extent they try to project their views regarding the EAEU onto the EU level. In doing so, the article starts from the assumption that EU member states will seek to project or 'upload' certain national foreign policies objectives onto the EU level because of the possible 'amplifying' effect.

The article finds that perceptions of the EAEU among the CEECs vary significantly. Poland, Romania and the three Baltic countries are least supportive of the EAEU, and are very skeptical of Russia's political intentions behind the EAEU, which they view as a tool of Russian regional hegemony. Slovakia and the Czech Republic are skeptical of Russia's political intentions, but are interested in economic cooperation with the EAEU. Hungary and Bulgaria are most supportive of the EAEU and Hungary has even sought closer engagement with it. In explaining why the perceptions differ so strongly, the article points to a mix of historical and economic factors. The article also finds that the extent to which the CEECs seek to upload their views of the EAEU onto the EU level

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diverges. Poland, Lithuania and Hungary have been most vocal at the EU level and have actively sought to upload their views of the EAEU onto the EU level. Latvia, Estonia and Romania have been less vocal, but they have actively defended their views of the EAEU when initiatives at the EU level were launched by others that went against their positions on the EAEU. The Czech Republic, Slovakia and Bulgaria have been mostly passive and have tended to follow the consensus position reached at the EU. The article explains this divergence by referring to one particular condition that determines whether a EU member state will seek to upload its national foreign policy preferences onto the EU level, namely the perceived salience of a policy goal or issue.

Introduction

The establishment of the Eurasian Customs Union, and subsequently Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), has triggered a lot of academic interest, including in the implications for the European Union (EU) (Delcour and Wolczuk, 2013; Delcour et al., 2015; Della Sala, 2015; ICG, 2016). For many observers, the launch of the EAEU should be seen in light of Russia's current geopolitical aspirations, which include a reassertion of Russian hegemony in the countries that were under its control at the time of the Soviet Union (ICG, 2016; Kirkham, 2016; Trenin, 2011). Little is known, however, how the European countries that were part of the Soviet Union or Soviet bloc and are now members of the EU, perceive the EAEU. In exploring the perceptions and attitudes of these countries (Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia, Poland, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria)² towards the EAEU, this article examines not only how they perceive the EAEU but also to what extent they seek to project these views onto the EU level. In researching the latter question, the article starts from the assumption that EU member states will seek to project or 'upload' certain national foreign policy objectives onto the EU level because of the possible 'amplifying' effect (Bossuyt, 2017). Bottom-up Europeanization in the area of foreign policy may enable EU member states to pursue foreign policy objectives with regard to specific themes beyond those attainable with domestic capabilities (Baun and Marek, 2013, p.16; Keukeleire and Delreux, 2014, p.132; Hill and Wong, 2011, p.222).

² For reasons of convenience, these countries will be referred to in the remainder of the article as 'CEECs', although it should be pointed out that this term does not perfectly match the geographical scope of all the countries.

Methodologically, the article relies on a combination of document analysis and in-depth interviews. The document analysis draws on both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources include official statements of the EAEU and the CEECs. The secondary sources consist of a combination of academic publications, news articles and reports by think tanks and research institutes. In-depth interviews were conducted with EU officials and officials of the CEECs.³

The remainder of the article is structured as follows. Following this introduction, the CEECs' perceptions of the EAEU are outlined in detail. The next section analyses the extent to which the CEECs have sought to project their views on the EAEU onto the EU level. Next, the article offers some tentative explanations for the CEECs' diverging perceptions of the EAEU by pointing to a mix of historical and economic factors. The article then moves on to explain the diverging degree to which the CEECs seek to upload their views of the EAEU onto the EU level by making reference to one particular condition under which EU member states are likely to engage in uploading, namely the perceived salience of a policy goal or issue. The final section summarizes the main findings.

Central and Eastern European perceptions of the EAEU

Perceptions of the EAEU among the CEECs appear to vary significantly. Based on their perceptions, three groups of countries can be distinguished. The first group consists of Poland, Romania and the three Baltic countries. They are least supportive of the EAEU, and are very skeptical about Russia's political intentions behind the EAEU, which they view as a tool of Russian regional hegemony. The second group comprises Slovakia and the Czech Republic. They are skeptical about Russia's political intentions, but are interested in economic cooperation with the EAEU. The third group includes Hungary and Bulgaria. They are very supportive of the EAEU and Hungary actively seek closer engagement with it.

³ An overview of the interviews is provided at the end of the article.

Poland, Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia and Romania

This first group of countries shares the perception that the EAEU is mainly a geopolitical project. They view it above all as a political platform for economic integration, aimed at re-establishing Russia's position in the world as a major power (Interviews 1, 2, 6, 7, 8 and 9). Therefore, they are reluctant to lend support to it, as this would legitimize – what they see as – Russia's domination of the Eurasian region.

In their view, there are various signals⁴ indicating that the EAEU does not consistently promote rule-based integration and instead is being used by Russia as a foreign policy instrument serving its interests (Interviews 1, 2, 6 and 7; Sikorski, 2014). Their skepticism was further fuelled by their perception that the smaller member states, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan, were pressurized by Russia into joining the EAEU; they only joined based on a trade off with Russia, namely security guarantee and continuation of labour migration, respectively (Interviews 1, 2, 6 and 7). The trade benefits of membership of the EAEU for these two countries are very limited, and in an institutional setting dominated by Russia they have little say over the decisions made within the EAEU and are fully subject to the whims of Russia (Interviews 1, 2, 6 and 7). The asymmetry inherent within the EAEU is also noticeable for Kazakhstan and Belarus, which have expressed concerns about their subordinate role (Interview 1, 2 and 8).

In terms of their policy goals towards the EAEU, their position is that they should not formally recognize the EAEU, and they are firmly opposed to accepting any offers from both the EAEU and its member states to enter into formal relations with the EAEU (Interviews 1, 2, 6 and 7; EUBusiness, 2015; Rettman, 2015). A formal acceptance of the EAEU would be conditional on a number of issues. The main one is Russia's compliance with the Minsk agreements. It is clear that none of the countries is willing to lend legitimacy to the EAEU as long as Russia fails to implement the Minsk agreements. In addition, even in the (unlikely) case that Russia progresses in this regard, they would remain skeptical about entering into a formal relationship with the EAEU, in particular about the possibility of negotiating a EU-EAEU free trade agreement. Their skepticism is instigated by several factors, including the lack of transparency of the EAEU, the incomplete nature of the customs union

⁴ Examples include the restrictions imposed by Russia on the transit of goods from Ukraine to Kazakhstan (and other members of the EAEU) through Russia and the Russian ban on agricultural products from the EU.

and single market, the inconsistency in the implementation of the rules, and Russia's poor track record in terms of compliance with international trade rules, as well as its uncooperative attitude when negotiating trade issues with the EU (Interviews 1, 2, 6 and 7).

Despite their skepticism towards the EAEU, all five countries maintain strong bilateral economic ties with most of the EAEU member states and actively undertake export promotion activities, including in Russia (Interviews 1, 2, 5, 6 and 7). They frequently engage in bilateral business meetings aimed at boosting trade.⁵

Slovakia and the Czech Republic

The second group of countries is also skeptical of Russia's motives behind the EAEU and have doubts about the extent to which the EAEU will become a fully-functioning customs union and single market, but they are more supportive of the EAEU than the first group. Like the first group, Slovakia and the Czech Republic both view the EAEU mainly as a political project, aimed at recreating Russia's dominance in its neighbourhood (Interviews 3 and 4; Lajčák, 2014). They believe that the economic benefits of the EAEU for its member states are limited, and they are cautious about the possible economic success of the EAEU.

Nevertheless, they do not rule out closer engagement with the EAEU. The formal position of the Czech and Slovak governments is 'to wait and see'; as long as the EU imposes sanctions on Russia and the situation in Ukraine does not improve, they will not engage in a formal relationship with the EAEU. But if those circumstances change, they might consider closer cooperation with the EAEU, although they would still remain cautious given their doubts about the possible economic success of the EAEU (Interviews 3 and 4). In particular, the trade ministries, along with business organizations, are interested in closer engagement with the EAEU.⁶ Like the countries of the first group, Slovakia

⁵ For Poland, see e.g. <https://www.cci.by/en/content/18th-good-neighborliness-belarus-%E2%80%93-poland-economic-forum>; <http://buda-koshelevo.gomel-region.by/en/republic-en/view/poland-considers-belarus-as-strategic-partner-in-transport-logistics-13113/>; http://www.paih.gov.pl/20160823/Poland_Kazakhstan_potential_of_cooperation_is_enormous#; <http://www.president.pl/en/news/art,237,presidents-duda-and-nazarbayev-for-development-of-economic-relations.html>; <https://armenpress.am/eng/news/890819/armenia-presents-new-attractiveness-to-polish-investors-ambassador-edgar-ghaz-aryan%E2%80%93interview.html>.

⁶ For instance, in 2016, a group of Slovak business representatives had a meeting with officials from the Eurasian Economic Commission at the headquarters in Moscow, where they expressed an interest in cooperation with the EAEU (Eurasian Economic Commission, 2016a).

and the Czech Republic maintain strong economic relations with most of the EAEU member states and are seeking to expand their trade relations with them (Interviews 3 and 4).⁷

Hungary and Bulgaria

The third group of countries is most supportive of the EAEU. Hungary, in particular, has openly expressed its support of the EAEU and has actively sought to enter into a formal engagement with it. Bulgaria's support is more ambiguous and cautious: while the government supports the EAEU, it is more reluctant to establish a formal relationship with the EAEU.

On numerous occasions, the Hungarian government has shown itself to be supportive of the EAEU and has called for closer interaction with the EAEU (Hungarian government, 2015a, 2015b, 2015c, 2015d, 2015e, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c). This culminated in 2016 with the conclusion of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC) and Hungary's Ministry of Rural Development (Eurasian Economic Commission, 2016b). The memorandum "defines the main directions and forms of interaction between the EEC and the Hungarian Ministry of agriculture to increase trade turnover between the countries of the EAEU and Hungary, eliminate barriers in trade, ensure food, veterinary and phytosanitary safety, technical and scientific cooperation and technological development in AIC branches" (Eurasian Economic Commission, 2016b).

Bulgaria is supportive of the EAEU, but compared to Hungary it is less eager to launch a formal relationship with the EAEU at this stage. While there have been bilateral contacts between Bulgaria and the EEC (Eurasian Economic Commission, 2013), and Russia has offered Bulgaria the prospect of closer cooperation with the EAEU (see e.g. TASS, 2014), for the time being, Bulgaria is reluctant to engage more closely with the EAEU (Interview 10). Bulgaria thinks that it is too early to enter into formal cooperation with the EAEU: it sees the EAEU as a very young organization and wants to wait and see how it will further evolve (Interview 10). Interestingly, public support in Bulgaria for the EAEU is quite strong. In an opinion poll in 2014 conducted by Alpha Research, 22 per cent of the respondents indicated that they would like their country to join the EAEU (Euractiv, 2014).

⁷ For Slovakia, see e.g. <http://eng.belta.by/politics/view/andreichenko-belarus-ready-to-be-a-gateway-for-slovakia-to-urasian-economic-union-91092-2016/>.

Uploading through the EU

The article now moves on to examine to what extent the CEECs seeks to project their views of the EAEU onto the EU level. In doing so, it starts from the assumption that EU member states will seek to project or ‘upload’ certain national foreign policy objectives onto the EU level because of the possible ‘amplifying’ effect (Bossuyt, 2017). Bottom-up Europeanization in the area of foreign policy may enable “member states to pursue and even expand foreign policy objectives (in specific regions or with regard to specific themes) beyond those attainable with domestic capabilities” (Keukeleire and Delreux, 2014, p.132). If a state successfully manages to upload a national foreign policy goal onto the EU level, it can rely on budgetary, diplomatic and economic support from the EU institutions and other member states, which allows this national foreign policy goal to be pursued more intensively and with a higher potential impact (Keukeleire and Delreux 2014, p.132; also see Hill and Wong, 2011, p.222).

While it is generally acknowledged that EU foreign policy is highly subject to the interests of the large member states (in particular, Germany, France and the UK), smaller member states can also leave their mark on the EU’s foreign policy and succeed in projecting their interests onto the EU level (Wong and Hill, 2011, p.7; Nasra, 2011; Denca, 2009; Denca, 2013; Pastore, 2013). EU membership allows them to pursue a more ambitious national foreign policy, backed by the EU’s political and economic weight and international standing (Denca, 2009; Popescu, 2010). Smaller member states also benefit strongly from the increased access to information and resources, which hugely exceed their own capabilities (Denca, 2009, p.402). As such, new member states, and in particular the smaller countries, tend to perceive EU membership and integration in the field of foreign policy as carrying more benefits than losses.

Based on how active they have been at the EU level on issues concerning the EAEU, again three groups of countries can be distinguished. The first group consists of Poland, Lithuania and Hungary. They have been most vocal at the EU level and have actively sought to upload their views of the EAEU onto the EU level. The second group comprises Latvia, Estonia and Romania. They have been less vocal than the first group but they have actively defended their policy goals towards the EAEU when initiatives at the EU level were launched by others that went against their positions on the EAEU. The third group includes the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Bulgaria. They have been

mostly passive and have tended to follow the consensus position reached at the EU. The official position of the EU regarding the EAEU was established in 2012 when preparing for the bi-annual EU-Russia summit. This position was for the last time revised ahead of the last EU-Russia summit in 2013. The position is that technical contacts can be made between the European Commission (DG Enterprise and DG Trade) with the EAEU when and where it is needed for EU business (Interviews 1, 2, 5 and 8). In light of the ongoing conflict in Ukraine and the EU sanctions imposed on Russia, it was decided that no formal contacts should be established with the EAEU as long as Russia's commitments under the Minsk agreements are not fulfilled.

Poland, Lithuania and Hungary

The first group of countries has been most active at the EU level. While Poland and Lithuania have been pivotal in resisting any attempts to establish a formal relationship between the EU and the EAEU, Hungary has actively sought to get the EU to enter into a formal relationship with the EAEU. Poland and Lithuania both vehemently want to preserve the current status quo in EU-EAEU contacts, which are limited to technical meetings. The most illustrative example of Poland and Lithuania's uploading attempts is their response to the letter that Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker sent to Russian President Vladimir Putin in 2015, in which he suggested building closer ties between the EU and the EAEU once a ceasefire is implemented in Ukraine. Both Poland and Lithuania reacted furiously to Juncker's letter and actively sought support among their allies in the EU to ensure that the letter would not be followed up (Interview 2; Euractiv, 2015; Rettman, 2015). By contrast, Hungary is very keen to upgrade the ties between the EU and EAEU and has actively sought to pave the way for a formal relationship between them (Interviews 2, 8 and 11; Hungarian government 2015a, 2015b, 2015c, 2015e, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c)

Latvia, Estonia and Romania

The second group of countries has been less vocal, but they have been quick to defend their interests when attempts were made to get the EU closer to the EAEU. Latvia, Estonia and Romania each are keen to preserve the status quo and have rejected initiatives from other member states, not least Hungary, and

Commission President Juncker to cooperate formally with the EAEU (Interviews 1 and 2). They each uphold the position that no rapprochement between the EU and the EAEU should be made as long as Russia does not live up to its commitments under the Minsk agreements. Moreover, given their overall skepticism towards the EAEU, not least Russia's motives behind it (see above), it is unlikely that they will accept the EU to enter into a formal relationship with the EAEU even if the Ukraine crisis is resolved.

Czech Republic, Slovakia and Bulgaria

The third group of countries has been mostly passive, in that they have not actively sought to upload their preferences concerning the EAEU onto the EU. The Czech Republic and Slovakia align themselves with the general EU position, which means that they do not seek any closer engagement with the EAEU as long as Russia does not fulfill its commitment under the Minsk agreements (Interviews 3 and 4). Bulgaria has taken a neutral position at the EU level, and is not taking any action on the EAEA as long as the European Commission does not come with a proposal to change the EU's position (Interview 10). Given its relatively positive perception of the EAEU, Bulgaria is likely to endorse proposals from the European Commission for closer engagement with the EAEU (Interviews 10 and 12). In contrast to their counterparts from most other CEECs, some Bulgarian diplomats are of the opinion that "EU-EAEU economic cooperation could be an important vehicle for de-escalation of tension [between the EU and Russia], moving the focus from confrontation to a search for pragmatic relations" (Interview 12). However, Bulgaria is not actively promoting this view at the EU level (Interview 10).

Explaining divergence

How can we explain not only the CEECs' diverging perceptions of the EAEU, but also the diverging degrees to which they seek to upload their preferences onto the EU? Let us first turn to the question how we can explain why the CEECs' perceptions of the EAEU diverge.

Explaining CEECs' diverging perceptions of the EAEU

Foreign policy-making in the European capitals is still informed by demands of national decision-makers to follow sovereign imperatives in as many areas as possible, both procedurally and in terms of substance. In this perspective, national foreign policy is thus the result of a reconciliation of sovereign imperatives, which 'explain the enduring pragmatism and even obstructivism that characterizes many member states' foreign policy' (Hadfield et al., 2017).

Moreover, as the EU's legal competence in the area of foreign policy is still low, EU member states continue to conduct foreign policy issues in parallel to, separately from, or even in opposition to the EU. Based on this conceptualization, member states' foreign policy should thus be observed across the interface of forces of Europeanization and national imperatives (Hadfield et al., 2017). The extent to which national sovereign imperatives operate in foreign policy is different in all 28 member states and varies on a policy by policy basis (Hadfield et al., 2017).

National preferences and interests of EU member states are shaped by a broad range of factors, including (perceived) size, geography, economy, historical experience, domestic politics, institutional settings – such as coordination of EU policy-making –, external alliances, international developments and perceived national vulnerabilities and weaknesses (Copsey and Haughton, 2009; Bilčík, 2010; Wong and Hill, 2011). As Wong and Hill (2011, p.3) point out, national preferences and interests also 'reflect a country's sense of national identity, including its basic values and perceptions of what it stands for in the world'. In the case of the CEECs, national preferences and interests in the area of foreign policy are strongly influenced by the experience of and the security and economic dependencies from the communist and Soviet era, as well as by the political geography of the countries' historical statehood (Bilčík 2010, p.142; Copsey and Haughton, 2009; Vilpišauskas, 2011).

In explaining why CEECs' perceptions of the EAEU diverge, these factors thus need to be taken into account. In fact, the divergence of their perceptions is not surprising given the variation that the CEECs display on a number of these preference-shaping factors, including history, geography and economy, and in particular their historical relationship with Russia, their geographical location (border or no border with Russia) and their energy dependence on Russia. Therefore, it is not a coincidence that how they perceive the EAEU appears to be largely in line with their broader attitudes towards Russia. The

range of attitudes towards Russia among the CEECs varies from friendly (Hungary and Bulgaria) to pragmatic (Slovakia and the Czech Republic) and openly frosty (Poland, the Baltic states and Romania). A case in point is the sanctions imposed on Russia over the Ukraine crisis, an issue on which more or less the same groups of countries can be distinguished: the third group firmly opposes lifting the sanctions, the first group most vocally supports lifting the sanctions and the second group takes a more pragmatic position (Interviews 8 and 9; ECFR, 2015; ECFR, 2016).⁸

As states of the Soviet bloc, Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria were ideologically, economically and militarily allied with the USSR, as institutionalized, *inter alia*, through their membership of COMECON and the Warsaw Pact. However, their relationship with the USSR was highly asymmetrical and the Soviet regime sought to keep these satellite states under tight control. This was done on the one hand by keeping the 'fraternity parties' and their leaders in the CEECs dependent on the USSR and its Communist Party (CPSU) for their survival, and on the other hand by threatening to intervene militarily in case any opposition to local communist rule erupted (Jones, 1980). Throughout much of the Soviet era, the USSR wanted the communist parties in the CEECs to have the appearance of autonomy but not the reality (Jones, 1980, pp.562-4).

However, relations with the Soviet Union/Russia differed to a significant extent. The CEECs were not equally supportive of the USSR and its communist party, as evidenced by the conflicts between the Soviet regime and various communist parties in Central and Eastern Europe (Jones, 1980). Poland and Romania maintained a troubled relationship with Russia/Soviet Union. Romania held arguably the most dissident position among the CEECs (Jones, 1980, p.568). In Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, reformist factions in the communist parties tried to get more autonomy from the USSR after the economies of their countries started stagnating. In contrast, Bulgaria, as the most faithful ally of the USSR within the COMECON system of states, never challenged Soviet ideology and supremacy (Bozhilova, 2013, p.190).

As Soviet republics, the three Baltic states were under full control of the Soviet Union. However, by being reluctant from the beginning, they managed to obtain some degree of autonomy. Not surprisingly, the Baltic countries were among the first to declare independence from the USSR.

⁸ It should be noted that Slovakia openly opposed the sanctions (ECFR, 2015).

This differentiation continued after the fall of communism and the break-up of the Soviet Union, with most of the CEECs publicly announcing their membership aspirations of the EU and NATO, thereby seeking ‘a return to Europe’ away from their communist and Soviet past. During the 1990s and early 2000s, the foreign policies of most CEECs shared a deep antagonism towards Russia that translated both in their discourse and in the economic bilateral cooperation of these countries with Russia. The countries perceived EU membership as an escape from the Russian sphere of influence and a guarantee of their security (Więclawski, 2011). Only Bulgaria, which traditionally had closer relations with Russia/USSR, did not break its ties with Russia and maintained a constructive relationship.

The CEECs’ hostile relations with Russia in the 1990s gave way to a more favourable engagement from about the mid-2000s on the basis of reciprocal pragmatic relations (Freire, 2012, p.136). Hungary and Slovakia, in particular, developed much more friendly attitudes towards Russia.

In what follows, the divergence in perceptions of the EAEU among the CEECs will be explained by indicating how the preference-shaping factors, and in particular those determining their relationship with and attitude towards Russia, play out differently for each group of countries identified above.

Poland, the Baltic countries and Romania

Poland and the Baltic countries’ skepticism about Russia’s motives behind the EAEU can easily be linked to their fears of Russia’s return to imperial foreign policy. These fears are a reflection of their historical experience during the Soviet era and to some extent also during the period of tsarist Russia’s domination over the region (Więclawski, 2011).

Compared to the other Central European member states of the EU (namely Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic), Poland’s relationship with Russia is considered to be of a different nature and ‘verges on the obsessional’ (Dangerfield, 2012, p.970; Pomorska, 2017, p.53). The fundamental differences in security policy together with deep mistrust towards the Russian government among Polish society suggest that Poland is likely to continue to have a confrontational stance towards Russia (Buras and Balcer, 2016). Despite being highly dependent on Russian gas (see Figure 1), the same applies to the Baltic states. Given their history of Soviet occupation and continuing existential concern about national sovereignty (Haukkala et al., 2017, p.27),

they are very eager to help defend the sovereignty of the CIS countries, which explains why they are of the opinion that the sovereignty of the EAEU members is under threat in light of Russia's dominance of the EAEU and that Armenia and Kyrgyzstan did not willingly join the EAEU and were instead pressurized by Russia.

Also Romania tends to be critical of Russia's actions in the post-Soviet space. Romania, for instance, has been an outspoken critic of Russia's involvement in Moldovan domestic affairs and of its use of energy prices to manipulate the domestic agenda of other countries. More generally, Romania maintains an unfriendly attitude towards Russia, which reflects a broader distrust among the Romanian public sphere towards Russia (Micu, 2010). Like in the case of Poland and the Baltic countries, this is rooted in a historical legacy of subordination to Russia (Micu, 2013).

Czech Republic and Slovakia

Compared to the first group of countries, the Czech Republic and Slovakia have been building more cooperative relations with Russia in the past two decades (Freire, 2012, pp.135-6; Pomorska, 2017, p.54). This is partly because of their energy dependence on Russia (see Figure 1) and their interest in expanding economic relations (Freire, 2012, p.137; Dangerfield, 2013), but also because anti-Russian views are not as widespread among the public spheres of these two countries as in those other countries.

Slovakia wants to keep close relations with Russia and avoid open confrontation. Hence, it adopts a pragmatic stance on Russia and has a friendly attitude towards Russia. This explains why it firmly opposed EU sanctions on Russia (ECFR, 2015). In the Czech Republic, much more than in Slovakia, the image of the conventional threat from Russia persists among diplomats and politicians (Dangerfield, 2013, p.175) and there remains an anxiety about Russia's neo-imperial ambitions (Koran, 2013, p.57). But these perceptions do not have a decisive influence on bilateral relations with Russia, which instead appear to be more determined by energy and economic interests. Consequently, the Czech Republic adopts an ambiguous and somewhat neutral stance on Russia. This explains that despite being skeptical about Russia's motives behind the EAEU, it has a relatively pragmatic stance on the EAEU in the sense that it follows the EU's position but does not rule out possible cooperation with the EAEU, especially if this may benefit economic interests.

Hungary and Bulgaria

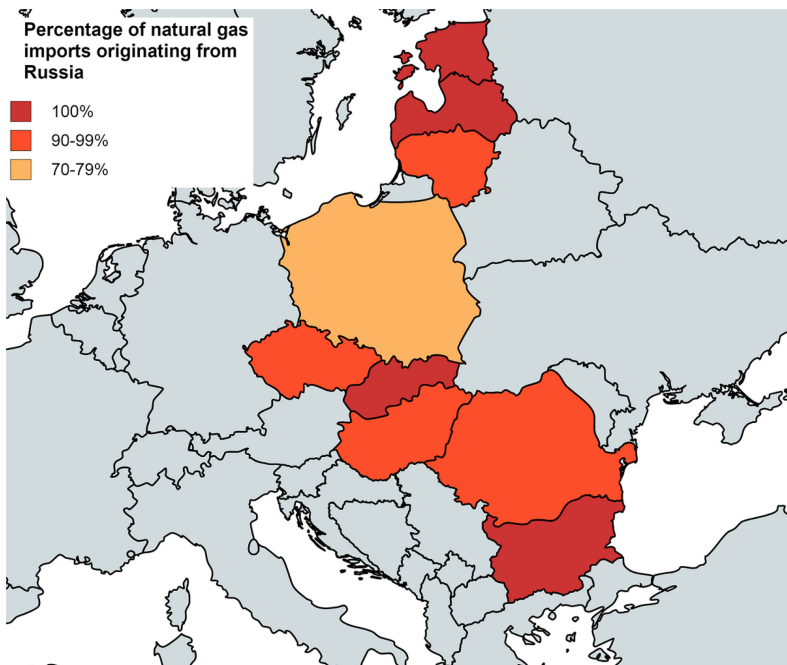
The third group of countries has the most cooperative and supportive attitude towards Russia. Both Hungary and Bulgaria will seek to avoid confrontation with Russia and focus instead on deepening trade and energy cooperation (Dangerfield, 2013; Bozhilova, 2013). For Hungary, this supportive attitude is relatively recent. The Soviet occupation of Hungary in 1956 firmly cooled off relations with Russia, and it is only from 2002 onwards that Hungary has sought closer cooperation with Russia. Since Viktor Orbán started his second term as a prime minister in 2010, relations have become friendlier than ever (Dangerfield, 2013). The recent rapprochement to Russia is driven by two factors. The first factor is Hungary's energy dependence on Russia, along with the fact that the Hungarian government wants to strengthen – rather than decrease – its cooperation with Russia in this field. The second factor relates to the anti-western course that the Fidesz government is following and its shift towards a more autocratic model of government. The rapprochement to Russia should therefore be seen as a way for the Hungarian government to seek endorsement among a like-minded state for its anti-western rhetoric and its autocratic model of government.

Bulgaria's support for Russia goes back a long way and is rooted in the Russian intervention that led to Bulgaria's autonomy from the Ottoman Empire (Bozhilova, 2013; Ralchev, 2015). Bulgarians also feel ethnically, linguistically and culturally related to the Russians. This partly explains why a significant number of respondents that participated in the opinion poll on the EAEU indicated they wanted their country to join the EAEU. As mentioned above, Bulgaria was the closest ally of the Soviet Union in the COMECON system of states. Today, Bulgaria's supportive attitude towards Russia can also be linked to its strong economic and energy dependence on Russia, which is the highest among all the CEECs. To begin with, Bulgaria relies almost entirely on Russia for its energy supplies. It is fully dependent on Russia for its gas supplies (see Figure 1), but it also has a strong dependence on Russia for oil and nuclear energy (Ralchev, 2015, p.131; Bozhilova, 2013, p.189, p.192). Most of Bulgaria's military equipment is Russian-made and the majority of tourists coming to Bulgaria's Black Sea coast are Russian (Ralchev, 2015, p.131). Moreover, Russian influence is also manifested through "informal business ties connecting powerful circles" and "infiltration of the institutions via corruption of decision-makers and public officials for the sake of business interests" (Ralchev, 2015, p.140).

This strong Russian influence on Bulgaria obviously translates into a supportive attitude towards Russia, but at the same time Bulgaria is also a reliable western partner and is keen to follow the official lines of the EU, even if they may go against Russia's interests (Ralchev, 2015). This explains why Bulgaria despite having a positive stance on the EAEU prefers not to enter into closer cooperation with the EAEU as long as the EU does not agree to do this.

By contrast, in line with its more confrontational attitude towards the EU, the Hungarian government does not shy away from openly defending Russian interests at the EU and going against the official line of the EU. This explains why Hungary has shown itself so supportive of the EAEU and entered into formal cooperation with the EAEU despite the EU's official position of non-engagement. This is to some extent surprising considering that Hungary's dependence on Russia is in fact less strong than that of Bulgaria. Therefore, much more than is the case for Bulgaria, Hungary's positive perception of the EAEU is politically motivated, in the sense that it is tied to the anti-western course taken by the current government and is likely to change if another government comes to power (Interview II).

Figure 1: CEECs' dependence on Russian gas



Source: Map developed by author based on data from Eurostat, 'Imports (by country of origin)-gas-annual data' (nrg_124a), available at <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data> [accessed 3 November 2016]

Explaining divergence in uploading

How can we explain the divergence in the extent to which the CEECs have been projecting their views regarding the EAEU onto the EU level? Based on insights from the literature on Europeanization of national foreign policy, a number of conditions can be identified under which EU member states are likely to attempt to project national foreign policy preferences onto the EU level (Bossuyt, 2017). One of those conditions appears helpful here to explain the diverging uploading pattern observed above, namely the perceived importance of a policy goal or issue. EU member states will normally only try to project national preferences onto the EU when these concern issues that they consider very important (Baun and Marek, 2013, p.213, p.218). In other words, if an issue is not considered a policy priority, they will not invest significant effort in trying to influence the EU on that matter. The factors determining the (perceived) importance of a policy issue are of course closely linked to the preference-shaping factors mentioned above.

The analysis has shown that Poland, Lithuania and Hungary have been most active at the EU level and have undertaken most attempts to project their views of the EAEU onto the EU level. Latvia, Estonia and Romania have been less vocal, but they have actively defended their views of the EAEU when initiatives at the EU level were launched by others that went against their positions on the EAEU. The Czech Republic, Slovakia and Bulgaria have been mostly passive and have tended to follow the consensus position reached at the EU.

As we have seen above, for Poland, the relationship with Russia verges on the obsessional. Therefore, ever since joining the EU, Poland has been quite active at the EU level to defend its interests and positions relating to Russia (Pomorska, 2017). Hence, it is no surprise that Poland has been actively uploading its position regarding the EAEU onto the EU level. Also for the Baltic states, Russia remains a priority topic. However, of the three countries, only Lithuania has sought to be among the lead EU member states on Russia (Haukkala et al., 2017, pp.33-34). Whereas Estonia and Latvia see themselves more as support states in EU foreign policy, Lithuania tends to more outspoken and self-assured (Interview 2; Haukkala et al., 2017, pp.33-34). This is in line with the finding that Lithuania has been more actively uploading its views of the EAEU at the EU level than Estonia and Latvia. For Hungary, ensuring closer cooperation with Russia constitutes a top priority, arguably more so than

for Bulgaria, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, which would explain why Hungary has been more actively projecting its views of the EAEU onto the EU level. However, the more passive attitude of Bulgaria, Czech Republic and Slovakia can also be explained by the observation that they tend to support states in EU foreign policy and are keen to follow the consensus position rather than seeking confrontation.

Conclusion

This article explored how the European countries that were part of the Soviet Union or Soviet bloc and are now members of the EU, perceive the EAEU. In addition, it examined whether and to what extent these EU member states try to influence the EU's position on the EAEU and thus to what extent they try to project their views regarding the EAEU onto the EU level. In doing so, the article started from the assumption that EU member states will seek to project or 'upload' certain national foreign policy objectives onto the EU level because of the possible 'amplifying' effect. Bottom-up Europeanization in the area of foreign policy may enable EU member states to pursue foreign policy objectives with regard to specific themes beyond those attainable with domestic capabilities.

The article found that perceptions of the EAEU among the CEECs vary significantly. Poland, Romania and the three Baltic countries are least supportive of the EAEU, and are very skeptical of Russia's political intentions behind the EAEU, which they view as a tool of Russian regional hegemony. Slovakia and the Czech Republic are skeptical of Russia's political intentions, but are interested in economic cooperation with the EAEU. Hungary and Bulgaria are most supportive of the EAEU, and Hungary has even sought closer engagement with it. In explaining why the perceptions differ so strongly, it was argued that the divergence of their perceptions is not surprising given the variation that the CEECs display on a number of preference-shaping factors, including history, geography and economy, and in particular their historical relationship with Russia and their energy dependence on Russia. This becomes even clearer when considering that how they perceive the EAEU is largely in line with their broader attitudes towards Russia.

The article also found that the extent to which the CEECs seek to upload their views of the EAEU onto the EU level diverges. Poland, Lithuania and Hungary have been most vocal at the EU level and have actively sought to

upload their views of the EAEU onto the EU level. Latvia, Estonia and Romania have been less vocal, but they have actively defended their views of the EAEU when initiatives at the EU level were launched by others that went against their positions on the EAEU. The Czech Republic, Slovakia and Bulgaria have been mostly passive and have tended to follow the consensus position reached at the EU. The article explained this divergence by referring to one particular condition (drawn from the literature) that determines whether a EU member state will seek to upload its national foreign policy preferences onto the EU level, namely the perceived salience of a policy goal or issue.

Interviews

Interview 1, Estonian officials, 25 May 2016

Interview 2, Latvian official, 27 May 2016

Interview 3, Czech official, 30 May 2016

Interview 4, Slovak official, 22 June 2016

Interview 5, EU official based at the EU Delegation to Russia, 5 July 2016

Interview 6, Lithuanian official, 7 July 2016

Interview 7, Lithuanian MEP, 7 November 2016

Interview 8, DG Trade officials, 21 November 2016

Interview 9, EEAS officials, 25 November 2016

Interview 10, Bulgarian official, 20 July 2017

Interview 11, Hungarian official, 25 July 2017

Interview 12, Bulgarian official, 8 August 2017

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Central and Eastern European countries shaping the EU's border policy towards the post-Soviet space

Case study: Kaliningrad

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Abstract: The European Union (EU)'s enlargements of 2004 and 2007 signified a project without precedent, the expansion to the East being a manifestation of the EU's foreign policy. After gaining full membership, the new Central and Eastern European EU members also tried to shape the Union's foreign policy, seeking to implement their preferences in the setting of the external policy making agenda of the Union. The aim of this article is to decipher the role of two of these "small" countries in shaping the EU's border policy towards the post-Soviet space: the study analyses the role of Poland and Lithuania in shaping the Union's border policy towards Kaliningrad, indirectly disclosing the EU-Russia relations. Special attention is paid to the current European regulation on a visa-free travel zone. This case study helps us not only to become familiar with the influence of the Central and Eastern European EU members on the EU's border policy towards the post-Soviet space, but also reveals both the "hard" and "soft" practices used by the Union, trying to appease its exclusionary model of border practice with the need to establish an inclusionary approach based on cooperation with those residing outside the community borders.

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Introduction

When in 1950 the European Coal and Steel Community was established, gathering six countries from Western Europe, no one would have guessed that it will outgrow itself and will expand to 28 members till 2017. What started as a confined project of economic nature has turned into a successful integration, covering most of western, central and central-eastern Europe. It must be ascertained that besides positive effects, such as extending the European Union (EU) with other member states, giving them the opportunity to benefit from all the advantages deriving from their newly earned membership status, it also provoked some negative waves in the close neighbourhood among those countries who were left outside. For countries which have been granted permission to become future members of the European colossus, this was a great opportunity, while for others the fallen Iron Curtain had turned into a *lace curtain* (DeBardeleben, 2005), being banned from taking part in the circle of welfare.

The enlargements of 2004 and 2007 seriously tested the Union's assimilation capacity, also leading to the "enlargement dilemma". This refers to the management of relations with the neighbouring countries. How to involve the neighbouring states in the integration process without offering them the possibility of a future membership; how to mitigate the negative effects of the enlargement on the countries left out? In order to create a "ring of friends" the EU has developed the European Neighbourhood Policy, a geography-based foreign policy tool offering privileged conditions to the states surrounding the European Community (Casier, 2008).

This article targets the analysis of a rather under-researched topic, namely the role played by two Central and Eastern European member states, Lithuania² and Poland during the EU's negotiations with Russia concerning the Kaliningrad transit. Throughout the research we will highlight the involvement in the negotiations concerning the Kaliningrad transit of Lithuania and of Poland in the pre-, respectively post-accession period, emphasizing that both countries were actually still candidate countries during a substantial part of the negotiation process. We will see how the existence of this *geographical anomaly* called Kaliningrad enabled a small country as Lithuania to come out of the dark and transform itself into an indispensable player on the EU-Russia chess board. Lithuania acknowledged in time the prospect which lies in the Kalinin-

² More attention will be paid to Lithuania because the transit issues directly involve its territory, unlike in the case of Poland.

grad issue, a card which can be used in order to increase its influence amongst its fellow member states and to impose its opinion on the decision-makers in Brussels. On the other hand, we will see the subtle and self-directed rather ambiguous policy of Poland, which sometimes put its own economic interests ahead of the European ones, sometimes opposing the position of the Lithuanian leadership, even putting forward mutual plans with Russia concerning the Kaliningrad transit if it feels this serves its interests.

The study also aims to reveal whether Central and Eastern European EU member states such as Poland and Lithuania have the power to influence the EU's governance and policies and if they do, to what extent and how their involvement in EU policies towards the post-Soviet space empowers or strains these policies in terms of effectiveness. When talking about a "small state" we do not refer to a country's geographical or demographical features, but to its political, military and economic position occupied in a given region/or in the international arena. A brief synthesis of the academic literature on small state influence on EU decision-making shall be presented, and we will explain why Poland and Lithuania can be considered small states.

In researching the negotiations on the Kaliningrad transit, the EU's inclusionary and exclusionary securitization measures will be unfolded. Inclusionary securitization measures consist in facilitating access to the territory of EU member states via more open visa policy, better border infrastructure, more professional staff in the border crossing points, operational coordination and information exchange with foreign partners, special treatment of certain categories of third-country citizens (visa facilitation policy, local border traffic), bilateral agreements, and instruments of the ENP. Exclusionary securitisation involves various tasks performed by border guards, including checks on border crossing points, monitoring of borders, prevention and countering cross-border organized crime, illegal migration, use of forged or false documents, erection of walls, fences, and a heavy visa regime (Mészáros, 2015).

The paradoxes of EU and Schengen enlargement

Concerning the enlargement process of the EU, two dichotomies can be observed: the EU dilemma/dichotomy and the "we/others" or "insider/outsider dichotomy". The EU dichotomy means that with the integration process the internal borders between the EU member states were lifted, allowing the free movement of people, capital, services and goods, the external borders of the

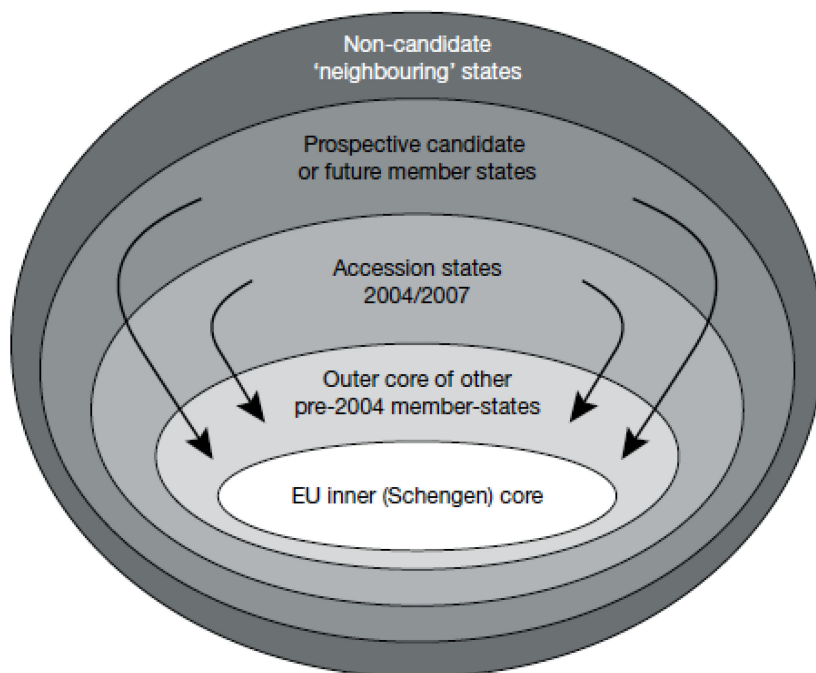
Union had to be strengthened as a measure of compensation. As a consequence, the external borders of the Union became heavily secured, putting obstacles between the EU and third countries. Security/securityization materializes as a prerequisite for the establishment and expansion of freedom in a given community, even though security is inherently subjective and can never fully. In turn, security aliments more security and the process of searching security can continue indefinitely. This phenomenon is portrayed as hyper-securitization and can lead to the transformation of policies into exclusionary and repressive practices intended to isolate the Union of real or perceived potential threats coming from its vicinity (Zaiotti, 2011).

Every acceding country has to incorporate the Schengen *acquis* into its legislation,³ meaning that once becoming members of the EU and of Schengen they had to secure their borders and to impose visa obligations on their non-Schengen neighbouring countries. In many cases, these neighbouring countries' citizens could previously travel on their territory without many formalities or restrictions. For example, with its accession to the EU, Poland had to ask visas from its Ukrainian neighbour, visa obligations were also imposed on the citizens of Kaliningrad and on third country nationals from the Republic of Moldova. These obligations and restrictions had serious consequences on the surrounding countries, reducing the frequency of border crossings and hindering the unofficial border trade, which previously generated trade surplus (Casier, 2008).

Regarding the second dichotomy, in the construction of the idea of a united Europe or a common European identity the concepts of *we/others* play a very important role, the notion of Europe (EU) being inherently exclusionary (Lavenex, 2005). There is no inclusion without exclusion, (Neumann, 1999) which brings us to the *insider/outsider* paradox, referring to the negative effects of the enlargement process on those countries which have remained outside. As the EU grows larger, the surrounding countries are trapped in its zone of influence, they need visas if they want to travel to the EU, and the conduct of trade relations is also affected (Casier, 2008). Departing from this inside/outside paradox, the EU and the Schengen regime can be portrayed as concentric circles:

³ UK and Ireland opted out.

Figure 1. EU and the Schengen regime as concentric circles



Source: Busch and Kryzanowski, 2007

At a closer look, this figure is very similar to Wallerstein's core-periphery model from the world systems theory, depicting the distribution of privileges and the benefits of the European integration process. At the nucleus, or inner circle are situated those member states who fully comply with the Schengen arrangements, the surrounding layer comprises the pre-2004 member states which are not fully participating in the Schengen scheme. As we go further, the next circle gathers all the new member states which acceded in 2004, 2007 and 2013, and must implement the Schengen Regulation in a given timeframe in their national legislation, as it was a precondition of their accession to the European Union. At the inner periphery, we find the prospective candidate countries enticed with the promise of accession, while the outer layer is reserved for those states whose accession is not foreseen, but who are involved in joint agreements concerning border and migration control meant to limit migration and to prevent illegal border crossings. Based on the *carrot and stick* approach, the treatment of countries from the outer periphery is based on the principle of conditionality (Busch et al., 2007).

The EU-Kaliningrad relationship

Following the Treaty of Potsdam, after 700 years of existence as a Prussian territory, Königsberg came under the jurisdiction of the Soviet Union, and its name was changed to Kaliningrad in 1946. After the occupation, the whole native population of German origin was deported or chose exile, their place being taken by a mixed Soviet population, made up of Russians, Ukrainians and Byelorussians. Later, the city of Kaliningrad has gradually become a closed military zone of the Soviet Union, with military affairs dominating the region for several decades (Stanley and Kappe, 1999; Vitunic, no year). Until 1991, Kaliningrad was a completely isolated area from the states outside the USSR, barely opening its doors after 1991. After this date only two border crossings were opened: at Bagrationowsk and at Mamonowo. A third crossing point, at Goldap, operated exclusively for local residents (Stanley and Kappe, 1999).

Kaliningrad has a special place in the context of relations and cooperation between Russia and the EU. Because of its unique geopolitical position, after the enlargement of 2004 the Russian enclave was faced with a huge challenge: the conditions determining the socio-economic development of the region are regulated by the Russian and European legal proceedings. These proceedings and actions primarily affect vital areas such as the transit of persons and goods, ecology, fisheries and energy sources (Ignatiev and Shopin, 2007).

The relationship between Kaliningrad and the European Economic Community/EU started after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, when the region opened its doors to the West. From 1991 onwards, the small Russian enclave benefited from financial instruments and funds from the TACIS and PHARE programmes. In the first half of 1993, the Delegation for relations with the Republics of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) of the European Parliament developed the Hoff-Timmermann report on the Kaliningrad issue. According to Krickus, "the Russian authorities did not have a clear picture of what changes in Kaliningrad's internal structure needed to be made to improve its economy. Nor were they sure about Kaliningrad's relations with neighbouring states" (Krickus, 2002: 112).

Despite a fairly successful cooperation between Moscow and Brussels in the context of preventing the oblast to become a source of instability at the Eastern border of the EU, certain barriers to cooperation have also been identified. One of these barriers emerged after the opposition of Russia to give Kaliningrad a

special economic status, when it was clear that the Russian enclave needed a comprehensive development plan to address economic difficulties and to build a democratic society (Topalova, 2003). The Hoff-Timmermann report favoured the introduction of the TACIS program in the Kaliningrad region, the oblast being declared a priority region for TACIS support by the European Parliament. Meanwhile the PHARE programme was implemented in the neighbouring regions (Krickus, 2002). Reflecting the concerns for the evolution of relations with Russia, the European Commission issued an interim report in 1995, beginning to examine the impacts of future EU enlargement (with new countries such as Poland and Lithuania) on Kaliningrad.

Topalova has identified three possible positions of the Union towards the Kaliningrad problem: economic isolation, indifference, or integration of the region in the EU. In the first scenario, the EU could isolate the region economically, stressing that the issue of the enclave was an exclusive domestic matter of Russia; under the second scenario the European colossus could treat the oblast with indifference, recognizing the Kaliningrad problem, but without conferring any financial assistance or programmes as TACIS or PHARE; the third option was the adoption of an integration policy of Kaliningrad into the EU's economic vein. In this context, the European Commission issued a document entitled *The EU and Kaliningrad* in the first month of 2001, which can be identified as a manifestation of a moderate attention towards the region:⁴ despite the commitments made by the EU, Russia remained entirely responsible for its enclave's future (*The EU and Kaliningrad*, 2001). It seems that the EU, by issuing this document, has been one step ahead of Russia, but at the same time it was also a response to Russia's Letter of Concern of 2000 regarding the consequences of EU enlargement on the EU-Russian borders. Brussels stated that it was ready to take some practical and well-established measures for the development of the infrastructure at the border crossing points, and of the border crossing procedures, promising to help solve problems of energy supply and construction of transportation facilities in Kaliningrad. The European policymakers were also ready to test their basic principle, i.e. the free movement and transit of goods and persons crossing the border with the possibility of applying some special arrangements.

⁴ A very interesting fact that in this document appears the possibility of turning the oblast into a pilot region.

Lithuania and Poland shaping the EU's border policy towards Kaliningrad

Small states as power-brokers in EU negotiations?

Before inspecting whether small states (in our case Lithuania and Poland) do or do not exert influence on EU policies it is mandatory to describe what we understand by a *small state*. As noted by Thorhallsson and Wivel, the literature on small states developed in the EU is diverse and fragmented, and it lacks cumulative insights and coherent debate. Moreover, there is no consensus on how *small states* should be defined. Consequently the development of a common pattern of how they behave or conduct their policies and influence international relations and other actors' decision-making is also difficult (Thorhallsson and Wivel, 2006). Thorhallsson and Wivel perceive small states as countries which are *not great powers*, following the historical evolution initiated in the 19th and 20th centuries when due to the decolonisation many new states came into existence. This definition does not make any reference to the geographic or demographic features of a country. In an EU context it is difficult to decide on what grounds the EU member states should be categorised as "big" or "small" (Thorhallsson and Wivel, 2006). From the perspective of size and population Malta or Lithuania can be perceived as small states, while Poland a relatively big one, coming on the sixth place in the EU in terms of population and on the fifth place concerning its surface (Living in the EU). On the other hand taking size and population as frames of reference Luxembourg and Belgium are small states, but looking at their economic position and policy setting capacity they can be identified as great powers, not to mention that the vast majority of the headquarters of the EU institutions can be found here.

Keohane describes a small state as an entity "whose leaders consider that it can never, acting alone or in a small group, make a significant impact on the system" (Keohane, 1969: 296). However, in the EU's system of multi-level governance it is possible for all member states to influence decision-making in certain policies. The EU with its *sui generis* character has a unique institutional system; its decision-making process is designed in such a way that it reflects the national interests of the member states striving for their sovereignty, and also those of the supranational institutions and its form of governance mingles "the influence of a discourse of integration over time, spillover effects, and path dependency in policy making" (Kronsell, 2002: 295).

Although both small and big countries operate in the same institutional landscape, when it comes to decisions that involve costly resources the bigger states have more chance to influence the outcome of the negotiations than their medium or small fellow member states. However, the EU's institutional structure is setup in such a way that it tries to reconcile both the interests of the large and those of the small states. For example, the qualified majority voting procedure in the Council before 1 November 2014 (and since then the population criteria of the double majority voting procedure) prevented the small states to unify their strength putting forward decisions that might have jeopardized the vital interests of the big countries, at the same time preventing the big countries from forcing their will on the smaller ones.⁵ Still, Panke believes that small states face size-related disadvantages in shaping European policies, not only because of their limited voting weight but also because they tend to have fewer financial resources and constrained economic bargaining capacities (Panke, 2010).

Even though at the negotiating table the small states start with a disadvantage, they have the strength to exercise considerable influence in certain specified policy areas. The role played by states like Denmark or Sweden in policies concerning environmental and climate issues can be seen as a good illustration of this. In these types of negotiations what really counts is not the country's size, political or economic position but its reputation, expertise and knowledge. In our case study concerning the role of Poland and Lithuania in shaping the EU's border policy towards Kaliningrad we perceive that not the aforementioned qualities have made a difference but rather the successful coordination of national interests, soft power and negotiation skills. Departing from Thorhallsson's and Wivel's approach in this study we consider both Lithuania and Poland as small states, due to the fact that they are *not great powers*, regardless of the size of their territory or demographic weight, being aware of possible criticism that would question the status of Poland being rendered as a small state.

⁵ Though there were cases when this occurred due to these countries more favourable negotiating position and used tactics of pressure. Undoubtedly simple majority and unanimous voting favour more the small states, but these are used only on rare occasions in the Council of the European Union.

The role of Lithuania and Poland in the EU-Russia negotiations concerning Kaliningrad in the pre-accession period

The adoption of the *acquis communautaire* by Poland and Lithuania inevitably involved some changes in the rules and practices between Russia and the EU, respectively the new member states (Mészáros, 2015). Some of these changes were about to have a great impact on the Russian regions while others brought special implications for the Kaliningrad oblast, particularly in areas such as the movement of people, goods and energy supplies (Laurinavicius, 2002).

In particular, the European Commission suggested:

- ◆ the examination of the impact of the EU's enlargement on trade;
- ◆ discussion with Russia, Lithuania, and Poland concerning the functional management of border crossings, particularly those linking the Kaliningrad region to the Pan-European transport network;
- ◆ practical measures conducive to efficient border control, facilitating the movement of people and goods across the future external borders, without jeopardize the accession negotiations of Poland and Lithuania;
- ◆ EU technical and financial assistance, which can contribute to the creation of a functional border control, including necessary travel documents;
- ◆ the cost of passports (the responsibility of Russia) can be considered just like the costs visas. Both new and old member states were urged to open consulates in Kaliningrad to facilitate the visa insurance;

Four areas have been among the most important topics of discussion in this document produced by the European Union, areas that have aroused the anxiety Russian side, namely: transit (of goods and persons), visa regime, energy sector, fishery (Laurinavicius, 2002).

Concerning the movement of people and goods, it can be ascertained that the adoption of the *acquis communautaire* did not have any effect on the bilateral agreements between Lithuania and Russia for the transit of goods to or from Kaliningrad oblast. Studies conducted by foreign and Lithuanian experts have concluded that after the accession to the EU, the costs of transit through Lithuania would become lower. Finally, Russia acknowledged that the introduction of the common European tariff will have a positive effect. After the enlargement, the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between Russia and the EU ensured the free transit of goods through Lithuania and/or Latvia free

of duty or other tolls. After the adoption of the *acquis* by the Poland and Lithuania, the citizens of Kaliningrad needed a visa to travel through these countries. But still, to facilitate the border crossings the *acquis* ensured the elaboration of transit visas, short-term visas and long-term national visas allowing smooth border crossing and the possibility of multiple entries (The EU and Kaliningrad, Brussels). The representative of the Foreign Ministry of Russia in Kaliningrad, ambassador Kuznecov, assured the residents of Kaliningrad that the introduction of the visa regime will not be painful, and that a visa will cost no more than 5 dollars (Laurinavicius, 2002).

Before the implementation of the visa regime, tough negotiations were conducted between Lithuania, Poland, EU and Russian representatives. A detailed analysis of these negotiations reveals Lithuania's leading position in convincing both the EU and Russia, and the obstinate position of the latter Russia, which for a long time played by the rules of *all or nothing*, demanding the undisturbed and free movement of its citizens even after the two countries' accession.

In December 2001, Vladimir Putin spoke about the Kaliningrad issue in a press conference in Moscow. He urged to solving the problem of free movement of Russian citizens from the Kaliningrad oblast until 2002, asking for a visa free regime with Poland, Latvia and Lithuania for all his fellow countrymen or at least an area without visa between Kaliningrad and the rest of Russia. For the success of their plan, subtle pressuring tactics and shuttle diplomacy were used by the representatives of the Russian Duma and of the Kaliningrad region, coming forward with territorial claims to Lithuania. In the Russian political circles, discussions concerning Lithuania's sovereignty had begun to circulate claiming the constitutional right of the Russian citizens to transit freely through Kaliningrad and moreover the alleged *jus* of control free movement on Lithuanian land (Zdanavicius et al., 2005). However, Rogozin's (the Russian president's special envoy in Kaliningrad matters) visits to the major EU capitals with persuasive and sometimes threatening tone were unsuccessful because the European decision-makers rejected the possibility of a visa free regime or transit corridors, at this time the EU considering the Kaliningrad issue as a matter of secondary importance. Although nurturing hostile feelings towards Russia for past historical grievances, Lithuania knew how to use the Kaliningrad card in its favour. The fact that today Kaliningrad occupies a pivotal position on both the EU and Russian agendas is a result of the Lithuanian leadership's swift diplomacy, managing to turn itself into the successful media-

tor between the two *hulks*, when the negotiations between them had reached a deadlock. During a meeting in Palanga between the Governor Jegorov of Kaliningrad and the Lithuanian President Adamkus, the latter came out with the idea of issuing special magnetic cards for the residents of Kaliningrad. These cards would have been equivalent with long-term visas, thus ensuring fluent transit of Russian citizens across Lithuania. The proposal was turned down by Russia, claiming that the introduction of any special treatment to Kaliningrad would be improper. More specifically, it was considered being discriminative to the other parts of the Federation (Zdanavicius et al., 2005).

After Lithuania's intervention from Palanga in 2002, the EU's attitude towards the Kaliningrad dilemma started softening, making significant concessions, deciding that simplified transit documents could be a solution to the problems of the movement of people. In the European Commission's Communication from 2002 (Kaliningrad Transit, 2002) the regulation of transit of Kaliningrad residents through Lithuania and Poland was proposed. At a meeting in March 2002 with EU officials and the governmental representatives of Poland and Lithuania, Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Ivanov highlighted four major issues concerning the oblast, namely: visas, transit, energy, and fisheries. During the meeting the Russian PM also stressed that his government would prefer that after the accession of Poland and Lithuania to the EU there won't be any visa regime implemented in the enclave (Vitunic, no year). Moreover, a visa free regime which would operate along fixed train and bus routes with a special permit system for travel by car was suggested by the Russian partner (Joenniemi, 2008).

The final agreement was reached at the EU-Russia Summit meeting in Copenhagen on 11 November 2002, when the Joint Statement on Transit between the Kaliningrad Region and the Rest of the Russian Federation was signed. The document gave the region some concessions: (Vitunic, no year) multiple entry visas that can be valid for a longer period, including preferential treatment for certain categories of professionals such as lorry drivers. The Union has shown flexibility even in the case of visa fees, allowing visa exemptions for certain categories of persons (such as owners of diplomatic passports, air and sea crew members). Although the EU was not willing to implement a visa free regime in the enclave, as requested by Russia, it has made a great compromise after the signing of the Joint Declaration, by drafting the Facilitated Transit Document (FTD) and the Facilitated Rail Transit Document (FRTD). Under this declaration, Russian citizens travelling to or from Kalin-

ingrad through the territory of Lithuania used a facilitated transit document, while the other document could be requested by Russian citizens travelling to and from Kaliningrad by train (Moshes, 2003). This Facilitated Transit Document was portrayed as a “temporary measure” by the EU decision makers, luring Russia with the possibility of the introduction of a visa free regime in the near future. On the other hand as part of the deal between the EU and Russia, the latter finally ratified the Russian-Lithuanian Border Treaty, (Moshes, 2003) which had been pending since the 24th of October 1997, and introduced a Readmission Agreement.⁶

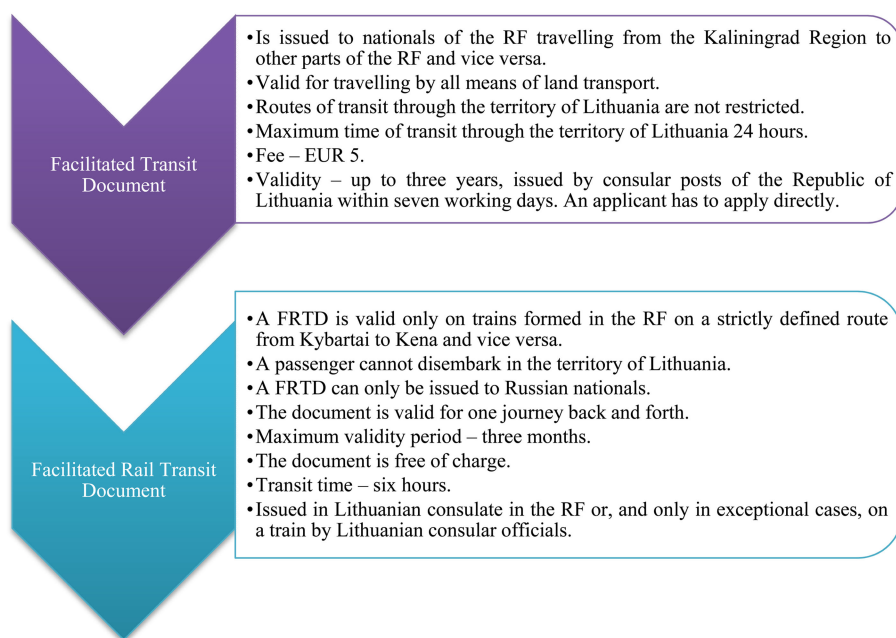
According to the new regulation in vigour since 2003 every citizen from Kaliningrad had to be in possession of an FTD in order to transit Lithuania by car or bus. The FTD was issued free of charge by the Lithuanian consulates in Russia for one year. However, the procedures acquiring an FTD are very similar to those taken in case of normal visa procedures. An FRTD was issued for people travelling through Lithuania by train. The EU-Russia Join Statement enumerates two train routes, namely one to Moscow and the other to Saint-Petersburg. Until 1 January 2005, a Russian internal passport was enough to acquire an FRTD, since then a foreign passport is needed (Vinokurov, no year). In Lithuania, visas were introduced in July 2003. This meant that the existing liberal visa regime, namely the 30 day visa free access to Lithuania with the prospect of entering with domestic ID card and the special voucher system available in the case of entry to Poland was replaced by the Schengen regime. This can be perceived as a negative impact of the accession of Poland and Lithuania to the EU on the small Russian enclave (Moshes, 2003). Visas free of charge for Kaliningrad residents were an alternative for the facilitated transit regime, as having in possession a Lithuanian visa and wishing to travel through its territory in transit additional documents of the facilitated travel were not required. If Russian nationals did not want to apply for facilitated transit documents, they could obtain a Lithuanian entry visa or transit visas, after paying established consular fees and submitting the necessary documents (Zdanavicius et al., 2005)

In order to help Lithuania to implement the new system of facilitated transit procedures of Russian citizens through the country to and from the Kaliningrad oblast, a Financial Memorandum was signed on 28 February 2003, pledging 12

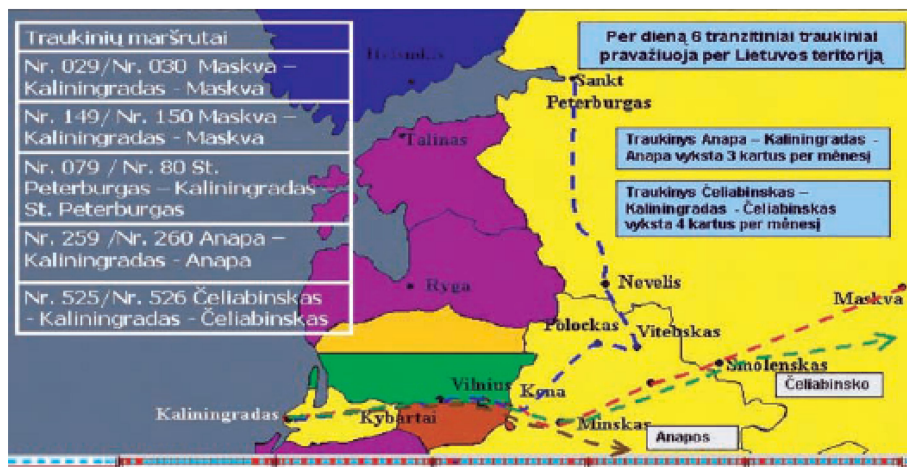
⁶ Agreement between the Russian Federation and the Lithuanian Republic about the Russian-Lithuanian state border and the agreement with Lithuania on division of the exclusive economic zone and continental shelf in the Baltic sea.

million Euros financial support for Lithuania to cover additional costs related to fulfilling the provisions of the Schengen acquis and the EU-Russia Joint Statement (Signature of EUR12 million Financing Memorandum for Kaliningrad Transit, 2003). The financial aid enabled the hiring of additional 137 consular officials to assist in the implementation of the Facilitated Document scheme. In order to speed up the process in 2003, a new Lithuanian consulate had been established in Sovetsk. It is important to mention that although the agreement entered into force between Lithuania and Russia in January 2003, the visa regime for Kaliningrad was not introduced automatically by the small Baltic state, as it did not want to use the methods of “shock therapy” on the Russian citizens. A transition period between January and July 2003 allowed the residents of the enclave to get accustomed with the new visa procedures, when the Lithuanian border guards controlled the papers of all Russian nationals coming to Kaliningrad by train, putting a stamp in their documents just as in the case of single Lithuanian transit visas (Zdanavicius, 2005).

Figure 2. FTD and FRTD



Source: Zdanavicius, 2005

Map. 1. Routes of transit trains included in the facilitated transit scheme

Source: Zdanavicius, 2005

Interestingly, Poland introduced visas for the Russian citizens only on 1 October 2003, three months later than Lithuania. This postponement was a deliberate and wise move with a clear purpose: Poland did not wish to disrupt the tourist season. Poland revealed the specific elements of its visa regime towards Russia barely on 20 September 2003, when the Poles proposed the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs a visa regime that would enable Polish citizens to move freely on Russian territory without visa, while the Russians could have acquired Polish visas free of charge. The Russians rejected the bargain, thus establishing a reciprocal visa regime, but they have allowed the introduction of a specific element in the negotiation, a concession on behalf of Kaliningrad. This agreement made possible for the residents of Kaliningrad to get Polish visas for free, while persons from the Russian mainland were compelled to purchase visas paying regular consular fees. On the other hand Polish people could acquire Russian visas for free in order to travel to the enclave (Zdanavicius, 2005).

At the Hague Summit in 2004, Russia and the EU agreed to establish a special working group responsible for solving the problems of the enclave, which would play the role of a negotiation mechanism. This idea was not put in practice, and the group was not established (Ignatiev, 2007).

The role of Lithuania and Poland in the EU-Russia negotiations concerning Kaliningrad in the post-accession period

From 2004 to 2008 the fate of the enclave has been debated in high circles between the Russian President's Special Envoy to the EU Yastrzhembsky and Ferrero-Waldner, the EU's Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy. In these discussions the Polish and Lithuanian representatives played a major role. These discussions focused on some policies rather than on programmes and joint initiatives (Ignatiev, 2007). The *Kaliningrad factor* in the Russian-European relations took on a new dimension in 2005 with the adoption of the EU-Russia Road Maps for the Common Spaces Policy, which is a project with four areas of cooperation between the EU and the Russian Federation, the EU-Russia Common Spaces.

As we could see before, Poland and Lithuania have their own interests towards the region. Trains with passengers and merchandise arrive in Russia through the territory of Lithuania. Lithuania played the role of Kaliningrad's expert body in Brussels: European representatives consulted matters related to the Kaliningrad region first with Lithuanian envoys. In many ways the small Baltic state played the pilot European state in the EU-Russian relations.⁷ The Lithuanian representatives considered that when Russia will meet the technical criteria for the establishment of a visa-free regime, the mutual introduction of a visa waiver will become easier (Lobjakas and Mölder, 2012).

In contrast to the case of Lithuania, the Kaliningrad question in the context of the Polish-Russian relations has not been burdened with the problem of transit. The Polish business community perceives Kaliningrad as a potential market for its products, and the cooperation between Poland and Kaliningrad is growing especially in areas such as energy sector and construction, Poland being the major business partner of the oblast. Recently the relations between Poland, which for many years was considered as being part of the New Cold Warriors⁸ (Leonard and Popescu, 2007) and Russia seem to improve, attested by the signing of bilateral agreement of Local Border Traffic between Russia and Poland (Fedorov and Y. Rozhkov-Yuryevsky, 2013).

⁷ According to the EU-Russia Watch report elaborated by the Centre for EU-Russia studies in 2012, although Lithuania didn't see the entire Kaliningrad region as part of a visa-free regime, focusing only on a 30-50 km wide state border zone on both sides of the border, it backed up the abolition of EU visas for Russian citizens in the long term, perceiving this process as a technical rather than a political matter.

⁸ Classification of EU countries concerning their relationship and attitude towards Russia.

The signing of an agreement in 2010 between Russia and Norway on visa-free travel for Russian citizens from certain towns and villages from the province of Murmansk and the Norwegian adjacent territories situated at 50 km from the border, fostered the closing of similar accords for travels without visas in the adjacent territories of Lithuania and Poland for the residents of Kaliningrad. Poland and Germany supported this plan in front of the European Commission, only Lithuania remained reluctant until April 2011, when finally on the insistence of Poland and Brussels it changed its position. To everyone's surprise, who backed down was Putin, then prime minister of Russia, stating that this privileged status granted to the enclave could be used as a pretext for the EU for not granting a visa free regime to all Russian citizens (Golunov, 2013). Putin's reaction can be perceived as a form of pressure and a very well-directed double game: as he claimed lifting the visa requirements for all Russian citizens; he wanted to test the limits of Brussels, namely to what extent is the European decision-making triangle is willing to make concessions. This negotiating tactic could be seen as a modern and soft form of its *brinkmanship* policy used during the Cold War. Of course the Russian administration knew that its proposals go beyond the applicable EU regulations, but it wanted to push the limits with the clear purpose of harvesting the experience of changing "EU regulations in other areas, including its efforts to change provisions which are unfavourable to Russia (such as the so called Third Energy Package)" (Rogoża, Wierzbowska-Miazga and Wiśniewska, 2012, p. 50-51).

These events had certain antecedents which are worth unfolding. It is rather confusing that after officially requesting a visa free regime for many years and hammering out the FTD and FRTD, finally we find out that for the Russian administration the facilitation of their fellow citizens' travel from Kaliningrad to the EU was not a genuine priority. This can be derived from the feedback given to the governor of Kaliningrad, Tsukanov's numerous appeals to transform Kaliningrad into a "pilot" region, emphasizing the necessity of implementing a visa-free regime. Surprisingly Moscow has changed its orientation, favouring the introduction of a local border traffic scheme, which enabled visa free movement only in the border area, along the external frontiers of the Schengen zone. Russia started a negotiation involving local border traffic with Lithuania back in 2009, but when they were about to close the bargain, Moscow decided not to sign the agreement, thus causing a diplomatic fray with Vilnius (Rogoża, Wierzbowska-Miazga and Wiśniewska, 2012).

In 2010, a new appearance was given to the Russian plan for a local border traffic scheme: instead of visa-free movement in a 30 km wide frontier belt previously negotiated with Lithuania, the Russian Foreign Affairs Minister lobbied for the extension of the local border traffic rule covering the entire oblast. Due to the region's existing close economic links with Warsaw, the Polish administration supported the proposal, forwarding it together with Russia to Brussels. As a consequence of its negative experience with Russia from 2009, Lithuania at this time refused to participate in this scheme, also giving voice to its disapproval to extend the local border traffic rule to a larger area on the Lithuanian side, as this would have involved a considerable part of its territory. This Polish-Russian motion was welcomed by the EU leaders, making possible the signing of a bilateral local border traffic agreement between Moscow and Warsaw (Rogoża, Wierzbowska-Miazga and Wiśniewska, 2012). In December 2011, Poland and Russia agreed on a visa-free travel for their citizens living along the border of the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad and Poland, and the accord entered into force in July 2012. The agreement provides that residents of Kaliningrad and Poles living in two bordering regions will be able to cross the border on a visa-free basis for specific purposes (Poland, Russia Agree on Visa Free Travel for Kaliningrad).

The Agreement enables the residents of the border regions to cross the border with special permits, which cost 20 Euros and are issued by the Russian consulates in Warsaw and Gdansk and the Polish consulate in Kaliningrad. However, the document cannot be used for work activities, only for family, social, economic, cultural purposes. This agreement received positive echoes in the Russian media, being perceived as one of the few visible results of cooperation under the Road Maps and across all EU-Russia relations. As the Russian Foreign Affairs Minister Lavrov stated, this Local Border Traffic agreement is expected "to noticeably facilitate human contacts between the residents of these regions and will considerably expand opportunities for developing business ties, inter-regional cooperation, youth exchanges and tourist trips" (Rogoża, Wierzbowska-Miazga and Wiśniewska, 2012, p. 7-8).

This agreement came into force in July 2012, including the entire region of Kaliningrad and, as already mentioned, the Polish Pomeranian region with the cities of Gdansk, Gdynia and Sopot, and the districts of Pucki, Gdansk, Nowodworski and Malborski, the Warmińsko-Mazurskie region, with the cities and districts Elbląg, Olsztyn Elbląska, Braniewski, Lidzbarski, Bartoszycki, Olsztyńskie, Kêtrzyński, Mragowski, Węgorzewski, Gizycki, Goldap-

ski and Olecki. Crossing the border is possible only by land, by car, in Goldap, Bezledy, Grzechotki, Gronowo, by train or walk to Braniewo (Jankowiak, 2015). The area covered by this agreement includes 2.8 million inhabitants, of which 941.500 are Russians and 1.900.000 are Poles. According to the agreement, "the local border traffic permit authorizes the holder to make multiple entries, exits and stays exclusively in the Kaliningrad region, each time for up to 30 days counted from the day of entry. The combined time of stay must not exceed 90 days in the period of each six months, counted from the day of first entry. The local border traffic permit is not a visa, and does not authorise the holder to enter any Russian Federation entity other than the Kaliningrad region" (Dudzińska and Dyer, 2013, p.2).

According to data provided by the Polish consulate in Kaliningrad, after the entry into force of the agreement, between 27th July 2012 and 31st August 2013, 131.856 applications were accepted for border traffic permits, being issued 117.096. On the other hand, the Russians have issued 30.000 permits for the Poles. The data of the Polish Border Police on the number of border crossings reveals that while in 2010 this number was 1.451.492, in 2012, after the entry into force of the agreement, reached 4.073.142, and in 2013 it was 2.745.053, of which 310.860 were small border traffic permits (Dudzińska and Dyer, 2013). According to the Frontex Annual Risk Analysis at the Eastern Borders of the European Union from 2014 the number of border crossings increased at the Russian-Polish border by 52%, from 4 to 6 million crossings (Frontex, 2014).

The introduction of this border traffic permit had positive effects for both the Kaliningrad region and for the Polish side, in particular concerning economic issues. This agreement has contributed to extensive cooperation between the Russian and Polish border police forces which led to the simplification of border crossing formalities, among which we recall the automatic printing of cards for visitors and the application of simplified processing of documents of visitors entering the region by car under the small border traffic. At the Polish side we enumerate a series of simplified arrangements, such as online booking option for larger groups, which have the possibility to announce their approximate arrival at a land border crossing.

Although on the European side were concerns about the increasing illicit activities such as smuggling, organized crime, abuse of border traffic permits, irregular residence of Russians in Poland, after the entry into force of the Agreement, the data of the Polish border police refute such allegations. They

just inform about some minor incidents, such as 7 cases of violation of the small border traffic system and 10.000 violations of customs regulations. Alarms on criminality also proved to be false, but a few Russian citizens were involved in several incidents with cars and theft. As a negative effect of this regime of small traffic can be mentioned the practice of removal of fuel from the Russian side of the border by Poles, the Polish border guards collecting mobile inspection teams responsible for patrolling the border localities to find fuel storage tanks and some illegal cigarette distributing locations (Dudzińska and Dyrer, 2013). In November 2014, Euractiv reported of a serious incident between Lithuania and Kaliningrad, emphasizing Russia's reluctance to permit the entrance of Lithuanian registered cars or trucks in its enclave. This denial of entry came soon after Lithuania's president Dalia Grybauskaitė had announced the grant of military aid to Ukraine in its fight with the Russian separatists from the East. As a sign of protest Lithuania summoned its ambassador to Russia (Russia blocks Lithuanian trucks after Vilnius promises military aid to Ukraine).

Inclusionary/exclusionary measures at the EU-(Kaliningrad) Russia border

The existence of local border traffic between Poland and Kaliningrad, together with the special provisions concerning the facilitated road and rail transit scheme with Lithuania, plus the TACIS programme can all be perceived as inclusionary securitization measures. Concerning the TACIS programme between 1991-2006 Kaliningrad received over 100 million Euros and it was also included in cross-border cooperation programmes for the 2007-2013 period. Under the ENPI in the 2007-2013 financial framework 50 million Euros were provided to the Kaliningrad oblast (Rogoża et al., 2012).

A large number of projects have proposed to address the problem of the long queue of trucks waiting at the border with Kaliningrad. The customs authorities of Poland, Lithuania and Russia have been working alongside the European Commission for the smooth functioning of the transit arrangements. In 2009, an important crossing point at Chernyshevskoye (on the border with Lithuania) was opened, an investment of € 8 million. Another European project, with an investment of € 13.3 million at the checkpoint near the border with Poland, Mamonovo, began in 2007 and was completed in 2009, with the purpose of maritime traffic management (European Union External Action,

Kaliningrad). Under the 2007-2013 budgetary period, the EU earmarked €132 million for the land-based Cross Border Cooperation (CBC) Lithuania-Poland-Russia (LT-PL-RU) programme, and € 217 million for the maritime Baltic Sea Region programme. However, due to the Russia's delay to sign the Financial Agreement with the European Commission, the authorities of Kaliningrad have not received the funds under the Baltic Sea Region Programme (Rogoza et al., 2012).

As a result of the Russian intervention in Ukraine, amid heightened tensions with Russia, in April 2015 Poland has announced its desire to build six 50m high watchtowers along its border with Kaliningrad. This move can be considered as feedback to the reports showing the deployment of nuclear capable Iskander missiles⁹ by Russia in its exclave. The CCTV towers cost around 3.5 million Euros, 75% of the money coming from EU's External Borders Funds, monitoring almost 200 km long border between the two countries (Malm, 2015). Furthermore, as a response to the Russian assertiveness, Poland besides building the six watchtowers had decided to take greater lead within NATO, in 2016 expanding its military budget, reaching the required 2% ceiling of its GDP (Bender, 2015).

Prompted by Russia's recent moves in the Baltic, such as the conduct of large military exercises (*Zapad*), cyber-attacks, missile deployment and the seizure of an Estonian official, the Lithuanian minister of interior, Eimutis Misiūnas, announced in January 2017 the erection of 2 metre high border fence with an estimated cost of 3.6 million euros on a 50 km range, either side of the Ramoniškiai checkpoint, opposing the barbed wire erected by the Russians five years earlier. (Boffey, 2017) The fence is due to be finished by the end of 2017, further equipping the Lithuanian border guards with new surveillance system including drones (

The erection of these watchtowers, fences and increasing the military spending can be perceived as a materialization of exclusionary securitization practices at the EU-Russian border. The two countries, now full NATO and EU members are very concerned about a possible Russian military intervention through Kaliningrad. Kaliningrad can become a potential source of friction, a

⁹ Russia has one SSM battalion equipped with Tochka missiles and three naval infantry battalions stationed in Kaliningrad. In 2016 Russia deployed in Kaliningrad S-400 land-based air-defense missiles with the aim of protecting its air base in Syria, but these missiles can be easily targeted against NATO member states from the vicinity of Kaliningrad. Russia has also bastion land-based coastal-defense missile launcher with a range approaching 200 miles and Kalibr nuclear-capable ship-based cruise missiles.

flashpoint between Lithuania, Poland and Russia, prompting the need for security guarantees from their EU and especially NATO allies (Kashi, 2014).

Map. 2. Iskander M nuclear capable land ballistic missiles.

Range: 310 miles (Russian government)

● NATO member ○ Missile range



Source: Filipov, 2016.

Conclusion

Progress with solving problems regarding the Kaliningrad oblast, especially those concerning border policies, largely depends on the level of cooperation between Moscow and Brussels but also on the involvement of Poland and Lithuania. Because of its geographic position and the problems which hit the region

after the 2004 enlargement, Kaliningrad reflects the essence of the Russian-European cooperation, including its potential for future development and current difficulties. The region has already participated in numerous projects and initiatives, designed to promote cooperation on the common Russian-EU border, such as the Northern Dimension Initiative, Interreg, Euroregions or others (Kashi, 2014).

At the same time, we have to acknowledge that Moscow and Brussels have different interests related to the enclave. While Russia focuses on issues like sovereignty or security (e.g. loss of sovereignty over Kaliningrad in the light of NATO and EU enlargement), Lithuania and Poland are more concerned about soft security issues, including illegal immigration, cross-border crime, smuggling, pollution, the spread of diseases and human trafficking. Deciphering the role played by Lithuania and Poland in shaping the EU's border policy towards Kaliningrad, and implicitly towards Russia, it may be ascertained that both Vilnius and Warsaw have successfully defended their national interests and the sovereign right to exercise full control of their territory. Poland has maintained its close economic ties with the enclave, while Lithuania has managed to get rid of the extra financial burdens imposed by the facilitated transit scheme, this being financed by the European Commission. Moreover, the small Baltic republic has achieved to see the ratification of the Treaty concerning the States Border between Lithuania and Russia and the signing of the Readmission Agreement. Lithuania also received guarantees from the EU clearly stating that the implementation of FTD and FRTD would not hinder its full participation in the Schengen framework. Poland's changing attitude and willingness to present a proposal together with the Russian representatives, contrary to Lithuania's viewpoint has also shown that when it comes to national interests there is no genuine solidarity among the EU member states. At the same time, in this matter Poland's *solo mission* didn't harm Lithuania's national interests.

At the same time, when the EU leaders have proposed the facilitated transit scheme to Moscow, they have stressed that this would be only a temporary measure, on the long term foreseeing the implementation of a visa free regime in Kaliningrad and later for Russia as a whole. The current Ukrainian crisis and the deployment of Iskander missiles in the oblast are doing nothing but rolling away the region off the possibility of a visa free travel to the EU and they can even lead to the implementation of heavy exclusionary policies in the near future. The illusions enshrined in the official European documents of

Kaliningrad becoming a pilot region for the EU-Russia cooperation, a “Baltic Hong Kong” have proved to be rather dim and unrealistic (Oldberg, 2015).

In the introduction of our study we pointed out that this research also targets to reveal whether Central and Eastern European EU member states such as Poland and Lithuania have the power to influence the EU's governance and policies and if they do, to what extent and how their involvement in EU policies towards the post-Soviet space empowers or strains these policies in terms of effectiveness? Through our case study we have shown that small CEE countries which are at the same time new member states detain the strength to influence certain EU policies, as Lithuania managed to be an indispensable negotiation partner whose interests had to be taken into consideration while hammering out a deal with the Russian Federation concerning the Kaliningrad transit. After becoming a member of the Union, its powers further increased because of the possibility of participating in the Union's institutional setup as a full member, thus contributing to a more effective decision-making. Even though Poland did not play such an important role in the negotiation process as Lithuania, it succeeded to defend its position and to secure its national interests.

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