

## The EU and Russia

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Derek Averre\*

## The EU and Russia: managing the new security environment in the wider Europe

### Abstract

Russia's intervention in eastern Ukraine and annexation of Crimea in 2014 sent shock waves through Europe and exposed the inadequacies of the EU's relationship with its most powerful neighbour, Russia. This paper focuses on the fundamental challenges facing the EU arising from the Ukraine conflict and Russia's more assertive foreign policy approach in general. We consider how Russia's intervention in Ukraine affects Europe's rules-based security environment, analyse Moscow's policy in the EU-Russia neighbourhood and its implications for the EU's own role in the region and examine how the EU and its member states are addressing the challenges posed by Russia. Finally, we pose a crucial question: can the EU and NATO work together to provide incentives for Russia to accept a common approach aimed at institutionalising partnership and reviving cooperative security management, without making concessions to Russian aggression? In other words, how do the European powers both 'deter' and 'engage' Putin's Russia?

### 1 Introduction: changes

The transformation of the security environment that has taken place in the last few years has presented a clear challenge to the EU. Already mired in economic stagnation and financial problems in the Eurozone, Brussels has been hit by the fall-out from the Arab Spring – Islamist terrorist attacks and the refugee crisis – whose sheer scale threatens to destabilise states on the EU's periphery and undermine the values on which modern Europe is built. These issues have dominated the policy agenda.

However, it is no exaggeration to say that the future of the relationship with Russia may well constitute one of the EU's most difficult external challenges in the longer term. Indeed, official EU policy statements in the immediate aftermath of the Crimea annexation emphasised that 'the notion of Europe whole and free, based on the shared commitment to human rights and freedoms, democracy, and the rule of law, as well as freedom and sovereignty of all the European states... is being challenged in an extremely serious and dangerous way'.<sup>1</sup> Leading politicians in Europe

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<sup>1</sup> Štefan Füle, European Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy, 'Russian pressure on Eastern Partnership countries, destabilisation of eastern Ukraine', Plenary Session, European Parliament Strasbourg, 16 April 2014, at [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_SPEECH-14-331\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-14-331_en.htm). A European Parliament resolution 'strongly condemns Russia's aggressive and expansionist policy, which constitutes a threat to the unity and independence of Ukraine and poses a potential threat to the EU itself'; European Parliament, *Resolution on the situation in Ukraine*, 2014/2965(RSP), Strasbourg, 15 January 2015.

followed suit.<sup>2</sup> A noted British commentator condemned Russia's authoritarian system and called on the West to respond to the challenge of Putin – 'the Slobodan Milošević of the former Soviet Union'.<sup>3</sup> The majority opinion among European policymakers and experts is neatly summed up by François Heisbourg: 'revisionist Russia emerges as a largely unpredictable player, which no longer gives prime importance to abiding (even in appearance) by international law, with a neo-imperial vision in the form of the Eurasian project and an across-the-board enmity for Western institutions in Europe and Western values in the world'.<sup>4</sup>

The political-military response has been led by NATO, with practical measures aimed at 'deterrence and collective defence' and the suspension of institutional cooperation with Russia. NATO's Readiness Action Plan promises a greater military presence in the eastern Europe member states, an enhanced military preparedness through the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force, and a more coherent and responsive political approach to crises.<sup>5</sup> These measures have been accompanied by US and EU sanctions, intended to form a united front of Western countries against Russian aggression.

Despite these measures, European opinion is divided over Moscow's strategic objectives and the regional consequences of the Ukraine conflict. Policy reports have played down the prospect of a return to the Cold War<sup>6</sup> and statements by EU leaders have emphasised that the door remains open to re-engagement with Russia if a resolution of the conflict can be found.<sup>7</sup> The dangers posed by the potential spill-over of the conflict, and the breakdown of political-military agreements and links between western states and Russia, are widely recognised and underline the need to seek cooperation over issues of mutual interest.<sup>8</sup>

This paper raises several important questions:

- How does Russia's intervention in Ukraine affect Europe's rules-based security environment?
- What are Moscow's intentions in the EU-Russia neighbourhood and how could Russia's actions impact on the EU itself?
- How are the EU and its member states addressing the challenges posed by Russia?
- Can the EU and NATO work together to provide incentives for Russia to accept a common approach aimed at institutionalising partnership and reviving cooperative security management, without making concessions to Russian aggression? Put simply, how do the European powers both 'deter' and 'engage' Putin's Russia?

## 2 Russia and EU security relations: strangers when we meet

In the immediate aftermath of the Cold War, Russia's willing return into the community of European nations was marked by the signing of the 1994 EU-Russia Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (ratified only in 1997, after the conclusion of the first Chechen war), which established both the economic and political basis for cooperation rooted in common values. As Brussels felt its way towards a greater role as a foreign and security policy actor, it published in 1999 the EU Common Strategy on Russia, which aimed to promote stability, security and prosperity through a permanent political and security dialogue with Moscow by the 'integration of Russia into a common European economic and social space'.<sup>9</sup> The cooperative relationship with Russia – 'a major factor in our security and prosperity' – was reaffirmed in the EU's 2003 European Security Strategy.<sup>10</sup> A 'common space on external security' was launched at the

<sup>2</sup> Ian Traynor and Ewen MacAskill, 'Don't appease Putin like we did Hitler, Cameron warns', *The Guardian*, 3 September 2014; Christian Reiermann, 'Schäuble Says Putin's Crimea Plans Reminiscent of Hitler', 31 March 2014, at <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/schaeuble-compares-putin-moves-in-crimea-to-policies-of-hitler-a-961696.html>

<sup>3</sup> Timothy Garton Ash, 'Sometimes only guns will stop guns. And Putin must be stopped', *The Guardian*, 2 February 2015.

<sup>4</sup> 'Preserving Post-Cold War Europe', *Survival*, 57, 1, 2015, p. 34.

<sup>5</sup> *Wales Summit Declaration*, meeting of NATO's North Atlantic Council, Wales, 4-5 September 2014.

<sup>6</sup> Group of Policy Experts, *Collective Defence and Common Security – Twin Pillars of the Atlantic Alliance*, report to the NATO Secretary-General, June 2014, at [http://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2014\\_06/20140606\\_140602-peg-collective\\_defence.pdf](http://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2014_06/20140606_140602-peg-collective_defence.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> *Issues paper on relations with Russia* (2015), Foreign Affairs Council of 19 January 2015, at <http://blogs.ft.com/brusselsblog/files/2015/01/Russia.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Ian Kearns and Denitsa Raynova, *Managing Dangerous Incidents: the need for a NATO-Russia Memorandum of Understanding*, European Leadership Network, 7 March 2016, at [http://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/managing-dangerous-incident-the-need-for-a-nato-russia-memorandum-of-understanding\\_3578.html?mc\\_cid=031ce5cbc7&mc\\_eid=92b06f72c7](http://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/managing-dangerous-incident-the-need-for-a-nato-russia-memorandum-of-understanding_3578.html?mc_cid=031ce5cbc7&mc_eid=92b06f72c7)

<sup>9</sup> *Common strategy of the European Union of 4 June 1999 on Russia* (1999/414/cfsp), at [http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2003/november/tradoc\\_114137.pdf](http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2003/november/tradoc_114137.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> *European Security Strategy, A Secure Europe in a Better World*, Brussels, 12 December 2003, at <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/78367.pdf>

May 2003 EU-Russia Summit; vague in terms of actual commitments, it was a means to foster shared approaches to security, including in their common neighbourhood. Moscow had also responded favourably to the development of the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), seen as a potential counterweight to NATO, and appeared ready to develop common approaches to security issues such as the fight against terrorism, disarmament and non-proliferation, crisis management and civil protection. More extensive bilateral links on trade and energy, as well as aspects of internal security, were aimed at assisting Russia's political consolidation and economic regeneration after the lost decade of the 1990s and promoting its integration into the world economy.

## 2.1 The Russia-Georgia conflict and the EU's 'upgraded' eastern policy

However, the EU-Russia partnership lacked strategic direction and common perceptions of a normative framework. The EU's promotion in the common neighbourhood of democratic reform, good governance, the rule of law and human rights, particularly through the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), began increasingly to disquiet Moscow. Ukraine's 'Orange Revolution' in 2004 – uncomfortably close to home as far as Moscow was concerned – prompted Russia's governing elite to reconsider the EU's eastern policy. Russia's intervention in South Ossetia in August 2008, in response to the deaths of civilians and Russian peace-keepers caused by the attack by Georgian forces, led to mediation by President Sarkozy (acting under France's EU presidency) to end the fighting. However, Moscow remained highly suspicious of the ambition of Georgia's president at the time, Mikheil Saakashvili, to forge deeper relations with NATO and the EU. Saakashvili had been emboldened by NATO's proclamation of an 'open door' policy for Ukraine and Georgia at its 2008 NATO Bucharest summit. The EU – which supported Georgia's territorial integrity within its internationally-recognised borders – criticised Russia's subsequent recognition of South Ossetia's and Abkhazia's independence and Moscow's military support for these

separatist regions, which effectively 'froze' the conflict. Brussels launched the civilian EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia, but it was excluded from South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

The EU's offer in 2008 of political association and economic integration through an Association Agreement and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) with Ukraine – a measure that 'represented a critical upgrade in the EU's eastern policy'<sup>11</sup> – intensified concern in Russia: Ukraine was seen by Moscow as a potential partner in President Putin's plans for regional integration and its association with the EU could potentially threaten this integration. The launch of the EU's Eastern Partnership initiative – which, in the EU's own words, was 'responding to the need for a clearer signal of EU commitment following the conflict in Georgia and its broader repercussions'<sup>12</sup> – further deepened Moscow's suspicions.

The Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area did not in fact constrain Ukraine from pursuing cooperation within other free trade agreements favoured by Russia. However, Moscow – extrapolating its own security logic onto the EU's policy – accused Brussels of forcing Kiev to 'choose between East and West'<sup>13</sup>, in effect accusing the EU of trying to establish its own sphere of influence in the common neighbourhood. Efforts to revive the failing security relationship produced no breakthrough, with Brussels not prepared to offer Russia the kind of institutionalised security partnership that would allow Moscow to influence EU security and defence policy.<sup>14</sup> Moscow's proposals for a European Security Treaty were largely ignored by the European states. The subsequent German-Russian Meseberg initiative for joint EU-Russia conflict resolution also met with failure, since there was no agreement among EU member states on how to revise existing arrangements. Meetings of the Permanent Partnership Council, the main body for Russia-EU cooperation at the ministerial level, were also discontinued, in Russia's view due to Brussels' reluctance to engage in systematic discussion of EU-Russia political relations.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Rilka Dragneva and Kataryna Wolczuk (2015), *Ukraine Between the EU and Russia: The Integration Challenge* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave MacMillan), p. 45.

<sup>12</sup> *Eastern Partnership, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council*, COM [2008] 823/4, 3 December 2008.

<sup>13</sup> Sergei Lavrov, 'It's not Russia that is destabilising Ukraine', *The Guardian*, 8 April 2014.

<sup>14</sup> Roy Allison, 'Security policy, geopolitics and international order in EU-Russia relations during the crisis', *Avoiding a New 'Cold War': The Future of EU-Russia Relations in the Context of the Ukraine Crisis*, LSE Ideas special report SR020, March 2016.

<sup>15</sup> House of Lords European Union Committee, *The EU and Russia: before and beyond the crisis in Ukraine*, 6th report of Session 2014-15 (London: The Stationery Office Limited), 20 February 2015, p. 27.

## 2.2 The Euromaidan

The growing strain on EU-Russia relations – and Moscow's increasing resentment over its marginalisation in the European security order – came to a head with the decision by Ukraine's President Yanukovich not to sign the Association Agreement with the EU in November 2013 in favour of accepting an economic package from Moscow. This decision sparked the Euromaidan – a popular uprising against the ruling elite's corruption and political ineptitude. Brussels' initial response to the Euromaidan was relatively restrained; it hoped that an agreement between the Yanukovich regime and the opposition, concluded on 20-21 February 2014, would produce a settlement to create a government of national unity.

However, once the Euromaidan protesters refused to accept the agreement and Yanukovich fled from Kiev, the EU voiced support for the protest and made it clear that Yanukovich's departure from the presidency had to precede any resumption of talks on the Association Agreement. The EU Foreign Affairs Council monitored the situation and declared it was ready to take measures if the crisis escalated, fearing an escalation of conflict.<sup>16</sup> The EU's promise of political support to the interim government was accompanied by the signing of the political provisions of the Association Agreement and pledges of financial assistance, as well as mediation by the EU of energy disputes between Russia and Ukraine.

## 2.3 Sanctions

The most important instrument used by the EU to respond to Russia's annexation of Crimea is the sanctions regime, put in place in July 2014 and since strengthened and prolonged to July 2016, which includes restrictions on sectoral cooperation and access to EU capital markets and defence-related goods and technologies. In itself the sanction regime is significant: in discouraging any further moves by Moscow to limit Ukraine's sovereignty by constraining Russia's trading links, it represents a shift away from the post-Cold War aim of integrating Russia into the global economic order.

Moscow has responded by placing sanctions on imports of goods from EU countries. This trend towards the

politicisation of trade relations, which appears to signal a conscious choice by both sides to limit interdependence, is another nail in the coffin of the much-talked about strategic partnership. Indeed, this trend even extends to the securitisation of energy relations, with calls for the EU to sharply reduce dependence on Russian gas imports to minimise the possibility of Moscow's employing energy as a 'weapon' against vulnerable east-central European states. To what extent this will be possible, or even desirable, is a matter of some contention, with some experts pointing to the uncertainty of the EU's longer-term energy strategy and suggesting that there is no conclusive evidence that Russia will use energy as a 'geopolitical' tool against Europe.<sup>17</sup> In any case, the partial isolation of Russia resulting from sanctions, alongside the EU's offer of deeper engagement with Ukraine, has significant implications for future political relations – and may deepen tensions – between the three protagonists.

## 2.4 Common Security and Defence Policy and the EU's role in crisis management

The European Council also established a Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) mission in July 2014, the EU Advisory Mission (EUAM) for Civilian Security Sector Reform Ukraine. The EUAM's remit is limited to building the capacity of the post-Euromaidan reforming state to bolster the rule of law and withstand external attempts to undermine its security. Modest though this political support appears in terms of crisis management, it both provides visibility for the EU in Ukraine and supports Kiev's foreign policy reorientation towards a deeper partnership with EU, as well as with NATO – however unlikely the longer-term goal of membership in these organisations due to opposition from leading member states.

The EU has also been the largest contributor to the OSCE's Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, which monitors the movement of forces and exchange of prisoners, facilitates dialogue, aids civil society in conflict resolution and reports on the humanitarian, social and economic situation to help guide political negotiations.<sup>18</sup> This allows for a more rational use of the two organisations' resources and a better division of labour in terms of crisis monitoring between them.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Ana E. Juncos and Richard G. Whitman, 'Europe as a Regional Actor: Neighbourhood Lost?', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 53 annual review, 2015, p. 203.

<sup>17</sup> Katja Yafimava, *European Energy Security and the Role of Russian Gas: Assessing the Feasibility and the Rationale of Reducing Dependence*, Istituto Affari Internazionali working paper 15/54, December 2015.

<sup>18</sup> *OSCE Thematic Report, Civil society and the crisis in Ukraine*, SEC/FR/125/15Corr.1\*, 4 March 2015.

<sup>19</sup> Teija Tiilikainen ed. (2015), *Reviving Co-operative Security in Europe through the OSCE*, OSCE Network, 2015, p. 17.

## 2.5 Russian views on the Ukraine conflict: estrangement...

Russia's account of the Ukraine crisis, promoted through a sustained information campaign, differs sharply from Europe's. In Moscow's view, Brussels backtracked on the agreement of 20-21 February 2014; Yanukovich's removal amounted to an unconstitutional coup, supported by Western governments obsessed with democracy promotion. The intervention by Russian military personnel was aimed at protecting the Russophone population from the new authorities in Kiev – described by Moscow as 'ultranationalist' – which refuse to engage in direct dialogue with the authorities in Donetsk and Luhansk regions. Moscow insists that constitutional reform, negotiated by Kiev with the Donbass regions to include an amnesty for separatists and a special status for the Donbass, must precede reinstatement of full control of the state border by the Ukraine government and the withdrawal of all foreign armed forces, as provided for in the Minsk-2 Agreements, which provide a framework to resolve the conflict.<sup>20</sup> This is roundly criticised by European governments as Russia's attempt to legitimise its efforts to limit Ukraine's sovereignty.

Russia thus attempts to portray itself as the peace-broker despite being penalised by Western sanctions and a freeze in relations, which will remain in force until it fulfils its part of the Minsk-2 Agreements by withdrawing its troops from Ukraine. Moreover, Moscow criticises what it perceives as Kiev's determined attempt to damage historical cultural and linguistic ties between Ukraine and Russia. Though a UN General Assembly majority vote deemed the March 2014 referendum in Crimea and Sevastopol invalid and recognised Ukraine's territorial integrity<sup>21</sup>, Crimea's secession was compared by Moscow to Kosovo's secession from Serbia and defended as being in line with international legal norms on self-determination.

Moscow has tried to divert attention away from its military support for anti-government groups in the Donbass and the annexation of Crimea by criticising what it calls Europe's own intervention in Ukraine. But it has gone further, vilifying Europe for supposedly encouraging regime change in Russia itself<sup>22</sup> – an existential fear of the Putin regime. Its response to the Ukraine crisis – portrayed as an issue vital for the survival of the Russian nation and state – is depicted as resisting a hegemonic European project and a defence of the 'Russian world'. This has raised the suspicion that Moscow is ready to re-establish its own sphere of influence in its wider neighbourhood, with domestic support underpinned by the promotion of nationalist-conservative Russian values.<sup>23</sup>

Many prominent political commentators and experts are in agreement with official views. One expert argues that the EU has damaged its reputation as a responsible actor and aligned its foreign policy with US interests by promoting regime change in Kiev 'through violent and unconstitutional means'.<sup>24</sup> The fall-out from the Ukraine crisis represents the 'new normality' in which 'the current level of confrontation is not an aberration but a new norm' in Europe's security environment.<sup>25</sup> According to the experienced commentator Sergei Karaganov, Russia 'speaks for the entire Non-West' in demanding change in decision-making on the rules of security.<sup>26</sup> Put simply, their argument is that Russia now rejects the Western conception of an inclusive regional community of states, based on shared norms and values, in post-Cold War Europe. The 'new normality' referred to above is thus synonymous with a new uncertainty that now pervades EU-Russia relations, not least in their common neighbourhood.

## 2.6 ... but not isolation

The opinions described above represent the majority view in Russia's political establishment. However, some Russian

<sup>20</sup> The Minsk-2 agreements were signed by Russia, Ukraine, France and Germany on 12 February 2015 - see text at <http://www.unian.info/politics/1043394-minsk-agreement-full-text-in-english.html> – and were endorsed by the UN Security Council; Security Council resolution S/Res/2202, 17 February 2015.

<sup>21</sup> *United Nations General Assembly* (2014), A/RES/68/262, 1 April.

<sup>22</sup> See Sergei Lavrov, interview with France 24 TV station, 16 December 2014, at [http://www.mid.ru/brp\\_4.nsf/newslines/29C0BA2F20252442C3257DB000502785](http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/newslines/29C0BA2F20252442C3257DB000502785)

<sup>23</sup> House of Lords European Union Committee, *The EU and Russia: before and beyond the crisis in Ukraine*, p. 39. See also Roy Allison, 'Russian "deniable" intervention in Ukraine: how and why Russia broke the rules', *International Affairs*, 90, 6, 2014.

<sup>24</sup> See Alexey Gromyko, 'Smaller or Greater Europe?', *Revista di Studi Politici Internazionali*, 81, 4, 2014, at <http://www.ieras.ru/gromyko/Smaller%20or%20Greater%20Europe.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> Alexey Gromyko, 'A new normal or a new "big agreement"', *Sovremennaya Evropa*, 2, 2015, at <http://instituteofeurope.ru/images/stories/structura/gromyko/gromyko2.2015.pdf>. This was echoed in the title of a recent policy paper by a leading European think-tank: Susi Dennison and Nick Witney, 'Europe's neighbourhood: crisis as the new normal', European Council on Foreign Relations, 23 June 2015.

<sup>26</sup> Sergei Karaganov, 'Europe and Russia: preventing a new Cold War', *Russia in Global Affairs*, 7 June.

experts express an altogether different conception of Russian national interests. They argue that rejecting the 'European choice' of political, economic and social modernisation undermines what should be the main objective of foreign policy – creating a favourable external environment for domestic development.<sup>27</sup> These moderate elites criticise Moscow's reliance on the concept of 'limited sovereignty', which emphasises national interests and historical justice rather than accepted legal and normative rules; any gains for Russia in Ukraine, they argue, are outweighed by the withdrawal of the latter from Russian-led regional integration initiatives. They also point to the ignorance in Russia's political establishment of social processes that are shaping a revival of a national civic identity in Ukraine.<sup>28</sup>

There are signs that this trend of opinion still has influence at the decision-making level in Moscow. Foreign minister Sergei Lavrov has underscored Russia's attempts to resolve the conflict through the Normandy quartet of Russia, Ukraine, France and Germany and avoid isolation.<sup>29</sup> Despite his often fierce rhetoric in defence of Russia's independent foreign policy, Putin himself has periodically revived the narrative of positive relations with Europe.<sup>30</sup> Although the shift towards a more conservative-nationalist paradigm at odds with Europe has undoubtedly gained ascendancy over recent years, it is far from monolithic within Russia's political establishment. This deep-seated ambivalence – between the progressive vision of a common European-Russian economic and social space on the one hand, and the conservative-nationalist idea of a sovereign Russia competing with a weakened Europe for influence in the international order on the other – has marked post-Cold War political thinking in Russia.

### 3 The EU's response to Russia's actions in Ukraine: life on Mars?

#### 3.1 NATO's strategic posture

As mentioned in the introduction to this article, the political-military response to Russia's actions in Ukraine has been led by the NATO alliance. NATO's Readiness Action Plan will effect 'a far-reaching adaptation of NATO military strategic posture' with a 'renewed emphasis on deterrence and collective defence capabilities'.<sup>31</sup> A White Paper, prepared in the run-up to the July 2016 NATO summit in Warsaw, has advocated 'a far-reaching transformation of the Alliance' to update its readiness 'by an order of magnitude, not just incrementally'; it explicitly refers to a Russia 'unconstrained by international law' posing a long-term threat to Allies and EU member states.<sup>32</sup> It is clear that NATO member states are seeking a clear, common strategic framework for defence planning to deal with the perceived challenge emanating from Russia.

Critics have pointed to the likely problems that NATO will face. The NATO spearhead Joint Task Force, to be stationed on a 'rotational' basis in eastern Europe and designed for rapid deployment to conflict points, may face logistical problems and may not be suited for the potential challenges presented by Russia's 'hybrid warfare'.<sup>33</sup> The Defence Investment Pledge launched at the 2015 NATO Wales summit – whereby member states aim to spend a minimum of 2 per cent of GDP on defence<sup>34</sup> – may not be realised by most European member states, and the shortfall risks widening the transatlantic divide over security in Europe at a time when the US wants Europe to take on more of the burden of security provision in its neighbourhood. Nor

<sup>27</sup> Alexei Arbatov, 'Collapse of the World Order?', *Russia in Global Affairs*, 23 September 2014.

<sup>28</sup> Institute of Europe, 'The Ukraine crisis: expert assessment', *Sovremennaya Evropa*, 3, pp 14-16, at <http://www.sov-europe.ru/2014/3/Ukk.pdf>

<sup>29</sup> Lavrov has said that Russia will not 'shut itself away in its own "little world"': speech at the RF Federation Council, 20 May 2015, at [http://www.mid.ru/brp\\_4.nsf/newsline/7D5C10AE87AA6F9843257E4B003A396A](http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/newsline/7D5C10AE87AA6F9843257E4B003A396A)

<sup>30</sup> Vladimir Putin, press conference, Russia-EU summit, 28 January 2014, at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20113>

<sup>31</sup> *Statement by NATO Defence Ministers*, Press release (2015) 094, 25 June 2015, at [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_121133.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_121133.htm)

<sup>32</sup> NATO Transformation Seminar 2015 (2015), *Next Steps in NATO's Transformation: To the Warsaw Summit and Beyond*, NATO/Atlantic Council White Paper, Washington, DC, March 2015. This paper recommends a 'strategic realignment' and adaptation of the Alliance's core tasks to include a central role for deterrence, the pursuit of 'options for collective defence measures under the threshold of Article 5' in response to 'hybrid warfare', and 'a more coherent strategy of engagement towards strategic neighbours in the East'.

<sup>33</sup> Martin Zapfe, *Efficacy, not Efficiency: Adjusting NATO's Military Integration*, Research paper no. 118, NATO Defense College Rome, August 2015, pp. 9-10. There are debates over the exact meaning of 'hybrid warfare', but the term is generally used to denote a combination of conventional and unconventional, overt and covert, regular and irregular use of forces, together with the use of information and cyber warfare.

<sup>34</sup> *Wales Summit Declaration*, p. 4. The US has consistently called for European Allies – most of which spend less than 2 per cent – to reverse the decline of defence capabilities in Europe; see Ian Traynor, 'US defence chief blasts Europe over NATO', *The Guardian*, 10 June 2011.

is it clear how this ‘reassurance’ to member states will help Ukraine, which is not a member state and does not warrant the article 5 defence guarantee; NATO is only offering Kiev ‘strategic consultations’ to strengthen programmes on security sector reform, capacity-building and crisis management cooperation, rather than robust military support.<sup>35</sup>

### 3.2 The EU: a deficit of internal coordination on security

It is highly uncertain how NATO’s changing strategic approach – prioritising deterrence based on the core assumption that Europe now faces a long-term adversarial relationship with Russia – will achieve consistency with the EU’s need for a beneficial relationship with its largest and most powerful eastern neighbour. Beyond a measure of consensus over providing ‘reassurance’ to eastern member states – Poland and the Baltic states in particular feel threatened by Russia’s actions in Ukraine – there are disagreements within the EU over long-term policy. The UK tends towards a harder line towards Moscow. France and Italy – who have had a better security relationship with Russia in recent years – take a more pragmatic line, with an eye to cooperation on security challenges in the Middle East.<sup>36</sup> Germany, despite having taken the lead in the sanctions regime, is unwilling to abandon its traditional *Ostpolitik* towards Russia.

Calls for EU member states to lead on managing security crises in their neighbourhood are also problematic. The Common Security and Defence Policy is an intergovernmental policy, covering the EU’s operations in third countries and coordinating member states’ defence capabilities.<sup>37</sup> It is designed to ‘protect [the EU’s] interests and project its values by contributing to international security, helping to prevent and resolve crises and including through projecting power’.<sup>38</sup> However, it was hardly

mentioned as an appropriate policy instrument in the Ukraine crisis and there has been no discernible effort to coordinate it with the European Neighbourhood Policy. The only CSDP instrument is the civilian EU Advisory Mission, tasked with supporting revised security policies and the rapid implementation of reforms in Ukraine – hardly a projection of power. Many experts agree that the EU’s lack of leadership, due to overlapping competences among its institutions, weakens coordination among heads of state and governments over power projection and precludes effective strategic vision. Indeed, it is France and Germany, rather than the EU, that lead European involvement in the Normandy format in support of the Minsk Agreements. ‘Hard’ security and defence in Europe remain, and will remain, the preserve of the NATO alliance.

### 3.3 Sanctions: much ado about nothing?

The fact that Brussels is locked into sanctions and trade restrictions is having the unintended effect of narrowing the basis for its economic relations with – and hence influence over – Russia. Evidence to date suggests that sanctions may in fact be provoking a more autarkic political economy in Russia, with resources being directed to those elites whose interests are closely linked with the state-directed political economy.<sup>39</sup> The impact of sanctions (at the time of writing, at least) has had no impact on Putin’s domestic support ratings and shows little sign of changing current policies. In the longer term, diminishing economic interdependence between Russia and the EU – still Russia’s largest trading partner – bodes ill for political relations and institutional interaction.

Relations have not been completely frozen. Consultations were held between the EU and Russia on the Association Agreement and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement, and talks over energy and other key trade issues have continued. A paper circulated by the EU Foreign

<sup>35</sup> David S. Yost, ‘The Budapest Memorandum and Russia’s intervention in Ukraine’, *International Affairs*, 91, 3, 2015.

<sup>36</sup> Claudia Major, *NATO and European Security: Back to the Roots?*, Istituto Affari Internazionali working paper 15/53, December 2015, p. 11.

<sup>37</sup> Carmen-Cristina Cirlig, *European Defence Cooperation: state of play and thoughts on an EU army*, European Parliament briefing, European Parliamentary Research Service, March 2015. This source describes the typically divergent reactions by EU member states to European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker’s support for the idea of a common European army, to sustain a common foreign and security policy and ‘take up Europe’s leadership in the world’.

<sup>38</sup> See Jolyon Howorth, ‘European Security post-Libya and post-Ukraine: In Search of Core Leadership’, in Nathalie Tocci (ed.), *Imagining Europe: Towards a More United and Effective EU* (Rome, Istituto Affari Internazionali), 2015, pp. 134-40. Coordination between the CSDP and the ENP was called for by some EU member states and experts in the recent Joint Staff Working Document *Towards a new European Neighbourhood Policy*, which accompanied the Review of the ENP; see SWD(2015)500 final, Brussels, 18 December 2015, p. 14.

<sup>39</sup> Richard Connolly, *Troubled Times: Stagnation, Sanctions and the Prospects for Economic Reform in Russia*, Chatham House research paper, February 2015.



Affairs Council in January 2015 suggested that links between the EU and the Eurasian Economic Union, the Russia-led regional trading bloc, may form part of ‘selective and gradual re-engagement’ with Russia.<sup>40</sup> However, it is far from clear how they would negotiate a regulatory basis for such an agreement, especially when the EU and Russia have failed to agree on a successor agreement to the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, the legal basis of the EU-Russia relationship. The promise of creating prosperity as the basis for security – the notion that underpinned EU policy towards Russia in the early years of the relationship – now appears to be a hollow one.

But the reality remains that Russia is a strategic priority for many EU member states.<sup>41</sup> Federica Mogherini, the EU’s High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy (HR CFSP), has spoken of restoring ‘shared influence’ by bringing Russia back to be a ‘responsible player’ in international affairs.<sup>42</sup> This is unacceptable to some European elites as a realistic framework for dealing with Russia’s challenge to the European security order, however: the political compromises that Brussels may be faced with in re-engaging with Moscow – particularly if it allows Russia to influence bilateral EU-Ukraine dialogue – would risk ‘a strategic abdication made by the European Union in the East’.<sup>43</sup> If Ukraine’s sovereignty and independence is a crucial indicator for the future of the European order, a policy is needed that goes beyond simply providing Kiev with a credible alternative to economic dependence on Russia through the Association Agreement.

### 3.4 A strategic approach?

The EU appears uncertain what that response might be. One commentator suggests that, after Crimea and the shooting

down of the Malaysian airliner – a breach of international law and an atrocity near the EU’s very borders – ‘the credibility of the EU as a foreign policy actor is at stake’.<sup>44</sup> The Common Security and Defence Policy, predicated on autonomy from NATO so that Europeans would become a security provider, has had modest impact; it has led neither to a European strategic doctrine, based in shared understandings of aims, nor to an autonomous military capacity that might be useable in a major confrontation. It remains only one part of a broader EU approach to external policy. Rethinking institutional arrangements between the EU and NATO in order to establish a ‘single regional capacity’ for stabilising the European neighbourhood, with greater defence cooperation (as advocated in the NATO White Paper<sup>45</sup>), would mean the EU committing resources and developing the leadership appropriate for a military power – a major shift in its strategic culture, and not one that several of the member states are keen to see.<sup>46</sup>

The President of the European Council, Donald Tusk, recently reasserted before the UN General Assembly the European world view as enshrined in Lisbon treaty; based on a contemporary reading of international law, it prioritises the value of human security and traditional principles of the inviolability of borders and non-interference in sovereign domestic affairs.<sup>47</sup> While this restatement of EU *norms* and *values* is significant, the EU faces the difficult task of defining its key strategic *interests*, setting clear objectives that can employ Brussels’ extensive range of instruments and working within other multilateral mechanisms.<sup>48</sup> The June 2015 European Council meeting tasked Federica Mogherini, HR CFSP, with continuing ‘the process of strategic reflection with a view to preparing an EU global strategy on foreign and security policy... to be submitted

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<sup>40</sup> *Issues paper on relations with Russia*.

<sup>41</sup> Author’s interview in the Council of the European Union, January 2015.

<sup>42</sup> Federica Mogherini, Remarks following G7 foreign ministers’ meeting, Lübeck, 15 April 2015, at [http://eeas.europa.eu/statements-eeas/2015/150415\\_02\\_en.htm](http://eeas.europa.eu/statements-eeas/2015/150415_02_en.htm)

<sup>43</sup> Adam Eberhardt, *Dialogue with the Eurasian Union on Ukraine – an opportunity or a trap?*, Centre for Eastern Studies commentary no. 154, 1 December 2014, pp. 3-4.

<sup>44</sup> Steven Blockmans, *Ukraine, Russia and the need for more flexibility in EU foreign policy-making*, Centre for European Policy Studies policy brief no. 320, 25 July 2014. Who shot down flight MH-17 on 17 July 2014 is still unclear but a Dutch investigation concluded that Russian-built missiles were used in the incident.

<sup>45</sup> NATO Transformation Seminar, 2015.

<sup>46</sup> See Thierry Tardy, *CSDP in action – What contribution to international security?*, EU Institute for Security Studies Chaillot Paper, no. 134, 12 June 2015.

<sup>47</sup> Address by President Donald Tusk at the 70th UN General Assembly debate, 29 September 2015, in *European Neighbourhood Watch*, no. 119, October 2015, pp. 1-2. In the words of one leading commentator, the EU has a ‘moral duty’ to reflect in its foreign policy the same values as in its domestic political and social models; Sven Biscop, *Global and Operational: A New Strategy for EU Foreign and Security Policy*, Istituto Affari Internazionali working paper 15/27, July 2015, p. 4.

<sup>48</sup> Nathalie Tocci, *The Neighbourhood Policy is Dead. What’s Next for European Foreign Policy Along its Arc of Instability?*, Istituto Affari Internazionali working paper 14/16, November 2014.

to the European Council by June 2016'.<sup>49</sup> With the conflict in the Donbass ongoing and little sign that the Minsk-2 agreements are leading to a resolution, it remains to be seen how the new strategy will reflect the needs of EU security on its eastern borders.

### 3.5 The EU's eastern policy: the uncertainty principle

The EU's more immediate problems are also overshadowed by uncertainty. The EU's commitment to Ukraine has been stepped up; a headline support package of €11 billion has been assembled to support political and economic reform there.<sup>50</sup> It was also encouraging that Brussels resisted Russian pressure and refused to revise the EU-Ukraine Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement – operational from 1 January 2016 – which incorporates important instruments to assist with reform. The EU Advisory Mission also provides important capacity-building for Ukraine's state security. But to what extent will Brussels sustain its political and economic support to Ukraine in the longer run?

Though the EU sanctions regime has largely held so far, the pressure on governments may generate a sense of Ukraine fatigue and force the resumption of pragmatic cooperation with Moscow. This is particularly the case for Germany; as Russia's largest trading partner, it does not want to compromise its substantial exports and continuing interest in gas cooperation through the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, which is also vital for Russia's energy export strategy and its economy as a whole.<sup>51</sup> It remains the case that the prospects for an implementable framework for a political settlement in Ukraine – designed to balance its integration into Europe with a mutually acceptable partnership with Russia – are hostage to domestic politics in Moscow. There is a risk of allowing Moscow to exercise influence over Ukrainian politics while shifting the burden of rebuilding eastern Ukraine onto Kiev.

With Moscow showing no signs of giving ground, not only in Ukraine but also in Moldova's and Georgia's internal conflicts, there are calls for the European Neighbourhood

Policy to be recalibrated to promote more effectively the EU's progressive, values-oriented foreign policy in the region. This includes more efficient delivery of Association Agreement benefits in return for reforms, targeting the most serious impediments to these reforms and better interaction with progressive constituencies in the partner states.<sup>52</sup> For the present, however, the EU – which faces even greater challenges from the South in the shape of the rise of Islamic State and the refugee crisis – is proceeding with pragmatic and incremental steps. With some European elites insisting on the need to take account of Russian views over trade and security in the common neighbourhood, which may entail engaging with Moscow over its plans for the Eurasian Economic Union, authoritative experts argue that 'the [Eastern] partnership looks set to resemble a framework of negotiated order, within which Russia has a *de facto* if not a formal voice. The dynamics of assertively extending EU rules and norms are in retreat'.<sup>53</sup>

### 3.6 Life on Mars

In fact a 'negotiated order' reflects closely Moscow's own perception of the regional situation: Russia, excluded from European-led security arrangements, aims to reassert itself as the hub of an alternative legal-normative order within which it pursues its regional interests. With Crimea now part of Russia, South Ossetia and Abkhazia proclaiming independence despite their non-recognition by most of the international community, and Transnistria still holding out for extensive autonomy within Moldova – and with the conflict in the Donbass ongoing – the prospect of a genuine 'common space' of security is ever more elusive. Illiberal politics, corruption and non-transparent economic practices in these regions, together with Russia's active contestation of the EU's role in promoting rule-of-law reform, place considerable restrictions on the EU's room for manoeuvre. To adapt Robert Kagan's famous comment that 'Americans are from Mars and Europeans are from Venus' – inferring that the EU model of diplomacy and compromise clashes with the reality of power politics in the rest of the world – the lesson of the Ukraine conflict is: welcome to life on Mars.

<sup>49</sup> *European Council Meeting conclusions*, EUCO 22/15, 25-26 June 2015.

<sup>50</sup> See <http://www.eeas.europa.eu/ukraine/> for more details.

<sup>51</sup> See Tuomas Forsberg, 'From *Ostpolitik* to 'frostpolitik'? Merkel, Putin and German foreign policy towards Russia', *International Affairs*, 92, 1, 2016; Stefan Meister, 'Russia's return', *Berlin Policy Journal*, 14 December 2015, at <http://berlinpolicyjournal.com/russias-return/>.

<sup>52</sup> Richard Youngs and Kateryna Pishchikova, *Smart geostrategy for the Eastern Partnership*, Carnegie Europe, November 2013.

<sup>53</sup> Thomas de Waal and Richard Youngs, *Reform as Resilience: An Agenda for the Eastern Partnership*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 14 May 2015.

## 4 Strategic implications for the EU: under pressure

### 4.1 'Soft power' versus political vision

The Ukraine crisis has highlighted broader problems for the EU in adapting to the rapidly changing external and internal conditions that are shaping its security environment. Michael Smith, a leading scholar of the EU, has argued that Brussels is struggling to manage the 'new geopolitics... in which the rising powers have taken a major role'; the EU's bilateral approach to institutionalising links with the emerging powers has been inconsistent and has shied away from major security concerns, lowering expectations of EU as a potential 'strategic' partner'.<sup>54</sup> For all its 'soft' or 'normative' power – its reliance on the legal constraints of treaties and on convergence with European legislation to integrate the wider Europe – the EU has not been able to craft a comprehensive political vision that can deal strategically with Russia and leverage its normative and regulatory power in the region to cement its own vision of regional order.<sup>55</sup> In fact it has stumbled into confrontation with Moscow. As mentioned in the introduction above, political and diplomatic attention has been diverted to numerous more pressing items on the policy agenda, not least problems with the EU's economic model, unwelcome political developments in some member states and the fall-out from the Arab Spring. Indeed, the recent review of the European Neighbourhood Policy states that, while security should have a greater place in the mandate, it will 'take stabilisation as its main political priority'.<sup>56</sup> This suggests strongly that transforming the post-Cold War European order has given way to the primary task of containing the immediate challenges to collective security.

Russia has also reinvigorated its interests in central Europe and the western Balkans and is pursuing political and economic ties with several states there, notably with Serbia, Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic. The sanctions regime is holding for now but Federica Mogherini's (HR CFSP), suggestion, cited above, of keeping open the possibility of reengaging with Russia – even though Moscow challenges common political, economic and security norms – may entail the partial defection of European countries where common interests with Russia are seen to

predominate, particularly if Ukraine's current government fails to rein in the country's oligarchs and reform its political system.

### 4.2 The challenges to Russia

A final question arises: how resilient is Russia in terms of sustaining the costs imposed on its political economy as a result of its actions in Ukraine? We argue that Moscow faces considerable challenges. The EU remains its largest trading partner by far and it will be difficult to absorb economic losses caused by sanctions over a long period, particularly at a time of low oil and commodity prices, and with post-Soviet era structural reform of the economy incomplete. Russian companies may well find additional markets in the Eurasian Economic Union and among the other BRICS states. However, the Eurasian Economic Union countries' share of Russia's trade is dwarfed by Russia's trade with the EU; also, the BRICS states depend heavily on technology and trade links with the West and are facing their own economic problems – in fact, their importance for Moscow is political rather than economic. Nor can these states replace the technology and financial services available from EU countries. Even with a rise in oil and gas prices in prospect, Moscow's current policies – relying more heavily on the mobilisation of its own resources, implementing an import-substitution agenda and narrowing relations with the EU to a simple exchange of commodities – risk distorting its political economy and undermining modernisation.<sup>57</sup>

The reliance of the Putin regime on a narrow circle of decision-makers and the use of economic levers for political ends means that Moscow struggles to think out and implement a progressive strategy in a rapidly evolving world. Russia is a weak state lacking a vision to sustain its influence and the ability to manage political and social change. Recourse to conservative-nationalist support for domestic legitimisation of Putin's policies may well become more difficult to justify if there is no resolution of the conflict in the Donbass and Russia is forced to swallow further sanctions. Indeed, Moscow is now playing down nationalist rhetoric and advocates a settlement in the Donbass. The political deadlock may endure for some time, however, and inflict longer-term damage to EU-Russia relations.

<sup>54</sup> Michael Smith, 'Beyond the comfort zone: internal crisis and external challenge in the European Union's response to rising powers', *International Affairs*, 89, 3, 2013.

<sup>55</sup> Pierre Vimont, *The Path to an Upgraded Foreign Policy*, Carnegie Europe policy outlook, 30 June 2015.

<sup>56</sup> *Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy*, European Commission/HR CFSP, JOIN(2015)50final, Brussels, 18 November 2015.

<sup>57</sup> See Nigel Gould-Davies, *Russia's sovereign globalization: rise, fall and future*, Chatham House Russia and Eurasia Research Programme research paper, January 2016.

## 5 Conclusions and policy recommendations: ashes to ashes – or a Phoenix arising?

Russia's intervention in Ukraine undoubtedly represents a challenge to the rules-based security environment which, after the horrors of the Balkan wars of the 1990s, had largely held firm in Europe. Russia's challenge to the EU's promotion of liberal norms of governance in the common neighbourhood indicates that the EU has lost both influence and credibility for Russia. Authoritative commentators agree that 'the EU's milieu-shaping goals and instruments are not equipped for these challenges'.<sup>58</sup> The surge in Russia's defence spending (including on the strategic nuclear forces), an upturn in the scale of its military exercises near its western borders and greater interest in 'hybrid' warfare appear to give additional grounds for pessimism. At best, the evidence appears to point to a 'negotiated order' in which Moscow tries to pursue its sovereign interests through transactional relations. At worst, Europe faces a 'systemic and ideological conflict between the democratic West and a revanchist Russia'.<sup>59</sup>

However, we argue that future developments are subject to considerable uncertainty: over how and how far Moscow intends to project power in the common neighbourhood, how its political economy will fare given the pressures it faces and how domestic political developments in Russia will shape its approach to Europe. The history of Russia's relations with Europe over the last 25 years, albeit often volatile, by no means shows an intractable hostility. Russian foreign policy has been marked by a complex and fluid interplay between an attachment to sovereignty on the one hand and a recognition that interdependence demands shared approaches to regional and global security problems on the other. Domestic politics, although currently prey to statist (and to an extent nationalist-conservative) interests – and often reflected in extravagant rhetoric – is also influenced by moderate elites who are critical of the regime's tendency to distance Russia in political and civilisational terms from Europe: they believe that the country's interests lie in a constructive, though pragmatic, relationship with the EU.<sup>60</sup> The regime's desire to avoid isolation, reflected in calls for what amounts to shared management of the European security order, suggest a reluctance to return to a Soviet era- like 'peaceful co-existence' of two rival orders.

It is clear – and has been for some time – that the EU faces clear limits to what it can achieve in the common neighbourhood. There are few signs that Europe's leaders are prepared to invest the EU with the political will and capacity to allow it to emerge as a security provider in the eastern neighbourhood. Important though the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement is to Kiev, Brussels' commitment to the neighbourhood is likely to be confined to partnership and capacity-building, together with a measure of economic integration, for the foreseeable future. Even association for Ukraine and other Eastern Partnership countries prompts divided opinions among EU member states.

Still, the member states must resist demands for trade-offs with Russia over other security issues – for example, the Syria conflict – allowing Moscow to enforce its sphere of interests in the neighbourhood. Entering into a bargaining process in which the West concedes to Russia over Ukraine – perhaps entailing pressure on Kiev to accept extensive self-government in the Donbass in return for Moscow's verbal acceptance of Ukraine's control over its borders, Ukraine's agreement not to seek NATO membership and some kind of settlement on Crimea – would embolden Russia in its relations with other partners. At the same time, Brussels faces a tricky balance between expanding its influence in its neighbourhood while rebuilding a stable, if not fully strategic, relationship with Russia. That the supposed 'Russian threat' is not at the top of the priority list for most European governments – apart from Poland and the Baltic states – reflects the fact that the security environment is much more complex and contains challenges that differ from those of the Cold War.

At this stage, it is far from clear whether and how Russia's continuing military involvement in the Donbass and annexation of Crimea, as well as its use of political and economic levers against Ukraine – and other regional states – can be accepted if the notion of a rules-based Europe is to have any meaning. Russia itself puts forward no developed ideas to transform its relationship with Europe apart from sketchy proposals for a legally-binding security treaty and the vague notion of integration between the EU and Eurasian Economic Union.<sup>61</sup> Alongside the NATO-EU

<sup>58</sup> Ana Juncos and Richard Whitman, 'Europe as a Regional Actor: Neighbourhood Lost?', p. 212.

<sup>59</sup> Gustav Gressel, *Russia's quiet military revolution, and what it means for Europe*, European Council on Foreign Relations, ECFR/143, October 2015, p. 13.

<sup>60</sup> Vladimir Chizhov, Russia's permanent representative to the EU, interview with Interfaks, 17 June 2015, at [http://www.mid.ru/foreign\\_policy/news/-/asset\\_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/1457377](http://www.mid.ru/foreign_policy/news/-/asset_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/1457377)

<sup>61</sup> This is reflected in Lavrov's call for 'open, *unformalised* dialogue on ways to form a single economic and humanitarian space from Lisbon to Vladivostok relying on the principles of equal and indivisible security'; speech at press-conference with Belarusian foreign minister, 8 June 2015, at [http://www.mid.ru/brp\\_4.nsf/newslines/BE236170AB02698643257E5E003AEF3E](http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/newslines/BE236170AB02698643257E5E003AEF3E) (emphasis added).

bloc a weakly-institutionalised Russia/Eurasia hub appears to be emerging, with issue-specific and transactional trade relations between Russia and Europe. Limited measures to mitigate tensions and avoid military confrontation are likely to predominate over a strategic dialogue to cement the foundations of stable security order in the wider Europe.

The final question posed in the introduction to this paper was: can the EU and NATO work together to provide incentives for Russia to accept a common approach that would institutionalise partnership and the cooperative management of security without making concessions to perceived Russian aggression? In simple terms, how does Europe in the longer term move from deterrence to engagement with Russia?

The key to rebuilding relations, may be – as Winston Churchill famously suggested – to consider Russia's *interests*. The demands of modernisation and need for stability and prosperity on its Western flank give Russia an incentive to retreat from self-exclusion. Russian elites have two decades or more of experience of working with European institutions; dialogue continues between Lavrov and Mogherini and at lower political levels.<sup>62</sup> In several of the bigger EU member states, notably Germany but also Italy and France, there are political and economic elites more favourably disposed towards Russia. With more astute decision-making in Brussels that takes account of the changing priorities of Russia's policy, Moscow can be encouraged to use existing platforms for dialogue on broader governance. A joint approach to make the Minsk-2 Agreements work and stabilise Ukraine would help to ease sanctions and revive trade and political-military links, and indeed could have a beneficial effect on other disputes in the common neighbourhood.

As far as NATO-EU dialogue and cooperation is concerned, since 2014 NATO's North Atlantic Council and the EU Political and Security Committee have met to conduct informal discussions on Ukraine and the eastern and southern neighbourhoods. There are still reservations in member states over deeper cooperation; an institutional and political fusion of Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and NATO<sup>63</sup>, or reestablishing the European Security and Defence Identity to pursue a 'European pillar

within NATO'<sup>64</sup>, are probably steps too far at the present time. Nevertheless, the EU and NATO need to show that they are prepared jointly to shape the regional and global institutional order rather than just containing collective security threats. How far this will be possible while recreating a constructive relationship with Moscow depends on whether all sides can muster the political will and invest in serious and sustained diplomatic engagement.

The EU itself needs to carry out an in-depth assessment of its interests in the neighbourhood states and its capacity to influence domestic politics there, within a broader overall strategy to shape the regional order. In particular, political support from the member states is needed for the new security strategy, with political and economic instruments – trade, migration policy, development, humanitarian cooperation, security sector reform – used coherently and institutions and financial instruments designed to back up clearly enunciated aims. The narrative of Europeanisation should not be abandoned but, as one experienced commentator suggests, the new strategy should define strategic priorities, set a limited number of realistic objectives and communicate how the EU perceives its role in the world and how it will go about pursuing it.<sup>65</sup> Ad hoc groups of member states, such as the Normandy format, may be used but should act within clear guidelines prioritised at the European level. A more coherent policy could also lend support to the OSCE's crisis management/conflict resolution efforts in the frozen conflicts, particularly in the humanitarian field.

The EU and Russia must ultimately address the cause of their current estrangement through negotiation over the application of core principles, rather than simply dealing with the symptoms. This requires a shared vision to underpin the restoration of trust: undoubtedly a long-term affair, with the current regime in Moscow suspicious of European norm promotion and unprepared to reform its domestic political and economic order. But a sustained focus on positive-sum outcomes does have an intellectual history – the Helsinki process and post-Cold War efforts to involve Russia in European security governance – and support from some elites in Moscow. Identifying and acting upon shared interests with Russia is a precondition for norms and principles to be collectively re-legitimised and universally applied. Will Europe rise to the challenge?

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<sup>62</sup> Vladimir Chizhov, interview with Interfaks, 10 December 2015, at [http://www.mid.ru/foreign\\_policy/news/-/asset\\_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/1978334](http://www.mid.ru/foreign_policy/news/-/asset_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/1978334)

<sup>63</sup> Jolyon Howorth, 'European Security post-Libya and post-Ukraine: In Search of Core Leadership', p. 157.

<sup>64</sup> See Simon J. Smith, 'Are the EU and NATO Really Committed to the International Order?', European Leadership Network, 24 September 2015.

<sup>65</sup> Sven Biscop, 'Global and Operational: A New Strategy for EU Foreign and Security Policy', p. 1.

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