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Challenges and opportunities provided by the Ukraine crisis for the EU as an international actor: A study on EU Actorness

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Table of Contents

1.) Introduction.....	1
1.1) Problem definition & Research Questions	1
2.) Theoretical Framework	3
2.1) Conceptualizing EU Actorness – Literature review.....	3
2.2) EU Actorness by Bretherton and Vogler	4
2.3) Social constructivism	8
2.3.1) Limitations/Criticism	9
3.) Methodology.....	11
4.) Analysis of the EU Actorness in the Context of the Ukrainian Conflict	12
4.1.) Background Ukraine crisis	12
4.2) Presence.....	14
4.3) Capability	18
4.3.1) Policy formulation	19
4.3.2) Availability of policy instruments	21
4.4) Opportunity.....	24
5.) Result of the analysis.....	26
5.1) Contrasting strengths and weaknesses	27
5.2) Lessons from the Crisis to overcome challenges - Recommendations	29
6.) Conclusion.....	33
Bibliography	35

Abbreviations

AA = Association Agreement (Between the EU and Ukraine 2013)

CFSP = Common Foreign and Security Policy

CSDP = Common Security and Defense Policy

EEAS = European External Action Service

ENP = Eastern Neighborhood Policy

EU = European Union

IR = International Relations

PCA = Partnership and Co-operation Agreement

QMV = Qualified Majority Voting

1.) Introduction

The European Union (EU) is currently situated at a crossroad in its foreign policy actorness. While the Union aspires to play a greater global role, its actorness and effectiveness cannot be taken for granted given its nature as a multilevel actor, consisting of 28 Member States with diverse foreign policy preferences and positions. Even though the external policy capacity of the EU has been increased by institutional innovations and by the Union's increased involvement in international issues (Edwards, 2013, pp. 280-283); there are a lot of factors that cast doubt on the effectiveness of the EU's external policy actorness. An example for this would be the internal reforms which are often regarded as slow as well as modest and also a less favorable external environment, with the United States shifting its focus to the Asia-Pacific region (Campbell/Andrews, 2013, p. 4). The management of the sovereign debt crises in the Eurozone was another complicating factor, which both consumed the energies of policymakers internally and generated perceptions of disunity and incompetence externally (Niemann/Bretherton, 2013, p. 262). These challenges for EU external policy make an improved understanding of EU external policy actorness all the more pressing. To gain a better understanding of the Union's external policy actorness this paper will analyze the Ukraine crisis as a case study and try to evaluate the challenges this crisis is posing for the EU actorness as well as which opportunities are opening up for the EU to evolve and increase its influence as an international actor.

1.1) Problem definition & Research Questions

Since 2014, the EU is engaged in an international crisis over the status and territorial integrity of Ukraine that might have the potential of creating a new conflict among great powers in Europe. The Russian annexation of Crimea in February 2014 was viewed as a fundamental breach of international law and the greatest challenge of the established world order since the end of the Cold War (NATO, 2014; Ignatzi, 2014). In 2015, the situation in the country still remains volatile. On September 2, the Ukraine's national security council approved a new military doctrine that declares Russia to be a military opponent and calls for the country to pursue NATO membership (Karmanau, 2015).

The crisis in Ukraine is an illustration of the clashing objectives of two major regional players, the Russian Federation and the EU, in their shared neighborhood. The EU tries to ensure its interests and security as well as regional stability at its borders by deepening its economic and political relationships with the eastern countries, which historically belonged to the Russian sphere of influence, through the European Neighborhood Policy (Loschert, 2014, p.8). Russia, at the same time, seeks to exploit the situation in order to re-establish itself as a great power. President Putin views the downfall of the Soviet Union as the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century (Hacke, 2014, p. 106). He aims at the creation of a Eurasian Union under Russian command, of which Ukraine is an integral component. This competition for the sphere of influence in the shared neighborhood of Russia and the EU is often viewed as a zero-sum-game whereby the increasing of influence of one party results simultaneously in the decreasing of influence of the other (Noori, 2014). This crisis can be seen as a test for the EU to demonstrate whether it is capable of responding as a credible international actor and whether it will live up to its identity and values. In the past the EU's actorness in international conflicts has been criticized by some scholars (inter alia Hill, 1993; Nielsen, 2013) and certainly had its weaknesses and shortcomings (e.g. Balkan wars or Iraq crisis). The EU's inability to meet the expectations of third parties in dealing with international conflicts resulting from its capabilities established the notion of the capability-expectation gap (Hill, 1993). Hill's theory referred to a gap between the expectations placed on the EU and its actual capability to meet these expectations. "The gap was accounted for by the EU's limited ability to agree on policy, its sparse resources and the lack of instruments at its disposal" (Nielsen, 2013, p. 726). The Ukraine crisis offers an opportunity for the EU to evolve as an actor and increase its capabilities especially in the field of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). This thesis aims to gain a better understanding of the factors that influenced the EU's foreign policy actorness in the Ukraine crisis as how the EU could use the crisis to improve its actorness. Therefore the following research question will be addressed in this thesis:

What challenges did the Ukraine crisis pose for the EU as international actor and how can the EU utilize the opportunities that arose from it to address these challenges and improve its actorness?

In order to give a structured and clear answer to the research question, sub-questions have been formulated; these are:

1. *What factors challenged and constrained the EU's reaction to the crisis?*
2. *What distinct strengths and weaknesses revealed the crisis of the EU's foreign policy?*
3. *What opportunities is the crisis providing to improve EU actorness in the future?*
4. *What lessons can be derived from the Ukraine crisis for the future development of the EU's actorness and how can it utilize them to increase its actorness in the future?*

In order to answer these questions this paper will adopt Bretherton and Vogeler's social constructivist framework to assess the EU's external policy actorness. The authors distinguish three interrelated concepts which shape the EU's ability to act as an international actor: Presence, Opportunity and Capability. Using these overlapping dimensions of actorness allows to analyze both internal and external factors that influence EU external policy. Whereas Capability enables the consideration of the internal complexities of EU policy-making, Presence and Opportunity take the constraining, as well as the enabling factors associated with external context and perceptions of the EU into account. Each of these dimensions will be deployed on the Ukraine crisis to gain a better understanding of the EU actorness in the crisis. This will be followed by an analysis on how the EU could utilize the opportunities provided by the Ukraine crisis to increase its presence as well as capability as an international actor.

2.) Theoretical Framework

2.1) Conceptualizing EU Actorness – Literature review

The international relations (IR) theory struggled for a long time to conceptualize the EU and its external relations as its original focus was statehood and rationality. Since The EU is less than a state but more than an international organization, it cannot be approached by theories that concern only one of the two organizational forms (Niemann/Bretherton, 2013, p. 263). The EU is an institution sui generis (of its own kind), which brings up the 'n=1' problem and accordingly scholars of IR were trying to discover the real “Nature of the Beast” (Risse-Kappen, 1996, p. 56). With the

deepening and widening of integration the EU increased its capabilities on the regional and international level as well as improved the research on its external relations. Scholars were trying to conceptualize the unique nature of the EU's foreign policy behavior by moving away from the traditional state-centric view (Chebakova, 2008, p.5).

Gunnar Sjösted (1977) was among the first scholars who construed the EU as an actor in the international system. Thereby he introduced the concept of EU actorness, which he defined as "the capacity to behave actively and deliberately in relation to other actors in the international system" (Sjösted 1977 as cited in Loschert, 2014, p. 5). Since then many scholars have tried to conceptualize the European Community – and later the European Union – as an actor from different perspectives (for example Allen/Smith, 1990; Hill, 1993; Jupille/Caporaso, 1998 and Ginsberg, 1999). In the beginning there was a general focus on the internal composition of the EU and its capabilities, however, over time external factors gained ground incrementally. According to Scheler (2014) an increasing emphasis has been put on the intersubjective mechanisms that constitute an actor in world affairs (p. 12). For example Bengtsson (2008) states that "[f]ocusing solely on developments in the internal capacity of a given actor misses the fundamental point what is ultimately decisive is how other actors perceive such developments" (p. 603). More and more scholars opened themselves to the viewpoint that actorness is created where the two dimensions meet. Hill and Smith (2005) claimed that "[t]he very conception of international 'actorness' depends on bringing 'inside' and 'outside' into a relationship with each other, just as agents and structures are mutually dependent" (p. 5). Following that logic and considering actorness as an intersubjective construction enables the researcher to overcome the sui generis debate on the EU's international role (Scheler, 2014, p. 12). Therefore an approach combining internal as well as external factors influencing actorness is very viable in analyzing the EU actorness in its totality. Such a conceptualization is attempted by Bretherton and Vogler (2006) whose analysis focuses on the inter-related concepts of opportunity, presence and capability.

2.2) EU Actorness by Bretherton and Vogler

Bretherton and Vogler (2006) use a social constructivist approach that "[...] conceptualizes global politics in terms of the processes of social interaction in which actors engage. These formal and informal processes shape the evolution of actors' identities and provide contexts within which action is constrained or enabled." (p. 13). In their conceptual framework they define an actor as an entity that is capable of agency; of formulating and acting upon decisions. They argue that agency is not unlimited, but rather that the capacity to act reflects the interaction between understandings about internal character and capabilities as well as external opportunities (p. 35).

The authors therefore consider both internal and external factors that impact the EU's ability to act. The focus on the interplay of internal and external parameters in constructing an international actor is also what advances their concept of international actorness from earlier contributions. On the one hand, the EU is embedded in a socially constructed international structure of relations between multilevel actors (regional, national, international) and of different norms, values and ideas. These structures "provide 'action settings' or distinct patterns of opportunity and constraint within which agency is displayed" (Bretherton/Vogler, 2006, p. 21). This includes how third parties perceive the EU and whether they acknowledge it as an actor. On the other hand, actorness is also shaped from within the EU, for example depending on whether or not the EU has resources at hand and the political willingness to react to opportunities revealed by the international structure. Furthermore all actions have consequences, both intended and unintended, and structures evolve through the reinterpretation of international rules. According to Bretherton and Vogler agency and structure are closely intertwined, and they argue that they cannot be studied without referring to how they are related the other processes. (Bretherton/Vogler, 2006, p. 22).

Their theoretical conceptualization is based on the interrelated notions of presence, opportunity and capacity, which frame actorness.

The concept of *presence* is inspired by the work of Allen and Smith (1990) about "Western Europe's Presence in the Contemporary International Arena." According to them, presence is understood as whether the EU has an impact on third parties by its

mere existence as an institution in the international arena (Bretherton/Vogler, 2006, p. 24). It is therefore a passive concept that can manifest itself both directly, for example through unintended external consequences of internal policies, as well as indirectly, through the subtle processes of structural power associated with perceptions of the EU's reputation (Niemann/Bretherton, 2013, p. 266f). In this regard, success plays an important role. If the EU is perceived as a community of security and prosperity it increases its attractiveness to others. Also perceptions of purpose, unity and effectiveness are apt to enhance presence. This is particularly relevant in relatively new policy areas such as CSDP where third-party expectations have been low. Here considerable evidence of success is needed to change external perceptions of the Union (Bretherton/Vogler, 2013, p. 377).

Bretherton and Vogler define *opportunity* as "the external environment of ideas and events – the context which frames and shapes EU action or inaction" (Bretherton/Vogler, 2006, p. 24). The authors try to capture how events in the international system or the ideas that third parties have about the role of the EU frame its action and shape its identity. Opportunity therefore either constrains or enables EU actorness and represents the structural context for its action. For example the end of the Cold War brought fundamental changes to the international external environment and provided enhanced opportunities for the Union to act, especially within the wider European region. However, the EU was ill-equipped to meet some of the new challenges and opportunities that were produced, for example, by the outbreak of violent conflict in the Western Balkans in the early 1990s. The development of Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) were to a considerable extent a response to the failures of the 1990s. However, the EU managed to become a major player in the region in the post-conflict situation (Bretherton/Vogler, 2013, p. 380).

Capability, the final element in Bretherton and Vogler's model, refers to the internal process of the EU agency that shapes EU actorness. Capability determines whether the EU and its member states have the political willingness, shared priorities and policy instruments at hand to act collectively in the situations brought forward by Presence and Opportunity (Bretherton/Vogler, 2006, p. 29ff). The most important dimensions of Capability are policy formulation i.e. the ability to formulate priorities

and develop policies; and the availability of policy instruments as well as the capacity to utilize them (Bretherton/Vogler, 2013, p. 381).

The EU's policy formulation ability is impeded by diverging interests of its Member States, which are referred to as coherence problems. Coherence reflects the common-sense notion that the EU is more effective when it 'speaks with one voice,' and it was also argued by Niemann /Bretherton (2013) that the desire to strengthen the coherence of the EU's external policy has been a key factor driving treaty and institutional reform for more than a decade (Niemann/Bretherton, 2013, p. 267).

For analyzing purposes coherence is divided in three parts: vertical, horizontal and institutional coherence. However, they are intimately connected and all three must be present if policy-making is to be effective (Bretherton/Vogler, 2013, p. 381). Vertical coherence is particularly significant for this paper, because it denotes the extent to which the external policies of the Member States are consistent with each other and complementary to those of the EU. It is therefore a measure of Member State political commitment to common policies. However, in some cases Member States are able to reach agreement only on a relatively weak policy position, vertical coherence therefore is not automatically guaranteeing an effective policy. (Bretherton/Vogler, 2013, p. 382). Horizontal coherence refers to tensions between policy sectors that impede effective policy formulation and implementation. Such tensions arise for example between trade, energy and environment policy. It is necessary to ensure that policies in one sector do not impede or undermine those in others to achieve horizontal coherence (Bretherton/Vogler, 2013, p. 383). Institutional coherence refers to the Union's internal policy coordination procedures and should prevent turf wars between its institutions. The EU was lacking satisfactory mechanisms for dealing with disputes between the Council and the Commission and within the Commission. The responsibility for promoting coherence was shared by the Council and the Commission; it is now the sole responsibility of the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, who is also Vice President of the Commission (Bretherton/Vogler, 2013, p. 384).

Apart from the policy formulation, EU capability depends on the availability of policy instruments. The traditional instruments employed in pursuit of external policy objectives include political (diplomacy/negotiation), economic (incentives/sanctions)

or military means. The Union has access in varying degrees to all three types of instruments. It has also developed the capacity to deploy externally a range of civilian policing and judicial measures. The ability to utilize these instruments, however, depend on the extent to which problems of vertical coherence can be overcome (Bretherton/Vogler, 2013, p. 385).

The framework of Bretherton and Vogler was chosen for this paper, because it offers a tool to outline and examine how the ideas and meanings certain parties attribute to actors and events are closely intertwined with the ability or inability of an entity to act as an international actor, and vice versa. That means how the EU actorness is shaping and shaped by processes in its external environment. This framework provides the tools to highlight those processes and assess their impact on EU actorness.

2.3) Social constructivism

Since Bretherton and Vogler's theoretical framework is a social constructivist theory, it is necessary to examine social constructivism more closely and outline the added value of a social constructivist approach.

Social constructivism within IR considers reality as socially constructed and reproduced through social interactions in an ongoing and dynamic discourse. It is interested in how actors reproduce and react to reality depending on their understanding, interpretation and knowledge of it (Loschert, 2014, p. 9). From a constructivist point of view structures are created through interaction and the act of sharing ideas/knowledge within and across communities and not by material forces, which is the case for realists. Thus international structures are built on shared ideas and knowledge; it will always be possible to change these structures if new thoughts and ideas enter into existence in IR. Identities and interests are therefore dynamic and constructed through interaction rather than embedded in the human nature (Jackson/Sorensen, 2010, p. 160). European cooperation has been a main theme in constructivist analyses. While a realist might say that European foreign policy is simply a product of the interests of each individual nation, therefore close cooperation will never emerge due to diverging interests and occasional progress is merely

tactical maneuvering, a constructivist would argue that interests are created through social interaction and that this builds intersubjective structures that help further cooperation. That means that EU Member States may not agree on important aspects of foreign policy, however, day-to-day practices of political cooperation significantly promotes a shaping of common perspectives and mutual coordination (Jackson/Sorensen, 2010, p. 172). These intersubjective structures provide the 'action settings' of global politics, which will be of interest in analyzing the mediating dialogue in the Ukraine crisis (Bretherton/Vogler p. 23). Social constructivism therefore will provide a good framework for understanding how the EU's decision making process in the Ukraine crisis will affect and shape its identity in global politics. The added value of a social constructivist approach for this paper is that it does not only focus on the internal, material ability or disability to act, but is also considering the influence of external factors (meanings and perceptions of other actors) as elaborated in chapter 2.2. From this point of view, actorness is not just enabled or constrained by internal capabilities to act, but also by the international context, i.e. the reality it is embedded in.

2.3.1) Limitations/Criticism

This section contains a critical review on social constructivism in general and the chosen theoretical framework in particular. Since neorealism is viewed as the main theoretical opponent for constructivism, some shortcomings of constructivism according to neorealists will be reviewed in the following.

Neorealists are generally skeptical about the importance that constructivists attach to norms, especially international norms. They acknowledge that they exist; however, they argue that they are routinely disregarded in the interest of powerful states. Krasner (1994) stated that since the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, powerful states have violated the autonomy and integrity of weak ones. According to him every major postwar settlement since then has attempted to restructure domestic political institutions in defeated states. He concludes that if there is an international society out there, it had not more impact on the behavior of states than conventional norms about sex, family and marriage have on the behavior of individuals in North America and Europe (Krasner, 1994, p. 16-17 as cited in Jackson/Sorensen, 2010, p. 175).

The breach of Ukrainian sovereignty by Russia is supporting that line of argument, although Russia favored an indirect approach with its hybrid warfare rather than to risk an open breach of sovereignty.

Neorealists are also not ready to accept that states can easily become friends due to social interaction. They recognize this as a desirable goal, but deem it not realizable in practice since the structure of the international system forces states to behave as egoists. According to them uncertainty plays a very important role in the anarchic international system, which constructivists neglect to analyze sufficiently. States are uncertain about the present and future intentions of other states, even if there is peace and quiet in the international system at the moment. Because in anarchy, states are always seeking security and moves in that direction can be misread by other states; this is what the security dilemma is all about. This problem can also be increased by deception. Constructivists tend to assume that social interaction between states is always sincere and states genuinely try to express as well as understand each other's intentions. But deceptive actors will stage a situation in a way that serves their ends, so a state can never know if another state is really peaceful or merely pretends to be peaceful (Jackson/Sorensen, 2010, p. 176). Against that critique, constructivists argue that anarchy is a more complex entity than presented by neorealists. They argue that neorealists still favor an outdated view on anarchy. Alexander Wendt suggested three cultures of anarchy that developed over time: Hobbesian, Lockean and Kantian, based on the three famous theorists. In the Hobbesian culture, states view each other as enemies and war is endemic as a way to survive. This worldview dominated, according to Wendt, until the seventeenth century. After the peace of Westphalia in 1648 the Lockean culture became characteristic of the modern states system. Here states consider each other as rivals, but they restrain themselves and recognize the other states' right to exist. After the Second World War a Kantian culture has emerged among consolidated liberal democracies. Here states view each other predominantly as fiends, settle disputes peacefully and support each other in the case of threat by a third party (Jackson/Sorensen, 2010, p. 168). So anarchy is not necessarily leading to self-help, mutual aggression and the risk of violent conflict. However, it may also be true that shared ideas about friendship do not automatically reflect a deep commitment between some states (Jackson/Sorensen, 2010, p. 177).

The actorness approach of Bretherton and Vogler shares the above elucidated flaws of constructivism since it is a constructivist theory and applies to the same principles. Furthermore, the theory lays a heavy focus on the coherence of the EU as a determining factor for the Unions capability to act. It has been argued (in chapter 2.2) that greater unity of the EU i.e. coherence leads to a more effective foreign policy and therefore enhances the EU's ability to act. However, coherence does not translate into effective policy quite so linear; there are some limitations. On the one hand, efforts to achieve coherence can result in the lowest common denominator. This could lead to ineffective policies that are, for example, reflected in the EU's preference for inducements rather than threats when seeking to exert influence (Niemann/Bretherton, 2013, p. 267). On the other hand can greater EU unity also invoke negative reactions from negotiating partners and therefore impede EU effectiveness (Niemann/Bretherton, 2013, p. 268).

3.) Methodology

This paper will be conducted as an explorative, qualitative case study of the EU actorness in the Ukraine crisis. The research will be conducted as a desk research relying on secondary sources. The chosen theoretical framework will be applied to the source material in an explorative manner in order to answer the guiding sub questions.

This method was chosen because qualitative research methods allow understanding of complex phenomena through in depth analysis. Thus all aspects of the situation need to be considered, which means that contextual factors surrounding the phenomenon will also be taken into account (Harling, 2002, p. 5). Qualitative research is also viable for simplifying and managing data without destroying complexity or context. However, a weakness of this approach is that the gained insights might not be generalizable to other settings or cases (Atieno, 2009, p. 17). Given the complexity of the EU as international actor this approach allows to access and capture much of its unique actorness through a holistic approach (Harling, 2002, p. 2). As an institution sui generis as explained in chapter 2.1 the EU has its own approach to power politics and is considered by some as "soft power." In contrast to traditional states so called "hard powers" that rely on their military resources to grant them influence, the EU uses primarily other channels to exert influence. Mainly

through its attractiveness to others, its function as a role model or the promotion of norms, values and ideas. The EU is covering a broad spectrum reaching from its attraction as prosperous economic giant, with lavish welfare systems up to its function as a paragon of western values like democracy and human rights, serving as a role model as well as benchmark and contributing to a non-military solution of conflicts through diplomacy (Große-Hüttmann, 2013). Social constructivism is based around the understanding and interpretation of norms, values as well as ideas and therefore most apt to capture the EU actorness in this regard. Therefore this paper will approach the area of research from a social constructivist perspective in order to account for the complexity of its system and structures.

4.) Analysis of the EU Actorness in the Context of the Ukrainian Conflict

In this chapter the Ukraine crisis will be analyzed in regard to the three categories (presence, capacity, opportunity) of Bretherton and Vogler's analytical framework. The first subchapter will provide an overview of the events that caused the Ukraine crisis as well as happen during the course of it. This will be the background for the following chapters in which each category of Bretherton and Vogler's framework will provide insights on how the EU's actorness is either constrained or enabled internally as well as externally and what opportunities are arising from the crisis.

4.1.) Background Ukraine crisis

The Ukraine crisis erupted in November 2013 when the then Ukraine President Viktor Yanukovich refused to sign the over year's negotiated EU Association Agreement (AA) at the Vilnius Summit. The AA was supposed to be the future cornerstone of EU-Ukraine relations and successor of the former Partnership and Co-operation Agreement (PCA). It is embedded in the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) that has been developed in the follow up of EU Eastern enlargement (EEAS 2013: 1). The core element of the AA was the establishment of a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) that would gradually integrate Ukraine into the European Single Market and lead to a "gradual approximation with the EU acquis" (EEAS 2013: 4). In spite of the fact that a Ukrainian membership in the EU was explicitly not on the

table, Moscow perceived the completion of the AA as a foreign policy threat (Gehring et al., 2015, p. 18). Unwilling to lose Ukraine to the European Union, Russia launched substantial trade sanctions against Ukraine in summer 2013 and thereby pressured the Yanukovich administration not to sign the agreement. Russia wanted Ukraine to reject the European bid and to join the Eurasian Union - its Customs Union with Belarus and Kazakhstan (Aslund, 2013, p. 1).

As a consequence of not signing the AA, thousands of Ukrainian citizens protested in the streets against the current regime. Violence escalated on February 20, 2014 at the Maidan square in Kyiv when the government reacted aggressively towards protestors, leading to the death of several people (BBC, 2015). The result was a highly instable and insecure situation in Ukraine, in which western emissaries hurriedly flew to Kyiv to resolve the crisis. On February 21, the government and the opposition struck a deal that allowed President Yanukovich to stay in power until new elections were held. But it immediately fell apart, and Yanukovich fled to Russia the next day (Mearsheimer, 2014). The then appointed interim government was accused by Russia of threatening the rights of Russian minorities living in Ukraine, especially on the Crimean peninsula. Thereafter pro-Russian gunmen seized key buildings in the Crimean capital, Simferopol. Within days the Crimean parliament initiated a referendum on whether Crimea should be incorporated into Russian territory. The following declaration of the annexation of Crimea by Russia on March 18, 2014 was highly disputed and deteriorated the relationship with the West (Englund, 2014). The EU views the annexation as a violation of international law and the territorial integrity as well as sovereignty of Ukraine. Shortly after the annexation the Union imposed the first round of sanctions on Russian officials and high-ranking Moscow allies in Ukraine (EU Council, 2014).

After Ukrainian troops withdrew from Crimea, trouble spread in eastern Ukraine and protesters occupied government buildings in the cities of Donetsk and Luhansk Ukraine's industrial heartland as well as in Kharkiv. Although Kharkiv was retaken, the occupation spread to other cities and on May 11, pro-Russian separatists in Donetsk and Luhansk declared independence as "people's republics" after the referendums, which were not recognized by Kyiv or the West. On 25 May, elections for a new president resulted in the election of Petro Poroshenko with more than 55% of votes, although Donetsk city and several other locations were excluded from voting. On 5 September, Ukraine and pro-Russian rebels agreed on a ceasefire in

the Belarus capital, Minsk. Just four days later it was violated when fierce fighting erupted around Donetsk airport. There were also repeated violations of the truce elsewhere in the east. In January 2015 the fighting continued in and around Donetsk as well as in the Luhansk region. Both sides seemed keen to strengthen their negotiating positions ahead of any "peace summit" that might come. Finally on February 12, after a negotiation marathon, an agreement was reached to end the fighting. The respective leaders of Russia, Ukraine, Germany and France announced a ceasefire starting February 15. The deal included weapon withdrawals and prisoner exchanges and also a buffer zone for heavy weapons between Ukrainian and separatist territory. The pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine also signed the agreement (BBC, 2015).

4.2) Presence

According to Bretherton and Vogler, Presence denotes for the EU's ability to shape the perceptions, expectations and behavior of third parties by virtue of its existence (Bretherton/Vogler, 2013, p. 377). The fall of the iron curtain at the end of the Cold War brought an increase of the EU's presence in its eastern neighborhood. The EU had a significant influence on the transformation of the political and economic systems of nation states of the former Soviet Union through the prospect of accession using the tool of conditionality (Litra, 2011, p. 8). The establishment of the EU Eastern Neighborhood Policy (ENP) was an attempt of the EU to maintain this influence on its new eastern neighborhood states, such as Ukraine or Belarus, even though the prospects of membership had been explicitly excluded. However, research shows that the incentives provided by the ENP are not as effective as the prospect of accession (Litra, 2011, p. 21). Therefore it can be argued that the influence of the EU on its eastern neighborhood decreased with the EU's "enlargement fatigue" after the big accession of 2004 and 2007.

The EU's identity as an actor is an important part of the EU's Presence, which is evolving constantly through social interaction and encounters with other actors as well as events of the external environment. The EU's identity consists of "shared understandings [...] about what the EU is, in terms of its character and its values, and what it should (or should not) do, in terms of its external policies and actions" (Bretherton/Vogler, 2006, p. 38). According to Rohrbacher and Jeníčková is the identity of the EU built on strengthening peace, justice, human rights protection and

security in the world. As a consequence, norms and values are unintentionally spread from the EU to other political actors which adopt these values voluntarily (Rohrbacher/Jeníčková, 2011, p.182). There are several concepts that explain the EU attractiveness. One of them is Europeanisation, which is a concept that focuses on the description of the process of adoption of the EU legislature by either member states (internal Europeanisation) and by the states outside the EU (external Europeanisation). External Europeanisation includes the European Neighbourhood Policy and the EU' s policy towards Central Asia (ibid., p.181). According to the normative power concept, the EU is seen as a source of civilian and democratic standards and an actor using primarily the "export" of ideas and values instead of other forms of power (ibid., p.182). The briefly in chapter 3. explained concept of soft power explains the influence of an actor on the behavior of other actors is based on attraction and seduction. Being weak in terms of force or military power the EU is (relatively) strong in terms of soft power, in attracting others to its "way of thinking." The EU' s advantage lies in its ability to attract outside actors thanks to its internal value paradigms and institutional scheme (ibid. p.183).

In order to access the effect that the EU's presence had on the crisis in Ukraine this paper will analyze the perceptions which the Ukrainian population had of the EU. What started as a student protest striving for closer links to the EU turned into a more general anti-regime protest against the unpopular, authoritarian government of president Yanukovich. The problems addressed and the demands made by the protestors during the Ukraine crisis were diverse and partly contradictory. While some protested solely for democratic values and the protection and strengthening of the rule of law, others demanded closer ties with the EU. Another group is the rightwing nationalist sector, whose claims are quite contradictory to those of the other two positions. Moreover, especially in the eastern part of Ukraine, pro-Russian movements prevailed (Darden/Way, 2014).

Two important narratives that shaped the protests will be examined: the pro-European and pro-Russian narrative. The pro-European thrives for a better future for Ukraine by deepening the relationship with the EU. It resulted among other things from the dissatisfaction of Ukraine citizens with the current political and economic situation in their country. In 2013, 67% of the population was of the opinion that

developments within their country were going the wrong way. There was also a trend in public opinion that citizens were increasingly striving for a strengthening and protection of the rule of law, democracy and the realization of human rights (Jarábik/Yanchenko, 2013). Since the EU stands for all those values, as elaborated earlier, the adherents of those narratives hoped to achieve them by forging closer ties with the EU. This is a good example for an unintended effect of the EU's Presence, triggered by the normative values it radiates. However, the attractiveness of the EU as a normative power should not be overestimated. A big part of the appealing force of the EU derives from its economic success and plays an important role in strengthening the perception of EU Presence in its neighborhood (Bretherton/Vogler, 2013, p. 378). Loschert (2014) argues that due to the normative values and economic prosperity the EU is representing derives the duty to take action along those lines to support the Ukrainian pro-European attempts (p.12). This is underpinned by a statement of former President of the European Parliament, Manuel Barroso. According to him, the protestors at the Maidan "know that Europe is not just the land of opportunity in terms of economic development [...] but also because Europe is the promise of hope and freedom. And I think the European Union has the right and the duty to stand by the people of Ukraine in this very difficult moment" (Barroso, 2013). This illustrates how Presence triggers responses and expectations by third parties and in return the responsibility of the EU to react which in the end can lead to actual actions decided and undertaken by the EU (see chapter 4.3).

The EU's Presence in its eastern neighborhood is not uncontested. It is faced with challenges from both internal as well as external factors that have the potential to diminish its international perception as a capable actor. As explained in chapter 2.2 the EU's Presence is to a great extent based on its success, solidarity and unity. However, a substantial part of Ukraine's society perceives the EU as flawed and unable to solve its own problems efficiently, like the financial and economic crisis, the inability to cope with increasing immigration flows and demographic change. Due to the Euro Crisis EU officials focused intensely on the problems within the EU and thereby neglected their duties and responsibilities beyond its borders (Loschert, 2014, p.12). As a consequence, EU officials and the wider public began to question the exemplary character of the EU, at the same time doubting its capability as an actor within the international arena and the eastern neighborhood (Bátora/Navrátil,

2014, p. 24). This perceived lack of efficiency and cohesion (Capability) leads to a decreasing Presence of the EU in the international system and its eastern neighborhood. In addition to its internal challenges the Presence of the EU is also threatened by the Presence of another major player in the region: the Russian Federation. That strives to create closer ties with Ukraine in order to include it in its Eurasian Union. Since 2009, Russia has struggled for Ukrainian accession to the Customs Union (Gehring et al., 2015, p. 17-18). Like the EU the Russian Federation can be understood as a "gravity center" (Rohrbacher/Jeníčková, 2011, p.182) which offers a certain set of values and "governance standards" (Bátora/Navrátil, 2014, p. 25). Both parties are pulling on Ukraine with different approaches. The EU on the one hand, relies on the tool of conditionality and socialization to create sources of influence. Russia on the other hand, operates through the deepening of vulnerabilities in the region by the establishing asymmetrical relations (Dias, 2013, p. 5). Russia also utilizes the rhetoric of soviet brotherhood to further its cause and invoke the desire within the Ukrainian population to reunite with Russia.

To access the Ukraine crisis in its totality, the "pro-Russian narrative" in the Ukrainian population has to be considered. This narrative favors closer ties with Russia and the Eurasian Union over the EU. Incited by Russian propaganda a movement of "pro-Russian" citizens formed in Eastern Ukraine with the wish to reunite Ukraine with Russia and basically to bring back the Soviet mentality (Schneider-Deters, 2014). Supported by hundreds of Russian political tourists they promote "a return to Soviet order, values and customs" and were "optimistic about the future of Ukraine if it develops strong connections with Russia and returns to the ideals of Soviet Ukraine" (Korostelina, 2013, p. 225). These pro-Russian demonstrations in Eastern Ukraine and especially in Crimea were a reflection of this eastward looking narrative, which shows that it is not just the EU has a magnetic effect on its neighbors. In case of the "pro-Russian narrative" the Presence of the EU triggers a reaction from third parties not because they are attracted, but instead because they feel threatened by the increasing influence of the EU on the region. It can be argued that the attempt of the EU to further bind Ukraine to the EU upset Russia and pro-Russian movements within the shared neighborhood and triggered the reaction of Russia to protect its influence (Schneider-Deters, 2014). So a cause of the Ukraine crisis may very well be the "(often unintended) consequences of the Union's internal priorities and

policies” (Bretherton/Vogler, 2013, p. 377). In negotiating the AA with Ukraine the EU sidestepped the intergovernmental decision-making body of CFSP and thereby prevented an adequate processing of security related information coming from the broader environment. This neglect of contextual factors made the Commission blind for unintended consequences beyond the scope of monitoring implementation of its policy, since the target of the association policy was Ukraine and not Russia (Gehring et al., 2015, p. 10). Through its focus on low politics related issues and its disregard for high politics consequences the EU became a high politics actor by accident and sleepwalked into the Ukraine crisis (Erlanger, 2015).

To sum up, the Presence of the EU in its eastern neighborhood and especially Ukraine should not be taken for granted. It is challenged by the inner divide of the EU, its lacking political willingness and especially the vast presence of Russia. Despite its reputation as a "value leader" (Rohrbacher/Jeníčková, 2011, p.189) the EU should be more conscious about the effect of its Presence as well as the impact of its policies to prevent causing further unintended high politics effects.

4.3) Capability

The Ukrainian situation cuts to the heart of the European Union's promise as a foreign policy actor and posts challenges to its actorness. The Presence of the EU, as elaborated in the previous chapter, has still a powerful pull for many countries, like Ukraine, aspiring to join its ranks. The Union acts to a variety of external policies, signing international treaties alongside sovereign states and acting as the world's largest contributor of foreign development aid. Its combined economic weight outstrips that of the United States and puts it far ahead of China. However, despite its successes one should not forget that the EU is not a nation-state and cannot be compared to other states in terms of foreign policy coherence (McNamara, 2014). Bretherton and Vogler consider the EU's Capability, i.e. the Union's internal ability or inability to formulate policies and utilize policy instruments, as an integral part of EU actorness. This chapter therefore will access the EU's Capability through the analysis of its two most important dimensions: its ability of policy formulation and the availability as well as capacity to utilize policy instruments (Bretherton/Vogler, 2013, p. 381).

4.3.1) Policy formulation

The unique character of the EU provides particular challenges to policy formulation. The ability of the EU to prioritize and develop policies can be impeded by diverging interests of its Member States. This is particularly the case in the field of CSFP and CSDP, which are very sensitive areas for the member state sovereignty, where decisions (with a few exceptions) are taken unanimously. If the interests or external dependencies of Member States diverge or are even opposing, it is difficult to take a common stance or adopt policies which go beyond the lowest common denominator (Gehring et al., 2015, p. 6). Therefore Vertical coherence is especially important for this paper, because a lack of vertical coherence across the Member States can challenge and seriously constrain the EU's actorhood.

To provide a general baseline for understanding the complication of EU consensus politics, Leonard and Popescu (2007) identify five distinct policy approaches of EU Member States to Russia:

The "'Trojan Horses' (Cyprus and Greece) [...] often defend Russian interests in the EU system, and are willing to veto common EU positions; 'Strategic Partners' (France, Germany, Italy and Spain) who enjoy [a] 'special relationship' with Russia which occasionally undermines common EU policies; 'Friendly Pragmatists' (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Finland, Hungary, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal, Slovakia and Slovenia) who maintain a close relationship with Russia and tend to put their business interests above political goals; 'Frosty Pragmatists' (Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Ireland, Latvia, the Netherlands, Romania, Sweden and the United Kingdom) who also focus on business interests but are less afraid than others to speak out against Russian behavior on human rights or other issues; and 'New Cold Warriors' (Lithuania and Poland) who have an overtly hostile relationship with Moscow and are willing to use the veto to block EU negotiations with Russia" (Leonard/Popescu, 2007, p. 2).

The differing political and economic interests of EU member states with regard to Russia can be traced back to the divergent economic interdependencies of Member States on Russia, their geopolitical situation as well as historic experiences. Of particular importance is the dependency of several countries on Russian oil and gas. A general overview of the EU's dependence on Russian energy supplies can be drawn from a current report of the House of Lords (2015), which is based on official EU sources. In 2013 accounted Russian energy supplies for 39% of EU natural gas

imports or 27% of EU gas consumption, Russia also exported 71% of its gas to Europe. In regard to oil, the EU imports more than €300 billion of crude oil and oil products, of which one third is from Russia (House of Lords, 2015, p. 14). While states like Portugal, Spain and the UK are not obtaining any Russian gas, especially the eastern member states are highly dependent on gas supply from Russia. Bulgaria, Estonia, Finland, Slovakia, Latvia and Lithuania depend on Russia as a single external supplier for their entire gas imports (House of Lords, 2015, p. 14). The latter group fears that restrictive measures against the Kremlin would aggravate Russia which then in return could punish them with gas cuts or an increase in gas and oil prices.

On the other hand are the EU Member States by far Russia's most significant trading partners, in 2013 they accounted for 57% of Russian exports and 46.5% of Russian imports. In turn, Russia is the EU's third largest trading partner, accounting for 9.5% of EU trade (House of Lords, 2015, p. 12). Special attention should be paid to Germany, which has close economic ties to Russia (Wagner/Rinke, 2014). It is also the biggest importer of Russian energy in the EU, in terms of volume. With a supply of 36% on gas and 39% on Russian oil, German dependency is considerable (Westphal, 2014, p.2). When restrictive measures were discussed, German industry put pressure on Chancellor Merkel to halt sanctions against Russia (Karnitschnig, 2014). Also countries like France, Italy and Hungary have strong ties with Russia, and therefore prefer keeping an open dialogue with Moscow instead of aggravating it with sanctions (Balfour, 2014). The western parts of the EU, with a greater geographical distance to the crisis and less dependency on the eastern neighborhood, felt less direct pressure to ease the crisis (Loschert, 2014, p. 18). In contrast, the eastern post-Soviet member states "feel the heat" from Ukraine. Especially Latvia and Estonia, which also have ethnic Russian minorities, urge the EU to tighten the pace and stem the Russian aggressive acts more efficiently in order to de-escalate the situation and ease the crisis (Easton, 2014). To summarize, it is the prevailing lack of political willingness of those member states highly dependent on Russian energy supplies and those with a greater geographical distance to Ukraine that constrained an effective approach of the EU towards Russia.

4.3.2) Availability of policy instruments

The second dimension of EU Capability relies on the availability of policy instruments. The instruments that are traditionally employed in pursuit of external policy objectives include political (diplomacy/negotiation), economic (incentives/sanctions) or military means. However, the EU's ability to utilize them depends on the extent to which problems of vertical coherence can be overcome (Bretherton/Vogler, 2013, p. 385).

Military

The EU generally has access to all three types of instruments, however, the possibility to use military instruments to ease the crisis in Ukraine had been ruled out from the very beginning (Ivan, 2014). This is consistent with the Union's identity as a "soft power" (Große-Hüttmann, 2013) and normative actor (Rohrbacher/Jeníčková, 2011, p.182) as elaborated in chapter 4.2). By precluding military interventions, the EU is re-constructing and thus underlining its normative identity. This illustrates how the EU's Presence and identity as a normative power influences the EU's Capability to act.

Diplomacy

Completely in line with the EU's normative values and probably the "softest" external policy tool to promote EU objectives with regard to third parties is diplomacy. For this approach the position of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs & Security Policy (HR), who is simultaneously the Vice-President of the European Commission, has been established. The work of the HR is supported by the European External Action Service (EEAS) consisting of Commission and Council officials. The EEAS, as a new institution, is intended to provide an effective diplomatic service that combines external economic relations and foreign policy (Bretherton/Vogler, 2013, p. 384). During the Ukraine crisis the office of HR was held first by Lady Catherine Ashton and later by Federica Mogherini. The first diplomatic efforts to solve the conflict, in Lady Ashton's term, were delivered by the Weimar Triangle ministers (Germany, France, Poland). Later, Germany, France, Ukraine and Russia negotiated behind closed doors in the so called "Normandy format" about matters that concerned European security without having a clear mandate from the other member states (Raik, 2015). In those talks, the High Representative and other EU institution representatives were not present (Kaca, 2015, p.2). The negotiations

resulted in a ceasefire agreement (Minsk I), in September 2014. So Germany and France taking the initiative was beneficial for the EU, however, it also raised worries of other MS about the legitimacy of their leadership. During Federica Mogherini's term, the negotiations continued to remain outside the EU institutions and resulted in a second ceasefire agreement (Minsk II) brokered again by the Normandy format in February 2015. Due to Russia's lack of progress in meeting the conditions of the agreement, the major Member States continued with their work on keeping a common EU line on sanctions policy towards Russia and Mogherini was limited to explaining European Council decisions to the outside world (Kaca, 2015, p.2).

The still remaining importance of single member states in the EU's external policies is also underlined by the fact that third parties, e.g. the government of the United States or members of the Ukrainian pro-European opposition maintained bilateral talks with single member states in order to ask for their support, rather than addressing the HR of the EU, which faded into the background. The presence of the HR in mediating the crisis was not only challenged by the governments of the member states, but also by the Presidents of the European Council and the Commission, Herman van Rompuy and Manuel Barroso (Loschert, 2014, p.19). These turf wars between EU institutions undermine the position and acceptance of the HR as the external representative of the EU and show a lack of "institutional coherence" (Bretherton/Vogler, 2013, 384). This indicates that the Member States are not truly willing to give up their foreign power to the EU. Raik (2015) also stated that "the HR, no matter who it is, cannot be a counterpart in talks with the Russian president. It is the president of the European Council who represents the EU externally at the level of heads of state in matters where the Commission has no competence" (Raik, 2015). In order to represent the EU externally as a single coherent actor in the future, the HR competences need to be extended.

Sanctions

Because of the EU's reluctance as a "soft power" to offer military aid, restrictive measures are a very important external policy instrument to promote the objectives of the CFSP which are "peace, democracy and the respect for the rule of law, human

rights and international law" (Council of the European Union, 2014). If the EU implements these restrictive measures as a single actor, they bear more political weight and symbolic power than if single Member States were to conduct them. However, in order to implement them unanimity within the Council is needed and this always bears the risk that measures will be watered down in order to achieve consensus (Loschert, 2014, p. 20). This problem could be observed with regard to the Ukraine crisis. The initial response of the EU was perceived as being "far too weak" (Ivan, 2014) and that the EU failed to consensus-build a strong response, which resulted in only superficial sanctions (Smith, 2014, p. 65). One reason was the internal disunity of the EU in regard to the usefulness of the sanctions. Hungary, Slovakia, Czech Republic and Finland openly criticized them and their usefulness (Dolidze, 2015, p. 7). Also Germany's reluctance to impose tough sanctions, coupled with a pro-Russian bloc consisting of Cyprus, Bulgaria and Greece cast serious doubt over the ability of the EU to compete with Russia in its shared neighborhood (Smith, 2014, p. 65). This was somewhat expected considering the weak position of the EU in due to the dependencies of both big and small Member States on Russian energy supplies and trade as explained in the previous section. Understandably it was immensely difficult to formulate a cohesive foreign policy position against this backdrop. However, despite these odds the EU's reaction after the Russian annexation of Crimea has been relatively good. The EU managed to create a common position, engaged in intensive diplomacy with Russia, and backed up its demands with a three-step sanction regime. That encompassed (1) diplomatic sanctions; (2) "targeted measures" against individuals and legal entities, including travel bans and freezing of assets in the European Union; (3) sectoral economic sanctions (Fischer, 2015, p.1). It then implemented two of these steps right away, dedicated significant relief funds to avoid Ukraine going bankrupt and even managed to keep all 28 member states in support of these measures (Techau, 2014). As the crisis progressed the EU also incrementally stepped up their restrictive measures including sectoral sanctions targeted at Russia's oil industry, financial sector and the military/arms industry (Jansen, 2015). Which were really meant to hurt Russia as well as itself. How did the EU manage to achieve the needed cohesion for those steps?

The EU Member States became aware of the gravity of the situation, which led enough of them to recalibrate their cost-benefit calculations. Nobody, of course,

wanted to lose valuable Russian business and those states with good diplomatic relations with Moscow were not eager to put them at risk. It, however, became clear to all 28 that the predictable short-term losses caused by tougher sanctions were much smaller than the potential long-term costs of a changed Eurasian security landscape. The EU's unity on Ukraine was therefore a victory for long-term over short-term thinking. Nowhere was this long-term perspective clearer than in Germany. Angela Merkel, the famously cautious German chancellor, declared that Germany could tolerate the costs that EU sanctions against Moscow would likely inflict on the country's own economy. Her statement was also targeted just as directly toward the German business community that had previously warned against taking a tougher stance on the Kremlin (Techau, 2014). This change could herald a shift in EU foreign policy to a more strategic approach focusing on a long-term perspective. The remaining contrast between the EU's normative obligation (derived from its presence as a normative actor) and the material interests of the Member States still impedes the EU to act according to the former. However, the shift to a more long term centered approach would increase the probability for the EU to act along the lines of its normative identity in the future.

4.4) Opportunity

Bretherton and Vogler define Opportunity as the external context of ideas and events in the international system that either enables or constrains EU action (Bretherton/Vogler, 2013, p. 378). The following chapter thus will deal with the question how the EU can use the Opportunity provided by the event of the Ukraine crisis to its advantage. According to Bretherton and Vogler "the conduct of regional relations [...] will have profound implications for the fundamental character of the Union, its physical borders and its reputation as an actor" (Bretherton/Vogler, 2006, p. 137). Therefore the Ukraine crisis has the potential to transform EU foreign policy, much like the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks transformed U.S. foreign policy. As history shows, external threats and crises have always been a determining factor for the EU as an international actor. The EU's failure to stop the bloodshed that followed the breakup of Yugoslavia in the 1990s and their humiliating dependence on U.S. leadership prompted the EU Member States to become more serious on foreign and security policy (Lehne, 2014, p. 3). These internal and external challenges and

opportunities led to institutionalization, cooperation and agreement within the EU and were the driving force behind the creation of the CFSP (Chebakova, 2008, p. 11). The current Ukraine crisis could provide exactly the challenge the EU needs for more and deeper integration and could erase the stain that was left by the failure to react efficiently to the so-called “hour of Europe” (Rupnik, 2011, p. 18) in the Balkan wars, that shaped the idea of the “capability-expectations gap” (Hill, 1993).

The event of the Ukraine crisis and the annexation of Crimea was perceived as the greatest challenge of the established world order since the end of the Cold War (NATO, 2014). National border demarcations, which had been taken for granted for decades, are now challenged and some were asking whether this conflict will turn out to be “a new Cold War” (Wintour, 2014). For the first time, the EU found itself in a geopolitical competition. The EU did not seek this confrontation, it was mostly imposed on the Union by Putin’s zero-sum approach to the region (Noori, 2014). This crisis provides an opportunity for the EU to evolve and improve its actorness as an international actor. The EU’s engagement during the last decades within the post-Soviet space largely involved promoting ‘European values’ through low politics and technocratic cooperation with the states in the region. This approach stems from a broadly shared understanding within European institutions that the EU’s success story originates in its ability to promote change through slow technocratic processes. Moreover, some consider solving issues on the international agenda through high level politics simply not within the EU’s reach, because it is lacking the capabilities to develop such a foreign policy (Nitoiu, 2015). In order to adapt to the current international situation and improve its international actorness also in high politics, there are different paths the EU could take. Some are of the opinion that this situation necessitates a radical change from traditional EU crisis management, which was about reducing risk rather than winning a fight. They see the crisis as an opportunity for the EU to find the strength to rise to the challenge or face a serious foreign policy setback (Lehne, 2014, p. 4).

The current crisis in Ukraine has shown that Europe is faced with a new kind of threat situation. Russia’s disregard for a nation’s sovereignty and Putin’s statement that his troops could be in Riga, Warsaw or Bucharest within two days was perceived as an open threat to question Europe’s existing borders (Huggler, 2014). Putin also could be aiming at furthering the divide within the EU Member States as his offer of financial aid to Greece shows (Hjelmgaard, 2015). Also the different dependencies

on Russian gas imports as shown in the chapter 4.3.1) offer a possible target for abuse. The EU in its current state would be very vulnerable to that approach, especially considering other current factors like the refugee policy that is threatening European unity. There is also a strategic disagreement concerning the policy towards Russia. Some states on the one hand are afraid of Russia and demand harsh sanctions as well as NATO troops at the border to Russia. In early 2015, for instance, the British Defense Secretary Michael Fallon has warned that there is a "real and present danger" that Russia could use its tactics of hybrid warfare also on NATO allies like Lithuania, Estonia or Latvia (Farmer, 2015). While Other states would like to suspend the sanctions against Russia as soon as possible because the counter sanctions are hurting their economy. These states view Russia first and foremost as trade partner and important raw material supplier. So there is at best a selective cooperation within the EU, a Common Security and Foreign Policy in the sense of that term does not exist. The current model of CSFP may be enough in times of peace but is not sufficient in times of crisis like the current one has shown. In the long run even big Member States like Germany, France and Great Britain will not be enough to provide security and stability in Europe. Destabilization in Europe could become a real danger (Bendiek, 2015). Instead of doing nothing the EU should use the lessons from the Ukraine crisis as a catalyst for more integration steps on the way to a communitization of the CFSP. Only a better integrated Europe will be able more efficiently coordinate its actions in this and future crises as well in its Energy foreign policy or the neighborhood policy.

Apart from overcoming its internal challenges provides the Ukraine crisis also an opportunity in a different direction. The EU should not dissociate itself from Russia and rather stop the bleeding between East and West. An isolated Russia is a dangerous Russia and could become a serious threat to Europe's security. The EU therefore should play into its strengths as a normative power to bridge the rift through diplomacy. The goal should be to make Russia part of the solution and not the problem. This could be a step on the way to realize the "Common European House" as envisioned by former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev (Gorbachev, 1989).

5.) Result of the analysis

The premise of this thesis was to answer the question, how the EU could utilize the opportunities provided by the Ukraine to increase its capabilities, which in turn would increase its international presence. Improving the EU's capabilities and presence furthermore would enable the EU to better react to future opportunities in the international system. The following first subchapter will identify and contrast strengths as well as weaknesses of the EU's external policy that the Ukraine crisis revealed. The second subchapter will offer recommendations on how the EU can build upon its strengths to increase its actorness and also how weaknesses can be overcome to achieve that goal.

5.1) Contrasting strengths and weaknesses

In analyzing the crisis some strengths and weaknesses of EU external policy became evident. This chapter will identify those and contrast them. The subsequent chapter will derive some lessons from the crisis as well as recommendations on how to best meet the EU's foreign policy challenges in the future.

To increase its actorness the EU needs to expand and build upon its strengths. Three distinct strengths coupled with three weaknesses were identified regarding the Ukraine crisis. First of all, the EU has a strong Presence in its eastern neighborhood, which allows the EU to exert influence by its mere existence. The EU is attractive to others because of its economic weight, elaborate welfare systems and high living standards, but also because of its normative identity and the values like democracy and human rights it radiates. As described in chapter 4.2 these factors have a pull effect on large parts of the Ukrainian population. The EU is utilizing this attractiveness to build a secure neighborhood, although its friendship is linked to conditions, which have to be met in order to establish further cooperation like the Accession Agreement with Ukraine. However, this focus on low politic trade relations with Ukraine neglected the very real high politics foreign policy consequences of their approach and forced the EU in a geopolitical struggle with Russia. The EU underestimated Ukraine's importance for Russia and was caught on the wrong foot by Putin's strong response. The general focus on low politics is not per se a weakness, however the neglect of high politics consequences in implementing low politics is. The EU only focused on its own interests in that matter and neglected to consider Russia's interests. The EU should be more aware of the consequences of its actions and how they affect others. If they want to challenge someone in the

future, they should do it intently and not unconsciously 'sleepwalk' (Erlanger, 2015) into the next crisis.

Secondly, due to its economic weight and strong interdependence with Russia as described in chapter 4.3.1) the EU is in a strong position to back its demands with the tool of restrictive measures. The implemented economic sanctions can really hurt the Russian economy as studies have shown (Dolidze, 2015; Dreyer/Popescu, 2014) and the long term impact of those cannot be safely estimated yet. But for the EU to exert this strength unanimity among its Member States is required and precisely this is considered as the EU's Achilles heel (Smith, 2014, p. 64). The struggle to achieve a common position against Russian aggression in the early stages of the Ukrainian crisis were displayed by the EU's initial weak response, only officially condemning Russia's actions in statements and implementing superficial sanctions. Achieving consensus between the Member States was impeded by their strong dependencies as well as different interests regarding Russia. The EU, however, managed to overcome these weaknesses in the Ukraine crisis, as its Member States finally became aware of the gravity of the situation and managed to implement tougher sanctions later on. Even though the EU managed to eventually overcome its weakness in consensus politics in this crisis, the problem is not solved and remains for future crises.

The third strength of the EU in dealing with the Ukraine crisis lays in its capability as conflict mediator. The result of its negotiating efforts with Russia, as well as Ukraine, were two ceasefire agreements, of which one currently still is in place. The EU recently extended its sanctions against Russia by six months to increase the pressure on Putin to comply with the terms of the second agreement, since the first was repeatedly violated (Barnes, 2015). However, the credit of this success belongs to the effort of single Member States, which took the initiative to negotiate on the EU's account. France and Germany negotiated within the framework of the so called "Normandy format" with Russia and Ukraine. Member States inter alia the United Kingdom, Poland and Finland questioned the legitimacy of their approach and raised concerns whether they wanted to impose their will on the EU over the heads of the other Member States (Raik, 2015). This lacking legitimacy could cause stronger disruptions among the Member States in future crises. It also shows another weakness in the EU's foreign policy and the need to strengthen the EU's foreign policy institutions. Germany's and France's leadership in the current crisis was not

contested, because there was no major disagreement between the Member States on how the crisis needed to be resolved. Other cases might be not so clear cut and if certain states would again assume the responsibility to act in the EU's name there would maybe be more of an uproar and open disagreement between the EU Member States. This perceived disunity could hurt the EU's international presence. In theory the EU should speak with one voice to be perceived as a coherent and unified international actor. This kind of unity would grant more weight to EU statements. Given the EU current foreign policy institutions such a measure is almost impossible to archive, thereof arises the need for the EU to improve its foreign policy institutions. Granting the EU's High Representative a more leading role in negotiations would be a big step in that direction. The HR was marginalised in the negotiating process of the current crisis, because she was lacking the political weight to negotiate at the highest level. To be perceived as a single coherent actor the EU needs to find a solution for this weakness and the concerns of the Member States regarding legitimacy have to be addressed and taken into account.

5.2) Lessons from the Crisis to overcome challenges - Recommendations

The Union's direct neighborhood is increasingly unstable and requires more intense EU engagement on a permanent basis. In order to react to the opportunity the given situation in Ukraine provides, the EU needs to increase its capabilities. To do that the EU should tackle what impedes its actorness the most - consensus politics. Chapter 4.3 has shown an internal divide and a lack of coherence among the 28 EU Member States in dealing with the crisis. Diverging interests kept the Member States from adopting strong counter measures in the beginning of the conflict, instead the reaction was slow and some Member States even criticized the EU's approach openly. A possible solution to overcome its internal disunity and to prevent a further division of Europe could be the communitization of the EU's CFSP. A strong common position would demonstrate unity to the outside and strengthen the Unions international presence. External threats and crises have always been a determining factor for the development of the EU as an international actor, as explained in chapter 4.4, the Ukraine crisis therefore could very well serve as the catalyst for more European integration.

As chapter 4.3.2 has shown, there was a shift in perspective happening within the Member States during the Ukraine crisis. This shift from the EU's initial weak response to a considerably stronger one can be traced back to a victory of values over interests from the social constructivist perspective or at least of long-term over short-term thinking (Techau, 2014). The EU's foreign policy debate is frequently dominated by the conflict between values vs. interests. As elaborated in chapter 4.2 the EU's presence derives for a large part from the EU as a "normative actor," preferring "soft-power" approaches over hard military power. As "value leader" (Rohrbacher/Jeníčková, 2011, p.189) the EU's restrictive measures also aim to promote these values as mentioned above. However, the diverging interests of its Member States in realpolitik often times pose a hindrance in achieving these goals as seen in the Ukraine crisis. These Member States are then accused of selling out European values for good trade relations or for peace and quiet on the political front. On the other side proponents of realpolitik will accuse the supporters of values of preaching from the moral high ground and ultimately achieving nothing. So realpolitik points to an urgent need for solving problems in the here and now, whereas the values-driven approach tends to follow longer cycles. The solution to this dilemma would be the creation of a common EU foreign policy strategy. A Strategy, by definition, is a long-term enterprise and its core is to identify long-term interests and to draw up a plan of how to pursue them with the tools available. A common EU foreign policy strategy would also root the EU's short-term decision making in the bigger picture (Techau, 2013).

After taking over the office of the High Representative of the EU it is Federica Mogherini explicit aim to make the EU foreign policy more 'strategic' (Korteweg, 2015), which would be in line with my argument. In order to do that she may revise the European Security Strategy of 2003 or even draft the EU's first foreign policy strategy document. However, it will not be easy to establish a consensus on a common "grand strategy" (Nünlist, 2015, p. 4). Mogherini's first step for a more strategic approach was the preparation of a strategic document on EU-Russia policy for the January 2015 Foreign Affairs Council (FAC). With this paper she tried to contribute to the EU position a more incrementally conciliatory approach towards Russia. She called for supplementing the sanctions by proposing an incentive policy

for Russia and for reconciling the EU's Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area agreements with the Eurasian Union (Kaca, 2015, p.2). The EU's end goal should not be to isolate or destroy Russia, but to find a way to make Russia modify its behavior to correspond to international law and to an OSCE-based international order. Thereby to arrive at a new level of co-existence and cooperation that would also include elements that appeal to Russia. This is a good goal – but it is also a very difficult and demanding one (Liik, 2015). This is why it is exactly the course the EU should take to play into its strengths as a normative power. Her approach, however, was not taken into consideration by the Member States, because they interpreted it as going back to business as usual with Russia (Kaca, 2015, p.2).

Mogherini also advocates an increased usage of qualified majority voting (QMV) in the CFSP. To implement that she could use the Passerelle clause, which allows for QMV in selected fields of the CFSP after a unanimous decision of the European Council. The application of this instrument is especially interesting for the EU's external energy policy and sanction policy. A communitized external energy policy would give the negotiating mandate to the European Commission, which would prevent future Russian attempts to play off Member States against each other (Bendiek, 2015). It is questionable, however, in how far the Member States are willing to give sovereignty to Brussels. The Treaty of Lisbon 2009 brought the communitization of the CFSP to a full stop and led to a disillusionment in EU foreign policy, the treaty strengthened the Member States instead of the Union (Bendiek, 2010, p.1). Given the current divide between Member States a communitization of the CFSP would be hard to archive, a more feasible goal would be the strengthening of the position of the HR of the Union. In her term Federica Mogherini has made progress in improving cooperation between the EEAS and the Commission. She also seeks to respond to the calls for a stronger role for the HR and EEAS in taking the initiative and proactively shaping EU foreign policy (Raik, 2015). Improving the capabilities of the High Representative would result in a more unified Union in the international perception. Providing the HR with the authority to speak for the EU would get rid of the questions of legitimacy that were raised during the negotiations of the "Normandy format", where Germany and France took matters in their own hands without an clear mandate by the other Member States (Raik, 2015). As elucidated in chapter 4.3.2) she has been marginalized by the Member States in diplomatic efforts

during the conflict in Ukraine, much like her predecessor. The strong limitations on the role of the High Representative are also contradictory to its founding idea, which was to ensure that the greatest challenges for EU external relations are discussed and solved with the equal participation of all the Member States. The continuation of the High Representative's weak role in EU foreign policy could result in attempts to formalize the diplomatic activities of Member States in EU external affairs, for instance by the creation of groups of ministers of foreign affairs responsible for concrete dossiers (Kaca, 2015, p.6). Strengthening the HR's role and responsibilities would result in an increased perception of the EU as a coherent actor, however, just legitimizing the external diplomatic activities of Member States would be a compromise and this is what the EU is really known for.

Aside from increasing its capabilities the EU can take some policy steps in order to find a long term solution for the instable situation in its eastern neighborhood. A possibility could be a pan-European Economy- and Security Community which includes the whole northern hemisphere (Schneider-Deters, 2014). The EU also could aim for a free trade agreement "from Lisbon to Vladivostok" (Spiegel, 2010) including the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) as already suggested by President Putin in 2010. A positive step in this direction was already brought forward by Federica Mogherini in her above mentioned strategic document on EU-Russia policy. The EU should follow up and pursue measures in that direction. This is important especially when paying closer attention to the Russian point of view. From a constructivist stance it is important to consider the situation from both sides and so it is significant also to review the situation from the Russian viewpoint. The current situation provides not only a threat to the EU but also Russia as well. Because the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), which is currently negotiated between the EU and USA contains the risk for Russia of total economical marginalization, especially after its political isolation caused by the Ukrainian crisis (Stavridis, 2014). As shown in chapter 4.3.1 there is a mutual dependency between the EU and Russia concerning gas. However, due to the shale gas revolution in the US (EPRS, 2014: p. 2) Russia is threatened to lose its main customer to gas exports from the States. There are also significant shale gas reserves in Europe itself, however, due to various factors they are currently too expensive to access (EPRS, 2014: p. 3-4.). Nonetheless they are providing another longtime threat to Russia.

Instead of shoving Russia further into isolation the EU should extend its figurative hand and act as upholder of Russian interest. To this end the EU could build upon its diplomatic strength and work for Russia's longtime inclusion as a safety measure (Schneider-Deters, 2014). The creation of a Free Trade Area from "San Francisco to Vladivostok" (Vilpišauskas, 2015) is a worthy goal to fight for in order to build peace, prosperity and security in the northern hemisphere. The creation of a Free Trade Area between the EU and the Eurasian Union would probably mitigate the geoeconomic conflict between these parties, however, it would most likely not solve the geopolitical conflict, since Putin is still determined to make Russia a global player again, also in a political sense (Schneider-Deters, 2014). To achieve this goal he needs Ukraine, therefore is Ukraine not "safe" as long as Putin remains the President of the Russian Federation. However, Putin is not Russia and his current course is not irreversible. It is unlikely that he will change his course, but there are other parts of Russian society that want to return to Europe. To make that possible, Europe has to open itself to Russia again and to disengage from its one-sided transatlantic orientation. The USA has shifted its foreign policy focus already to the Asia-Pacific region (Campbell/Andrews, 2013, p. 8) and does not have the same dependencies to Russia as the EU has. So therefore the EU needs to think about its own needs and to break loose from its dependency to its big brother from overseas.

6.) Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to evaluate the EU's 'actorness' in foreign policy. The Ukraine crisis was used as an empirical example, because the EU entered for the first time into a geopolitical competition and the outcome is likely to influence its future actorness. Examining the Ukraine crisis according to the three categories of Bretherton and Vogler's social constructivist framework allowed for a better understanding of the EU actorness in the crisis. From this analysis different strengths and weaknesses regarding the EU's CFSP in the Ukraine crisis could be observed, which served as a foundation to derive some recommendations to meet the challenges of the EU's foreign policy in the future. Approaching the research from a social constructivist angle not only enabled the consideration of the internal material capability of the EU, it also allowed taking the influence the external environment had on EU actorness into account.

The realist perspective may be better in explaining the current situation and Russia's approach in Ukraine, but the realist mindset facilitated the crisis. This is exemplified through President Putin's desire to make Russia a great power once again and Russia's zero sum approach to the Ukraine crisis. It would be wrong for the EU to answer in kind, which could result in an isolation of Russia both economically and politically. This isolation would only make Russia only more dangerous. The EU should instead focus on its strengths as a normative and soft power. There has to be a change in thinking in order to prevent war and find a peaceful solution. This crisis opened up an opportunity for the EU to act and how it does will shape its identity, presence and actorness in the future. Will Member States continue to dominate the foreign policy or could communitization in CFSP be revitalized, which was stuck since the Treaty of Lisbon in 2009. The EU cannot simply extend a friendly hand to Russia and hope for the best, but they surely can find a way around a purely realist rationale and continue a constructive dialogue. The EU managed to finally stabilize Ukraine for the moment and backed its determination with the recent extension of their restrictive measures against Russia. It remains to be seen if Putin complies and also how the EU chooses to act when the time comes to take back the sanctions. Is the EU letting Putin get away with what happened in Ukraine and its back to business as usual or are they willing to let the diplomatic relations to Russia freeze over?

A possible third way could be an attempt to warm up their relations to Russia and provide positive incentives for cooperation like the possibility of a Trade Union, while still having the option of negative incentives if Putin chooses to step out of bounds. In this way not everyone will be pleased, but nobody will be left out of the benefits either – that is the heart of a compromise and the EU is really known for those. With Ukraine's signing of a new military doctrine (Karmanau, 2015) in September 2015 declaring Russia as an enemy and stating to reclaim its lost territory, the situation remains volatile in the EU's eastern neighborhood. Especially because of its identity as a normative power and provider of peace and democracy the EU has the duty to act to this opportunity and help to find a peaceful solution which includes all conflict parties. The long term solution of the Ukraine crisis could either bring the "Common European House" as envisioned by former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev one step closer to become reality or move further away from it.

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