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Analysing EU Foreign Policy on Russia before the 2022 Invasion of Ukraine

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At the end of the Cold War, assumptions that world peace needed to be underwritten by a balance of power, or more accurately, a balance of terror between heavily-militarised adversaries, began to fray. Expectations that states must conduct their affairs under the shadow of violence were challenged by the emergence of an alternative paradigm, which Francis Fukuyama proclaimed 'the end of history' (1989:3-18). Europe was ready to reject *Machtpolitik*. Instead, diplomacy, universal values, international laws and trade would be the handmaidens of peace.

The trajectory of the EU represents an attempt to reconceptualise power, rejecting the notion that power requires a capacity and willingness to instrumentalise violence. This has led to alternative definitions of the EU as an 'ethical power' or 'postmodern superpower' (Aggestam, 2008:1-11, McCormick, 2006:1ff). François Duchêne, an influential theoretician at the outset of Europe's unification, commented that 'where history ends, administration begins' (1972:47), and under the protection of NATO, the European Commission has busily concentrated on defining social and economic policy, and developing normative authority. Although Article J/11 of the Maastricht Treaty contained a vague expectation that the EU would evolve from political cooperation to form a Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), convincing member states to elevate national security capabilities to a supranational level has proved difficult. Over time, marginal advances in the EU's security architecture have gradually developed, accented by 'turning points' such as the Treaty of Lisbon in 2009, which introduced permanent structured cooperation in an attempt to convene largely reluctant member states around a more coherent security strategy, but such developments have tended to mirror the fluctuation of Europe's political challenges with the rediscovery of the argument for 'military power Europe' only surfacing in times of crisis (Braw, 2022).

Today, 'Military Power Europe' is once again *à la mode,* and the reason can be attributed to the return of history. Since 2014, the EU's strategic environment has deteriorated alongside a crisis of democratic legitimacy and a rise of ethnic populism. In 2014, Hungary became the first EU country to backtrack on democracy, whilst Russia annexed Crimea, and in 2016 the UK began exiting from the EU, withdrawing substantial diplomatic expertise and firepower. The chaotic withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan in 2021 provided a humiliating reminder of Europe's reliance on the US's hard power to maintain its influence abroad. As Russian storm clouds gathered on Ukraine's borders in 2021, the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, warned of 'an era of regional rivalries, [with] major powers refocussing their attention towards each other'. Josep Borrell, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, went further, claiming that 'if you want dialogue, diplomacy and multilateralism to succeed, you need to put power behind it […] we must relearn the language of power'. These comments conveyed a growing sense of Europe's insecurity and a desire for the EU to assert itself militarily. The first incursion of Russian troops into Ukrainian sovereign territory in Crimea caught the EU by surprise; after all, it was the first such breach of international law since 1945, but leading up to the full invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Russian restiveness was much more apparent. President Putin had previously declared that he would rather destroy Ukraine as a functioning state than see it fall under Western control (Mearsheimer, 2014:82). The EU had ample opportunity to reassess its diplomatic postures towards Russia and find a way to reduce the peril for Ukraine. Instead, the EU's eastward expansion discourse continued to aggravate the Europe-Russia rivalry. Why?

Suppose the Russian problem and future security challenges are to be addressed through collective rearmament. In

that case, the EU must also prepare to re-evaluate its own conceptual and political identity. This introspection would conflict with its established liberal narrative of leading Europe away from great power politics. This is the paper's central theme, whether discussions on militarisation have so far overlooked how forming a capable EU army would modify the emotions and group identity projected onto EU foreign policy. This research explores whether the 'normative' and 'civilian power' tributaries which flow into EU foreign policymaking lead to actions consistent with that of a 'rational actor' and whether the EU's power image creates an exploitable gap between the discourse of the EU and its geopolitical reality. The EU's power image has been the subject of so much debate that the discourse now appears cyclical. This research seeks to go beyond a case of 'old wine in new bottles.' Following the launch of the Strategic Compass proposals in 2021, and the invasion of Ukraine in 2022, much attention has been given to the structural and financial implications of military integration or the advantages of an EU army as a blunt instrument of containment (Brooks and Meijer, 2021:7-43). Less attention has been given to how these proposals could change the cognitive policymaking patterns within the EU, which could mean embracing a fundamentally different foreign policy outlook. The invasion of Ukraine could mark a *Zeitenwende*, a new era for European security, but this may mean going beyond Borrell's plea to 'relearn the language of power' to embrace the logic of power also.

Is the EU a Power Maximiser?

There is a cogent argument that EU states, conditioned by their violent history, have no interest in acquiring power at all, instead modern Europe seeks to influence and shape its environment by default rather than by design (Buzan & Little, 2000:359, Maull, 2005:778). Therefore, a useful starting point for this discussion is establishing if the pursuit of power is a cardinal element of EU foreign policy. Whilst 'power' is a central theme in IR, the main concepts and pathologies of power are highly contested. Power may be defined narrowly or semantically as a type of authority or influence; it may describe resources or a willingness to coerce (Gilpin, 1981:13, Forsberg, 2013:22-43, Mattern, 2008:691-697, Strange, 1996:3-15). As the West's confrontation with Russia escalates, debates over the architecture of European power from researchers such as Stephen Walt (2021) and Brooks and Meijer tend to discuss power in terms of the 'institutional capacity to independently plan and conduct military operations' (2021:7-43) and largely ignore the psychological basis of power which scholars such as John Mearsheimer (2014:77ff) and Robert Kagan (2003:27-42) argue may be of better use in understanding and explaining why certain geopolitical tendencies generate dangerous counter-currents. The canons of realism situate the pursuit of power as the central wellspring from which all other political laws and foreign policy arrangements flow. Hobbes locates the perpetual desire for power in the shifting fortunes and anxious condition of human nature:

The cause of this is not always that a man hopes for a more intensive delight, or that he cannot be content with a moderate power: but because he cannot assure the power and means to live well, which he hath at present, without the acquisition of more (Leviathan, pt. 1, Ch.11).

In an international system characterised by a Hobbesian vision of anarchy, where self-interested states are uncertain about the intentions of others and which lack a supreme authority to govern over them, states operate under a condition of perpetual motion, organising themselves for optimal security by constantly acquiring and extending power. Thus inevitably, according to E. H. Carr, 'international politics are always power politics' (1946/2016:97). This essentialist logic may lead to a zero-sum calculation of how power is constructed in the international system. The liberal critique claims that such *a priori* realist predictions ignore the humanist and idealist traditions that have helped shape political thought and are lacking in morality as they legitimise an uncritical defence of militarisation, conquest, nationalism, and colonialism (Donnelly, 2008:150-162). Against this, Hans Morgenthau argues that 'the appeal to moral principles in the international sphere has no concrete universal meaning' as politics always reflects a specific group interest and across many moral principles, no consensus among groups exists (1982:55). Rather than morality and power politics being two conflicting aspects as averred by Carr (1946/2016:92) or a restraint on power 'guiding political action to political failure' as claimed by Morgenthau (in Filary, 2008:3-20), it can also be contended that the antithesis between morality and power politics — and by extension, between morality and militarisation — is analytically misleading. Instead, there is a moral purpose to be found within the instrumentalisation of coercive power, an idea that Hedley Bull, Bernard Williams and 'the English School' take up when they situate morality within an 'ethical-realism' framework by identifying the 'first political question' that a legitimate government must solve for its people, and for which coercive power may be justly applied, that is 'the securing of order, protection, safety and trust'

(Williams, 2008:3-8).

Williams and Bull channel a Weberian 'ethic of ultimate ends', rejecting moral absoluteness in world politics. Therefore, it can be seen as morally necessary for the EU to instrumentalise coercive power in its own interests and to advance human rights globally. The EU already deploys coercive methods of securing a European order by leveraging its laws, institutions and sanctions as a function of power (Merlingen, 2007:449, Mearsheimer, 1995:5-59). This behaviour in consistent with Bull's assertion in *The Anarchical Society* that power emanates from order built on common interests, which emerge not from authority but from the practices, routines, and customs that characterise interactions between social groups and on which stable emotional structures, principles, and rules can be built. Later, these may be codified in administrative devices (1977:58). Since the end of the Cold War, the Western liberal order has dominated international politics, characterised by customs of economic openness, multilateralism, and democratic expansion, anchored in the values of the US, and, as Bull predicted, these routines have evolved into formal edifices of governance, and economic and political centralisation, such as the EU. Research by Karaganov and Suslov (2018) concludes that the breakdown of these common customs and rules drove the EU-Russia tension over Ukraine. The factors contributing to the crisis of the liberal international order are outside the scope of this research; however, a growing collection of high-quality texts provide a helpful commentary (see Babic, 2020:767-786, Diamond, 2020:1-14ff, Ikenberry, 2018:7–23ff). Karaganov and Suslov suggest that this crisis led directly to the EU needing a more assertive role in its strategic environment. According to Bull, an international order, defined by agreed 'rules of the game', is essential for stability and security (1977:51-54), but arguably, such security is only temporary as an established order may be fundamentally challenged through confrontation. To mitigate, a preponderant actor may extend its order-defining norms over neighbouring or politically-aligned nations by forming a 'sphere of influence' [SOI] in an attempt to achieve strength by drawing satellite nations into its intellectual and cultural orbit and, crucially, into its security arrangements.

'Sphere of influence' is a familiar term in IR but remains abstract and undebated. In practice, SOI is a political discourse tool rather than one of international law, but it helps reveal how great powers understand their relationships. The SOI concept appears to fall short of the formality of Bull's international society; however, in advancing SOI as an explanatory device to describe European tactics, it is helpful to synthesise Bull's constructivist social-theory concept of how the order is produced through ideational and economic assimilation, with a structuralist interpretation provided by Amitai Etzioni, who describes a geopolitical zone of control where SOI are 'international formations [wherein] one state commands superior power over others' (2015:117). Does the EU command a sphere of influence? It would prefer not to think so. SOI has pejorative connotations in the European mindset as it contradicts the Westphalian narrative and is reserved in Western rhetoric to describe something distinctly Russian; Moscow's irredentist claims over its 'near abroad', quite opposed to the EU's benevolent influence within its 'neighbourhood' (Leonard and Popescu, 2007:5-29, Rutland, 2012:343-354).

In European discourse, SOI is replaced with the concept of 'enlargement', a metaphor which lends itself neatly to the EU's internal normative purpose of liberal democratic momentum. Still, the distinction between 'enlargement' and 'expansion' is not easily transportable to a Russian mindset. Importantly, expanding an SOI can be seen to develop ontological security for the EU, that is, in 'perpetuating efforts to safeguard the survival or persistence of a sense of self in contexts of recurrent uncertainty' (Giddens, 1991, in Johansson-Nogués, 2018:529). Europe's enlargement provides substance and permanence to its identity and enriches its 'storyline' over an opposing Russian storyline (Kinnvall et al., 2018:249-265, Johansson-Nogués, 2018:530). Greater regional interdependence allows the EU to influence migration and markets, but at a fundamental level, Diez argues that the Europeanisation of practices, customs, interests, and even the revision of world histories, rationalises the EU's bid for regional hegemony (2013:194-210). On the whole, the EU may consider the eastward expansion of its political influence to Ukraine as benign, and from the point of view of the EU, the process of enlarging a regime that is compatible with liberal values can be seen internally as morally justified and strategically vital in solving the 'first political question'. This is a valid rationale for the pursuit of power but should also be recognised as an implicitly anti-Russian strategy, as Moscow believes that it is also tackling the 'first political question' in protecting what it regards as Russian interests in what it considers a vassal state, and in the securing of the defensive gateway across the North European plain and access to the Black Sea. According to Samuel Charap, the war in Ukraine is far more than a contest over cultural particulars, economic preferences, or even a strategic buffer zone; the struggle for Ukraine is 'fundamentally about the set of

rules, norms, and institutions that govern the region: the regional order' (2019:1*ff*). It is a contest over storylines.

These imagined storylines are essential to both Russian and EU conceptualisations of themselves as influential great powers, both domestically and externally (Deyermond, 2014), even more so considering how these two states have traditionally suffered from status anxiety. Russia's ontological storyline is threatened by the EU's expansion eastwards into territories which until recently belonged to the Tsarist and Soviet spheres, whilst instability in the East undermines the EU's binding narrative of a neighbourhood of integrated liberal democracies, which are manifestly destined to triumph over unreformed autocratic regimes. It can be argued that the EU has a fundamental compulsion to pursue more and more power, an ambition that is morally and strategically vital to its identity and security and to solving Europe's 'first political question', securing a normative European Order bound by common interests. The EU maximises its power and strengthens its identity and 'actorness' through efforts to enlarge a European presence in the world by expanding its SOI eastward in competition with Russia.

Understanding the EU's Power Image

Building on the Hobbesian principle, the structural-realist orthodoxy introduced by Kenneth Waltz set out that in an anarchic world where consequential states will go to any lengths to expand the power and preserve the power they have, they must also prepare military capabilities to fend off opposition from challengers (1959:160). The corollary is that as Russia modernises its military to the extent that it is capable of delivering a massive strike of blunt force on Europe's periphery, it must be balanced by Europe generating enough of its own capability to exhaust, dispirit, and ultimately defend an attack on Europe and its allies. Interestingly, Waltz did not subscribe to the idea that states are inevitably power maximisers; 'the first concern of states is not to maximise power but to maintain their position in the system through the balance of power' (1979:26). Balance of power theory is concerned only with avoiding the possibility of confrontation with a compelling physical deterrent to political subjugation and the seizure of territory (Posen, 2006:155), a theory which finds its fulfilment in the doctrine of 'mutually assured destruction' and continues to shape discourse and policy on tackling the Russian problem. H. R. McMaster insists that 'a combination of actions, initiatives, and capabilities should aim to deter Russia by denial – by convincing the Kremlin that it cannot accomplish its objectives through the use of military force' (2020:80). Nonetheless, Waltz's 'defensive realism' theory contains an internal paradox as it attributes the cause of war to the fragile structure of an anarchic international system, whilst also foregrounding domestic, 'non-realist' reasons as the main causes of wars. In contrast, Mearsheimer's 'offensive realism' simply states that 'the structure of the international system forces great powers to engage in intense security competition […] and initiate wars' (2018:221). Both agree on the primacy of military power, but Mearsheimer argues that it is a bedrock assumption that 'fearful great powers must inherently possess some offensive military capability' (2003:30). A conventional security logic was built into the Maastricht treaty and in early attempts to forge a CFSP; for example, the 1999 Cologne Declaration of the European Council on Strengthening the Common European Policy on Security and Defence, stated: "The Union must have the capacity for autonomous action, backed up by credible military forces, the means to decide to use them, and a readiness to do so" (June 3rd 1999).

Despite the realist leanings of these founding articles, why has the EU's military ambitions and power image decoupled from conventional conceptions of power? The reason may be traced to the 'liberal moment' and the unfolding NATO security umbrella, which emboldened Europe to embrace an alternative worldview where economic integration and soft power would transcend more than 450 years of realist orthodoxy. François Duchêne established the body of scholarship that affixed the term 'civilian power' to a nascent European Economic Community [EEC]. Duchêne envisioned an administrative Europe that would reject 'the age-old process of war and indirect violence [and] in a sense [Europe] could be the world's first civilian centre of power' (1972:43). Maull articulated the features that would enable Europe to become a capitalist civilian proto-superpower; advancing democracy, peace, and prosperity through trade policy, international law, and supranational institutions (1990:92-3). Whilst Duchêne's civilian power concept made clear that 'the one thing Europe cannot be is a military power' (1972:37), Whitman suggests that Duchêne's notion left room for economic coercion, positioning the EU as 'market power Europe' (2013:174). Meunier and Nicolaïdis characterise the EU as a 'conflicted trade power' covertly aligning its trade policy to a Eurocentric geopolitical agenda that selectively prioritises material interests over human rights (2006:906-925), which means positioning the EU much closer to realist thinking than to Duchêne's prima facie Kantian liberalism. At the same time, structural-realist predictions would seem to be confirmed by attempts to develop CFSP alongside

civilian-economic power, such that Duchêne's original concept became supplanted by expectations for the emergence of a less-than-distinctive civil-military superstate (Kupchan, 2001:4-5, McCormick, 2006:174).

It is questionable just how much emerging Europe was ideologically attached to this concept of civilian power. As a Cold War security consumer, the EU was technically a civilian power by default. It was the US-NATO balance against the Soviet Union and subsequent European disarmament which assigned the EU its civilian power status rather than any intrinsic commitment. This echoes Hedley Bull's pivotal 'Contradiction in terms' critique, which insisted that any power accruing to Europe was conditional on the US aegis. Bull had argued that for Europe to acquire actual power, it needed military self-sufficiency but conceded that such an ambition was unfeasible due to the rigidity within the Westphalian international system, as the national interest would always take precedence (1982:151). More recently, Brooks and Meijer have built on this premise to focus their research on the 'strategic cacophony' of profound, national-interest divergences across European states as the insurmountable barrier to achieving EU militarisation (2021:7-43). However, contrastingly, Lightfoot (2009) points out that NATO has continuously managed conflicting interests between trans-continental members, such as different threat perceptions, 'out of scope' missions (Afghanistan), tensions over command structures, burden sharing, and Alliance nuclear policy. The NATO experience would suggest that the central barrier to military integration in Europe is more ideological than technical, financial, or strategic.

Up to this point, Duchêne and Bull provided the coordinates for the opposing arguments on Europe's power profile, coordinates which still remain useful to the military power debate. A third coordinate was introduced by Ian Manners in 2002, marking a conceptual shift which has influenced the EU's self-image and decision-shaping ever since: 'Normative Power Europe' [NPE]. The NPE concept focuses on Europe's 'ability to shape conceptions of 'normal' in international relations' (Manners, 2002:239). Through an NPE lens, the EU can be seen to set standards on 'liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law', the moral principles articulated in the preamble of Maastricht. These normative convictions, the commitment to diffuse them, and the rejection of realism's state-building imperialist trappings form the basis of the EU and guide its actions, and accordingly, Manners argues that the EU represents a unique and distinctive political form, which cannot be limited to conventional great power analysis. Although civilian power and military power concepts both rely on maintaining a Westphalian status quo, the EU is a hybrid of supranational and international forms, allowing its influence to 'float' across conventional boundaries (Manners, 2002:238-240). Manners suggests that the EU's power should therefore be analysed in terms of what it is rather than what it does. Clearly, this has empirical ramifications when considering the practical nature of foreign policy in a fragmented world. NPE theory also attempts to transcend the dichotomic debate on military power or civilian power, which both instrumentalise material resources, by instead insisting that the EU's norms are diffused through 'contagion', a form of political enchantment with European liberal ideals, rather than through political pressure. Unlike conventional powers, NPE emphasises the transference of norms through multilateralism and intense cultural-economic interdependence (Ibid:236-237).

Manners does not disregard the usefulness of military power altogether but relegates it to an optional peacekeeping extra, dismissing the idea that normative power requires a willingness to use force to back it up (Ibid:242). Manners' concern is that the development of military capabilities could lead to a 'Great Power mentality', which is problematic considering Europe's need to understand the character of its powerful neighbour and its own place as a Great Power. Absent a national mythology to draw upon, normative power theory provided the EU with an identity-shaping narrative whilst reframing its hard power insecurity into something positive. This explains why the concept was embraced by political elites and the supportive epistemic community as it nourishes an explanation of what is distinctive about the EU's role in the world (Orbie, 2006:123, Della Salla, 2010:1-19). NPE theory also accepts an idealistic vista of a world which is consistently convening around liberal principles and a declining need for confrontation. Robert Kagan detects a hidden realist logic in this reconceptualisation of power; 'Europe's relative [military] weakness has produced a powerful interest in building a world where military strength matters less than economic and soft power […] Europeans have a deep interest in devaluing and eradicating the brutal laws of an anarchic Hobbesian world' (2003:37).

An alternative case for the primacy of soft power is provided by scholars such as Karen Smith, who suggests that the militarisation of Europe would diminish its 'actorness' in world politics as 'most foreign policy does not involve the use

of force' therefore adding military capability would not 'buy' greater influence (2000:20). Webber agrees, arguing that 'the outcomes of defence and security conflicts do not depend on military strike power' (2016:42). In addition, McCormick had suggested that the absence of a threat of violence from Europe, combined with its considerable market opportunities, could encourage Russia to be more receptive to the EU's ideas, than to those offered by the US under its brooding shadow of military might (2012:41). NPE theorists reject the hard power accoutrements of power maximisation and treat the development of military power as detrimental to dialogue, and deterministic in causing war, summoning the adage 'when you have a hammer, every problem looks like a nail'. But according to this logic, great military powers would be constantly at war. The literature on power in IR, specifically on the EU power image, concentrates on the evolution and mapping of Europe's power image and on attempts to categorise the EU's objective status into a binary-choice debate over positivistic realism-liberalism dialectics. The structural-realist scholarship on Europe asserts Waltz's maxim that 'the state of nature is a state of war' (1979:102) and subsequently inclines to discuss power in overly-mechanical terms of building the necessary capacity for brute-force retaliation as a deterrent. This corresponds to the current urgency among political elites in Brussels to accelerate Europe's capability for force generation in the teeth of Russian aggression. However, structural-realism also views European militarisation as unrealistic and therefore places limits on Europe's 'actorness' in the international system. Interpretations which dismiss the EU as a serious actor based on the Atlantic treaty risk discarding the importance of how the relationship is experienced in an anarchic world, specifically how the EU created a serious ideological power competition with Russia or how Russia may view EU membership as a 'stalking horse' for NATO. Similarly, the liberal critique that militarisation would only recast the EU as a conventional threat on the world stage and diminish its diplomatic capabilities does not account for the very real anxiety experienced in Moscow about the path and pace of Europe's political enlargement.

To summarise, we have seen that Europe's security arrangements were outsourced to Washington, allowing the EU to shape a new 'storyline' and a new, if vague conceptual identity as a peaceful proto-superpower. There is real concern that a Europe which concedes that preparation for war is 'normal' and desirable behaviour risks disfiguring the EU's unique identity-shaping storyline, the imagined well-spring of its power and security, and even risks a tragic rehearsal of Europe's traumatic history. Thus, NPE theory rejects the Weberian ethic of ultimate ends in favour of an ethic of responsibility towards humanity. This distinction seems clear enough, yet it quickly becomes problematic as the EU also seems to disregard responsibility for its security vulnerabilities and selectiveness over its trade arrangements. Advocates of NPE tend to avoid discussing how being normative inevitably means challenging and replacing 'counter norms' in the international system (rather, NPE merely 'transfers ideas') and fail to account for how the slavish linking of an exceptional European meta-narrative and constitutionalised norms to EU foreign policy impacts empirically on a non-normative world, which involves the othering of 'radical' and 'irrational' international actors in a confrontational dynamic. Whether normative or militarised, we can see that the EU is inevitably a 'power maximiser' despite its benign pretensions and must seek to shape a reflective world order by expanding its SOI in a contest for influence. Beyond the debate on EU militarisation as a hard-power deterrent, it is necessary to investigate the extent to which the EU's pursuit of ontological security may have atrophied the psychological reflexes of European diplomats to make sense of their surroundings, whether narratives are being developed and transmitted emotionally rather than rationally, and to consider whether militarisation could facilitate more cognitive flexibility in policymaking by fundamentally re-shaping the EU's identity.

The Effects of 'Normative Power Europe' on Foreign Policy Projection Regarding the Crisis in Ukraine

Based on an evaluation of the language and meanings used in official documents and discourses and supported with theoretical inputs, this research examined the use of ontological reference points rooted in the NPE self-image, reinforcing Europe's contrast to the Russian 'other'. Specifically, by casting the EU as a "legitimate authority" in setting world standards, compared to Russia's non-legitimacy; by having an ideational impact through "benevolent influence" versus manipulative state-sponsored interference; and by showing 'actorness' through positioning itself as the regional "security provider", against the alternative of Russian repression.

The Duchênian civilian/normative power image casts the EU as a technocratic and 'de-dramatised' organisation bounded by a legislative acquis and steeped in rationality, a project which is sensitive to the passions that have led European states towards nationalistic violence in the past and, therefore, unencumbered by emotions today (Smith,

2021:288). This image does not align with the emotive discourse that the EU has continued to project post-Crimea to steer Kyiv away from Moscow in the shadow of an unchecked conflict in the Donbas region. According to Cross and Karolewski, the Ukraine challenge served as a 'critical juncture and catalyst for shaping the EU's power' presenting an existential test of EU foreign policy in demonstrating how NPE effectively exercises power in times of crisis and against a militarised adversary (2017:3-10). It also presented an opportunity to vanquish the image of the EU's past failures in the Balkans. Howorth portrays the struggle between Brussels and Moscow as 'an attempt to 'define' Ukraine as either a liberal democracy or as part of Russian orthodox culture' – a mortal contest of storylines (2017:131).

The narrative on the EU's role as a "legitimate authority" in Ukraine may be traced to the EU-Ukraine Paris Summit in 2008, which 'recognised that Ukraine [is] a European country [which] shares a common history and common values with the countries of the EU' (in Wallace et al., 2020:449). Subsequently, the Eastern Partnership policy [EaP] in 2009 aimed to bring Ukraine within a European SOI through an Association Agreement [AA] and a concomitant Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement [DCFTA]. More than a trade deal or terms of rapprochement, the AA was an umbrella for political re-orientation to European ideals whilst building Ukraine's 'resilience' to Russian counter-norms (Rabinovych, 2022). The objectives of the AA include 'increasing Ukraine's association with EU policies, programmes, and agencies' and bringing about enhanced cooperation in legislation and security (EU, 2014:161/5). The AA also confirms 'the importance Ukraine attaches to its European identity' whilst 'taking into account the strong public support for the country's European choice' (EU, 2014:161/4).

Chaban and Elgström analysed conceptual metaphors' use in interviews with EU foreign policy practitioners, revealing a consistent self-image as the "legitimate authority" in shaping Ukraine's future. They found that practitioners consistently invoked the social solidarity theme of deep cultural ties, insisting that the EU is by far the most important partner for Ukraine. This historical homogenisation narrative represents an attempt to legitimise Europe's claim on guiding Ukraine's future but is juxtaposed with how Russia believes that its own civil and religious society was forged in the medieval Kyivan-Rus, the first major East Slavic polity, and with Ukraine being the setting for some of Russia's most critical military triumphs in casting off the foreign yoke. Accordingly, Moscow fails to acknowledge a distinctive Ukrainian biography. For the Kremlin, Russia and Ukraine share in 'the same historical and spiritual space' with 'blood ties that unite millions of families' – the theme of Putin's polemic 'On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians' (2021). Even if this founding myth of a one-nation Greater Russia is a historically inaccurate ideological construct to legitimise Russian irredentism, as argued by Anaïs Marin (2021:70), and conveniently ignores events such as the Holodomor, the deliberate starvation of four-million Ukrainians in 1933 as a result of Soviet policies (See Applebaum, 2017), European policymakers would be unwise to reject the symbolic importance of Ukraine in Russia's reassertion of its own storyline, a unified Russian world comprising ancient Rus lands, and myopic not to view the re-scripting of Ukrainian history as distinctly 'Eurocentric' as equally problematic. Similarly, the claim of Ukraine's 'European choice' disregarded clear ethnic and political cleavages and lacked objectivity in interpreting the public mood, where support for the EU association or Russian orientation was divided. At the time the AA was drafted, the International Republican Institute's Centre for Insights [IRI] survey indicated that a slight majority of 51 per cent of respondents believed the AA would be 'useful', but 21 percent preferred alignment to a Russian customs union and 15 percent were unsure (IRI, May 2013). The narratives surrounding the EaP can be seen as an attempt to construct a 'shared meaning of the past, present and future […] to shape the behaviour of domestic and international actors' (Miskimmon 2018:1). Olga Shumylo-Tapiola argues that the rendering of a European-Ukraine storyline is a reaction to Europe's declining status and ignores the reality that 'Ukraine was largely invisible to the EU in the first decade of its independence […] none of the then fifteen EU members at the time saw Ukraine as a priority. It was too far away from the EU, too difficult to understand, and too close to Russia' (2013), suggesting that as Europe's ontological security reduced, its interest in Ukraine increased.

In 2014, Russia enlarged the Russian Customs Union to create the Eurasian Economic Union [EEU], intending to integrate Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States [CIS] in infrastructure, currency, trade, and tariffs, within which the Kremlin envisaged Ukraine as a major economic and symbolic cornerstone. Ostensibly, a strategic counterweight to the EU, but conceivably also offering the potential for cooperation and bargaining with both the EU and China's Belt and Road Initiative in developing a vast free-trade area. EU-EEU dialogue could have led to a Pan-European Free Trade Area creating political stability across the European and Eurasian regions (Emerson, 2014:12).

Instead, both the EU and Russia perceived each other's integration projects as competing bids for regional hegemony and as enriching rival storylines – Russian revisionism or European exceptionalism. The terms of the AA/DCFTA imposed an 'either/or' dilemma on Ukraine, backed up by financial incentives linked to legislative and civil society reforms, a 'more-for-more' approach with rewards for political re-orientation and the dangled prospect of future accession. The EU's insistence on moralistic tropes, which cast Russia as a volatile 'other' and the EU as a safe harbour, also drew Ukraine into a difficult process of acting as an 'authorised agent and valued collaborator in EU stability production' and reinforced the zero-sum contest over Ukraine's political and economic future (Johansson-Nogués, 2018:538).

The narrative of the EU's "benevolent influence" versus the destabilising interference from Russia pervades the 2016 EU Global Strategy [EUGS]. The document frequently uses notions such as bolstering, deepening, nurturing, fostering, enabling and facilitating. Normative 'contagion' metaphors, for instance, 'fostering growth' through 'a different path to resilience' leading to 'Ukraine's gradual integration' – are mixed with concrete targets for political alignment (EUGS, 2016:2/9/33). The Joint Declaration of the Eastern Partnership Summit in 2017 reinforced the idea that rather than simply aligning economic arrangements, it would be the 'bonds forged through the Eastern Partnership [that would] make the EU and its partner countries stronger together [and] better able to deal with common challenges' (EU, 2017:2, emphasis added). The Joint Communication on the Eastern Partnership Policy beyond 2020 specified that the EU and its partner countries should join a 'common European narrative, based on shared values' and that the Eastern Partnership will 'build a stronger Europe in the world' (EU, 2020:16-17). For the Kremlin, this amounted to the 'supervision of the Ukrainian authorities' and the domination of Ukrainian politics by an anti-Russian idea (Putin, 2021).

The scope of the EU's self-image as a "security provider" covers various policy frameworks in which Europe aims to securitise economic, social, and environmental developments in its Eastern neighbourhood. The securitisation of specific 'milieu goals' validates a distinctive and normative security profile, that is, protecting human security and fundamental freedoms through rights diffusion and legislative reform, and in this endeavour, the EU can leverage its substantial administrative power in areas such as human rights legislation and climate action. Perhaps the original intention of the ENP was to instrumentalise the NPE image by de-emphasising military power as a securitising facility and to expand European norms and values through peaceful legislative reforms. However, the ENP also called for 'reinforcing stability and security [with] a ring of countries, sharing in the EU's fundamental values and objectives, drawn into an increasingly close relationship, going beyond cooperation to involve a significant measure of political integration [bringing] enormous gains to all involved in terms of increased stability [and] security' (EU, 2004:4). Since 2014 and the deterioration of Europe's strategic environment, a deep ambiguity emerged in the EU's self-assigned role as "security provider", prompting a step-change in the EU's behaviour from promoting the securitising effect of normative values to the establishment of a Grand Strategy. The 2015 European Security Agenda warned that Europe's security was 'no longer confined to the borders of the EU […] the EU response must therefore be comprehensive and based on a coherent set of actions combining internal and external dimensions' (EU, 2015a:4). The EUGS strived to 'deepen the transatlantic bond and partnership with NATO' and conveyed that 'our partners expect the European Union to play a major role […] as a global security provider'. It also states that 'we live in times of existential crisis, within and beyond the European Union. Our Union is under threat' (EUGS, 2016:13), and sets out to 'strengthen the EU, enhance the resilience of our eastern neighbours, and uphold their right to determine freely their approach towards the EU' (Ibid:33, italics added). The EUGS also sought to 'pave the way for [Ukraine's] further involvement in CFSP' and explicitly set out that 'Russia's violation of international law and the destabilisation of Ukraine […] has challenged the European security order' — not just Ukrainian sovereignty, implying that Ukraine was already part of Europe's security architecture (Ibid:25). Such dialogues blur the boundaries between the EU's mastery of the 'low politics' of guiding economic prosperity and human rights improvements and the 'high politics' implications of a conventional grand strategy.

This ambiguity exacerbated Moscow's suspicion over the EU's storyline production in other domains, its claims to being Ukraine's "benevolent influencer" and "legitimate authority" (Sakwa, 2015:553, Crombois, 2017:119). Paradoxically, the EU does not yet see itself as able to adequately provide for its own security, but nonetheless, this role conception increasingly permeated its narrative on Ukraine. The AA contains a security proposal, promoting 'ever-closer convergence on positions of bilateral, regional, and international issues of mutual interest […] taking into

account the Common Foreign and Security Policy' (EU, 2014:161/5) and articulates an ambition to 'deepen security policy convergence and effectiveness' (EU, 2014:161/7). Article 7 of the AA describes how the EU and Ukraine shall 'intensify their dialogue […] in areas of foreign and security policy' addressing, in particular, regional stability and joint planning (EU, 2014:161/9). The Joint Communication on the Review of European Neighbourhood Policy in 2015 announced support for 'the reform of civilian and military security' with Europe's Eastern partners, including 'strategic and policy advice [and] institution and capacity building activities' and offered concrete support for 'the settlement of protracted conflicts in the neighbourhood', including Donbas, setting out that 'in the next three to five years, the most urgent challenge […] is stabilisation' alongside preparing partner countries 'to withstand, adapt and quickly recover from stresses and shocks' – reinforcing the image of the EU as secure (EU, 2015:13-14). The ENP review outlined further measures to 'strengthen the resilience of the EU's partners in the face of external pressures' and to 'secure against cross-border threats' (EU, 2015:4-12). For Moscow, these preparations implied a move towards involving Europe's partners in the EU mutual assistance clause — article 42(7) of the Treaty on European Union states that 'If a Member State is the victim of armed aggression on its territory, the other Member States shall have towards it an obligation of aid and assistance by all the means in their power'.

The 2017 European Defence Fund ringfenced €8 billion for research in innovative defence products, whilst the European Peace Facility, launched in 2021, created a €5-billion funding mechanism to enable the export of EU battlefield technologies to EU partner countries. By 2021, the normative basis of the EU's foreign policy towards Russia's near-abroad was arguably both unclear and offensive. The view from the Kremlin was that the EU was rapidly deploying the infrastructure and means to conceivably press not just ideas but missiles with a minimal flight time up against Russia's borders. During 2021, these developments were matched by sharpened rhetoric from Europe's leaders. France's President Emmanuel Macron said that Europe is 'under pressure from powers […] we need to react, to show that we have the power and capacity' (in Irish, 2021), and in her State of the Union address, the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen impelled the EU to 'step up to the next level' specifically referring to sending soldiers into peripheral conflict zones to 'defend European values and interests' (2021), echoing the main thrust of the EUGS, that 'forging unity as Europeans – across institutions, states, and peoples […] has never been so vital or so urgent. Never has our unity been so challenged' (EUGS, 2016:16). Importantly, however, these narratives and pronouncements were made in the certain knowledge that no EU army actually exists to defend Europe's unity or expansion against Russian reactions.

The Effect of NPE on Foreign Policy

According to research from Viktor Velivchenko, 'the construction of desired images can have a greater impact on international relations than a significant increment in military or economic power' (2018:108). They also provide more than just external legitimacy for action; these conceptual images determine an internal 'reason to be', enabling the EU to make sense of itself. They may help convince political actors how easily they can reach their objectives by providing confidence and minimising intra-EU vulnerabilities. The narrative analysis supports this view and suggests that the NPE identity has calcified into EU intragroup rhetoric, logic, and beliefs, forming a potent 'collective experience' which guides behaviours among Europe's political elites. Robert Kagan suggests that 'it is normal to put out of one's mind that which one can do nothing about'. Europeans focus on challenges that require economic, humanitarian, and institutional solutions, which are EU strengths, and avoid contemplating issues that expose military incapacity, the European weakness, such as the possibility of a full-spectrum hard power Russian retaliation. As Kagan puts it, 'when you don't have a hammer, you don't want anything to look like a nail' (2004:28).

In 2006, Manners argued that 'we have built the EU precisely to escape great power mentality' (183). This includes enshrining the principle of self-determination in its absolute form, which made it impossible for Brussels to accept Moscow's 'interference' in EU-Ukraine negotiations, simultaneously ignoring the validity of Russia's counter-claims about Europe's intrusion into Russo-Ukrainian politics. The NPE mentality is suffused with deeply-rooted notions of 'moral duty' and 'force for good' and another troubling assumption: that 'European values, ideas, and ways are intrinsically superior' (Aggestam, 2008:6) and that, 'fundamentally it is values that make up the borders of Europe' (Rehn, 2005). But this privileging of an emotive self-image without consideration of Russian interests produced a significant delta between storyline production and geopolitical consequences. The narrative of European enlargement, which casts Russia as an 'imagined other,' reveals an 'ontological blindness' to those consequences

(Campbell, 1998:6). Whereas a state rolling its SOI across borders backed with coercive hard power would elicit a robust international reaction, the psychology of NPE doesn't recognise such restrictions on enlargement/expansion, nor does it consider hostile Russian counter-currents as rational, legitimate, or genuine due to the self-belief that the enlargement is only ideational.

This research suggests that NPE values exist independently from empirical concerns creating a form of 'normative rationalism' within the EU's policymaking community. According to a study from Smith, Seger and Mackie, this normative rationalism is formed at the group level, who argue that group-level emotions can motivate intragroup attitudes and behaviour (2007:432, see also Schimmelfenig, 2001:47-80). Hutchinson and Bleiker suggest that 'emotional power works discursively, diffused through norms […] and other values which stipulate, often inaudibly, how individuals and communities ought to feel and what kind of political behaviour is legitimate' (2014:508). The group-level emotions, which fundamentally perceive the EU as a peace project, conveniently align with the EU's main vulnerability, its lack of military power. As Robert Kagan argues, 'the incapacity to respond to [military] threats […] can lead to denial [which is why] Americans are quicker to acknowledge the existence of such threats […] because they can conceive of doing something to meet those threats' (2004:33). So, whilst the intergovernmental preferences may inform policies of member states, Europe's CFSP discourse is ultimately activated in a constitutional crucible of deeply-embedded community values.

The opportunity to bring Ukraine into the European SOI, coming amongst a deterioration in the liberal order, served only to crystallise normative discourse in European diplomacy and deepened the need for storyline production, a 'test' of the narrative power of modern ideas on 'community security' prevailing over old-fashioned nationalistic sabre-rattling. This behaviour appears irrational to Mearsheimer, who assumes that great powers are 'aware of their external environment and they think strategically about how to survive in it […] they consider how their own behaviour is likely to affect the behaviour of other states' (2003:31). For Robert Jervis, this misreading is not a result of inadequate intelligence but rather 'a common cognitive bias which attempts to fit events into a pattern […] the result is usually to increase conflict'. Jervis explains how 'motivated biases' commit policy-makers to move towards a goal and create 'great psychological pressure to believe that it can succeed despite empirical evidence pulling in another direction' (1994:775).

It appears that the EU's multi-layered, consensus-based political routines contributed to foreign policy dialogues unfolding very slowly and deliberately, as can be seen with the path, speed and consistency of the ENP and its sub-strategies. By avoiding high-stakes, real-time, militarised reactions to external crises, over 2013-2021 EU foreign policy could remain insulated within the 'otherworldly' broad arc of its romantic normative structure; 'EU member states have worked together for decades, and socialisation produces co-ordination reflexes, the perception of common interests, and the growth of collective identification' (Smith, 2021:298). The combination of slow, technocratic policy formulation and a determinative emotional framework means that EU foreign and security policy can operate on 'separate rails' to nation-state foreign policymaking, imbibing policy practitioners with a sense of temporal-spatial separation from domestic constraints or from the inclination to look past tropes and doctrines of who ought to hold power in a situation, to who actually holds power. In a sense, EU foreign policy is 'de-dramatised', but this paper rejects the view that it is emotionless. These findings suggest that EU foreign policy practitioners are prisoners to the psychological structures of NPE, leading to the naïve mistakes which contributed to the outbreak of war in Ukraine. But what if the EU did not need to reinforce a normative storyline? If it was also a military power, would its language and policy instruments be as provocative?

What if the EU was Militarised?

This research included an interview with the former Head of the British Army, General Sir Michael Jackson. General Jackson's views are advantageous as he commanded NATO's multi-national Rapid Reaction Force during the Kosovo War. During the conflict, General Jackson's American superior sensed an opportunity to make a 'political statement' by instructing troops to isolate and attack a Russian detachment at Pristina. General Jackson refused the order and instead established a working relationship with the Russian general; for that reason, General Jackson is often credited with having averted World War III (Grice, 2007). According to General Jackson:

Russia has extensive borders and is neurotic about its security, particularly its Western flanks, which keep getting invaded. Western politicians don't appreciate this 'raw nerve', and by challenging those borders again through the enlargement of the EU, they are rubbing salt into the wounds.

General Jackson's comments reflect Russia's self-image as a vulnerable 'warrior nation' and its view that the West is strengthening its security at the expense of Russia by constructing military-strategic realities in Ukraine, requiring Russia to create counter-vulnerabilities.

General Jackson continues:

Russia hasn't moved out of the Hobbesian zero-sum mindset. If Ukraine wants to join the EU it is seen as a total rejection of Moscow. To the Kremlin, the 'near abroad' is a strategic space that belongs to Russia, and which it is entitled to by virtue of its size, importance, and history, and particularly its sacrifices during World War Two […] an element of triumphalism entered world politics [after the Cold War] a sense of 'we won, you lost!' which has clouded political judgement on Russia's place in the world.

As Russia has been largely excluded from the construction of a rules-based order and left to dwell on its position as an outsider, Jackson is alarmed that EU policymakers have not provided for this in their calculations: "We talk of a rules-based order, which is a completely different worldview to Russia. The evangelism of Europe transcends rationality."

Although General Jackson contends that the sum of an EU army and a rump NATO would be less than the security we have in place now, Jackson agreed that having a military and having actually to send young men and women into conflict heightens the threat perception and, as was the case during the General's intervention at Pristina, this significant burden can put a premium on the cognitive flexibility needed to avert dangerous developments.

Confronting the full spectrum of physical threats directly and making calculations based on necessity and proportionality suggests a Realpolitik orientation. NPE foreign policymaking processes have deliberately excluded the Realpolitik tradition, partly due to the term's interchangeability with *Machtpolitik*, Machiavellianism, and power politics, but also due to the partisan way that the term has been applied in intellectual history to denote a 'more sophisticated' approach to the 'deluded naivety' of idealism in conducting international affairs (Bew, 2016:6). Machiavelli's militarism is often over-stated, but when viewed from a different angle, there is an empirically important maxim available, the idea that militarisation may be a grim element, but that the discipline it inculcates in political reasoning has a considerable effect:

We shall find that there is a very close, intimate relation between these two [political and military] conditions, and that they are not only compatible and consistent with each other, but necessarily connected and interrelated.

Trans. 1965:3

The conflation of Realpolitik with doctrine or ideology also misses the true meaning of Realpolitik, as intended by the idea's creator August Ludwig von Rochau, in 1853. According to Bew, 'Rochau was not concerned with the construction of worldviews, but the business of politics […] moral philosophy existed in another sphere to Realpolitik' (2016:8-9). Understood this way, Realpolitik is a rejection of liberal utopianism in policy development only, but not of liberal ideals themselves, which Rochau believed provided vital political coherence (Ibid:303). Realpolitik is best viewed as a formula for approaching foreign policy dilemmas by prioritising context and visibility.

Confronted with the return of geopolitics, the EUGS attempted to mark a return to Realpolitik in the form of 'principled pragmatism'. This attempt to modify the EU power image instead continued to mischaracterise Realpolitik, conflating it with a liberal ideology and a security manifesto which articulated more muscular 'vital interest' principles; security, neighbourhood stability, crisis management, and a credible enlargement policy. Rather than setting Europe on a more prudent path, one where it could acknowledge Russia's 'raw nerves', EUGS only served to rearrange Russia's anxieties with a strategy that now appeared interest-heavy and which continued to ignore the 'binary nature' of

Russia's political culture with 'its tendency to seek extreme solutions to problems' (Hosking, 2001:22). Sven Biscop (2016) calls principled pragmatism 'Realpolitik with European characteristics' as it 'emphasises our own security [and] lowers the level of ambition in terms of democratisation [in] the acceptance of reality', but this is not Realpolitik at all. For Rochau, ideas, particularly liberal ideas, mattered in politics, but equally important was the skilful navigation of competing interests (Bew, 2016:32).

In any case, the empirical findings suggest that EUGS principled pragmatism failed to moderate the idealist impulses of policymakers, arguably because Europe's Realpolitik turn was rooted in rhetoric rather than actual jeopardy, and so there was no material change to the NPE image with its embedded emotional decision-making structures. For Europe to practice Realpolitik, it must acquire the instruments to deal with contemporary power politics. Europe's decision-making structures will need to be reconstructed with a change of power image resulting from a significant military dimension in order to enable a new psychological paradigm to take hold. As Hutchison and Bleiker assert, 'it is the type of power that is imbued within processes that constitute how actors are differently enabled and constrained to determine their fates' (2017:23).

Militarisation *per se* does not lead to greater cognitive flexibility in internal decision-making, but broadening the conceptualisation of a normative *and* military power European identity would potentially absent the prioritisation afforded discursive storyline production, and the effects of the 'moral mission' rhetoric which propels Europe's enlargement. This could have avoided the invocation of an imagined EU-Ukraine historical-cultural tradition and would have made Europe less likely to 'other' international parties that lack its 'moral fervour'. Equating the EU with conventional military powers could help reduce the limiting belief that Europe has a unique, predestined role in the world. This might have decreased the internal perception that Europe must react to an 'existential crisis', the theme threaded throughout the EUGS and may have caused a reorientation towards a more pluralistic and pragmatic foreign policy.

Throughout the EU's history, CFSP has been an idea rather than a credible attribute, but policymakers would need to be more cautious if the approximation processes insisted on in the AA could be viewed as an instrument of foreign expansion by a militarised continental superpower — probably forcing a decoupling of 'deeper political association and security policy convergence' from humanitarian goals (EU, 2014:161/7). EU policymakers would have to re-learn their place in international politics. For Waldman, states become more secure as they learn strategic empathy: 'imagining or simulating another's experience and perspective, in order to better understand them […] a conscious effort to see the world through another's eyes' […] empathy, in this sense, is rational and cognitive' (2014:2). But Joseph Nye suggests that 'learning is frequently blocked by the power aspects of prior beliefs [therefore] only changes in the structure of power can produce learning' (1987:398). Following Nye, a departure from the EU self-image as a proto-superpower would initiate a learning journey in Brussels towards the rediscovery that a complex interdependence with 'outside' militarised states is preferable to an adversarial policy of 'othering'. Examining the role of learning in the development of foreign policy, Breslauer and Tetlock argue that it is only 'as the fates of actors become intertwined [that they are] forced to consider the other's interests as if they were their own' (1991:97). With the heightened potential for violent confrontations, EU policymakers would need to calculate the probability risk of fatalities for European military personnel before directly charging Moscow with violating European security and threatening to tackle the Kremlin with an offensive military alliance (EUGS, 2016:13/25). Moscow would be forced into similar considerations. There is also the extent to which the EU's overambitious rhetoric of being a regional SECURITY PROVIDER has run ahead of the reality of what the EU can deliver. Burdened with the difficulties of financing, implementing and sustaining a continental militarisation programme, it is unlikely that EU policymakers would have the cognitive bandwidth to tailor security dialogues which include capacity-building with partner countries (EU, 2020:4), or that EUGS would have invited the ambitious expectation that the EU would 'play a major role as a global security provider' (EUGS, 2016:3). Policymakers would have adjusted their discourse to the art of the possible, leading to a less emotionally-charged, less antagonistic diplomacy.

Conclusions

The research found that the concept of 'power' is a necessary explanatory device when discussing the EU, and a solid appreciation of Europe's internal power maximisation logic is essential to understanding the motivations driving

its expansionism. Contrary to its conceptual basis, separating the EU's normative political form from its political actions is profoundly unhelpful. Although Europe is a non-militarised superstate, efforts to distance the EU's power image from a Great Power identity overlook that power maximisation through enlargement remains an essential driver for the EU to thrive and is a stated objective. It underpins Europe's 'reason to be' – expanding a liberal order which achieves security through integration. Although realist orthodoxy limits the EU's post-national 'actorness', Europe should be discussed within an 'ethical-realism' framework and analysed as an assertive, maximalist actor in a Hobbesian environment.

Secondly, the research revealed that the EU has not behaved as a rational actor in its relations with Russia. The EU can be understood as encumbered by the normative power self-image, which shapes and perpetuates emotions in EU foreign policymaking and discourses. Europe's policymakers are bound at group-level by a common cognitive bias, a form of 'normative rationalism' which fits events in Ukraine within a discursive 'European storyline'. Europe's emphatic framing of various conceptual roles, emotive discourse, and political and security association instruments deliberately did not consider Russian reactions or create sufficient space for dialogue.

Thirdly, the research concludes that broadening the NPE image profile with a full-spectrum military dimension would drastically de-emphasise Europe's distinctive 'moral mission' self-image, removing the need to reproduce an 'alternative power' storyline. Europe's attempt to resolve its strategic mistakes with a form of Realpolitik contained within the EUGS concept of 'principled pragmatism' did not go far enough. Principled pragmatism is ineffective and counter-productive, underlining only EU vital interests without introducing cognitive flexibility and strategic empathy as the 'exceptional' normative impulses remain embedded in dialogues sustaining Europeanist globalism's advancement. Militarisation would dismantle the present cognitive bias, restraining moral exceptionalism, and force a new consideration of geostrategic practicalities with space for more flexibility in political reasoning.

There are clear limitations when making 'what if' statements, but they reveal important implications for future EU policy and strategy by recognising the interconnectedness of causes and outcomes. It is not possible to accurately determine whether a proper Realpolitik orientation would have led to peaceful cooperation with Russia over Ukraine's position in the world, such as non-alignment, or whether that outcome would have been acceptable to Ukraine, or whether it would have simply emboldened Russia, or if militarisation would have accelerated confrontation. The research has only considered how the normative power model has undermined European security but has not evaluated how it may have strengthened it, for example, in building a powerful political value-system among twenty-seven countries and with partners worldwide. The research has not examined the efficacy of the other power assets available to Europe, notably financial firepower, economic sanctions, and a *coalition of the willing*, which may have changed the course of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, forced a rethink of Russian incursion in the Baltics, and deterred future aggression from other predatory states. Suggesting that Europe was inadequate in its inability to predict Russian aggression is not the same as arguing that it is responsible for it, and this paper should not be read as an apology for Putin's brutal assault on Ukraine. It must be remembered that the EU attempts to engage states in a system comprising accountable institutions and fair and inclusive societies. The EU may indeed be characterised as a 'peace project' when considering that aggressive foreign policies abroad usually correspond with illiberalism at home.

As Russia invaded Ukraine, Caroline De Gruyter lamented that 'Europeans are starting to understand why more than two decades of talking has come to nothing, because their diplomacy lacked the foundation of hard power' (2022). Most commentaries arrive at this same prosaic observation that the main point of a military should be to repel attacks. This paper has taken a different but complementary approach to the debate over militarisation, arguing that, for Europe, it would serve a deeper purpose in having a transformational impact on Europe's foreign policy character by reducing the prominence of the provocative NPE storyline and making Europe more resilient on two-levels; militarily protected but diplomatically more prudent. These findings support the argument that the most effective approach to generating a positive cognitive transformation in EU foreign policymaking and discourse depends on creating an EU army.

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Primary Research

Interview with General Sir Michael Jackson, GCB, CBE, DSO, DL, Hungerford, England, March 11th 2022.