

Emerging Power Europe: The “Expansionism” of the EU and the Ukraine Crisis

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Abstract

Many observers posit that a shift in global power has taken place the last many years, away from the West to “emerging powers”, in particular the BRICS. In contrast to this view, this paper accepts Moravcsik’s view that it has been the EU which has developed into the “second superpower”, being the only one to influence matters on a global scale besides, the US. Of particular importance in this context has been the growing attractiveness of the EU market and the considerable “soft power” which the EU exerts in some parts of the world. The paper reconstructs the most important steps of Europe’s rise, with emphasis on the “expansionist” character of the EU. Internal developments in the EU have been crucial for its growing external influence. The “expansionism” of the EU and its system has until recently been peaceful. In the case of Ukraine, however, another (regional) power has applied military force to prevent further EU expansionism. The last part of the paper deals with the Ukraine crisis.

1. Introduction: The Rising “Second World” and the Rising EU

The high economic growth rates in China, India and other emerging markets during the last decades have transformed the world. Economic decisions taken in Seoul, Shanghai or Mumbai can impact many markets on a global scale, including financial and capital markets. But higher GDP means also that these governments have much more money to spend than previously. This has enabled, for instance, China to rise its military spending substantially: A point many observers have viewed with concern, be it in the US or in China’s neighboring countries. In 2006 the foreign ministers of the BRIC countries held a conference in New York. The heads of states met in Yekaterinburg in 2009 for a first summit. From then onwards they met annually. South Africa joined the group the following year. Thus five countries which represented some 40 percent of the world population, all by then fast-growing economies, initiated a process of policy coordination. In 2014 they reached agreement on founding a development bank. The “Rise of the BRICS”, or broader, the “Rise of the Second World” has attracted much attention among scholars who have endeavored to gauge its impact and to assess it in theoretical terms (see for instance Christensen and Bernal-Meza).

In much of the literature on the changing world order Europe is hardly mentioned. Andrew Moravcsik, of Princeton University, summarized the debate as follows: “Among scholars, commentators, and politicians alike the conventional view is that the contemporary world is ‘unipolar’, with the United States standing alone as the sole ‘superpower’. In their view, with the rise of China, India, and perhaps Brazil and Russia ... the world might become multipolar – if it is not already – but Europe’s role in the geopolitical balance remains insignificant” (Moravcsik, 152). According to him, this view is flawed: “Today there are two global superpowers. One is the United States, the other is Europe. Europe is the only other region in the world, besides the United States, to exert global influence across the full spectrum from ‘hard’ to ‘soft’ power. Europe is the only other region, besides the United States, that projects intercontinental military power. European countries possess, singly or collectively, a range of effective civilian instruments for projecting international influence unmatched by any country, even the United States.”

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“These include EU enlargement, neighborhood policy, trade, foreign aid, support for multilateral institutions and international law, and European values. Since the end of the cold war, as the world system ... has become more interdependent, networked, democratic, and freer of overt ideological rivalry, Europe’s distinctive instruments of influence have become relatively more effective, leading to a rise in its power” (ibid). We should make the qualifier that the EU cannot project *massive* military power. Countries such as the Gulf States, in search of protection against strong potential predators, have to call for the US. Furthermore, EU’s “actorness” in foreign policy is still restricted because important decisions require unanimity, and this often means no decision. But apart from that, there is much about Moravcsik’s view. In a process of several decades the EU has indeed built up considerable strength. The most recent revision of the EU treaties – the Lisbon Treaty, in force 2009 – saw again a substantial strengthening of EU’s “actorness” (Zank, 2012). An essential part of the rise of the EU has been enlarging its membership and exporting its model, at least in part, to other countries, in particular in its neighborhood. The EU could do this mainly by using its economic attraction and other forms of “soft” power

Not everyone has been happy with this, in particular in Russia. As Alexander Sergounin, University of Sankt Petersburg put it: “For the *geopoliticians* and *political realists* (who are currently the dominant schools both in the Russian academic community and among decision-makers) the ENP/EaP [*European Neighborhood Policy/Eastern Partnership, W.Z.*] is a continuation of power politics but by other (non-military/economic) means. In this case the EU/West uses ‘soft’ instead of ‘hard’ power. These authors point out that the ENP was launched by Brussels without any respect to Russia’s national interests in the post-Soviet space. Moreover, they are confident that from the very beginning this project aimed to challenge the Kremlin’s reintegration plans – first to create a Customs Union and then a Eurasian Union” (Sergounin, 61).

We will revert to this *problematique*. Here, however, we should underline that Russian adherents of the so-called Realist School agree in one important point with Moravcsik (a proponent of the Liberal school in international relations), namely that EU’s “soft power” has proven to be very influential. And EU policies can indeed be seen as “expansionist”. I put the term in inverted commas to mark the difference to the expansionism of the European powers before 1914. Relations between the EU and four of the five BRICS have actually developed quite positively, resulting in rather comprehensive patterns of multiple forms of cooperation. But in the case of Russia the relations deteriorated into a new Cold War. The question why this has come about will be the main theme of this paper. The text is organized as follows: First I reconstruct shortly the main steps of the EU towards a status of international power; in this context I place particular emphasis on EU’s “expansionism”. Thereafter we look at EU’s policies to the world at large, in particular as regards the BICS. In the then following part I will examine the deterioration of the relations with Russia. This cannot be understood without attention to EU’s great eastern enlargement in 2004 and its concomitant first “invasion” of Soviet territory. We will therefore look at this process before turning to the Ukraine crisis.

2. The Rise of the EU

2.1 The Founding of the EU and its Early “Expansionism”

The EU was de facto founded by the Treaty of Paris in 1951 which established the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). The six founding members (Belgium, France, Italy, Luxemburg, the Netherland and West Germany) established a seemingly very narrow form of cooperation creating a common market for coal, iron, scrap and steel. But it was actually a revolutionary step because for the first time nation states agreed upon creating supranational institutions with the competence to make binding decisions. In the words of the French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman, who launched this project, it was intended as a *première étape de la Fédération européenne* (Schuman, 2). The main purpose of such an endeavor was to secure peace. Actually, *la paix mondiale* were the very first words of Schuman’s declaration. The so-called Realist School posits that international relations have been characterized by anarchy: No law and order among the states, instead power rivalries with war being a permanent possibility. The ECSC was the first substantial endeavor to replace anarchy in international relations by rule of law. This has been a *leitmotiv* of European politics ever since. The new construction showed a tendency to expand its tasks. For instance, by opening a trade representation in Washington in 1952, the ECSC gained a piece of foreign political competence. Furthermore, interest groups and political parties began organizing themselves on a union-wide level, demanding further initiatives from the new center and thus re-enforcing the integrationist drive.

Also the High Authority developed ideas and proposals for further integration. It thus became an actor of its own; the national governments were not the only actors in this setting any more. These “spill-over effects” were analyzed by Ernst B. Haas in his seminal *The Uniting of Europe*, of 1958. At the Messina Conference in 1955, the ECSC member states decided to create a general common market. The six governments saw this as another step on the way towards a “united Europe”. Such an agenda seemed indispensable to them “if Europe is to preserve the standing which she has in the world, to restore the influence and her prestige, and to improve steadily the living standard of the population” (Messina Declaration). The Treaty of Rome (March 1957) brought about the European Economic Community’s (EEC) with the common market and Euratom (cooperation in the peaceful use of nuclear energy).

As already Haas observed (Haas, 313-6.), the new construction generated a power of attraction, in the first place notably on the United Kingdom. “Fear of isolation” became a “potent catalyst” to this geographical spill-over process (Haas, 315). The decisions taken by the EU² impacted on the UK, and in 1961 London sent a first membership application, in order to becoming able to influence these decisions (Knipping, 145). In 1973 British membership became a reality – together with Denmark and Ireland, countries for whom the British market was important. This way, just by its own gravity, the EU had attracted three new members: The first example of EU “expansionism”. The British accession was all the more remarkable because in the meantime the European Court of Justice in “land-mark decisions “had made it explicit that EU law was supreme to national law. And EU law has “direct effect”, i.e. the citizens can go to court with it. This implies that EU law has got the quality of federal law, with the treaties being a de facto constitution.

But by about 1973 the possibilities of geographical spill-over seemed to have been exhausted. At West Germany’s eastern border the Soviet orbit began. Sweden and Switzerland saw EU membership as incompatible with their neutral status. South of the EEC were the authoritarian regimes of Franco and Caetano and the Greek colonels. All three countries were therefore unsuitable for a club such as the EEC, based on democratic principles and rule by law. But in 1974/5 the authoritarian southern regimes fell, and all three countries endeavored to build up democratic systems. And very soon, from 1975 to 1977, all three countries applied for EU membership (Kipping, 190-194). In the view of the new governments, democracy consolidation and EU membership supplemented each other. EU membership would mean free access to the EU market, including agricultural products. Their workers would gain free mobility inside the EU, important because of high unemployment rates. The applying countries could also expect direct payments. Finally, becoming integrated into a dense network of institutionalized cooperation in a union of democratic states would strengthen democratic institutions in the applicant countries.

Democracy consolidation was also in the interest of the old members. And they were aware of that the attractiveness of the EU was a powerful instrument in order to contribute to this consolidation. In April 1978 the heads of states and governments declared that “respect for and maintenance of representative democracy and human rights in each Member State are essential elements of membership in the European Communities” (Smith, 109f). This was a powerful signal to the Mediterranean countries to stay on a democracy course. Accession treaties were signed in 1979 (Greece) and 1985 with Portugal and Spain (Knippig, 192-4). The cases of Greece, Portugal and Spain showed the centrality of domestic policy shifts for EU’s “expansionism”: Three countries in the EU neighborhood transited from dictatorial rule to democracy and then almost “naturally” wanted to join.

The basic development behind the shift to democracy has been processes of modernization. As Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel have convincingly shown on the basis of mountains of data (World Value Surveys): Modernization has usually been accompanied by predictable cultural changes. And these cultural changes, in particular the growth of “self-realization values”, have been conducive to democracy (Inglehart and Welzel). EU’s “expansionism” was brought about by gradual but powerful processes *inside* the neighboring countries.

2.2 The Creation of a Big Internal Market and its Growing Power of Attraction

In the 1960s and 1970s the countries adhering to Western economic models were a rather lonely group. By then one third of the world lived under a Soviet-type of closed planned economy. Also numerous third-world countries opted for Soviet-like systems (for instance Algeria, Angola, Egypt, Ethiopia or Mozambique), their leaders indulging in heavy doses of Anti-Western rhetoric.

² I write consistently EU for the sake of simplicity, although the name was changing.

Most other countries (50 percent of the world population), while not adopting a Soviet-style system with mass expropriations, chose an "Import-Substitution Industrialization" which implied cutting many economic ties with the West. Morocco, India or many Latin-American countries followed such a course. Only about 20 percent of the world population lived in "open" economic systems (Sachs and Warner, 12). The world economy was thus severely fragmented.

And in the 1970s the common EU market did not work very well. True, all tariffs and quota had been abolished in the 1960s, but instead *Non-Tariff Barriers* (NTBs) impeded cross-border trade flows. The barriers could e.g. be divergent technical standards, practices of favoring national champions, or rules for public procurement. Observers in the 1970s and 1980s spoke of a "euro sclerosis". At the same time other regions in the world, mainly around the Pacific, showed impressing economic dynamism. The Soviet orbit and China appeared to develop stably. The narrative of the "big power shift away from the West", so prominent in the 2000s and 2010s, seemed to be much more justified in the 1970s.

Under these constellations in the EU a new consensus gained ground: In order to re-ignite growth and "preserve Europe's standing in the world", a proper Internal Market should be constructed and the NTB's removed. But this demanded a huge amount of harmonization and legislation; a White Paper issued in 1985 by the EU Commission specified some 300 measures and a timetable up to 31 December 1992. This could not be reached under conditions of unanimity voting in the council of ministers. Instead, Qualified Majority Voting (QMV) ought to be introduced on issues pertaining to the Internal Market. By July 1987, the new treaty, the Single European Act entered in force. It initiated a new dynamism of European integration. The "output capacity" of EU's legislative system increased substantially. The European Parliament received real decision-making power, thus becoming a new important supra-national actor which reinforced the integrationist drive. And it was difficult to determine where the Internal Market ended. Already the Single European Market made environmental problems and working conditions an EU issue. Many new spill-over's made themselves felt, and every following treaty revision extended QMV and the role of the parliament. Finally in 2007 the Lisbon Treaty made co-decision by the parliament and QMV in the council the "Ordinary Legislative Procedure". Basically only foreign and security policy still had to be decided by unanimity.

In the context of EU "expansionism" the project of the Internal Market has had two important consequences. Firstly, it substantially increased the attractiveness of the EU market for outsiders. Previously, it was far from given that a foreign exporter who could export to France could also do so to Germany, because the technical standards were different. But with the progress of the Internal Market, getting access to one country meant getting green light for the whole big EU market.

Secondly, the EU had invented strong mechanisms to generate legislation across state borders. This meant that the EU, as the first integration scheme in the world, progressed from "Shallow Integration" with "reforms at the border" (tariffs etc.) to "Deep Integration" with reforms "behind the border", producing common legal norms. And these norms could be overtaken by non-EU countries, if they were interested in easier access to the EU market. The EU thus got a new important export article: Legal Norms.

There have been powerful economic pressures and arguments for complementing the Internal Market with a common currency. Already in the 1960s currency instabilities had strong disturbing effects on the common market. Therefore in 1969 the Haag Summit decided the transition to a common currency. However, the economic crisis after 1973 rendered the project impossible for the time being. But from 1983 onwards French President François Mitterrand worked systematically at bringing the common currency back on the agenda. He wanted a comprehensive re-launch of the *construction européenne* (Dyson and Featherstone, 151). It took, however, a new shock to bring the project properly on track: On 9 November 1989 the Berlin Wall collapsed and this brought the issue of German unification on the agenda. The old idea of binding Germany into solid European structures gained anew strong traction. And German top politicians were well aware of that an unwavering pro-European stance on their side was a condition for getting German unification through smoothly.

As Harold James put it, "there was a clear economic as well as a political logic behind" (James, 1). In 1999 the euro became a reality, for eleven countries at the start. After the outbreak of the financial crisis in 2008 many observers have spoken of a "euro crisis". Wrongly so. The origin of the crisis had nothing to do with the euro. The crisis has been a crisis of public and private over-indebtedness in some countries, and lack of competitiveness in others. True, "solving" the competitiveness crisis by means of devaluation was no longer possible.

But under these conditions an internal devaluation (lowering prices and wages) has, if difficult, always been possible, as demonstrated already in the 1980s by countries such as Denmark, or more recently by Estonia or Ireland. No country could ever improve its position by leaving the euro zone. It would have multiplied their debts and their interest rates. Consequently, there has been no danger of the “euro zone breaking apart”. On the contrary, after the outbreak of the financial crisis it *expanded* by four new members, the Baltic countries and Slovakia.

The crisis revealed, however, that e.g. banking supervision on a national level has been insufficient. Consequently a common banking supervision was constructed. The euro countries also created a common fund, in order to assist countries in crisis. Likewise mechanisms for closer monitoring of fiscal policies were strengthened. Instead of “breaking apart”, the institutional settings of the euro zone became considerably strengthened. We might see this again as a case of spill-over (Zank 2015). Moravcsik summarized the international role of the euro as follows: The EU’s common currency ... is the only serious contemporary alternative to the dollar as a global reserve currency ... At the end of 2008 some 45 percent international debt securities were denominated in dollars and 32 percent in euros, the dollar was used in 86 percent of foreign exchange transaction and the euro in 38 percent, and 66 countries used the dollar as their exchange-rate anchor while 27 used the euro. The EU and the European Central Bank also play key roles in financial stabilization efforts outside the euro zone” (Moravcsik, 162). After the outbreak of the financial crisis, the international role of the euro declined slightly³. But this development can be expected to be reversed with the return to growth (as seems to be well on the way in the whole euro zone by February 2017).

3. *The EU, the World at Large, and the BICS*

On the important field of external trade the EU has been a united actor from the beginning. This became manifest for the first time in July 1963 when the EU and 18 former Belgian and French colonies signed the first Yaoundé Convention. Under this scheme the EU gave these countries preferential access to its market, not the least for agricultural products, and provided various assistance schemes. In 1975 (first Lomé Convention) this cooperation was extended to former British colonies, comprising then all in all 79 so-called ACP Countries (Africa-Caribbean-Pacific). In the context of GATT/WTO negotiations the EU performed as a unified actor for the first time during the Kennedy Round (1964-7).

But some EU members, in particular Britain and Denmark, have been very hesitant to give competences to the union in the field of foreign and security policy. The collapse of the Soviet Union 1990/1 changed this. The instability all over Eastern and Central Europe and the danger of armed conflicts seemed to make it imperative that the EU countries could act in common. Consequently the Maastricht Treaty of 1992 institutionalized a “Common Foreign and Security Policy” (CFSP). The council of ministers could decide on *common positions*, but only by unanimity. On the basis of such a common position the ministers could decide *joint actions* by QMV. (Hix, 389). The first big test of EU foreign policy was the Yugoslav civil wars. The EU failed, marred by internal controversies and lack of instruments.

In the end it was the US to broker/enforce the Dayton agreement. The Amsterdam Treaty of 1997 created the new position of a High Representative for the CFSP and a new planning and early-warning unit, the Policy Unit. Crucially, the European Council received the competence to decide upon common defense policies. In 1999 the EU Summit in Helsinki decided that the union should build up common military capabilities, e.g. for peace-keeping missions (Hix, 392). This decision was provoked by the Kosovo crisis. The Nice Treaty introduced a Military Committee and a military staff. For the first time military uniforms could be seen in EU buildings. In 2003 the EU started its first military operation, peace-keeping in Macedonia.

Thereafter the EU organized a long row of peace-keeping operations, mostly in Africa, but also in places as distant as Aceh, Indonesia. In these operations military power became combined with civilian instruments such as training police officers, administrators or judges. Finally, the Treaty of Lisbon provided a common diplomatic service, the European External Action Service (EEAS) and strengthened the position of the High Representative. The build-up of military capabilities was not done to confront any foreign power.

³ The role of the euro as e.g. measured in “currency shares in foreign exchange reserves with disclosed currency composition (current exchange rates)” fell from 27.7 percent in 2009 to 24.4 percent in the fourth quarter of 2013 (ECB 2014, 67).

The "enemy" has been instead the danger of conflicts outside the EU and the consequent risks of failing states. As regards the Western countries, anarchy has indeed been replaced by rule of norms. Particularly so inside the European Union, but to quite some extent also across the Atlantic. Small wonder because open democratic societies develop similar interests and big-power rivalry does not belong to them. The EU and the Western countries thus seem to demonstrate convincingly the validity of the theory of Democratic Peace.

Three momentous developments *outside* the EU have substantially increased the standing of the EU on the international scene. Firstly, there has been a *global* shift from closed state-led economies to more open systems, as Sachs and Warner could document already in 1995. The two most populous countries in the world - China and India - have been among this group. In the EU vicinity, after 1989 the countries of eastern and central Europe have been a spectacular case, but a more gradual, if sometimes inconsistent transition happened also in e.g. Morocco, Tunisia, Turkey, or, to a lesser extent, Egypt (Zank 2009). The reason for this shift is not hard to identify: Open and market-oriented systems have proven to be much more dynamic than closed state-led ones.⁴ Therefore also authoritarian and anti-Western regimes such as Syria moved in this direction. Becoming more open implied becoming more interested in export earnings, and this made the EU market much more interesting than previously. This required adaptation to the EU market rules. It also created an interest in coming into dialogue and trying to influence EU decisions. Also authoritarian regimes such as Tunisia under Ben Ali could therefore develop a strong interest in cooperation, albeit usually trying to restrict it to economic or technical issues, while downplaying issues of democracy and human rights.

Secondly, during the last decades the transition to democracy has also been a truly global phenomenon, affecting countries from Chile and Brazil to Indonesia and South Korea. And democracies with open economies have an interest in stable relations with the EU, without reservations against its over-all political values because they have the same. However, the transition to democracy has not been a linear one-way process. Most important in our context has been the reverse process in Russia. And thirdly, if Joseph Nye is right, technical developments – electronic communication, internet, social media – have increased the importance of "soft power" (Nye). It has become much more difficult for authoritarian regimes to control the flow of information. And if Moravcsik is right that the EU has got more "soft power" than others, then in particular the EU has benefitted from this development.

The EU has invested most of its external activity in the areas relatively close: Eastern Europe, the Mediterranean and Africa. But the overall-reach has been indeed global. Concrete initiatives and instruments have varied according to different situations, but the basic pattern has been the same: Try to reduce anarchy in international relations, contribute to the construction of an international system of rule by law and open economic systems, and exporting as much as possible of the EU model: Democracy and integration. This implied strengthening, if possible, the UN and the WTO. It meant support for the African Union, e.g. contributing to the AU's peace-keeping possibilities. It implied negotiating institutionalized dialogues and free-trade agreements, if possible with groups of countries.

In the case of the Caribbean (Cariforum) a rather comprehensive interregional *Economic Partnership Agreement* could be concluded. As a second-best solution agreements were signed with individual countries. The EU supported, for instance, the creation of Mercosur and endeavored for many years to reach an interregional agreement with it. When this proved not to be possible, the EU established instead in 2007 a "Strategic Partnership" with Brazil, with annual summits, action plans and multiple dialogues. The EU and most of the BRICS countries have constructed dense networks of cooperation, dialogues and transactions. Given the point that the BRICS are heterogeneous, the patterns of cooperation and problems have been different. For instance, human rights issues and Tibet have on various occasions burdened relations with China. The EU has also maintained an arms embargo on China, imposed after the massacre on and around Tien An Min Square in 1989. But this has neither in the case of China prevented a "Strategic Partnership" with yearly summits, regular high-level meetings and more than 50 institutionalized sartorial dialogues. In October 2014 a first dialogue on Security and Defense was initiated. The last decades dozens of agreements on e.g. scientific cooperation, university education or tourism have been concluded; economic cooperation is very close. When China aspired for membership in the WTO, the EU gave technical assistance and diplomatic support. Assisting other countries integrating into the world economy is an EU priority, mentioned even in the treaty.

⁴ This did, of course, not imply that the state did not play a role anymore. But the state concentrated on *different* task than before.

This might seem strange for followers of the “Realist” school. According to EU philosophy, integrating into the world economy makes these countries economically more dynamic. This implies also that they get more military clout. Therefore for a dye-hard realist, assisting China at WTO-accession must have been extremely unwise. But “realism” occupies only a minor place in the dominant beliefs in the EU system.

Furthermore, cooperation with China might also support other EU policy aims. As the Commission formulated it in 1995 in a strategy paper on China: “EU policy is based on the well-founded belief that human rights tend to be better understood and better protected in societies open to the free flow of trade, investment, people, and ideas” (Mattlin, 103). Also with India and South Africa the EU has been engaged in “Strategic Partnerships”, similar to Brazil and China. Relations have been rather unproblematic because these countries are democracies which endeavor to strengthen human rights. The density of cooperation, of transaction and dialogue has been much higher between each of these countries and the EU than among the BRICS themselves.

There has been no common EU strategy towards the BRICS as a group. Nor has the formalization of the BRICS cooperation induced noticeable changes in EU’s external activities. The BRICS have never formulated common demands towards the EU and have not negotiated in common. And as we have seen, strengthening Europe’s voice in the world has been a motive for European integration from the very beginning. Sometimes external events worked as catalysts, for instance the collapse of the Soviet orbit and of Yugoslavia and its concomitant risks of new conflicts; also political and social instability in e.g. Africa has been perceived as a risk also for Europe and motivated EU action. But the rise of emerging markets or the BRICS cooperation did not seem to have created many worries in Bruxelles or in the national capitals. Seen from Bruxelles, the BRICS have been very heterogeneous. Brazil, South Africa, India, and also China have mainly been cooperative. But with Russia cooperation substantially decreased during the 2000s. By 2013 relations turned into a new Cold War. The remainder of this paper will concentrate on relations with Russia. In order to understand them, we must include developments in the 1990s.

4. EU’s Eastern Enlargement and the First “Invasion” of Soviet Territory

In 1989 the Soviet Union began disintegrating and the “peoples’ republics” collapsed. The basic factor behind was the dismal inefficiency of the socialist planned economies. And they could not be reformed. The various schemes of introducing decentralization and some market mechanisms into the rigidity of the planning system did not improve efficiency, on the contrary. The planned economy could either be maintained, or abolished (Zank 2001, 7-11). Poland was pioneering the political change because Communist rule was particularly weak. In early 1989 the regime agreed to (mostly) free elections on 4 June. It was a landslide victory for the Solidarity movement which in September could form a coalition government. On 9 November the Berlin Wall fell, and by the end of the year all the regimes in Eastern Europe had collapsed.

In the Soviet Union developments were rather diverse. Russia made large strides on the way to democracy, and on 12 June 1991 Boris Yeltsin became Russian President with full democratic legitimacy. However, the parliament, elected without parties in March 1990, was quasi-democratic at best, the deputies being “accidental, disorganized, unaccountable, and predominantly communist” (Åslund, 59). The parliament developed into a formidable reform blocker which made Russia’s economic transition very inconsistent in crucial years. In Ukraine the Communist Party managed to stay in power also under conditions of formal democratization. At the parliamentary elections on March 4 1990, they gained 83 percent of the seats. Sensing that the Communists were losing power in Moscow, Ukraine’s *nomenclatura* functionaries successfully presented themselves as nationalists. In December 1991 90 percent of the voters opted for independence, and Leonid Kravchuk, Second Secretary of the Ukrainian Communist Part, became the first democratically elected president (62 percent of the votes).

For many years the ruling *nomenclatura* in Kiev did not show much interest in economic reform. A highly dysfunctional hybrid economic system with inflation rates up to 4,700 percent pulled the country on a long slide downwards which cost some two thirds of GPD. Only in 1998 did growth return (Zank 2001, 26-9). Matters developed differently in the Baltic States. In the interwar period they were independent, until Stalin annexed them in July 1940. 17,500 people from Lithuania, 17,000 from Latvia and 6,000 from Estonia were deported to Siberia (Snyder, 143). After Soviet re-occupation in 1944-5, armed guerilla resistance continued high up into the 1950s. As soon as Soviet repression eased under Gorbachov, independence movements appeared which in 1988 crystallized into broad popular fronts.

In February /March 1990 these popular fronts gained two-third majorities in the parliaments of all three countries, formed governments and declared independence. After the abortive coup against Gorbachov in August 1991 the Soviet Union recognized their independence (Åslund 59f). In December 1991 the Soviet Union became dissolved. Many academics advocated by then a gradual transition to more market economy. But there were strong arguments for rapid reform because several conditions must be in place simultaneously before a marked economy can function efficiently. For instance, liberalization of prices does not increase efficiency under conditions of hyperinflation (as was the case in Poland 1989, or later Russia and Ukraine). Macroeconomic stabilization was thus a prime priority. And markets could neither function properly as long foreign trade was not liberalized. Otherwise, these countries were dominated by monopolies. And although many reforms would take many years, there was no good argument for not starting early on the numerous reforms which could be done early (Zank 2001, 11-16).

For democratic governments such as the Polish one there were also strong political arguments in favor of fast reform: The old *nomenclatura* occupied still the economic ministries and bureaucracy. By fast reform, as started on 1 January 1990, the power of the old guard became dissolved. The Polish economy returned to growth already in 1992. This was the shortest and mildest transition recession in the former Soviet orbit. Ukraine was at the bottom (Zank 2001, 17-29). There was no practical economic alternative to opting for a system similar to those in Western Europe. And it was a burning issue to increase exports to Western Europe, in order to earn foreign currency. Small wonder that soon the question of EU membership came on the agenda. As before with Greece or Spain there was also here the issue of consolidating democracy.

The EU leaders certainly did not push for EU enlargement. French President Mitterrand declared in November 1989 that the union had enough internal problems and should not be burdened by "premature adhesions"; in summer 1991 he added it might take "*dizaines et dizaines d'années*". And German Chancellor Helmut Kohl was concerned that such a broad enlargement would transform the EU into "an elaborated free-trade area [*gehobene Freihandelszone*] but not the Political Union which he wanted" (Zank 2005, 6-8). While membership was excluded for the time being, the EU offered already in 1990 cooperation agreements with preferential trade access, in the first round to Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland. The EU made it clear that they did *not* imply a promise of EU membership (Zank 2005, 9f). Up to 1996, similar agreements were concluded with the Baltic States, Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. Gradually EU leaders came to think more positively about enlargement. In 1992 the Commission could show that a bigger enlargement was "doable" without dissolving the union, provided that the new-comers overtook the whole *acquis communautaire*, i.e. EU's body of legislation. The applicants had also to go through a comprehensive reform process.

Secondly, the situation all over eastern and central Europe became fraught with many conflicts which easily could turn violent, as it happened 1991 in former Yugoslavia. Closer EU association with a prospect of membership could be crucial for stabilizing the situation. In June 1993 on the Copenhagen Summit the EU for the first time opened a membership perspective to by then six of the eastern countries. But the offer was conditional on that an acceding country had built stable institution "guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities." Furthermore, it must have a functioning market economy capable of coping with competitive pressures in the EU market, and finally an ability to take on the obligations of membership, including adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union. Between March 1994 and June 1996 ten eastern and central European countries, including the three Baltic republics, filed membership applications. On the Luxemburg Summit in December 1997 the decision was taken to start proper accession negotiations with a first group of them (in 1999 enlarged to the whole group). The EU Commission monitored the reform processes and assessed where a country fulfilled the criteria and where not.

This procedure gave the EU an unprecedented leverage: The accession countries had to do exactly what the EU demanded. Exceptions or special rights were not possible, only some time-limited derogations. All in all, this was a large-scale interference into the internal affairs of the applicant countries. But it was interference in the interests of both sides. The EU's main interest was to stabilize the region, and the applicant countries themselves had an interest in stable democracy, rule by law and efficient administrative and economic institutions. The EU could interfere this way because of its strong force of attraction and "soft power" in the sense of Joseph Nye: The vast majorities in the applicant countries *wanted to be like the EU countries*. The negotiations could be finalized in Copenhagen in December 2002. And by 2004 most applicants became members, including the three formerly Soviet Baltic republics. Bulgaria and Romania had to wait until 2007.

The Eastern enlargement generated numerous new problems and financial burdens. But all in all it was a tremendous success which brought democratic stability to vast areas. But many Russian observers saw it as an “invasion” of Soviet territory.

5. The European Neighborhood Policy, the Second “Invasion” of Soviet Territory, and the Ukraine Crisis

In 2004, when the bulk of the eastern enlargement was achieved, the EU initiated its so-called European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) towards the countries in the east and south. The declared aim was to prevent the genesis of new dividing lines after enlargement. The core of the ENP has been the offer to give neighboring countries, if interested, a “stake” in the Internal Market, basically improved access. To this aim, the EU allotted financial means, in order to give various types of assistance, be it to build laboratories in order to meet the EU’s veterinary and phyto-sanitary standards, be it to speed up customs procedures or be it improving governance. Institutionalized dialogues on many levels were to accompany these processes. The ENP underwent some developments. For instance, in 2011 more emphasis was placed on contacts to civil society. The relations to the neighbors in Eastern Europe became grouped under a common heading (Eastern Partnership) and to countries with which cooperation has developed well, the EU offered Association Agreements, containing so-called “Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements” (DCFTA).

By such an agreement the neighboring country would gradually become institutionally so close that it would approach Norway’s status (full member of the Internal Market and its regulation, except agriculture and fishery). So far, Georgia, Moldova, Morocco, Tunisia and Ukraine have accepted entering such a process. Much of the ENP has resembled pre-accession assistance, but a membership perspective was explicitly not implied. Russia was not formally included in the ENP. However, the basic offer has been the same. But whereas Ukraine became receptive to the EU offer, Russia did not. Accepting EU association did not imply cutting off ties to other neighbors. On the contrary, the EU has been actively supporting integration schemes among neighbors such as the *Union Arabe de Maghreb* or the Agadir Agreement for free trade and trade facilitation (Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, and Tunisia). Each neighbor country has been perfectly free to strengthen cooperation and interaction with other countries. However, free trade with the EU was, of course, not compatible with a scheme of a competing customs union which implied new tariffs and other barriers towards the outer world, the EU included.

This became exactly the problem with Putin’s Eurasian Customs Union of 2010 with Belarus and Kazakhstan’s. These countries on 29 May 2014 signed a treaty of deepening the customs union to a Eurasian Economic Union. Some observers (Hilary Clinton, for instance) wondered whether this was not an initiative to reconstruct, at least partially, the Soviet Union (whose demise in Putin’s view was the “biggest catastrophe of the 20st century”. Already in the 1990s, but particularly after the accession of Putin to power in 1999 Russia has moved away from the Western model of democracy. According to the ranking of e.g. Freedom House in 1991 Russia scored 3 on the dimensions of Political Rights and Civil Liberty, classifying it for a status of “partially free”. By 1998 both dimensions had deteriorated to 4, still giving “partially free”. 2005, however, the characteristic changed to “non free”, with 6 on political rights and 5 on civil liberties. In 2015 also civil liberties were on 6 (Freedom House). Other comparative inquiries came to very similar results. For instance, the *Russia Country Report* of the 2014 Transformation Index of the Bertelsmann Foundation, characterized the parliamentary elections of December 2011 as “fraudulent”, and after Putin became again president in March 2013, assembly and media freedoms became further restricted. Participating in unauthorized demonstrations can be punished with very high fines, “slander” became a criminal offence, and websites can be blocked without judicial order. Human rights violations in northern Caucasus have been ongoing (Bertelsmann Russia, 2).

These developments were duly noticed in the major EU institutions or the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. According to them there has been a “weakening of the rule of law and democracy”. A system of checks and balances, indispensable for a functioning democracy, became “seriously undermined”. Changes of the rules for appointing or dismissing judges “undermined prospects for an independent judiciary”. In the context of the prosecution of the oil oligarch Mikhail Khodorkovsky state actions included “elements such as weakening outspoken political opponents, intimidation and regaining control of strategic economic assets.” Elections were characterized by the “extensive use of administrative resources and control of media to support the president and political parties favored by the government”.

Legislation on elections and political parties further restricted political competition. There has been "harassment and intimidation of members of civil society critical of the authorities and in particular of the journalistic, scientific and environmental communities". In Chechnya has ruled a "climate of impunity" (Adomeit, 392).

Putin and his ruling group could follow this authoritarian course with comparative ease because the majority of the Russian population had acquired an authoritarian mindset, in contrast to global trends. According to Inglehart and Welzel, the data of the *World Value Surveys* have shown a worldwide trend from 1981 to 2007 from "survival values" to "self-expression values" and from "traditional values" to "secular rational values". And the "self-expression values" have been conducive to and been highly correlated with functioning democracy. But Russia has gone the other way. Traditional values such as religion have become stronger, and so have "survival values" with their preference for order and discipline (Inglehart and Welzel 2009, 7f). This change was caused by the traumatic experiences of the highly disorderly Russian transition in the 1990s: Hyperinflation robbed the savings of most Russians, and unemployment, unknown before, became a problem for many. Pensioners fell into poverty; the opaque privatizations were often equivalent to theft. And in addition the country lost its superpower status.

Quite in concordance with Inglehart/Welzel's findings, Alexander Lukin, a leading researcher attached to the Moscow Ministry of Foreign Affairs, explained that in the former Soviet Republics all major religions have experienced a revival: "... all these religions reject Western permissiveness and moral relativism ... because they find such notions sinful." For them "... Western society is ... the very center of sin" (Lukin, 6).

These sentiments are suiting Putin's rule well. As many other authoritarian systems, Putin's has fostered a hostile atmosphere against the outside world, in particular the West. The government controls directly or indirectly all major economic activities, notably oil and gas, the sales of which became a major source of state revenues. Putin could use them to distribute benefits to loyal groups. But the Russian model has not been an economic success. Very few companies are competitive in foreign markets; three quarters of the export earnings come from hydrocarbons and minerals. As a World Bank report stated: "In 2013, frail domestic demand dragged the Russian economy close to stagnation ... The lack of growth-supporting structural reforms and decreasing profit margins weighed heavily on business sentiment and pushed down industrial activity and investment. The contribution of fixed investment to GDP growth turned negative in 2013 ..." (World Bank). This was before the Ukraine crisis and Western sanctions. Existing gas and oil fields approach depletion, and opening new production in Arctic fields require Western technology and investments. Putin's Russia has become much more reclusive and decidedly not interested in the EU offers of closer economic and political integration. EU financial assistance was of no interest. Not even better access to the EU market seemed to be important because Russia has got so much oil and gas. Small wonder that EU's neighborhood policy was no success as regards Russia.

Instead, Putin began actively working against the EU. In November 1999 Russia published a Medium-Term Strategy paper on the development of relations with the EU 2000-2010. It said explicitly that Russia "will counteract any attempt at hampering economic integration in the CIS. In particular, it opposes 'special relations' of the EU with individual countries of the CIS to the detriment of Russia's interests" (Adomeit, 393). Putin declared in April 2005 that the deepening of integration in the CIS, in the frames of the Common Economic Space (CES) and a Eurasian Economic Community had "top priority" for Russian foreign policy. In March 2005 Putin created a special Kremlin department to promote Russian influence in its "Near Abroad" through the use of energy supply, trade and investment, jobs for migrants and cultural and language programs (Abromeit, 394). Putin also spoke about efforts to increase Russia's "soft power". But he confused it with government propaganda (Nye, 21). From an economic point of view Putin's effort at ring-fencing the CIS did not make sense. Closer association with the EU would lift these countries economically and thereby make them also more interesting customers for Russian products. But politically Putin's course made some sense:

Any tightening of ties of those countries with the EU, any increase in the flows of ideas from the West, and any progress towards stable democracies in neighboring countries has got the potential to undermine his authoritarian system. The successive "Color Revolutions" from 2000 to 2005 downed authoritarian regimes in Serbia, Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan - to the profound dismay of the Russian leadership. However, in the most important neighbor, Ukraine, matters seemed again to "normalize" in Putin's view. In February 2010 Viktor Yanukovich won the presidential election again, by a narrow margin. Successfully he concentrated power within his inner circle. In October 2011 opposition leader Yulia Timoshenko was sentenced to 7 years prison in a trial which numerous observers saw as pre-fabricated.

Parliamentary elections in October 2012 were characterized by severely biased media coverage, vote buying and harassment of candidates (Bertelsmann Ukraine, 2). It produced a solid majority for Yanukovich's Party of the Regions.

However, these similarities covered over profound structural differences between Russia and Ukraine. Firstly, the western parts of Ukraine were conquered by Stalin in 1939. Also in Western Ukraine Soviet occupation was accompanied by large-scale deportations. Also in Ukraine nationalist guerilla fighters were active up into the 1950s. Today all over Ukraine historical memories weigh heavily against any glorification of Soviet "togetherness": In the famine of 1932-3 literally millions of people died because Stalin had ordered high food requisitions although production had collapsed in the wake of collectivization. Soviet Ukraine was actually the republic hardest hit in the Soviet Union, with about 3.3 million victims (Snyder, 53). Since 2006 the fourth Saturday in November has been a memorial day for the *Holodomor* all over Ukraine.

Particularly the western parts have entertained rather close connections with Poland, thus since 2004 with EU territory. And a very important structural factor in our context: Ukraine has not been an oil and gas country. This means that the Ukrainian business community, oligarchs or otherwise, could not just look at Yanukovich hoping that he showered oil money on them. They have had to earn money on markets, and this has made the EU important. Yanukovich could not ignore this basic fact. Beginning in 2007, under President Yushchenko, the Ukraine and the EU have been negotiating an Association Agreement, including a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (European Union 2014). After Yanukovich took over again, he did not stop this. Ominous for Putin and his entourage, in March 2009 the EU and Ukraine agreed on a program for the modernization of Ukraine's gas pipeline system. Putin issued a furious statement (Adomeit, 398). By 1 February 2011, that means under Yanukovich, Ukraine became also a full member of the Energy Community between the EU and now eight adjacent countries (Moldova accessed it already by 1 May 2010). This is about integrating the neighboring countries into the EU energy market; they have to overtake the whole EU *acquis* in this field. In this process *reverse flows* were installed in the pipelines between Ukraine and neighbors in the EU.

Previously gas (i.e. Russian transit gas) could only flow out of Ukraine. Now it became possible to send gas from the EU to Ukraine. This was bad news for Putin. The new Association Agreement, including a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area, was initialed in 2012, i.e. still under Yanukovich. But the EU side saw no reason to hurry but tried to use the advantages it would offer to Ukraine as a carrot to bring Yanukovich on a democracy course. On 10 December 2012 the council of the foreign ministers expressed their "concern" that the 28 October parliamentary elections showed "several shortcomings and constituted a deterioration in several areas". The EU expected that the Ukrainian government established "a reliable electoral system" with clear rules for media access. The ministers reiterated their "strong concern regarding the politically motivated convictions" (Council of the European Union 2012). The signing of the agreement on the Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius in November 2013 was still possible, but as other EU politicians made explicit: No Agreement if Yulia Timoshenko will not get released.

On 21 November 2013, in a surprise move, Yanukovich's government cancelled further preparations for the agreement. "It is President Viktor Yanukovich who is personally blocking Ukraine's movement toward the European Union", Arseniy Yatsenyuk, the parliamentary leader of Timoshenko's party, declared (BBC News). Protests started almost immediately and gained pace rapidly. Already at the end of November 100,000 people attended a demonstration in Kiev. Early December they were 800,000. Protesters occupied the town hall in Kiev and other cities and turned the Independence Square in Kiev into a tent city.

Soon people died of gunshots. 20 February was the worst day: At least 88 people got killed in 48 hours; videos showed uniformed snipers firing on demonstrators (BBC 2014). After mediation by the French and German foreign ministers on 21 February Yanukovich signed a compromise deal with opposition leaders. But in the following night he fled by helicopter, presumably fearing a trial in court. The parliament, the Verkhovna Rada, elected a new government by a constitutional majority which united the previous opposition and the Party of the Regions. Only the Communist Party did not become represented in the new government. And on 25 May Petro Poroshenko was elected president by 55 percent of the votes already in the first round, in elections assessed as fair by the OSCE and the ODIHR (EU External Action Service 2014 b, 4). Poroshenko gained a solid majority also all over Eastern Ukraine, except for the parts with about 3 million inhabitants where the separatists prevented the elections by force.

At the time of Poroschenko's election Russia had already occupied and annexed Crimea, and in Eastern Ukraine the armed insurgence had begun. In the conflict both sides disposed over completely different means. Putin had basically only military power, his special forces, arms deliveries, and financing. Putin presumably overestimated profoundly the separatist potential in Eastern Ukraine. At least Igor Gurkin/Strelkov, a "retired" Russian intelligence officer who became defense minister for the "Peoples' Republic of Donetsk" complained in June in a Twitter message that so few men in the area were ready to risk their lives; he appealed to the women to muster instead. And indeed all estimates of separatist forces resulted in a few thousand, at most 18,000, which included Russian Special Forces, Russian and Chechen mercenaries and Russian volunteers. Another resource for Putin was his command over the Russian TV stations (all of them) which were seen by many in the separatist territories.

The Ukrainian forces were weak at the outbreak of the conflict, became, however, reinforced by thousands of volunteers. But the Ukrainian side received much help from the outside, mainly the EU and US which acted closely together in this crisis. Firstly, Ukraine received substantial financial aid, mainly in the form of a loan of 15 billion dollar from the IMF. The loan has been accompanied by a Structural Adjustment Program which can be expected to improve Ukrainian institutions considerably. The EU provided additional financing. The financial support allowed Kiev, of course, also to strengthen its military. But it also made Ukraine rather safe against Russian economic blackmailing. The EU also started to pump gas to Ukraine. In four steps the EU imposed economic sanctions against Russia, the so far last round was decided on the 30 August Summit. A long row of institutions and persons have been hit. The most "biting" sanctions have been directed against constructing new oil-production facilities in the Arctic, and against the re-financing of Russian banks. Canada, Norway and the US imposed similar restrictions. The EU countries have also decided not to conclude any new arms contracts. In addition, the French government suspended the delivery of two helicopter carriers.

Berlin did the same with regard to a military training center. The NATO powers, the US in particular, have gathered and partly published hard-core intelligence documenting the Russian incursions. Also the Western media with a strong presence of reporters on location have produced much evidence and transmitted it to the world at large. And Putin's regime has been unable to prevent information from filtering into Russia itself. Concerned mothers began demanding to be informed where their sons were. And after first categorically denying that Russian soldiers were on Ukrainian soil, Russian TV reported about a funeral of a paratrooper who fell in Ukraine. He went there "in his holydays", without informing friends and relatives about it.

To a limited extent some EU countries and the US have delivered "non-lethal" military technique such as protection vests or night-vision binoculars. According to Poroschenko, five NATO countries have promised to send him weapons. In June and July 2014 the Ukrainian forces gained the upper hand, almost halving separatist-held territory. Putin decided to intervene with complete Russian army units which drove the Ukrainian forces back. The European Council (of the 28 heads of states and governments) on 30 August condemned "the increasing inflows of fighters and weapons into the territory of the Eastern Ukraine as well as the aggression by Russian armed forces on Ukrainian soil. It calls upon the Russian Federation to immediately withdraw all its military assets and forces from Ukraine" (European Council 2014). This assessment had to be endorsed by unanimity, so no one was in doubt that regular Russian forces were in Ukraine. The common EU Situation Center and the EU Satellite Center (near Madrid) were presumably important conditions for this unity of assessment. On the summit José Barroso, the President of the EU Commission, reported that Putin in a telephone call had told him that he could take Kiev within two weeks. But interestingly, he did not do so and instead agreed to an armistice. It left Donetsk and Luhansk under his control.

In September Ukraine, Russia and the separatist signed a protocol in Minsk, which, however, did not bring an end to hostilities. The separatist, supported by Russian troops, could enlarge their territory considerably. But on 11 February 2015, Ukraine, Russia and France and Germany (for the EU) signed the Minsk II Agreement which contained a rather comprehensive package for a normalization of the situation, including the restoration of Ukrainian control over its entire border. Thereafter fighting largely stopped. The situation remained, however, fragile. In March the EU governments reached agreement that the sanctions could only be lifted when the Minsk Agreement became really implemented. At the time go writing it is not yet clear in which direction the situation will develop. It can easily end in a situation similar to Georgia and Moldova where Russia has continued keeping part of their territory occupied. But Russia is now under economic sanctions which presumably will become increasing costly.

In addition the price of oil has fallen sharply. It is unclear what is actually the use of Donetsk, Luhansk and the Crimean for Russia. Putin might barter them for some concessions. And they give him, of course, the possibility to re-ignite the conflict at any moment. But they generate also high expenses for the Russian budget. Perhaps more important, by his actions Putin has destroyed any possibility of gaining sympathy and influence among the vast majority of the Ukrainians. He has lost Ukraine.

On 16 September 2014 the EU parliament and the Ukrainian Rada ratified the Association Agreement. The Rada did so unanimously. And the parliamentary elections of 26 October 2014 brought an outright smashing victory for the parties supporting the pro-EU course, gaining 87 percent of the seats. The right-wing extremists of *Svoboda* and the Right Sector, being so prominent in Russia's propaganda, did not gain any representation. The reasons for the attraction of EU Association are not difficult to guess. One aspect has been the prospect of economic prosperity. In 1990 GDP per head was about the same in Ukraine and Poland (12 percent higher in Poland). By 2014 Poland's figure was more than *three times* higher. We might add that EU countries have built up rather generous welfare states, a point which strongly contributes to the attraction of the Western European models. According to interviews in the media Ukrainian citizens were also very much motivated by their disdain about the rampant corruption in their country. The EU countries showed, in spite of some problematic member countries, that much lower corruption levels are perfectly possible. And last not least: EU countries have without exception democratic standards which have been much higher than what Ukrainians have experienced even in the best days before 2014. On none of these dimensions can Putin compete, he could practically only use force. But EU's soft power has proven harder.

6. Was it the Fault of the West?

John Mearsheimer, *grand old man* of the "Realist School" published an article in *Foreign Affairs*, according to which the Ukrainian crisis is the "West's Fault" (Mearsheimer). The above-quoted Alexander Lukin, Moscow, presented a very similar view in the same issue (Lukin). According to their view the West intruded into Russian spheres of influence which threatened Russian core interests. No great power would tolerate this. Mearsheimer discussed explicitly Ukraine's right of choosing her foreign policy: "The sad truth is that might often makes right when great-power politics are at play ... It is in Ukraine's interest to understand these facts of life and tread carefully when dealing with its more powerful neighbor" (*ibid.*, 8). In a way, Mearsheimer is right: Had the EU and the US accepted that Ukraine is not an independent country but Russia's vassal state with no right to choose its own foreign policy or its political system, then the crisis would have been avoided.

But this would have been a gigantic betrayal of the Ukrainians, and of the values the West has been proclaiming. It would have also meant a tremendous loss of power: Of "soft power", which, as Nye underlined, also depends on coherence between proclaimed values and the conduct of foreign policy. Interestingly, in Mearsheimer's (and Lukin's) account pro-democracy activists are practically exclusively depicted as agents of the West, or at least being strong only because of Western support. The population, or at least its vast majority, has obviously no opinion nor force of its own. This is a grossly "unrealistic" view. There might indeed have been some Western support for democracy activists. But this type of external support is of little effect, unless it is in line with fundamental social and cultural changes within the country in question. As an example of ineffective external support we might quote the case of the West German DKP (*Deutsche Kommunistische Partei*) which for decades was lavishly funded by Eastern Germany, allowing it to have a huge cadre of full-time functionaries. The party could organize long rows of schooling activities (often in the GDR) and publish mountains of books, papers and leaflets. It was also supported by GDR TV and radio.

Nevertheless, its traction among the voters at national elections was stably at the magnitude of 0.4 percent. Putin has presumably been well informed about this ineffective external support for activists; in the 1980s he served as KGB officer in Dresden, GDR. Also interesting, Mearsheimer and Lukin speak mainly of NATO and not of EU association. But NATO was not on the agenda. And Mearsheimer's reasoning that NATO expansion *caused* Putin's actions in Ukraine is positively flawed. As Michael McFaul, 2009 to 2012 Obama's Special Assistant in the National Security Council and 2012 to 2014 US Ambassador to Russia pointed out, Mearsheimer completely overlooks the "reset of US-Russian relations", a time of cooperation from spring 2009 to January 2012 (McFaul, 2). Presidents Dmitry Medvedev and Barack Obama signed and ratified the New Start Treaty, voted together for the most comprehensive sanctions against Iran, expanded the supply routes for US troops in Afghanistan and cooperated for Russian membership in the WTO.

They also established a bilateral presidential commission "to promote cooperation from everything from nuclear energy to counterterrorism." 60 percent of the Russians held a positive view on the US. After the final meeting with Obama as president, Medvedev declared: "We probably enjoyed the best level of relations between the United States and Russia during those three years than ever during the previous decades." McFaul added:

What he did not mention was NATO expansion. In fact, in the five years that I served in the Obama administration, I attended almost every meeting Obama held with Putin and Medvedev, and for three of those years, while working at the White House, I listened in on every phone conversation, and I cannot remember NATO expansion ever coming up. Even months before Putin's annexation of Crimea, I cannot recall a single major statement from a senior Russian official warning about the dangerous consequences of NATO expansion. The reason is simple: for the previous several years, NATO was not expanding eastward (McFaul, 3). In his view, Russian policy changed when Putin's regime came under attack internally for the first time. In December 2011, after Putin's announcement that he was seeking a third term, parliamentary elections were, "just as fraudulent as previous elections". However, this time, protesters went to the streets in number unseen in two decades. Putin recast the United States as an enemy, up to fomenting unrest in Russia. In May 2012, when Putin was inaugurated, even "a casual observer of Putin's speeches or Russian television would have thought that the Cold War was back on (ibid.)." Putin's media have stuck to this line ever since.

The proclaimed, for instance, that the sanctions against Russia were engineered by the US, out of anti-Russia hostility; with the European countries, being vassals of the USA, following blindly. By annexing foreign territory and using military power, Putin has broken norms of international relations which all EU governments (and many more in the world) regard as essential. As the German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier put it: "The situation is serious. Europe's order of peace has been shaken" (Steinmeier, 1). Putin has presumably seriously underrated how much the European governments have valued the "European order of peace", and what an outstanding provocation it has been to them to shake it. This can explain why all 28 EU countries, but also the US, or Canada, or Norway have mustered such a remarkable amount of common action and imposed sanctions against Russia, also if this implied not negligible economic costs

7. Concluding Remarks

We have seen how the EU has become able to influence matters on a global scale. This rise has been possible due to a progress to a high level of political and economic integration, thereby delivering on the message of the Messina Declaration of 1955 to restore Europe's influence in the world. The rise of the EU was not the least possible to its power of attraction, not the least due to the successful creation of the Internal Market. The global trends towards democracy and more open economies have also been supportive for EU influence.

However, in June 2016 a majority of British voters opted for "Brexit". This will create a case of expansion reversal. However, the consequences will presumably be much more symbolic than real. It is highly unlikely that the UK will leave the Internal Market completely because the economic costs would be far too high. Presumably the vast majority of EU legislation will remain in place, then as British law. Thereafter the UK will most probably implement new EU legislation "independently", as Switzerland has done so often. And given the point that Britain has not been a member of the euro zone or the Schengen area, "Brexit" will not change anything in this respect. True, Britain has been a strong contributor to EU foreign policy. But this had required unanimity in every case. And if the EU countries and the UK will have common views also in the future, then they can again act together. Not as EU, but as EU plus UK. Furthermore, London has been a very difficult partner, often preventing further integration. This break on EU integration will disappear, thus actually opening the way to more integration, not the least strong common external action. An example has already been the decision of the Bratislava Summit to strengthen the EU military headquarter, a move previously blocked by Britain. Seen in this perspective "Brexit" will strengthen European integration.

Britain has all the time been different because the majority of population and elites did not share the aim of "ever closer union"; they basically joined out of economic calculations and have tried to keep the EU at the level of an "elaborated free-trade area", to use again Kohl's expression. But they did not succeed, the EU moved much further towards a political union. In this perspective "Brexit" appears only to be logical. We can say that Britain never properly entered the EU. And it will not leave it properly.

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