Europe's Hybrid Threats

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What Kinds of Power Does the EU Need in the 21st Century?

Edited by

Giray Sadık

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This book is dedicated to all the cherished lives lost as a result of enduring hybrid threats, which we strive to improve our understanding via this edited volume.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

GIRAY SADIK[1]

Hybrid Threats and European Security

The *European Union* (hereafter EU) has been witnessing various crises: from intergovernmental squabbles over the EU constitution to economic hardships, from refugees on its borders to rising concerns over emboldening Russian manoeuvres in Ukraine and Syria, and nowadays the strategic consequences of *Brexit* for Euro-Atlantic relations. Evidently, these interrelated challenges are of a transnational and hybrid nature involving state and non-state actors alike. As these challenges have been affecting the European sphere inside and out, the EU needs to timely devise political strategies to deal with them. As its title suggests, this book is dedicated to addressing contemporary hybrid threats to the *European Union*. To this end, this book aims to open up a debate on these interrelated questions on the nature of European power, and on what kind of *Common European Security and Defence Policy* (hereafter CESDP) is necessary to address the on-going hybrid threats to the EU.

In light of these challenging developments, the need for comprehensive analyses and timely solutions has raised research interest in hybrid threats on the part of practitioners and scholars alike. For instance, the book edited by Williamson Murray and Peter R. Mansoor, *Hybrid Warfare: Fighting Complex Opponents from the Ancient World to the Present* (Cambridge University Press 2012), can be given as a flagship example of recent studies on hybrid warfare, providing historical background with the aim of tracing continuity and change in devising hybrid strategies. However, as Bernhard Hoffmann notes in his recent review of the book, perhaps in part due to the

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military background of the editors, "a traditional focus on the battlefield makes me wonder whether the editors were thinking hybrid enough" (Hoffmann 2016). Considering the fact that while both editors, Mansoor and Murray have a background in military history and strategic studies, which can be an advantage for detailed battleground analysis it can also hamper a comprehensive outlook necessary to grasp the nature of contemporary hybrid threats.

More recent books such as *Terrorism: Commentary on Security Documents Volume 141: Hybrid Warfare and the Gray Zone* (Lovelace, ed. 2016), and *Hybrid Wars: The Indirect Adaptive Approach to Regime Change* (Korybko 2015) tend to overemphasize a single dimension of hybrid warfare above all other factors such as terrorism and regime change. Evidently, these studies also risk not being comprehensive enough to grasp the true complexity of contemporary hybrid strategies.

We present in this book an edited volume of essays exploring previously understudied dimensions of hybrid threats. Given the relative paucity of comprehensive studies on such a highly complex topic, this edited volume will break new ground by opening the debate on the promise and pitfalls of the EU as a global power in light of on-going hybrid challenges. Under these circumstances, it is timely and necessary to seek multifaceted answers to the question of what kind of power does the EU really need.

As can be observed from the majority of edited books in the field, this is not a single-person task. This edited volume aims to present different perspectives as to the nature of the EU's real and potential power in relation to on-going transnational challenges. A variety of authors with diverse backgrounds ranging from history and sociology to political science and international relations will seek to analyse the multifaceted nature of hybrid threats under-represented in previous studies. Such variety remains essential for a comprehensive analysis of contemporary hybrid challenges. Accordingly, in line with this framework and the authors' expertise, the book's chapters will address the following substantive issues (please refer to the *Table of Contents* for a list of complete chapter titles):

European Security, Hybrid Threats and CESDP;
Mass Migration to Europe and the Role of the EU;
Refugees and European Borders, and the Future of the Schengen Area;
Putin-style Hybrid Warfare in Ukraine and EU-NATO Cooperation;
Relations between the EU and Russia;
What kinds of EU policies are needed toward Turkey in light of enduring MENA-crises and the growing threats from refugees and terrorism?

Brexit, EU, Transatlantic Alliance and Hybrid Threats;
Hybrid Conclusions and Policy Implications.

Hybrid threats posed by various combinations of state and non-state actors have mounted transnational challenges (e.g. mass migration, terrorism) to EU-member NATO allies such as for Eastern European EU-members expanding Russian manoeuvres in Ukraine, and for non-EU NATO allies such as Turkey its long border with Syria. Meanwhile, the last decade has witnessed terrorist attacks of unprecedented magnitude in the NATO ally heartlands of Paris, Ankara, Brussels, and Istanbul. The on-going rise of hybrid threats to the allies, ranging from political instability in Eastern Europe and the Middle East to the mass refugee influx and terrorism in their neighbourhood, put forward the need to timely discuss important questions about hybrid threats and the venues for effective Euro-Atlantic cooperation as a method to counter these threats. In order to address these interrelated questions of what kind of European power is necessary and achievable, this section begins by delineating the concepts of "hybrid war" and "hybrid threat" with reference to on-going European challenges, and then it proceeds with a road map for the book by presenting the chapter briefs in the order of the table of contents.

Hybrid Threat or Hybrid War?

As hybrid threats to international security have been evolving, their use in scholarly and policy debates has become a source of on-going confusion. In many instances, it can be noticed that the concepts such as "hybrid threat" and "hybrid war" are used randomly, without even providing a working definition for the terms. This has led to the further confusion of the policy-makers instead of much needed conceptual clarification. For that reason, this section will define each concept, delineate their similarities and differences, and explain why this book will proceed with "hybrid threats".

In addition to conceptual clarification, this section aims to put these terms into context. To this end, this paper refers to NATO and EU definitions from official reports as primary sources, which indicate a level consensus among member states about their understanding of these key terms. As NATO and the EU are the two core institutions to organise Euro-Atlantic cooperation against hybrid threats, their definitions present a meaningful starting point for this book. In a 2011 report, NATO describes hybrid threats as:

> *Hybrid threat* is an umbrella term, encompassing a wide variety of existing adverse circumstances and actions, such as *terrorism, migration*, piracy, corruption, ethnic conflict... What is new, however, is the possibility of NATO facing the *adaptive* and *systematic* use of such means singularly and in combination by adversaries in pursuit of long-term political objectives, as opposed to their more random occurrence, driven by coincidental factors. [*Emphasis Added*] (Quoted by Bachmann and Gunneriusson 2015)

This comprehensive definition of hybrid threats enables researchers to grasp the term's multi-faceted nature. This definition also presents examples of hybrid threats such as terrorism and migration. This paper therefore uses the term "hybrid threat" with the connotations and examples set out by the above NATO definition.

The same report underlines that

> *hybrid threats* are not exclusively a tool of asymmetric or non-state actors, but can be applied by *state and non-state actors* alike. Their principal attraction from the point of view of a state actor is that they can be largely *non-attributable*, and therefore applied in situations where more overt action is ruled out for any number of reasons. [*Emphasis Added*] (Quoted by Bachmann and Gunneriusson 2015)

This point in the report is of particular importance for this research, as it highlights the fact that *hybrid* does not necessarily mean *non-state*! In this regard, this "hybrid threat" conceptualization also opens door for the consideration of "hybrid war" in the formulation and development of hybrid threats. Accordingly,

> *Hybrid war* encompasses a set of hostile actions whereby, instead of a classical large-scale military invasion, an attacking power seeks to undermine its opponent through a variety of acts including subversive *intelligence operations*, sabotage, hacking, and the empowering of *proxy insurgent* groups. It may also spread disinformation (in target and third countries), exert economic pressure and threaten energy supplies. [*Emphasis Added*] (Popoescu 2015)

In view of the above definition, hybrid war necessitates an orchestrating state actor, which can weave state capabilities such as military and intelligence operations in support of proxy insurgent groups. The most recent examples of such operations can be observed in Russian manoeuvres in Ukraine and Syria, involving both conventional military assets such as fighter jets and air defences along with local insurgent groups acting as proxy land-forces.

Although important, hybrid war is only part of the story when the Allies are faced with ever-growing hybrid threats ranging from refugees to terrorism. NATO's Bi-Strategic Command Capstone Concept describes these *hybrid threats* as "those posed by conventional and non-conventional means adaptively in pursuit of their objectives". The same concept also includes, "low intensity asymmetric conflict scenarios, global *terrorism*, piracy, transnational organized crime, *demographic challenges*, resources security, which have also been identified by NATO as so-called *hybrid threats*" [*Emphasis Added*]. Similar to the earlier hybrid threat definition, this one also includes terrorism and demographic challenges, growing out of a combination of state and non-state actors via conventional and non-conventional means. This constitutes another reason for the editor's choice of the term "hybrid threat' to capture the complexity of the threat environment in which NATO and the EU need to operate.

Under these circumstances, it can be observed that Euro-Atlantic relations have been on a constant trial period, in which even their rare successes are bound to be repeatedly tested. Still, "*European countries are vulnerable* to threats from war and political instability in Syria and Iraq. Terrorist groups exploit fragile environment for unleashing violence and attacks in European countries" [*Emphasis Added*] (Upadhyay 2016). For this reason, effective Euro-Atlantic cooperation against hybrid threats has become more a question of "how" rather than "if". Among the sheer variety of these hybrid threats, this book mainly concentrates on analysing the ones related with the recent resurgence of an assertive Russia in Eastern Europe and the Middle East, which have triggered the largest refugee wave in Europe since World War Two. Evidently, these hybrid threats and demographic challenges are multi-causal, and therefore the book presents in-depth analyses provided by experts with various backgrounds ranging from geopolitics to migration issues.

In Search of Hybrid Order: The Road Map of the Book

Writing on hybrid threats entails complex challenges. This has required a particular approach when editing this volume of experts' essays. To this end, I coined this term *Hybrid Order* to describe the order for this book's flow. This order is not meant to be hierarchical. The chapters are neither ordered based on the importance of their subject nor on the seniority of their authors. As a rule of thumb, the flow of the book is from general to specific and from most recent to the others, aiming to establish this hybrid order for the road map of this book.

In their chapters, the authors have liberally applied the framework of analysis established by the book editor. This is based on the overarching definition of "hybrid threat" presented in this introduction. Nevertheless, the authors' interpretation of such an evolving concept is yet to be seen in their chapters, in which they can only speak for themselves, and not necessarily for the editor. As with any edited volume, the readers may feel certain discrepancies, or even disagreements among the authors. Considering that one of the core aims of this book is to open a debate on the nature of European power, different perspectives are more than welcome. As the editor of this book, I have set the stage for this road map; now I will introduce each chapter in the order of the table of contents, and based on summaries provided by the authors in their own words.

War in Ukraine and European Security: Reset, Reverse or Revoke? by Professor Maria Raquel Freire looks into Russian politics towards Ukraine, and how the use of soft and hard power has prompted serious challenges to European security. The annexation of Crimea and the lingering instability in Eastern Ukraine put pressure on EU-Russia relations, as well as on the European security regime. The violation of the border regime with its normative implications is an object of analysis. By looking into politics and procedures, including Russian foreign and security policy principles as well as instruments to pursue them, the chapter analyses Russian actions in Ukraine, unpacking the hybrid nature of these decisions and actions, and discussing the implications of these for European security.

Refugees, Borders and Practices of Othering in the European Union's Migration Policy by Dr. Zeynep Arkan-Tuncel. In the words of this chapter's author, the EU has been going through a rough period in terms of the domestic and external challenges directed against its politico-social order and security. By focusing on this increasingly closer connection between the EU's domestic order and foreign policy as well as internal and external security, this chapter analyses how the EU perceived and responded to hybrid challenges in the broad field of justice and home affairs, with a specific focus on the Union's migration policy. The aim of the chapter is to explore how the EU viewed migration, especially irregular migration, and formulated its response to this highly securitised phenomenon from the perspective of hybrid threats. It is argued that the response which the EU sought to develop to the threat of migration is based on a comprehensive approach that relied on solutions that intend to prevent migration by targeting its root causes through a combination of different policy tools and incentives, and to control and ultimately restrict migration through various surveillance mechanisms, stricter border controls and return agreements. Consequently, the EU's policy reaction to migration,

particularly irregular migration, by contradicting the very norms and values that symbolise the European order and the identity of the EU, is deemed to jeopardise the effectiveness and coherence of the Union's foreign policy, and diminish its credibility as an actor.

The Visible and Invisible Story of the European Migrant Crisis by Dr. Hélène Cristini and Claudio Lanza. The chapter's authors state the following: the rise of brutal violence and civil wars across the MENA countries and in Africa has triggered the largest migration flow in contemporary history. Migrants, mostly Muslims fleeing the multiple on-going conflicts and wars in the MENA region, are still expected to reach EU coasts, and they come by the millions instead of the few thousands of the past. Faced with this situation, European countries, as a whole, have found themselves much unprepared strategically, politically, and economically to handle this crisis. In addition, EU member states' responses have lacked any kind of coordination so far. More specifically, when looking at the EU members' reactions through René Girard's theoretical lenses, it seems that they focus on two apparently polar opposite arguments: the economic or the security argument fomented by Islamophobia. In fact, both arguments are identical insofar as they treat migrants as scapegoats hampering their integration policies and, thus, worsening the social discord between the autochthones' community and the minority groups. In particular, when security reasons are argued, migrants are suspected of being potential infiltrators, while when economic reasons prevail, migrants are de-humanised and objectified. Either kind of policy addresses the migrant issue as a threat arising from a (constructed) homogeneous group, leaving out any attempt of sustainable integration. These approaches act as divisive tools likely to engender social discord within national communities, fomented by xenophobic narratives. Yet, conversely, the over-optimistic stand that pretends that the migrant flow in Europe will work as an economic bonus for the overaged European population equally fails to successfully address the problem of integration. This paper explores how both responses of EU states are a failure because they do not solve the root problem of the migrant crisis, which is the unresolved conflict between two mimetic extremisms: modernity perceived by some, as secular fundamentalism and Islamic fundamentalism both epitomised by nihilism and endogamy. As light is shed on the visible and the invisible migrant conflict resolution side, we analyse how this issue may turn out to be the catalyst to help the European states and the Muslim communities reform their "model of politics". Should both parties fail to take steps in this direction, the chances are that a cycle of clashes will progressively escalate the conflicts between these extremes, on the one side

over utilitarian, rational and technocratic regimes, and on the other fundamentalist and radicalised states or organisations that are their mimetic doubles. This paper discusses the possibility of a new path to break the mimetic chain that is based on resentment and responsible for entrapping the conflict in the dialectic of a fake clash of civilization.

The Strategic Consequences of Brexit: The Challenges of the Common European Security and Defence Policy in the Post-Brexit Era by Dr. Filiz Coban. In her own words: this study argues that keeping the unity of the European Union is the biggest challenge for the future of European integration and the Common European Security and Defence Policy (CESDP). Surely, Britain's In/Out referendum by the end of 2017 qualifies as a decisive moment for Europe. An impressive number of thorough reports have analysed the process and consequences of Britain seceding from the EU over the past few years. Most analyses have focused on the economic, financial and trade costs and benefits regarding Britain's membership of the EU. The debates of Brexit have already cast doubts on the development of the EU's new Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy. However, its strategic effects still require a scholarly analysis. In this context, with Britain's departure from its role in European security and defence, this research sheds a light on how Brexit might impact upon European security and defence and the transatlantic alliance, with a specific emphasis on its "special relationship" with the United States.

Turkey and the EU: The Challenges of the Middle Eastern Crises by Prof. Kıvanç Ulusoy. In his own words: since their beginning in the late 1950s until recent times the relations between Turkey and the European Union (EU) have been regarded as a question of foreign policy or as a matter of economic development. The official application of Turkey in 1987 slightly changed this perspective to be mainly technical and economic in essence. The EU's Helsinki Summit in 1999, granting Turkey official candidate status, radically changed this. The EU's impact on Turkey's politics and political structures gained legitimate ground with the start of the accession negotiations in 2005. However, the relations made an unexpected turn in the radical political changes in the common neighbourhood. The Arab Spring and the civil war in Syria brought the geopolitical calculations and humanitarian crisis caused by the refugee crisis as the central questions that are parallel to accession negotiations. This article, in light of the recent changes in the Middle East, aims to discuss the relations between Turkey and the EU.

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CHAPTER II

WAR IN UKRAINE AND EUROPEAN SECURITY: RESET, REVERSE OR REVOKE?

MARIA RAQUEL FREIRE[1]

Introduction

This chapter looks into Russian politics towards Ukraine, and how the use of soft and hard power has prompted serious challenges to European security. The mix in strategies and political moves shows how hybrid threats have become a new element, despite not being so new, of the so-called new wars (Kaldor 2007). This terminology points to a different approach to war from conventional ones, where there is a mix of war, organised crime, massive violations of human rights, involving global and local actors both public and private, and informal criminalised economic networks, thus constituting both a military challenge and a political one, with the centrality of the state being questioned many times. In this way, Kaldor highlights how the new wars end up becoming more of a political challenge, about breaches of legitimacy and the need for distinct political responses, eventually more cosmopolitan in their nature and reach. The war in Ukraine, with all the ingredients that ended up being made part of the complex recipe developing on the ground, points to a mix of "old" and "new" war features, where the hybrid nature of threats and responses to these seems to have gained a relevant place in the unfolding of events.

The annexation of Crimea and the lingering instability in Eastern Ukraine put pressure on EU-Russia relations, as well as on the European security regime. The violation of international law and the border regime with its normative implications are objects of analysis. By looking into politics and procedures, including Russian foreign and security policy principles as well as instruments to pursue them, the chapter analyses Russian actions in Ukraine, unpacking the hybrid nature of the means and actions, and discussing the implications of these for European security. In fact, the neighbouring area to both the EU and Russia which became smaller with successive EU enlargements became a space of attrition between these two giants. Looking at this area differently but very similarly also, as a space of influence, both the EU and Russia have been developing policies towards these countries that seek to bring them closer to their own spheres of action. These contradictory projects have clashed and Ukraine became the prime example of this clash in many different ways that this chapter seeks to analyse.

The EU approach to Russian actions in Ukraine was slow to take shape and when sanctions were agreed among member states many criticised the EU for the lack of a strong common will and capacity to face the Russian muscled positioning in its vicinity. Besides, in many instances facing cumbersome decision-making processes in the face of divergence among its member states, the EU is not totally blocked by the disagreement of its members and might through different strategic approaches put forward alternative ways to approach new challenges, as well as take advantage of opportunities arising. The focus on preventive means and early warning is here a fundamental strategy in which the EU has been investing time and resources. Preventive diplomacy, by promoting anticipated action towards what might be identified as a focus of tension or friction, requiring the involvement of different human and material means, constitutes an area where the EU might play an advantageous role with positive results.

In this way, this chapter looks at the concept of hybrid threat and war and how new applications of old procedures have been challenging the European security regime. The implications for EU-Russia relations, as well as relations of Russia with the west, are immediate and the way the EU might reply to the new context might be framed in innovative contours. The chapter starts by looking into hybridity in this context and at what European security means, particularly for Russia and the EU. It then proceeds with Russian foreign policy towards Ukraine and what the decisions made and actions taken mean for European security. The case of Ukraine illustrates the hybridity of challenges faced by Russia and the EU,

and provides room for thinking ahead about a more proactive EU approach to hybrid challenges, through a tighter preventive approach.

Hybrid Threats: "Old Wine in New Bottles"?

The concept of hybrid threats and hybrid wars has been gaining attention in the literature as it points to a mix in procedures at both the decision-making/strategic and operational levels. This is not a new concept as such, as the term hybridity has been used to mean a combination of civilian and military means, or of global and local levels of analysis, or even of conventional or traditional means with more post-modern tools. Hybrid threats range from transnational terrorism to corruption, from inter-institutional cooperation among governmental and non-governmental agencies with the military to the combination of public and private spheres in operations, with governments, transnational actors and civilian populations deeply involved in the processes. The term was first worked out by two American military personnel, General James Mattis and retired Marine officer Frank Hoffman in 2005, who referred to the use of "irregular methods" to gain tactical advantage, such as "terrorism, insurgency and narco-crime". In these officers' words,

> Irregular challengers seek to exploit tactical advantages at a time and place of their own choosing, rather than playing by our rules. They seek to accumulate a series of small tactical effects, magnify them through the media and by information warfare, to weaken US resolve.

This "merger of different modes and means of war", they called "Hybrid Warfare" (IISS 2014).

In this way, hybridity points to a complex mix of means spanning decision-making processes to implementation dynamics, and differentiated actors, such as governments or irregular groups. But the novelty of this concept lies not so much in the possible combinations that it implies, but more in the new contexts where this hybridity has been applied.

> [H]ybrid warfare (…) has emerged as one of the most innovative and popular instruments in contemporary international politics (…). Hybrid warfare is now used in a systematic, subtle, and refined way, backed by an official state discourse that denies it and supports it at the same time and to which the international community seems unable to respond. (Polese et al. 2016, 365)

This complexity inherent to hybrid threats and wars renders clear the need for more complex responses and draws attention to the need for innovative tasks. If the phenomenon is not new, as propaganda, mis(dis)information and subversion are tactics that have long been applied, the contexts have changed. In fact, a highly technological environment, more advanced instruments in the digital and conventional dimensions, such as regarding social media, and the spaces for intervention, both territorially and transnationally defined, confer on these threats the need for new thinking.

The challenges associated with how hybrid threats are conceptualised in this encompassing manner, have a clear imprint on how security is understood and put to practice. The concept of security has been deepening and widening, particularly since the end of the Cold War, adjusting to a new context. More than just military security with a much territorialised dimension, human, societal, environmental and energy security became "new labels" for old concerns (Buzan et al. 1997). This meant that these different dimensions of security became part of the political agendas, in face of a more complex international system where different actors coexist, with different natures. The individual dimension of security gained relevance, with considerations about individuals and communities becoming fundamental, and the responsibility and in some cases ability of states to assure their rights being questioned. In fact, the discussion about a state's fragility or its incapacity to guarantee the security of its populations was discussed widely. The responsibility to protect agreements at the United Nations expressed concern over major violations of human rights and the incapacity, inability or unwillingness of national governments to prevent these. Other dimensions of security gained increased relevance, such as energy security with national, international and transnational dimensions, involving states, but also private companies, making the dealings to ensure energy production, transit and supply a dynamic chain with many challenges. Spoilers have interrupted supplies, with consequences for specific countries and populations in terms of resources available and in this way are being used as a security threat to a country's stability. Instead, in reverse, a reduction in supply demand can put pressure on the producer country, as a way to achieve lower prices, for example, but with consequences at the upper level of the chain production. These are just brief examples to demonstrate how security has widened and deepened, and how the challenges to security became so diverse. Security from what, and for whom, has become a recurrent question. And this demonstrates the ambiguities that have been characterising different understandings and interpretations of the concept. The territorialised nature of security is still relevant, but space was opened

for non-territorialised challenges to security, both regarding the sectorial dimensions as identified above, and the nature of the actors involved—state actors, non-state actors, intra-state actors and transnational actors. The complexity arising out of this new mix feeds into the discussion about hybrid threats and how we might face and respond to them to enhance security.

(In)security Readings in EU-Russia Relations

The understanding of security in the EU and Russia has been distinct. These are two very different actors—one is a unitary state and the other an international organisation with 28 member states; one has a centralised decision-making process, and the other follows inter-governmental methods in matters of foreign, security and defence policies. The distinct nature of the actors defines their very own distinct understanding of security. The European Security Strategy (ESS) approved in 2003 sought to identify the main threats to the Union and define the main strategic goals to achieve more security. The document goes through different threats to security, including terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, regional conflicts, state failure, and organised crime. It defines as an assumption that the transnational and complex character of these threats impedes countries on their own from addressing them, requiring therefore a concerted effort. Towards this goal, the development of better means for preventing violence was agreed, and it was understood that threats outside, and even far from EU borders, could have a fundamental impact on the EU's security. In fact, this idea became a core principle of the Neighbourhood Policy (Prague Summit 2009) when the EU defined security at its borders and in its vicinity as importing security towards the Union. The "ring of well governed states" in the EU's neighbourhood would contribute to sustaining this approach to security in the wider Europe. It also implied, even if in a timid way, the EU's affirmation as a global player, including in security matters.

> As a union of 25 states with over 450 million people producing a quarter of the world's Gross National Product (GNP), and with a wide range of instruments at its disposal, the European Union is inevitably a global player. (ESS 2003, 1)

> This is a world of new dangers but also of new opportunities. The European Union has the potential to make a major contribution, both in dealing with the threats and in helping realise the opportunities. An active and capable European Union would make an impact on a global scale. In

doing so, it would contribute to an effective multilateral system leading to a fairer, safer and more united world. (ESS 2003, 14)

This vision of the EU as a global player has consolidated with time, and becomes more evident in the new Global Strategy for the EU's Foreign and Security Policy (Global Strategy 2016). This document, approved in June 2016 acknowledges the changed international and internal context for the EU, and how new threats from energy, migration and climate change to hybrid warfare, need to be dealt with. The EU takes responsibility for its member states' security in a volatile international context, as well as for its neighbouring areas. The so-called "Arab Spring" to the South unleashed movements of resistance and opposition triggering violence that spread out and became persistent in countries such as Iraq and Syria, and the conflict in Ukraine to the East brought hybrid warfare to the EU borders. Once more the document underlines the need to combine resources and efforts as tackling these threats and addressing these conflicts cannot be a one-state job. The Union assumes itself to be a big player with the responsibility to promote security internally for its citizens, but also externally, in its vicinity and further afield.

> This Strategy is underpinned by the vision of and ambition for a stronger Union, willing and able to make a positive difference in the world. Our citizens deserve a true Union, which promotes our shared interests by engaging responsibly and in partnership with others. It is now up to us to translate this into action. (Global Strategy 2016, 11)

> We will take responsibility foremost in Europe and its surrounding regions, while pursuing targeted engagement further afield. We will act globally to address the root causes of conflict and poverty, and to champion the indivisibility and universality of human rights. (Global Strategy 2016, 17)

The wording of the new document points to an encompassing understanding of security, based on the need for a coherent, comprehensive and co-jointly-owned approach to address threats and respond to the ongoing crisis. The identification of hybrid threats that do not know borders (Global Strategy 2016, 50) points also to this complexity of actors, instruments and contexts that defy the international order. The EU's approach to security has been informed by its very own constitution as a union of 28 states where the finding of common ground is not always easy. Security and defence are one such area where much progress has been achieved, as evident in the number of CSDP missions agreed and deployed, but where consensus is still lacking in many issues. However, it should be underlined how "terrorism, hybrid threats and organised crime

(…) call for tighter institutional links between [the EU's] external action and the internal area of freedom, security and justice" driving efforts and interests together. The coexistence of different visions on security and the broadly sketched strategy to address well identified threats, including those of a hybrid nature, attest to the balances the EU continuously seeks within and among its member states.

In Russia, the various National Security Concepts make clear the direction of security understandings, starting from those that are understood as national priorities, and projecting these into the overall policies related to security. In the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation to 2020, it is clearly stated that:

> The main directions of the national security policy of the Russian Federation are the [so-called] strategic national priorities, in the form of important social, political and economic transformations intended to create secure conditions for the realisation of Russian citizens' constitutional rights and freedoms, the stable development of the country, and the preservation of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the state. (NSS2020 2009)

The issue of national sovereignty and respect for the territorial integrity of states are a fundamental part of the security equation. Russia has affirmed itself as a sovereignist power, meaning that the sovereignty rule has been a pillar of its foreign policy, as evidenced at the United Nations Security Council, for example, where it has been aligning with China on matters infringing the sovereignty of countries; as well as regarding its domestic politics, where Russia wants to avoid any kind of external interference. Indeed, Moscow became a fierce critic of the "colour revolutions" in the post-Soviet space understanding these as promoted and financed by western interests, attempting to destabilise relations between Russia and these republics, by promoting a western-oriented change in these governments' politics. Thus, security in Russia is very much interconnected with the preservation of sovereignty and non-interference in its internal affairs. The issue of Chechnya became the best example of how this principle should apply to Russian matters, in the sense that it was always carefully labelled as an internal issue, and that all measures taken to respond to it were the sole responsibility of the central government. This was an issue clearly framed within the domestic sphere, and as a matter of national security to avoid any attempts at secession from any part(s) of the territory within the Federation.

The overall security approach fits the foreign policy priorities of the Russian Federation and how the goal of regaining the status of a great power, including through international recognition by its peers, became so

central to the Russian agenda (Freire 2011). Briefly put, the concentric circles of foreign policy are geographically organised (Freire 2012), identifying the post-Soviet space as the primary area of interest for Russia, and where it even attributes itself a *droit de regard*, followed by relations both with the west—meaning the EU, the United States, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), etc.,—and towards the east including China and India, for example. The Middle East has been increasingly regaining a central place in Russian politics, with the Syrian war making it even more central. And Africa and Latin America have also been playing a bigger role in Russian politics, particularly in an unfavourable context regarding west-Russia relations, and the realignment of foreign policy through more attention to club diplomacy, for example, with the BRICS[2] becoming a relevant forum for Russian politics. In this foreign policy concentric geographic approach, the former Soviet space is an area of utmost primacy for Moscow which helps explain the approach followed regarding Ukraine. Moscow wants to have a say on Ukrainian politics, and in particular its eventual integration into western institutions.

These two approaches to security point to a sharing of the identification of threats, though not really a sharing of the perception of threats. This means that if the issue is terrorism, for example, both the EU and Russia share this as a security threat, sharing also the understanding that certain measures are needed to contain it. However, this does not mean that the perception of terrorism and how to fight it is always shared, in the sense, for example, that some actors have been differently understood as promoters/fighters of terrorism, contributing to mismatches in policies and reducing the possibilities for cooperation. A simple illustration of distinct interpretations that might hamper closer collaboration is EU-Russia cooperation on security matters which has been framed by the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (signed 1994, ratified 1997), which states

> the commitment of the Parties to promote international peace and security as well as the peaceful settlement of disputes and to cooperate to this end in the framework of the United Nations and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe and other fora.

Thus, since the formalisation of the relationship security has been a topic in the bilateral agenda, at the time broadly formulated. The Four Common Spaces agreement of 2004 further conferred on security a new place in the bilateral agenda, becoming more specific in its formulation

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[2] The acronym BRICS stands for Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

and including the problems lingering in the post-Soviet space, such as the protracted conflicts, which constitute focuses of insecurity. The wording of the document is clear and already includes hybrid threats in its listing, despite not explicitly using the terminology:

> The aim of work on this space is to intensify co-operation on security issues and crisis management, to address new threats such as terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), regional conflicts and state failure and to reinforce cooperation in responding to natural disasters. This cooperation will be based on the common values which underpin the external policies of both sides, as set out in the PCA. (EU-Russia Four Common Spaces 2004, 2)

However, and despite framing agreements, EU-Russia relations have been through many ups-and-downs due to misunderstandings in goals and procedures, as well as due to broader contextual factors. Sour relations between NATO and Russia, for example, have contributed to hampering EU-Russia relations. The same might be argued about the plan for a US missile defence shield involving some individual EU member states, which also did not contribute to a positive atmosphere in relations. EU enlargement, but clearly NATO enlargement—identified in Russia's military doctrine as the main external threat to the Russian Federation (Military Doctrine 2014)—has been high on the agenda of discord.

Adding to these differences, the readings about the neighbourhood that both the EU and Russia "share", and that is shared and the focus of contention by Moldova, Belarus and Ukraine, have fostered distancing. As much as the EU project includes a stable and prosperous neighbourhood where security dynamics will positively impact the Union's security, Russia also sees security and friendship at its borders as promoting its own security. The clashing projects of the EU and Russia towards this area of common interest, but where the projection of distinct interests is clear, led to a fundamental division. On the one hand, the EU vision is based on democracy building and liberal market principles, based on a normative appeal seeking to attract these states into its orbit. On the other hand, Russia, promoting more centralised governing procedures and its own market arrangements, is also seeking to bring these states into its sphere of influence. In the end, the initial rationale for the approximation and development of close ties with these countries is not very different, but looking closely at the developed objectives, instruments and politics, the difference is considerable and the proposals put forward are irreconcilable. The wider Europe project put forward by the EU clearly clashed with the greater Europe project advanced by Russia (see Averre 2016, 3; Sakwa

2012, 315-316). It is at this intersection of the EU and Russia's competing goals over their close neighbours that the crisis in Ukraine escalated into violence, leading to a situation of high instability and high insecurity that does not contribute to the reinforcement of EU security. Indeed, the lingering violence in Eastern Ukraine has been understood by some as maintaining instability at the EU doors and in this way weakening its position before Russia.

The next section deals with the case of Ukraine in more detail, looking at how these distinct projects clashed and the implications that the violence has had in Russia-west relations, and more broadly for European security.

Hybrid Threats and War: Which (re)actions in the Case of Ukraine?

The developments in Ukraine, from the proposals to develop further economic integration to armed violence, demonstrate how quickly tensions and misunderstandings might escalate into armed conflict. The EU's proposal for the signature of the Association Agreement and the counter-proposal of Russia for Ukraine to join the Customs Union ended up being more than technically non-reconcilable proposals. Having to make a choice between further integration with the EU or the Eurasian Union—which was the basic question then—pushed Ukraine into a choice it has always avoided. The multivectorial nature of Ukrainian foreign policy since 1991 had tried to play to the fullest on its geographical location in-between Russia and the EU, seeking to bargain and balance benefits and concessions, in such a way as to allow manageable relations with both big neighbours. This need to choose between one and the other economic project pushed Ukraine into a difficult situation where balancing no longer became a possible option. This points to the fact that the discussion on the signature of further cooperation with Russia or with the EU has to be framed in the ample context of relations between Russia and the EU, or more broadly, the west. In fact, in particular since 2008, when the war in Georgia seemed to be the culmination of a period of high tension between Russia and the west, cooperation between the EU and Russia has been haunted by misperceptions and misunderstandings.

Furthermore, the issue of NATO which has always been a difficult one in the agenda only contributed to further sour relations. The demonization of the "other" has become the daily recipe for differences. Although Ukraine was always cautious with regard to NATO's integration prospects, the discussion about offering a NATO Membership Action Plan