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Research article

Conventional Arms Control Agreements in Europe: Conditions of Success and Failure

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Abstract

Under what conditions are adversarial conventional arms control agreements (CAC) in Europe successful or unsuccessful? This study aims to identify the conjunctural causes of conventional arms control success in Europe from the end of World War One to the present based on a dataset of 22 cases. It applies a qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) to assess arms control success and failure resulting from four conditions: great power rivalry, national limitations, demilitarisation and delegation. Few studies have attempted to determine if CAC agreements in Europe have been successful and determine possible explanations for their outcome. This study's results suggest that national limitations between great power rivals and the absence of delegation with great power rivalry are more likely to result in agreement failure. Delegation may be important for agreement success when great powers or buffer zones are involved. These findings offer insights for future CAC agreements in Europe.

Keywords: *conventional arms control, war causation, qualitative comparative analysis (QCA), great power rivalry, delegation*

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Introduction

Under what conditions are adversarial conventional arms control (CAC) agreements[1] in Europe successful or unsuccessful? This research question, largely neglected in the scholarly literature, is of paramount importance for several reasons. First, the current Russia-Ukraine war is due in large part to the failure of CAC agreements, with the failure coming from a combination of insufficient existing agreements and the inability to revise them, and failure to establish new agreements – both pathways that Russia sought from the end of the Cold War through the start of the Russia-Ukraine war (Lippert 2024a). Second, when success contributes to preventing wars and agreement failure contributes to conflict, answering this research question contributes to causes-of-war scholarship (Fearon 1995; Jervis 1991, 2017; Lebow 2010; Vasquez 1996).

While the definition of conventional arms (Conventional Arms n.d.) is broadly accepted, arms control has different meanings in different contexts. Larsen (2002: 1) defines arms control as 'any agreement among states to regulate some aspect of their military capability or potential'. Kühn (2020a) uses the term 'cooperative arms control' between adversaries, but includes confidence and security building measures (CSBMs) in his definition, which this article excludes. This study focuses on CAC agreements in Europe which incorporate a legally binding limitation on some aspect(s) of military capabilities and are an agreement between rivals or geopolitical competitors. This excludes agreements such as export controls, non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and universal, humanitarian restrictions.[2]

With a great power rivalry now settling upon Europe and with the goal of assisting practitioners in mitigating this and to increase scholars' understanding of peace and security in Europe, this study focuses on CAC in Europe because of its 'specific European historical-political setting' (Kühn 2020a: 33). This article is relevant to scholars because it attempts to answer questions that are rarely asked: when is a CAC agreement successful, and what conditions lead to success or failure?

For this study, Europe is broadly defined as a space composed of states from the North Atlantic to the Urals. It thus includes Russia, but excludes, for example, Central Asia. Moreover, this article includes NATO and all its members (including the US and Canada) as European actors due to the high level of involvement in European security. In particular, the US has been critical for influencing security in Europe since WWI.[3]

1 Unless otherwise stated, all mentions of CAC in this article refer to adversarial agreements.

2 Examples of these include the Wassenaar Arrangement, Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Anti-Personnel Landmines Convention, respectively.

3 This differs from Kühn's (2020a) definition of Europe, which includes all OSCE members. This study does not include, for example, agreements between Armenia and Azerbaijan as their dispute is regional and the states straddle west Asia and southeast

This article uses a unique set of 22 CAC agreements from the end of WWI to the present, many of which are typically not considered in the existing arms control literature. Table 1 (see the section on research design and dataset below) includes all of these agreements as well as their long and abbreviated names. The 22 CAC agreements are analysed with a Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA)[4] with four conditions[5]: delegation, national limitations, geographic demilitarisation and great power rivalry involvement, to assess multicausal pathways and success or failure of CAC agreements. This research method provides insights into how the conditions may interact with one another and lead to agreement success or failure.

This study's agreements are focused on Europe for several reasons. First, the overlapping system of organisations such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation (OSCE), the European Union (EU) and NATO that are likely to have roles in any post-war CAC agreement share similar cultures and common history which excludes states and institutions outside of Europe (Sommerer & Tallberg 2019). Second, even CAC agreements which are products of UN support, such as the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) and the establishment of the Kosovo Force (KFOR) which was one of the two parties of the 1999 Kosovo agreement, were established or supported by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) whose Permanent 5 are composed of three European powers and the US. Prior to the United Nations (UN), the League of Nations, which was dominated by European states, was involved in several of the interwar CAC agreements, such as the Åland Islands Convention and the Lausanne Convention for the Straits. Third, several CAC agreements in Europe are interconnected (Anthony & Kane 2016; van Ham 2018). For example, the London Naval Treaties were based on the Washington Naval Treaties accomplishments; the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty unwound because the 1999 Adapted CFE (A/CFE) Treaty did not enter into force; the 1990 Final Settlement for Germany specifically references the then-forthcoming CFE Treaty; and the Balkans CAC agreement is based on the CFE Treaty. Many European CAC agreements are either modelled after previous agreements, or formally connected. Treaties from other global regions are not included in this dataset because they have minimal or no connection to European institutions,

Europe. For the most part their conflict does not involve core European interests. This contrasts with the Russo-Georgian conflict which involved at least one clearly European state (Russia), and some have suggested it involved broader European issues such as NATO and EU membership.

4 While some scholars specify whether a crisp-set (cs) or fuzzy-set (fs) QCA method is used, this article drops the description as csQCA is another form of fsQCA.

5 In QCA, what is commonly referred to as an independent variable in correlational studies is called a condition, due to the Boolean set-based rather than correlational nature of the analysis.

European CAC histories and experiences, and there is a comparative dearth of such agreements.

This study's set-theoretic-based QCA analysis of the 22-CAC case dataset has attempted to identify which combinations of conditions may be more likely to lead to CAC agreement success or failure. The study supports two of the hypotheses: first, that the combination of great power rivalries and quantitative limits on states' national military capabilities are a pathway to agreement failure; and second, that the *absence* of delegation to international organisations and agreement executors in combination with the presence of great power rivalries may lead to agreement failure. The study did not uphold the hypotheses that success pathways included the combination of delegation to agreement executors with geographic demilitarisation; or the delegation to agreement executors amidst great power rivalries although these combinations do appear in the data.

This article begins with an introduction, and then offers a discussion of the purposes and characteristics of CAC agreements. It then delves into greater detail about how great powers impact CAC agreements and three important aspects of CAC agreements. Thereafter, the study's QCA methodology is presented and discussed, followed by an overview of the research design which presents how the concepts of delegation, national limitations, geographic demilitarisation and great power rivalries are calibrated and analysed with QCA. This leads to a discussion of the calculated results from the perspectives of agreement success and absence of agreement success.[6] The results are then interpreted and analysed, followed by a conclusion to summarise the article.

Conventional arms control agreements: approaches and conditions

Adversarial CAC agreements' goals are to formally stabilise relationships with specific and detailed limitations which fix the status quo whether between states' national military capabilities or in a specific geographic area with the agreements enforced through some level of monitoring, verification and dispute resolution (Burns & Urquidi 1968; Hastedt & Eksterowicz 1988). This contrasts with arms control agreements which aim to reduce proliferation, usually related to weapons of mass destruction (WMD) or for humanitarian purposes to reduce the impact and severity of conflict. These types of agreements impose restrictions between allies and adversaries alike.

While CAC agreements may result in a reduction in the relative military balance, it never reverses it. In stabilising military rivalries (or at least attempting to do so), states seek to improve their diplomatic relations because the agreements reduce dispute causes and sources of tension such as fears of surprise attacks and contests over strategic locations (Freedman 1991; Lachowski 2010).

6 For brevity and readability, hereafter 'absence of success' is shortened to 'failure'.

The alternatives to CAC agreements include arms racing, deepening competition and conflict.

In addition to the status quo, deterrence is an underlying factor for CAC. States or alliances seek to retain or improve their deterrence (if they possess it) and can do so at a lower cost with CAC. In relationships in which there is parity or near parity, CAC agreements will preserve deterrence while reducing 'offensive' threats. However, in cases in which only one side has deterrence, such as a greatly imbalanced relationship in peacetime or following a major military victor/defeat, the strong party will seek to retain their deterrence by imposing limits on the defeated party.

Conventional arms control: agreement success

This study's QCA outcome or dependent variable is the presence or failure of success. Scholars are far from unanimous in viewing CAC or arms control agreements more generally as beneficial or positive. Fatton (2016) considers them broadly impotent in resolving existing adversarial relations and Gray (1993) does not believe that they contribute to peace and that they have a poor record of accomplishment. Indeed, he goes further to state that arms control efforts can even be counter-productive, especially for democracies that might disarm themselves in the face of predatory states (Jervis 1991). Kühn (2020a) and Graef (2021) view them as potentially more beneficial but note a significant downturn in their utility and effectiveness in the past few decades. Schofield (2000) is less critical of arms control but observes that they do a poor job at addressing deeper problems, particularly contests over the balance of power and adapting to changes in the balance of power which may be resolved through conflict.

Tanner is very sceptical of post-conflict arms control based on his analysis of case studies, stating that 'in asymmetrical outcomes, the chances for lasting arms agreements are almost nil'. One reason he identifies is the 'absence of normative consensus among the parties engaged in the construction of post- war structure' (Tanner 1993: 40). Here he is referring to the lack of a consensus of how post-conflict arms control should be approached and that each new post-conflict arms control regime is started from scratch, and he also assesses that post-conflict arms control agreements are more focused on ending the war than creating a stable post-war regime. At the same time, Tanner's sweeping scepticism of post-conflict CAC agreements may be unwarranted, as he may be basing his analysis on a small case selection.

Armistices and ceasefires are generally narrower agreements to terminate a conflict intended to create breathing room for a broader, longer-lasting peace. As such, CAC agreements related to armistices are intended to prevent a resumption of conflict, including accidental, by decreasing the opportunities for attacks and the exchange of fire. Fortna (2004: 210) also states that narrow cease-fire agree-

ments and agreements that only deal with arms control 'do not help maintain the peace'. Rather, broader measures including third-party guarantees, peacekeeping and intensified diplomatic efforts contribute to a more durable peace.

Studying CAC agreements and their success or failure is an approach, and arguably an underused one, to understand the causes of war. While other approaches, as Fortna (2004: 39) phrases it, struggle to determine when leaders 'go to peace', CAC agreements offer an insightful method of seeing when leaders go to peace (or stay at peace) – as these agreements are often specifically intended to maintain or establish peace – or states abandon the agreements and go to war.

Overall, the scholarship on CAC agreements is more negative than positive in judging its outcome. CAC agreements attempt to lock a status quo into place, but struggle to evolve when the status quo changes. For this reason, states withdraw or defect to change the status quo when they are dissatisfied – especially when defeated states believe that they can overturn the conditions of defeat – or because the status quo changed due to other reasons. At the same time, and here the scholarship is underwhelming, states in CAC agreements may largely be satisfied with the status quo and retain the agreements. They may either feel that the present agreement is sufficient and satisfies their security needs, or that even if it is insufficient, attempts to change the status quo may not end in their favour (Bull 1976; Schofield 2000). Nonetheless, though most scholars are sceptical of CAC agreement outcomes, none have attempted to explain under what combination of conditions they fail.

Great powers

Rivalries and conflicts in Europe since the beginning of the 20th century have often involved great powers. On the one hand, great powers compete across a range of issues and geographic space and possess a broader and more substantial range of military capabilities. As a result, they may be more likely to clash and conflict (Lynch III & Hoffman 2020).

Yet great powers may pursue CAC agreements for several reasons even while they aim to retain deterrence. Great power rivals find themselves in perpetual, long-term competitions defined in part by perceptions of zero-sum stakes. Thus, they are continuously concerned with relative gains and losses, complicating cooperation. At the same time, cooperation – as arms control scholars have continuously noted in prisoner dilemma models – can result in net gains for both (Downs, Rocke & Siverson 1985; Fearon 1998; Kydd 2000). The challenge, however, is assessing that an adversary will comply with any agreement and that for both sides cooperation outweighs defection. As Downs et al note, 'the long-run advantages of cooperation … [may] pale before the benefits of victory or the cost of defeat' (Downs, Rocke & Barsoom 1996).

Nonetheless, great powers have a self-interest in peacetime CAC to not just preserve resources through reduced expenditures but in preventing conflicts

whose outcomes are not guaranteed to improve their standing and the status quo. When great powers are victorious in a conflict – whether against other great powers or not – they have an interest in locking in their superiority and preventing defeated states from seeking revenge (Lebow 2010).

The impact of great power rivalries or their absence on CAC agreements is not discussed in detail in the existing literature. Rather, most of the CAC or general adversarial arms control in Europe literature focuses on great power rivalries whether between the US/NATO and Russia/Soviet Union/Warsaw Pact, or prior to the Cold War, between great powers such as the UK, France and Germany.

While CAC agreements may even substantially limit great powers' military capability, enough capability may remain – especially when limits are even – for one side to concentrate enough forces to attack (Biddle et al. 1991). This threat alone may weaken CAC agreements over time, especially if diplomatic relations have not improved even while the agreement itself is technically respected. Similarly, changes in technology, increases in military capabilities even in treaty limited equipment (TLE), within legal limits, can result in perceived or actual changes in the military balance (Lippert 2024b). Great powers may be more able to take advantage of opportunities to increase their relative military strength of TLE due to possessing greater resources compared to non-great powers.

These issues undermine efforts to mitigate the security dilemma as great powers are more likely to have larger militaries with a greater variety of capabilities, making assessment of comparative strengths and weaknesses difficult, even with the transparency and controls offered by CAC (Kaplow & Gartzke 2021; Lebow 2010).

Unless a CAC agreement as well as other policies result in resolving the rivalry between great powers, they are likely to still seek to prevail in the rivalry despite the negative impact on the stability offered by CAC agreements (Mazarr et al. 2021: 37) which will lead to, among other outcomes, violating or renouncing the CAC agreement. With multi-domain, rivalry-driven competition, rivals are compelled to pursue gains in zero-sum competitions due to the phenomenon of cumulative, relative gains (Mathews III 1996). A party that sees its relative strength decreasing due to the other's relative gains may be more likely to abandon CAC agreements even when they are being fully respected. One of Russia's concerns, for example, with the CAC regime that was designed and implemented prior to NATO expansion, was the loss of what they considered to be 'indivisible security' – NATO's gains in military capability was Russia's loss (Kvartalnov 2021).

Assessing the differences in rivalries and conflicts between great power and non-great power adversaries or rivals is beyond this study's scope,[7] but I offer a

7 Interstate adversarial relationships may be categorised into great power vs great power, great power vs non-great power, and non-great power vs non-great power. Mazarr makes the case that an adversarial relationship between a great power and non-great

few observations on why great power rivalries may impact the success or failure of CAC agreements. First, great powers may have more venues to compete and assess their relative strengths and weaknesses. As Jervis (2017: 64) notes, 'Any [great power] that has interests throughout the world cannot avoid possessing the power to menace others.' As to the extent to which a CAC is intended to address the military balance and offer avenues for improving diplomatic relations, this may be more difficult between great powers. For example, restrictions on naval forces in the inter-war years did little to alleviate issues of land power competition or attempts to broadly expand territory even if not at the cost of other great powers. Moreover, competing great powers may still engage in indirect conflict through proxy wars, which non-great powers may be less able to wage.

National limitations

One the methods to stabilise security relationships between rivals, whether great powers or not, is to set limitations on equipment quantity in national inventories. Reducing the quantity and/or capabilities of conventional weapons can halt arms racing either in those weapon classes or overall (Downs, Rocke & Siverson 1985), and may decrease the likelihood of surprise attacks when the TLE focus on perceived offensive weapons (Leah 2015; Webster 2004). The limits are in part based on the notion that an attacking force can gain a decisive advantage by amassing a high ratio, sometimes defined as three-to-one (Helmbold 1969), of forces against an adversary's defences. In a mutually balanced agreement, by limiting offensive capabilities while leaving defensive capabilities in place, both sides retain deterrence as neither can amass sufficient forces to conduct a successful surprise attack (NATO 1989; Snyder 1988).

In discriminatory CAC agreements, usually the outcome of a conflict in which one side is a clear victor, the victor may impose limits to ensure their deterrence by both limiting a rival's offensive capabilities, but also by limiting defensive capabilities (deterrence inhibition) so that the victor may successfully attack to enforce terms of the agreement or otherwise contribute to deterrence by ensuring the victor's ability to increase the costs of the defeated state must pay for attacking (Haffa 2018).

There are several challenges with national limitations. First, no agreement can control every aspect of a state's military capabilities. Thus, states may successfully shift their resources to compensate for limitations into different capabilities or capabilities not initially conceived when agreements were made (Lippert 2023, 2024c). Second, national limitation agreements struggle to adjust with changes to

> power is not a rivalry, because the non-great power cannot actually compete with the great power. Rivalries and adversarial relationships differ substantially from competitive states which might compete in a number of areas, especially economic, and may have been rivals, but do not view one another as a physical security threat (Mazarr et al. 2021: 9).

the geopolitical status quo, especially alterations in alliance structures and memberships. This was especially true with the CFE Treaty when first the Warsaw Pact dissolved and then several of its members joined NATO.

This would suggest that while great powers may agree to CAC with national limitations, changes over time will disrupt the balance even when all parties are compliant, resulting in states seeking to defect from the agreement. The hypothesis would thus be:

H1: Great power and national limits is a pathway to agreement failure.

Demilitarisation

Another method to stabilise rival security relationships is by limiting military capability in a specific geographic area such as a strip of land along a border or a key geographic feature. Geographic demilitarisation agreements may be made during a time of peace in order to mitigate the security dilemma wherein states do not need to possess the geographic area for their security but their security becomes threatened if a rival possesses it (Schelling 1975). Chillaud (2006: v), when speaking of northern Europe, referred to demilitarisation agreements as an attempt to 'exempt' areas 'from the risks and penalties of interstate warfare'. Examples of these include Norway's Spitsbergen Islands and the Turkish Straits.

More commonly, however, demilitarisation agreements are the product of conflicts. When conflicts terminate, even temporarily, rivals may agree to a demilitarised area or buffer zone to separate the forces and/or limit certain types of weapons within that area 'designed to reduce the risk of or minimise territorial disputes by preventing direct contact between hostile armies' (Chillaud 2006: 6). Sometimes these areas have a third-party presence, such as international peacekeepers, to monitor compliance and record violations.

Because of their narrow scope, demilitarisation may not resolve underlying causes of rivalries because it only resolves a small portion of a rivalry's causes. Most notably it does not substantially decrease the capability of a state to launch a surprise attack as overall capabilities are untouched and thus free to increase without limits. On the other hand, demilitarisation may increase the political cost of defection, especially when third parties including great powers serve as guarantors and/or implementors of demilitarisation agreements. Moreover, demilitarisation agreements can stabilise rivalries if states are satisfied that the status quo is better than continuing a conflict but the inability to come to an agreement on issues such as national boundaries prevents a permanent agreement.

Implementation and delegation

The method of CAC implementation is one of an agreement's more important characteristics. In and of itself, the method of implementation does not reflect

the type of rivalry nor the type of agreement, so that implementation approaches are independent of other agreement traits.

Delegation of authority within a CAC agreement is the extent to which states delegate or share formulation and implementation of a CAC with a third-party state or states or an international body. Delegation is by its nature a surrender of state sovereignty, as a state is entrusting important matters of state security and even existence to another entity. An agreement which lacks any delegation, such as the inter-war naval agreements, means that no implementation body is formed, and that states themselves perform every aspect of monitoring, verification and enforcement (Lippert 2024d).

Some agreements create a weak coordinative body that merely serves as a meeting forum where technical and administrative matters might be discussed, such as the CFE Treaty's Joint Consultative Group (JCG). Still other agreements might have a highly empowered body in which state parties have delegated a substantial amount of authority and responsibility to the treaty executor to include permanent monitoring and verification staff in the area of application, inspection authority and even enforcement authority. Agreement executors with high delegation include the OSCE's Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) in Ukraine and the Allied Control Commissions established in each defeated Axis country during or following WWII.

High implementation delegation to an agreement executor increases the likelihood of agreement success in several ways (Lippert 2024b). First, agreement executors may neutrally conduct activities so that their assessments are perceived as valid not just by the main state parties concerned but by the broader international community, including great powers who may have direct interests – including as formal agreement supporters – in the agreement's success. Second, agreement executors may serve as arbiters of disputes. Third, agreement executors help regularise and normalise positive exchanges and compliance (Fearon 2018). Lastly, defection from an agreement in which there is high delegation may impose higher diplomatic costs than an agreement lacking any third-party participation (Fortna 2004; Werner & Yuen 2005).

Delegation may be especially important to demilitarisation agreements because when, in the case of certain geographic features, states are primarily concerned that their rivals do not possess an area, an agreement executor might objectively and credibly enforce this. In the case of a conflict buffer zone, an agreement executor can maintain a neutral presence and manage the area, raising the cost of violations or defections due to physical presence. This suggests the following hypothesis:

H_2: Delegation and demilitarisation is a pathway to agreement success.

Great powers may be especially concerned with cheating, believing that their rivals may seek to obtain relative advantages despite agreements. A treaty executor with high delegation may offset fears of and discourage cheating and defection but lacking high delegation, agreements are more likely to fail. These analyses lead to the following hypotheses:

H_3: The presence of delegation and great power rivalry is a pathway to agreement success.

H_4: The absence of delegation and the presence of great power rivalry is a pathway to agreement failure.

QCA as a research method: general remarks

The CAC dataset is analysed using QCA, a research methodology used to understand and establish set-theoretic connections between the outcome (success) and causal conditions. As Schneider and Wagemann (2012: 8) state, 'Set-theoretic methods operate on membership scores of elements in sets; causal relations are modelled as subset or superset relations. ... Set theory can be useful for concept formation, the creation of typologies, and causal analysis.' Set theory is an appropriate approach for studying CAC agreement success because this approach focuses on considering the conditions as unique sets and identifying and analysing to what extent the conditions form sets that are members – or not – of agreement success and its absence (the two possible outcomes). Although QCA is applied extensively in social sciences including international security, it has never been used to assess arms control agreement success.

Truth tables are the foundation of QCA analysis, as they establish the sets and subsets of cases to be analysed and are the 'central features of causal complexity' (Schneider & Wagemann 2012: 9). Truth tables are composed of the cases, conditions and outcomes and are created through logical minimisation. The conditions (in QCA methodology) are the study's dependent variables, and as QCA's goal is to identify pathways through the derivation of the total number of possible conditions, it is counterproductive to have too many conditions as this may expand the number of combinations and pathways, reducing resulting insights (Hirzalla n.d.: 2.2).

In a data table, each case is scored for each condition and outcome with a figure between 0.0 and 1.0, which determines to what extent a case is a member of a condition with 1.0 being fully in and 0.0 being fully out, but QCA calculations do not permit the assignment of a 0.5 value as this does not identify if a value is more in or out of a set. In QCA, calibration is the act of assigning a value to each case's condition. This calibration can be quantitatively deter-

mined, for example by determining that values under a certain range equate to 0.0, then up to a certain range 0.3, in the next range 0.6, and then 1.0; or it can be based on subjective knowledge and judgment when the condition is not quantifiably based (such as level of treaty compliance) although either approach incorporates subjectivity. Conditions may also be limited to a binary option of present (1) or absent (0) when there is no apparent or theoretically comprehensible reason to apply a scale (for example, Böller (2022), when assessing the impact of US presidents on arms control, used binary conditions such as Republican/Democrat and Pre/Post-Cold War).

The outcome is also a set so that the truth table which is generated by the data table states to what extent each case, with each combination of conditions, is a member of which outcome. Thus, QCA allows one to know through a transparent and computer calculated method which case is a member of which condition(s) and outcome(s). This is an insight that a correlational calculation does not offer, as these are bivariate in nature.

QCA is ideally suited for mid-sized case sample sizes and between four to eight conditions (Hirzalla n.d.: 2.2). This method is ideal for understanding and comparing CAC agreements due to the number of cases (22) and their conditions. Equifinality can explain how different combinations of conditions can result in the same outcome. Moreover, QCA enables analysis of sufficiency and necessity. '[A] condition is sufficient if, whenever the condition is present, the outcome is also present. … A condition is necessary, if, whenever the outcome is present, the condition is also present' (Schneider & Wagemann 2012: 76). A theoretical example of sufficiency might be that whenever US military bases are present in other states, these states always vote pro-US in the UN – but countries without US military bases also vote pro-US. A necessary condition would mean that every state that voted pro-US in the UN also had a US military base but no states without a US base voted pro-US.

Conjunctural causation is another advantage of QCA as it 'draws our attention to the fact that conditions do not necessarily exert their impact on the outcome in isolation from one another, but sometimes have to be combined in order to reveal causal patterns' (Schneider & Wagemann 2012: 90).

Unlike some other methodologies, QCA identifies pathways to outcomes that offer insights into multi-conditional causations in a way that correlational studies do not through analytical interpretation through set relations. QCA seeks to identify commonalities based on condition combinations between cases in a transparent and substantively plausible approach through the generation of outcome configurations, which differs from other methods. However, like other methods, erroneous findings and conclusions can be derived when there are errors in variables (conditions) or data is misinterpreted – including erroneous attribution of relationships to causality. This is where, as with other

methodologies, theoretical knowledge is necessary to interpret data findings (Rutten 2023).

Specialised software or software packages complex assist in the Boolean calculations used to ascertain set membership and pathways. The software calculates consistency, which 'expresses the percentage of cases' set-membership scores', and coverage, which 'assess[es] the relation in size between the condition set and the outcome set' (Schneider & Wagemann 2012: 324–325).

Research design and operationalisation

The following section briefly describes how this study calculated the four conditions and CAC agreement outcome.

Dataset

All of this study's agreements are characterised by mutually agreed, legally binding controls on conventional arms with varying levels of specificity and cover the period from the end of WWI to the 2017 Minsk Agreements (the most recent CAC agreement in Europe at the time of writing). The purpose of *adversarial* CAC agreements (this study's focus) is to stabilise rival relationships rather than deal with other security challenges such as proliferation or the effects of conflict. All of this study's agreements were intended to stabilise relationships by ending or preventing conflict in Europe. Some of these agreements brought an end to combat operations, whether permanent peace agreements or ceasefires while others attempted to remove sources of potential conflict, whether geographic demilitarisation or perceptions of an unstable military balance. Both these types of agreements are included in the same dataset because states seeking to stabilise relationships or terminate conflicts may select from any of the three approaches (conditions), and the presence or absence of a great power rivalry may impact many agreements' aspects of agreements (and the likelihood of their passage).

The 22 CAC agreements, of which 13 are successful, four are unsuccessful and five are partially successful, in this study's dataset fall into two sets of broad categories. First, there are balancing agreements and geographic demilitarisation agreements with minimal overlap across the two (see Table 1). Second, there are post-conflict peace agreements, peace-time balancing agreements, armistices, peacetime geographic demilitarisation agreements and some agreements which fall into an 'other' category. This category's set of agreements have some overlap as, for example, a peace-time balancing agreement can also include geographic demilitarisation. This study analyses the agreements from the perspective of both categories.

Table 1: CAC agreement dataset

Agreement	Abbreviation	Year	Balancing (B) or Demilitarisation (D)	Context Category
1. Post World War One Peace Treaties	WWI	1919	B	Post-conflict
2. The Svalbard (Spitsbergen) Treaty	Spitsbergen	1920	D	Peacetime demilitarisation
3. Finnish-Russian Dorpat/Tartu Agreement	Tartu	1920	B	Discriminatory peacetime
4. Åland Island convention	Åland	1921	D	Peacetime demilitarisation
5. Washington Naval Treaty	WashNav	1922	B	Peacetime balancing
6. Lausanne Agreements of 1923	Lausanne	1923	D	Peacetime demilitarisation
7. London Naval Treaties	LondonNav	1930, 1936	B	Peacetime balancing
8. Anglo-German Naval Treaty	Anglo-German	1935	B	Peacetime balancing
9. Montreux Convention of the Straits	Montreux	1936	D	Peacetime demilitarisation
10. The Moscow Treaty (Finland and Russia) of 1940	Moscow1940	1940	B	Post-conflict
11. Post-World War Two agreements	WWII	1945	B	Post-conflict
12. WEU Protocol for the establishment of the Agency for the Control of Armaments	WEU	1954	B	Post-conflict/peacetime balancing
13. UNSC Cyprus Resolutions, peacekeeping force, and buffer zone creation	Cyprus	1964/1974	D	Cease-fire demilitarisation
14. INF Treaty	INF	1987	B	Peacetime balancing

15. Final Settlement for Germany	Germany1990	1990	B, D	Post-conflict/ demilitarisa-tion
16. CFE Treaty	CFE	1990	B	Peacetime balancing
17. Agreement on the principles for a peaceful settlement of the armed conflict in the Dniester region of the Republic of Moldova	Transdniestria	1992	D	Cease-fire demilitarisa-tion
18. Subregional Arms Control (Balkans)	Balkans	1996	B	Post-conflict balancing
19. Belfast Agreement	Belfast	1998	D	Cease-fire demilitarisa-tion
20. Military Technical Agreement between the International Security Force ('KFOR') and the Governments of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Republic of Serbia	Kosovo	1999	B, D	Cease-fire demilitarisa-tion
21. Six-Point Peace Plan for Georgia	Georgia	2008	D	Cease-fire demilitarisa-tion
22. Minsk Agreements	Minsk	2015	D	Cease-fire demilitarisa-tion

Source: Author

CAC agreement success (outcome)

This outcome assesses to what extent a CAC agreement was successful, calibrated along a score of 0 to 1 (inclusive).[8] While some agreements have been abject failures, lasting less than 10 years and ending when conflict broke out between state parties, and others are successful enough that they are still in place after almost 100 years, many fall in between. They have lasted over 15 years, but then failed because of conflict between state parties; or they have been terminated

8 For more details, see Table 3 in the supplementary information document, which is available online via: https://www.cejiss.org/images/_2024/Lippert/Lippert_CEJISS_Online_Appendix_18-3.pdf

due to disputes between state parties who, however, did not go to war against one another. Some agreements may be successful only because they are relatively new, and insufficient time has passed for relations between state parties to deteriorate to the point that the agreements are renounced or the states go to war with one another. Some agreements are, or were, successful except that the state parties went to war with one another, but not over the issue that the agreement addressed. Other agreements such as the post-WWII peace agreements signed between 1943 and 1949 (inclusive) were successful for reasons mostly unrelated to CAC. Similarly, agreements are rarely complete failures. Several agreements endured for at least two decades, though eventually the state parties went to war despite the controls put in place by the agreements.

This article calibrates success based on several factors such as number of years in effect, if the agreement is still being implemented, and if state parties went to war and why.

Delegation

In a study of delegation to CAC agreement executors using a sum-score methodology, the level of delegation was determined by nine different variables which were added up (Lippert 2024b). The total number of points determined the level of delegation. This study uses the sums to determine presence or absence of delegation from a possible low of zero to a high of nine. The calibration for the QCA delegation score is based on the delegation's sum-score.[9]

Nation-wide specific limitations

CAC agreements which incorporate specific, quantitative nation-wide limitations on weapon systems, personnel or other military capabilities are considered in this set (1), while agreements that have no such controls are considered outside of this set (0).[10] The calibration of set membership is straightforward as the inclusion or exclusion of nation-wide military limits is binary amongst the cases.

Geographic demilitarisation

CAC agreements containing geographic demilitarisation, defined by limits or prohibitions on military capabilities within a narrow, specific geographic area, is considered in this set (1), while agreements that lack any geographic demilitari-

9 For more details, see Table 4 in the supplementary information document, which is available online via: https://www.cejiss.org/images/_2024/Lippert/Lippert_CEJISS_Online_Appendix_18-3.pdf

10 For more details, see Table 5 in the supplementary information document, which is available online via: https://www.cejiss.org/images/_2024/Lippert/Lippert_CEJISS_Online_Appendix_18-3.pdf

sation are considered outside of this set (0).[11] The calibration of set membership is straightforward as the inclusion or exclusion of demilitarised areas is binary amongst the cases.

Table 2: Agreement dataset and QCA calibrated values

Short Name	Success	Del	NatLim	Demil	GrtPwr
WWI	0.4	1	1	1	1
Spitsbergen	1	0	0	1	1
Tartu	0.4	0	0	1	0
Åland	1	0	0	1	1
WashNav	0.4	0	1	1	1
Lausanne	1	0.4	0	1	1
LondonNav	0	0	1	0	1
Anglo-German	0	0	1	0	1
Montreux	1	0	0	1	1
Moscow1940	0	0	0	1	0
WWII	1	1	1	1	1
WEU	1	0.7	0	0	0
Cyprus	1	1	0	1	0
INF	0.6	0	1	0	1
Germany1990	1	0	1	1	1
CFE	0.4	0	1	0	1
Transdniestria	1	1	0	1	0
Balkans	1	0.7	1	0	0
Belfast	1	1	0	1	0
Kosovo	1	1	0	1	1
Georgia	1	1	0	1	1
Minsk	0	1	0	1	1

Source: Author

11 For more details, see Table 6 in the supplementary information document, which is available online via: https://www.cejiss.org/images/_2024/Lippert/Lippert_CEJISS_Online_Appendix_18-3.pdf

Great power rivalry

The calibration for the presence (1) or absence (0) of a great power rivalry first requires the assessment that more than one state party is a great power and then that they have a rivalry either at the time of the agreement's signature or during its entry into force. There is no standard definition of a great power, but this article uses three subjective measures. First, as Mazarr et al. (2021: 5) state, great powers are competitive across a 'global dimension'. Second, the Correlates for the Study of War Composite Indicator of National Capability (CINC) (Greig & Enterline 2021) offers an annual scoring and ranking from the late 18th century to the present so that, in this study's assessment, states in the top fifteen percent can be considered great powers. Lastly, a judgment on whether or not a state is or was a great power is based on historical context. For example, this study does not count interwar Netherlands as a great power despite its possession of colonies worldwide, in part because of its weak national military that was demonstrably and decisively defeated in just four days in 1940.

Rivalry was determined by a combination of historical study, including prior and future conflict, statements made by leaders at that time, a general assessment of diplomatic relations at the time of treaty signature, and an overall assessment of the level and type of strategic competition between great power signatories.[12] The calibration for each condition and outcome (success) are shown in Table 2.

Analytical results

The fsQCA software (fsQCA software version 4.0 for Mac (Ragin & Davey 2022)) calculated three different sets of pathways for each outcome: the complex, intermediate and parsimonious (simple) solution. This study focuses on the intermediate solution, in line with Schneider and Wagemann's recommendation that the intermediate solution provides better insights than the other two solutions (see the supplementary information for the complex and parsimonious solutions) (2012: 175, 278).

One row in both the success and failure truth table is fully contradictory – that is, the exact same conditions result in different outcomes. To an extent, this should be resolved by reassessing their calibration, adding conditions or removing the cases (Hirzalla n.d.: 3.3; Schneider & Wagemann 2012: chap.: 5). However, neither approach seems applicable to the dataset and theoretical approach. Rather, the contradiction provides insights in and of itself. Each truth table also has rows in which the same conditions appear to have different

12 For more details, see Table 7 in the supplementary information document, which is available online via: https://www.cejiss.org/images/_2024/Lippert/Lippert_CEJISS_Online_Appendix_18-3.pdf

outcomes, but this is due to the system simplifying truth table scores to 0 or 1 even if the condition value was between these values.

The following two subsections present the results of the analyses for CAC agreements' outcome.

Agreement success

The dataset contains 13 fully successful agreements. The calculations of necessary conditions were all below 0.9, indicating that none of the conditions were necessary for the outcome (success) (Schneider & Wagemann 2012: 278). Table 3 shows the truth table rows for agreement success, with rows 1–4 showing success and 6–9 showing failure. Row 5 is a logical contradiction where the exact same conditions result in both success and failure. This row contains the Kosovo, Georgia and Minsk Agreements which were characterised by the equal values (fully present) of delegation, the absence of national limits, the presence of demilitarisation and the presence of great power rivalry.

The intermediate solution for agreement success is composed of three pathways and is presented in Table 4. It has a consistency of 1.0 for a coverage of 0.53 – meaning that half of the success coverage cases are covered in the three pathways, and that all the cases that are in the pathways have full success. The pathways are:

- Presence of delegation, absence of geographic demilitarisation and absence of great power rivalries; this applies to the Western European Union (WEU) and Balkans agreements.
- Presence of delegation, absence of national limits and absence of great power rivalries; this applies to the Cyprus, Transdniestria, Belfast and WEU cases.
- Absence of delegation, absence of national limits, presence of demilitarisation and presence of great power rivalries; this applies to the Spitsbergen, Åland, Montreux and Lausanne cases.

Absence of agreement success

The dataset contains four agreements where success is fully absent. The calculations of necessary conditions were all below 0.9, indicating that none of the conditions were necessary for the outcome's absence (failure). The absence of delegation appears in both pathways, reflecting its high consistency (0.76) with failure. Table 5 shows the truth table rows for the absence of agreement success, with rows 1–2 showing failure, 3–9 showing the absence of failure (meaning that the outcome was more than 0) and row 5 containing a logical contradiction where the exact same conditions result in both success (1) and failure (0).

Table 3: Truth table for 'success'

	Conditions					Outcome	Consistency			
Row	Del	NatLim	Demil	GrtPwr	Number of cases	Success	raw consist.	PRI consist.	SYM consist.	Cases
1	0	0	1	1	4	1	1	1	1	Spitsbergen, Åland, Lausanne, Montreux
2	1	0	1	0	3	1	1	1	1	Cyprus, Transdniestria, Belfast
3	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	WEU
4	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	Balkans
5	1	0	1	1	3	0	0.705882	0.705882	0.705882	Kosovo, Georgia, Minsk
6	0	1	1	1	2	0	0.7	0.625	0.833333	WashNav, Germany1990
7	1	1	1	1	2	0	0.7	0.625	0.833333	WWI, WWII
8	0	1	0	1	4	0	0.25	0.0625	0.0833334	LondonNav, Anglo-German, INF, CFE
9	0	0	1	0	2	0	0.2	0	0	Tartu, Moscow1940

Note: Del = delegation; NatLim = National Limitations; Demil = Demilitarized areas; GrtPwr = Great power rivalry; Success = CAC agreement success.
Source: Author

The intermediate solution is presented in Table 6. The coverage is 0.67, meaning that the two causal paths, or formulas, for the intermediate solutions cover just over two-thirds of failure outcomes. The solution consistency is 0.77, meaning that the agreements included in the pathways that are mostly scored as failure (0).

Table 4: Intermediate solution for 'success'

Solution Formula	raw coverage	unique coverage	consistency	Cases
1. Del*~Demil*~GrtPwr	0.0921053	0.0460526	1	WEU (0.7,1), Balkans (0.7,1)
2. Del*~NatLim *~GrtPwr	0.243421	0.197368	1	Cyprus (1,1), Transdniestria (1,1), Belfast (1,1), WEU (0.7,1)
3. ~Del*~NatLim *Demil*GrtPwr	0.236842	0.236842	1	Spitsbergen (1,1), Åland (1,1), Montreux (1,1), Lausanne (0.6,1)

solution coverage: 0.526316
solution consistency: 1
Source: Author

The first pathway combines the absence of delegation, the absence of national limitations, the presence of geographic demilitarisation and the absence of great power rivalry, which are covered by the Tartu and Moscow agreements. The second pathway combines the absence of delegation, the presence of national limits, the absence of geographic demilitarisation and the presence of great power rivalry, which is covered by the by the London Naval Agreements, the Anglo-German Naval Agreement, the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty and the CFE Treaty.

Interpretation

Great power rivalries

Five out of 19 agreements in this dataset do not involve a great power rivalry but were instead between regional rivals or former rivals. Contrary to theory-based expectations, the presence of great power rivalries seems to about equally contribute to agreement success and its absence. For both success and failure, the presence of great power has high consistency, though low coverage for failure (meaning that of

Table 5: Truth table for 'absence of success'

	Conditions					Outcome	Consistency			
Row	Del	NatLim	Demil	GrtPwr	number	~Success	raw consist.	PRI consist.	SYM consist.	Cases
1	0	0	1	0	2	1	0.8	0.75	1	Tartu, Moscow1940
2	0	1	0	1	4	1	0.75	0.6875	0.916667	LondonNav, Anglo-German, INF, CFE
3	0	1	1	1	2	0	0.3	0.125	0.166667	WashNav, Germany1990
4	1	1	1	1	2	0	0.3	0.125	0.166667	WWI, WWII
5	1	0	1	1	3	0	0.294118	0.294118	0.294118	Kosovo, Georgia, Minsk
6	0	0	1	1	4	0	0	0	0	Spitsbergen, Åland, Lausanne, Montreux
7	1	0	1	0	3	0	0	0	0	Cyprus, Transdniestria, Belfast
8	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	WEU
9	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	Balkans

Source: Author

the cases with great power rivalry presence, there is a somewhat low failure (0.35). This is partly due to great power rivalries being present in 15 out of the 22 agreements. This lack of a clear and consistent relationship between great power rivalry and success exists throughout the dataset's time period, including the post-Cold War period where some of the successful agreements have involved the Russia–NATO rivalry.

Table 6: Intermediate solution for 'absence of success'

	raw coverage	unique coverage	consistency	Cases
4. ~Del*~NatLim *Demil*~GrtPwr	0.235294	0.235294	0.8	Tartu, Moscow1940
5. ~Del*NatLim *~Demil*GrtPwr	0.441176	0.441176	0.75	LondonNav, Anglo-German, INF, CFE

solution coverage: 0.676471
solution consistency: 0.766667
Source: Author

Great power rivalry is present in one of the three pathways for success, with the pathway covering the Spitsbergen, Åland, Lausanne and Montreux agreements. Although not contained in this pathway, the post–Cold War Kosovo and Georgia agreements include great power rivals.

Two of the pathways for success contain the absence of great power rivalry, and include four cases: the WEU, Cyprus, Transdniestria, Balkan and Belfast agreements. Each agreement is successful to date for several reasons, but the absence of great power rivalries may have contributed to success by reducing perceptions of zero-sum competitions and the costs of relative gains and losses. Indeed, the absence of great power rivalries may have made cooperation much easier from the prisoner's dilemma perspective; parties could easily see the benefits of cooperation, but unlike other prisoner dilemmas, the benefits of defection may have been very low, if any at all.

Great power rivalry presence appears in one of the two pathways for failure, with a coverage of 0.44 and consistency of 0.75. All the agreements in this solution were peacetime, military capabilities balancing agreements: the London Naval Agreements, the Anglo-German Agreement, the INF Treaty and the CFE Treaty. This suggests that such agreements between great powers are unlikely to succeed, especially when they lack delegation to an agreement executor and lack demilitarisation. Comparing two pathways for success and failure, success is characterised by the absence of national limits and the presence of demilitarisation while failure is characterised by the presence of national limits and the absence of demilitarisation. While this might suggest that great power rivals

should, then, strive for demilitarisation instead of national limits, the problem with this interpretation is that great power rivals compete over a broad geography. It is unlikely that a limited geographic demilitarisation would substantially reduce their rivalry.

National limits and geographic demilitarisation

The results suggest that national limits are detrimental to agreement success while demilitarisation is sufficient for agreement success although its absence does not have a major impact. The intermediate solutions success includes two pathways with the absence of national limitations but does not contain any pathway that includes the presence of national limitations. In contrast, failure contains both the presence and absence of national limits its two pathways. As a necessary condition for success national limits have a consistency of 0.32 while the absence of national limits has a consistency of 0.53. Successful agreement cases with the absence of national limits but with a great power rivalry include four interwar agreements, Kosovo, and Georgia, with Minsk having failed.

Demilitarisation and its absence are in two of the three pathways for success, suggesting that its impact on agreement success is influenced by other conditions. The presence and absence of geographic demilitarisation also appear in the two pathways for failure. Geographic demilitarisation for agreement success has a consistency of 0.8 and a coverage of 0.77, suggesting that its presence may be important to success.

Delegation

Most of the successful agreements had delegation (0.84 necessary condition coverage), although the absence of delegation only had a necessary condition coverage of 0.43, meaning that almost the same number of cases without delegation succeeded as failed.

Three of the four intermediate solutions include delegation with a total raw coverage of 0.59. Similarly, the lack of delegation appears in both intermediate solutions for absence of agreement success with a total coverage of 0.34. Though the consistency of delegation presence as a necessary condition for success is only 0.54, its absence as a necessary condition has a higher consistency at 0.76. The four cases – Spitsbergen, Åland Islands, Lausanne and Montreux – in which delegation was absent but had successful agreements all entered into force during the interwar period when delegation to treaty executors was on average lower than after WWII.[13] Three of the agreements are still in effect, with the Lausanne Agreements having been superseded by the Montreux Convention. These four

13 For more details, see Figure 1 in the supplementary information document, which is available online via: https://www.cejiss.org/images/_2024/Lippert/Lippert_CEJISS_Online_Appendix_18-3.pdf

agreements significantly decrease the extent to which the dataset and pathways connect delegation and agreement success.

Assessing the hypothesised pathways

H_1, which proposes that the presence of great power and national limits are a pathway for agreement failure is supported in pathway 5 which consists of both interwar and Cold War balancing agreements. Similarly, H_4, which proposes that the absence of delegation and the presence of great power rivalry is a pathway to failure is reflected in this pathway.

H_2, which proposes that the presence of delegation and demilitarisation are a pathway to agreement success, was not included in any of the solutions. Rather, pathway 3 has the absence of delegation with demilitarisation and great power rivalry – though these agreements were all made prior to WWII and thus do not reflect the post-WWII US–Soviet/Russia rivalry. Nonetheless, three cases do meet this pathway: Cyprus, Transdniestria and Belfast.

H_3, which proposes that the presence of delegation and great power rivalries is a pathway to success does not appear in the success pathways, but is nonetheless composed of three cases (WWII, Kosovo and Georgia).

Contradictory row

There is a contradictory row containing the Kosovo, Georgia and Minsk agreements. Both are characterised by full delegation, demilitarisation and great power rivalry but not national limits. In the case of Kosovo, delegation is to NATO, geographic demilitarisation was along the former Yugoslav of the Kosovo-Yugoslav border (Serb/Yugoslav forces were subject to various restrictions and prohibitions), and the great power rivalry was between the US/NATO and Russia. For the Minsk agreements, the delegation was to the OSCE's SMM, the geographic demilitarisation was along the line of contact and applied to both sides, and the great power rivalry was also between the US/NATO and Russia. In Georgia, delegation is to the EU Monitoring Mission (EUMM), although it mostly operates on the 'Georgia' side of the current border. The demilitarisation conditions for Georgia's Six-Point Peace Plan (which, compared to other CAC agreements, is exceptionally brief) are vague, but state that Georgian forces were to return to their garrisons and that Russian forces were to return to pre-conflict levels and positions.

Though the three agreements share the same rivalry, the Kosovo agreement has not been impacted by the rivalry while that concerning Georgia is stable, although disputes at many levels persist. In contrast, the Minsk agreements failed in large part due to great power rivalry. Explaining why one out of these three has failed, or how two out of three have succeeded, is difficult and may come down to the particulars of each case. One possible reason is that Russia

does not view the Kosovo agreement as giving the US a decisive relative advantage, while in Georgia the more contentious ceasefire may reflect Russia's perception of Georgia remaining outside of the EU and NATO as important, but not critical. In Ukraine's case, Russia may simply have viewed any loss of influence or control in Ukraine as too threatening to its core security interests (Layne & Schwarz 2023).

Another explanation may be that peace and stability in the Western Balkans may benefit Russia for any number of reasons and Russia is largely satisfied with the status quo in Georgia as it controls the territory that it seeks, and has no desire to invade, occupy and/or annex Georgia. Russia and the US/NATO view Ukraine as a critical, strategic state with clear, relative gains and losses to either side depending on the outcome.

Confounding comparisons of the three cases is that while NATO decisively defeated Yugoslavia in Kosovo, thus reducing the likelihood of Yugoslavia or Russia contesting the agreement, Russia held advantages in both Ukraine and Georgia – but only in Ukraine did it undermine and then defect from the CAC agreement with the outbreak of general conventional conflict in 2022.

This contradictory row emphasises that other unique factors, which may not have applicability in other CAC agreements, can supersede the four conditions set forth in this study.

Agreement types

As previously noted, this study's agreement dataset can also be analysed by agreement categories, and here QCA offers several insights. For the intermediate solution for success, there is a mix of post-conflict, cease-fire and peacetime agreements. Pathway 1 only applies to balancing agreements while pathway 3 applies only to demilitarisation. Pathway 1 is characterised by delegation, absence of demilitarisation and absence of great power rivalry while pathway 3 is the opposite in these three conditions. This suggests that high delegation is not necessary for demilitarisation agreements even when great power rivalries are involved, which is contrary to the theory which holds great power rivalries and contribute to great power success. At the same time, high delegation may play an important role in non-great power rivalries for balancing agreements, whether it is because the treaty executors have more tools and diplomatic strength to encourage compliance compared to treaty executors of balancing agreements between great power rivals. The only cases which included the combination of delegation, national limits and great power rivalry presence are the post-WWI and WWII peace agreements – one of which succeeded and the other which is not considered a success. Most of the balancing agreements, characterised by low delegation and national limits, were not fully successful (pathway 5).

Pathway 4 only concerns the bilateral relationship between Russia and Finland, with the Tartu agreement effectively locking in an imbalance (Russia's superiority) through demilitarisation that did not follow a conflict – a unique case in the dataset. The second agreement concerns the short-lived peace agreement between the two countries following the Winter War, which might generally characterise post-conflict agreements in which there is a clear and much more powerful victor.

Pathway 5 for agreement failure are all peacetime balancing agreements between great powers, emphasising the challenges these types of agreements face when they aim to limit national capabilities without delegation.

Generating separate truth tables and analysing the data for balancing and demilitarisation agreements separately offers limited insights because of the smaller dataset and the reduced variety of conditions (Hirzalla n.d.: 2.2). Balancing agreements are characterised by a high consistency (0.9) absence of delegation, with a relatively high coverage of 0.6. A simpler pathway for success was produced for the demilitarisation dataset that included the absence of delegation which (compared to pathway 3) contained the 1990 Germany agreement (which also contains national limitation). This pathway again emphasises that absence of delegation can still characterise successful agreements.

Conclusion

Under what conditions are CAC agreements in Europe successful or unsuccessful? This study applied QCA to understand what combinations of conditions contribute to and may cause success or failure. Its results support the hypotheses that the combination of great power rivalries and quantitative limits on states' national military capabilities such as capital ships, tanks and combat aircraft are a pathway to agreement failure. Likewise, the *absence* of delegation to international organisations and agreement executors such as the UN and OSCE can lead to agreement failure when great power rivalries are involved. Although the combination of delegation to agreement executors with geographic demilitarisation, such as the creation of buffer zones and limitation of military capabilities within a specific geographic area such as an island, and delegation to treaty executors with great power rivalries were hypothesised to be pathways for success, these did not appear in the solutions generated by the fsQCA software although they did appear as combinations in the truth table for success.

No intermediate solution pathway has high coverage and high consistency and no single condition is necessary for any outcome. The presence of contradictory outcomes despite the same conditions for the Kosovo, Georgia and Minsk agreements emphasises that the same conditions can have different outcomes. However, several combinations of conditions also have the same outcome for more than one case, suggesting that equal combinations of conditions may lead

to the same outcome in the future. This is an important discovery because states are more likely to want CAC agreements to succeed than fail.[14]

This study is somewhat optimistic about CAC in general, but less optimistic about NATO–Russia efforts to address military balances through CAC due to failure of great power rivalry agreements with national limitations – the precise kinds of agreements that both NATO and Russia seek. The good news for peace is that even between great power rivals, CAC agreements can succeed and lead to a broader, stable peace. And although efforts to impose CAC on defeated states following WWI failed with the outbreak of the next world war, WWII never saw a return of the Central European powers against their east and west neighbours. Many factors contributed to this, and one of them may have been moral disarmament – or the removal of the desire or ambition to go to war, especially world war. This concept, developed between the world wars, seems to have worked well after WWII. CAC likely contributed to stabilising the peace in a number of ways and may be an important step in the process, but the internalised aversion to major European continental wars runs beyond CAC agreements (Barros 2006; Goldblat 2002: 27–28; Henderson 1935: chap.: 12).

This article raises additional areas of research. First, it has selected four independent conditions. However, CAC agreements may have other conditions or variables which might be worth considering, or otherwise state parties' characteristics. These might include assessing differences in national military capabilities, the state of relations or global economic conditions at the time of signature and in the following years. Other conditions or outcomes might consider changes that the agreements incorporated or compelled, such as alterations in the military balance, changes in levels of stability and improvements in diplomatic relations. Different conditions might offer additional insights, including QCA analyses which include some of the conditions used in this study and conditions that this study excluded.

Second, this study has used a very specific dataset. Additional cases could be added, either broadening the cases geographically, historically by including earlier agreements, and/or to include other types of agreements including nuclear agreements. However, if the outcome of success or failure of an agreement is largely defined by whether conflict occurs between state parties, cases would need to have a relationship with conflict causation. In general, this would exclude, for example, universal, humanitarian agreements such as the anti-personnel landmine treaty.

14 This is due to the phenomenon of mutual benefits obtained through CAC agreements, which may include economic savings, improving diplomatic relations, decreased threat of surprise attack and domestic satisfaction – benefits encapsulated in the resolution of the prisoner's dilemma. However, for some CAC agreements, especially ones in which a defeated state has CAC imposed, the states may seek to violate and escape from the agreement, as was the case during the interwar period.

The 22 cases in this dataset suggest that the variation in CAC agreement conditions and outcomes are due in part to the variable situations in which they are created. Moreover, their relative infrequency may mean that the institutional knowledge which resides with those who crafted one agreement necessarily carries on to the next.[15]

The Russia-Ukraine war is the largest and most tragic conflict to befall Europe since WWII and was caused in significant part by the failure of CAC in Europe. However, CAC remains relevant today even while the war rages. A ceasefire might see the creation of a buffer zone, while a longer-term end to the conflict might include national limitations either limited to Ukraine or more broadly across Europe. This article has attempted to suggest how different CAC conditions might interact to stabilise peace successfully, and how some combinations of conditions may be more likely to fail than others.

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The Three Seas Initiative and Romania's Grand Behaviour in the Black Sea Area: Change and Continuity

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Abstract
Drawing on classical realism, the article investigates whether the Three Seas Initiative (3SI), just like the other subregional projects that Romania took part in since joining NATO in 2004, has been part of Romania's external balancing towards Russia. In contrast to the 1990s, when the Black Sea area had not been mentioned in Romania's strategic documents, Bucharest came up with a grand principle (the internationalisation of the Black Sea area) and a grand behaviour (external balancing) once it joined NATO. Considering that the Black Sea area has played a central role in all major strategic documents issued by Romania since 2005, one could draw the conclusion that, at least formally, Romania has devised a grand strategy for the region. The article examines whether 3SI, with its apparent emphasis on desecuritisation, marks a turn in Romania's grand behaviour in the region, as Bucharest's previous subregional initiatives have been guided by securitised multilateralism. By bringing into analysis the main differences among 3SI and Romania's prior strategic initiatives in the area, i.e. the Black Sea Forum for Dialogue and Partnership, Black Sea Synergy, Black Sea Flotilla and Bucharest 9, the article pays heed to the question of change and continuity in Romania's grand behaviour in the Black Sea area. The article concludes that 3SI is in line with securitised multilateralism, which is the common denominator of all Romania's subregional projects in the region.

Keywords: *grand strategy, grand behaviour, The Three Seas Initiative, The Black Sea, Romania*

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Introduction

As a Polish-Croatian initiative that was officially set up at the 2016 Dubrovnik summit, the main objective of the Three Seas Initiative (3SI) was to address the needs of twelve Central European nations with an emphasis on regional integration, energy, transportation and digital integration (Carafano 2023). As of 2023, Greece became the thirteenth member of 3SI. Unlike the interwar Polish Intermarium that had a clear-cut geopolitical and military profile, 3SI also takes into consideration low politics concerns, such as infrastructure development and economic cooperation. The main research question that this article poses is whether 3SI, a regional initiative that Romania has been part of since 2016, can be understood as a component of Romania's grand behaviour in the Black Sea area. This research question could raise eyebrows but there are two reasons behind it. First, the Black Sea region has been a fundamental security focal point of Romania since it joined NATO in 2004. Second, Romania came up with different regional projects tied to the Black Sea area between 2006 and 2016 in an attempt to improve the regional cooperation in this area. Can 3SI, as another regional initiative, be linked with the previous (sub)regional initiatives of Romania in the Black Sea area? Directly related to the first research question, the second one seeks to understand whether 3SI, which *at face value* looks like a rather desecuritised regional initiative, sharply contrasts with the regional initiative that Romania tried to set up in the Black Sea area between 2006 and 2016. The common denominator of Romania's regional projects was related to hard security concerns.

The article seeks to find support for the statement that, in contrast to the 1990s when Romania's behaviour in the Black Sea area was hardly discernible, once the country joined NATO in 2004 it started to display 'external balancing' (Wohlforth 2004: 215) towards the Russian Federation as a long-term grand behaviour. Along with its NATO membership, the 2006 Black Sea Forum for Dialogue and Partnership (BSF), the 2007 Black Sea Synergy (BSS), the 2016 Black Sea Flotilla (BSFt) and the Bucharest 9 (B9) have been subregional initiatives that Romania undertook in order to externally balance the Russian Federation in the Black Sea area. The common denominator of these initiatives has been what I have termed *securitised multilateralism*. This type of multilateralism did little to increase regional cooperation and identity in/of the Black Sea, a security environment within which the interest of great powers – the US, the EU, the Russian Federation – have been traditionally at odds since the early 2000s. Once Romania joined 3SI

in 2016 it seemed like Bucharest's security philosophy changed from securitised exclusive multilateralism to a more desecuritised one, an approach that, at face value, could be more effective for solving the security fault lines in the Black Sea area. Of interest for this article is whether 3SI stands for another instantiation of Romania's grand behaviour in the Black Sea area – that is, external balancing towards the Russian Federation. Or, on the contrary, does 3SI, as a desecuritised regional project, have nothing to do with external balancing.

The article is organised as follows. The first chapter introduces a theoretical and methodological context in which this article is embedded. It tries to make sense of the concept of grand behaviour, which may be hardly discernible when applied to secondary powers like Romania. It also discusses the concept of securitised multilateralism and classical realism as the main paradigm of this text. The second section looks at Romania's formal strategic documents in order to understand variation in the preferences of Romanian elites regarding the Black Sea area in the long run. Also, this section seeks to establish whether Romania has come up with a grand principle and a grand behaviour regarding the Black Sea area since it joined NATO in 2004. Then, in the third section, the article offers a quick glance at Romania's domestic politics that may help the reader understand why Romania has made certain strategic choices in the Black Sea area and not others. The last section delves into 3SI and seeks to understand whether this regional initiative has been perceived by the Romanian authorities and the local academic community as either a desecuritised project or a securitised one. Depending on these perceptions, one could link 3SI with Romania's previous regional projects, or, on the contrary, could claim that 3SI marks a shift in Romania's regional philosophy from securitisation to desecuritisation. Methodologically, given that the article traces variation in the security policies of Romania related to the Black Sea area over the long-term, I have resorted to a diachronic within-unit variance case study (Gerring 2004). The section dedicated to 3SI employs discourse analysis in order to explore whether 3SI has acquired a prevalent desecuritised meaning in Romania.

Investigating the grand behaviour of secondary powers: Ontological and paradigmatic issues

Secondary powers have been defined as states that 'cannot independently provide for their security against any other state, including the great powers' (Ross 2010: 357). Therefore, secondary powers are forced to join military alliances to provide for their security or to develop a system of bilateral and multilateral diplomatic relations to this end. Under such circumstances, to claim that a secondary power could develop a grand behaviour as an instantiation of a potential grand strategy, could seem like a far-fetched statement. But, as already stated, this article is interested in ascertaining whether Romania has come up with a grand behaviour in the Black Sea area, and whether 3SI fits – or not – this behaviour that has

consisted of a string of regional initiatives. In the following, I try to theoretically substantiate this claim.

When scrutinising the grand strategy of great powers, it is pertinent to clarify some ontological aspects. Does the great power under consideration have a grand strategy and, more important, what is the object of that particular state's grand strategy? In an attempt to solve this conceptual conundrum, Silove argues that the researcher needs to 'develop a theory of the concept of grand strategy' (Silove 2017). To this end, Silove puts forward the distinction between a semantic and an ontological definition of grand strategy. While the former continues to dominate the research field, even if it offers no clear understanding of the object of grand strategy, the latter seeks to establish a clear link between a theoretical perspective and an empirical analysis of grand strategy. The ontological approach that Silove puts forth holds that researchers could use three different conceptualisations of grand strategy: a grand plan, a grand principle and a grand behaviour. 'The three concepts each provide a distinct and valuable addition to the corpus of conceptual tools in security studies' (Silove 2017: 4).

The article aims to explore whether Romania's strategic initiatives in the Black Sea area, that is, BSF, BSS, BSFt, B9, and the regional initiatives that Romania has been a part of, that is, 3SI, stand for a particular grand behaviour – namely, external balancing towards the Russian Federation. Broadly speaking, external balancing refers to states that 'aggregate their capabilities with other states in alliances' (Wohlforth 2004: 215) in order to check the rise of a potential hegemon. When a state checks the rise of a hegemon only by building up its own capabilities, this is a case of internal balancing. There are two reasons behind my choice to scrutinise Romania's grand strategy as a grand behaviour. First, 'in IR, *the behavior of the specific actor is the crucial question*' (Kirshner 2022: 73). Second, the grand strategy refers to a pattern of behaviour: 'the pattern *is itself the grand strategy*' (Silove 2017: 17).

Researchers who have examined grand strategy as 'grand behaviour' fall under three categories, adds Silove. First are those that have not linked a given state's grand behaviour with a grand principle or a grand plan. Instead, these scholars have demonstrated that the drivers of grand behaviour could be 'strategic cultures', 'coalitions of interest groups' or 'internationalist versus statist-nationalist regional policy networks' (Silove 2017). Second, there are scholars who have not looked at all at the issue of intentionality and have thus operationalised grand strategy as a pattern of behaviour (Silove 2017: 18). Third are scholars who have explicitly connected the grand behaviour of a certain state with the 'intentional design of individual agents'. Layne (2006), for instance, argues that 'open door internationalism' has guided the US grand behaviour in the post–World War II period.

In contrast to Silove, who only aimed at deciphering the object of grand strategy without getting into paradigmatic or methodological details, Layne employs

neoclassical realism as a metatheory that explains how 'the distribution of power in the international system, economic expansion, and ideology are linked causally' (Layne 2006: 10). Rebecca Lissner also resorts to neoclassical realism when discussing a particular strand of research on grand strategy, which is grand strategy as a variable (Lissner 2018: 59). In Lissner's account, grand strategy as a *dependent* variable seeks to clarify both the origins and changes that affect a given state's grand strategy. To this end, Lissner takes into account subsystemic variables, such as domestic politics, strategic culture and the role of individuals (Lissner 2018: 59–61). Neoclassical realism has also been employed as a metatheory by the editors of *Comparative Grand Strategy*, who resorted to subsystemic variables, such as 'domestic politics, strategic culture, and the influence of individual leaders' (Ripsman 2019: 284), in an attempt to move away from the constraints of neorealism.

In my view, once the object of grand strategy has been clarified, the next step in the process of tracing the potential grand strategy of a secondary power is related to the paradigmatic starting point. This paradigmatic starting point could become tricky in the case of secondary powers. As already argued by Hoffman, the perspective of the weak (Hoffman 1977: 240) is difficult to capture with the most important strand of research in the realm of international relations – that is, structural realism. Therefore, I have opted for classical realism. Unlike structural realism with its emphasis on power, classical realism brings into analysis both power and purpose. As a consequence of paying heed to purpose, classical realism allows for a certain agency of states in relation to structural pressures. In this vein, classical realism stresses that 'politics matter' (Kirshner 2022), as well as a given state's history, ideology (Kirshner 2022: 107), 'the influence of statesmen' (Kirshner 2022: 51) and a particular social structure (Kirshner 2022: 221). At the same time, especially when one seeks to understand the strategic behaviour of secondary powers, it would be heuristically unfruitful to completely 'put structure in its place' (Kirshner 2022).

Therefore, classical realism looks at 'the choices made by other great powers, whose behavior shapes the nature of the opportunities and constraints presented by the system' (Kirshner 2022: 52). This variable – the choices made by other great powers – is particularly relevant for understanding the question of change and continuity in Romania's grand behaviour in the Black Sea area. While the US and the EU showed little interest in the Black Sea area in the 1990s, 9/11 significantly changed their perspective on the region. In the aftermath of 9/11, the Black Sea region started playing an important role in the strategic logic of the international war on terror, and retained this role also in relation to the Freedom Agenda of the George W. Bush Administration. Energy and the need to set up a 'ring of friends' in the region also put the Black Sea on the security agenda of the EU after 9/11. The Russian Federation, like Turkey, was interested in preserving the closed-sea view that has been institutionalised by the Montreux Convention since 1936.

Based on this view, great power competition should be kept out of the Black Sea region. Needless to say, the 1936 Montreux Convention has systematically reinforced regional status-quo and, thus, the geopolitical clout of both the Russian Federation and Turkey in the Black Sea area.

By drawing on Goertz (2006), I employ *securitised multilateralism* as a three-pronged concept – that is, one with an ontological, realist and causal level. Regarding the ontological dimension, Goertz argues that this is the most important one because concepts are not just about definitions. They are about 'deciding what is important for an entity' (Goertz 2006: 27). From this perspective, securitised multilateralism illustrates the conceptual conundrum of the Black Sea region, which lies in what Felix Ciută calls the 'dual hermeneutics' (2008). Specifically, this 'dual hermeneutics' stands for the systematic interplay between security concepts and security practices that make the Black Sea region difficult to explore from an academic perspective.

The analytical trouble is that strategic concepts and security policies conflate at the expense of the Black Sea's regional cooperation, and as an institutional logic gets permanently entangled with geopolitical reasoning with the result of impending the emergence of a common vision – and identity – for the Black Sea area. The geopolitical reasoning depicts the Black Sea area as a security problem due to 'frozen conflicts, illegal arms trafficking, transnational crime' (Ciută 2008: 126) and Russia's growing assertiveness. At the same time, the Black Sea area is framed as a security asset. It is a valuable military platform for projecting power, while its fossil energy resources should not be discounted. In order to stop the security threats of the Black Sea area to spill westwards, a geopolitical solution – power projection of the US, NATO and the EU – is advanced along with an institutional one – that is, democratisation and cooperation. To sum it up, securitised multilateralism, as the common denominator of Romania's subregional initiatives in the Black Sea area, stands for a secondary power's regional efforts that are geared towards reconciling great power politics and regional cooperation.

The realist or the indicator level of securitised multilateralism refers to both security concepts and security practices that Romania has so far employed to project influence in the area. To this end, the article brings under scrutiny the BSF, BSS, BSFt and B9 and tries to understand whether their securitised philosophy has also been used by the Romanian authorities when dealing with 3SI. Last, but not least, the causal level of securitised multilateralism, which tries to sketch a theory that accounts for Romania's subregional initiatives in the region in line with classical realism, brings to the fore 'a residue of the evolution of post-Cold War European security' (Ciută 2007: 54) that was projected onto the Black Sea area in the early 2000s. This 'residue' highlights the fact that security as identity coexists with security as practice. Specifically, NATO's identity in the post–Cold War era as simultaneously a military alliance and security community, that is, 'an

alliance against enemies and a partnership for peace' (Ciută 2002, 47), exported the conflation between a geopolitical logic and an institutional one in the Black Sea area. In my view, this conceptual conundrum according to which a military alliance is simultaneously against something and for something has directly left its mark on Romania's guiding principle in terms of subregional initiatives – that is, securitised multilateralism. To a significant extent, Romania's securitised multilateralism is redolent of the 'Mitrany paradox', according to which exclusive integration projects depart from a functional logic, and this aspect may increase the zero-sum game perceptions for the states that are excluded (Diesen 2015).

The grand behaviour of Romania in the Black Sea area: Change and continuity

The scope of this section is to examine whether Romania has come up with a grand behaviour in the Black Sea area. To this end, this section delves into Romania's official strategic documents which could also shed light on a potential variation in the strategic preferences of the Romanian authorities in the long run. Romania's regional policies for the Black Sea area were not discernible in the 1990s, as Romania's 1999 National Security Strategy (NSS) did not even mention the Black Sea region. What Romania's 1999 NSS did mention though – in a rather normative vein – was the country's participation at subregional projects and the promotion of either bilateral or trilateral partnerships with the states in the region (NSS 1999: 10). Neither the name of the states nor details about the region were mentioned. In the same vein, Romania's 2001 NSS did not bring the Black Sea area to the fore. Also, the 2001 NSS hardly made any geographical references to the region that Romania was interested in, although the document brought into discussion the 'potential negative evolutions at the subregional level in the domain of democratization, respect for human rights and economic development' (NSS 2001: 4) that could pose a risk to the country's national security. Not only was the Black Sea area not mentioned in the 1999 NSS and the 2001 NSS, but Romania's strategic behaviour in the area was hardly discernible.

From a classical realist perspective, given the occurrence of the frozen conflicts in the region in the early 1990s, especially the one in Transnistria, Romania should have initiated a balancing behaviour – either internal or external – towards the Russian Federation. Romania's external balancing towards the Russian Federation gained traction only in 2005, one year into Romania's NATO membership. In terms of internal balancing, this behaviour was out of the question in the 1990s, as the country was experiencing a difficult transition from a state-led economy to a market economy. Moreover, by giving up on subsidising its 321 commercial ships (Ionescu 2021), many of which needed serious reparations and technological updates, Romania sent the signal that it had no economic ambitions in the region. Therefore, especially because of internal weakness, the strategic behav-

iour that Romania adopted in the 1990s in the Black Sea area could be deemed underbalancing. Which means that either Romanian elites did not perceive the threat or they had run into trouble mobilising resources – internal and external – to answer to this threat (Schweller 2023). I tend to believe that a combination of the abovementioned reasons led to Romania's underbalancing in the 1990s as the prevailing behaviour in the Black Sea area. One should not forget that in the early 1990s, Romania was the only ex-communist state that signed a Friendship Treaty with the Soviet Union. This notwithstanding, the Treaty was not ratified due to the collapse of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991. My point is that the dominant strategic subculture of the ruling elite was to a significant extent favourable to the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, and this could account for the fact that the Russian-provoked frozen conflicts in the Black Sea area may not have been perceived as a significant threat to Romania's national security. And yet it is beyond the scope of this text to account for the subsystemic factors – that is, variables related to domestic politics – that could account for Romania's underbalancing in the 1990s. What matters is that this behaviour runs contrary to realist predictions according to which 'threatened states will balance against dangerous accumulations of power by forming alliances or building arms or both' (Schweller 2004: 160).

Once Romania joined NATO in 2004 its strategic vision on the Black Sea area shifted from the 'closed sea view' of the 1936 Montreux Convention to an 'open sea view'. Therefore, the 'internationalization of the Black Sea area' became the grand principle of Romania's policies in the region. In contrast to the 1999 NSS and the 2001 NSS, the 2006 NSS devoted roughly five pages to the importance of the Black Sea area for Romania's national security (NSS 2006). Specifically, after mentioning the fact that 'Romania holds a fundamental strategic interest' (NSS 2006: 18) in turning the wider Black Sea region into a stable, democratic and strongly connected area to the Euro-Atlantic institutions, the 2006 NSS points out that Romania's interest is 'to stimulate as strong as possible European and Euro-Atlantic regional implication' (NSS 2006: 19). Two points are worth making with regard to Romania's 2006 NSS, besides the fact that it was Romania's first National Security Strategy that emphasised the strategic importance of the Black Sea area. First, the Black Sea area is related to a fundamental strategic interest of Romania in the region. This means that, at least in 2006, the area under consideration was of no secondary strategic importance and, thus, just another object of Romania's foreign policy. Second, by reading the 2006 NSS alone, one may run into trouble clarifying the meaning of 'the internationalization of the Black Sea area', the new grand principle that guided Romania's policies in the region.

The 2006 NSS offers some insights into Romania's efforts to bring both NATO and the EU into the area, but two statements of Mr. Băsescu, the-then president of Romania, could shed more light onto the meaning of the 'internationalization

of the Black Sea area'. One year into his presidency, Mr. Băsescu stated in front of the representatives of the Romanian diaspora in San Francisco that the Black Sea should not turn into a 'Russian lake' (ziarul de iași.ro 2005). Notably, to Mr. Băsescu the internationalisation of the Black Sea area held the same significance at the end of his second presidential mandate against the backdrop of the 2014 Annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation. At the 2014 Newport NATO Summit in Wales, Mr Băsescu maintained that his administration had tried to turn the Black Sea area into a 'NATO lake' (click.ro 2014). In 2005, during a meeting on Romania's security problems with students of the University of Bucharest, Mr. Băsescu explained that the internationalisation of the Black Sea area consisted of 'controlling the [marine] traffic' in order for 'our allies to have a military and political presence in the Black Sea' (civicmedia.ro 2005).

As already stated, Romania came up with no subregional initiative regarding the Black Sea area in the 1990s. These initiatives started to emerge once Romania joined NATO in 2004. Romania's first regional policy in the Black Sea area was the Black Sea Forum for Dialogue and Partnership (BSF), which was mentioned in the 2006 NSS and launched the same year. According to the 2006 NSS, the BSF aimed at 'promoting democracy and economic development, building trust, reinforcing stability, peace and security' (NSS 2006: 21) at a regional level. Mr. Băsescu stated during the 2005 press conference that was held at the University of Bucharest that the internationalisation of the Black Sea area was related mainly to the military and political presence of Romania's allies in the Black Sea area. Under such circumstances, it hardly came as a surprise that the BSF's initial agenda was rife with hard security concerns (Dungaciu & Dumitrescu 2019). In the absence of the Russian Federation, the other countries that attended the 2006 BSF summit that was held in Bucharest in 2006 had no intention of aggravating the already existing security fault lines in the region, and therefore Romania's first regional policy was short-lived. It lasted less than a summit and clearly revealed that certain strategic obstacles could prove insurmountable for the president of a secondary power whose ambitions outweighed its capabilities, especially the diplomatic ones.

Romania's second strategic initiative regarding the Black Sea, called Black Sea Synergy (BSS), emerged in 2007, and, interestingly, was not launched by Bucharest. The main tenet of the BSS, namely the urge to solve the Black Sea area's 'frozen conflicts' through the regional involvement of the European Union, had already been mentioned during the BSF 2006 summit. BSS was the EU's first regional strategy regarding the Black Sea area and was launched in 2007 during the German presidency of the European Council. There are at least two reasons for which BSS was another short-lived strategy in the Black Sea area. First, it doubled Turkey's Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), which was set up in 1992. Second, BSS had to compete with the Eastern Partnership (EaP), that was launched one year later. EaP was better financed and supported by more EU members. The third

regional initiative of Romania, that is, the Black Sea Flotilla (BSFt), emerged in 2016, in the aftermath of the 2014 annexation of Crimea, an event that tipped the balance of power in the region in favour of the Russian Federation. According to Carp, the NATO members of the riparian states had only two options at their disposal to remake the power equilibrium in the region – that is, either to alter the 1936 Montreux Convention or to set up a 'naval grouping made up of the riparian states that also were NATO members' (Carp 2018: 125). Romania supported this latter option, as the first one was out of the question, given Turkey's commitment to defending the legal status-quo in the Black Sea area. Therefore, in the logic of classical realism, the emergence of the BSFt was just a normal and predictable act of balancing the three riparian states against the rising power of the Russian Federation. Surprisingly, though, Mr. Boyko Borisov, the-then Bulgarian prime minister, had changed his mind overnight and refused to enforce the BSFt.

Notably, an alliance made up of Romania, Turkey and Bulgaria emerged in 2024 in order to demine the waters of the Black Sea against the background of the war in Ukraine. This alliance is called the Trilateral Initiative (Stan 2023). Bucharest 9 (B9), a regional initiative that was set up in 2015 based on the proposal of Romanian President Iohannis and Polish President Duda, should be read as a balancing act towards the Russian Federation in the context of the 2014 illegal annexation of Crimea. The members of B9 – Romania, Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Estonia, Letonia and Lithuania – have strived to strengthen the coherence of NATO's Eastern flank. Through B9, Romania has tried to push the Black Sea area along with NATO's Eastern flank to the forefront of NATO's agenda, while the Baltic countries viewed B9 as a means to strengthen NATO's deterrence along its Eastern flank. Despite the fact that the last B9 summit took place in Riga on 11 June 2024 with the next one set to take place in Lithuania, some authors argue that this format 'is about to crumble' (Vuşcan 2024). While Hungary and Slovakia did not attend the last Riga Summit, Bulgaria was against a unitary position of B9 regarding common assistance for Ukraine (Vuşcan 2024).

Based on the data provided by the official strategic documents of Romania, this section has shown the existence of a grand principle, namely the internationalisation of the Black Sea, which has guided Romania's regional initiatives in the Black Sea area since 2006. Also, by tracing the regularities in the long-term initiatives of Romania in the Black Sea area, one can conclude that the country has come up with a grand behaviour in the region. And Romania's grand behaviour in the Black Sea area has been balancing the Russian Federation while bandwagoning with the US and the EU.

General aspects of Romania's domestic politics

As classical realism brings to the fore both power and purpose, and because the latter tends to be impacted by some domestic sources of grand strategy, a quick

glance at some aspects of Romania's domestic politics might offer a glimpse into the reasons why Romanian authorities have made certain strategic choices and not others regarding the Black Sea area. When it comes to the internal factors that may translate the pressures of international systems, neoclassical realism typically takes into account state capacity, political leadership and (sub)strategic cultures (Balzacq et al. 2019). Caverley (2023) argues that among the usually overlooked internal sources of grand strategy one can find regime type, capitalism type, militarism and nationalism.

The factors that I have chosen to shed some light on the domestic sources of Romania's grand strategy are the relation between the state and form of capitalism, and the dominant strategic subculture. Regarding the former, Romania has been a dependent market economy for more than twenty years (Ban 2014, 2016). It has been administered by a low-capacity state endowed with the most underdeveloped fiscal capacity in the EU – that is, roughly 27 percent of the GDP (Eurostat 2023). As Caverley puts it, the type of capitalism and a given state's ability to tax may have a significant impact not only on the objectives of grand strategy, but also on its tactical choices and the ability to mobilise resources in times of crisis. In a different article (Dungaciu and Dumitrescu 2019), I offered support for the thesis that one of the reasons that account for the failure of Romania's subregional initiatives in the Black Sea area is directly related to lack of strategic expertise, an asset that a low-capacity state with a dependent market economy may run into trouble getting.

Another factor that I pay heed to in order to offer a glimpse into Romania's domestic factors with a potential impact on its grand strategy, refers to the dominant substrategic subculture. The premise that I start from is that substrategic cultures might shed some light on the prevailing 'strategic rationality' (Mearsheimer & Sorento, 2023), that is, the theories and heuristics that policymakers resort to in order 'to make sense of their situation and decide the way forward in an uncertain world' (Mearsheimer & Sorento, 2023: 36). Broadly speaking, strategic culture refers to 'the mental universe of the generation in power, that is, the bureaucracies in power and their institutional preferences' (Skak 2016: 4). This loosely operationalised 'mental universe' of the generation in power suggests that this elite has already been 'socialized into a mode of strategic discourse . . . that evolve only marginally over time' (Snyder 1977: 9). The fourth generation of research in the field of strategic culture has brought to the fore a new conceptualisation. Not only does the concept of substrategic culture diminish the risk of essentialisation, but it also offers a fresh perspective on the issue of change and continuity regarding a given state's strategic rationality. The trouble, at least for the time being, is that Romanian authors are still inclined to explore strategic culture, instead of looking at Romania's strategic subcultures. Ghincea (2021) argues that Romania's strategic culture has been shaped especially by the US's unipolar moment. This

aspect accounts for Romania's hierarchical vision of international politics and also for the 'underappreciation of equally important partnerships with European powers such as France and Germany' (Ghincea 2021: 7).

In my view, Romania's dominant strategic subculture is a mimetic one. This comes as no surprise as all former communist countries have been mimetic to a large extent once they chose to join both NATO and the EU (Krastev and Holmes 2018). Also, 'normative exaggeration and mimetism' (Börzel & Risse 2009: 12) stand for an institutional attitude that a low-capacity state with a dependent market economy – like Romania – tends to adopt in interactions with its stronger counterparts. However, unlike Hungary and Poland, which have advanced heterodox economic ideas with illiberal overtones (Scheiring 2021), no such translations have emerged so far in Romania. By exploring the way that neoliberal ideas have been 'translated' by top Romanian economists and bankers, some belonging to the former communist financial technocrats, Ban concludes that 'the degree of mimetism was amazing' (Ban 2014: 184). A radical, ideal-typical version of neoliberalism completely disembedded the market with a direct effect on growing inequality, which turned Romania into the second most unequal country in the EU in 2014. Ban holds that in the aftermath of the 2008 Financial crisis, when heterodox ideas started taking hold at the level of the International Monetary Fund and also in former ex-communist countries, Romanian neoliberals turned even more radical (Ban 2016). This mimetic attitude has left its mark on the civil society in Romania that has been turned 'into a prisoner of radical neoliberal ideology' (Dragoman 2022: 111).

Mircea Malița, former Romanian ambassador to Switzerland and the US in the Cold War era, professor and member of the Romanian Academy, argued that there was no problem that Romania chose to internationalise the Black Sea under President Băsescu. The trouble was that 'Romania put forth and formulated a total, unnuanced, Western option' (Malița & Dungaciu 2014: 337). Yet, Malița offers no details on what a nuanced Western option would have looked like. Such a debate might have been blocked, among many other factors, by Romania's dominant strategic subculture of – at times, radical – mimetism. Mimetism also lies in the proposal of Diana Șoșoacă, the president of a sovereignist party called SOS Romania, for organising a referendum on Romania's exit from NATO (Morozanu 2024). Such a proposal has not been made by any politician in Romania for the last twenty years. Despite the fact that it occupies a marginal position in Romanian politics, Diana Șoșoacă, along with one of her colleagues, has been propelled into the European Parliament in the aftermath of the 9 June European elections. Still, it is worth mentioning that Romania's mainstream parties and also most Romanian citizens are clearly in favour of NATO, while another sovereignist party, i.e. the Alliance for the Union of Romanians (AUR), also supports Romania's membership in both NATO and the EU. Therefore, with the clear exception of Diana Șoșoacă

and her party, Romania's sovereignist parties have not come up with heterodox ideas either in the field of economics or in the area of foreign policy, and therefore one cannot talk about the emergence of a political countermovement in Romania, as it has already happened in other Central European countries (Blokker 2013).

The Three Seas Initiative: A desecuritised regional initiative?

This section relies on discourse analysis to explore the 'representational practices' (Dunn and Neumann 2016) that both Romanian authorities and Romanian experts employ with respect to 3SI. Of interest for this section is: What kind of meaning these representational practices generate for 3SI? Is 3SI viewed as a desecuritised initiative, which is related to low security concerns, or as a securitised one, which pertains to military aspects? Or, in the absence of a preeminent meaning, could one find both institutional and geopolitical meanings in the texts under investigation? The texts that I have scrutinised fall under three categories: official texts related to the two 3SI summits that Romania hosted in 2018 and 2023 respectively, texts written by Romanian authors that belong to the local academic community that covers foreign policy and strategic matters, and texts that belong to international experts in the realm of international relations.

First, I bring under scrutiny the official position of Romania's Presidential Administration on the two summits of 3SI that Bucharest hosted in 2018 and 2023. Notably, an official document that was issued in the run-up to the 2018 summit defines 3SI as a 'flexible political platform' (presidency.ro 2018a) that concerns itself with economic development, the convergence of EU member states and also the strengthening of transatlantic ties. Mr. Iohannis, the president of Romania, stressed in his official speech delivered at the 2018 Summit, the establishment of 3SI's Business Forum (presidency.ro 2018b). With the support of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Romania, the Atlantic Council of the United States and the National University of Political and Administrative Studies, the first edition of the 3SI Business Forum took place in Bucharest in 2018. Based on the above, the official representations of 3SI link this regional initiative to low security concerns. This perception is strengthened by the depiction of 3SI on the official site of Romania's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Thus, the values that guide 3SI refer to 'the promotion of economic development, the enhance of cohesion at the European level and the strengthening of the transatlantic relations' (mae.ro 2021).

Five years later, Bucharest hosted another summit of 3SI which showed, according to President Iohannis, the importance that Romania grants to this regional project. In his official speech delivered at the 2023 3SI Summit, President Iohannis laid emphasis on the strategic interconnections between the northern and the southern parts of the region bordered by the Three Seas. Also, Mr. Iohannis stressed the importance of investment in projects that aim at economic development. Yet the most consistent part of Mr. Iohannis' speech highlighted the

security concerns created by the discovery of debris that could belong to a drone in Romania's territory against the backdrop of the war in Ukraine (presidency.ro 2023a). Also, the Joint Statement of the 2023 Summit highlighted once again the 'strategic role of 3SI as a political, economic and connectivity platform that strengthens regional connectivity' (presidency.ro 2023b) and builds transport, energy and digital infrastructure networks on the North-South axis. However, the Joint Statement laid emphasis on the 'contested security environment' within which the resilience of the regional infrastructure may lead to a double usage related to 'an enhanced civil and military mobility on the North-South axis' (presidency.ro 2023b). To sum it up, against the backdrop of the war in Ukraine low security concerns continued to be preeminent on 3SI's agenda. Yet one could also notice both military aspects and military overtones on the official agenda, which shows the impact that great power competition could have on the contour of a regional initiative.

I now turn my attention to the texts written by Romanian experts, who belong to the academic community that comments on foreign policy and security issues. Mr Baconschi, former minister of foreign affairs, contends that the member states of 3SI intend to turn Central and Eastern Europe into a match for Western Europe in terms of 'roads, railroads, harbors, trade, digital networks and energy infrastructure' (2023). Therefore, in Baconschi's account, 3SI is exclusively related to low security concerns. Commenting on the 2023 3SI Summit held in Bucharest, Mr. Ștefan Popescu (2023) argues that the Investment Fund of 3SI seems to be severely underfunded. Specifically, the 91 projects adopted by 3SI in order to build transport, energy and digital infrastructure require roughly 700 billion euro while Romania's and Poland's foreign commerce banks can offer at best 6 billion euro. Again, the emphasis is laid on low security concerns, despite the fact that Mr. Popescu draws attention to the fact that France and Germany tend to look reluctantly at the US-inspired 3SI.

In contrast, Fati makes the difference between the initial project of 3SI that laid emphasis on connecting the states between the three seas through 'highways, high-speed rails, and gas infrastructure by bypassing Ukraine' (Fati 2023), and the actual project that accepted Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova as associate members against the backdrop of the war in Ukraine. Also, Fati argues that the transport infrastructure that is supposed to be built under the aegis of 3SI could improve the shipment of soldiers and military equipment through Romania, and also help Ukraine both economically and militarily. Alina Inayeh (2022), former director of the Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation, couples an institutional framing of 3SI, one that it is related to 'infrastructure connectivity', with a geopolitical one. The latter approach, argues Inayeh, has already been employed by the US and the EU in the Black Sea area, and the same card should be played by the abovementioned great powers also relative to 3SI. Also,

a group of Romanian experts belonging to the European Institute of Romania places emphasis on the 'interconnectedness of the 3SI infrastructure' (Sebe 2023: 52), while simultaneously stressing the 'dual use – civil and military' (Sebe 2023: 58) that certain projects of 3SI can have, such as Rail Baltica, Via Carpathia or the Polish Solidarity Transport Hub.

Regarding the texts written by international experts, James Carafano stresses the focus of 3SI on 'transatlantic economic, energy and security issues' (2022). Notably, Carafano also brings into discussion the 'unstated' strategic overtones of 3SI, which offers both the US and the EU an engagement model that could balance China's 17+1 development framework for Central and Eastern Europe. Moreover, Carafano (2022) holds that 3SI's energy infrastructure could address the Central and Eastern European countries' dependence on Russian gas and oil, while NATO could also avail itself of the infrastructure built under the aegis of 3SI. After making the difference between Intermarium, as a project for regional integration, and 3SI, which aims at regional cooperation, Aydaliani maintains that 'the Intermarium (sic) is not formally subject to NATO strategy, but in reality it functions outside it' (2019). At a local level that implies the interplay among neighbouring states; 3SI is indeed focused on low security concerns.

But once one changes vantage point, 3SI is directly related to great power competition (Ištok et al. 2018). On this aspect, Alexandr Vondra, a Czech politician, argues that the Russian Federation will likely seek to subvert 3SI because Moscow prefers investments on the East-West axis. Therefore, the survival of 3SI is heavily dependent on support offered by the US, the EU and the member states of 3SI (Vondra 2018). An institutional lens, which links transport, energy and digital infrastructure with regional development and cooperation, tends to magnify the low security concerns of 3SI. However, a geopolitical lens brings into relief the high politics aspects on the agenda of 3SI. While Poland and other Central European states aim at building a polycentric Europe and thus gain some degrees of autonomy in relation to the great powers that project influence onto the region, the US sees 3SI as a security buffer (Bartoszewicz 2021: 19). Notably, unlike President Obama who viewed exports of American LNG to Poland as an attempt to balance Russian influence, the Trump administration, which sent the first shipment of American LNG to Poland in 2017, viewed it as a bargaining chip in the trade negotiations with the EU (Grgić 2021: 14). Also, the US's USD 1 billion contribution to the Investment Fund of 3SI in 2020 came together with a more assertive stance on the 2014 Russia's annexation of Crimea. Although it is not directly involved with 3SI, China seeks to turn Central Europe into a commercial corridor by building infrastructure and connecting the area with BRI (Bartoszewicz 2021; Grgić 2021). Therefore, it is mistaken to view 3SI as a desecuritised subregional initiative. Based on the above, one may have a hard time arguing that 3SI is a completely desecuritised regional initiative.

Conclusion

By tracing Romania's regional initiatives in the Black Sea area, the article has found support for the thesis that Romania has come up with a grand behaviour in the Black Sea area since it joined NATO in 2004. This behaviour has been external balancing towards the Russian Federation and alignment with the US and the EU. Also, by scrutinising Romania's official strategic documents the article reveals that Romania has adopted a grand principle for the region – that is, the internationalisation of the Black Sea area. To date, Romania has not devised a grand plan for the Black Sea area despite the fact that this region has been steadily mentioned in all official strategic documents issued by Romania since it joined NATO in 2004.

In terms of change and continuity regarding the regional initiatives that Romania has either devised or been part of since 2004, the article has not found support for the statement that 3SI stands for a desecuritised form of multilateralism. Romania's membership of 3SI does not stand in contrast with BSF, BSS, BSFt and B9, since the common denominator of all these subregional projects has been securitised multilateralism. Therefore, the article has traced no variation in Romania's grand behaviour in the Black Sea area. Based on the scholarly literature and also on the meaning that both official documents and Romanian security experts attribute to 3SI, one draws the conclusion that the securitised contour of 3SI, especially against the backdrop of the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, is more than clear.

This conclusion does not intend to suggest that 3SI was devised as a subregional initiative that dealt exclusively with low politics concerns in 2015, and then against the backdrop of the war in Ukraine has it acquired a more securitised profile. From the very beginning, the geopolitical logic was the prevalent philosophy of 3SI, as some of its members aimed at creating a polycentric Europe that would allow them certain degrees of autonomy in a highly interdependent world and relative to great power competition. From this perspective, it would be worth exploring in a comparative vein to what extent the 'dual hermeneutics', that is, the institutional logic coupled with geopolitical reasoning, also comes into play in the particular case of 3SI. At first glance, the situation seems to be slightly different. One of the factors that could account for the difference is China's manifest interest for investing in the infrastructure of some of the members of 3SI, and second, the heterodox ideas that, for instance, Hungary and Poland have been using not only in the realm of economics but also in the field of foreign policy.

The article has advanced the concept of securitised multilateralism as the common denominator of Romania's subregional initiative in the Black Sea area. The concept could be worth exploring also in the case of other NATO members' subregional initiatives in order to understand whether internal factors, such as state capacity, the dominant substrategic culture or the relation between democracy and capitalism, have translated in a specific vein the strain between the

institutional logic and the geopolitical philosophy, which is specific to subregional initiatives that great powers seek to instrumentalise in their favour. Despite the fact that it has employed classical realism as its main explanatory paradigm, this article has also looked at some internal factors that may leave its mark on Romania's strategic initiatives, such as the relation between state capacity and type of capitalism, and the dominant substrategic culture. The above mentioned subsystemic factors may offer a glimpse into Romania's domestic politics, but further research is required in this regard, as the conclusions that this article has reached in this regard are just tentative. The concept of strategic subculture is, at least for the time being, not in in the field of security studies in Romania. This concept, despite its theoretical and methodological drawbacks, could shed significant light on Romania's agency regarding the subregional projects that it has been involved in so far. The findings of this article could also bring their contribution to further the investigation of secondary powers' grand strategy. For instance, are Romania's grand behaviour and grand principle for the Black Sea area synonymous with Romania's grand strategy in the region, the latter being understood as a comprehensive approach that couples economic, political and military resources?

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The EU's Approach to Sanctions on Russia: A Critical Analysis of the Existing Literature

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Abstract
This article focuses on the EU's sanctions against Russia, which were adopted in several rounds after Russia's aggressive actions against Ukraine in 2014 and 2022. This article reviews and critically examines the existing academic works on this topic. In particular, it identifies, distinguishes and analyses five types of the existing scholarship, each of which relies on a different explanatory perspective on why the EU has adopted its sanctions against Russia. These are: (1) convergence of normative views within the EU, (2) national preference-based bargaining, (3) emotional resonance and (dis)trust in relation to the Russia-Ukraine conflict, (4) the EU's ambition to be an active political-security actor and (5) threat perception of the EU's geographical proximity with Ukraine. Additionally, the article reviews the debates on the (in)effectiveness of the EU's sanctions on Russia. Although the extant literature offers different perspectives and has been expanding, there are still some gaps in the existing scholarship, which are also discussed in the article.

Keywords: *EU, sanctions, Russia, EU-Russia, Russia-Ukraine conflict*

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Introduction

Since the crisis in Eastern Ukraine and Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, the European Union (EU) has adopted sanctions as the key policy response targeting Russia's aggressive behaviour. These restrictive measures were applied by the EU in multiple rounds and packages and gradually became the cornerstone of the EU's policy towards Russia. However, they remain a subject of controversy. They are frequently perceived as suboptimal and inadequately considered measures, primarily driven by the EU's inability to come up with a prompt military response to Russian actions (Baron 2022; Berlin 2022; Sivis 2019; Laruelle 2016). Despite – or perhaps due to – all these uncertainties regarding the effectiveness of sanctions, there is a growing interest in exploring why these sanctions were imposed.

This article reviews and examines how the existing academic works make sense of the EU's sanctions against Russia, while also considering how they assess the impact of history and external and internal environments on the EU's policy-making and decision making connected with the adoption of sanctions. As Snyder et al. (2003) suggest, understanding why international actors adopt specific behaviour and policies requires examining the decision-making processes (the 'how' question). Alongside that, this article also tries to identify which theoretical perspectives and approaches have been used in the existing literature and what their strengths and limitations are when explaining policy-making process.

This article reviews scholarly works regarding the EU's sanctions on Russia published between 2014 and 2023. It distinguishes five main streams of academic works which rely on different explanatory perspectives on why the sanctions have been adopted by the EU: (1) convergence of normative views within the EU, (2) national preference-based bargaining, (3) emotional resonance and (dis) trust in relation to the Russia-Ukraine conflict, (4) the EU's ambition to be an active political-security actor and (5) threat perception of the EU's geographical proximity with Ukraine. Each of them is discussed in a separate section in this article. These categories are established by looking at and distinguishing the approaches and methodologies used in the concerned works. Additionally, the article examines how the widely debated question of the (in)effectiveness of sanctions against Russia is addressed in the existing literature. This is discussed in the last section of the article.

Convergence of normative views within the EU

Several existing works discuss how the convergence of normative views among EU actors and member states has played a significant role in the EU's decision to impose sanctions. As they demonstrate, the convergence arose after meticulous deliberation of the EU's commitment to maintaining the principles of self-determination, territorial integrity and Ukraine's sovereignty (Bosse 2022b; Hayashi

2020; Sjursen & Rosen 2017). The existing literature emphasises deliberation of norms, supported by an empirical evaluation of situations in Ukraine, as a key mechanism that enables the EU and its member states to evaluate the normative reasoning of others, exchange their normative arguments and ensure the binding nature of the imposed sanctions (Bosse 2022a). Nevertheless, the deliberation of norms did not necessitate member states' compliance (Risse 2018) with the EU's sanctions policy implementation. The deliberative mechanism naturally consists of three stages: claim-making, justifying and learning (Eriksen 2018; Ganuza & Csis 2012; Squires 2008). Consequently, this approach contributes to the analysis of how the claim-making had been made in regard to the importance of the sanctions policy, how the sanctions policy had been justified and how learning helped address the internal discrepancy between member states.

The sanctions implemented in 2014 were a clear indication of this deliberation of norms. The EU had emphasised its moral and ethical principles to preserve peace, stability, prosperity and human rights in Ukraine as a duty to its fellow human beings and sovereign actors. Additionally, the EU cited its long history of close cooperation with Ukraine as justification for making sanctions the appropriate response. Consequently, Italy and Hungary adjusted their positions to align with the EU's political stance and normative arguments, even though their domestic public opinion still favoured amicable relations with Russia (Bosse 2022b; Schuette 2019; Balfour et al. 2019).

The cases of Hungary and Italy are further elaborated by Sjursen and Rosen (2017). Both nations, which were initially opposed to sanctions, issued statements asserting that member states bore a special responsibility for resolving the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. The Italian prime minister emphasised the necessity for the EU to take action, particularly in the form of support for the Ukrainian government. Meanwhile, the Hungarian prime minister emphasised the necessity for the EU to maintain its values and principles, disregard internal disputes and comply with international law. The standard of moral authority implemented by the EU was incorporated with a mechanism of deliberation of norms to enable member states to evaluate moral and ethical justifications. Thereby, it enabled the EU to institute unilateral sanctions as preferred measures. On the other hand, Sjursen and Rosen (2017) also suggest that Italy and Hungary only altered their stances and statements to preserve their political credibility within the EU when they continued to secure their self-interest by not fully implementing sanctions on Russia.

Bosse (2022b) slightly differs in her explanation by introducing the concept of value-based norms, which denotes the EU's duty to respond to specific situations of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 and exhibit collective solidarity with and responsibility for those experiencing hardship. The value-based norms were driven by shared understanding, a common identity or a sense of belonging represented by the conception of 'us', meaning Ukraine as a part of the European community.

Bosse (2022b) emphasises that this factor prompts both the activation of the EU's Temporary Protection Directive (TPD) and the imposition of EU sanctions. Additionally, value-based norms have compelled Hungary to implement the TPD, despite its close bilateral relations with Russia.

Another example of the conversion of norms within the EU is the establishment of the EU Global Human Rights Sanctions Mechanism through the exchanges of normative viewpoints between the European Parliament and the European Council. This particular regime would enable the EU to impose sanctions on individuals and entities that violated universal human rights. Parliamentarians then dedicated a significant amount of time and effort to the elucidation and exchange of normative arguments and rationales in order to provide member states with the necessary information to support and implement a sanctions framework (Szep 2022).

These existing scholarly works, which include the most important ones from Sjursen & Rosen (2017), Bosse (2022b) as well as Szep (2022), have endeavoured to elucidate the EU's ability to develop normative claim-based sanctions. Although the existing literature that uses a deliberative method has important explanatory strengths, it rarely explores how the EU's intricate interactions with other actors and institutions, on both regional and global scales, underpin its endeavours to convert certain normative principles into specific policy preferences (Eriksen 2018; Schimdt, 2010; Wiener, 2006). When there are interactions within the Union and between the Union and its international partners, there must be either power dynamics or power inequality. However, the deliberative approach lacks the capacity to scrutinise the connection of these aspects of power and the EU's sanctions policy-making. Other obstacles in this deliberative approach include the difficulties of comprehending (a) how democratic entities, such as the EU, utilise institutional tools and engage policy entrepreneurs (both state and non-state actors) to address internal polarisation, (b) how member states accommodate domestic opinion to decide to support the EU's sanctions policy and (c) whether normative deliberation is the sole method or procedure employed by the EU to strengthen consensus on sanctions policies over time (Curato et al. 2022).

National preference-based bargaining

The imposition of sanctions after the annexation of Crimea was the result of a consensus reached through the bargaining processes within member states during the EU's policy-making process, as argued by Orenstein and Kelemen (2017) and Stoop (2016). These works analyse the policy-making process from the perspective of liberal intergovernmentalism and assess how states' national interests are expressed and negotiated at the institutional (EU) level. More precisely, they examine how member states negotiate with other EU policymakers to promote their preferred policies. Drawing on Putnam's concept of the two-level bargaining

game (Dyson & Konstadinides 2013), liberal intergovernmentalism also acknowledges that domestic groups at national level can evaluate the government's preferred policy and provide feedback and arguments either in favour of or against it, thereby allowing their government to either alter or modify its initial policy.

Nitoiu (2018) and Shagina (2017) illustrate that the United Kingdom (UK) played a significant role in condemning Russia's illegitimate actions and advocating for stricter sanctions against Russia after the annexation of Crimea 2014. The UK proposed sanctions that were specifically designed to target Russia's defence and security sector, with the potential for lifting these sanctions if Russia withdrew its military forces from Ukraine.

In contrast, Germany and France initially opted for a relatively neutral stance in response to the annexation of Crimea 2014. Both countries hesitated to impose sanctions while simultaneously condemning Russia's actions in Crimea and Ukraine (Marangé & Stewart 2021). Germany, in particular, prioritised economic interests over security concerns when leading the coordination of the EU's sectoral sanctions. Correspondingly, Germany and Russia continued a discussion regarding the Nord Stream 2 project during a period of military hostilities in Donbass. This continued discussion was influenced by Germany's new Ostpolitik, which sought to establish a stable political environment through the integration of diplomacy, economic engagement and conflict resolution (Siddi 2016).

Conversely, France thought the seizure of Eastern Ukraine and Crimea was of less relevance than crises in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), which are key areas for France's geopolitical interests. Paris stressed that the emergencies in MENA had the potential to escalate and become more perilous and intricate if the EU did not allocate adequate attention to them. Furthermore, France perceived the threats emanating from the Islamic State and Syria as paramount and held them accountable for major acts of terrorism in Europe. Given its limited economic ties with Russia, France proposed financial sanctions rather than defence-related sanctions and suggested lifting the sanctions if Russia met the EU's conditions (Cadier 2018).

Nevertheless, after the crash of Malaysian Airlines Flight 17 in July 2014, Germany's stance underwent a change, resulting in an agreement on more stringent sanctions across various domains. France also suspended the delivery of Mistral military vessels to Russia. Germany's policy shift had a significant impact on France. Moreover, Germany's tougher position represented a shift from its previous passive reaction to Russia's military intervention in Abkhazia and South Ossetia in 2008. In 2008, Germany and France were relatively benign to Russia and signalled that the EU should perceive Russia as an equal partner. In this context, the EU's response was rather mild, such as the threat of suspending EU-Russia partnership talks, and the EU failed to reach a consensus on imposing serious sanctions against Russia in 2008 (Shagina 2017).

However, following the crash of MH-17, prominent EU member states such as the UK, Germany and France, which wield considerable influence in the EU decision-making processes, said that EU foreign ministers should be ready to step up sanctions. This signal empowered the EU to coordinate for final commitments and consensus. The EU's lobbying efforts eventually persuaded Greece, Italy, Bulgaria and Hungary, initially resistant to sanctions due to influences from domestic populist factions, anti-American sentiments from Putin's Russia and entrenched historical economic ties with Russia. The EU facilitated member states in assessing the potential economic ramifications of imposing sanctions on Russia for their domestic economies and business sectors. Lobbying also centred on austerity measures and alternative energy sources aimed at mitigating the impact of sanctions costs. Consequently, these states acquiesced to the sanctions policy (Stoop 2016).

Poland, being geographically close to Ukraine and having a historical memory of Russian annexation during World War II, originally supported more stringent sanctions compared to the UK, Germany and France. Poland warned the Baltic states about the possible resurgence of Russian imperialism, drawing on its historical experiences. Poland viewed the EU's approach as pragmatic in addressing the challenges to democracy in Ukraine and restraining Russia's aggressive actions in Eastern Europe (Sus 2018; Shagina 2017; Stoop 2016).

Another contribution on the relationship between national interests and the EU's policies towards Russia is offered by Portela and her colleagues (2021). They show that member states other than the UK, Germany and France also contributed to agreements in Council negotiations regarding the EU's sanction policy. Unlike other works, their research demonstrates how domestic economic, political and social groups could influence or moderate their governments' final political positions and foreign policy regarding the EU's sanction policies, while focusing on Poland and Spain as their main case studies. Poland's civil society and political groups persistently advocated stricter sanctions. However, business associations criticised this policy, by pointing out that Poland heavily depended on its significant agricultural exports to Russia, particularly apples and on imports of Russian fossil fuels for its industry. Poland adjusted its position in the EU and suggested sanctions after receiving feedback from business groups.

Meanwhile, Spain originally kept a 'business as usual' approach because of its heavy reliance on the Russian market, which included the docking of Russian naval ships at its ports. Nevertheless, Spain's civil society and opposition groups began to blame Russia for the situation in Eastern Ukraine, even though they did not fully support sanctions against Russia. As a result of this situation, the Spanish government ultimately reached an agreement with the EU to toughen sanctions against Russia, irrespective of Madrid's specific implementation of them.

Within the literature focused on national preference-based bargaining, the EU is often depicted as a facilitator rather than a policymaker. The EU only exerted influence to promote the desired sanction policies of relevant countries. By utilising its institutional resources, the EU sought to persuade member states to have different opinions to support these decisions. For instance, Germany, representing the EU, visited Greece on 11 April 2014 to urge Greece to impose sanctions against Russia (Hooghe & Marks 2019; Kleine & Pollack 2019; Stoop 2016). Essentially, the EU's institutional lobbying assisted the UK, Germany and France in legitimising the implementation of their preferred policies.

Generally speaking, liberal intergovernmentalism can show that most member states lack full control over policies (Coskun 2015) as they are embedded in multilevel institutional complexities (Portela et al. 2021; Stoop 2016). Nevertheless, the existing literature that employs liberal intergovernmentalism fails to elucidate how the EU, as a supranational and international actor with its own autonomy, interests and roles, navigated external complexities and sustained its sanctions policy against Russia in the long term. This explanatory limit is caused by the focus of intergovernmentalism on member states' interests and expectations, while ignoring the EU's actorness and role conception. Moreover, in this theoretical context, member states' ultimate policies are largely perceived as being driven by their economic interests and the attractiveness of the EU's economic bargaining tool, rather than by other motives and mechanisms (for example, epistemic community) (Hooghe & Marks 2019; Kleine & Pollack 2019). Additionally, in the context of sanction adoption, the works that are close to the liberal intergovernmentalist research tradition seem to lack the ability to probe the degree to which positive or negative feedback from government and business sectors either support or compromise the EU's insistence on sanctions against Russia.

Emotional resonance and (dis)trust

The literature that discusses institutional bargaining as a crucial element in the EU's policy-making and sanction-adoption process does not provide a comprehensive insight into the impact of psychological factors, prompting other authors to examine psychological aspects (for example, emotions) in greater details. Such psychologically-oriented approaches are capable of comprehending the motives and decisions of international actors by investigating intangible factors, such as emotion and trust, in the policy-making process (Levy 2013; Kehler, 1998). For instance, there is limited research on the potential psychological influences that contributed to the EU taking a firm stance against Russia four months after the annexation of Crimea. One of these influences was the emotional resonance created by the United States (USA), which established the EU's emotional connection (Beauregard 2022).

To illustrate the importance of emotional resonance, Beauregard refers to Obama's speech on 28 May 2014. Obama described the situation in Ukraine as 'Russia's aggression toward former Soviet states', evoking memories of the Cold War and framing it as a struggle between the 'free world' and the Soviet Union (Beauregard 2022; Obama 2014). This historical narrative aimed to elicit powerful sentiment and urged the EU to take a swift response by utilising its considerable normative influence. Obama strategically crafted his statements to elicit intense emotions in light of the major political and security conflict between Russia and the West. Furthermore, the escalation of the crisis in Ukraine, which involved military clashes in Donetsk and Luhansk between Ukrainian forces and armed rebel groups, further heightened the EU's outrage, particularly in France and Germany, against Russia's aggressive policies. The shooting down of aircraft MH17 by Russian forces served as an additional catalyst, which reinforced Obama's sentiments and prompted the EU to impose broader sanctions on Russia in various sectors. The EU also acknowledged the vulnerability of certain members to sanctions and their cautiousness about potential repercussions. This situation prompted the EU's engagement with the Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS) in preparatory works in order to clarify the scope of travel bans and asset freezes, and inform member states about the potential economic and political impacts of sanctions (Beauregard 2022).

The emotional resonance as part of a psychological approach used in Beauregard's (2022) study helps to identify Obama's implicit and explicit meanings by delving into the diction in his political statements. The language and diction in political statements aim to rationalise or morally justify the senders' action (Alvarez 2018; Schüler et al. 2018; Rasmussen 2017; O' Mahoney 2012; Gordon & Arian; 2001; Ducasse 1966). Obama's diction successfully underpinned the emotion and cognition of the EU's leaders to have a sense of shared identity ('we-feeling') with the USA as allies in the Cold War and to impose tougher sanctions against Russia as the USA did.

Furthermore, other scholars highlight an additional psychological dimension – either trust or distrust – which suggests that Germany's lack of trust in Putin after Russia's hybrid war in Eastern Ukraine, along with the MH-17 disaster, bolstered the EU's determination to impose stricter sanctions. Consequently, Italy and Hungary reduced their trust in Russia and began to believe that Germany and France would prioritise the collective interests of the EU and continue to mediate between Russia and Ukraine in the Minsk negotiations (Natorski & Pamorska 2017). Furthermore, Ukraine's increasing trust in the EU's dedication to assisting its efforts in reestablishing democratic rule and independence played a role in strengthening the EU's preparedness to enforce sanctions (Yamakami 2019).

The (dis)trust as a part of the psychological approach applied in these scholarly works can underscore the roles of socialisation and information-sharing (Levy 2013) in altering the cognition of sceptical and opposing member states regarding the

necessity of sanctions against Russia. The existing literature applying the psychological approach also takes into account shocks (events) like the Malaysian Airlines tragedy related to Russian actions in Ukraine as intervening factors to elucidate the enhanced trust between the EU and member state and their increasing distrust toward Russia. Then, the concept of (dis)trust can explain the linkage of the nature of interactions and the policies of international actors (Hewer & Lyon 2018). For instance, the EU's sense of shared identity ('we-feeling') and commitment to support Ukraine enhanced their mutual trust, empowering the EU itself to reinforce sanctions policy.

Nevertheless, the psychologically-oriented approaches appear to have limitations in elucidating the specific types and components of trust that were present within the EU, between its member states and between Ukraine and the EU– whether the trust is particularised or generalised. It also neglects to include the frequency at which the EU and/or its member states, along with Ukraine, mentioned (dis)trust as a rationale for the EU's policy preferences (Hoffman 2022; Fjaeran & Aven 2021; Levy 2013). Furthermore, there is insufficient analysis of the extent of compliance of member states in the implementation of sanctions policy, when the theory of normative deliberation can explain that the member states did not need to adopt the implementation of the EU's policy into their own foreign and/or domestic policy (Mercer 2005).

Moreover, the existing literature using this kind of approach falls short in delivering a comprehensive analysis of strategic and political contexts within foreign policy-making (Levy 2013); for example, how psychological factors of the EU's international partners could influence its perceptions of specific strategic and political conditions at institutional and international levels and how this possible linkage led the EU to adopt, reinforce or constrain the EU's sanctions policy. The existing literature also does not combine analyses of psychological factors and other aspects. As such, it cannot produce sufficient explanations of how international actors adopt and implement the policy and how policies have evolved, institutionalised and become entrenched over time with international actors or within regional organisations.

It is worth noting that it is possible to integrate analysis of psychological aspects with certain approaches and methods, such as correlational, quantitative, historical and comparative analyses, even though it can bring along challenges in terms of data management. However, these challenges can be mitigated – for example, by using advanced digital data analysis tools (Hudson 2019; Uslaner 2018; Harsch 2015; Levy 2013).

Actorness recognition

Unlike the scholarly works mentioned above, other studies utilise the concept of actorness to explain the EU's capacity and competence to act and account for

its external ambition in response to Russia's aggressive policies in Ukraine. The analyses based on actorness predominantly posit that the sanctions imposed by the EU operated independently from those of the USA. The EU's approach to sanctions demonstrates that the EU acted differently from the USA during a critical international event when responding to Russia's actions in Ukraine. The EU's sanctions policy was seen as a tactical measure to counterbalance Russia's authoritarian regime, which sought to advance its own policies that contradict the principles of universal democracy, and as the EU's effort to integrate Eastern Europe (Giumelli et al. 2021; Noutcheva 2018; von Soest 2015). The EU confirmed its position that Russia's assertive foreign policies were unacceptable. Concurrently, the EU solidified its values within its foreign policy by formulating, enforcing and advocating its sanctions strategy (Tiilikainen 2014).

The EU showcased its autonomy, capacity to act and cohesion in policy-making by implementing sanctions on Russia with high frequency and intensity (Giumelli et al. 2021). Autonomy refers to the ability of the EU to operate independently in establishing a policy-making agenda. Regarding the EU's response to Russia's actions in Crimea and Ukraine, the EU employed its market power to impose sanctions on Russia as part of its high-political strategies. Moreover, the EU's capability to take action displays its aptitude for formulating a sanctions strategy, participating in internal deliberations and evaluating possibilities such as the potential extent, effectiveness and acceptance of its sanctions policy. The EU's imposition of sanctions is also influenced by its assessment of Russia's propaganda against the progress of democracy in Ukraine. Then, cohesion refers to the EU's success in finalising policies, persuading member states to unanimously delegate their sanctioning authority to the EU and ensuring sanctions are in line with normative objectives, such as promoting democratic values in Ukraine. It also encompasses strategic objectives, such as deterring further aggression from Russia towards NATO members and upholding the Euro-Atlantic community and its values. Both cohesion and the capacity to act required the EU to optimise institutional resources for imposing sanctions aligned with normative goals, as well as to persuade other member states (Giumelli et al. 2021; Portela 2021; Veebel 2021; Veebel et al. 2020; Gehring et al. 2017; Veebel & Markus 2015).

The EU could expand the reach of its sanctions application to include other countries beyond the EU by utilising its particular sanctions model and through alignment and adoption. Cardwell & Moret (2023) distinguish alignment from adoption. Alignment refers to the official invitation extended to neighbouring states to implement the EU's sanction and to make a public statement about their sanction imposition. Adoption refers to the process by which non-EU states adopt the EU's sanctions without their governments explicitly stating that their state followed the EU's sanctions. During the alignment and adoption

phases, the EU may use its institutionalised communication practice to prompt other actors to assess and determine the culpability of various parties involved in certain crises. The wider the range of countries using this kind of sanctions, the more robust the EU's economic profile and CFSP became.

Through alignment and adoption, the EU could underpin others' perceptions of its responsibility and presence and showcase the economic power and normative leadership that set it apart from the USA. In this context, leadership is equivalent to the EU's primary actorness reinforcing a sanctions regime at the European level. Norway was one of the states that aligned with the EU's sanctions model, while Iceland voluntarily adopted the EU's sanctions without its government's statement. Then, the EU had substantial talks with Switzerland and the UK about sanctions on Russia. Both Switzerland and the UK finally adopted various parts of the EU's sanctions model (Cardwell & Moret 2023; Hofer 2021; Portela 2021; Sossai 2020; Cardwell 2015).

As indicated by these scholarly works, particularly Giumelli et al. (2021), applying the concept of 'actorness' naturally provides a framework for analysing EU foreign policy by concentrating on specific variables: autonomy, capacity to act and cohesion. These works shed light on the EU's capacity to comprehend the contextual intricacies of conflicts, which serve as a prerequisite for the EU to fulfil its roles. Additionally, they evaluate how the EU utilised its resources and capabilities to achieve its goals. The concept of actorness tends to generate a more descriptive explanation of policy-making (Rhinard & Sjostedt 2019), but it helps to illustrate the sequences of phases in which the EU effectively utilised its institutional resources to support policy-making and identify opportunities for the development and implementation of sanctions models.

Moreover, Portela (2021) demonstrates that the EU as an actor was more effective than in the event of the Chechnya-Russia War in 1999. At that time, the EU opted to lift sanctions against Russia despite Russia not meeting the necessary criteria for their removal. This decision came after the Council of Ministers agreed only to suspend scientific agreements with Russia and associated funding, subsequently reallocating these funds to the humanitarian aid sector.

Härtel's research (2023) indicates that in the context of Ukraine, contrasted with the EU's symbolic sanctions in response to the Georgia-Russia conflict, its robust sanctions policy on Russia since 2014 had paved the way for the EU to pursue coherent political approaches and direct conflict management in the forthcoming security landscape in Europe, particularly in the post-Soviet regions. The EU had increasingly invested in its capacity for sanctions management and allocated resources towards peace negotiations between Ukraine and Russia to enhance its role as a more active participant in political-security affairs. As added by Veebel (2021), Veebel et al. (2020) and Fischer (2017), the EU also promised that the lifting of sanctions would be contingent upon Russia

embracing democratic principles, the rule of law, human rights and the security framework established by the EU in partnership with its allies.

The concept of actorness proves its explanatory strength to answer the EU's consistency in its sanctions policy in order to be an active political and security actor. Particularly, the explanations emphasise value cohesion and tactical cohesion (Niemman & Bretherton 2013). Value cohesion is how the EU, through its sanctions policy, managed common goals to coerce Russia to negotiate. Tactical cohesion is how the EU used available methods (such as diplomacy) relevant to sanctions policy to make diverging goals (coercing Russia and appearing to be an active political and security actor in Europe) fit one another.

However, the concept of actorness may encounter challenges in analysing the diverse range of actors contributing to the dynamic nature of the EU's policy-making (Čmakalová & Rolenc 2012). Furthermore, the concept overlooks the comprehension of how the altering political and security environments, in which the EU operates, (re)formed its perception of the issue in Ukraine. This consequently restricts the in-depth analysis of the possibility and extent of changes in the EU actorness in a historical context (Lena Kirch 2021; Rhinard & Sjostedt 2019). Regarding these concerns, Costa and Barbé (2023) advocate for the necessity of incorporating the EU's external environment and its associated worldview into analyses of the EU's actorness.

Although the EU has always shown an ambition to participate in important global matters (Koops & Macaj 2015), Costa and Barbé (2023) assert that the EU's worldviews influence how a changing international system impacts policy-making. Costa and Barbé (2023) suggest a departure from traditional variables such as autonomy, capacity to act and cohesion, as proposed by the concept of regional actorness. Instead, they clarify a fragmented liberal international order (LIO) as a prevailing pattern in the current external environment.

For instance, Costa and Barbé (2023) illustrate how Europeanists and European-Atlanticists hold contrasting perspectives regarding this pattern. In detail, fragmentationist Europeanists want EU independence in competition with other regional blocs. Anti-fragmentation Europeanists see the globe as a cooperative framework with multiple regional orders and seek to strengthen the EU's unifying role. Additionally, European Atlantists, who support the USA as the Atlantic alliance leader and accept fragmentation, see the EU as a responsible ally for the USA in countering global challenges from other blocs. European Atlantists, who support the leadership of the USA but are against fragmentation, have confidence in the USA's capacity to maintain a universal order and really appreciate their relationship. European Atlantists, who oppose US leadership and fragmentation, ally with Europeanists who seek a universal order. Finally, European Atlantists, who reject US leadership but admit fragmentation, believe Western bloc interests are divided. They believe the EU can demonstrate its independence without the USA.

Costa and Barbé (2023) contend that their analysis can be a valuable reference for understanding other instances related to EU foreign policy, particularly regarding sanctions and policy-making, even though their primary focus is on the fragmented liberal international order in the context of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Furthermore, they suggest that incorporating a historical perspective would offer a more comprehensive understanding of the evolution of the EU's responsibilities as regards enhancing sanctions policies over time, despite the obstacles posed by the international structure.

Thus, the concept of actorness has limitations in explaining how the intricate international system, which may have undergone changes and divisions, interacts with the EU's historical experiences. It also fails to fully address how this interplay shapes the EU's understanding of Russia's actions in Ukraine and the EU's role in Europe. Additionally, it does not sufficiently explain to what degree the growing uncertainty and dynamic power in the regional and international system (caused by this fragmentation) influence the EU's evolving preference for sanctions against Russia over time.

Threat perception: the EU's geographical proximity with Ukraine

While the previously mentioned literature overlooks the role of geography and cognition, other scholarly works aim to fill this gap by addressing how threat perception is influenced by Ukraine's geographical proximity to the EU and how this factor underpinned the EU's decision to adopt sanctions against Russia. Hofer (2021), Horbelt (2017) and Costea (2015) elaborate on threat perception regarding geographical proximity with Ukraine as a main explanation for the EU's imposition of sanctions against Russia's aggressive behaviour. According to Petrov (2023), the EU imposes sanctions on Russia in response to the annexation of Crimea and the crisis in Eastern Ukraine. He understands sanctions on Russia as a significant factor supporting Ukraine. He also highlights that the final outcome of the conflict between Ukraine and Russia will indeed define the geographical borders of Ukraine and it can potentially impact its sovereignty in matters concerning its security and its capacity to join the EU. Additionally, the EU has heightened its concerns about peace and stability in Ukraine since the Cold War. The EU previously focused on Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific as its main favoured partners; however, its main concern has been replaced by its priority on a partnership with Ukraine (Portela 2005).

The geographical proximity with Ukraine prompted the EU to perceive political and strategic threats from Russia, leading to the adoption of more punitive sanctions aimed at maximising costs for Russia. It is so despite the fact that the EU member states differed in their perceptions of the extent of the Russian threats. Moreover, within the EU, Russia had been increasingly viewed as a potentially hazardous adversary for European security, so the EU recognised the seriousness

of Russia's aggressive policies faced by Ukraine, which could potentially have spill-over effects for EU members such as Poland (Pezard et al. 2017).

The rationale behind this geopolitical perception is rooted in the combined concepts of milieu and possession goals, which relate to the direct relevance of situations to EU security and objectives (Kreutz 2005; Portela 2005; Starr 2005). Although the existing literature on the EU's sanctions against Russia may not explicitly mention these concepts, earlier studies, such as Kreutz (2005) and Portela (2005), underscored that the EU tended to impose sanctions more often and to a greater extent on countries closer to its borders, particularly when ongoing conflicts were posing a direct threat to political and security aspects, such as democracy and regional stability. Both Kreutz (2005) and Portela (2005) elucidated how the EU had increasingly focused on Eastern Europe in its regional agenda since the end of the Cold War. As part of this agenda, the EU actively promoted the adoption of its standards and principles, including democracy and human rights, among the countries that were formerly part of the Soviet Union. Consequently, in the event of instability arising in this region, it had become imperative for the EU to respond collectively, resulting in the implementation of sanctions against accountable individuals and governments.

Furthermore, Meissner (2023a) reveals that the EU's imposition of robust economic sanctions was primarily motivated by significant political and security concerns, including the potential escalation of Russian military actions and the resulting casualties in Donbas. Interestingly, Meissner observes that these rationales for the implementation of the EU's economic sanctions were inextricably linked to the pressure exerted on the EU leaders by the USA. Meissner (2023b) and Meissner and Graiziani (2023) further argue that the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 exposed substantial geopolitical threats, prompting the EU to respond with a more comprehensive framework of unprecedented sanctions. These sanctions intended to impose political and economic costs on Russia and to showcase the EU's geostrategic influence. Meissner's works excel in their ability to match with Sprouts' ecological triad (Sprout & Sprout 1969), which consists of three elements: the entity, its surrounding environment and the interactions between the entity and its environment. Sprouts' concept (Sprout & Sprout 1969) is fundamentally grounded on the ideas of milieu and possession goals. It posits that international actors, as entities, typically react to the issues and the surrounding environment associated with those issues, perceive them and attribute significance to them (Starr 2005).

Regrettably, the scientific publications by Meissner and other scholarly works do not provide a comprehensive analysis of the causal mechanisms that underlie the policy-making process. Although they suggest that threat perceptions primarily stem from geographic proximity to Ukraine, they (except Horblet 2017) do not mention the exact theories or concepts they use. This article concludes that the

explanations of Horblet, Meissner and existing scholars are primarily based on Portela's (2005) concepts of milieu and goal possession. This article also discovers Sprout's ecological triad which has similarities with the concepts of milieu and possession goals.

As indicated by Breslauer (2019), Glucker et al. (2018) and Dawisha (1975), policy-making must consider assessments of the interplay between the external environment and the internal environment including historical factors/experiences of the past. This external environment encompasses the complex interactions among various actors, including conflict, cooperation and alliances at both regional and international levels. It also includes the structures, such as anarchy, the balance of power, the dynamics of alliance expansion and fragmentation in the international order that shape those interactions (Seandeera 2023).

We can use the example of the Israel and Palestine conflict as described by Gordon and Arian (2001) to underscore the necessity of additional analysis regarding the integration of historical factors and external environmental factors into the policy-making of actors. Gordon and Arian argue that Israel's antagonistic foreign policies towards Palestine are influenced by a combination of its history and threat perception of geographical proximity and international instability.

Israel perceives its freedom as being threatened by any dangerous manoeuvres from Palestine, especially Hamas or Hezbollah. Subsequently, Israel always looks at the history of the Holocaust, as well as the ongoing wars and terror assaults in other countries or regions. Its worldview regarding these external patterns of interactions and the foregoing experience increasingly prints a lesson and a belief that if they do not defend themselves, despite possessing sufficient diplomatic and military capabilities, they will be annihilated. Despite fragmentation between secular and religious Jews within Israel's internal landscape, Israelis are compelled to unite, maintain moral solidarity and endure together due to a combination of these three factors.

Therefore, the concepts of milieu and possession goals and similar ones fail to analyse how the EU's historical factors and geopolitical perception of the Ukraine crisis and of Russia's challenges to a global order can underpin the EU's decision to impose sanctions on Russia. On the other hand, historical factors can provide a useful narrative to address how the EU develops geopolitical perception amid the rising uncertainty due to the crisis in Ukraine. Besides, the existing literature does not include other events and intricate patterns of relations beyond the EU's territorial borders. As noted by Kaufholz (2004) and Mebee (2011), these interactions can be interconnected with the central issue or event and add possible threats to the central issues – for example, China's influences in Asian region, Russia-China bilateral ties and its possible involvement to help Russia's actions in Ukraine. The use of the concepts of milieu and possession goals and similar ones prevent extended analysis on how the economic relations between Russia and

China develop the EU's threat perceptions towards the war in Ukraine, leading the EU's (continuous) sanctions policy against Russia.

Ineffectiveness of the EU's sanctions against Russia

Besides analysing various reasons for why the EU imposed sanctions against Russia, the existing literature has also widely debated the (in)effectiveness of the EU's sanctions on Russia between 2014 and 2021. More specifically, the literature has predominantly focused on their effectiveness by empirically identifying the economic impacts on Russia (Morgan et al. 2023) while some of the works, such as Sivis (2019), Portela (2016) and Baron (2022) intended to explain why the EU's sanctions were ineffective between 2014 and post–Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Simola (2022) highlights the negative effects of the EU's sanctions on Russia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). As a result of these sanctions, the Russian GDP growth experienced a substantial decline, falling from 2.3% prior to the annexation to 0.8% between 2014 and 2015. Christine (2016) contends that the second round of the EU's financial sanctions, which were put into effect in August 2014, inflicted the most significant economic damage on Russia. These sanctions had significant repercussions on Russia's international trade and financial activities, resulting in a reduction in capital inflows to the country. This reduction appeared to prompt Russia's perception that the EU was likely capable of causing further economic harm. This perception might lead Russia to agree with the initiatives and proposals such as the ceasefire in Donbas and the signing of Minsk Agreements 1 and 2.

More specifically, according to Hamid-Mechiev (2019), Bojang and Okrah (2017) and Connolly (2015), capital outflows from Russia totalled USD 7.8 million after the implementation of the EU's sanctions in 2015. Subsequently, certain Russian enterprises, particularly those engaged in the energy and defence sectors, experienced a significant decrease in foreign investments. This situation had an impact on the Russian military industry and deep-water and offshore oil exploration, including those on the Arctic shelf. The revenue challenges faced by numerous Russian energy companies were further exacerbated by the decline in global oil prices.

Overall, the economic growth of Russia decreased to an average of 0.2% from 2014 to 2018. This decline was ascribed to a variety of restrictions that were imposed on Russian companies, which impeded their capacity to expand their assets, access foreign loans and export products (Simola 2022).

However, Portela (2016) argues that the incremental implementation of sanctions since 2014 weakened their coercive pressures on Russia. She underscores that the EU's sanctions on Russia were adopted in distinct phases, in part to mitigate the EU's own financial burdens. At first, the EU came up with measures such as the restriction and suspension of certain bilateral communications and meetings. Subsequently, in the second phase, the EU implemented measures which

included visa bans, asset freezes and an arms embargo. Nonetheless, doubts still exist regarding the EU's readiness to enforce more stringent targeted sanctions.

Moreover, Korhonen (2019) and Coote (2018) underscore Russia's efforts to mitigate the detrimental impacts of sanctions, including on Russia's energy sector. Russia actively tried to find new trading partners and strengthened its relations with China between 2014 and 2017. For example, the prohibition imposed by the EU on investors from financing Russian state-owned banks and agricultural banks, such as Rosselkhozbank, led to a significant increase in food prices in Russia. In spite of this predicament, the Kremlin pursued alternative measures, such as facilitating more investment deals and importing substitute goods from its allies, particularly China (Korhonen 2019).

Furthermore, Coote (2018) highlights that in order to avoid an economic collapse, (1) Russia chose to shift investment deals to its allies in order to mitigate the impacts of the sanctions, although the EU's sanctions tried to make Russian financial investments in Crimea more expensive to prompt Russia's withdrawal from this peninsula, (2) Russia implemented various strategies to enhance the competitiveness of its energy enterprises in the global market. These efforts encompassed the offers of gas supplies to many Asian countries, the gas exports to Turkey, the execution of the Yamal gas pipeline project, which was funded by China, and the gas transfer from Russia to China's mainland, and (3) Russian energy companies successfully improved domestic oil exploration and production through the government's financial support and upgraded horizontal oil drilling technology. As a result, Russia's relatively low oil production costs enabled it to sustain its oil sales, particularly those to China.

Moreover, Russia opted to deepen and broaden its cooperation with other BRICS countries, especially after its invasion of Ukraine in 2022. BRICS refrained from bandwagoning the EU's or the USA's sanctions against Russia. Rather, they bolstered trade and investment relations with Russia, which aided in Russia's recovery from the effects of Western sanctions, particularly unprecedented sanctions imposed by the EU. For example, they intensified imports of gas and oil from Russia and continued the operations of their firms in Russia (Edinger 2023; Baron 2022; Júnior & Branco 2022).

Baron (2022) investigates other reasons for the ineffectiveness of the EU's sanctions against Russia both before and after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine and highlights three critical factors. First, he suggests that the functional aspect of the sanctions (coercing, limiting and signalling) themselves have been disempowered. He argues that the sanctions made a greater impact on ordinary citizens than they had on official authorities. Second, Baron points out that the EU faced unintended consequences which undermined the efficacy of subsequent sanctions. For instance, Russia garnered domestic support by skilfully shifting blame onto the EU's sanctions imposition and portraying Russia as a nation endeavouring

to overcome economic decline that the EU's sanctions caused. This narrative bolstered Putin's approval ratings, particularly among populist nationalist and communist parties. Moreover, in response to the EU's sanctions, Russia retaliated by imposing sanctions on the EU's agricultural exports to Russia and cutting gas supplies to Europe (Gold et al. 2023; Alexsee & Hele 2020; Aris 2014). Third, related to the previous point, Baron underscores the importance of historical factors, such as Russia's enduring trauma connected with the collapse of Soviet Union. He suggests that the ineffectiveness of the EU's sanctions could be attributed to Russia's unwavering commitment and ambitions to restore its great power status and reclaim its control over the post-Soviet states, which it perceived as rightfully belonging to Russia, regardless of any circumstance it had to encounter.

Conclusion

In the current body of literature that addresses the EU's foreign policy and the EU's sanctions against Russia, five main ways of explaining such sanctions can be identified. They are, first, a convergence of normative views within the EU, second, interest-based bargaining among the EU member states and the process of achieving consensus, third, emotional resonance and (dis)trust, fourth, the EU's ambition to be an active political-security actor and, fifth, the threat perception of the EU's geographical proximity with Ukraine.

Despite the fact that the literature on the EU's sanctions against Russia is rich and still expanding, this article suggests that there are some limits and gaps in how the extant literature addressed this topic. Based on the previous discussion, this review identifies five of them. First, only weak research puzzles have been formulated in the extant literature. The existing works mainly intend to address why the EU impose sanctions against Russia. However, this is primarily a political problem rather than a genuine academic (theoretical) puzzle in a strong sense (cf. Gustafsson & Hagström 2018). Genuine research puzzles are expected to arise when there is a contradiction in the existing knowledge – for example, the tension between the causes of the EU's sanctions against Russia and the ineffectiveness of these sanctions. To put it more coherently, why does the EU persist in imposing sanctions on Russia despite the lack of desired outcomes, such as deflecting Russia's aggressive actions in Ukraine or changing a political regime in Russia? Additionally, scholarly works singularly focused on evaluating to what extent and why the sanctions have been (in)effective may inadvertently neglect a broader and more nuanced analysis. For instance, such studies might overlook the potential diversity of motivations or rationales underlying the sender's persistent imposition of sanctions (Jones & Portela 2020).

Second, most of the existing literature discussing the EU's reasons for sanctions targeting Russia does not clarify the design or type of the EU's sanctions on Russia, particularly in the context of economic sanctions as parts of CFSP (Meissner 2023a; Bapat et al. 2020).

Third, there is currently limited inquiry into the connections between historical factors and the dynamics of external environment, internal environment or institutional structures. The existing literature has also understudied the role of uncertainty generated by the changing environments in the EU's adoption of sanctions against Russia (Morgan et al. 2023; Bapat et al. 2020; Ogbonna 2017; Leenders 2014; White 2001; Drezner 2011). In addition, the existing lliterature does not address the extent to which the interactions and arrangements among the EU, its member states and non-state actors underpin the process of shaping the EU's insistence on (economic) sanctions, as well as the phases of strengthening or weakening such policies and their implementation (Mintrom & Luetjens 2017).

Fourth, the literature examining the EU's rationale for adopting sanctions against Russia is devoid of a comprehensive analysis that would be more closely integrated with the existing international relations theories. Such an analysis could consider the impact of the EU's internal institutional and power structures, historical influences and legacies and external regional and extra-regional structures.

Fifth, the extant literature has not fully utilised the complete range of the available social scientific methods which could strengthen our insights into the EU's sanction policy. In particular, process tracing has been ignored while it could help produce detailed explanations of causal mechanisms, including timing, phases, sequences and the interactions of relevant actors.

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Strategic Trends 2023: Key Developments in Global Affairs

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The 'Strategic Trends 2023: Key Developments in Global Affairs' publication delivers a thorough analysis of the pivotal trends shaping international security in 2023, serving a diverse readership.

Brian G. Carlson's chapter 'China, Russia, and the Future of World Order' delves into the intricate geopolitical landscape sculpted by Russia's and China's influences. Throughout the chapter, Carlson dissects these nations' multifaceted challenges and ambitions to the existing global framework. He inserts the readers into the complex realm of international diplomacy, where the looming shadows of Russia and China traverse historical epochs and contemporary power dynamics, revealing pivotal moments of convergence and divergence in their interests, often demonstrated through the institutions they are part of. From Russia's strategic manoeuvres in Ukraine to China's calculated restraint, the narrative unveils the delicate equilibrium in their partnership amid mounting concerns about authoritarian threats to the prevailing world order.

As he proceeds through the chapter, Carlson reveals the annals of history, tracing the evolution of international institutions and alliances. He sheds light on the aspirations and disillusionments of pursuing a liberal international order. China's rise is at the heart of his analysis, highlighted by ambitious projects such as the Belt and Road Initiative and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, which reflect its intent to redefine global norms and institutions. Within China's ambitions lies a fundamental challenge to the existing world order, exemplified by its goal to establish a Sinocentric global framework. This ambition, juxtaposed

with Russia's disenchantment with Western hegemony, sets the stage for a monumental clash intertwined with ideological struggles, forming the crucible of global governance in the 21st century.

The subsequent chapter, authored by Sophie-Charlotte Fischer and titled 'Silicon Curtain: America's Quest for Allied Export Controls against China', explores the evolving dynamics of technological competition between the United States and China. Fischer navigates through the historical context of multilateral export controls, emphasising the imperative for the United States to garner support from technologically capable allies to safeguard its technological supremacy.

Fischer's analysis of the Biden administration's strategic shift towards coordinated export controls with allies offers insights into contemporary efforts to deny China access to critical technologies. There it can be seen that allied export controls face uncertainties amid China's ambiguity regarding the Ukraine war, the potential repercussions for European security if China backs Russia militarily, the escalating tensions over Taiwan prompting closer US-allied coordination on tech sector controls targeting China, and the 2024 US elections potentially shaping future US-China policy, with both parties expected to maintain a firm stance.

Névine Schepers' chapter, 'Alliances and Extended Nuclear Deterrence in Europe and Asia', examines nuclear deterrence's dynamics. The chapter marks 2022 as a pivotal juncture, coinciding with the 60th anniversary of the Cuban Missile Crisis and witnessing significant global nuclear risk assessment developments. Vladimir Putin's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, accompanied by thinly veiled atomic threats, underscores the pervasive influence of nuclear arsenals in contemporary geopolitical calculations. Similarly, China's rapid atomic expansion and assertive manoeuvres in the Asia-Pacific intensify concerns for US allies, necessitating a robust commitment to the US nuclear umbrella.

Schepers illuminates the complexities of US allies, mainly NATO members and states like Finland and Sweden, who are eyeing NATO membership amidst growing atomic risks and how North Korea's prolific missile testing and expanding nuclear arsenal further accentuate the imperative of bolstering deterrence through alliances, notably exemplified by South Korea's partnership with the United States. The interdependence of commitments to different allies highlights the strain on US alliance systems in Europe and Asia amidst simultaneous crisis scenarios. It underscores the interconnectedness between these regions, anchored in their reliance on US security assurances and the imperative of mitigating evolving risks through investments in conventional capabilities.

The fourth chapter, 'How India Navigates a World in Transition', looks at India's foreign policy strategy under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership. The author, Boas Lieberherr, explores the intricate dynamics influencing India's strategic position as global power shifts continue to unfold. Lieberherr's analysis sheds light on Modi's approach to reshaping India's foreign policy landscape in the

context of an increasingly assertive China and the BJP's rise to power. He adeptly navigates through various viewpoints regarding Modi's foreign policy trajectory, acknowledging interpretations that frame it as a departure from past administrations while noting continuity elements. This examination offers readers a grasp of the complexities inherent in India's diplomatic manoeuvres. At the core of Modi's foreign policy agenda lies the revitalisation of India's economy and the pursuit of strategic autonomy. Lieberherr brings to the fore Modi's endeavours to rebrand India's 'Look East' policy as 'Act East', signaling a strategic pivot towards deeper engagement in Southeast and East Asia.

However, the chapter also highlights the challenges hindering India's foreign policy aspirations, including resource constraints within the Ministry of External Affairs. Lieberherr takes the ideological underpinnings of Modi's foreign policy, specifically the influence of Hindu nationalism, and investigates how Modi employs cultural and religious diplomacy to shape India's global image while appealing to domestic audiences. Providing timely insights into India's defense issues and the reforms initiated by the Modi government, Lieberherr explores efforts to modernise the armed forces and bolster indigenous defence capabilities through the 'Atmanirbhar' (self-reliant) initiative.

Much like its predecessor, 'Strategic Trends 2022', the 2023 edition maintains its focus on key themes such as the Russia-China relationship, US-China competition, nuclear arms discussions, ongoing references to the Ukraine conflict and the evolving dynamics of India's alliances. It showcases how these disparate events are increasingly interconnected and potentially wield greater significance in global politics, showing no signs of immediate resolution or easing. While the edition strives to capture global trends, it notably overlooks discussions concerning Latin America and Africa, opting instead for a pronounced emphasis on European, North American and Asian subjects. This editorial decision inadvertently neglects comprehensive coverage of diverse regions, leaving readers interested in these areas wanting pertinent information. The text is approachable for those with minimal exposure to international relations literature. Even so, the abundance of examples might pose a slightly more significant difficulty for general readers.