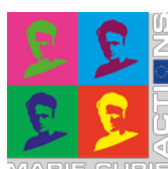# Threats to Stability in Wider Europe
Expert and Academic Analysis

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Threats to Stability in Wider Europe

Expert and Academic Analysis

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| Introduction |

The European Union (EU) needs more than ever to recognise and deploy the values and the tools available to it for the multiplicity of security threats emanating from its Eastern and Southern Neighbourhoods and beyond. Indeed, a key starting point involves not merely identifying threats but reasserting and refocusing existing EU capacities and suggesting new ones to address threats and achieve greater stability. This research publication seeks to offer ways forward.

A focus on wider Europe comprises countries deemed to co-affect regional security. This is increasingly evident in what the EU defines as the European Neighbourhood: candidate countries, potential candidate countries and the so-called '+1s'[1] which cover the Gulf, Sahel, and Central Asia. The concept of wider Europe becomes ever so relevant when threats to stability transcend borders and spill-over regionally, often stabilised (or de-stabilised) as a result of trade agreements and pipeline politics, migration and information-warfare.

> " A key starting point involves not merely identifying threats but reasserting and refocusing existing EU capacities "

The EU's Eastern Partnership (EaP) towards six post-Soviet states is in a dangerous status quo of patchy and even rejected EU influence and of the near-certainty that enlargement cannot and will not happen here. The proven EU incentives used in past accessions cannot therefore work similarly in this region. Similarly, Turkey has lost all confidence in the EU accession process, whereas Syria remains in a quagmire of civil war and the interests of foreign powers. Multiple and diverse threats emanate from that uncertainty, and need careful statecraft. Indeed, wider Europe generates an enormous range of security challenges, from energy to migration and geo-economics, to terrorist threats and to outright warfare and territorial occupation.

To identify and address these threats[2] the policy paper harnesses expertise from eight nationalities, appropriately ranging from North America to Russia and Central Asia, and from across the EU. Contributors include past and present officials from national governments and international organisations, as well as early career researchers and established academics.

We address the fundamental dilemma of a Russia that simultaneously flouts international law and norms and yet sees itself as a protector of precisely those. A more distant threat is from Russia's North Caucasus, prone to some of Europe's worst violence, and from where thousands of citizens have become fighters in Syria, and who may return home but possibly part of the mercurial and internationalised extremist network that wreaks

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1 +1's are officially referred to as "neighbours of the neighbours" in the Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy from 2015: http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/enp/documents/2015/151118_joint-communication_review-of-the-enp_en.pdf, p. 15 and 18.

2 Wider Europe faces a complex plethora of threats to stability in 2017. Our decision to focus particularly on Eastern and Southeastern Europe, as well as Syria, was based on our expert researchers interests and area specific focus. It includes topics focusing on stability in Turkey, Syria, Georgia, Ukraine, Russia, Moldova, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

Threats to Stability in Wider Europe   ● ● **ENC PERSPECTIVES**

fear in the EU. That situation, of added concern, generates opportunity for enhanced EU-Russian cooperation. The EU, too, still has capacities in the geographically furthest region of Central Asia. Closer to EU borders, this paper examines the implications and also opportunities of the ongoing crisis in and about Ukraine; the under-recognised roles of the EU in the protracted conflicts in the EaP states of Georgia and Moldova; the Kurdish question confronting Turkey and the prognosis of Ankara dealing with 'extremist' entities in Syria and Iraq.

The research publication, though, goes broader still, recognising the importance of the United States (US) in these challenges, and the necessity for Euro-Atlantic coherence. But there, too, arises a newer challenge of the 'consistently inconsistent' foreign policy emanating from Washington. The paper concludes with an assessment from the European External Action Service (EEAS).

At a time when the EU grapples with unprecedented internal challenges, from Brexit to the rise of parochial and anti-EU political groups in some Member States, the EU can and must exert a more multipronged activist programme towards wider Europe. The following analyses identify regional and interconnecting threats to stability and offers recommendations for actionable goals to assist the EU and also wider Europe in achieving greater stability.

" EU can and must exert a more multi-pronged activist pro-gramme towards wider Europe "

Prof. Dr. Rick Fawn

I Are Four Heads Better Than One? Russia as Conflict Instigator, Mediator, Saviour and Perpetuator. I

Prof. Dr. Rick Fawn

Professor of International Relations, School of International Relations

He also convenes the St Andrews section of the ‹Around the Caspian› Marie Curie Innovative Training Network, which is funded by the European Commission's Horizon 2020 Programme.

Regarding its foreign policy, Russia's Coat of Arms could feature not one but two double-headed eagles.

The first double-headed eagle concerns incompatible Russian and Western views on the post-Cold War peace, especially in Europe. This is not old history, but painfully alive issues. For the Russian leadership, Russia is sinned against. It was (now seen as mistakenly) a good team player in the early 1990s, keen to forge a common peace, with Russia enshrined in it. But Moscow feels itself to have been misled, mistreated and ultimately abused. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), a Cold War military alliance should have disbanded; instead it expanded in 1990, 1999 and 2004, and then again in 2009 (and 2017), and most alarmingly in the latter stages intimated membership for the post-Soviet states of Ukraine and Georgia. Worst still, NATO bombed Russia's tiny Slavic Orthodox fraternal Serbia in 1999, over spurious claims of defending human rights. The Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) was Russia's (and others') grand hope for post-Cold War pan-European security. By 1994, just as United States (US) President Bill Clinton stunned Moscow by pronouncing that NATO enlargement was no longer a 'question of whether but when', the CSCE was hopefully transformed into an international organisation, but one which was, in the eyes of successive Russian leaderships, quickly turned against it and even used to foment revolution in the post-Soviet space.

> " No easy solution exists for these opposite facing heads; yet to proclaim the entirety of that relationship as a New Cold War is counterproductive "

The eagle's second head declines to see, however, Western perceptions (and facts) of the accommodation of Russia in this period. Russia gained membership in key pan-European and international formations, including the G-7 which became the G-8 (until Russian aggression against Ukraine). Russia received special status with NATO; Western governments backed Russian President Boris Yeltsin when he bombed his own parliament in 1993, and then closed their eyes to the conduct of Russian military operations in Chechnya from 1994, and even rewarded Russia with membership of the Council of Europe. For the West, Russia was underachieving economically and politically, yet over accommodated institutionally.

No easy solution exists for these opposite facing heads; yet to proclaim the entirety of that relationship as a New Cold War is counterproductive. Indeed, Western governments and Russia can and still cooperate on key international issues – be it for energy or against forms of terrorism and nuclear proliferation, and common concerns should not only be pursued but used as bridgeheads for better understanding and tangible cooperation.

The second pair of opposing eagle heads concerns Russian views – and actions – towards neighbouring, post-Soviet states. The dynamic of first pair head is mirrored again in contradiction. Indeed, an added dimension is that Russian policy flipped from accepting the European Union (EU) enlargement to exhibiting hostility to the Eastern Neighbourhood (EaP). The EaP, top Russian officials all proclaimed, was forcing post-Soviet states to choose sides.

That view is only a recent backdrop to the double-headed approaches to the former Soviet Union. One head professes a moralist, even altruistic and norm-advancing Russia: it keeps the peace and protects the innocent. It rallies selectively, and purposefully (again) against Western double standards (particularly NATO's 1999 bombing campaign and the wider but not complete Western recognition of Kosovo/a's

February 2008 unilateral declaration of independence). Russia militarily defended South Ossetia against (so it claimed) ethnic cleansing and genocide was the height of selfless virtue. Recognising it and Abkhazia (where conflict start in August 2008 once Russian forces advanced from it) was an act of righteousness. He also claimed to protect Russophones (and others) against a 'fascist' coup in Ukraine, sponsored by the ever-conniving West, was both necessary and honourable. Annexing Crimea protected the innocent and reversed injustices of history, an act codified again by both reference and practice of key international norms, including the benediction of a referendum (with no issue of its haste, in conflict circumstances, and a severely polarised mini-campaign that visually pitted Nazi barbed wire against the freedom the Russian tricolour).

In other, long-standing post-Soviet conflicts, Russia has positioned itself, if not as an outright instigator of them, then as an early contributor to conflict sustenance through supply of personnel and material. That role then morphed into mediator. Moscow brokered, necessarily and commendably, ceasefires in such places as Karabakh and Abkhazia, and was a co-guarantor of the peace settling Tajikistan's civil war. But in the former conflict, Russia remains an arms supplier to both Armenia and Azerbaijan; since 2008 it is the outright and essential protector and patron of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Russia has little interest in settling Karabakh; nor has it supported Karabakh-Armenian self-determination. Status quo in this dangerous standoff serves Russian interests. Apart from arming both Armenia and Azerbaijan, Russia has integrated Armenia more deeply into its own military structures.[1] Again, none of that prevents Moscow from simultaneously offering mediation. After 2008, Russian President Dmitri Medvedev ramped up Russian mediation - with presumably the agreement, or at least absence of objection from its other co-chairs in the Minsk Group. Russia is also an unmovable, if also admittedly and indispensable party to talks on both Georgian conflicts and Moldova-Transnistria.

But the second of the two eagle head is the perception of Russia by its neighbours. Minimally, Moscow is seen as vetoing their foreign policy choices – much as in the nineteenth century smaller states not only served but existed at the mercy of Great Powers. Smaller post-Soviet states interested in close relations with the EU, foremost Georgia and Moldova, share a vision of twenty-first century postmodern relations of ceding some state sovereignty for collective gain. Little does Moscow appreciate how – despite its own sense of being threatened and abused – its actions threaten, in name and now indeed, the sovereignty and even survivability of adjacent states. For the neighbouring states, Russia is hardly an honest broker but a dangerous, self-serving conflict party.

The four Russian eagle heads intertwine worst over the EU's EaP. While the EU and its earlier Eastern enlargement, in contradistinction to NATO's, were accepted by Moscow, the EaP was deemed too hostile. EU became, albeit mistakenly, perceived as an aggressor.

What must be called Russia's weaponisation of news and information – domestically, regionally and internationally – is very real and generally well-recognised.[2] It makes the EU rightly uneasy. It risks exposing EU vulnerability – ideas and values may prevent military threats on-ground in the longer-term but cannot in the short-term against an interlocutor with a different values system. While early efforts to counteract this dilemma of unequal attributed are to be applauded,[3] recognition is mixed (as for example evidence by votes in the European Parliament) and efforts should continue. Soft power projection of values remains possible and necessary; in this the EU has the advantage in its history and in practical funding

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1   For commentary see: What Does the Russian-Armenian Joint Military Force Mean for Security in the South Caucasus?, by Georgian Institute of Politics, December 2016,: http://gip.ge/what-does-the-russian-armenian-joint-military-force-mean-for-security-in-the-south-caucasus/
2   Russia's information war: Propaganda or counter-propaganda?, by Martin Russell, European Parliamentary Research Service (October 2016), http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/589810/EPRS_BRI(2016)589810_EN.pdf
3   See EU EAST STRATCOM Task Force (November 2015), available at: http://www.tepsa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Kimber.pdf

and dissemination. The uses of alternative media, think tanks[4] – plus tangible measures to draw EaP countries away need to be encouraged.[5]

Russia's approach to conflict zones (noting that Moscow and the breakaway entities in Georgia consider these to be post-conflict) provides a modicum of support for people in unrecognised or partly recognised entities – but denies them and those displaced from an existence in which to reach their individual and collective potentials. The EU's soft power remains a considerable attraction. Engagement without Recognition already gave some access and mobility to the self-recognised state's populations and counteracts the hegemony of Russian perceptions of those conflicts and indeed also of the EU itself.

These practices give the Russian leadership short-term benefits of activism and even of seeming morality and heroism. They are, however, short-lived and ultimately self-defeating. Ukraine is, by its size and location, an even greater challenge. Although Russian actions towards Ukraine wrong-footed the EU (after all, none of those measures were anticipated, and were executed with impressive ingenuity, if eventually less deniability), time can be on Brussels' side; Russia does not want the costs of direct management of Donbas and, after brief nationalist chest-thumping by the Russian leadership, Crimea is becoming an economic liability.

" Although Russian actions towards Ukraine wrong-footed the EU, time can be on Brussels' side "

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4 Ukraine Crisis: What it Means for the West, by Andrew Wilson, 2014.
5 A timely short analysis, also reflecting post-communist European member state understanding, was Russian Promises and Threats: Towards the Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius, by Piotr Kościński and Ievgen Vorobiov, 15 November 2013, available at: https://www.pism.pl/Events/Others/Russian-Promises-and-Threats-Towards-the-Eastern-Partnership-Summit-in-Vilnius

Recommendations.

- Recognise that we now have a security dilemma – statements and actions by each side inflame the other and provoke further that measures the increase suspicion.
- The EU therefore needs a combination of projection of its own values while retaining strong measures against Russia, notably elite-targeted sanctions.
- Indeed, sanctions should be retained that target private interests of the elite. US President Donald Trump indicated at the G7 that sanctions could 'get tougher on Russia' is encouragement for continuity.
- At the same time, the EU should stress that Russia's best interests rest still with the EU and the West more broadly, and that these are not in competition with other areas of Russian activism, such as with BRICS[6].
- That done, signalling particular Russian actions are unacceptable, foremost the annexation of Crimea.
- Greater energy diversification – Central European initiatives, despite reliance of Russian energy, are good indicators. Some measures, such as reverse-flow infrastructure, have provided assistance.
- Positive roles for Russia in the wider international arena, including on limiting nuclear proliferation. In that, allow Russia a rightful place to grand-stand as a significant power.
- Discourage arms sales in the conflict zones.
- Continue efforts to monitor and counter Russian news promotion and outright propaganda.
- Increase societal interactions generally and specifically prioritise education for students – get youth to know that the EU is not a menace.
- Solidarity of the EU in all of the above is essential – and this should be underscored by recognition of the substantial common interest of so doing.

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6 BRICS is the acronym for an association of five major emerging national economies: Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.
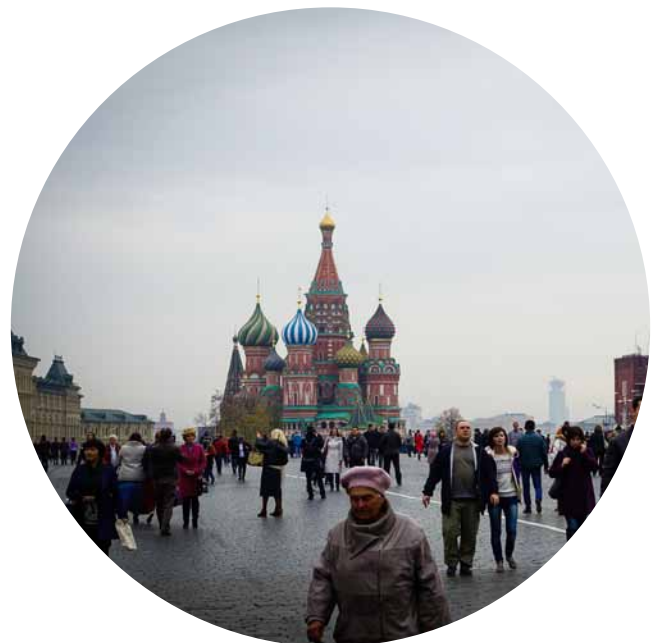
Dr. Elena Zhirukhina

I Security Concerns for the EU: To What Extent is the Caucasian Emirate Reaching Out?[1] I

Dr. Elena Zhirukhina
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Are local insurgencies getting linked together and, consequently, should the European Union (EU) institutions be concerned about irregular threats present in the European neighbourhood regions? This paper considers the changing role of the Caucasian Emirate (CE), having operated in the Russian North Caucasus since 2007. Firstly, the paper briefly examines security threats imposed by the CE in Russia. Secondly, it evaluates possible reasons for the organisation to associate itself with a global jihadist movement, therefore, allowing for deviation from pursuing a local agenda. Thirdly, the paper discusses perspective implications of such a shift for the European Union (EU) and Russia.

The CE in Russia

Initially, the CE's proclaimed enemies encompassed not only Russia, but also the United States (US), the United Kingdom (UK), Israel and other state actors claimed to suppress Muslims around the globe[2]. However, its geographical area of operation was concentrated inside Russia, and more precisely, inside the Russian North Caucasus with a rare exposure to other Russian regions. Despite its primarily local nature, the CE has been designated as terrorist organisation not only by Russia[3], but also by the US[4] and included in the United Nations (UN) sanction list against al-Qaida and its affiliates[5].

Since the CE's establishment in 2007 and up to 2014 the region witnessed approximately 3270 attacks[6]. Its operational activities caused tremendous pressure on the local law enforcement institutions. The CE targeted primarily two groups – military and law enforcement personnel, and civilians. Over 2007-2014, approximately 1058 officers working in law enforcement institutions were killed, and 2218 injured[7]. Civilians were the next group to bear the high cost of the conflict, with sizeable numbers killed and injured – 733 and 1537, respectively[8]. Although the state employees have been constant targets, the attitude towards civilian targets fluctuated from appeals to avoid harming civilians to their prioritisation in planning an attack[9].

Groups affiliated with the CE resorted to two types of actions: targeted small

> " Over 2007-2014, approximately 1058 of officers working in law enforcement institutions were killed, and 2218 injured "

1 Research for this paper was conducted under Post-Soviet Tensions: A training programme in post-Soviet affairs for early career researchers, funded by the European Commission under FP7-PEOPLE-2012-ITN (Grant agreement number: 316825).
2 Informational strategies of radical religious insurgent groups in the North Caucasus, by Elena Zhirukhina. Politeia 1(72) 2014, p. 47-60/ http://politeia.ru/politeia_journal/6/55
3 Decision of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation from 08.02.2010 GKPI09-1715, http://nac.gov.ru/terroristicheskie-i-ekstremistskie-organizacii-i-materialy.html
4 US Presidential Executive Order 13224 from 26.05.2011, https://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/other/des/266637.htm
5 UN Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee Narrative Summaries of Reasons for Listing, https://www.un.org/sc/suborg/en/sanctions/1267/aq_sanctions_list/summaries/entity/emarat-kavkaz
6 The State Application of Repressive and Reconciliatory Tactics in the North Caucasus (2007-2014), by Elena Zhirukhina, PhD Thesis, supervised by Professor Rick Fawn, School of International Relations, University of St Andrews.
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid.
9 kavkaz-uzel.eu, from 27.01.2016, accessed 30.05.2017, http://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/158730/

operations aiming to liquidate officials, and massive attacks designed to intimidate population. The former introduced a routine dynamic of the conflict and covered the largest portion of events. The latter indicated operations seeking to attract public attention through intimidation, and promoted the insurgent cause. Large-scale spectacular events were used in the region against government targets in 5.9% of cases, once against a military base, in 82.4% of cases against police, and civilians in 9.8%[10]. Outside the region, the CE claimed operations including the Nevsky Express train bombing in November 2009 (28 killed, 132 injured)[11], and the attack in Domodedovo airport in Moscow in January 2011 (37 killed, 172 injured)[12].

Affiliation to the global jihad fronts

There are two possible interlinked reasons for the CE to join the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) including gradual weakening of the CE and consequent successes of Russian counterterrorism.

Decrease in the CE's operational capacities[13]
The CE started in 2007 as an active regional violent non-state actor causing enormous pressure to local administrations, law enforcement and population through violence across the region. Since 2007, violence in Chechnya reached its peak in May-June 2009 after the official end of the Counter Terrorist Operation (CTO) regime in April 2009, where after it experienced a gradual decrease. Efforts of law enforcement agencies significantly reduced the bloodshed. In contrast, Dagestan, Kabardino-Balkaria, and Ingushetia experienced observable periods of escalated instability. The situation in Dagestan started boiling in 2008, reached its peaks in July 2009 and June 2010 and kept tension on a high level until 2013. Ingushetia experienced violence at most in 2007-beginning of 2010. It was followed by a steady decrease in violence. Kabardino-Balkaria reached the highest intensity of violence in May-June 2010. The republic experienced an extreme rise and decrease in violence between January 2010 and February 2011. Afterwards, the modest level of violence had a tendency to decline in the republic. The rest of the federal subjects did not exhibit any patterns in occurrence of violence and experienced an insignificant number of random attacks. Overall, by 2014 the trend of the CE giving up its positions became evident in the region.

Short-term successes of the Russian counterterrorism[14]
The Russian government responded to the CE-associated violence with extensive counter measures. Repressive operations incorporated various tactics including special operations, clashes, shelling, shootings, arrests, seizures, and detentions. Over 2007-2014, countermeasures resulted in death of a sizeable number of suspected insurgents, namely, 2255 individuals. In contrast, 1402 suspected insurgents and 1032 supporters were arrested. Implementation of counterterrorism task came at high cost for military, security, and police forces that lost 422 officers killed, and 1020 injured.

By 2014, the Russian law enforcement shattered the CE, assassinating its leader, Doku Umarov. After his death, the CE leadership experienced frequent turnover. Its next leader survived about a year, and one after that only a couple of months[15]. The absence of strong leadership resulted in gradual reorientation of remaining groups.

10 The State Application of Repressive and Reconciliatory Tactics in the North Caucasus (2007-2014), by Elena Zhirukhina, PhD Thesis, supervised by Professor Rick Fawn, School of International Relations, University of St Andrews.
11 ria.ru, from 27.11.2013, accessed 30.05.2017, https://ria.ru/spravka/20131127/979516035.html
12 ria.ru, from 24.01.2016, accessed 30.05.2017, https://ria.ru/spravka/20160124/1363238677.html
13 The State Application of Repressive and Reconciliatory Tactics in the North Caucasus (2007-2014), by Elena Zhirukhina, PhD Thesis, supervised by Professor Rick Fawn, School of International Relations, University of St Andrews.
14 Ibid.
15 kavkaz-uzel.eu, from 27.01.2016, accessed 30.05.2017, http://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/158730/

" The Russian government responded to the CE-associated violence with extensive counter measures "

In 2015, the CE has officially joined ISIS[16].

The CE fragmentation and decision to affiliate itself with a stronger force indicates incapability of this organisation to pursue its agenda on its own. Such shift can be perceived as a sign of weakness. However, it contains possible future threats for both Russia, and possibly the EU, if the North Caucasian insurgency is to be fuelled by new recruits, skills, techniques and ideology. Having been an attractive destination for global jihadist community[17], the North Caucasus can once again attract skilled fighters.

Implications for the EU?

Fighters from the North Caucasus joining ISIS might have two kinds of consequences for the EU.

Indirect
The CE contributed towards ISIS' foreign fighters with over 2000 residents of the North Caucasus who have claimed to join ISIS[18]. It is considerable asset since the organisation is joined by trained fighters including some high-ranked ones[19]. These fighters can potentially participate in the ISIS operations against various targets including soft targets in the EU.

Direct
Possible change in the CE agenda inside Russia. Although, the current rhetoric is restricted to attacks against various Russian targets inside the country and abroad, the possibility of broadening their priority list to include attacks against the EU citizens in Russia also could not be excluded.

Window of opportunity?

Both Russia and EU Member States are facing the similar concern of returning foreign fighters that are travelling back to their countries of origin, including Russian and EU citizens. Given the similar security threat emanating from the same actor, Syrian turmoil long-term consequences can open renewed opportunities for security cooperation between Russia and the EU.

Joint actions in the sphere of counterterrorism, having had been a promising area of cooperation prior to the Ukrainian crisis, could obtain a new meaning. Continuation of a political dialogue, indicated by the framework agreement regarding protection of classified information exchange between the EU and Russia[20] and a roadmap of joint actions against terrorism[21], would be only a logic step and is envisaged as an area of a gradual re-engagement[22].

Both the EU and Russia have a lot to offer in sharing practices of counterterrorism. Although criticised, Russian approach proved to be very effective in achieving short-term security outcomes. In addition, Russia acquired extended experience in engaging with diffused violent non-state actors who employed hybrid strategy.

> " Both Russia and EU member states are facing the similar concern of returning foreign fighters that are travelling back to their countries of origin, including Russian and EU citizens "

16 kavkaz-uzel.eu, from 23.06.2015, accessed 30.05.2017, http://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/264409/
17 Jihad in Saudi Arabia: violence and pan-Islamism since 1979, by Thomas Hegghammer, New York, 2010, Cambridge University Press
18 Ibid. Note: such official data cannot be checked and is highly unreliable due to movements of people and incidents with the lethal outcomes.
19 kavkaz-uzel.eu, from 29.05.2017, accessed 30.05.2017, http://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/251513/
20 Agreement between the Government of the Russian Federation and the European Union on the protection of classified information, from 01.06.2010, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/er/114745.pdf
21 Joint EU-Russia statement on combating terrorism, from 28.01.2014, http://static.kremlin.ru/media/events/eng/files/41d4b9fc4bb11a050563.pdf
22 Issues Paper on relations with Russia, from 19.01.2015, http://www.ieras.ru/pub/IssuesPaper1.pdf

Recommendations.

- Monitoring of the developments in the North Caucasus associated with the CE and ISIS activities and possible shifts in their target priorities. Given a marginal nature of the threat currently imposed on the European actors by the remaining CE groups, monitoring constitutes a low-cost essential measure to follow the situation on the ground.
- Reinforcement of a reasonable extent of intelligence sharing between Russia and the EU to identify individuals associated with the CE and ISIS and to trace their movements and contacts. Advancement of cooperation areas indicated in the joint statement[23].

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23 Joint EU-Russia statement: http://static.kremlin.ru/media/events/eng/files/41d4b9fc4bb11a050563.pdf

Shairbek Juraev

Karolina Kluczewska

I Threats to Stability in Central Asia: What Role for the EU?[1] I

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Keeping Central Asia stable and free of conflicts has been mentioned as a priority both in national governments' narratives and those of international partners already for long time. The early 1990s, times of political and economic transitions, were uncertain by default. Few observers could foresee how the newly emergent states would address the spectre of ethnic conflicts or civil wars. Disputes over borders and water resources highlighted low level of inter-state cooperation, while the post-9/11 war in Afghanistan put Central Asia at the forefront of the fight against terrorism. The region has not been free of heated disputes and open conflicts, and undoubtedly, most of the aforementioned issues require a close attention. However, long-term stability of the region cannot be pursued without addressing some less visible, yet critical problems. These are often issues of domestic nature that set the very environment within which a stable and prosperous development can be imagined. While national governments are primarily responsible for addressing (or not addressing) these challenges, international partners of the region have a big role to play. This brief looks at three particular areas – education, economy and equality – that are critical for sustainable development of the region and deserve more national and international attention.

A convenient stability

One can hardly generalise about "threats to stability" in Central Asia. The differences between Central Asian states' economic situations, political systems and foreign policies can hardly be ignored. The past 26 years saw a consistent prominence of hard security issues in discussions about stability across the region. In particular, the returning motives include non-traditional security threats (terrorism/extremism, religious radicalisation, drug trafficking), inter-state conflicts (borders and water disputes) or possible spill-over of the war in Afghanistan, especially in the context of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) withdrawal in 2014. While legitimate in many ways, the above issues should be viewed with at least a few caveats.

First, the sacrosanct meaning attributed to stability of Central Asia, as a condition of equilibrium, has two roots. In the first place, such understanding of stability was fostered by the acceptance of stability as a value, by Central Asians (and external observers), preoccupied with "economic turmoil and lawlessness" in the immediate aftermath of the Soviet collapse.[2] In the second place, it is fostered by a change in development aid after the Cold War: from the principle of non-interference to an intervention (not necessarily a military one, but also by funding of development projects) which targets potential hard security threats in Central Asia, the ones which may eventually affect donor countries.

Second, the governments in Central Asia learned how to use the rhetoric of international security. The 9/11 attacks and ensuing United States (US)/NATO intervention in Afghanistan put Central Asian states at the forefront of the war on terrorism. This provided a new security framework for the region's cooperation with

> " The differences between Central Asian states' economic situations, political systems and foreign policies can hardly be ignored "

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1   Both authors are Fellows under 'Around the Caspian': A Doctoral Training for Future Experts in Development and Cooperation with Focus on the Caspian Region. CASPIAN is funded by the European Commission's Horizon 2020 programme. Grant agreement number SEP-210161673.

2   The Curse of Stability in Central Asia, by Sarah Kendzior, 2013, http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/02/19/the-curse-of-stability-in-central-asia/.

the Western world, which proved to be more convenient for collaboration than the previous alignment based on a vocabulary of democratisation, good governance and human rights. Central Asia's non-Western allies share a similar language of security; best illustrated by an oft-cited goal of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) – fighting the "three evils" of terrorism, separatism and extremism. Such language allows a very broad interpretation and merges the distinction between international security, state security and security of specific regimes, as it legitimises silencing of any forces which might challenge current political constellations in Central Asia.

Third, many security issues that can be found on top of national agendas are outcomes of, or tightly linked to, problems in other areas. One can hardly address the problem of "religious radicalisation" by targeting "radicalised" individuals, confiscating suspicious religious literature or labelling some groups as "extremist", while ignoring underlying problems – the condition of education or restricted political participation. Drug trafficking cannot be effectively fought by solely upgrading the scanners or training sniffer dogs at border checkpoints, if corruption and organised crime are left aside, not to mention the demand for narcotics in countries of their destination. Focusing on often invisible roots of security issues may not be very expedient politically or convenient for the logic of project-cycles preferred by international partners. Yet, these precise roots of security issues will keep hampering human security in the region, if not addressed properly.

> " Actors genuinely concerned about long-term development of Central Asia should remain attentive to who and how "threats" or "stability" are defined "

Actors genuinely concerned about long-term development of Central Asia should remain attentive to who and how "threats" or "stability" are defined. The region's long-term stability, however, hinges on developing an environment, which would enlighten and empower citizens, and this should be a priority for both national and international policy makers.

Inconvenient yet critical: education, economy and equality

A report on threat perceptions of the governments of Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) participating states noted, with a surprise, "the salient prominence of perceived domestic threats combined with questions about the efficiency and legitimacy of governance", as opposed to more traditional notions of military and transnational security threats.[3] This finding resonates very well with our understanding of some critical issues for long-terms stability in Central Asia. These are domestic matters related to institutions and governance with implications for human security and development: education, economy and equality.

A lamentable state of public education is nothing new in the region. The Soviet-time literacy rate was often stressed as a big difference between Central Asia and other parts of the world under colonial rule elsewhere. Few would hear similar "bragging" today. The countries of the region inherited fully state-funded and controlled education systems, focused on a solid primary and secondary education. Today the levels of Soviet-time funding on education could hardly be sustained. In addition to poor funding, out-dated curricula, deficit of well-trained and dedicated teachers and scarcity of updated teaching materials are exacerbated by political resistance to real reforms. National governments, particularly in resource-poor countries of the region, still struggle with very basic problems of education system, such as provision of textbooks and attracting good teachers. Nurseries where three kids share a single bed, cold schoolrooms or universities where exam grades are bargained for cash are not best practices which would allow healthy individuals and competent professionals to grow. Private schools offer better quality education, but they are mostly accessible for urban and rich groups of the society – in this way producing the elites that do not always speak the language of the population. A growing quality gap between urban and rural, or elite and "ordinary" schools, is a problem shared across the region, with huge implications for societal development in the decades to come.

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3 Threat Perceptions in the OSCE Area, by OSCE Network of Think Tanks and Academic Institutions, 2014, http://www.osce.org/networks/118080?download=tru.

The second area, which poses a potential threat to stability, is a limited development of small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Although economically the countries in the region are clearly on very different levels, some problems are shared and need to be addressed by all of them. In oil-rich economies in the region, such as Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, few benefit from access to the resources and power. The state remains strong and the power of the state apparatus large thanks to energy revenues. In turn, in remittance-dependent economies, such as Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, the state has nearly abandoned some of its primary services to population (e.g. healthcare, education) while nevertheless retaining the control of the economy. Excessive control of the state, poor infrastructure and rampant corruption are some of key factors squeezing small-scale economic activities or driving them underground. This leaves the SME sector under-developed, especially in rural areas. Allowing the growth of SMEs could provide opportunities for many active citizens without special "connections" or big capital to undertake economic activities, and in turn create employment for other people and generate a higher tax income for the state.

Finally, the equality, understood as the rule of law and social justice, is severely missing throughout the region. Political systems of all Central Asian states, although to different extent, are dominated by strong personalities and an executive branch which enforces the situation in which the law follows politics, and not vice versa. Laws might be in place; their non-selective execution and independent judiciary, however, remain to be seen. Implications of this can be seen in daily lives of ordinary citizens, who mastered the "laws" of corruption, and for whom informal ways of addressing problems are a norm rather than an exception. The rule of law is often a part of donors' agendas, although often it is reduced to capacity-building projects. Endless trainings might be somewhat useful, but one may wonder to what extent training judges or prosecutors improves social justice in countries where a phone call from the "right" person can play greater role than a law.

Recommendations.

- Define a long-term stability as a condition that empowers citizens and creates best possible opportunities for their physical, professional and intellectual development. Disentangling the concept of stability from an "absence of any change", as it is commonly defined today to wider society-oriented notions will send an important political message to political and societal actors of the region.
- Encourage national governments to collaborate closely with relevant civil society actors in elaborating strategic reforms of the education sector. Encourage particular attention to streamlining curricula, improving learning outcome assessments and motivating teachers. Support two-way exchange visits for students of high schools and universities with their European counterparts.
- Support national governments in developing and implementing economic development programmes focusing on support to SMEs. Encourage active cooperation between respective national government agencies and private business associations, as well as businesses and civil society organisations in discussing matters of taxation, licensing and other aspects of state regulation of business. Provide direct support to already existing successful and socially oriented enterprises operating in poorer areas, instead of providing grants to form news ones from scratch.
- Stress the centrality of the rule of law and social justice in cooperation with the countries of the region. While small-scale capacity-building or awareness-raising projects may have their own benefits, long-term support to national-level programmes on fighting corruption, enforcing the law and institutionalising state-society collaboration is vital.

I Crisis in Ukraine, Three Years Now: Towards Containment or Conflict Resolution? I

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This is a period of sad anniversaries. It has been more than three years since the annexation of Crimea and the eruption of conflict in Donbas and more than two years since the Minsk II agreement was signed – supposedly to put an end to the bloodshed. That has not been materialised yet.

So far the war has left nearly 10,000 killed, more than 20,000 injured[1] and around 1,5 million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Ukrainian government-controlled areas and within Crimea[2], without including more than 650,000[3] Ukrainians who fled to Russia since the conflict erupted.

" The deadlock hurts Ukraine most, but also its allies "

In an effort to destabilise Ukraine and derail Kyiv's attention from much needed reforms, Moscow, through its proxies, has brought the conflict and the Minsk peace process to a stalemate. The deadlock hurts Ukraine most, but also its allies. There are several mechanisms and negotiation formats in place, none of which have succeeded in bringing peace and restoring the territorial integrity of Ukraine. Are Western institutions, notably the European Union (EU), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), flirting with another unresolved conflict on Europe's Eastern flank, the fifth in the Eastern Partnership (EaP) area?

This paper considers the need for a different approach in the negotiation process on behalf of the EU and the changing role of EU-NATO cooperation in the aftermath of the NATO Warsaw Summit in July 2016. Firstly, the paper briefly examines security threats imposed by the stalemate in the peace process to all parties. Secondly, it evaluates the EU-NATO joint declaration and its potential as a security backer in the region. Thirdly, the paper provides recommendations in order to break the deadlock in the negotiations and strengthen Ukraine's resilience against foreign aggression.

Where do we stand now?

On the 11th of May the European Council approved the long-awaited visa free travel for Ukrainians which is expected to enter into force by the 11th of June. The milestone agreement was followed by the ratification, by the Dutch Senate, of the Association Agreement (AA) and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA), which were in force provisionally since 1 January 2016[4].

This came at a high price for Ukraine though. Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte

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1 European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) Factsheet for Ukraine, by European Commission, February 2017 https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/aid/countries/factsheets/ukraine_en.pdf

2 Ukraine IDP Figure Analysis, by Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) http://www.internal-displacement.org/europe-the-caucasus-and-central-asia/ukraine/figures-analysis

3 Ukraine crisis has created more than 2 million refugees , UN reports http://www.euronews.com/2015/04/22/ukraine-crisis-has-created-more-than-2-million-refugees-un-reports

4 EU-Ukraine Trade, by European Commission http://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/countries/ukraine/

managed to strike a deal with Brussels, following the April 2016 referendum that rejected initially the agreement. No EU membership guaranteed and very limited defence commitments to Ukraine were the end results of the negotiations[5].

The EU perspective is off the table, peace is in deadlock and no military assistance is expected from the West while in Kyiv the authorities are having a hard time with reforms on anti-corruption legislation. In the past year, Ukraine's reforms pace slowed down due to resistance from oligarchs, and opposition in the parliament.

Meanwhile, in Donbas hostilities intensified in the first quarter of 2017. According to the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) to Ukraine "at least 44 civilians had been killed and 175 more injured in the Ukrainian conflict zone between January 1 and May 24"[6], an escalation of violence which is more than double compared to last year. The OSCE continues to report that the withdrawal of heavy weapons has not been implemented, Kyiv is not in full control of its borders and frequent violations of the ceasefire are straining the process. No peace agreement is possible under these circumstances when there is no trust among the fighting sides.

As far as Russia is concerned, the prospect of peace and conflict resolution in Donbas is not an option that serves its interests. Despite the fact that the Kremlin is paying a high price for its intervention in Ukraine – the economic sanctions imposed by the EU and United States (US), including the cost of retaining "5,000-6,000 regular troops on the ground"[7] as International Crisis Group estimated – it looks unlikely to regress.

The Kremlin is denying any involvement in the conflict, while playing the role of the mediator and guarantor. President Putin's position is clear; during the four-hour meeting he had with the German Chancellor Angela Merkel in Sochi on May 2, 2017, he specifically underlined the need for direct dialogue between the conflicting sides, which effectively means that Kyiv will negotiate with Luhansk People's Republic (LPR) and Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) as co-equal parties, replacing the Normandy Format in which the latter are not involved[8]. This scenario for President Poroshenko is a red line that he does not wish to cross in order to maintain the national sovereignty of the Ukraine.

As next steps what Putin envisages and what Kyiv rejects is the special status for LPR and DPR, the electoral law and the local elections in those territories.

Against this uncertain and insecure environment the EU is demonstrating the sturdiness of Germany and France to lead the diplomatic efforts and make sure that the Minsk II agreement is fully implemented. Despite the fact that none of the accord's thirteen points have been fully implemented so far, it has served as a basis for talks – although it is merely to keep the communication channels open – and stopped the large-scale fighting in Donbas.[9]

The EU strongly supports the territorial integrity of Ukraine and condemns Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea. Diplomatic, individual and economic sanctions are in

> " Against this uncertain and insecure environment the EU is demonstrating the sturdiness of Germany and France to lead the diplomatic efforts and make sure that the Minsk II agreement is fully implemented "

5   Dutch senators approve compromise on EU-Ukraine pact, by EURACTIV, 31 May 2017 https://www.euractiv.com/section/elections/news/dutch-senators-approve-compromise-on-eu-ukraine-pact/

6   Ukraine Blames Separatists For Bombardment That Injures Eight Civilians, by Radio Free Europe, 29 May 2017 https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-krasnohorivka-bombardment-osce/28516309.html

7   Ukraine: Military Deadlock, Political Crisis, by International Crisis Group (ICG), Briefing N.85, 19 December 2016 https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/eastern-europe/ukraine/b85-ukraine-military-deadlock-political-crisis

8   Putin, Merkel Exchange Views on Ukraine in Sochi (part one and two), by Vladimir Socor, Jamestown Foundation, 10 May 2017 https://jamestown.org/program/putin-merkel-exchange-views-ukraine-sochi-part-one/ & https://jamestown.org/program/putin-merkel-exchange-views-ukraine-sochi-part-two/

9   Ukraine: Military Deadlock, Political Crisis, by International Crisis Group (ICG), Briefing N.85, 19 December 2016 https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/eastern-europe/ukraine/b85-ukraine-military-deadlock-political-crisis

place, as well as a ban on trade and investment between EU and Crimea, which was renewed for another year on June 6.

But what about EU's role in resolving or at least managing the conflict? The EU has no seat in the Normandy Format or the Trilateral Contact Group in Minsk. Its contribution is limited to deploying a Support Group and the European Union Advisory Mission (EUAM) which are responsible for monitoring and assisting Ukraine during the reform process, however it has no authority to operate in Donbas. This role was reserved for the OSCE SMM to Ukraine[10] although the monitoring of the security situation in Donbas is not only risky[11] but also limited. This is quite striking given the fact that the EU was more proactive during the aftermath of the August 2008 five-day war between Russia and Georgia.

What about Crimea and Sevastopol? Crimea is not covered by the Minsk II agreement; it is treated as a separate issue compared to the conflict in Donbas, there are even different sanctions regimes for Crimea.[12] The EU ought to explore more actively alternative solutions and include the region on the negotiation table.

> " The EU has no seat in the Normandy Format or the Trilateral Contact Group in Minsk "

In the meantime, the Baltic States and Poland, in light of growing Russian military resurgence, requested and were granted NATO combat forces on their soil – three to four thousand soldiers – to be stationed on a rotational basis.[13] However, the main military operations are taking place a bit further to the south. NATO and EU military presence or heavy weaponry is out of the Ukrainian crisis equation, which leaves us with the question: How can the EU project stability and security in the country?

It is worth mentioning that after the last NATO Summit in Warsaw (July 2016) the new trend is that "a stronger NATO and a stronger EU are mutually reinforcing. Together they can better provide security in Europe and beyond."[14] Inter-institutional cooperation is very much needed at the moment in order to tackle issues such as hybrid warfare and propaganda by working together on analysis, prevention, and early detection, through timely information sharing and, to the extent possible, intelligence sharing between staffs; and cooperating on strategic communication and response. It is still at an embryonic stage. For example, quite recently did the European External Action Service (EEAS) establish the East Strategic Communications (StratCom) task force (March 2015) to tackle external cyber threats and interferences. But worryingly, many NATO countries in Europe seem ill-equipped and sometimes unwilling to deal with these external threats coherently and collectively. However, the EU has some examples already in place where NATO and EU members are working together such as the NATO Professional Development Programme (PDP) with Ukraine.[15]

NATO's PDP with Ukraine enhances the professional skills of key civilian officials

10 The OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) was deployed on 21 March 2014, following a request to the OSCE by Ukraine's government and a consensus decision by all 57 OSCE participating States. The SMM is an unarmed, civilian mission, present on the ground 24/7 in all regions of Ukraine. Its main tasks are to observe and report in an impartial and objective way on the situation in Ukraine; and to facilitate dialogue among all parties to the crisis.

11 A paramedic who was part of a patrol of the OSCE SMM to Ukraine died and two SMM monitors were taken to hospital on the 23rd of April after their vehicle was heavily damaged by an explosion near Pryshyb in a non-government controlled area of Luhansk region.

12 Illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol: EU extends sanctions by one year, by European Council, Press Release, Foreign affairs & international relations, 17/06/2016: http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/06/17-annexation-crimea-sevastopol-eu-extends-sanctions/

13 Enhancing NATO's Forward Presence, by John R. Deni, Carnegie Europe, 27 April 2017: http://carnegieeurope.eu/strategiceurope/?fa=68792

14 EU-NATO Joint Declaration, 8 July 2016: http://www.nato.int/cps/de/natohq/official_texts_133163.htm

15 International Support to Security Sector Reform in Ukraine: A mapping of SSR projects, by Mans Hanssen, Folke Bernadotte Academy, 2016 https://fba.se/contentassets/9f9daa3815ac4adaa88fd578469fc053/international-support-to-security-sector-reform-in-ukraine---a-mapping-o....pdf

in order to strengthen capacity for effective democratic management. In 2014, the budget allocated to the PDP Ukraine doubled, with contributions from the United Kingdom (lead nation), Denmark, Germany and Turkey who is hosting training and educational activities. Activities focus on National Guard reform, critical infrastructure protection and strategic communications.

What needs to be done?

The final communiqué of the NATO Warsaw Summit highlighted the importance of the Black Sea region and the fact that Russia continues to strengthen its military presence and its military activities. Ukraine cannot defend itself alone. NATO membership prospects were already distant and will recede further under Trump's administration. The EU has no seat on the negotiation table. This poses a direct challenge to Europe's security order and stability in its neighbourhood. There is considerable risk of spill-over into the EU. In order to provide security and stability in the region as well as strengthening Ukraine's resilience against foreign aggression and internal instability, the following concrete measures are necessary:

" NATO Warsaw Summit highlighted the importance of the Black Sea region and the fact that Russia continues to strengthen its military presence and its military activities "

Recommendations.

- The EU must get a seat on the negotiation table. That doesn't necessarily mean that Minsk II will be implemented automatically. In the Nuclear Deal with Iran, the EU was represented by its High Representative on Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, and her role was significant in reaching an agreement. A similar move will provide more legitimacy to the diplomatic efforts and strengthen unity among member states.
- EU-NATO inter-institutional cooperation: better coordination in terms of projects and funding, in order to avoid overlapping and unnecessary spending. Particularly in a financially strained period for the alliance where members must meet their obligations, as US President Donald Trump stressed on many occasions.[16] Emphasis must be given on strategic communication. It also incorporates a better relationship between the European Parliament and NATO, as MEPs continue to have lacking oversight over defence issues, which is not in sync with the reality of how fast the parliament has moved in terms of institutional capacity and budgetary approvals over a Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) of the EU. It would be important to improve these inter-institutional aspects by creating new platforms where NATO staff and the appropriate equivalents from the EEAS meet with civil society and MEPs on a regular and rolling basis to discuss concrete policy, projects and research.
- Sanctions must stay in place and perhaps should be extended against journalists and editors involved in disinformation campaigns. Notwithstanding the fact that the EU shows unity and solidarity towards Ukraine, maintaining the sanctions is not a political solution. Crimea must be the 14th point in the Minsk II agreement, or at least to be part of any other negotiation initiative.
- Keep channels of communication with Russia open. Continued dialogue with Russia, at the NATO-Russia Council and other venues, can contribute to avoiding misunderstanding and to increase transparency.

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16 Trump Lectures NATO Allies On Defence Spending, by Radio Free Europe, 25 May 2017
https://www.rferl.org/a/nato-trump/28509003.html

I EU Potential for Breaking the Deadlock of the Conflicts in Moldova and Georgia I

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" This brief offers an enhanced note for the EU by analysing threat, stability, capacity, and prospects "

The European Union's (EU's) Eastern Neighbourhood is challenged by deadlock over the conflicts of Transnistria in Moldova and Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia. Two related dilemmas arise: firstly, divergent perceptions of the EU and Russia in the 'shared neighbourhood'[1] exist and secondly, local and external actors concerned with these conflicts tend to work against each other, conditioned by their clashing interests. This brief offers an enhanced note for the EU by analysing threat, stability, capacity, and prospects, guided by the question of what the dilemma of divergent threat perceptions means for conflict resolution.

The Threat Dilemma and Divergent Perceptions

Both conflicts remain unresolved, despite more than two decades of efforts to resolve them. Their geostrategic positions, in the EU's crucial area of the Eastern Partnership (EaP), mean that they are unwillingly labelled as buffers as well as "frozen conflicts" with a potential to ignite into wider crises. Unrecognised or potentially recognised, they are absent from the international system, but hold powerful patronage and advocacy from Moscow. Therefore, this brief starts with discussing both Russia's and the EU's perspectives before turning to the search for common notions of stability and for defining the EU's and joint capacities with Russia. Prospects to overcome the deadlock follow as recommendations below.

Russia's Perspective: Clients, but not Vassals?

For Russia, Transnistria and Abkhazia and South Ossetia are significant, yet in different ways. Russia perceives Transnistria interchangeably as an 'outpost of the empire' and a 'window to Europe'. That said Moscow has not been able to secure in the entity the leaderships that it prefers.

This mirrored the win six years earlier of Sergei Bagapsh[2] over Moscow's anointed Raul Khajimba in Abkhazia. With the permanent stationing of Russian military bases[3], thinly disguised as peacekeepers, and the Russian recognition in 2008, Abkhazia, along with South Ossetia, have grown into a situation where they are perceived as tools to tame Georgia's resurgent transatlantic ambitions with the long-term aim of repositioning the key country in the South Caucasus in Moscow's favour. The clan structure of the Abkhaz elites remains focused on their national interests,[4] acceding to Moscow's demands towards Sukhum/i[5] but counterbalancing the strategy of rising influence from its patron.[6] Conversely, in Transnistria, Moscow

1   Introduction, by Graham Timmins and Jackie Gower, in The European Union, Russia and the Shared Neighbourhood, by Graham Timmins and Jackie Gower (eds.) Routledge: New York and Hove, 2010
2   Sergei Bagapsh: Politician who guided the Republic of Abkhazia through its troubled beginnings, by George Hewitt, The Independent, 1 July 2011.
3   The former 7th base in Abkhazia and 4th base in South Ossetia.
4   Dynamics of de facto Statehood: The South Caucasian de facto States between Secession and Sovereignty, by Helge Blakkisrud and Pål Kolstø, Journal of Southeast European and Black Sea Studies, 12:2 (2012), 281-298; and The Politics of Identity in Post-Soviet Abkhazia: Managing Diversity and Unresolved Conflict, by Rachel Clogg, Nationalities Papers, 36:2 (2008), 305-29.
5   Sukhum/i is used for neutral spelling: Sukhumi in Georgian, Sukhum in Abkhaz.
6   Vladimir Putin Signs Treaty With Abkhazia And Puts Tbilisi On Edge, by Jack Farchy, FT (24 November 2014).

has downgraded its capacities financially and politically.[7] Both dynamics present a situation in which local elites increasingly have agency, making it difficult for Moscow to assert full control. This may be an opportunity for positive EU influence.

From the EU's Perspective

The conflicts in Moldova and Georgia challenge the EU's ability to be a values exporter of functioning democracy, human rights, market economy and the rule of law. Trade with the EU does not solve the conflicts but is beneficial in two ways: first, resolving the conflicts means closer monitoring and integration into EU structures, and second, and maintain the EU's own purpose as a security community to minimise threats.

NATO's open door policy and EU's policies towards the Eastern neighbourhood – but never an offer of membership to the EaP countries – changed the dynamics. The EaP strategy, with the European Neighbourhood Policy Instrument (ENPI) and the 2014 Instrument contributing for Stability and Peace (IcSP) to diplomatically respond to crises as key instruments for its neighbourhood,[8] held its conflict resolution outreach in the 2003 European Strategy Paper.[9] Regional conflicts came third of perceived threat and were reinforced in the 2016 Global Security Strategy, outlining an integrated approach to conflicts and crises for more security and defence for Europe.[10] Based on the EaP, the EU invited Moldova, Georgia, Ukraine, and to some extent Belarus, Armenia, and Azerbaijan, to reorient their foreign policies away from the Russian orbit.

The core threat is geopolitical.[11] In this sense, Moldova differs from Georgia. Talks to put Georgia on the Membership Action Plan (MAP) started in 2003. It was added to the NATO MAP at the Bucharest Summit in April 2008. This happened soon after NATO's second wave of enlargement, which incorporated the Baltic states and consolidated the Kremlin's threat perception. Moscow's leverage crumbled over Saakashvili's Western ambitions for Georgia's foreign policy course, a country that Bush in 2004 labelled as "beacon of democracy".[12] After August 2008, Russia recognised the former two breakaway territories and Georgia left the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). By contrast, Moldova has remained neutral despite quarrels with Russia over Transnistria and under no circumstances would Moldova further endanger the unresolved status dispute by entering the club of Western military structures.

Georgia's orientation toward Euro-Atlantic institutions has been, albeit only slightly, moderated since the 2012 parliamentary elections, which Bidzina Ivanishvili's Georgian Dream Party won. The new government ushered in a normalisation period, re-establishing diplomatic relations with Russia. Trade with the EU remains substantially lower than that with Russia, due to geography. Envisaged visa liberalisation for Georgians travelling and staying for up to three months to the EU, as part of the Association Agreement (AA), were postponed for several years. The regime started only in February 2017, compared to the launch for Moldova's visa free status to the EU in April 2015. Until the end of 2016, Georgia traded with the EU under the Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP+) that reduced 66% of the previous EU customs.[13] Given limited trade between Georgia and Abkhazia, little has been achieved towards conflict resolution through EU trade.[14]

So far, Moldova has received substantive EaP funds (the EaP budget amounts to

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7   The Transnistria Conflict in Light of the Crisis over Ukraine, by Klemens Büscher, in Not Frozen!, SWP, September 2016.
8   The EU Delegation uses the Foreign Policy Instrument (FPI).
9   A Secure Europe in a Better World, by European Commission, 12 December 2003.
10 Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe, June 2016, p.18.
11 As the EU discovered in 2013/4 that Putin considers it a geopolitical actor, too. Based on a Polish and Swedish initiative, the EaP, launched in 2007, was a geopolitical policy.
12 Bush backs Georgia as 'beacon for democracy, by Caroline Daniel, FT, 10 May 2005.
13 European Commission, Trade, GSP.
14 Interview with EU official, August 2015.

€23 million for the period 2015-2018, which is substantially higher than the previous rounds).[15] The EaP fulfilled its purpose as it opened up an avenue for Moldova's visa liberalisation[16] as part of the 2013 Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA) of the AA. Furthermore, the DCFTA provided ample opportunities to involve the business communities in Transnistria, who had previously exported goods under the Autonomous Trade Preferences (ATP) regime.[17] For the two-year transition period of the DCFTA, following January 2016, the expiry date of the ATP, Transnistria continued to export to the EU market (benefiting Moldova's economy) while continuing shadow economic trade and a bilateral trade with Russia. At the same time, Transnistria's factories are said to be obsolete.[18] For the EU, this has redefined its mandate to a functional level.

Mutually-perceived threat levels could not be lowered through trade and future economic paths and have remained two-sided with an interest in the Russian and EU markets, which enabled both actors to maintain a temporary regional foothold.

In Search of Common Ground and Stability

'Stability' has been subject of debate and interpretation. For the conflicts, the 1990s ceasefire agreements, including that for the 2008 war, can be seen as a sign of stability. A breached ceasefire, however, is naturally a sign that stability has not taken root. This undermines living standards for the population, especially the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), minimising rights and reducing prospects for conflict resolution.

Russia maintains influence through exerting instability and by that ensures preponderance in the Near Abroad. The meddling of an invisible hand has limited EU's and NATO's influence[19], while favouring Moscow's subversive agenda of exerting soft power, being associated with waging information war.[20] This agenda has remained relatively successful because of the prevalence of Russian as lingua franca in the post-Soviet space as well as the upheld memory of the turbulent 1990s.

As a value exporter of a security community,[21] the EU can only encourage positive political processes or impose economic sanctions for perceived obstruction. For ENP countries, no aquis as the Copenhagen Criteria exist. The revised 2017 EaP strategy seeks to support countries without too much interference.[22] In this regard, stability goes beyond restoring breached ceasefires. The Western interpretation of stability means for Brussels to induce stability by incentivising reforms, whereas the United States (US) gives backing to the EU priorities but also considers stability on a more geostrategic level.[23]

In Moldova, external actors' projects[24] have so far all destabilised the country and divided society further between the European and the Eurasian proxy projects. The latter directly attempted to mitigate the conflict; the former sought to restrict the

> " The DCFTA provided ample opportunities to involve the business communities in Transnistria, who had previously exported goods under the Autonomous Trade Preferences (ATP) regime "

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15 EU cooperates with UN and IOM on migration and human trafficking (€1.5 million); €2.5 million go to CBMs, €7.5 million to infrastructure projects and €2.5 million are used for business development, Interview with EU official, August 2015.

16 Problem is that Russians can buy Moldovan citizenship for $100 and by that able to enter the EU, which makes Moldova a Trojan horse for the EU.

17 Transnistria – Where to?, by Paul Ivan, EPC, 13 March 2015.

18 Transnistria: A bottom-up solution, by Nico Popescu and Leonid Litra, ECFR, September 2012, p.2.

19 The Limits of Soft Balancing: The Frozen Conflict in Transnistria and the Challenge to the EU and NATO Strategy, by Ryan Kennedy, Journal of Small Wars & Insurgencies, 27:3, (2016), 512-37.

20 Russia in Moldova – Soft Power or Soft Force, by Irina Severin, RFE/RL, 24 October 2010.

21 Security communities, by Emmanuel Adler and Michael Barnett (eds.) Cambridge University Press; and The Normative Ethics of the European Union, by Ian Manners, International Affairs, 84 (1), 2008, 45–60.

22 Press Release, by European Commission, 18 May 2017, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-17-1334_en.htm

23 Moldova. Values and Geopolitics, by Piotr Olesky, New Eastern Europe, 12 May 2016.

24 Examples are Kozak Memorandum (2003), Meseberg Process (2009/10) and the AA's DCFTA (2014)

shadow economy and thereby to bring Tiraspol more under Chisinau's influence. Germany has attempted to solve the conflict over Transnistria with Russia making promises in the name of the EU through a proposed EU-Russia Political Security Policy Committee,[25] which then-President Dmitri Medvedev interpreted as the EU giving Russia a veto, similarly for the NATO-Russia Council. There were two major issues: Germany did not well inform the EU about this initiative and Russia was in fact not in a position to dictate its terms to Smirnov.[26]

Turning to Georgia, external actors concluded the Moscow Agreement in May 1994, later repeatedly breached. The 1997 Coordinating Council of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) format that presented the Boden Plan in 2001 did not succeed. The 2010 EU Engagement without Recognition policy[27] towards the breakaway states has given the EU some traction in Georgia. The EU role exists through the EU Special Representative (EUSR), EU Monitoring Mission (EUMM), and EU Delegation. More coordination would be required to reverse the downward trend in surveys of 'European integration' and clarify the public perception on the EU.[28]

Speaking Influence and Joint Capacity

The EU's niche is clearly located in the aforementioned instruments it provides. At the same time, the donor activities have diminished and blurred the EU's political mandate.[29] Despite the negotiations it has joined, the EU's main potential contribution to the region remains as a donor; the EU's strength is that Russia has no veto over the EU's application of its instruments, which should enable greater EU assertiveness toward conflict resolution. Given the Brussels focus here, the EU needs to be more tangible and correspond to the population's needs on the ground to be more effective[30] and to decrease Russia's leverage.

> " Germany did not well inform the EU about this initiative and Russia was in fact not in a position to dictate its terms to Smirnov "

25 The EU's strong involvement in moderating the conflict situation was visible in the EUBAM border customs treaty in 2005, its observer status in the 5+2 format, and the 2010 Meseberg Process. Meseberg Process: Germany testing EU-Russia Security Potential, Eurasian Daily Monitor 7 (121), by Vladimir Socor, The Jamestown Foundation.
26 Negotiation Gone Bad: Russia, Germany, and Crossed Communications, by Philip Remler, Carnegie Europe, 21 August 2013.
27 Engagement without Recognition: A New Strategy toward Abkhazia and Eurasia's Unrecognized States, by Alexander Cooley and Lincoln A. Mitchell, The Washington Quarterly, 33:4 (2010), 59-73.
28 Population's EU support has declined 78 per cent to 62 per cent since 2013. Knowledge of and Attitudes towards The EU In Georgia. Trends and Variations 2009 – 2015, by Europe Foundation.
29 In the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and the EEAS.
30 Interview with DG Trade, May 2015.

Recommendations.

- Be more transparent in coordination with the OSCE and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Transparent cooperation ensures more efficient implementation of funds for projects. Higher credibility then moderates the regional expectations of European integration and better allocates capacity to support developments.
- Speaking with one voice for a clear mandate. The EU should communicate more clearly the purpose of its engagement and coordinate its actions internally with the European Parliament and European Commission (EUSR and EEAS specifically).
- Clarity in messaging before communicating policy. The EU should communicate its objectives and capacities as a donor actor, emphasise cooperation with INGOs and local NGOs, and readdress the scope of its mandate for conflict resolution.
- More tangibility is required. The EU needs to communicate more coherently the reasons for its presence (EUMM, EU Delegation, and EUSR) and performance to civil society. The EU should act with visible actions but downscale competition with Moscow.

I Kurds, Europe and Turkey's Regional Window of Opportunity? I

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Samuel Doveri Vesterbye

" Pressure is not only felt domestically as a result of demography and the ending of the PKK ceasefire in 2015 "

As it currently stands, Turkey's constitutional package was voted through by a majority of its population and parliament between January and April 2017. Domestically, the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) – a defined terrorist organisation by the European Union (EU) and Turkey – continues to pose a grave threat to Turkey's national security, while its sister-organisation, the People's Protection Unions (YPG), is increasing its scope across the border in Syria. Meanwhile, there is an estimated two-year waiting period before the next Turkish elections are due, including the resurging of nationalist narratives. Under these difficult circumstances, populism of course never entirely disappears. But as of mid-2017, the Turkish economy is facing some difficulties. Its regional policies have largely backfired, while trade with Syria has collapsed, decreased with Iraq[1], and run into problems with Western countries. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)[2] and tourism[3] has declined after numerous terrorist attacks, strained diplomatic relations and a failed coup d'état that has left Turkish society and rule of law in trouble. An unreformed Customs Union only adds injury to insult[4].

Demographically speaking, the Kurdish population in what the Turkish General Directorate of Civil Registration and Nationality refers to as Southeast Anatolia (TRC Güneydoğu Anadolu) continues to demographically grow at high rates of 3.37 in 2016[5]. On a population of 70.5 million, approximately 13,4% are Kurdish, while their children represent 47% of Turkey. Taking the refugee population into consideration, a comparison is the Aegean region in which demographic growth rates remain at 1.76. The regional distinction is of course important as a large number of Kurds live outside of this region, most of whom have absolutely no affiliation to the PKK or desires of autonomy.

However, a very significant percentage of Kurds living within this region, that includes Diyarbakir, are indeed ideologically motivated or share an affinity with either the People's Democratic Party (HDP) or the PKK[6]. The growth rate therefore present a long-standing and growing reality that Turkey continues to face.

Yet pressure is not only felt domestically as a result of demography and the ending of the PKK ceasefire in 2015[7], which led to thousands of deaths and international

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1   Turkish Foreign Policy since 1774, by William Hale, Routledge, 2013, p. 236.
2   According to figures from the Turkish Ministry of Economy, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) hit a record low in seven years, while Moody's (from stable to negative), Fitch (from BBB- to BB+) and Standard & Poor (from stable to negative) all downgraded Turkey in 2016 and 2017, which could have serious implications for borrowing rates internationally, inflation and currency fluctuations.
3   Turkey's Economy Hit by Declining Tourism, IMF Country Focus, International Monetary Fund, February 23 2017.
4   A Modernized EU-Turkey Customs Union: Expert Interviews and Analysis, by Dr. Sait Akman and Samuel Doveri Vesterbye, ENC Perspectives, April 2017, p. 29.
5   Total fertility rate by Statistical Regions, 2009-2016 (İstatistiki Bölge Birimleri Sınıflamasına göre toplam doğurganlık hızı, 2009-2016) by the Turkish General Directorate of Civil Registration and Nationality.
6   Election results from the June 2015 and November 2015 general elections, and the 2017 constitutional referendum continue to indicate a strong support for the HDP, despite gains for the Justice and Development Party (AKP) during the 2017 constitutional referendum.
7   A temporary ceasefire was negotiated between Turkey and the PKK between 2013 and 2015 through dialogue channels developed between imprisoned PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan and Hakan Fidan, head of Turkey's National intelligence Organization (MIT).

condemnation. Today's rapidly changing regional perspective is also posing a real problem for foreign policy makers in Ankara.

Increasingly surrounded by Kurdish potential breakaway regions, if not de facto autonomous areas, in Syria and Iraq, Turkey's concerns over territorial integrity remain valid. Yet it's difficult to imagine a future in which radicalised Kurds remain completely sidelined, or simply decide overnight to disassociate themselves organically from terrorist organisations.

In fact, Syria's YPG – and its affiliates across the region – stand to benefit the most from the current geo-political setting. The YPG's three main patrons – the United States (US), Iran and Russia – are providing them with indirect and direct military and financial support against Da'esh[8].

Considering that both the US and Russia can outspend Turkey exponentially in terms of waging a proxy conflict through the YPG, an argument can be made for Ankara to consider trade and de-radicalisation as a more sustainable solution for more stable regional relations.

Both for Europe and Turkey – that share similar geographical concerns over migration and regional Da'esh and PKK radicalisation – an added case can be made for cooperation.

Shared security concerns, whether in counterterrorism (e.g. returning foreign fighters) or migration, continue to be a tier one priority with little chances of de-prioritisation in the short to medium term (2017-2019).

Both prioritise regional stability and see the devastating results of the conflict in terms of migration, investment levels, terrorism and loss of civilian life in Turkey's Southeastern provinces and Syria since 2015 and 2011 respectively.

A potential move that aims to secure a potential venue for peace and sustainable de-radicalisation should depend on two factors:

First, the involvement of European countries like Belgium, France, Germany and Sweden because of their important Kurdish populations, and the EU as a potential mediator and sponsor of post and current dialogue and anti-radicalisation programs[9], as well as institutional minority or cultural recognition[10].

Second, the prioritisation of Turkey's territorial integrity and wider regional security concerns, which include fears about the radical role of the Democratic Union Party (PYD) and YPG in future negotiations in Syria and their impact on Turkey domestically and abroad.

This view is echoed in Enabling Kurdish Illusion, in which Michael Rubin – resident Scholar at the American Enterprise Institute – notes that it would be "irresponsible to undercut the security of a long-term North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) ally like Turkey"[11].

In other words, NATO partners in Europe have to find a compromise position that takes into consideration their legitimate concerns about Turkey, while not ignoring Ankara's national interests.

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8 Da'esh is more commonly referred to as ISIL, Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, outside of France, Turkey, the United Kingdom and a majority of the Arab-speaking world.
9 Turkey, the Kurds, and the fight against Islamic State, by Cale Salih, European Council on Foreign Relations, 2015, p.8
10 91,3% of Kurds surveyed by Istanbul based Konda Research and Consultancy stated that their primary concern was the lack of recognition of their identity by authorities.
11 Enabling Kurdish Illusions, by Michael Rubin, Worldbulletin News, 2017, p. 2

A compromise could be the so-called Barzani model[12], which has done a reasonable job at developing peaceful and stable relations between Turkey and the Kurdish Regional Government (KGR) in Iraq[13].

One could for example imagine a possible scenario in which Turkey expands the Barzani model emphasising on peace through trade and regional spill-over[14] to Southeastern regions[15] and parts of Kurdish controlled Syria, including potentially carefully targeted hostile/extremist groups[16].

A Turkish move could also be assisted by trade agreements or support through an EU Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) or bilaterally through other instruments. The economic perspective is relevant considering the EU's important track record in terms of successful preferential and autonomous trade agreements[17], while not forgetting its own history of fostering peace through internal European trade and cooperation.

> " One could for example imagine a possible scenario in which Turkey expands the Barzani model emphasising on peace through trade and regional spill-over "
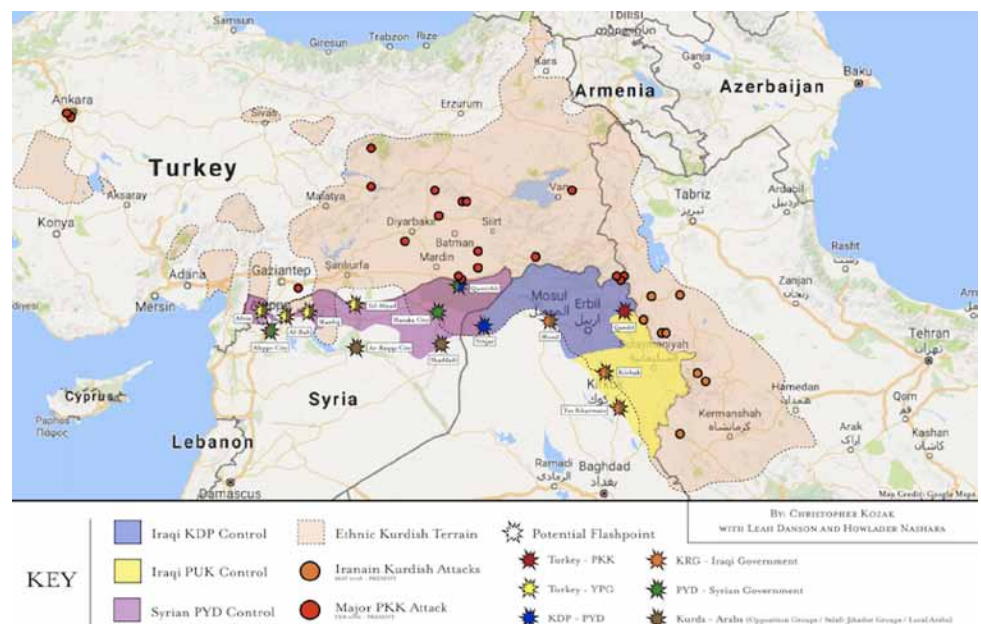
Map from Kurdish Seams in the Middle East by Christopher Kozak with Leah Danson and Howlander Nashara, Institute for the Study of War

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12 The term is colloquially used to describe the peaceful and constructive relationship that was developed between the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in Iraq and Turkey over the past decade, with the strong support of KRG President Massoud Barzani. The model is based on a deliberate effort to intertwine Turkey and KRG's economies in order to guarantee interdependence, and thereby avoid escalation of diplomatic divergence due to common economic investments, shared profit areas and cross-border trade volumes. Since 2008 this can be seen in particular sectors, including banking, construction and energy. The model appears to have yielded positive results in diplomatic and institutional relations between Turkey and the KRG, economically, institutionally and politically.

13 Turkey and the KRG: An Undeclared Economic Commonwealth, by Soner Cagaptay, Christina Bache Fidan, and Ege Cansu Sacikara in The Washington Institute, 2015, p.2.

14 Spill-over is a form of economic and institutional integration that results in economic interdependence, usually as a result of higher levels of trade, investments and cross-national or regional market integration. The concept was first popularised by Ernst Haas in 'The Uniting of Europe' in 1958 as part of the school of neo-functionalist integration and economics.

15 Turkey has largely followed an economic policy of de-radicalisation throughout its Southeastern regions over the past decades, focusing particularly on the Southeastern Anatolian Project (GAP) project, which received a major government 30 billion TL allotment in 2010. The inclusion of European countries and the EU, together with the economic and political de-radicalisation of Kurdish groups is likely to yield more favourable results considering the domestic and regional circumstances.

16 Kurdish extremist group are defined as organisations inside Syria, which are considered terrorist (People's Protection Units (YPG)) or hostile organisations by Turkey (e.g. Kurdish Democratic Party of Syria (KDPS) and the former-Peshmerga Sinjar Resistance Units, as well as both organisations' sub-groups and other affiliated organisations).

17 http://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/business/calculation-customs-duties/rules-origin/general-aspects-preferential-origin/arrangements-list_en#kosovo and http://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/agreements/

As far as the US is concerned, the prospect of an anticapitalistic ideological paramilitary group at the helm of Syrians in the Middle East is not a credible long-term solution either[18].

Considering the US' ambiguous use of both the YPG against Da'esh and Turkey as a strategic and NATO ally, the de-radicalised solution could be a plausible compromise to avoid straining US-Turkish relations any further[19].

Looking at the existing literature, the idea of duplicating the Barzani model within a Syrian context has already been discussed by a handful of academics and experts.

In The Kurds: A Divided Future? Joost Hiltermann writes that "Should it (referring to the PYD) seek to replicate the Iraqi Kurdish model of using American power as a vector for Kurdish ambitions? … or should Syria's Kurds exploit the country's disorder to expand the territory under their control and simultaneously escalate the war in Turkey…"[20].

Despite the many splinter formations of Kurdish extremist organisations still posing real and radical threats to Turkey, it should be noted that leading parts of the PKK now reject Marxist-Leninist principles and the idea of full autonomy[21]. This is in part a result of the first round of peace negotiations led by Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) between 2013 and 2015.

Hiltermann suggests that the US should "condition its support for the YPG on the latter's willingness to rein in its territorial ambition … at the same time, the (US) administration would need to nudge Erdoğan to return to peace talks with the PKK in exchange for US support of Turkish interest in northern Syria, including prevention of a unified PYD/YPG-run Kurdish region and an end to the YPG's provision of weapons and other assistance to the PKK in Southeastern Turkey"[22].

The economic argument, added with European mediation and shared de-radicalisation efforts, could be the missing element in a much-needed recipe for regional stability. It may also ease concerns in Turkey that the YPG won't simply enter a dormant stage and resurface at a later point in time, as a multilateral process and trade is capable of increasing interdependence and organic de-radicalisation.

As the May Memorandum[23] allows for more delivery of humanitarian aid to the de-escalation areas, it is easy to imagine Europe's role increase. That would include strategic thinking and new responsibilities, taking into consideration the leverage that the EU will obtain by contributing €9.4 billion towards Syria, with another €3.7 billion pledged at the Brussels conference in May.

On the Turkish side, the fact that YPG controlled territory could soon become de-escalation areas by the US and Russia[24] adds a degree of urgency for Ankara to act.

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18 Enabling Kurdish Illusions, by Michael Rubin, Worldbulletin News, 10.
19 Turkey's role in the Arab spring and the Syrian conflict, by Şener Aktürk in Turkish Policy Quarterly, 2017 Winter Edition, p. 88.
20 The Kurds: A Divided Future?, by Joost Hiltermann, The New York Review of Books, May 2017, p.2.
21 Turkey and the Kurds: A Chance for Peace?, by Jonathan Steele, The New York Review of Books, April 2017 Issue, p.3.
22 The Kurds: A Divided Future?, by Joost Hiltermann, The New York Review of Books, May 2017, p.3.
23 Original memorandum from Astana: https://syria.liveuamap.com/en/2017/4-may-heres-the-full-text-of-the-syria-deescalation-zone
24 Odds appear stacked against success of Erdoğan-Trump meeting, by Semih Idiz, Al-Monitor, May 2017, p. 2.

Recommendations.

- Schedule closed-doors brainstorm meetings in Ankara and Brussels with think tanks academics and sectoral government officials from the European External Action Service, Turkey, and a selection of senior officials dealing with Syria and/or Turkey from EU Member States to discuss venues for cooperation (and red lines) surrounding trade, Kurdish extremist or hostile groups, and Turkey.
- Conduct detailed research on how the Barzani model could potentially be replicated within a Syrian context, analysing both pitfalls and possible avenues of success in detail.
- Conduct detailed surveys, monitoring and interviews with Kurdish regional groups, Turkish officials, EU, Russian, US, and European Member State officials about their views on a suggested peace process, trade options and de-radicalisation, including their concerns, suggestions, and requirements.
- Schedule EU-Turkey meetings on potential funding mechanisms for anti-radicalisation programs targeting Kurdish extremist or hostile groups.

I Consistently Inconsistent: Cognitive Dissonance and Geo-economics in US Policy towards Europe I

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The only consistency in the foreign policy of the new United States (US) Administration toward Europe thus far has been inconsistency: Trump's personality quirks, his greater comfort with authoritarian leaders, and stark policy divisions among his advisers, have left Europeans confused and resentful. Trump seems to be framing a new strategic approach, but its contours are ambiguous and seem at odds with the views of the general public and his own political allies.

Ending Seventy Years of Consistency

The US is weathering a period of domestic and foreign policy volatility whose sources are complex, and mirror the root causes of concurrent developments in Europe. While the American public has demanded new approaches to policy and such approaches should be explored, this should be done carefully and not at the expense of international relationships that are both popular and useful. The basis for the transatlantic relationship has always been the attraction between stable democratic societies with market-based economic systems in an anarchic world full of potential threats. This attraction is unlikely to disappear unless the values that provide its foundation evaporate.

It is often forgotten that the US was an early advocate for the Coal and Steel Union, the European Commission and the European Union (EU). Over time, as the EU assumed greater regulatory responsibility, there were trade disputes between the US and the EU which irritated transatlantic relations. However, for many policy makers in Washington the human and material cost of three American military interventions in Europe during the 20th century was evidence that support for European unity was in the strategic interests of the US.

> " The US is weathering a period of domestic and foreign policy volatility whose sources are complex "

This strategic continuity extends to North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), an organisation many might not have expected to have survived or thrived the way it has since the collapse of the Soviet Union. NATO's expansion eastward in the 1990s and 2000s was grounded in the organisation's previous expansions. Successive American presidents and their Defence Secretaries cajoled European leaders to adopt Washington's policy perspective and spend more on their own defence, but again the cost was deemed worth it. NATO became a way to push democratic and human rights norms as much as a security alliance, which helped re-define security in Western minds.

At the same time, the US tried to cultivate democracy and liberal markets in Russia, promoting a shared normative agenda in conjunction with the EU in the former Soviet Union. The Russian response to US and EU promotion of democratic and liberal market norms and the appeal of these values in places Russia considered within its sphere of interest was to promote itself as an alternative civilizational pole that rejected Western concepts of democratic and human rights as irrelevant. The new American president's ambivalence regarding long-standing policies is particularly jarring because of many years of consistency, with issues largely above debate for the past 70 years.

The Mixed Signals of Cognitive Dissonance and Geo-economics

President Trump is Eurosceptic, as evidenced by his endorsement of Brexit, Marine Le Pen's presidential bid in France, and his dismissive January 2017 statement about the EU being a mechanism for German dominance. It is possible that Trump' general distaste for regulation may be partly responsible[1]. As a president whose personal experience is rooted in business and who ran on a platform attacking the establishment for not protecting the economic interests of the public, he is more likely to place greater emphasis on geo-economics rather than geopolitics[2]. If you accept the premise that Trump's international perspective prioritises the economic dimension of international power more than his predecessors it may help account for his willingness to break with longstanding policy.

In his inaugural address, Trump was unequivocal that he believed that the US had "enriched foreign industry" and "subsidized foreign armies" at the expense of its own. He has also repeatedly suggested that NATO allies hadn't paid their bills, and has de-emphasised the US treaty commitment to collective defence under Article V[3]. Trump's geo-economic perspective makes him far less inclined to bear the costs of transatlantic security or accept opportunity costs for the US economy in the interest of solidarity than previous American presidents. It is an approach that betrays a poor understanding of the alliance, but also emphasises flexibility and deal-making over values.

Although American presidents possess extraordinary power within foreign and defence, they do not make policy alone. Trump's Vice President, cabinet secretaries, and other officials have contradicted his rhetoric by emphatically reaffirming US commitments to and partnership with the EU and NATO. Meanwhile, political establishment and the American public have been consistent in their positive views of the transatlantic relationship and its transnational institutions[4].

The effect of these inconsistent mixed signals is best defined as the policy equivalent of cognitive dissonance— "psychological conflict resulting from incongruous beliefs and attitudes held simultaneously.[5]" The same cognitive dissonance can be found in relations with Russia, where Trump has consistently advocated a new and better relationship while some in his cabinet have attacked Moscow in the strongest possible terms. The absence of a clear sense of what the US government collectively "wants" has inevitably raised suspicion of US intentions and undermine American credibility in Brussels and European capitals.

With all the challenges before this Administration and the President's stated desire to do big international deals, sewing mistrust and confusion among European allies at the outset was a quixotic policy to pursue. Creating doubt about the US commitment to NATO or intentions towards the EU may well drive Europe together in ways that Washington may not like[6].

> " The effect of these inconsistent mixed signals is best defined as the policy equivalent of cognitive dissonance "

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1   A wall denied may have made Trump dislike EU, by Griff Witte, The Washington Post, February 7, 2017.
2   Geo-economics is a concept Edward Luttwak introduced a quarter-century ago in From Geopolitics to Geo-economics, The National Interest, 17, 17-24, 1990. Luttwak asserted that states might increasingly internalise the "logic of war with the grammar of commerce."
3   For once, Trump stays silent about Nato unity – and US allies are disappointed, by Julian Borger, The Guardian, 25 May 2017.
4   Recent polls indicate that the depth of American support for NATO and the EU has remained strong and consistent: Most Americans Support NATO Alliance, by Michael Smith, Gallup, February 17, 2017 or NATO's Image Improves on Both Sides of Atlantic. European faith in American military support largely unchanged, by Bruce Stokes, Pew Research Center May 23, 2017.
5   Merriam-Webster Dictionary online merriam-webster.com
6   If Germany can't count on old friends, perhaps it's time to make new ones, by Joe Miller, BBC,

The Road Ahead

US foreign policy is in need of reappraisal. The US is overextended globally, with a foreign policy establishment that maintains unrealistic "unipolar" expectations of what the US can accomplish in the reality of a "multipolar" world with near-equal great power competition. A greater balance between geopolitics and geo-economics might be in order, just as soft power and a more nuanced approach to US power projection would also be useful for a national-security establishment that too often turns to hard power options. Trump may have had a moment to bring off a new foreign policy a new approach when he entered office, but the opportunity was fleeting and may already have been squandered.

The US and Europe both need to find a way to de-escalate tensions with Russia, but the repeated episodes of election hacking across the West have raised tensions and reduced trust to dangerously low levels. Trump's argument that better relations with Russia would be a good thing may have merit, but may not be practical under the circumstances. Just as in Europe, the American public is deeply suspicious of Moscow as a result of hacking, interference in the elections, and hybrid warfare in Ukraine, among other reasons. Trump's domestic difficulties with allegations of connections to Russia have undermined the credibility of any deal struck with Moscow in the eyes of the American public and Europeans concerned about bilateral deals being struck at their expense.

Europe can and will improve its capacity to project influence. In the same way that the unilateralist policies of the Bush Administration (2001-2009) in Iraq and elsewhere encouraged the Europeans to consolidate behind the European Security Strategy in December 2003, so too might the Trump Administration policies, at variance with those of the EU encourage similar consolidation. Although new forms of European cooperation may seem unlikely in the current Eurosceptic climate, an international security crisis in which it appears US and EU interests are poorly aligned could provide motivation.

> " The US and Europe both need to find a way to de-escalate tensions with Russia "

The only thing we can be certain of is that it is nearly impossible to make educated assumptions about the course of American foreign policy in the near future due to the present volatility of decision-making in Washington. It will be difficult for Trump to change long-standing foreign policy strategy in the face of serious congressional and public opinion. To some degree he has also hamstrung his own ability to affect change. The transatlantic relationship and the cooperation it engenders remains the best guarantee of security for the democratic values for both sides of the Atlantic community. It has been taken for granted, but now it requires careful management.

Recommendations.

- Strategic Patience – Europe should exercise strategic patience in dealing with the US over the next three years. The US is distracted and inward looking, if some around Trump wish to change the structure of the transatlantic relationship they are doing so against broad resistance, even from within their own party. Recalibrating policy is difficult and changing public opinion takes effort, time, and good arguments, which have not been made.
- Security Capacity Building – Trump's insistence that the NATO Member States increase defence spending is consistent with his predecessor and perhaps unintentionally good advice for Europe. He has broad support for this in the US. The limitations of decades of under-investment in security and over reliance on the US should now be apparent to European policy makers. If you want to have influence in Washington right now, being backed by hard power doesn't hurt.
- Norms – Democracy and political freedom never seem as precious as when they seem threatened. Foreign attacks on elections and radical destabilising talk have a way of making people actively think about the meaning of political freedom, reminding all that the cliché about shared values cementing the transatlantic relationship actually has meaning. Europeans and North Americans should be encouraged to work together at all levels of society to find ways of infusing new ideas and legitimacy to democratic governance. If a political order based on liberal values is to survive, it needs to evolve, and governments must act to support it abroad.

I How the EU is Handling Threats to Stability in Wider Europe? I

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Dr. Dominika Krois

The world poses many challenges, as usual. Not many today however recall the 1989 changes, triggered by the Polish Solidarność movement. Yet when communism collapsed, hope for a better world order was in everybody's heart. Today, there is little room for optimism on the situation across wider Europe: the escalation of violence in the Eastern Ukraine, the illegal annexation of Crimea, the simmering conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, lack of meaningful progress in the attempts to find solutions for other protracted conflict, the backtracking in human rights, and threats stemming from radicalisation and terrorism.

When the efforts to end the post-war conflict and build a safer Europe were undertaken in the 1970s, the situation was different but not less difficult, and yet an agreement on the principles guiding relations among the European nations was reached. The changed status quo was accepted in exchange for the respect of human rights across wider Europe. Since then the European security order has been based on the principles of sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of states, the inviolability of borders, peaceful settlement of disputes and the free choice of a states' future. The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Helsinki Final Act principles and the Paris Charter, complemented by the comprehensive concept of security apply to all European states. Today the OSCE remains a unique forum and framework for dialogue and cooperation in Europe and beyond, even if its efforts have been hampered by the imperative to find consensus among all of its 57 participating states, with their different visions for this part of the world.

Since then the European Union (EU) approach, based on the OSCE principles and synergies with its actions, led to the development of its own role in the region. Stabilisation and peace process support as the guiding principles and the focus on the Eastern and Southern neighbourhood have been reconfirmed by the 2015 Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy for the European Union.

The Eastern Partnership (EaP), with its focus on strengthening institutions, good governance, taking advantage of market opportunities with the EU, enhancing mobility, people to people links, developing interconnections in the areas of energy and transport, and newly added areas of cooperation related to civilian security, tackling terrorism and preventing radicalisation, security sector reform, disrupting organised crime, strengthening cyber security, and addressing disaster related risks, contributes to strengthening of the EU partners' resilience.

The EU approach to the crisis in and around Ukraine has been firm on principle, applying restrictive measures where necessary, and cautiously keeping options for diplomatic engagement open. The EU's unwavering support for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, and its non-recognition of the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol of March 2014, has led to the EU substantive sanctions to enforce non-recognition. The full implementation of the Minsk agreements as the basis for a sustainable political solution to the crisis has been directly linked to the EU sanctions policy. The EU has been ready to engage in the conflict resolution, while recognising the Ukraine's ownership for its sovereignty and territorial integrity, and subsequently supported the diplomatic efforts in the

> " The EU approach to the crisis in and around Ukraine has been firm on principle, applying restrictive measures where necessary, and cautiously keeping options for diplomatic engagement open "

framework of Normandy format and the Trilateral Contact Group. As part of the EU support to the implementation of the Minsk agreements, the EU has been the biggest contributor to the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) with two thirds of both the mission's budget and of monitors. The EU and its Member States have also been at the forefront of the humanitarian response and demining.

In the 5+2 process, designed to bring solution to the Transnistrian conflict and to improve life for people on the both banks of the river Nistru, the EU, an active observer, has offered such solutions (based on its best practices and the OSCE Confidence Building Measures (CBM)) as the 2015 deal on trade facilitation allowing the application of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA) to Transnistria, European Union Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM), an effective CBM promoting border control, customs and trade norms and practices serving both sides to the conflict and meeting EU standards, and some exemplary ad hoc solutions allowing Transnistrian students to participate in the exchanges with European universities. The resumption of the formal 5+2 meetings in June 2016 and the subsequent signing of some technical agreements are positive developments. The EU continues to make efforts to prevent the blockade of the Transnistrian people from exchanges with the EU.

Following the outbreak of the 2008 war in Georgia and the mediation carried out by the then French Presidency of the EU between Georgia and Russia to agree on the six-point plan, the EU has played a decisive role through the rapid deployment of a monitoring mission to prevent the violations of the forged ceasefire. The European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM), still in Georgia, has helped establish communication channels between the breakaway regions and Tbilisi Administered Territories. The EU, through its engagement in the Geneva International Discussions (co-chairing), has helped strengthen stability and build bridges with the entities and is constantly encouraging the government of Georgia to have a proactive attitude and engage with the breakaway regions without endangering its non-recognition policy, followed also by the EU. The recent positive developments include cooperation between Georgian and Abkhaz participants on humanitarian issues.

The overall objective of the EU's third European Partnership for the Peaceful Settlement of the Conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh (EPNK) programme has been to contribute to the peaceful settlement of the conflict and prevent further violence. It aims at capacity-building of the civil society and grass-root communities to undertake peace building activities and to feed into the official peace process led by the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs. Following the 2016 "April War", the EU appealed for restraint and welcomed the decision taken at the Vienna and St. Petersburg meetings to re-launch political negotiations on substance and to increase the number of monitors on the line of contact. Unfortunately, these agreements have not been implemented yet.

Since the collapse of Yugoslavia, the EU and its Member States have been active in the region promoting peaceful solution to the conflict and helping with post-conflict rehabilitation. This policy culminated in 2011 with the historic deal between Serbia and Kosovo brokered by the EU. Since then, the EU has facilitated the dialogue to promote normalisation of relations, improve the lives of the citizens and achieve progress on their path to the EU. The dialogue, aiming at improving contacts between officials, neighbours, citizens and communities, facilitates the movement of persons, goods and services and make neighbours interact, live together and understand each other. The dialogue aims at reconciliation between the Kosovars and Serbs, and is not only in the common interest of the both sides, but is also directly linked to their European aspirations. The dialogue allows for extending Kosovo governance over its entire territory, including northern Kosovo, and the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) binds the country to

" The recent positive developments include cooperation between Georgian and Abkhaz participants on humanitarian issues "

work on the further normalisation of its relations with Serbia. The normalisation of relations between Serbia and Kosovo is also addressed under the Serbian accession negotiations through Chapter 35 detailed requirements.

The EU has a strong interest in the stability and security of Central Asia and cooperates with the Central Asian states in building peace and economic prosperity in the region. Through bilateral political dialogues with all countries in the region the EU develops cooperation on issues such as human rights, youth and education, good governance and rule of law as well as economic diversification, energy, trade and sustainable development. The EU also pursues a regional approach for tackling common challenges in the area of security (organised crime, human, drugs and arms trafficking, terrorism and non-proliferation issues, border management) and the sustainable management of natural resources (energy, environmental pollution, water management). The EU further promotes inter-cultural dialogue and helps address migration-related challenges. The EU relations with these countries have developed further since the European Council adopted the Strategy for a New Partnership between the EU and Central Asia in 2007, which is supported by a significant increase in EU assistance. Since then both sides have reaffirmed their commitment to the strategy, and the implementation is well under way.

While the conflicts cannot be solved without a will of the conflicting parties to compromise, the engagement of a non-involved party could be conducive to forge a solution. The EU holistic approach, offering – where appropriate – a European solution and/or European aspirations can catalyse changes in the direction of stabilisation, normalisation of the relations and reconciliation.

Recommendations.

* Practical measures can include further promotion of mutual understanding, concrete solutions to foster communication and people-to-people contacts to help prepare for an eventual compromise by engaging the public on both sides.
* Offering a perspective of economic development and developing organised trade across the boundary lines could have a major positive impact for the people living in these areas. And even if the change does not happen overnight, it is worth trying to make an effort.

> " The EU has a strong interest in the stability and security of Central Asia and cooperates with the Central Asian states in building peace and economic prosperity in the region "

I Conclusion I

Wider Europe has seen an unprecedented transformation over the past two decades. An important thread that ties together all of the articles in this research publication is how multipolarity and trans-border fluidity is raising new challenges to security. From proxy warfare to borderless radicalisation and migration waves, the concept of geography and interconnectivity on the European continent has – again – shown itself to be a relevant factor when defining threats to stability.

Professor Rick Fawn's understanding of European values in an unstable region are closely tied to how a 'borderless' European continent is developing and the difficulties this raises for societies when communicating transnationally and countering disinformation. In Andreas Marazis' 'Crisis in Ukraine, Three Years Now: Towards Containment or Conflict Resolution?' similar concerns over Russia and a shared geography are raised, particularly with an emphasis on rapidly changing concepts of identity and 'spheres of influence'. Old notions of 'proxies' seem less relevant when looking at Ukraine's right to self-determination through the prism of the 21st century. Despite this value-based assessment, the geographical divisions remain very real. Dr. Nina Lutterjohann depicts this fact when explaining the current situation on-the-ground in breakaway regions like Abkhazia and South Ossetia, as well as Transnistria – all of which remain very tangible examples of areas that have experienced warfare and continue to pose a major risk to stability for themselves and the wider neighbourhood. Moving further South, Syria and Turkey are equally entangled in conflicts that are increasingly affecting nearby countries, or in turn being influenced by them, as Samuel Doveri Vesterbye describes in 'Kurd's, Europe and Turkey's Regional Window of Opportunity?'. Turkey's pivotal position, linking North and South, East and West, plays a crucial role within this debate. It exemplifies how wider Europe interlinks geo-strategically, particularly with a reference to conflict, migration, energy and other areas of policy. The threat of terrorism and demographic change ties the Middle East together with Europe for example. This difficult situation is equally represented by Dr. Elena Zhirukhina in her analysis of the Caucasian Emirate, an enclave of dangerous radicalism, which threatens an entire region, potentially incorporating both Russia, the EU, parts of the Middle East and Central Asia. Both Shairbek Juraev and Karolina Kluczewska indicate that these transnational risks are not only confined to traditional security perspectives, but range from education and local business participation to cultural exchanges and rule of law, as soft, yet relevant, concepts for stability. Jason Bruder and Dr. Dominika Krois share their views and years of experience in the policy field, from an EU and US perspective. Whereas a continuation of cooperative and cross-border policy is imminent from Dr. Dominika Krois and the EU's outlook, the US policy perspective raises the issue of 'cognitive dissonance'. The transatlantic relationship remains of essence to Europe, as does the geography that binds it east- and southwards. With analysis from across the entire region, the research publication helps the reader to understand the common areas of threat and their effects on stability, which – in turn – helps contextualise the paper's policy recommendations.

| Recommendations |

The recommendations for each case-study are expected to project stability and security in wider Europe by facilitating dialogue among all stakeholders, preventing escalation, strengthening the EU's role in overseeing the implementation of internationally recognised agreements, while also taking into consideration the norms and values of democracy, rule of law and respect for human rights.

The numbered recommendations in each chapter are categorised according to their importance and gravity in resolving or improving the situation on the ground.

Are Four Heads Better Than One? Russia as Conflict Instigator, Mediator, Saviour and Perpetuator

Country focus: Armenia, Azerbaijan, EU, Georgia, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, and Ukraine.

- Recognise that we now have a security dilemma – statements and actions by each side inflame the other and provoke further that measures the increase suspicion.
- The EU therefore needs a combination of projection of its own values while retaining strong measures against Russia, notably elite-targeted sanctions.
- Indeed, sanctions should be retained that target private interests of the elite. US President Donald Trump indicated at the G7 that sanctions could 'get tougher on Russia' is encouragement for continuity.
- At the same time, the EU should stress that Russia's best interests rest still with the EU and the West more broadly, and that these are not in competition with other areas of Russian activism, such as with BRICS.
- That done, signalling the particular Russian actions are unacceptable, foremost the annexation of Crimea, and that therefore.
- Greater energy diversification – Central European initiative, despite reliance of Russian energy, are good indicators. Some measures, such as reverse-flow infrastructure, have provided assistance.
- Positive roles for Russia in the wider international arena, including on limiting nuclear proliferation. In that, allow Russia a rightful place to grand-stand as a significant power.
- Discourage arms sales in the conflict zones.
- Continue efforts to monitor and counter Russian news promotion and outright propaganda.
- Increase societal interactions generally and specifically prioritise education for students– get youth to know that the EU is not a menace.
- Solidarity of the EU in all of the above is essential – and this should be underscored by recognition of the substantial common interest of so doing.

Security Concerns for the EU: To What Extent is the Caucasian Emirate Reaching Out?

Country focus: EU, Russia and US.

- Monitoring of the developments in the North Caucasus associated with the CE and ISIS activities and possible shifts in their target priorities. Given a marginal nature of the threat currently imposed on the European actors by the remaining CE groups, monitoring constitutes a low-cost essential measure to follow the situation on the ground.
- Reinforcement of a reasonable extent of intelligence sharing between Russia and the EU to identify individuals associated with the CE and ISIS and to trace their movements and contacts. Advancement of cooperation areas indicated in the EU-Russia joined statement.

Threats to Stability in Central Asia: What Role for the EU?

Country focus: EU, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

- Define long-term stability as a condition that empowers citizens and creates best possible opportunities for their physical, professional and intellectual development. Disentangling the concept of stability from an "absence of any change", as it is commonly defined nowadays, to wider society-oriented notion will send an important political message to political and societal actors of the region.
- Encourage national governments to collaborate closely with relevant civil society actors in elaborating strategic reforms of the education sector. Encourage particular attention to streamlining curricula, improving learning outcomes assessment and motivating teachers. Support two-way exchange visits for students of high-schools and universities with their European counterparts.
- Support national governments in developing and implementing economic development programmes focusing on support to SMEs. Encourage active cooperation between respective national government agencies and private business associations, as well as businesses and civil society organisations in discussing matters of taxation, licensing and other aspects of state regulation of business. Provide direct support to already existing successful and socially oriented enterprises operating in poorer areas, instead of providing grants to form news ones from scratch.
- Stress the centrality of the rule of law and social justice in cooperation with the countries of the region. While small-scale capacity-building or awareness-raising projects may have their own benefits, long-term support to national-level programmes on fighting corruption, enforcing the law and institutionalising state-society collaboration is vital.

Crisis in Ukraine, Three Years Now: Towards Containment or Conflict Resolution?

Country focus: EU, Russia, Ukraine and US.

- The EU must get a seat on the negotiation table. That doesn't necessarily mean that Minsk II will be implemented automatically. In the Nuclear Deal with Iran, the EU was represented by its High Representative on Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, and her role was significant in reaching an agreement. A similar move will provide more legitimacy to the diplomatic efforts and strengthen unity among member-states.
- Sanctions must stay in place and perhaps should be extended against journalists and editors involved in disinformation campaigns. Notwithstanding the fact that the EU shows unity and solidarity towards Ukraine, maintaining

the sanctions is not a political solution. Crimea must be the 14th point in the Minsk II agreement, or at least to be part of any other negotiation initiative.
- Keep channels of communication with Russia open. Continued dialogue with Russia, at the NATO-Russia Council and other venues, can contribute to avoiding misunderstanding and to increase transparency.
- EU-NATO inter-institutional cooperation: better coordination in terms of projects and funding, in order to avoid overlapping and unnecessary spending. Particularly in a financially strained period for the alliance where members must meet their obligations, as US President Donald Trump stressed on many occasions. Emphasis must be given on strategic communication. It also incorporates a better relationship between the European Parliament and NATO, as MEPs continue to have lacking oversight over defence issues, which is not in sync with the reality of how fast the parliament has moved in terms of institutional capacity and budgetary approvals over a CSDP of the EU. It would be important to improve these inter-institutional aspects by creating new platforms where NATO staff and the appropriate equivalents from the EEAS meet with civil society and MEPs on a regular and rolling basis to discuss concrete policy, projects and research.

EU Potential for Breaking the Deadlock of the Conflicts in Moldova and Georgia

Country focus: EU, Georgia, Moldova, and Russia.

- Be more transparent in coordination with the OSCE and UNDP. Transparent cooperation ensures more efficient implementation of funds for projects. Higher credibility then moderates the regional expectations of European integration and better allocates capacity to support developments.
- Speaking with one voice for a clear mandate. The EU should communicate more clearly the purpose of its engagement and coordinate its actions internally with the European Parliament and European Commission (EUSR and EEAS specifically).
- Clarity in messaging before communicating policy. The EU should communicate its objectives and capacities as a donor actor, emphasise cooperation with INGOs and local NGOs, and readdress the scope of its mandate for conflict resolution.
- More tangibility is required. The EU needs to communicate more coherently the reasons for its presence (EUMM, EU Delegation, and EUSR) and performance to civil society. The EU should act with visible actions but downscale competition with Moscow.

Kurds, Europe and Turkey's Regional Window of Opportunity?

Country focus: EU, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Turkey, Russia, and US.

- Schedule brainstorming meetings in Ankara and Brussels with think tanks, academics and sectoral government officials from the European External Action Service (EEAS), Turkey, and a selection of senior officials dealing with Syria and/or Turkey from EU Member States to discuss venues for cooperation (and red lines) surrounding trade, Kurdish extremist groups, and Turkey.
- Conduct detailed research on how the Barzani model could potentially be replicated within a Syrian context, analysing both pitfalls and possible avenues of success in detail.
- Conduct detailed surveys and interviews with Kurdish regional groups, Turkish officials, EU, Russian, US, and European Member State officials about their views on a suggested peace process, including their concerns, suggestions, and requirements.
- Schedule EU-Turkey meetings on potential funding mechanisms for anti-radicalisation programs targeting Kurdish extremist groups.

Consistently Inconsistent: Cognitive Dissonance and Geo-economics in US Policy Towards Europe

Country focus: EU, Russia and US.

- Strategic Patience – Europe should exercise strategic patience in dealing with the US over the next three years. The US is distracted and inward looking, if some around Trump wish to change the structure of the transatlantic relationship they are doing so against broad resistance, even from within their own party. Recalibrating policy is difficult and changing public opinion takes effort, time, and good arguments, which have not been made.
- Security Capacity Building – Trump's insistence that the NATO Member States increase defence spending is consistent with his predecessor and perhaps unintentionally good advice for Europe. He has broad support for this in the US. The limitations of decades of under-investment in security and over reliance on the US should now be apparent to European policy makers. If you want to have influence in Washington right now, being backed by hard power doesn't hurt.
- Norms – Democracy and political freedom never seem as precious as when they seem threatened. Foreign attacks on elections and radical destabilising talk have a way of making people actively think about the meaning of political freedom, reminding all that the cliché about shared values cementing the transatlantic relationship actually has meaning. Europeans and North Americans should be encouraged to work together at all levels of society to find ways of infusing new ideas and legitimacy to democratic governance. If a political order based on liberal values is to survive, it needs to evolve, and governments must act to support it abroad.

How is the EU Handling Threats to Stability in Wider Europe?

Country focus: Armenia, Azerbaijan, EU, Georgia, Kosovo, Moldova, Russia, Serbia and Ukraine.

- Practical measures can include further promotion of mutual understanding, concrete solutions to foster communication and people-to-people contacts to help prepare for an eventual compromise by engaging the public on both sides.
- Offering a perspective of economic development and developing organised trade across the boundary lines could have a major positive impact for the people living in these areas. And even if the change does not happen overnight, it is worth trying to make an effort.