

Battlefield East

A comparative analysis of Russia's foreign policy in the EaP
States

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Abstract

This paper investigates how the development of Russian foreign policy and the Russian policy towards the Eastern Partnership states can be explained. In order to do so it will use the comprehensive understandings of the two IR theories Realism and Liberalism. The purpose being to explain the foreign policy of Russia in general, and to present comprehensively Russia's relation to, and the Western involvement in the six EaP states.

The epistemological and ontological approach are based in positivism, the paper uses a mixed method consisting of inductive method and qualitative comparative case study, the comparison taking place between the two theories' ability to explain the Russian foreign policy and relation to the EaP states. The material used is pre-existing primary and secondary sources.

The result of the research shows that the foreign policy of Russia in the 1990s carried to a large extent liberal characteristics, but that the policy after 2003-2004 has shifted to easier be explained by Realism, that follows a much clearer logic in explaining the Russian relation to the EaP states, whereas Liberalism may explain certain aspects but in the end the understanding of Russia turns to be that of an unpredictable actor.

Key words: Russia, Eastern Partnership, Russian Foreign Policy, Liberalism, Realism

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1 Introduction

Russia is a country that defies classifications of political science and international relations. It is usually a presidential system, but at the same time can function as a semi-presidential one. It is a market economy, a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO), but at the same time its economic survival depends on the performance of state-owned companies. Russia shows a number of signs typical of democratic institutions, but it is not democratic as measured by Western standards (Leichtova, 2014:1)

In the initial years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the emphasis of the Russian government was to integrate Russia with the West and abandon the imperial pretensions in the space of the former Soviet Union. But it did not take too long before concerns about trade, security, disputes regarding boundaries, and the welfare of the Russian diaspora in these states, moved the *near abroad* to the front of the priorities of the Russian foreign policy (Gill, 2015a:432). The former Soviet Union is a heterogeneous area, no matter how homogenous and standardizing terms like “In Between Europe”, “New Eastern Europe”, and “post-Soviet West” (Torbakov, 2013:174) may sound. It is an area that involves a variety of political processes, differing strategies for economic development and different levels of social unity. These states’ foreign policies are increasingly autonomous, although in differentiated manners, and should traditionally be understood to, to some extent, be playing off the EU and Russia against one another (Freire, 2013:201).

In the beginning of the 2000’s, Russia was still struggling to find out what the EU really was, what its potential role in the global arena was, and what role it was to play for Europe as a whole. The role and goals of the EU were not only hard to pinpoint, but Russian leaders and policy-makers found the EU’s decision making process to be unclear and complicated, not knowing whom to approach for a dialogue. On top of that Russia lacked a strategy on how to relate to the European integration process, and the Russian strategy when dealing with the EU has taken its starting point in dealing with different member states on a bilateral basis (Jonsson, 2015:447). Since then the EU has not only expanded eastward, to now include the three Baltic states and the former satellite states in Eastern Europe, but the EU has also reformed itself in its internal decision-making procedures, where the jurisdiction in the relation to the Member States has been expanded. And added the creation of the new EU presidential post and the foreign policy spokesperson, the EU has marked itself as a global player that is to be taken into consideration (Jonsson, 2015:444). But the enlargement of the EU came to bring new security challenges closer to the Union’s borders. Examples of this are the Transnistria dispute in Moldova, the non-recognized independencies of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia and the interstate conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict: all constituting a context where the EU, according to Freire, does not want to deepen its involvement regarding crisis management, but

instead would prefer to acknowledge the role of other international actors as mediators. It is therefore required that the EU will be able to coordinate itself with other partners, out of which the Russian Federation is of most relevance in these cases (Freire, 2013:196).

The history of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) started in the early 2000s. Originally a part of the “Wider Europe” initiative from the beginning of 2002 that included Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova and Russia. The idea was extended in December 2002 to also involve the Mediterranean area, and later on, in 2004, it was enlarged once again to also include the Caucasus states of Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia (Freire. 2013:193). The ENP was, apart from economic integration, hoped to be of particular relevance in conflict resolution (Simão, 2013:104). But even though Putin, and later on also Medvedev, stressed that Russia is an integral part of European civilization (Mankoff, 2012:136), Russia decided in the end to withdraw as the policy was considered too EU-centric. Russia and the EU instead agreed on a strategic partnership that was to be based on equality (Casier, 2013:127), and in the end Russia was recognized as a “key partner of the EU” (Commission of the European Communities 2004:4).

The original documents of the ENP stated that the EU was to act in order to reinforce and unite around two main objectives. The first one: to work with the partners to reduce poverty and create an area of shared prosperity and values, based on deeper economic integration, intensified political and cultural relations, enhanced cross-border cooperation and shared responsibility for conflict prevention. The second one was related to the offer from the EU, regarding benefits and preferential relations within a differentiated framework that responded to the progress the partner country made in political and economic reforms. The benefits for the ENP states, in return for showing concrete progress that demonstrated shared values and effective implementation of political economic and institutional reforms, would be to benefit from closer economic integration with the EU. This by being offered a share of the *Internal Market* as well as further integration and liberalisation in order to promote the free movement of persons, goods, services, and capital (Commission of the European Communities, 2003:9-10): *the four freedoms*. The European Commission stated though, that the ENP was not including a perspective of joining the EU:

The aim of the new Neighbourhood Policy is [...] to provide a framework for the development of a new relationship which would not, in the medium-term, include a perspective of membership or a role in the Union's institutions. A response to the practical issues posed by proximity and neighbourhood should be seen as separate from the question of EU accession (Commission of the European Communities, 2003:5).

This was a position that was not welcomed by the European Parliament (EP). The EP referred to the *Treaty on European Union*, that stated that all European countries that honours the principle of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and the rule of law, may apply for full membership. Hence the ENP was not to be understood as incompatible with aspirations for EU membership (Vysotskaya & Vieira, 2013:59-60). In 2008, with Sweden and former Warsaw Pact countries being the principle supporters (Mankoff, 2012:149), a new

framework within the ENP was established: The Eastern Partnership (EaP) that specifically targeted Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine (Vysotskaya & Vieira, 2013:62). The foundation for it was laid One year later, in 2009 during the Prague Summit.

The participants of the Prague Summit agree that the Eastern Partnership will be based on commitments to the principles of international law and to fundamental values, including democracy, the rule of law and the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as to, market economy, sustainable development and good governance (Council of the European Union, 2009:5).

The EaP initiative is a regionalized version of the ENP with the same instruments of the ENP, aiming to foster domestic reforms in the political, economic and administrative realms by offering privileged access to the internal market, financial aid and visa facilities in exchange, that is: market; money; mobility. The most advanced stage a country can reach in the ENP is the signing of an association agreement (AA), that generally includes a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA) (Cadier, 2015:165).

Before the launch of the ENP, the EU had had a rather inflexible policy towards Eastern Europe, developing similar policies and having similar objectives towards all former Soviet states. At the same time the EU respected a hierarchy with Russia as number one, Ukraine as number two and the rest of the countries as number three (Casier, 2013:127). The Russian reactions after the launch of the EaP was negative and the Russian foreign minister declared that the EaP was an attempt by the EU to expand its sphere of influence (EUobserver, 2009). Even though the EU poses no military potential that is comparable to the one of NATO, both the expansion of NATO and the EU has substantially changed the Russian security landscape, feeding Cold War-era anxieties regarding Russia's strategic isolation and encirclement. The fact that the Warsaw Pact died while NATO continued to strive after 1991, frustrated Russia. Russia had understood that, in exchange for Russia tolerating that the unified Germany being a NATO member, the alliance would not expand further. But instead NATO expanded into the former Warsaw Pact members – the former Soviet satellite states. The same did the EU and both even discussed openly to offer Georgia and Ukraine membership (Mankoff, 2012:134-135). After the inclusion of the Baltic states, NATO was quick to announce the intentions to start aerial surveillance of the airspace over Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania: a step that the Russian military saw as a prove of NATO's unfriendly attitude, and the Russian defence minister even commented that combat jets would only be a three-minute flight away from St Petersburg (Donaldson, Noguee & Nadkarni, 2014:382). This interpretation of NATO would remain, and be reinforced further on by the event that came to generate the biggest amount of mistrust against the United States: Washington's plans in 2007 to set up missile defence in the Czech Republic and Poland (Donaldson, Noguee & Nadkarni, 2014:391). This in combination with offering membership to Ukraine and Georgia created tensions, where both the EU and NATO, the West, was seen to be moving its interests further eastward at the same time. Whereas a Georgian membership in NATO would have placed the United States in the heart of the Caucasus with direct access to the oil and pipelines

of the Caspian Sea basin, a Ukrainian membership would have been equally, if not more, catastrophic, not only because of the historical ties between Russia and Ukraine, but because of the large Russian population in eastern Ukraine and the location of the Black Sea fleet in Sevastopol on the Crimea (Donaldson, Noguee & Nadkarni, 2014:397).

On the 12th of October, 2012, the Norwegian Nobel Committee announced the decision to award the EU with the Nobel Peace Prize. It declared that the European integration project had been a role model for peace and reconciliation, democracy, and human rights in Europe (Nilsson & Silander, 2016:46). The policies towards the EaP can, on the contrary, rather be understood to have led to the EaP now being an area of crisis and instability (Dangerfield, 2016:11), a consequence of the EU-Russian competition for influence (Nilsson & Silander, 2016:45). As a result, the EaP states has, as a group, been fragmented, resulting in that the solidarity that previously existed now has been undermined. And on top of that, and more seriously, the EU now also has to deal with a Russia that finds it in its interests to destroy the EaP (Paul, 2015:33, 31).

The competition for influence in this battlefield for influence is to be understood as having peaked with the signing of the AA between the EU and Ukraine in 2014. This was to start a chain reaction that ultimately led to the *Ukrainian Crisis*: The Russian supported war in eastern Ukraine, and the Russian annexation of Crimea; implications the EU-Russia competition in the EaP states (Ademmer, 2016:2, 12). John Mearsheimer claims that the prevailing perspective in the West blames the Ukrainian Crisis almost entirely on Russian aggression. Where Russia and the Russian president are understood to be driven by a desire to recreate the Soviet Union: Russia has decided to annex Crimea, after which the entire Ukraine or other eastern European Countries might follow: an understanding of international politics that Mearsheimer argues is flawed. One of the main reasons being the strong belief that the logic of Realism holds very little relevance in the 21st century and that Europe can be kept united and free being based on liberal principles (Mearsheimer, 2014:77-78).

Elites in the United States and Europe have been blindsided by events only because they subscribe to a flawed view of international politics. They tend to believe that the logic of Realism holds little relevance in the twenty-first century and that Europe can be kept whole and free on the basis of such liberal principles as the rule of law, economic interdependence, and democracy (Mearsheimer, 2014:78).

1.1 Research question

Inspired by Mearsheimer's argument, this essay will follow the assumption that there is a difference between realist understanding and the general understanding in the EU regarding Russia's acting. The research question is as follows:

- How can the development of Russian foreign policy and the Russian policy to the EaP states be explained, seen from the perspectives of Liberalism and Realism?

The purpose is to explain the development of Russia's foreign policy in general, give a comprehensive presentation of the development of the Russian relation to, and Western involvement in, each of the EaP states. This in order to determine, what realist and liberal characteristics there are to be found, that can be used to explain the case. This in order to see what can be said about the understanding of Russia's role in international politics.

One of the key ingredients in the understanding of the relation Russia has with the EaP states is based on frozen conflicts. I have chosen to only focus on the Georgian secession states, Transnistria, and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, hence the conflict in Eastern Ukraine, although being linked to in some of the reasoning, will not be presented. This due to the conflict being too recent in comparison to the other three, as well as differing from the other three in that it started far later after 1991.

1.2 Social Relevance and Previous Research

The European Union's ultimate purpose and goal is to secure stability in Europe. This is done by the promotion of liberal ideas such as democracy, free trade, human rights etc. But following Mearsheimer's hypothesis, regarding that liberal views have outcompeted realist ones in the understanding of Russia and Russia's foreign policy, it is worth examining more thoroughly if this claim is true. This is of value as the EU and the EU's influence has reached the borders to Russia and the EaP has turned into a battlefield for influence between Russia and the EU. It is of importance, especially in the present situation with the Ukrainian crisis, to be able to understand Russia and how and why Russian actions are what they are, as the portrayal of Russian policy in the West often is understood as being unpredictable and illogical.

The previous research that has been made, has mostly focused on the Russia-EU relations, seen through perspectives such as power and identity. Investigations that explores the Russian foreign policy and how the development of it has been related to the EaP states is hard to find. Splidsboel Hansen (2016) examines the Russian relations with the west. Even though a thorough development of the Russian identity debate is given, a debate that started during Boris Yeltsin's presidency, no further attention is given to the Russian view on the post-Soviet space. Derek Averre (2009) questions the assumption that the EU and Russia offer fundamentally different approaches to the shared Neighbourhood, and argues that it is simplistic to speak of the EU as a normative power, that is in a constant competition with a malign Russian sphere of influence. The article does take the shared neighbourhood into consideration to some extent, but the overall focus is on the power structure of the EU and Russia. S. Neil MacFarlane (2016) suggest in his

article “Kto Vinovat? Why is there a crisis in Russia’s relations to the West?” that the deterioration of the relations between the West and Russia, is best understood as a result of multiple reinforcing factors that are related to internal elements of the Russian political culture, as well as the political system and the Russian experience in international relations since the Cold War ended. The main focus is on the relations of the West and Russia and the dominant modes of understanding the deterioration in the relations.

2 Theory

Realism and Liberalism are the two given theories to use, as Russian politics often is understood as *realpolitik*, meanwhile the EU are based on liberal principles. Also, as the study is inspired by Mearsheimer's hypothesis, the choice of the two theories is obvious. The study will, however, take a more comprehensive understanding of the two theories. More specific parts of the theories would have been possible to use, had the hypothesis been developed further, or been another. It would then have been possible to also use other theories as well, such as constructivism. This would though have demanded the purpose to be changed into aiming to test theories and not, as in this case, explain the case that involves the Russian foreign policy and the Russian relation with the EaP states.

2.1 Realism

Realism is a theoretically broad concept that embraces many authors and texts. However, all realist follows, and believes in, the Three S's: *Statism; Self-help; Survival*. The state is understood as the main actor, transnational corporations, international organizations, and ideological driven terrorist networks, all rise and fall whereas the state is seen as a permanent feature of global politics and sovereignty is understood as its most characteristic trait. Sovereignty means that the state has the highest authority to make and enforce laws, which in its own turn form the basis of the social contract where individuals' liberty is traded for the guarantee of security. When security has been established, power is understood to have been organized and, when this has happened, community can begin. In the international realm, however, a sovereign is missing which leads realists to see the international sphere as anarchic. Hence states compete with each other for power and security, where more for one actor means less for another (Dunne & Schmidt, 2008:100-101).

International politics is characterised by war, conflicts and suspicion, and each and every state is left on its own for help. Neither culture, economy or ideology plays a bigger part in any realist analysis, instead all knowledge of international relations starts and ends with power, which is seen as unequally divided, the strong states doing what they want and the weak states accepting what they have to accept. And as the states in the world are in control of the majority of the power, Realism places it in the centre for all analysis of international politics (Hall, 2009:35-36). *Zero-sum logic* is a term that describes how actors behave in international relations. From this perspective, assets that actors are competing for, such as power, financial resources, and territory, are understood as indivisible or irreproducible. Hence, if

one actor gains a part of an asset, then another actor loses the equivalent share, that is one actor's gain is another actor's loss (Leichtova, 2014:21).

The arena where international politics takes place, the international system, is understood to be anarchic by realists. But despite this feature, it is far from chaotic as the great majority of states' interactions follow norms of behaviour. The norm of sovereignty means that a government has the right to do whatever it wants in the own territory, meaning that all states are equal at least in status (Goldstein & Pevehouse, 2012:50). But the principle of non-intervention in other state's internal affairs, designed to facilitate coexistence, is, for instance, understood not to apply in all relations. As survival is the main goal in international politics and the only priority for a state, never being allowed to put it at risk, immoral acts are necessary at times in order to promote the greater good. Hence great states are able to disregard the non-intervention principle in their *near abroad*, where the stronger state can promote the own national security and the international order, on behalf of the weaker state's sovereignty. This is linked to the absence of authorities in the international sphere, whereas security only can be realized through self-help. The problem is that the state that provides for the own security, by doing so, automatically fuels the insecurity of other states (Dunne & Schmidt, 2008:100-102).

The situation where a state's action to ensure the own security comes to threaten the security of other states, is called the *security-dilemma*. The dilemma is primarily caused by arms races, where states spends large sums of money on mutually threatening weapons that in the end don't provide security. Yet the system of self-help demands states to prepare for the worst as there are no world government that could punish aggressors. In comparison to Liberalism, who believes the dilemma can be solved through institutions (discussed below), Realism believes the dilemma to be unsolvable (Goldstein & Pevehouse, 2012:51-52). The issue is that it is hard to determine if military resources are offensive or defensive ones, and therefore, as no state can, or should, be without military resources, as soon as a state obtains military resources, it starts to pose a threat to its neighbours, who then must start to obtain military resources of their own. Therefore, the individual security of a state is seen to lead to insecurity for the collective (Hall, 2009:39). But in order for the security dilemma not to lead to a full scale war, Realism stresses the importance of *balance of power*, one of the key mechanisms to preserve the liberty of states (Dunne & Schmidt, 2008:94). The concept refers to a situation where one or several states' power being used to balance that of another state or group of states. During history several counterbalancing coalitions have been formed in order to prevent one state from conquering an entire region. Such counter balancing is understood to occur regularly. But even though it is seen as maintaining the stability of the international system, the stability does not imply peace (Goldstein & Pevehouse, 2012:52). Counterbalancing rather mean that the two parties presume that they have about equal military resources and possibilities to obtain larger resources. A war in this circumstance would be too dangerous or costly (Hall, 2009:40).

Whereas the international system on the one hand is seen as anarchic, it is on the other hand inhabited by actors of different strength. It is the strongest actors, the *super powers*, that determine how international politics is shaped; the *polarity* is

what determines the stability of the international system. Polarity refers to the number of independent power centres in the system, including both the power of various participants as well as their alliance groupings. A multipolar system normally has five or six centres of power, that are not grouped into alliances. A bipolar system has two dominant rival states, or two rivalling alliance blocs. And, finally, a unipolar system has one single centre of power around which all the other revolve (Goldstein & Pevehouse, 2012:56-57). Whereas bipolar and multipolar systems are understood to be the most important versions, unipolar systems are on the contrary generally understood as something unstable and dangerous (Hall, 2009:41-43).

2.2 Liberalism

Liberalism is mainly aiming at explaining how peace and cooperation can be possible. One of the traditional standpoints are the *reciprocity principle*, that states could develop organisations and rules that would facilitate cooperation. By developing and following reciprocal rules, with international institutions to monitor and enforce them, peace would be able to evolve. And peace through international cooperation is understood as a more rational option for states than to descend to warfare (Goldstein & Pevehouse, 2012:86-88). The liberal perspective on international relations is, in comparison to Realism, built on the assumption that states and humans are rational beings (Ericson, 2009:51). The state, although an important player in the international arena is not the only one of importance. Instead the relations in the international arena are understood as a cobweb of different actors, such as interest groups, transnational corporations, as well as international non-governmental organisations (Dunne, 2008:115).

War, even though it is believed to be a common feature in the anarchic system, is not identified to be caused by anarchy (Dunne, 2008:110). Instead it is seen as an irrational and unnatural thing, being the product of militaristic and undemocratic governments that seek to realize the own interests. Peace, on the other hand, is the normal state of affairs and is on top of that claimed to be able to last forever. As humans are seen as rational creatures, harmony and cooperation between peoples are understood as a part of the laws of nature, Liberalism is confident that war can be removed from human experience with the help of democracy and free trade (Burchill, 1996:31). But the ever lasting peace depends on the characteristic of governments, where democracies are understood as more peaceful than autocracies (Goldstein & Pevehouse, 2012:87). This because they are understood as being more stable internally and more peaceful than their authoritarian counterparts in international relations (Dunne, 2008:113). Liberalism holds a rather suspicious view on concentrated forms of power, especially state power as it is understood to be exercised in the interest of the ruling elites against the wishes of the masses. In international relations, the balance of power is seen as being arranged in order to suit the interests of Great Powers' leaders. This is why Liberalism stresses the importance of democracy in order to maintain international peace (Burchill,

1996:39). In a democracy, war and use of force is usually not seen as legitimate, as it violates the individual's right to peace and freedom. Only if the people has given its consent to it, war can be legitimate (Ericson, 2009:53). Liberalism hence claim that the aim of international relations is democracy, human rights, peace, free trade and economic growth, and intergovernmental cooperation (Ericson, 2009:55). But since different parties might have different perceptions of the same thing in a conflict, it can be difficult to resolve the conflict without a third party involved, such as international organisations or regimes. These can help solving the problems of collective goods by increasing transparency, that makes cheating harder when everyone knows what everyone else is doing. As the communication internationally wise would be enhanced, states can identify conflicts and negotiate solutions through regimes in a more efficient way (Goldstein & Pevehouse, 2012:90-91). By engaging several states in a cooperation there is a possibility to connect all states' needs so that a state that makes a concession in one area gets compensation in another. Institutions might also offer sanctions if any party would be found cheating or not following agreements (Ericson, 2009:58-59).

Another core in liberal thinking is free trade. As trade in general is seen to bring mutual gains to all players, no matter of their size or the nature of their economics, Liberalism understands free trade as being able to create a more peaceful world order (Dunne, 2008:113). Trade is seen to increase wealth, cooperation and global well-being. In the long term it also makes conflict unlikely because governments will not disrupt a process that adds wealth to the own state. When trade between states increases state leaders will rather find out that they have become dependent on one another for goods: *interdependence* (Goldstein & Pevehouse, 2012:87). The growth of interdependency has been linked to a parallel decline in the value and importance of territorial conquest for states. This as the benefits of trade and cooperation among states greatly exceeds that of military competition and territorial control: what traditionally has been a mean for states to increase the national wealth. The modern, complex layers of interdependence ensure that states cannot act aggressively without risking economic penalties from other members in the international community, and it makes little sense for states to threaten its economical partners whose markets are of importance for the own economic growth (Burchill, 1996:37). Although the mutual dependence in interdependence is most often is asymmetrical, that some states are more dependent than others, power is not understood as something actors have in general, but something they have a certain amount of in specific matters (Ericsson, 2009:58).

2.3 Analytical framework

The two theories differ in all of aspects. A comparison between the two analytical frameworks is to follow:

<i>Aspects:</i>	<i>Liberalism</i>	<i>Realism</i>
Important actors in international politics:	Nation States, NGOs, interest groups, International organizations, transnational corporation.	Nation States.
The normal state of affairs in International Politics:	Peace: states and human beings are rational; harmony and cooperation between peoples are part of the natural laws.	War, suspicion and conflicts: states compete with each other for power and security.
Main goal of international politics:	Democracy, human rights, peace, free trade and economic growth, and intergovernmental cooperation. Politics is a plus-sum game: good chances of mutual benefit.	Survival of the State. Politics is a zero-sum game: more for one actor means less for another.
The security dilemma:	Solvable through institutions and regimes.	Not solvable. War can be avoided through balance of power: counterbalance means that war would be too dangerous and costly.
The international system is:	Anarchic. War is a common thing in the system. Actors have a certain amount of power in specific matters: it is not something they have in general.	Anarchic, but not chaotic: states follow norms on how to behave. States are of unequal strength and the most powerful determine international politics.
Security and co-existence is facilitated by:	Democracy and free trade. Cooperation through international organisations and regimes increase transparency and makes cheating harder; they can offer sanctions if any party would cheat	Self-help. Non-intervention: only important in regards to other, equally strong actors. Stability in the system is linked to polarity.
War is:	An irrational and unnatural thing. The product of militaristic and undemocratic regimes. War can be removed from the human experience.	The normal state of affairs in international politics.

3 Methodology

The epistemological and ontological approach in this essay is based on positivism, that sees the ability to make casual statements as the aim of political science. The study will be a qualitative comparative case study, using inductive method and comparative method. The material will consist of pre-existing primary source and secondary source material that will be processed through content analysis. Interviews although an option to gather data, will not be conducted.

3.1 Ontological and epistemological discussion

Questions regarding ontology concern what reality is characterised of; epistemological questions concern the nature of knowledge and how knowledge is reached (Esaiasson et al. 2012:19). Both are issues that cannot be avoided as they shape the approaches to theory and the methods used by the social scientist. A classical description of them is that they should be seen as *a skin and not a sweater*, stressing that the individual stance of the social scientist is not something that can be put on and taken off when it is seen fit. It is of importance that every political scientist identifies the personal ontological and epistemological belief and are able to defend it (Furlong & Marsh, 2010:184). This since it, after all, shapes what we study, how we study it and also what we think we might be able to claim with the result of our inquiry (Furlong & Marsh, 2010:189). Ontology concerns what is *out there*, that is, whether or not a reality exists that is independent from our understanding of it. Epistemology is connected to ontology in the sense that it asks the question of what the relationship is between the knower and of what can be known. Hence the main question in epistemology is whether or not the observer can identify objective relations between social phenomena, and if so, how can it be done? If so, can it be done through direct observations or are there situations that exist but that cannot be observed directly? (Furlong & Marsh, 2010:185-186).

3.1.1 The ontology and epistemology of this work

The ontological and epistemological approach in this work is based on the one of positivism. Positivism makes a division between empirical and normative research and theory, that is about *what is* respectively *what should be*. The former being concerned with questions that can be answered with empirical data, the latter most often concerning moral issues in politics, i.e. human rights, intervention, etc. Positivism claims that it is possible to divide empirical questions from normative

ones which enables for social science to be objective and value-free (Halperin & Heath, 2012:54).

Positivism sees the social world as regular, systematic, and law-governed and that social phenomena can be explained and predicted by means of laws that has the same status as the laws in natural science. The purpose of social science, therefore, is to discover these laws (Halperin & Heath, 2012:29). Further it is stressed that a reality, that exists independently of our understanding of it, indeed do exist. And it claims that it is possible to establish regular relationship between social phenomena by using theory in order to generate a hypothesis that is possible to test by using direct observations, something that according to positivism can be used as a test of a theory's validity. An observer is also understood as having the ability to be objective in the way he or she undertakes observations. According to positivism, the general aim of social science is to be able to make casual statements, and it is also what the social scientist should aim to do. Positivism stress that it is possible for social science to be objective and free of values. This as it claims that it is possible to separate empirical questions from normative ones (Furlong & Marsh, 2010:193-194).

3.1.2 The Critique of Positivism

There are critiques against positivism. Quine, for instance, argued that the five senses never can give us *unvarnished news*, that is, information independent of the concepts we use to classify it. When we apply a concept we pick out relevant and reliable features of what we perceive. There are no brute facts and no facts prior to interpretation (Hollis & Smith, 1990:55). Hence it is impossible to classify and describe experiences without interpreting it, which would make the positivist's approach difficult to use since it means that theory and experiment is not easy to separate, that in the long run will affect the conclusions that is drawn (Furlong & Marsh, 2010:195). Another critic, Kuhn, stressed that the thinking of a scientific community takes place within a paradigm, which governs what scientists are to make out of reluctant experiences. Any experience that conflicts with an accepted theory can be treated in two ways: either it is seen as a counter-example that demands that the theory shall be tested again, or it is seen as an anomaly that is discarded or put in the pending tray. In the end it comes down to how deeply the scientific community is committed to the theory (Hollis & Smith, 1990:59). The leading paradigm therefore can be seen as affecting what questions scientists asks and how observations shall be interpreted. It is based on the understanding that science generally tends to be dominated by the present paradigm. This paradigm usually is unquestioned and hence it affects what questions scientists asks and how the observations are interpreted. Further criticism mentions that there are obvious differences between social and natural phenomena which would make social science impossible to conduct as social structures do not exist independently of the activities they shape, unlike natural structures. Social structures also do not exist independently of agents' views of what they are doing in the activity (Furlong & Marsh, 2010:195-196).

I do acknowledge the critique of positivism and I do realise the risks that comes along with it. However, I stress that the arguments of, for instance, Quine and Kuhn, would mean that social science would be hard, if not impossible, to study. From my understanding, no science can be conducted without interpretation of some kind. And as there is no other way to interpret society or the world around us without the use of our senses, there is no way to be able to classify or describe experiences without interpreting them. According to Quine there are no facts prior to interpretation, interpretation that takes place by the help of our five senses. How can reliable facts even be found without the use of our senses? Social Science would be an impossible task. Kuhn's critique, regarding different paradigms might be more applicable to natural sciences. Social Science, according to Hollis & Smith, use theory that often is derived from International Relations, where there is much talk about competing paradigms. This in the sense that there are not just conflicting and unfalsified theories but that the conflict reflects starting points that hardly even can be compared. For instance, Realism, Structuralism, and Pluralism all have their followers in the discipline. At first sight it may look like the approaches are in direct competition, but it is impossible to even think of a way in which they could be tested against each other. Each of the theories sees different actors, different issues, and different pieces of evidence. Each know about the weakness in the own theory and in the other theories (Hollis & Smith: 1990:60-61).

3.2 Research design

In order to answer any research question, it is of importance to first and foremost identify what *kind* of question it is. There are five different types of research questions: descriptive questions, that are concerned with the characteristics of what has happened, what is happening, or what exists; explanatory questions which generally asks about what is causing or what has caused an outcome, or why something exists or has happened; predictive questions, that are concerned with the likely effect or outcome of something; prescriptive questions asks of what we should do, or about what is right and what is wrong; and normative questions asks what is best, just, right or preferable and what therefore must be done (Halperin & Heath, 2012: 116-118). Descriptive questions usually ask "Who", "What", "Where", and "When". They can be research questions if they are significant, researchable, and if it can be shown that people disagree about what the answer is, or if it can be shown that people in some way are wrong about the answer on which most people agree. However, while it is possible to answer some descriptive questions easily, since they have a clear factual answer that is easily accessible and uncontested, other descriptive research questions are not as easily resolved and may be a very contested matter and can provide allot of scope for theoretical and empirical investigation (Halperin & Heath, 2012:116-117).

I recognize my research question as a descriptive question. I find it significant as the hypothesis used, argues that the EU's main purpose, to promote peace, is having opposite effect due to the failure to understand Russian foreign policy from

another perspective. But previous research is lacking in the matter of how the liberal view differs from the realist view, which is of importance in order to understand how Russia sees on the *near abroad*, an area that it now has to share with the EU. I do believe that the question indeed is researchable by studying primary sources, such as official documents, and secondary sources, such as academic articles.

An answer of the research question, the hypothesis, contains of three elements: an independent variable, a dependent variable, and a statement about the relationship between the two of them. A variable always assumes at least two different values or characteristics, and these values must be exclusive; each observation fitting into only one category. A ***dependent variable*** is the variable that the researcher is most interested in, that is, what he wants to explain. It is the variable that the researcher assume is dependent upon, or be affected by, variations in another variable. An ***independent variable*** is thought to be affecting the outcome; it is the factor that brings along the outcome the researcher wishes to explain. It always comes before the dependent variable in time and space, and directly, or indirectly, cause or influence the dependent variable. Within this specific relationship it is seen as independent since it does not depend on any other variable. Finally, the relation between the independent and dependent variable is often affected by an ***intervening variable***, that either can take the form of either a *mediating* variable, if it transmits the effect of the independent variable to the dependent variable, or as a *moderator* variable, if it affects the relationship between the independent and dependent variables by producing an interaction effect (Halperin & Heath, 2012:144-145).

In order to answer my research question, I recognize the following set of variables:

VARIABLES		
<i>Variables:</i>	<i>Identified as:</i>	<i>Values identified as:</i>
<i>Dependent</i>	Russian Foreign Policy	Confrontation/Cooperation
<i>Independent</i>	Non-Russian orientated policy	EU oriented policy/NATO oriented policy/West oriented policy/Nationalist based policy.
<i>Intervening</i>	EaP state	Armenia/Azerbaijan/Belarus/Georgia/Moldova/Ukraine

The independent variable could also have included Iran and Turkey in the variables, something that would have been of more benefit, had the focus been on the Commonwealth of Independent States. But as the essay concerns the EaP these two variables have been left out in order to focus on a Western perspective.

Also, it can be questioned whether or not it only is Non-Russian oriented policy that affects the outcome of Russian foreign policy. Other identity and heritage based aspects, that could explain the reason for the closeness between Belarus and Russia and the rivalry between Georgia and Russia would also be of benefit. But as identity and identity based on heritage are big subjects, that alone could be the subject for research, I decided to collect these aspects under the, perhaps rather simplified,

value “Nationalist based policy”. It is also worth mentioning that this study aims at investigating cases where Non-Russian policy in the EaP affects the Russian foreign policy. In this case there also is possible that the independent variable might be affecting the dependent variable, that is that non-Russian oriented policy might directly affect Russian foreign policy, which would complicate the image further. This could, even though not used in this essay, be used in future research.

3.3 Method

I will be using a mixed methods approach. A qualitative and comparative case study will be conducted in order to answer the research question. The focus of a qualitative method in political science is on detailed, text based answers that are often historical or include personal reflections from participants in political institutions, events, issues or processes (Vromen, 2010:249). A case study is described as *cases* of something. The thing being studied is interesting, relevant, or has caught attention due to a larger theoretical concern or a specific research design (Moses & Knutsen, 2007:132). One of the benefits with case studies is that the researcher, by focusing on a single case, that case can be intensively examined even if the resources of research are relatively limited. The negative part, since science has the goal to generalize, is that one single case will face difficulties in constituting the basis for a valid generalization or a ground for disproving already established generalizations (Lijphart, 1971:691). The selected case is the foreign policy of Russia, making the study into a *single-N* study, that, according to Halperin & Heath, usually are used in order to uncover casual paths and mechanisms and assess specific mechanisms that are identified in theories. The negative side of Small-N case studies is that they generally are weaker in generating external validity, such as generalization, due to the fact that they only concern a small number of cases of a general phenomenon. But including a larger set of cases in order to increase generalizability, could on the other hand lead to conceptual stretching and, therefore, threaten the conceptual validity of the study (Halperin & Heath, 2012:172).

A comparison will be made between the theories’, Liberalism and Realism, ability to explain the case. A comparison serves several purposes in political analysis, the main function being that it enables the development, testing and refinement of theories regarding casual relationships (Hopkin, 2010:285). Qualitative research which regards a small number of cases has traditionally been considered as a methodologically “soft” option. This as research, that is based on a small amount of cases, faces the risk of the selected cases being unrepresentative, and the findings in these specific cases exposes the analysis to the researcher’s bias. A qualitative-comparative and case-based research can, however, provide a far more rigorous and sophisticated response to some research questions (Hopkin, 2010:300).

This will be mixed with an inductive method. An inductive method starts with empirical particulars and generates more general truths; it is based on the claims

that only direct observations supply us with statements about the world and that true knowledge comes from observation statements (Moses & Knutsen, 2010:22-23). This is a technique that is based on discovering categories and being exploratory with open question, rather than only testing theoretically hypotheses through the counterpart, deduction (Vromen, 2010:257).

3.4 Material

The material will be based on pre-existing primary and secondary sources. Primary sources refer to original documents that has been produced by political actors, policy-making agencies, or non-governmental organizations. In other words: a source that generally is considered to be a document that reflects a position of an actor and do not contain an analysis, whereas a secondary source does contain an analysis, such as a scholarly journal article (Vromen, 2010:261-262). Primary sources are the direct outcomes of events or experiences. They include eyewitness accounts, such as interviews or oral stories; original documents, such as diaries and school records; diplomatic reports, such as original assessment and papers given to decision makers (Moses & Knutsen, 2007:120).

The material will be processed through content analysis, which is an unobtrusive method of data collection, something that has a number of advantages over other methods such as surveys, interviews, focus groups discussions, ethnography, etc. The chief advantage being that it can reduce bias. For instance, there is always a risk that people change their mind when they know they are being observed. But by using content analysis the researcher can actually get material on decision making without interviewing the decision maker. Transcripts of a public hearing can be analysed instead of being dependent on what government officials remember or are willing to tell about the hearing (Halperin & Heath, 2012:318). Content analysis also have the benefit of allowing the researcher to explore beliefs, attitudes, and preferences of actors without having to meet them in person. Through analysing data from existing archives, the researcher can widen the scope of the own project further than would have been possible by collecting all data by him-/herself. It makes possible to study the trends over time as this material can be used for purposes that might differ quite allot from the purposes it originally was created. Using multiple sources of data and methods of how to obtain it, enables the researcher to see the research problem from different angles, *Triangulation*, that increases the reliability of the data and the process of how it was gathered. This because if the same results are discovered in different sources, the findings and interpretations of them have stronger validity because of this corroboration. Triangulation might also involve the usage of different theoretical perspectives which makes it possible for the researcher to identify bias (Halperin & Heath, 2012:177-178).

The use of interviews of any kind, would have been an option, but due to the rather short time frame of this project I will abstain from it as the work load would become too big to handle. Also, as my spoken Russian is considerably weaker than

my literate skills, I would be in need of an interpreter, and also the processing of the material would demand a longer timeframe for the project.

3.4.1 Source criticism

As the source of information today is never-ceasing, the demand on researchers is high when it comes to critically examine material; a sceptical starting point is essential (Esaiasson et al. 2012:278). I have decided to follow Esaiasson's, Gilljam's, Oscarsson's and Wägnerud's model for source criticism, that concerns Authenticity, independence, contemporaneity, tendency. The authenticity criteria focus on whether or not the document is real. The document in which the facts or witness reports are published must have been produced at the time claimed, by the author claimed. If a document is false, it usually comes down to being the content itself that gives it away (Esaiasson et al. 2012:282).

The second criteria, independence, regards whether or not we can believe in the stories that a document tells us. There are a couple of different aspects of how to do this: if a fact can be confirmed by another source of another origin than the first one, the credibility will grow; primary sources are more credible than secondary ones, that is, the story of people who themselves have experienced something is more credible than someone who simply is retelling what someone else has said; a credible statement should come from an independent source and the statement should not have been affected by someone else. This criterion is however mostly based on deciding the level of dependency, as it would indeed be hard to find a person or a document that is completely independent from someone or something else. Contemporaneity stress that the longer period of time that pass between an occurrence and the writing about it, raises the probability of the written source containing false memories, reconstructions, and rationalizations. As people have a tendency to forget and reconstruct, contemporary accounts are to be understood as more valid (Esaiasson et al. 2012:283-284). Finally, the tendency criterion helps the researcher to keep in mind under what circumstances or in what environment an account has been made or produced. It mostly concerns the teller and not the tale. The amount of truth in the tale is decided upon reflecting on the tendency of the teller. Any tendentious source must be supplemented by at least one independent source, or by a source that has the opposite tendency (Esaiasson et al. 2012:285).

3.4.2 Source critical discussion

The largest part of the material is based on academic articles or books. Those articles that has been peer reviewed, represents official agencies, or found in books that has been published by well-known publishers, have been found as trustworthy. However, it is of benefit to discuss some sources, especially the official Russian documents.

In establishing the development of the Russian foreign policy towards the EaP, a part of the material consists of the official Russian foreign policy concepts. The Concept of 2013 was found at www.Mid.ru, the official homepage of the Russian

foreign ministry. The document is in English and stated to be an unofficial translation. The specific parts used has, in order to circumvent the issue of being an unofficial translation, been compared to the Russian original documents. The Concept, from the time of Medvedev's mandate in 2008, was not found on Mid's webpage, rather it was found on www.russianmission.eu, the official webpage of the representation of the Russian Federation to the EU.

The two documents are therefore understood to fulfil the authenticity criteria, and as they are understood as official documents, the independence criteria also is fulfilled. The fact that several years have passed since the documents were published could make it problematic for the contemporaneity criteria. However, from the documents one can clearly read when they all have been approved by the president, which in this case is understood as a period after which changes or additions have not been made. The tendency criteria as well is understood as fulfilled, as the criteria becomes rather superfluous in regards to these documents that are official ones, their partiality being exactly what will help to develop a theory of how the Russian Foreign Policy Concept can be understood differently from the two chosen perspectives.

4 Russia and the EaP

Below follows the empirical part of the paper. But before going into empirical facts regarding the six EaP states' relation with Russia, it is of benefit to first focus on the development of Russian foreign policy, which will follow below. The essay will after that present the *Frozen Conflicts* of the EaP, namely the conflicts regarding Nagorno-Karabakh, the Georgian secession states, and Transnistria. These conflicts are important to understand, as they understood as a tool to prevent deeper integration with the West. Finally, a comprehensive presentation of all the EaP states will follow, before the conclusion.

4.1 The development of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation

The Russian Federation is not a part of neither the ENP nor the EaP. The intensification of the EU's policies to the East has generally been understood as a way of the EU to gain leverage and influence over the *near abroad*, which is understood as being contrary to Russian interest (Freire, 2013:203). Especially the EaP, is understood as a Western or EU intrusion of the own prerogatives that includes the relations with its neighbours (Torbakov, 2013:111).

The foreign policy during the reign of Boris Yeltsin was influenced by the memories of Russia's past status as a superpower (Casier, 2006:384-385), where Russia tried to figure out the own self-importance and the own methods of operation (Leichtova, 2014:152). In the first days of independence Russia defined the West as its political ally and as a prototype for Russia's economic and political development, and the aftermath of the Soviet era was characterized by the so called *Kozyrev diplomacy*, a stage of Russian foreign policy that was explicitly pro-Western and that had a *unipolar* world view, recognising the United States' centrality as the only global power (CIDOB, 2010:224). The foreign policy was based on pursuing a policy that maintained close ties with both the EU and the USA, as well as achieve integration into the Euro-Atlantic world, a policy that got under constant attack from communist and nationalistic forces that argued that the policy was representing a capitulation to the West and that it was a sacrifice of the national interests of Russia (Gill, 2015a:10). The policy started eventually to falter, and in January 1996 the resignation of the foreign minister Kozyrev was announced (CIDOB, 2010:224).

The new Foreign Minister, Yevgeny Primakov, was to base the Russian foreign policy doctrine on three pillars. First and foremost, it was stated that the preferred world order was a *multipolar one* instead of a unipolar one. The international

agenda was set by a number of players, out of which Russia was one, but also the EU. The second pillar argued that Russia was to be reinstated as a *normal great power*, not seeking to reinstate the rivalry with the United States from the Cold War. The third pillar mentioned how this goal was to be achieved: Russia was to defend its national interests in a consistent manner (Casier, 2013:124). The claim to great power status was to appear in every foreign policy concept up until 2013 where it was no longer mentioned (Light, 2015:15). However, the general attitude to the West remained cooperative (Gill, 2015a:11).

When Vladimir Putin became president in 2000, he initially hinted that he did not regard NATO in its expanded form as a major problem. Rather he pursued a more wide-ranging and durable cooperation with NATO than Yeltsin ever did. During the early days of his presidency he even tried to downplay the impact a NATO expansion would have on Russian security, in a quest to make Russia an indispensable partner for the West (Mankoff, 2012:152), and in October 2001 Putin acknowledged that Russia could live with an expanded NATO as long as NATO itself became more of a political organization rather than a traditional military alliance (Mankoff, 2012:157). The Russian acceptance of the expansion of both NATO and the EU marked a definitive ending to the Brezhnev doctrine (McDonald, 2007:146).

The foreign policy concept that was released during Putin's first term showed self-confidence (Leichtova, 2014:42). At this time Russia mainly used soft power tools in the relations with its neighbours, and looked for cooperation on common interests with the West (Ruiz González, 2013:5). To a large extent the foreign policy was to be based on a recognition of Russia's new status and needs, getting rid of relics from the days of the Soviet Union, such as abandoning of a naval base in Vietnam and a radar station on Cuba (Lieven, 2002:254). Russia also showed a far more flexible approach to the near abroad, for instance in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks, when Russia supported the American intervention in Afghanistan and agreed on American troops being stationed in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. Russia also did not voice serious concerns when the United States withdrew from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in 2002 (Casier, 2006:384-385). This approach could on the other hand be seen as serving national interests as it became useful for dealing with the situation in Chechnya (Hill, 2015:20).

Putin's second presidential term came to be the one that changed the direction of the Russian foreign policy. The spirit of cooperation that had been apparent during the Yeltsin era was abandoned for a more assertive and hard-lined approach. In 2004 the declining Russian control over the former Soviet space continued to be troubling: Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania had become part of the West; Moldova had defied Russia with encouragement from the EU; American military advisors were in Georgia; and Azerbaijan and Ukraine had sent troops to Iraq (Donaldson, Noguee & Nadkarni, 2014:383). The change of the foreign policy in the post-Soviet space from 2004 and onwards, was, first and foremost, due to the Rose Revolution in Georgia and the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, which caused regime changes that was not only understood as unfriendly, but also understood as being masterminded by the West. This era was accompanied by raising energy prices that created extra incomes for the Russian state, and meanwhile certain regimes in the region were

rewarded for their allegiance to Russia, for instance with lower energy prices, while others were sanctioned for the lack of compliance (Casier, 2013:124-125). By the end of Putin's second mandate, Russia were to have strained relations with both Ukraine and Georgia, as well as with its strategic partners: the EU and the United States (CIDOB, 2010:225-226).

The seeking of a stable and fair world order with collective solutions for common challenges, a world order that always follow the legality that the United Nations provides has for a long time been a central aim in Russian politics (Ruiz González, 2013:6). Dmitry Medvedev stated during his presidency that Russian foreign policy followed five principles: the primacy of international law; an international world order that was to be understood as a multipolar one; a policy of non-confrontation and non-isolation; the protection of diasporas; the recognition of areas of privileged interests (Freire, 2013:204). And in 2008 a new foreign policy concept was released that replaced older versions, adopted during Putin's presidency. Much of the content was reproduced, but it did, however, differ from previous versions regarding how Russia portrayed itself: now seeing itself as an actor in the international arena whose present international status did not match its potential. Therefore, it was meant that its interests were not being taken into consideration (CIDOB, 2010:227). The purpose for creating a new concept, was stated to be in order to strengthen the role of Russia in international politics (Leichtova, 2014:42), and one of the first aims to be clarified in the concept, was to "achieve strong positions of authority in the world community" and "to influence global processes to ensure formation of a just and democratic world order, based on collectiveness in finding solutions to international problems [...]", where the United Nations would carry the central coordinating role (Russianmission, 2008:1-2). It further stressed the need to strengthen international law and the role of the UN.

In relation to the neighbouring countries, the tone was toned down in comparison to the 2000 concept, stating that Russia would offer *comprehensive aid* and that it committed itself to foster the removal of conflicts and tensions in neighbouring states (Leichtova, 2014:42-43). Concerns especially regarding tensions based on the Russian diaspora, has grown with Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia (Hill, 2015:20). The reason for why the Russian diaspora has been such a reoccurring theme in the foreign policy concepts is linked to the fact that over 20 millions of Russians found themselves residents in other independent states after 1991. The integration of these has come at varied levels, whereas integration in Lithuania and Kazakhstan has proved to be close to exemplary, in other states such as Estonia and Latvia, ethnic Russians were subject to segregation, lacking basic rights such as the right to vote, unless they went through a naturalization process (Ruiz González, 2013:7). In the 2008 concept, where development of bilateral and multilateral cooperation with the CIS is stressed to be a priority of Russia, references to the diaspora is as follows:

Particular attention is paid to supporting compatriots who live in the CIS Member States, as well as to negotiating mutual agreements intended to protect their educational, linguistic, social, labour, humanitarian and other rights and freedoms (Russianmission, 2008:14).

The tone in the 2008 concept against the international system harshened further. The contemporary international system was deemed as being discriminatory towards the majority of cultures and cultural identities, and further warnings were made regarding the circumventing of the authority of the UN security council's authority. Two specific interventions were in mind: Kosovo and Iraq, that was understood as Western states were able to do as they pleased unilaterally in international politics (Leichtova, 2014:45-46), meaning that especially NATO was neither a caring or a reliable partner in terms of security (Wallander, 2007:456).

In 2013 when Putin had been reinstated as president, the Foreign Policy Concept was updated once more, and the importance of international law was mentioned 16 separate times. The traditional objections to violations of territorial integrity was accompanied by the opposition of interventions carried out in the name of *responsibility to protect*, and the condemnation of the unlawful use of *soft power* to interfere in the internal affairs of sovereign states (Light, 2015:24). The regional priorities stated, in similarity to the policy from 2008, that priority areas of Russian foreign policy included the development of bilateral and multilateral cooperation with the CIS Member States, who, it was stressed, "share common historical background" (Concept 303-18-02-2013, 42§). In the 2013 concept the Regional Priorities also clearly states that Russia seeks "friendly relations with each of the CIS Member States on the basis of equality, mutual benefit, respect for and consideration of each other's interests". Strategic partnerships and alliance would, it was stressed, be developed with "those states that show willingness to engage in them" (ibid. 43§). As well it is now stipulated to be one of Russia's priority tasks to establish the Eurasian Economic Union. This Union aimed at making the best out of the mutually beneficial economic ties in the CIS as well as becoming a model of association that also were open to other states, serving as an effective link between Europe and the Asia-Pacific region (ibid. 44§). Regarding the diaspora, the 2013 Concept states that the humanitarian sphere is an essential resource for the CIS as a whole and for each of the CIS Member States in the context of globalization. Particular attention was to be paid to provide support for compatriots living in the CIS Member States and negotiate on agreements to protect their educational, linguistic, social, labour, humanitarian rights and freedoms (ibid. 45§). On the security area the Concept states that Russia will build up a cooperation with the CIS to neutralize threats coming from, among others, Transcaucasia (ibid. 46§).

The principles that have guided the foreign action of the Russian Federation has developed through the years. In the 2000 concept no reference was given to the State's interests. Instead the main principle was stated as "To protect citizens' and society's interests". The state was however added in the 2008 concept', hence being "Protection of citizens', society's and State's interests". And in 2013 the principle was even further strengthened into being "To Guarantee the protection of citizens', society's and State's interests" (Ruiz González, 2013:2-3).

4.2 The frozen conflicts in the EaP

Ever since the collapse of the Soviet Union, three major conflicts have been going on in the Russian near abroad: separatism in Transnistria in Moldova, and Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia. In Azerbaijan the Armenian dominated region of Nagorno-Karabakh has been occupied since the 1990s by Armenia, resulting in a de facto war between the two states. As will be shown below, Russia has played an active part as a mediator in these conflicts. Leichtova explains that stability in the region has traditionally been high on the Russian agenda, as already the 1993 foreign policy concept mentioned that peace in neighbouring states was understood as being directly connected to Russia's own survival (Leichtova, 2014:43). In the same foreign policy concept Russia also claimed the right to judge activities from third parties in the post-Soviet space, where these parties were recommended to respect Russian interests (Leichtova, 2014:50). As both the EU and NATO pledge not to admit any new members that have unresolved territorial disputes (Mankoff, 2012:237), these conflicts can be seen as a tool to keep a leash on the post-Soviet states' ambitions to join the organisations.

4.2.1 Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and Transnistria

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict started already in 1988 where large demonstrations followed in Armenia after the Soviet leadership in Moscow had refused to transfer the Armenian Christian dominated part of Muslim Azerbaijan, to the Armenian Soviet Republic. In 1990 there were armed clashes between Armenians and Azeri in Nagorno-Karabakh, and in September 1991 Armenia voted to include the enclave into the independent Armenia. From the late fall 1991 the conflict has resulted in the estimated displacement of 800.000 Azeri, 400.000 Armenians as well as 25.000 casualties, where Armenian troops have helped cleanse Nagorno-Karabakh and surrounding areas in the territory of Azerbaijan from Azeri. Russia originally took the side of Azerbaijan but later on switched sides in order to support the Armenians. Mediation hasn't reached any solutions and the matter has strong opposition in both Armenia and Azerbaijan (Nygren, 2008:105). The role played by Russia in the conflict changed into being that of a real mediator, something that coincided with the installation of Putin as president, when also the EU and United States started to show an increased interest in the Caucasus. It could also be a result of that, in comparison to the other conflict areas, Russia did not have anything to gain from a continued conflict (Nygren, 2008:109).

In a similar manner, the conflicts in the secession states in Georgia arose in the early 1990s when separatist tendencies made Georgia face the prospects of losing two of its regions, South Ossetia and Abkhazia. The Georgian government responded with armed attacks in 1991 and 1992, which made the governments of South Ossetia and Abkhazia to appeal to Russia for protection. Russia mediated into an armistice and established peace keeping missions in the two Georgian republics (CIDOB, 2010:226). In 1991 nationalist Zviad Gamsakhurdia had been elected president of Georgia and during his short reign the relations with Russia

would deteriorate (Donaldson, 2015:440-441). Gamsakhurdia, being a passionate anti-Soviet and anti-Russian, came to support the Chechen demand of secession from Russia (Donaldson, Noguee & Nadkarni, 2014:191). Eventually he was overthrown by domestic opponents, who were reported to be receiving weapons from Russian military forces in the region, and replaced as president by Eduard Shevardnadze (Donaldson, 2015:440-441). In 1993 Gamsakhurdia began a military uprising with the support of loyalists in Abkhazia, after which Shevardnadze asked Russian troops to be stationed in Abkhazia, and shortly thereafter a cease fire was proclaimed (Nilsson & Silander, 2016:54). But Shevardnadze had, among other things, to accept Russian military forces being stationed on Georgian territory in exchange for the help with Abkhazia and the Gamsakhurdia loyalists (Donaldson, 2015:441).

Transnistria is a region of Moldova, mainly populated by ethnic Russians and Ukrainians that immigrated to the area after Moldova had been re-united with the Soviet Union after having joined Romania after the Russian revolution. Violent opposition was triggered in Transnistria in the late 1980's when the Moldovan language was declared the official language of the Moldovan Soviet republic. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union there were political movements in Moldova that strongly advocated for the country to reunite with Romania (Nygren, 2008:82).

The population of Transnistria were strong believers in the Soviet system and backed the 1991 august coup against Gorbachev, something that the Moldovan leaders opposed. One week after Moldova had declared its independence from the Soviet Union, Transnistria seceded from Moldova, declaring itself to be a constituent republic of the Soviet Union. Moldova tried to stop the secession which resulted in widespread fighting in 1992, where the Transnistrians were aided by the Soviet 14th army that was stationed in the capitol Tiraspol and hence managed to hold off the Moldovans. In spring 1992 Yeltsin put the 14th army under Russian control (Donaldson, Noguee & Nadkarni, 2014:187), and a cease fire was signed the same year where the conflict's parties, Moldova, the separatists in Transnistria, and Russia, made a joint decision to supervise peacekeeping in the area. Russian troops maintained a special peacekeeping mission in the territory. Russia withdrew most of its military troops and heavy armed equipment in the early 2000s, but still claims its right to remain in Transnistria to uphold peace (Nilsson & Silander, 2016:52-53). For instance, Russia promised in 1994 to withdraw its troops by 1997 but eventually only came to lower the number of troops from 10.000 to 1500 men between 1994 and 2003 (Nygren, 2008:83). After the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014, the parliament of Transnistria also requested to join the Russian Federation. After Moldova signed the Association Agreement (AA) with the EU the talks between Russia and Transnistria intensified, resulting in economic packages, trade agreements, and strengthened military relations. And in 2015 Russia held a military exercise in Transnistria, that the EU saw as a future Russian threat of annexation of the region, in similarity to the 2014 event in Crimea (Nilsson & Silander, 2016:53).

4.3 Transcaucasia: Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia

Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan is located south of Russia and is to be understood as an important geographic area, being close to Chechnya as well as to the Black Sea and the Russian military interests located there. In the 2008 foreign policy concept, Russia is stated to approach trade and economic relations with the CIS member states, and that the cooperation with the CIS would be increased in the areas of security, where joint actions would be made to combat international terrorism, extremism, drug trafficking and transnational crime and illegal migration. “The priorities here include [...] prevention of risks of destabilization of the situations in [...] Transcaucasia” (Russianmission, 2008:14).

Whereas Armenia rests rather firmly in the Russian embrace, Georgia and Azerbaijan are less likely to end up there. Though Azerbaijan might, just as Georgia, become involved with the West, but that would provide that the ally, Turkey, does the same (Nygren, 2008:248).

4.3.1 Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan has no aspirations to join either the EU or the EEU. Instead the regime in Baku follows a policy of “Choosing not to choose”, by many argued to be a result of the country’s geography and the security challenges this brings: being sandwiched between Russia’s growing aspirations to dominate its near neighbourhood, and Iran that many fear is seeking to export its Islamic state model. Meanwhile the foreign policy agenda is dominated by the ongoing conflict with Armenia over Nagorno-Karabakh. Although the president has declared that Azerbaijan wants to be as close as possible to Europe, a significant thorn in the relations has been the EU’s failure to explicitly recognize Azerbaijan’s territorial integrity in the same way that it has done with other countries in the EaP, such as Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine, that have territorial disputes. Resulting in Azerbaijan considering the EU’s approach being a double standard (Paul, 2015:35-36): while the EU condemns the Russian occupation of Crimea, there seem to be no interest of the EU that parts of Azerbaijan’s territory are occupied by Armenia (Paul, 2015:40). The relation with Russia has historically seen been tense ever since 1992 due to basically the same reason: Nagorno-Karabakh and the Russian military assistance to Armenia in the conflict. The relation did improve when Putin became president. When Putin came to power in 2000, the relations were to improve considerably (Nygren, 2008:110-111), and in 2004 the Moscow Declaration was signed, that reaffirmed the two countries’ commitment to cooperate in the fight against terrorism and to refrain from any military, economic or financial measures that were directed against the other. Although Azeri is the only official language in Azerbaijan, there are no serious cultural-political problems in the relationship with Russia, even though there is a Russian minority in the country (Nygren, 2008:112).

The 2005 parliamentary elections stirred unrest in Azerbaijan that led to a long and violent period leading up to the elections. Frequent public demonstrations were met with violence and several demonstrators were arrested. After the election

OSCE and the Council of Europe monitors, both concluded that the elections had not met the standards of a democratic election. Russia on the other hand claimed that the elections had been held in accordance with the acting Azerbaijani legislation, admitting there had been violations but stressed that violations always take place to some extent in elections and the small extent of the violations did not call for questioning the legitimacy of the election results (Nygren, 2008:113).

A dispute did occur in December 2012 when Azerbaijan refused to extend a lease of a radar station to Russia where Azerbaijan had insisted on raising the annual price from \$7 million to \$300 million. Russia did not agree and in January 2013 Russia doubled the number of soldiers on a military base in Armenia, a move that according to military experts was aimed at getting the base ready for combat, either to repel aggression against Armenia, or for peacekeeping operations outside the post-Soviet region (Donaldson, Noguee & Nadkarni, 2014:203-204).

4.3.2 Armenia

Armenia was part of the four countries that were running for an AA with the EU in lead-up to the Vilnius EU Partnership summit in 2013. However, after a meeting with the Russian president, president Sargsian of Armenia announced the withdrawal of Armenia from the negotiations (MacFarlane, 2016:345). The Russian-Armenian relationship has not changed very much ever since the first term of Putin, who already in the year 2000 referred to Armenia as Russia's traditional ally. In the same year Armenia allowed Russian troops to remain on Armenian territory until the year 2025. Even though it is the strongest military power among the three Caucasus states, the Armenian need of Russian arms supplies can best be understood from the increased defence cooperation between Georgia, the hostile Turkey in the south, and the mortal enemy Azerbaijan. In the aftermaths of the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington in September 2001, government officials in Russia noted that Armenia was to remain Russia's only strategic partner in the South Caucasus. In the beginning of the 2000s joint military exercises with the local Russian troops were held annually (Nygren, 2008:114-115). The country has faced a lot of economic problems. The economy was shattered in the early 1990s and the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh drained the national economy. The situation was stabilised in the end of the decade with the help of Iran and Russia, after which Armenia found itself in debt to Russia. In the years to come agreements were made on how the debt to Russia would be paid off, eventually leading to the *debt-for-assets* arrangement, where state owned Armenian enterprises, such as military-industrial plants and a thermal power plant, were given to Russia as payment. The Armenian energy sector has been the aim of Russia: in 2003 the management of a nuclear power station was transferred to the Russian Unified Energy Systems, and later the same year the ownership of six hydroelectric power plants was transferred to Russia. By 2004 Russia had acquired 80 per cent of Armenia's power-generating capacity through the assets-for-debt agreements (Nygren, 2008:116-117).

4.3.3 Georgia

The most troublesome relation of Russia in the Caucasus, presently and historically, no doubt is the one with Georgia. Georgia's flirt with the West started already during Shevardnadze's presidency, who, with the nearby war in Chechnya in mind, sought closer security, military and trade relations with the United States and signed a partnership with NATO. (Nilsson & Silander, 2016:54). The Georgian dissatisfaction with Russia had been shown in a number of actions, for instance Georgia took part in the US-led initiative Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, and also allowed Chechen missions to operate in Tbilisi. The Russian response was sharpened when Vladimir Putin succeeded Yeltsin as the President of Russia, and on 1st of January 2001 Russia stopped its deliverance of natural gas to Georgia, most likely to demonstrate the Georgian dependency on Russia and to persuade Shevardnadze to refrain from further flirtation with NATO and the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline project (Donaldson, 2015:441). In 2003 a revolution ousted Shevardnadze from the power, something that was seen by Moscow as an example of how the Bush administration in the US used democracy promotion as a cover for efforts to spread American influence around Russia's borders (Mankoff, 2012:236).

In the Saakashvili mandate after the 2003 revolution that ousted Shevardnadze from power, Georgia intensified its demands of the withdrawal of the Russian peace keeping troops. The regime in Tbilisi found that Russia was increasing its political cooperation with Abkhazia and South Ossetia, giving financial support and therefore encouraging secession. The relations worsened yet, when Russia claimed that Chechen rebels were hiding on Georgian territory, in the fall of 2006 Georgia arrested five Russian officers on spying charges and introduced visa requirements for Russian peacekeepers in Abkhazia. Russia responded by introducing a visa regime for all Georgians in Russia and by imposing an embargo on the import of Georgian goods (CIDOB, 2010:226).

During 2008 the Russian-Georgian relation deteriorated steadily and officials in Tbilisi stated in May the same year that the two countries were on the brink of war. The Georgian war that was to follow in the summer 2008 was short. The war did demonstrate that flirtation with the West in the Russian sphere of influence would come at a price, and that Russia was prepared to defend this sphere of influence. In the end the US secretary of state acknowledged that the US would not continue to press for Georgia's membership in NATO in the near future (Donaldson, 2015:442-443). The war was presented as a humanitarian intervention, which was directly inconsistent with Russia's constant refusal to recognise any right of humanitarian intervention in international law (Kuhrt, 2015:427). But Russia did not follow any explicit imperial strategy in the Georgian war. It refused to annex Abkhazia and South Ossetia and the Russian forces did not advance to Tbilisi, and much less sought to incorporate Georgia into the Russian Federation. The action more resembled that of a large state claiming the right to friendly governments in their backyard, even if they have to be installed by force, which once was seen in the interventions once taken by the United States in Latin America (Mankoff, 2012:266).

After the war Russia virtually disappeared as a destination for Georgian exports. Attempts to normalize the relations were made from the Georgian side in 2012 by, for instance, removing the visa demands for Russians in 2012, a gesture that Russia did not respond to. In March 2013 the Georgian parliament passed a resolution that affirmed the country's intent to seek membership in the EU and NATO, and also expressed the interest to pursue dialogue with Russia regarding South Ossetia and Abkhazia. But the resolution did point out the impossibility for Georgia to establish any diplomatic ties with countries that recognized the independence of the Georgian breakaway republics. In November 2013 the continued westward leanings of Georgia were demonstrated when the country, together with Moldova, signed the EU cooperation agreement in Vilnius (Donaldson, Noguee & Nadkarni, 2014:200). Shortly after Georgia ratified the Association Agreement with the EU, Russia introduced a treaty with Abkhazia that binds Abkhazia to Russia politically, military, economically and socially more than ever before, even after the Abkhaz side redrafted several parts of the treaty in order to keep their de facto sovereignty. Another treaty later signed with South Ossetia went a step further in granting Russia full control over its security and borders (Paul, 2015:33-34).

4.4 The western neighbours: Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine

The western neighbours constitute of Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine. Belarus has the closest military alliance with Russia out of all of the countries in the post-Soviet space (Nygren, 2008:81), and whose good relation to Russia can be understood from the limited integration the country has had with the EU. Moldova has been heavily dependent on Russia for food export and energy import. The country has as well been indebted to the West and has faced big problems with criminality and emigration (Nygren, 2008:83). In the summer of 2013 Russia imposed economic sanctions on Ukraine and Moldova, most likely in order to prevent the two countries from signing an association agreement with the EU (Cadier, 2015:166). But Moldova is taking active part in the EaP and did sign the cooperation agreements in Vilnius in together with Georgia. Then finally there is Ukraine, with whom the Russian relation has been a roller coast ride ever since 1991, just to finally plummet during the last couple of years.

4.4.1 Belarus

In comparison to the present state of foreign policy, Belarus originally had a westward orientation. But this orientation slowly transformed into a Russian orientation when Aleksander Lukashenka was elected president in 1994. Border controls with Russia were for instance abolished in 1995 and, in 1996, Belarus decided on closer economic relations with Russia, which more or less can be described as the point when Belarus turned its back towards the West (Nygren,

2008:66). From that point on the Belarusian relation with the EU has remained stalled. In 1997 the Council of Ministers also decided that relations with Belarus would not improve while the country continued to fail to move towards respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. All measures that the EU has applied regarding the worsened situation in Belarus have had limited results due to a number of domestic factors and the constant Russian support of the Lukashenko regime in Minsk (Vysotskaya & Vieira, 2013:71-72).

The stalemate with the EU is also probably a contributing factor to the stable relation to Russia. But even with its closest ally, Belarus, Russia has had disputes. One of these disputes has concerned the Russian pricing of gas. In the summer of 2003 Belarus backed down on a previous promise to sell the Belarusian gas pipeline operator, *Beltransgaz*, to Russian Gazprom. In September the same year Gazprom announced that the deliverance of subsidized gas to Belarus would cease by 1st of January 2004. A decision to create a joint pipeline company was taken, but when the creation of it didn't happen, Gazprom stopped gas supplies to Belarus in January 2004, which Belarus responded to by raising its gas transit fees. Not until June 2004, had the issue been solved and the agreement was only for the remainder of the year, yet another gas war with Belarus did, however, not happen (Nygren, 2008:76-78). In spring 2006 Gazprom threatened with higher gas prices for the following year. Negotiations started but were soon stalled. But in September, Russia responded that Belarus could get cheaper gas if Russia was allowed to obtain 50 percent of *Beltransgaz*. In the end Belarus had to give in, giving up its monopoly on control of its gas pipeline network to Gazprom (Nygren 2008:78-79). Evidently the Belarusian economic sector, and especially the energy sector, is dependent on Russia. But furthermore, defence cooperation has also been an important factor in the relations ever since 1991, as Russia sees Belarus as the major buffer state against NATO expansion. Belarus also has sought political integration with Russia, where a possible union has been a big issue (Nygren, 2008:67), being at the centre of the Russia-Belarus relationship since the mid 1990s (Nygren, 2008:75). Although nothing has come of the unification process, Belarus did sign a treaty in 2014 together with Kazakhstan and Russia, that formally established the Eurasian Economic Union, the *EEU*, that extended the provision of the former Eurasian Customs Union, that was set up in 2010 (Cadier, 2015:169).

As Belarusian authorities prefer to keep a distance from the ENP, as the own position can be used as a personal sticks and carrots in the national relations the country has with the EU and Russia (Vysotskaya & Vieira, 2012:74). For instance, in 2008 the regime in Minsk took some unforeseen measures to cooperate with the EU, deciding to open a representation of the European Commission in Minsk, releasing political prisoners, and the president, Alexander Lukashenko, even stated in public that the EU demands at last had been heard (Vysotskaya & Vieira, 2013:73).

4.4.2 Moldova

The Transnistrian conflict has poisoned the Moldovan-Russian relations over the years, the main complaint being the continuous presence of the Russian military

forces that prevents Chisinau from extending its authority over the region. In 2001 Moldova became the first of the former Soviet states where a parliamentary election decided to return the communist party into power. The leader, Vladimir Voronin, initially pursued a cautious policy in order to not provoke Moscow. In early 2003 Voronin proposed a federal solution to the Transnistria problem; the first time a Moldovan leader abandoned the principle of a unitary state. The presence of Russian military in Transnistria encouraged the separatists to refuse to change their minds regarding independence. Suspicion towards Moscow grew in Moldova and during 2003 and 2004 Voronin himself shifted his orientation away from Russia by instead seeking closer relations with Europe. The main complaint being the continuous presence of the Russian military forces that prevented Chisinau from extending its authority over the region (Donaldson, Noguee & Nadkarni, 2014:189). The closer relations with Russia had made the relations with Romania to deteriorate, but when Romania joined the EU, Moldova came to seek closer relations with the West. The enhanced relation with Romania, as well as with the EU, NATO and the United States, interfered negatively on the good relations with Russia that had been developed since 2001 (Nygren, 2008:85).

In the summer of 2006 the Russian ministry of foreign affairs announced that it considered the unrecognized republics in the former Soviet Union to possess the right to self-determination, the foreign minister stressing that the expression of the people's will constituted the highest authority in determining the fate of those living in a specific territory. In September 2006 the residents of Transnistria voted in favour to join the Russian Federation. In the summer of 2007 Putin opened negotiations with Moldova, in order to reach a diplomatic settlement. Issues, such as ending the Russian boycott of Moldovan wines as well as reaching an agreement on the price of Russian natural gas, were solved. The Transnistrian problem, however, remained unchanged. The 2012 talks on the dispute ended with Transnistria blaming Moldova for the lack of progress, and Moldova accusing Russia for trying to entrench themselves in the region by secretly strengthen their military presence (Donaldson, Noguee & Nadkarni, 2014:189-190). In October 2013 Russian officials unexpectedly banned the import of Moldovan wines once again. A previous ban in 2006 had lowered the exports of wine to Russia from 70 percent to 30 percent in 2013. But in November the same year, unlike the Yanukovich regime in Ukraine, Moldova were to sign the cooperation agreements with the EU during the Vilnius summit (Donaldson, Noguee & Nadkarni, 2014:191).

4.4.3 Ukraine

Ukraine's position towards Russia has been characterized by suspicion since 1991. Already after the independence there was a public suspicion in Ukraine that Russia would not accept the permanence of Ukrainian independence. This was based on two issues: the status of the Black Sea Fleet and the status of the Crimea. The black sea fleet being one of the Soviet Union's four fleets contained around 300 ships and was located on Crimea in the city of Sevastopol, a city largely populated by ethnic. Nationalist tendencies in both Russia and Ukraine laid claim on both the Crimea and the entirety of the Black Sea Fleet (Donaldson, 2015:438). A large part of the

Russian legislature made territorial claims in the early 1990s, claiming the Crimea, and especially the city of Sevastopol, to be a part of Russian territory, as it had been part of the Russian SFSR up until 1954 when it had been given to the Ukrainian SFSR in order to commemorate the 300th anniversary of the unification between Ukraine and Russia. The Russian president, Boris Yeltsin, never approved of the territorial claims, but the Ukrainian president, subsequently stated that a loss of Sevastopol would mean the end of Ukrainian independence (Donaldson, Noguee & Nadkarni, 2014:173-174). In 1997 the issue regarding the Black Sea fleet had been solved and the fleet was divided equally between Russia and Ukraine. It was also decided that Crimea would remain with Ukraine and the naval base in Sevastopol would be permitted to be used by Russia for the upcoming 20 years (Donaldson, 2015:439).

During the 1990s Ukraine came to show considerable interest in cooperating with NATO, and signed military cooperation agreements in both 1997 and 1998. Even though a Ukrainian candidacy for NATO found some support in the West, the acting Ukrainian president, Leonid Kuchma, were, burdened by a bad human-rights record, that made a candidacy unlikely. In May 2002, however, Kuchma chaired a meeting of Ukraine's National Security and Defence Council that voted to initiate the process of a Ukrainian NATO membership. After the Orange revolution the newly admitted, pro-Western, president Viktor Yushchenko, proclaimed Russia to be a strategic partner of Ukraine. But at the same time Yushchenko declared the determination to affiliate with the West in his meetings with foreign leaders (Donaldson, 2015:439).

The infamous gas conflicts of 2006 and 2009 resulted in the impression of that Russia at any given time could turn off gas supplies and, by doing so, create tremendous economic problems in certain EU member states (Casier, 2013:137). The gas conflicts started already in 2005 and flared up periodically up until the middle of 2009. Initially they concerned the pricing of natural gas Russia sold to Ukraine and gas that passed through Ukrainian territory on its way to the EU. In 2005 Russia announced that it was going to stop selling natural gas to Ukraine by the old preferential tariffs. Instead world market prices were to be used (CIDOB, 2010:226). Prices were, however, not raised for either Belarus or Transnistria, showing on a Russian underlying political rationale aiming to disrupt the upcoming Ukrainian parliamentary elections, that were to see the Moscow favourite Viktor Yanukovich as victor. Yanukovich managed after the elections to renegotiate the deals regarding import and transit of gas into a more favourable arrangement (Donaldson, 2015:439-440). The price was, however, an extension of the long-term lease of Black Sea fleet in Sevastopol to Russia. The agreement hence provided the Russian fleet to remain in Sevastopol another 25 years, up until 2042 (Gill, 2015b:31-32).

Between 2004 and 2010 Ukraine uncontestedly enjoyed the status of being the frontrunner of the ENP and can be said to represent an important reference point for the evolution of the EU's approach towards its Eastern neighbours: the first Action Plan that was adopted under the ENP in 2005 targeted Ukraine; the DCFTA was first codified in an association agreement with Ukraine; the very first Association Agreement that contained the DCFTA was negotiated with Ukraine

(Vysotskaya & Vieira, 2013:68). In the end of 2013 Ukraine was facing a fundamental choice regarding its economic orientation. The EU had offered to conclude the Association Agreement with Ukraine at its summit in Vilnius in November, on condition that Ukraine improved the internal human rights environment. Ukraine seemed to be on the verge of signing the trade and cooperation pact with the EU at the Vilnius summit, apparently succumbing to persistent Russian pressure, came to abruptly suspend the association agreement on the basis of *national security*. On November 21st it instead announced the intentions to pursue active dialogues with Moscow on an economical deal. The decision was followed by severe demonstrations in Kiev and the following dramatic events in the relationship between Ukraine and Russia was to have harsh consequences for Russia's relations with the West (Donaldson, Noguee & Nadkarni, 2014:180-181).

5 Conclusion

Seen from the start of the independence, the Russian foreign policy was highly in line with, and easily understood from, liberal thinking. The change for instance from the Kozyrev years, when Russia identified the international system as a unipolar one, with the US as the hegemon, into the Primakov era that understood the world to be a multipolar one with several players, the US being one, Russia one, and the non-state actor the EU being one, is an acknowledgement that nation states as well as *other things* such as international organizations are among the important actors in the international system. The foreign policy had the approach, in line with Liberalism, that the security dilemma could be solved, bearing the characteristics of plus-sum logic: a good chance for mutual benefit. This is for instance visible in the fact that the role of NATO was downplayed by the president, and accepted, as well as the EU in its expanded form. Instead of being a competitor, Russia was seeking to become an important partner to the West, an approach that can be seen as yet another testimony to Liberalism's view that states and human beings are rational and that harmony and cooperation between peoples are parts of the natural laws.

The approach after the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington in September 2001, when Russia allowed American troops to be stationed in the former Soviet states in Central Asia, also part of the Russian *near abroad*, and furthermore not making any bigger outbursts when the US left the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, as well as the abandonment of a naval base and a radar station located on the territory of old allies from the Cold War era, surely can be seen as a testimony to liberal plus-sum logic, where negative events in the world called for decisions that might not have been in the national interest of Russia, but to which there might have been a sort of sticks-and-carrot logic, just as well as the abandonment of the relics of the Cold War would let the world draw a breath of relief that the terror balance was being dismantled, and whereas Russia itself benefitted from not having to be burdened any more by expensive maintenance of symbols of the past – yet another testimony to Liberalism's statement that politics brings in good chances for mutual benefit, a part of the main goal of politics: peace, democracy, human rights, free trade, economic growth and cooperation.

Realism on the other hand have a harder time explaining this behaviour. But there are some points that can be understood from a realist perspective. Just like Liberalism, Realism sees the world as anarchic, but with one highly different addition to the characteristics, namely that the system despite its anarchic trait isn't chaotic, states follow norms on how to behave. As states are of unequal strength and the most powerful determines international politics, the abandoning of the military resources in Vietnam and on Cuba, could simply be seen as a testimony to that Russia, understanding that the world had changed since the fall of communism,

now being a weaker actor in the system, and therefore simply decided to cut back on the expenditures in those areas of the world where maintaining the own power wasn't in the own interest any more. This in order to focus and concentrate the quest for strengthening the Russian power and influence where it mattered the most: in the Russian corner of the world, among the states in the *near abroad*. Seen from this logic, also the avoidance of outbursts regarding the American withdrawal from the Anti-ballistic missile treaty, and the expansion of the EU and NATO can be understood. At the time Russia identified itself as a powerful state, but admittedly not powerful enough in order to be able to determine the international politics, in this case the expansion of NATO and the EU, still having issues on domestic levels with terrorism and the war in Chechnya, meanwhile trying to hold on to the positive economic development, with the hard financial years in the 1990s still freshly in mind. Understanding the world as a multipolar world order also goes well in hand with Realist thinking that understands it to be a more common and more stable international system.

Coinciding with the expansion of the EU and NATO in 2004, the Russian Foreign Policy becomes harder to understand from a liberal perspective. As the Baltic states had become part of the EU and NATO, regime change took place in Georgia and Ukraine, bringing west oriented governments into power, several of the states in the near abroad started to follow the policy of the West with Moldova turning to the EU, advisors from the US were in Georgia, and Azerbaijan and Ukraine were behaving in a manner that did not follow strongly rooted principles of Russian foreign policy: sending military troops to Iraq in the aftermath of the US-led intervention. The US-led intervention in Iraq was something towards which Russia had been strongly opposed, seeing it as unlawful and obstructive against the authority of the UN, the strengthening of which has been a central aim in Russian foreign politics for a long time. The firm belief in the supremacy of the UN does, however, go well with the liberal belief that the security dilemma can be solved through institutions and regimes, that war is an irrational and unnatural thing, that international organizations and regimes can increase transparency and offer sanctions if any party would cheat. But the Russian firm belief in the UN system can also be understood equally well from a realist perspective, as Russia can influence the decision making in the UN, being one of the most powerful states, holding a permanent seat in the Security Council with the power of the veto. But as the strongest actor in the international system, the US, on its own managed to circumvent the authority of the UN and start a military campaign against Iraq, a situation that in itself is hard to understand from a liberal perspective, backed up by several other states, some of which that happened to be part of both NATO and the EU. The Russian approach did turn more hard-lined afterwards, hence being easier to understand from a realist perspective.

The purpose for creating a new foreign policy concept in 2008, to strengthen Russia's role in international politics as the Russian interests, and whose present international status did not match its potential, is easily linked to Realism and the zero-sum logic in the competition for power. The Foreign Policy concept also obtained more realist characteristics, obtaining a more State-centric policy in 2008. With the adding of "the State" in regards to interests, a reference that hadn't existed

in previous foreign policy concepts, which can be seen as a shift towards a more realist approach with a more state-centric understanding of international politics can be seen.

In the following Medvedev presidency, the view on NATO transformed into being the one of an unfriendly and unreliable partner in terms of security, and the five principles that Russia was stipulated to be following, primacy of international law, a multipolar international world order, a policy of non-confrontation and non-isolation, protection of the diaspora, and recognition of areas of privileged interests, even though certain aspects of it, such as the protection of the diaspora could be linked to Liberalism's main goal of international politics: Human Rights. But altogether the principles are easier to understand to be following a realist logic. The stressing of multipolarity could on one hand be understood from a liberal perspective, as other actors apart from Nation States were recognized as important actors. But Realism stresses multipolarity to be one of the most important systems, and the purpose of it is to counterbalance the stronger actors, and hence having several actors to turn to in order to counterbalance, would conflict arise. This also is described as Realism's method for states to avoid war and conflict.

In Russia's case, avoiding war probably isn't as much of a concern as avoiding being isolated. Although the belief international regimes and organisations is a core foundation of Liberalism the choice to establish the EEU can just as well be understood from Realism: the creation of an economic union would be the most efficient way to counterbalance the EU. Russia alone would not be able to counterbalance the EU, but another organization would, and as long as Russia would be the strongest member of this organisation, Russia would be able to *de facto* control the outcome of international politics through this organisation, a way of reasoning that follows the same logic as described above, regarding the promotion of the UN.

The concern for the Russian diaspora can also be linked to the national security. As 20 millions of Russians found themselves outside of the Russian Federation's border after 1991, and as the integration of these in their new home countries have been of varied levels of quality. Having hordes of refugees of ethnic Russian returning to Russia, would not serve the interests of the Kremlin, as the aim of every government is to remain in power, and facing a crisis with millions of countrymen returning home, is just as well a financial challenge as it is a humanitarian one. With such a large diaspora it would also be problematic for any government to avoid critique if not taking this part, of the citizens and the protection of their rights, into consideration. And the choice to promote the interests of the diaspora, such as by promoting the Russian language and culture, in order to keep the own legitimacy, is in itself validated by Medvedev's fifth pillar: that certain areas shall be understood and recognized as areas of privileged interests, that can be understood as not only the EaP but all of the CIS states. Of course this also can be seen to bear some liberal logics such as the plus-sum logic regarding cooperation, but altogether the liberal framework has less to offer in the explanation than Realism. The update of the foreign policy concept in 2013 made objections against interventions that were carried out in unlawful manners under the disguise of *the responsibility to protect* and the condemnation of unlawful use of *soft power* that interferes in

internal affairs of sovereign states. Both concepts being anchored in liberal thinking, the critique of them is hard to explain from a liberal perspective. From a realist perspective though this is rather a way to once again protect the survival of the state and the state's right not to have external actors meddling in domestic affairs: a way to stress the own belief in the principle of sovereignty.

To summarize, the Russian foreign policy can be seen both through a Liberalism and Realism perspective. From the start of independence, it is, however, easier to understand the foreign policy of Russia to be following a liberal reasoning. Aiming to be part of the world community, becoming a partner to the West, abandoning memories of the terror balance, and becoming a subtler and more reasonable actor in world politics than its predecessor the Soviet Union. But starting in 2004, with the expansion of two western organisations, NATO and the EU, right up to the Russian border, can be understood to have made concerns grow in Russia. Added some time later, several member states of these two organizations, participated in the US led intervention against Iraq, and not long after that Russia saw the governments in Georgia and Ukraine being overthrown and replaced with pro-western ones. These events were met by positive reactions from the west and discussions of offering memberships in both NATO and the EU started, and as the risk of facing isolation hence had started to grow, the Russian foreign policy can be understood to shift towards a realist one. Liberalism can to some extent be used as well but in certain aspects, such as the five principles of Russian Foreign Policy, stated by Medvedev, the theory is hard to apply.

Regarding the Russian policy to the EaP states, the traces of Realism and the zero-sum logic does apply the strongest in those cases where an EaP state has sought for military security with the NATO. As stated above, the Russian view of NATO was not always as negative as what it has turned into today and the obvious shifting point in the Russian understanding of it came in the aftermaths of the revolutions in Ukraine and Georgia. Whereas Georgia remained in its West-orientation, Ukraine eventually had a change of government into a pro-Russian president that was dethroned in the Maidan protests.

The relations with Georgia has been tense already from the start, being badly affected due to the heavily anti-Russian policy that was kept in the early 1990s with support to Chechen secession and NATO flirtation, that were to be responded to by bad relations at first and eventually bring about gas conflicts and the 2008 war. The negative understanding of what a Georgian membership to NATO would bring, dates back to the 1990s when the country not only sought closer ties with NATO, while at the same time allowing Chechen missions to operate in the country, a safe haven far away from the Chechnya conflict. Georgia did also participate in the US led pipeline projects that aimed at creating energy transportation routes that circumvented Russian territory and therefore would make the influence of Russia less important in a matter of great value to the survival of the Russian state: energy export. This clearly is examples of non-Russian oriented policies, an attempt to affect a large part of Russian income, and the support of Georgia to Chechen missions can also be seen as Georgia de facto supporting secession of a Russian region, which were to be followed by a harsh Russian response eventually. Azerbaijan had also participated in the pipeline project, but due to the country's

non-alignment policy, in combination with the Russian decision to support Armenia in the conflict with Azerbaijan, the only way for Russia to secure the own position in the energy export, and prevent any western alignment for Georgia that would probably come to expose the potential to use Georgia to lessen the dependency on Russian energy in the West, has been to keep Georgia unstable. And when the Georgian president in the summer of 2008 made the decision to once and for all try to gain control of all of the Georgian territory, Russia seized the opportunity and went against the own, Realism anchored, non-intervention standard, and made a military intervention in Georgia under the liberal pretext of responsibility to protect. From Realism, however, the non-intervention principle only applies to other, equally strong actors, a description that does not apply well on Georgia and Russia.

Realism can rather easily understand the instability of Georgia as a way of securing the stability of Russia, guaranteeing the survival of the state, whereas the same aspect of Liberalism, promoting democracy, human rights, free trade etc. fail altogether to give any other explanation to the Russian behaviour, other than Russia behaving in an imperial manner, not believing in liberal values, and especially being an indeed very unpredictable actor in the international arena. But the refusal of Russia to annex Abkhazia and South Ossetia can be understood as a testimonial to the realist logic that Russia follows, as the interests are to keep Georgia in a state of *stabilized conflict*, as any territorial disputes prevents for NATO and EU membership. And the likelihood of Georgia becoming a unified state by accepting the secession of Abkhazia and South Ossetia is highly unlikely, something that is the same for the conflict in Moldova, Ukraine, and, theoretically, even for Azerbaijan.

But whereas Georgia already by the time of the revolution in the early 2000s, was a fragmented country, Ukraine was a unified nation. In Ukraine the stabilized conflict logic, presented above, is from a Russian point of view, applicable on the eastern part of the country. The Crimean incident can be understood as a completely different thing, being an issue already after the collapse of the Soviet Union, having been given to Ukraine as a present in the 1950s. It rather is best understood, together with the annexation of it, as Russia bringing back something that had been understood to be Russian soil all along since the 1990s. From Liberalism understandable as an act of warfare, an irrational thing by a militaristic, undemocratic and unpredictable regime. From a realist perspective, it is also on the one hand understandable as an illegitimate act. But once again in the defence of Realism, states are understood as being of unequal strength, and non-intervention only applies to states of equal strength. And applying zero-sum logic and the competition for power, having a big part of the own navy located on the soil of another sovereign state, a state that repeatedly has sent signals of wanting to affiliate itself with a rival that generally is understood as a risk towards facing isolation and conflict, clearly can link the Ukrainian Western-oriented policy as a threat to Russian national security. From this realist based logic, an explanation can be given fairly easily to why Crimea was annexed, whereas Transnistria, that also requested to join the Russian Federation, and Abkhazia and South Ossetia, was not.

Whereas Liberalism could see the Russian behaviour as irrational and unpredictable for annexing Crimea, then as even more unpredictable for not

continuing the annexations, from a Realism perspective a Russian Transnistria would mean a unified Moldova, just as a Russian Abkhazia and South Ossetia would mean a unified Georgia, hence the doors would be open for NATO- and EU negotiations which goes against the Russian national quest to secure power and security. The refusal of removing Russian troops, from Transnistria, as well as the Georgian secession states, would on the one hand be possible to understand from Liberalism as a mean to secure peace in the area, as a sort of humanitarian intervention. But from a Realism perspective the Russian troops have rather served as a way to secure as a factor to keep the conflicts stable.

Russia can be understood to maintain a sort of hard-power sticks-and-carrots logic when it comes to keeping states in the EaP under control, a more realist sense than its Liberalism equivalent that probably could be renamed sticks-for-stones. This is when Russia responds to basically any national decision by playing of the state with the help of another state, such as Azerbaijan and Armenia for instance, or by the help of a tool, a tool that most often has some sort of relation to energy. The disagreement with Azerbaijan regarding the radar station, where Russia ended up doubling up the military troops in the enemy Armenia, serves as a rather solid example. The biggest sensitivity of Azerbaijan is the de facto Armenian occupied Nagorno-Karabakh, that fails to receive the same attention as the Russian annexation of Crimea that generally is understood by the West as an illegal occupation. Azerbaijan and Armenia are basically at war with each other where Azerbaijan's national territory has been violated. Losing the Armenian dominated region to Armenia is not in Baku's interests, who most likely is well aware of the Armenian military's superiority in the conflict thanks to the Russian support. But in order to prevent Azerbaijan from turning away from Russia which would be a quite logical move, Russia has been able to use certain liberal tools to prevent this. The Moscow declaration from 2004, for instance, where Azerbaijan and Russia signed an agreement to refrain from any military, economic or financial measures against the other, can out of this context be understood as an agreement to promote transparency into certain areas. But on the other hand Azerbaijan is one of the most authoritarian regimes among the EaP states and would face obvious demands for democratization would an embrace with the EU be attempted, which can be understood from the announcements that was made by OSCE and the Council of Europe on the one hand and Russia on the other, that literally differed so much from one another it would have been fully legit to assume they were speaking of two different elections. Azerbaijan's interests to keep up the good relations with Russia must also be understood out of the Nagorno-Karabakh context, where as long as the relations remain normal, Russia will not, even though supporting Armenia, engage itself, or support any full scale military operation against Azerbaijan.

Another area of this kind of behaviour certainly is the energy sector. Basically all of the EaP states, apart from the loyal Armenia and the self-supplying Azerbaijan, has faced the Russian tendency to turn the gas tap off in order to prove the national need for Russian energy. Georgia had its gas deliverances cut in winter of 2001 after flirtations with NATO; Belarus had the deliverance turned off in the winter of 2004, as a response to the failure to reorganize and hence give more control of the Belarusian pipelines to Russia, something that was followed by a

threat of cutting the subsidiary gas; Ukraine had conflicts regarding the import of Russian gas that flared up in between the first conflict in 2006 and the last one in 2009, one that coincided with a parliamentary election that came to see the replacement of a pro-western leader with a Moscow loyal one. Once again making little logic at all with liberal thinking of trade, intergovernmental cooperation and economic growth, but being more understandable through Realism: setting an example against states that, regardless of being hostile or an ally, tend to try to play off Russia against the EU, and seeking to use all means in order to stabilise the surrounding area in order to minimize the risk of a future problematic situation of enemy oriented states right on the border. In other words: battle for power and preventive self-help. This perspective can also be used in understanding the trade embargos placed on Moldovan products in 2006 and 2013, a zero sum logic from Russia when Moldova had been in a situation of growing stronger relations with the EU. Of course the situation regarding Moldovan agriculture products could also be seen as valid, if one assumes the health concerns, as stated as the explanation by Russia for placing the embargos, are true. In that case the embargos would be possible to see as fully legit and understandable.

Armenia and Belarus are the biggest allies to Russia among the EaP states, both being members of the EEU, and therefore don't play such an active role in the analysis of the Russian relation to the EaP states, due to the relation to Russia providing little analytical material. Belarus, being kept close to Moscow thanks to the EU-sanctions against the country, and Armenia, geographically located surrounded by hostile states, most likely finds an enhanced control by Russia of national infrastructural resources, such as gas pipelines or power plants, as a security to the survival of the state. Whereas the Russian resources in Armenia provides a firm grip of an ally for Russia in an insecure region, and the obtain of control of the pipelines through Belarus, provides Russia with a secure source of income in energy exports to the west, that abolishes the need in the future to choose between disciplining an obnoxious neighbour by cutting of the energy, and remaining a stable trading partner to the West.

To summarise. Being inspired by the claim of John Mearsheimer, that the West sees Russia and the Russian president as being driven by a desire to recreate the Soviet Union, as showcased by the decision to annex Crimea after which the rest of Ukraine might follow, a belief that was stressed to be based on the assumption that the logic of Realism holds little relevance in the 21st century, and that Europe can be kept united based on liberal principles, I decided to base my thesis on the Russian foreign policy development in general and the Russian foreign policy towards the EaP states, in order to compare how the view differs from Liberalism and Realism, the two analytical frameworks.

The paper started with a presentation of the development of the foreign policy of Russia, that through a comparison to the analytical framework, was stated to have been following more of a liberal reasoning in the 1990s only to be replaced by a clearly visible realist logic following a series of events in the 2003-2004: the EU and NATO expanded; Russian oriented regimes were ousted in Georgia and Ukraine; The US intervention in Iraq; It was stated that the ENP indeed was not to be understood as thing separated from EU accession. No matter the reason it is

indeed possible to see that a change in Russian Foreign Policy took place afterwards, Realism having an easier time to explain the development in comparison to Liberalism.

With some of the EaP states, such as Georgia and Ukraine, the independence of 1991 put a lot of strains on the relations with Russia, this due to nationalist tendencies that kept an anti-Russian policy in Georgia, and territorial disputes with Ukraine. Whereas the relations took for the better with Azerbaijan and Armenia, and basically has been stable all way along with Belarus, the strain in the Russian-Georgian relations have remained, being of a shifting character with Moldova, and altogether a real rollercoaster ride with Ukraine, hitting rock bottom presently.

The purpose of this essay did not include investigating of the origins of the Russian acting in the conflicts in the area. The peace keeping intentions that the Russian troops in Transnistria and Abkhazia and South Ossetia might very well have been genuine. However, whereas Liberalism, with some doubt remaining, would be able to understand the Russian presence in these regions as some sort of intervention in order to make sure human rights are protected, Realism can see the Russian presence as a way to stabilize these frozen conflicts, that serves as a tool for Russia to keep EU- and NATO-orientations from turning into memberships. And whereas the gas conflicts go against everything that free-trade, harmony and cooperation stands for, Realism can understand them as yet another tool to exercise power, most commonly over Russian oriented states, such as Belarus, and Ukraine during the Yanukovich regime, as a response to the habit of these states' habit of trying to play off Russia against the West. This also explains the Russian interest in obtaining energy resources, especially in the loyal friend, Belarus.

As always in international relations, the answer to a question is founded in what perspective that has been used. In this essay, by testing two of the classical theories in their understanding of the same context, Realism has been found to have an easier time to explain the chosen cases, making Russia follow a clear logic. This in comparison to Liberalism that altogether has been able to explain some things, but in other areas has had trouble understanding the logic, hence understanding the actor as an unpredictable power.

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