# The European Union and the Russian Federation and the Shared Neighbourhood:

How will the recent developments in Russian foreign policy as evidenced in Ukraine change the relations between the European Union and the Russian Federation?



Mete B. Erdurcan

Supervisor: Dr. R. Tromble

2nd Reader: Ms. E. Gabrovska

Academy of European Studies and Communication Management  
The Hague University of Applied Sciences

13 June 2016



# Preface

Everyone that will know me will testify to my special interest with Eastern Europe, and the Russian Federation in particular. My 6-month exchange to the State University of Saint-Petersburg, during the Ukraine crisis, has taught me many valuable lessons, and has engraved the city in my heart as the city where I could experience a Dutch, Turkish, and Russian lifestyle. The experience has allowed me to look at things from various perspectives, and discover where solutions may lie to any problems we face.

# Acknowledgements

I would like to give special thanks to everyone that has helped me in the past years to cultivate my knowledge on Russia, and particularly my professors that have always given me the opportunity to research Russia for their class. Professor Dr. Joris Voorhoeve is among the professors I hold in high regard, his class was essential in my future academic choices. Furthermore, I would like to thank my family, my mother, sister, brother, and father for supporting me throughout my thesis writing process. However, I believe that I have had the most support from Ms. Diana Pyrikova, who did not let sleep or work stop her to assist me in every way possible.

# Executive Summary

This dissertation is focused on the relations between the European Union and the Russian Federation in light of the recent developments in Ukraine. The research provides evidence on the relations between these parties, keeping the dissolution of the Soviet Union in mind. It looks at various theories of international relations, and recognises the classical realistic roots that underlie the making of foreign policy in Russia.

The application of political realism is an important aspect of this dissertation. It gives an overview of why certain states, Russian Federation, behave in a particular manner. With terms, such as statism, survival, and self-help functioning as an outline of this theory, and setting the evidence that clarify why certain actions were taken by Russian leaders. It, therefore, concludes that Russia most closely fulfils the classification of a classical realist.

This dissertation investigates the nature of the developments in Ukraine, examining the recent developments, as well as the EU’s and Russia’s role in this. It provides the background on the historical, economic, and political developments that led to the Ukraine crisis in 2014. Furthermore, it looks at whether the relations have changed, and if so, how, by looking at the way that the Ukraine crisis has affected the foreign policy of both parties.

When examining Russian foreign policy it identifies the importance of the domestic politics, and how that plays a role in the Kremlin. In connection with this, it identifies the utopian concept of ‘Russkij Mir’, and establishes important figures in the Russian political landscape that can be identified as ‘hardliners’, and form the core advisors to the office of the President. It furthermore explains its affiliation to the Ukraine crisis and the subsequent annexation of Crimea.

Finally, this dissertation examines how the Ukraine crisis affected the EU’s and its foreign policy. The institutions and treaties that are at the basis of these relations are vital in this process. Some of the policies and agreements analysed are the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), the Eastern Partnership (EaP), Association Agreements (AAs). Additionally, it establishes the importance of European values that are at the heart of these institutionalised frameworks for negotiation.

Concluding the extensive research, the dissertation states that the crisis in Ukraine has been a turning point in the EU-Russia relations, and has significantly altered the foundation of their approach to one another. This has been evidenced in their changing foreign policy and attitude in the policy-making process. Additionally, it recommends that the EU should consider the Russian domestic politics when creating foreign policy towards the shared neighbourhood. Additionally, it recognises the challenges it faces, particularly if internal disagreements will leave it unable to act in unison.

# Table of contents

[The European Union and the Russian Federation and the Shared Neighbourhood: 1](#_Toc453574930)

[Preface 3](#_Toc453574931)

[Acknowledgements 3](#_Toc453574932)

[Executive Summary 4](#_Toc453574933)

[Table of contents 5](#_Toc453574934)

[List of Abbreviations 7](#_Toc453574935)

[Introduction 8](#_Toc453574936)

[Methodology 10](#_Toc453574937)

[Research Questions 10](#_Toc453574938)

[What will be the process of obtaining the evidence? 10](#_Toc453574939)

[What types of evidence will be examined? 11](#_Toc453574940)

[How will the changes in relations be established? 11](#_Toc453574941)

[Limitations 12](#_Toc453574942)

[Background 13](#_Toc453574943)

[EU-Russia relations during the Yeltsin administration 13](#_Toc453574944)

[Eurasian Integration 13](#_Toc453574945)

[Russia under the Putin administration 14](#_Toc453574946)

[The Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) 15](#_Toc453574947)

[The European Union as a threat 15](#_Toc453574948)

[European approach to the Russian Federation 17](#_Toc453574949)

[Partnership and Cooperation Agreement 17](#_Toc453574950)

[European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) 20](#_Toc453574951)

[The Eastern Partnership (EaP) 21](#_Toc453574952)

[Association Agreements (AAs)/Deep and Comprehensive Trade Agreements (DCFTAs) 22](#_Toc453574953)

[Theoretical Framework 24](#_Toc453574954)

[Realism 24](#_Toc453574955)

[Russia as a (Classical) Realist 24](#_Toc453574956)

[What are the recent developments in Ukraine? 28](#_Toc453574957)

[How does the Russian government incorporate the recent developments in Ukraine into its foreign policy? 34](#_Toc453574958)

[Russkij Mir 34](#_Toc453574959)

[Foreign policy to Ukraine 37](#_Toc453574960)

[How do the recent developments affect the European Union and its foreign policy? 39](#_Toc453574961)

[Partnership and Cooperation 39](#_Toc453574962)

[Shared neighbourhood 41](#_Toc453574963)

[Conclusion 44](#_Toc453574964)

[Bibliography 47](#_Toc453574965)

# List of Abbreviations

AA Association Agreement

CES Common Economic Space  
CIS Commonwealth of Independent States  
CSTO Collective Security Organization  
DCFTA Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas  
EaP Eastern Partnership

EACU Eurasian Customs Union  
EEAS European External Action Service

EEU Eurasian Economic Union  
EU European Union

EP European Parliament  
ENP European Neighbourhood Policy

MAP Membership Action Plan  
NATO North Atlantic Treaty Organization  
OSCE Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

USA The United States of America  
WTO World Trade Organization   
TFEU Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union

# Introduction

‘Крым-наш’, or Crimea is ours, was probably the catchiest phrase of 2014 in the Russian Federation. It quickly became a movement, a patriotic phrase uttered in support of Russian President Vladimir Putin’s recent decision to accept the ‘return’ of the Crimean Peninsula to Russian jurisdiction. One could see the phrase uttered frequently in social media, and the Russian media picked it up with relative ease. The ‘Крым-наш’ movement achieved its purpose, in so far as to justify Russia’s illegal handling of the Crimean crisis, and was in accordance with the increasingly patriotic nature of Russian domestic politics. This increased patriotism is strongly supported by the hardliners within the Kremlin, and explains the set of populistic policies of President Putin (Popescu & Leonard, 2007).

With the Kremlin’s successful persuasion of the Russian population that the annexation of Crimea was just, using the motto ‘Крым-наш’ in support of this, it was not surprising that the popularity of President Putin soared after the annexation (Nardelli, Rankin, & Arnett, 2015). The reaction of the western world, the European Union in particular, was nothing sheer of utter confusion. The question that echoed throughout the member states of the European Union was: how could something like this, a country openly seizing a part of its neighbour’s territory, happen in the 21st century? The annexation only proved to be a symptom of a phenomenon occurring in Russia for a longer time; Russia was increasingly distancing itself from Europe, in favour of the Eurasian identity (Mankoff, 2016).

The shift in self–perception was not exclusively linked to the Ukrainian crisis in 2014, the notion that Russia had a ‘special place’, and that it should play a role in international politics, in Europe had become more present since President Putin’s terms (Putin, 2007). Russia had begun to question European morals and values, even going as far as referring to some things as ‘decadent’ (Mankoff, 2016). The video that went viral in 2015, ‘Я русский оккупант/I'm a Russian Occupant’, is an evidence of this notion. The video, that was shared by Deputy Prime-Minister Dmitry Rogozin on Twitter (Porter, 2015), went viral and received more than 3,3 million views. It is a testimony of the spirit of the time that became apparent with the Ukrainian crisis; an unapologetic stance with regard to its imperialistic past, and a threatening stance against those who dare to challenge it (BBC Trending, 2015). That such a video is met with relative popularity is not a coincidence, it completely fits with the changing perception of Russia’s place in the world. It is, therefore, that the European Union, under the auspices of the Eastern Partnership (EaP), can want to further induce its neighbours with morals and values, but should expect this to be met with increasing cynicism on the Russian side (Pallin, 2016).

The undeniable interdependence in Russian-European relations can be seen in the list of current sanctions between the two parties (European Commission, 2015). On the one hand, Russia relies on the relative stability in price of fossil fuels (an increase in value is never frowned upon), and Europe’s demand to it. On the other hand Europe depends on the political stability of Russia, and the transit countries (Segers, 2016), so that these fossil fuels can keep being supplied, in order to keep its economy going forward. It perhaps also classifies the relations, as the two sides sometimes appear to be partners by necessity, rather than desire. The fact remains that especially with the past enlargements of the European Union, the two sides are neighbours, and have to get used to being neighbours for the foreseeable future.

Bilateral relations remain an important part of the Russian foreign policy, so much that it prefers to negotiate with individual countries than with the European Union, which is considered by them to be irresolute and indecisive, and has the tendency to act on a more value-based agenda (Mankoff, 2016). Russia not only prefers to deal with these countries bilaterally, it also pursues a system of ‘preferred relations’ in terms of the energy sector. It maintains separate energy prices for different countries (Popescu & Leonard, 2007), and actively uses its state-sponsored media to convince the European public of its stance point (Somer & Iris, 2015). It is not a coincident that the historical connections Moscow has with Berlin, Rome, and Paris (Mankoff, 2016) accompany a close economic cooperation, most notably in the energy sector (Hancock & Lane, 2016).

This dissertation focuses its research on the changing relationship between the Russian Federation and the European Union. The recent developments in Ukraine will indicate how the change has taken place, and what the likeliest scenario for future bilateral and/or trilateral relations will be.

# Methodology

This chapter will discuss the methods used to analyse the relations between the European Union and the Russian Federation in light of recent developments in Ukraine. It will discuss how, and whether, the relationship between the EU and Russia has changed over the course of the last 2 decades. Furthermore, the process for obtaining, and selecting, evidence that will be relevant for my research is vital in due consideration of the research question. It will be supported by formulating sub-questions, which will guide the analysis/conclusion section. Therefore, one central question, and three sub-questions were introduced to properly guide this dissertation:

## Research Questions

The central question of this dissertation:

***How will the recent developments in Russian foreign policy as evidenced in Ukraine change the relations between the European Union and the Russian Federation?***

The sub-questions are:

1. *What are the recent developments in Ukraine?*
2. *How does the Russian government incorporate the recent developments in Ukraine into its foreign policy?*
3. *How do the recent developments affect the European Union and its foreign policy?*

The central question takes a closer look at the foreign policy of the European Union and Russia, and its evidences in Ukraine. The sub-questions will focus at one theme at a time. The first sub-question will examine the recent developments in Ukraine thoroughly, the second one will examine Ukraine’s position in Russian foreign policy, and how it is evidenced, finally it will measure how Russia’s foreign policy, beside recent developments in Ukraine, has affected EU foreign policy.

### What will be the process of obtaining the evidence?

The process of obtaining evidence involved determining the search methods, which was centred around the terms ‘Ukraine’, ‘EU’, and ‘Russian Federation’. The process involved preferring academic publications from the HHS library, Springer, EBSCO Host, Taylor & Francis Online, the EU Institute for Security Studies, and the Clingendael Institute. In general, the publications referred often to the EU’s EEAS, OSCE, speeches/interviews from/with relevant politicians, and Russian policy papers, which were taken into this process as well. These publications were often communication papers from one to the other department, or in Russia’s case, foreign policy concepts. Additionally, the date of publication further guided the obtaining of relevant information. The book ‘*Putin’s Russia: Past Imperfect, Future Uncertain*’ (2016), most notably the section from Jeffrey Mankoff (2016), regarding the ‘relations with the European Union’ guided the research in the first phase, as its suggested reading, and bibliography, pointed the evidence obtaining process in a good direction. The academic publications were selected on its complementing, and explaining, role of the policy papers from official institutions, serving as a context for the logic behind the creation of these policy papers.

### What types of evidence will be examined?

Publications, such as Mankoff’s ‘relations with the European Union’ in ‘*Putin’s Russia: Past Imperfect, Future Uncertain*’ (2016), are a good guideline. Additionally, historians, such as Marc Jansen (2014) give the historical context of the information. Journalists, such as Laura Starink (2016) provide the most recent developments. Publications, for example Wiegand and Schulz (2015), set the context for policies, which are complimented by the policy papers by governmental institutions. It is important that academic publications derive their knowledge from first-hand analysis, and from policy papers from the relevant government institutions, because it minimalizes the bias factor.

The publications will also guide the theoretical framework, which will analyse Russian and EU foreign policy in light of the political realism theory. The aim will be to prove whether the EU, and/or Russia, classify as realist entities. This theory is chosen due to the fact that political realism is closely linked to foreign policy-making, and that it suits this situation adequately.

### How will the changes in relations be established?

The dissolution of the Soviet Union, and with that the foundation of the Russian Federation and Ukraine, will mark the beginning of the research. This is not because Russia’s Soviet past is unimportant, however will bring about a different set of research objectives that are only partly relevant for this research. The changing dimensions of the Soviet Union’s dissolution has marked the developments in Ukraine. The Ukraine crisis appears to be the culmination of EU-Russia relations.

The best indication of the dynamics of the relations between Russia and the EU has been the policy papers produced by the foreign policy institutions. Additionally, the cooperation agreements, the AAs, and other treaties have proved to be indicative of the nature of the relations. Furthermore, academic publications, documentaries, and interviews have guided the policy papers in shedding a light on the context of the treaties and agreements. Moreover,

### Limitations

The expectations regarding the constraints of the research, and its due consideration of Russian propaganda, have been avoided as much as possible. When dealing with controversial topics, the aim has been to seek out multiple scholarly views, in order to minimise the influence of propaganda or bias in the research and writing.

# Background

This chapter will provide the background, on which the sub-questions will build on, and eventually will answer the central question. The most important aspects of this dissertation will be the foreign policy conducted by both the European Union, and the Russian Federation. This will be done in light of the recent developments in Ukraine, but not exclusively of this. This dissertation will also take a look at how the relations developed to become in the tense situation it is today. The research will focus on the relations between the European Union and the Russian Federation from its foundation in 1991, because the developments in the period since that foundation are most relevant for this research. It is also the period that Russia was independent in its foreign policy making, not necessarily bound by any other republics. It is important to add that the Euro-Russo relations have developed more since the arrival of Vladimir Putin, and that due this fact the literature mainly will reflect the development of relations since that period.

## EU-Russia relations during the Yeltsin administration

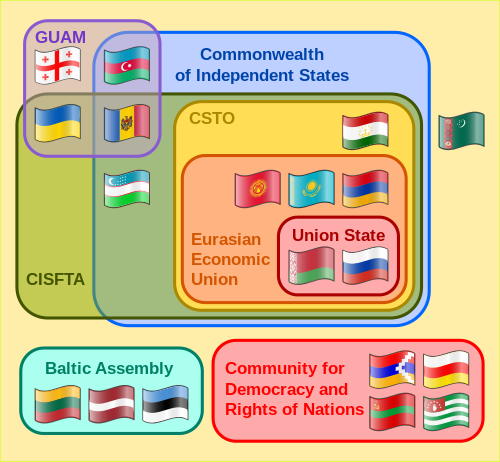
The recent developments in Ukraine have highlighted certain key differences in the foreign policy approach of the Russian Federation and the European Union. The peaceful ending of the Cold War seemed to be the precursor of a safer world, and the EU easily agreed on ‘a common approach to Moscow’, and their main aim was ‘democratising and westernising a weak and indebted Russia’ (Popescu & Leonard, 2007, p. 1). The claim that Russia was in financial despair is supported by Simâo (2016), who adds that ‘centralisation was needed to re-establish order in the Russian political and bureaucratic system, following the chaotic transition from the Soviet period in the Yeltsin years’ (p. 492). Margot Light (2005) argues that Russia had emerged as the successor of the Soviet Union, but lacked the conventional power that it once had, fuelled by the poor state of its economy. Due to the symbolism of the United States of America, as the successful capitalist enemy turned ally, the focus of the Yeltsin administration was not towards the European Union, even by the time Putin took over, according to Fyodor Lukyanov (2008). Jeffrey Mankoff (2016) reiterates the notion that the Yeltsin years were dominated by relations with the United States, rather than with the EU.

### Eurasian Integration

The Commonwealth of Independent States, or mostly referred to as CIS, was founded in December 1991 and two years later contained all the successor states of the Soviet Union, except for the Baltic states (Light, 2005).The CIS charter (1991, p. 3) charter states the following:

‘*The Commonwealth shall be based on sovereign equality of its members. The member states shall be independent and equal subjects of international law. The Commonwealth shall serve further development and enhancement of the relations of friendship, good neighbourhood, inter-ethnic accord, confidence, mutual understanding and mutually beneficial cooperation among member states. The Commonwealth shall not be a state and shall not be supranational*’

The last sentence, ‘The Commonwealth shall not be a state and shall not be supranational’, will be important in the later stage when the Eurasian Union will come up. The Russian Federation is engaged in many more *post-Soviet* institutions, or as Light (2005) calls them ‘a succession of vehicles for integration’. This succession started with an economic union in 1993, a free trade area in 1994, a free trade zone in 1994-5. The Eurasian Economic Union, or EURASEC, was founded in 2000. During this time, Ukraine became an associate member of the economic union in 1994, and obtained an EURASEC observer status in 2002-3 (Light, 2005).  
 Figure 2: Eurasian Integration

The Russian Federation was also interested in applying collective defence to the CIS countries, however ‘the unified military force that was initially envisaged has never been formed’ (Light, 2005, p. 230). The culmination of this desire came to be the Collective Security Treaty, which was signed in Tashkent in 1992. During President Putin’s term, this ‘Tashkent Treaty was upgraded to the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) (Light, 2005). Incidentally, the idea for an *Eurasian Union* came from the President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, during a speech at a University in Moscow in 1994 (Kilner, 2011).

## Russia under the Putin administration

The incoherence of the foreign policy during the Yeltsin years changed with the arrival of a new President, Vladimir Putin. According to Light (2005), this was due to the ‘personality features associated with President Yeltsin’, which ‘affected the coherence of foreign policy’ (pp. 228-229). This was due to the fact that Putin had different governing method, ‘a better relationship with his ministers and with the Duma’, leading to a more coherent, but also more pragmatic Russian foreign policy. It ,therefore, appears that President Putin the pragmatic approach has succeeded in achieving the “reasonable balance between objectives and possibilities for attaining these objectives”, which the 2000 foreign policy concept calls for (Light, 2005, p. 229).

According to Popescu and Leonard (2007) Vladimir Putin has ‘a small group of political strategists’ to thank for assuming Presidency from ‘the ailing and unpopular Boris Yeltsin’, and the subsequent years of dominance in Russia’s domestic politics. The role of these political strategists have been important in the Kremlin’s goal to ‘re-establish control of the Russian economy and society without losing the international respectability that comes from being a democracy’ (p. 11). The prestige that joining international negotiations gives the Putin administration was clear when ‘Putin achieved a long-standing Russian ambition, when Russia became full member of the G7, turning it into the G8’ (Light, 2005, p. 239).

### The Eurasian Economic Union (EEU)

The Eurasian Union’s precursor, the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), entered into force in January 2015, building on the foundation of the Customs Union, which included Russia, Kazakhstan, and Belarus, with Armenia joining on January 2, and Kyrgyzstan in late August 2015. For Armenia this meant choosing Eurasian integration over an AA with the EU (Pallin, 2016). President Putin’s wish to establish an EEU has been in the making since Putin expressed this aim ahead of his re-election in 2011 (Mankoff, 2016), which has also been part of a long-standing idea of the Kremlin hardliners (Newman, 2014).

According to Mankoff (2016) the EEU is ‘allegedly modelled on the EU, but espousing an illiberal creed sharply at odds with European values’, and has to be an alternative to ‘Euro-Atlantic integration’ for the CIS countries (p. 257). For the EaP countries this has meant that they had to choose for European or Eurasian integration, with pressure from Moscow to become a part of the EEU.

### **The European Union as a threat**

While NATO was perceived to be a security risk for Russia since the end of the Second World War, the European Union was not perceived in that manner for a long time, even optimistic on the prospect. Russian foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov even noted that the only concern of EU enlargement for Russia ‘had to do with the extension of EU regulations to new members and the potential impact on trade with Russia’ (Mankoff, 2016, p. 260). However, Russia was more concerned with attempted projects, such as the European Defence and Security Policy (EDSP), and Common Foreign Policy (CFP), which would increase the ability of the EU to act in unison, which would be able to act more decisively, and be a potential threat to Moscow (Mankoff, 2016).

The conflict of values has become more apparent during recent years, Mankoff (2016) articulates this by commenting on the ‘deep chasm in values and institutions’, which accompany an increased economic interdependence. One of the core foreign policy objectives in Russia has been, according to Simâo (2016), its aim for a post-Soviet Russian identity, which became a main priority during the Yeltsin administrations, and later a central issue for President Putin. It is in this context of ‘deep chasm’ that Putin’s emphasis on ‘Russia’s Eurasian (as opposed to European) identity‘ has become more present in Russian foreign policy, leading to the entering into force of the EEU in 2015 (p. 261). The intentions of Russia with pursuing Eurasian, or post-Soviet, integration are seen in various ways. Simâo (2016) reiterates that European, and most notably NATO, enlargement towards the post-Soviet space is seen by a ‘part of the Russian elite as a strategy of encirclement’. Therefore, through its foreign policy concepts and other official documents, the Kremlin has claimed to have the right to defend compatriots, or ‘ethnic Russians’, abroad, within the CIS that functions ‘as an area of privileged interests for Russia’ (p. 492). The self-attained right to defend compatriots abroad has been instrumental in limiting Western influence in the CIS countries (Simâo, 2016). Furthermore, with the re-election of Putin, Ukraine and Moldova have emerged as an arena of ‘geopolitical struggle’, with attempts to ‘undermine EU institutions from within’. The Ukraine crisis derives from the increased hostility towards the EU that this ‘geopolitical struggle’ has brought (Mankoff, 2016, p. 266). The re-emergence of an increasingly assertive Russia has alarmed, in particular, the Baltic states and Poland the most. They observe a Russia that annexes a part of Ukraine, deploys troops there, but also carries ‘out provocations in many other European states’, pointing towards a revisionist agenda within the Kremlin. Acting decisively has been particularly difficult for the EU, since there is a carefully cultivated interdependence with Russia’ (Mankoff, 2016, p. 259).

A turning point in relations was the Russian-Georgian war, with Western attempts at democratising, and bolstering, Georgia’s viability. However, an important issue in Putin’s and Medvedev’s foreign policy ‘has been to restore Moscow’s influence in its neighbourhood and roll back the American and European presence in Eurasia’ (Rumer & Stent, 2009, p. 94). The Russian elite, furthermore, suspects that the ‘real objective of democracy promotion’ is to undermine Russia’s influence, and extend its own sphere of influence in the CIS countries, which endangers ‘the Russian leadership at home’ (Trenin, 2009, p. 15). With the emergence of the ENP and EaP as important EU foreign policy goals, Russia equally considered this as a manner increasingly saw the ENP and EaP as an attempt by the EU to extend its sphere of influence into the CIS countries, and decrease Russian influence from the European energy sector (Mankoff, 2016). President Putin’s attempt at convincing President Yanukovych not to sign the AA/DCFTA was, therefore, considered a foreign policy success (Pallin, 2016).

According to Lukyanov (2008), who describes the evolution of EU-Russia relations over the last two decades, and the three different views Russia had on the EU, the EU first view appeared in Russia’s eyes as a ‘unique voluntary union of nations that are united by common values and mutual striving for progress and justice’. Furthermore, the EU was an ‘expansionist empire’ that sought to decrease Russia’s influence in the post-Soviet space, and challenge the Kremlin government. Finally, the EU is an indecisive, ‘overly centralised and excessively bureaucratised association’ with a stagnating economy (p. 1107). Neither of the descriptions are fully correct, but do articulate Russia’s view on the EU, and does define some of its characteristics. According to Lukyanov (2008), the EU, which was founded approximately simultaneous with the Russian Federation ‘served as a mirror reflecting the development of Russia’s self-identification’ (p. 1107).

## European approach to the Russian Federation

The PCA was the first institutionalised framework for the European Union to engage the post-Soviet countries, which ‘helped to normalise and develop relations across many field with newly independent states’. The emphasis in the PCAs was laid on “cooperation” between partners with a rather loose form of commitment’ (Wiegand & Schulz, 2015, p. 327). Though the PCA was signed in 1994, it was not ratified until 1997, because of European unease over the human rights violations in the Chechnya war (Mankoff, 2016). The years that followed the PCAs saw enlargements of both the European Union (2004 and 2007), and NATO, which affected the geopolitical situation on the European continent. It meant that the European Union now shared borders with Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova and Russia, and through the new Member States with a Black Sea coast, also the South Caucasus countries. The EU realised that it could not endlessly enlarge, due to the so-called ‘enlargement fatigue’, and wanted to avoid creating new dividing lines in Europe. The solution was the European neighbourhood policy (ENP), which was coined by the former President of the European Commission Romano Prodi (Wiegand & Schulz, 2015, p. 330).

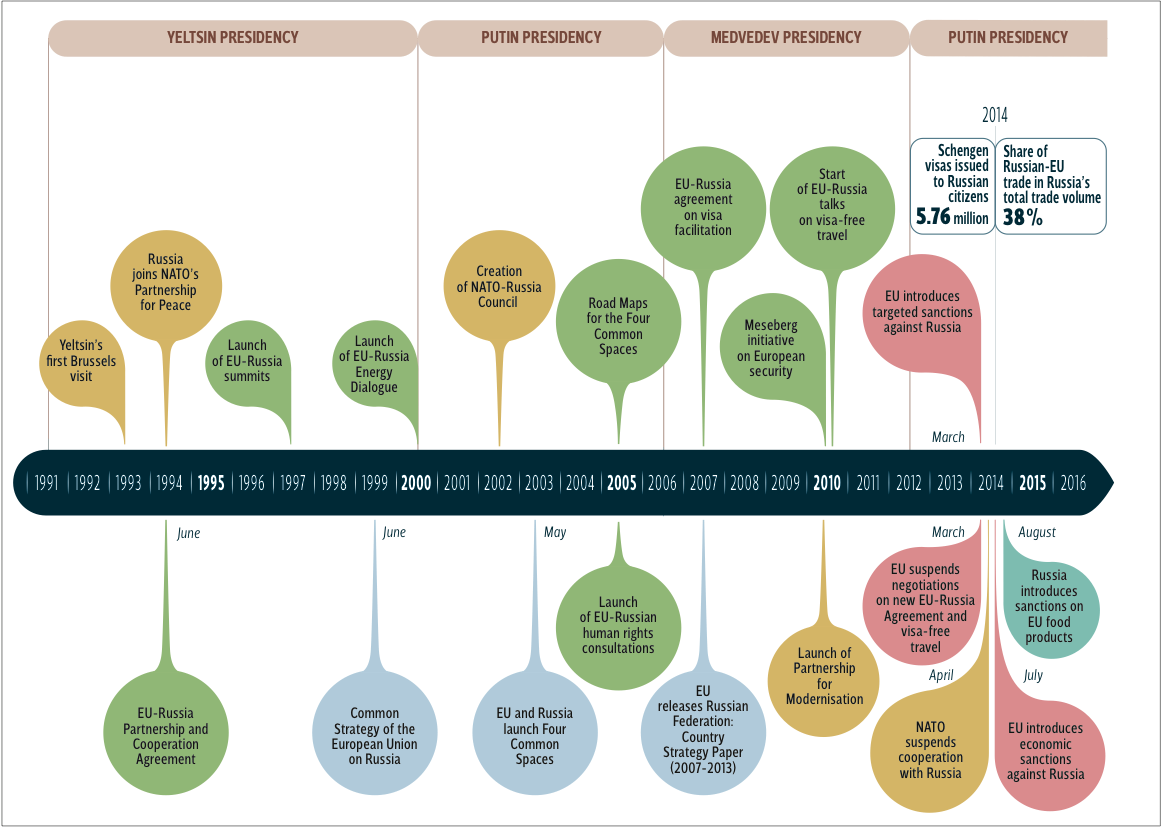
### Partnership and Cooperation Agreement

The realisation that the enlargement rounds would create common borders with the Russian Federation ‘laid the foundation for the first attempt at formally defining the relationship between Russia and the EU’, which resulted in the signing of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA), in 1994, however ratified in 1997 (Mankoff, 2016, p. 259). The PCA sets out objectives on trade and political dialogue; it encourages the countries to treat each other with the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) principle, and creates an institutionalised platform for dialogue between the two parties (The European Union, 2010) (Rumer & Stent, 2009). According to the European Commission (2016) ‘the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the EU and Russia has been the framework of the EU-Russia relations since 1997 and regulates the political and economic relations between the two parties’.

Furthermore, figure 1, provided by Popescu and Haukkala (2016), illustrates the timeline of EU-Russia interactions. Light (2005) explains the functioning of the PCA by noting that ‘it created a dense network of permanent institutions and political consultations between the EU and Russia, including regular six-monthly EU-Russia summits’. The EU’s intention behind seeking the PCA was closely bound to ‘Willy Brandt’s concept of “Wandel durch Annäherung, or “change through engagement”’. It aim was to incentivise the post-Soviet countries with partial access to the European Internal Market, in return for its ‘gradual adoption of European values’, such as the rule of law, human rights, and a consensus-based governing approach. Even though Russia was never seriously considered for EU membership, the EU still pursued the policy concept of ‘change through engagement’, with the aim of ‘political and economic liberalization’ in Russia that was exemplified by, for example, Poland (Mankoff, 2016, p. 259). Lukyanov (2008) goes as far as stating that the main idea was ‘the Europeanization of Russia’ (p. 1109).

The question regarding the Europeanization of Russia remains to be seen in upcoming years, however one of the core foreign policy objectives in Russia has been, according to Simâo (2016), its aim for a post-Soviet Russian identity, which became a main priority during the Yeltsin administrations, and later a central issue for President Putin. The culmination of this appears in the later conflict in Ukraine, as in the third term of President Putin ‘the Kremlin began asserting the fundamental incompatibility between an allegedly decadent Euro-Atlantic West and a Russia that remained a bulwark of supposedly “traditional” values (Mankoff, 2016).

Figure 1: EU-Russia interactions timeline



### **European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP)**

There are various explanations for the creation of the European Neighbourhood Policy. Wiegand and Schulz (2015) notes that the desire to ‘form an “arc of stability” and “a ring of friends” with the ability to participate in the various EU policies and programmes (“everything but institutions”)’ is important in the EU’s motivation (p. 328). The European Commission (2003, p. 4) notes in the first strategy paper on the newly founded ENP that the European Union is determined to ‘avoid drawing new dividing lines in Europe, and to promote stability and prosperity within and beyond the new borders of the Union’. The conclusion can, therefore, be that the European Neighbourhood Policy was created in the spirit of 2004 enlargement round ‘in order to provide a framework for the EU’s relations with its new neighbours’ (Wiegand & Schulz, 2015). The European Commission (2003, p. 4) confirms this by stating ‘that enlargement will serve to strengthen relations with Russia, and called for enhanced relations with Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, and the Southern Mediterranean countries to be based on a long term approach promoting reform, sustainable development, and trade’. Mankoff (2016) also concurs with the development of the ENP on the basis of the united strategy among the countries.

Mankoff (2016), furthermore, notes that the ENP was ‘designed to standardize the existing patchwork of the PCAs’, where the ENP would be customised for the vision of each member state. A stark contrast with the PCA’s intended design ‘as an a *la carte* menu of steps to promote cooperation between the EU and former Eastern Bloc states’ (p. 259). Furthermore, the ENP made the introduction of the ***Association Agreements*** (AA) possible, because they were signed under the patronage of the European Neighbourhood Policy, thus providing the framework for such an agreement. The AAs were all lead under the assumption of ‘convergence on the basis of the EU’s *acquis communautaire*’. The European Commission (2003) articulates another difference by stating that ‘in contrast to contractual relations with all the EU’s other neighbouring countries, the Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCAs) in force with Russia, Ukraine and Moldova grant neither preferential treatment for trade, nor a timetable for regulatory approximation’. Therefore, on the basis of these objectives, it is clear that ‘a new EU approach cannot be a one-size-fits-all policy’, referring to the ‘a *la carte* menu’ of the PCAs.

The European Commission (2003) considers this as ‘the Union’s most successful foreign policy instrument’. Besides, the same document stipulates the accession to the European Union according to ‘article 49 of the Treaty on the European Union’, which states that ‘any European state may apply to become a member of the European Union’. However, for some prospective member states, such as non-European Mediterranean countries, the question of the partnership has already been answered. For many, the accession has been ruled out on the basis of the European Union geographic limits. Therefore, Mankoff (2016) describes the potential development of ‘the EU’s so-called Union for the Mediterranean (UfM)’., which would imply that ‘Brussels would henceforth be prioritizing the Southern vector of its foreign policy of the Eastern’ (p. 268). This led to the realization by Brussels that European Neighbourhood Policy is not the most sufficient mechanism of integration of all its neighbours into the European system. During his 2008 European Council presidency, Nicolas Sarkozy was actively arguing for the creation of specific strategies for the countries in Mediterranean and North Africa (known as former French colonies). However, a number of European countries have objected the creation of such ‘Mediterranean club’ as the premises of its creation (along the Mediterranean coast) would ‘violate the principles of the EU solidarity’.

### The Eastern Partnership (EaP)

The High Representative of the EU (2012), Lady Catherine Ashton, states in the Roadmap to the autumn 2013 Summit that ‘at its basis (EaP) lies a shared commitment to international law and fundamental values, including democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as to market economy, sustainable development and good governance’. In this regard the Eastern Partnership (EaP) is set to serve as an umbrella, which covers the multilateral dimensions of the EU and its partner countries. Most importantly, the role of the Eastern Partnership is the support of anyone who seeks closer relationships with the EU, suggesting that the desire for closer cooperation is two-sided. The High Representative of the EU (2012) makes it clear that the ‘multilateral dimensions” are increasing the bilateral relationships that help to establish common ground and cooperative activities.

The High Representative of the EU (2012) explains that one of the main goals of the EaP is the establishment of special terms to amplify political relations and strengthen economic growth between the EU and the Eastern European partner countries. Three objectives are formulated: 1. Form more profound partnerships between the countries (Association Agreements, Deep and Comprehensive Trade Agreements) in the agreement with the EU laws, 2. Support more liberal movement of the citizens of partner countries (such as Visa facilitation), 3. Involvement of partner countries in work of appropriate EU agencies.

Furthermore, Mankoff (2016) explains the origins of the EaP as a counterweight against the ‘perceived tilt toward the South’, by means of the UfM. It was introduced with a ‘Polish-Swedish initiative’, in which they an analogous program resulting in the *Eastern Partnership* (EaP) (p. 268). Revealed in Spring 2008, the initiative focused on major states, formed around the Russian borders post-Soviet Union: Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia. The difference between the two initiatives is explained by Wiegand and Schulz (2015) stating that the ENP was hoping to ‘avoid the creation of new dividing lines between the new Eastern EU Member States and their closes neighbours,’ where as the EaP provided more development of that approach (p. 330). The EU (2016) presents the EaP as ‘a joint initiative involving the EU, its Member States and 6 eastern European partners’. Articulating its purpose, the EU (2016) adds that the EaP is centrally based on International law and fundamental values, such as democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and fundamental freedoms.

### Association Agreements (AAs)/Deep and Comprehensive Trade Agreements (DCFTAs)

Wiegand and Schulz (2015) state that after the Georgia Crisis, at the EU-Ukraine Summit in Paris, Fall 2008, the heads of the EU and Ukraine have come to the conclusion that ‘the PCA should be succeeded by an Association Agreement in line with Article 2017 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU)’ (p. 332). Also, Mankoff (2016) states that the Associate Agreements were authorized under the patronage of ENP. Besides, Wiegand and Schulz (2015) emphasize that ‘the New Agreement with Ukraine which was already under negotiation was renamed an “Association Agreement” (AA)’ (p. 332).

Furthermore, the High Representative of the EU (2012) states, in the EaP roadmap to the 2013 Summit, that in support of goals of the EaP ‘the EU and its Eastern European partners will forge new, deeper contractual relations between the EU and partner countries in the form of Association Agreements, including, where appropriate, Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (DCFTAs) where regulatory approximation can serve to strengthen the positive effects of trade and investment liberalisation, leading to convergence with EU laws and standards’. This reaffirms the idea that the EaP is based on political and economic integration of the EaP countries through the AAs/DCFTAs. Wiegand and Schulz (2015) articulates this by stating that ‘the AAs are a concrete way to foster a dynamic relationship between the EU and its Eastern partners,’ supported by new reforms and mutual cooperation.

The Deep and Comprehensive Trade Agreements (DCFTAs) differ in normal ‘classic free trade areas, since they foresee the approximation to relevant EU norms and standards in return, for large-scale market access, while providing a strong binding framework to ban all arbitrary trade-restrictive measures, including export duties and quantitative export restrictions’ (Wiegand & Schulz, 2015). Mankoff (2016) notes that all EaP countries had wide commercial links with Russia, so one of the outcomes of the DCFTA could be to move attention of trade towards Europe. Even though the direct outcomes of this shift in the economy are perceived minor, the political outcomes could be substantial.

Wiegand and Schulz (2015) state that ‘the agreements establish an “association” between the EU and the EaP country, moving from the previous “cooperation partnership” to a new level of political ambition’. This is further supported with the articulation of the political significance: ‘with the exception of the EEA countries (Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein) and Western Balkan candidate countries, the EU has never negotiated such comprehensive and far reaching agreements […], but also with regard to the partners’ commitments to approximate to the EU acquis’. The commitment to approximate to the EU acquis is reiterated by Mankoff (2016) when he states that ‘the association agreements signed under the auspices of the ENP […] were all governed by the principle of encouraging convergence on the basis of the EU’s *acquis communautaire*’ (p. 267).   
  
Besides, the adaption of the European values is very important for the European Union. According to Wiegand and Schulz (2015) ‘the Agreements put a strong emphasis on values and include an important list of general principles to which both Parties ought to be bound’ (p. 332). The provisions such as Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), for the promotion of peace and international justice by ratifying and implementing the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC). Consequently, the common agreements intensify the importance of foreign policy and international security.

# Theoretical Framework

## Realism

Realism is a theory within the field of political sciences. It relies heavily on term, such as **statism**, **survival**, and **self-help**. The first term refers to the assumption within realist theory that the state is the legitimate representative of the collective will of the people. From this legitimacy the state detracts the right to exercise authority within its domestic borders. This is even more important considering the fact that realism considers the world to be in a state of *anarchy*, meaning that international politics has no overarching authority above the sovereign states. Within this state of anarchy in the international arena the states’ primary aim is to perpetuate their existence, and thus cannot count on any other entity or state to guarantee their security, an example of this is the United Nations. One of the main tools to secure their existence is how much *power* they have, which in turn should be used to realize *national interests* of the state. With a variety of sovereign nations trying to secure their national interests, of which their existence is the core of, by means of power, one will inevitably have multiple big powers competing for a hegemony. This is often referred to as the *balance of power*, and an example is the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) (Pease, 2012).

Even though realism dates back to ancient Greece, it has had to endure quite a bit of criticism, mainly in the aftermath of the Cold War. It seemed that classical realism had fallen short, and failed to predict a peaceful resolution of the Cold War. Fortunately, various schools of thought exist within realism, the main ones being **classical realism**, **structural realism**, **neorealism**, and **neoclassical-realism**. A selection was made from a large group of realists, specifically ones that apply best to the European Union, the Russian Federation, and Ukraine. It is the author’s belief that **classical realism**, **neorealism**, and **neoclassical-realism** apply best to the situation of the Russian Federation, whereas **structural realism** applies more adequately to the international system (Dunne & Schmidt, 2011).

### Russia as a (Classical) Realist

The *realpolitik* agenda has been very present under the Putin administration, with a very important place for the state as unitary actor within its borders, as well as the role of the military in Russian society (Wiecklawski, 2011). The Russian elite is highly sensitive of anything that might decrease its prestige in the international arena, and have even looked at the military measures to secure its interests within its sphere of influence. This is, not only, exemplified with the Russian-Georgian war, annexation of Crimea and support of Donbass insurgents, but also its high military budget. With the emergence of Putin as President the resurgence of its role as regional actor has appeared. Furthermore, Putin has little regard for its smaller neighbours, and generally chooses to engage in bilateral relations with the bigger European states, avoiding the Brussels apparatus (Mankoff, 2016). It is Putin’s little respect for international organizations, except for NATO, that have mainly pointed towards the Kremlin’s realistic school of thought, having its roots in ‘deeply anchored in the classical realistic tradition’ (Wiecklawski, 2011, p. 177).

#### Statism

For the current Russian elite, the governing body of the state is the most important entity within the borders of the Russian Federation. Therefore, the Russian government has focussed the power around its centre in the Kremlin in Moscow. A centralised government was common during the Soviet Union, and has been, after a brief period of experimentation, referred to as the ‘wild nineties’, with relative little control, re-entered into its centralized state; this was President Putin’s accomplishment (Popescu & Leonard, 2007).

The first example is Putin’s conflict with Russia’s oligarchs. The 90s are synonymous with chaos and economic despair, gave a select group of individuals the chance to enrich themselves. With Yeltsin as the President, the oligarchs had a relative free game, partly in return for supporting his re-election (Judah, 2014). With the President Putin came a different governing style (Popescu & Leonard, 2007) . One of his first actions was to, quite publicly, cut out the great influence the Russian oligarchs had in Russian politics. The famous TV stand-off with Mikhail Khodorkovsky was exemplary of this (Percy, 2012).

Furthermore, The gubernatorial elections were disbanded in Russia in 2005. Putin attempted to regain control over the federal districts by successfully convincing some states to merge with one another. His subsequent decision prefer to appoint governors to these districts over gubernatorial elections can be considered as a way of regaining federal power (Koehn, 2011). However, with the election of the President Medvedev, a law allowed the resumption of the gubernatorial elections, only to be rolled back when Putin became the President again (Roth, 2013).

Furthermore, Putin’s policies can be considered to have a populistic nature; international prestige, social benefits, and conservative rhetoric make him immensely popular among the Russian public. The Russian elite derives prestige from being included in important international organizations, such as the OSCE and the G8, and maintaining its influential position in the CIS countries (Pallin, 2016), which increases its gravity in domestic politics (Rumer & Stent, 2009). Additionally, social benefits are an important part of Putin’s policies, gaining many voters with steady social wages (Percy, 2012). Furthermore, the conservative agenda of part of the Dugin-inspired Russian elite can generally count on many voters, as evidenced by Putin’s popularity after the annexation of Crimea (Nardelli, Rankin, & Arnett, 2015).

The Russian government does not accept the criticism of the European states on its approach to government, and has stated that its identity is ‘neither European nor Asian, it is Eurasian’ (Popescu & Leonard, 2007). By stating this the Putin administration reasserts its validity as the representation of the Russian citizens, as it indicates that the criticism does not hold up to its distinctive status as an Eurasian government.

The Kremlin’s strong emphasis on the state’s importance and the re-centralisation are key factors in Russia’s strong resemblance with classical realism. This is mainly exemplified in Putin’s policies that have taken power away from the regions and oligarchs, and has centred the power back to the centre of Power, the Kremlin.

#### Survival

An important objective in Russian national interests is the perpetuation of the state, and because of that the Russian government is willing to go very far to realise its national interests in the international arena. Russia distrusts any foreign presence in, or close, to its borders, which includes ‘foreign funded’ NGOs within its borders and any NATO troops, and/or European member state.

The Russian government is sceptical of all NGOs, and other ‘foreign agents’, because this is often perceived as a tool of foreign governments to exert their influence within the Russian borders. A new law was presented in early 2016 that would further restrict the capabilities of NGOs, building on earlier law that require all the NGOs, Media, and other organizations that conduct political activity to register themselves with the relevant government institutions. Additionally, any U.S. citizen, even with a dual citizenship, cannot operate on the managing board of any Russian NGO, or any NGO registered as a foreign organization. Any organization that the government considers to be a threat to the national interests will be marked, including participating in political activities, can be closed and its assets seized (ICNL, 2016). The Russian government is highly suspicious of ‘foreign’ activity on its borders and has made it very difficult to operate with the help of foreign donors.

In due consideration of the recent developments in Ukraine, Russia can be considered to show signs of offensive realism. This is not exclusively a trait that is present since Putin’s ascension to the Presidency, but started with founding of the Russian Federation. Its troops are present on multiple countries’ territories, including Moldova, Georgia, and Ukraine. When the Russian government understood that Ukraine would choose European integration over Eurasian, it decided to secure its national interests in Crimea. For the Kremlin elite this is justified, as Crimea has historically been a part of Russia (Starink, 2016).

Another vehicle for Russia’s offensive realism has been the Eurasian Union project, which was founded as the EEU in 2015. Russia has pursued Eurasian integration, and has attempted to involve the CIS countries in this project, in order to offer them something that would be an alternative for European integration (Mankoff, 2016). Russia tries to incentivise the CIS countries to choose Eurasian integration with soft and hard power. Ukraine is a good example of this, when the EuroMaidan protesters succeeded in overturning President Yanukovych’s decision not to sign the AA, Russia annexed Crimea, and supported the insurgency in the Donbass region (Jansen, 2014) (Starink, 2016) (Snyder, 2014).

Russia’s re-emergence as a regional actor has become more apparent in the last years, and appears to be among the key foreign policy objectives it has. It is not afraid of using *soft*, and when it is needed, *hard* power to achieve its objectives. This has been exemplified throughout the CIS countries, and most notably in Ukraine.

#### Self-Help

Russia’s interest for international politics is limited, its focus lies mainly on national interests, and has little trust in the international community’s ability to ensure Russian security. Therefore, the Kremlin does not seem to be interested in committing fully to any international organization, as exemplified in the creation of the four Common Spaces, which the EU and Russia devised as an alternative to the ENP (Wiegand & Schulz, 2015). According to Wiecklawski (2011), ‘Russia is not interested in any international cooperation that does not satisfy its interests’ (p. 172). Therefore, one can conclude that Russia only participates in international organisations when it suits its national interests, which are highly focused on the state.

# **What are the recent developments in Ukraine?**

The relationship between the European Union, the Russian Federation, and Ukraine has its roots in the dissolution of the Soviet-Union, and the subsequent institutionalised framework created by the European Union for the dialogue between the three parties, named the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA). The PCA went into force in 1997 for the Russian Federation, and in 1998 for Ukraine, and was developed by the EU to create a platform for itself, as a newly established supranational organization, and the newly founded states, who had for the duration of the Cold War not been in charge of their own foreign policy and thus never had any relations with the EU. In the cases of Russia, Ukraine and Moldova the long term plan was to set up free trade areas (Wiegand & Schulz, 2015). For Ukraine it meant that for the first time since the Soviet-Union made Ukraine ‘whole’ (Jansen, 2014), it was in charge of its own affairs. Ukraine being taken into the PCA, the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), and then subsequently the Eastern Partnership (EaP) and ‘New Agreement’, or Association Agreement (AA) marked their willingness to integrate into the family of European states.

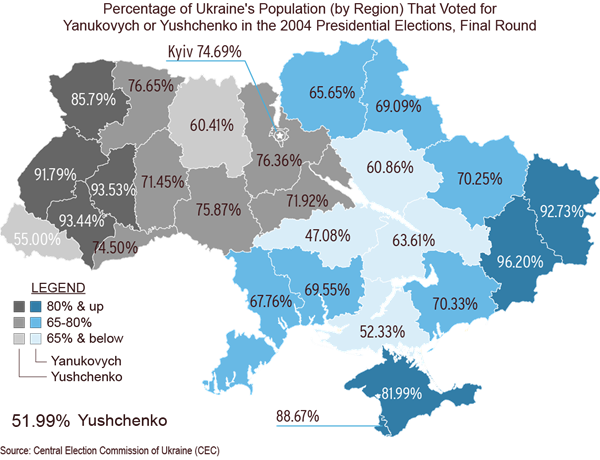
The fact remains that for Ukraine, since its independence in 1991, it has been a permanent struggle to balance their policies between the European Union and the Russian Federation. The drive throughout the Soviet-Union with terms, such as *perestrojka* (rebuilding)and *glasnost* (openness) (Freeland, 2015), towards modernisation marked Secretary-General Gorbachev’s time as Soviet leader, and therefore the aim for European standards of living. This is even more the case for Ukraine, because for a long time the western part of Ukraine has been part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, therefore enjoying a more westernised living standard. On the other hand, Ukraine’s south and eastern parts are closely linked with the Russian world, or Russkij Mir (Starink, 2016). This is partly due to the fact that Ukraine and Russia have a common history, which President Putin (but also the Patriarch in Moscow) likes to reiterate very often. This goes back to the first big Slavic empire named the Kievan Rus’, which had at its epicentre the capital Kiev. This city has great importance, together with the Crimean Peninsula, due to the fact that this is the place where respectively the Kievan Rus’ leader Vladimir the great decided to adopt Byzantine Christianity, and baptize the Kievan Rus. After the downfall of the Kievan Rus’, and their subsequent division with the Muscovy state history separates these two states. The importance of this fact cannot be stressed enough as it marks part of the debate between Russians and Ukrainians, as Russian often refer to Ukrainians as ‘little Russians’. The term Ukraine, or Ukraina in Russian, means ‘borderland’, which has been an important aspect of Ukrainian statehood, as the Russian state has seen always seen Ukraine as its buffer state on good terms (Jansen, 2014).

This was no different during the administrations of Kravchuk, Kuchma, Yuschenko

or Yanukovych. This was partly proven by the decision of the 2008 NATO summit in Bucharest to leave the possibility of membership of Georgia and Ukraine open, by not refusing them a Membership Action Plan (MAP), but also not granting them MAP directly (Percy, 2012). Ostensibly this should not constitute too much, after all, Ukraine nor Georgia have any MAP in sight, however even this possibility was perceived as a threat by the Russian authorities. Even though Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov noted in 2004 that Ukraine’s EU membership would not constitute any difficulties for Russia, other than some trade agreements in need of being straightened out with respect to EU regulations and the trade between Russia and Ukraine (Mankoff, 2016). This notion has changed in the past years, and has strong connections to the return of Vladimir Putin to the Presidency in 2012. In part, this is due to the fact that NATO and EU expansion seem to be strongly linked, and that the one always precedes the other (Mankoff, 2016) (Starink, 2016).

The culmination of this strive for balance between Russia and the EU has not just been apparent in the 2014 EuroMaidan protests, but already in the 2004 Orange Revolution. The first and second President of Ukraine, Leonid Kravchuk and Leonid Kuchma, had been part of the old Soviet apparatus, Kravchuk as the Chairman of the Ukrainian Communist party and Kuchma being a former director of an rocket factory in Dnipropetrovsk. While Kravchuk only served one term, Kuchma served two, scandal-ridden, terms. He is renowned to have said, according to a Russian saying, that ‘a smart calf drinks milk from two cows’, which characterised his policy on balancing Russia and the EU and getting the most out of each relationship (Jansen, 2014). This changed during the elections in 2004, in which Kuchma decided that he would endorse Viktor Yanukovych to run for presidency against the more popular, pro-EU candidate Viktor Yuschenko. Kuchma and Yanukovych received support from Russian President Putin in the form of campaign advisors (Percy, 2012). When Yanukovych won the elections in the second round, allegedly with the help of fraudulent methods, popular protest broke out in Kiev in support of Viktor Yuschenko, the so-called ‘Orange Revolution’ (OSCE, 2004). The Orange revolution eventually led to new elections, and the subsequent election of Yuschenko as President of Ukraine (Percy, 2012) (Jansen, 2014).

President Yuschenko could not fulfil the expectations created by the Ukrainian citizens during the Orange revolution in 2004, and failed to bring about an actual change in the Ukrainian political and economic landscape, which gave Viktor Yanukovych ample chance to reorganise himself, and meant that in 2010 Viktor Yanukovych gained the Presidency with his Party of the Regions. It is important to note that Kuchma and Yuschenko relied on support from the Eastern and South regions of Ukraine, while Kravchuk, and particularly Yuschenko, relied on his constituency in the Centre and Western regions of Ukraine. The eastern and south-eastern parts of Ukraine are characterised by a Russified population, often having Russian as their first language, and feeling a close connection with their neighbour Russia. The centre and western part are, on the other hand, synonymous with the Ukrainian language (although most Ukrainians are bilingual) and a mind-set that resembles European values. This phenomenon is often evidenced in the electoral results, as the South and Eastern parts of Ukraine tend to vote for the more ‘pro-Russian’ candidate, as was the case in the 2004 elections. Figure 3 clearly shows candidate Yanukovych’s electoral success in the Eastern parts of the country, as opposed to candidate Yuschenko’s appeal in the Western part of Ukraine.

Figure 3: 2004 elections electoral map

However, no matter on which constituency the Ukrainian Presidents relied, all of them realised that the country could not go forward without European assistance. President Yuschenko might have been the one outspokenly expressing his wish to join the European Union and NATO, but it actually was President Yanukovych that was very close to signing the AA in the third EaP summit in Vilnius in November 2013, with the accompanying statement that ‘there is no alternative to the integration with the EU’ (Wiegand & Schulz, 2015) (Starink, 2016) (Afinkeevsky, 2015). Meanwhile, the Russian government was heavily pressuring the Yanukovych administration over the AA/DCFTA negotiations. This started in August of 2013, in which Russian authorities subjected Ukrainian exports to bizarre restrictions, explained by Putin’s economic advisor as a warning (Jansen, 2014). President Yanukovych and Prime Minister Azarov decided, under a vast array of politically-driven measures taken by the Russian government to convince the Ukrainian government to back out of the AA/DCFTA, to forego the signing of the AA in the 2013 Vilnius summit. They determined the negative impact of the AA signing to be of such magnitude, in terms of impact to the Ukrainian economy, that the effects ‘had to be carefully studied and significant compensation had to be agreed’ (Wiegand & Schulz, 2015, p. 323). Yanukovych stated that €20 bn would be needed, with a total of €160 bn, to adjust to European standards and to compensate the loss of trade with Russia (Jansen, 2014). On the 17th of December 2013, President Yanukovych agreed to a deal, that included a €11 bn loan and a reduction of Russian gas prices by a third, with President Putin (Wiegand & Schulz, 2015) (Jansen, 2014).

President Yanukovych’s last-minute backing down of the AA sets the precedent for the dramatic developments that would become the protests on the EuroMaidan in November of 2013 on the Maidan Nezalezhnosti (Independence) square. It was initiated by Mustafa Nayyem, a Ukrainian-Afghan journalist, who after the change of heart of President Yanukovych posted on Facebook ‘let’s meet at 10:30pm by the independence monument. Dress warm; bring umbrellas, tea, coffee, a good attitude, and friends. Re-post highly appreciated’ (Afinkeevsky, 2015). What started as a student protest, with small origins, grew to several thousand people. Opposition leaders, such as Vitaly Klitschko, and several famous Ukrainian figures, such as Ruslana, were among the protestors on the Maidan square. The turning point for the protests, when it turned into a ‘revolution’, was when the military police, or *Berkoet*, forcibly tried to disperse the crowd from the Independence square. Additionally, on the 16th of January 2014 25 laws were signed into force that vastly restricted the protest movements, outlawing things, such as, gathering and wearing helmets or clothing that resembled an uniform (Snyder, 2014) (Jansen, 2014). The law was signed at such a fast rate, thereby breaking 2 procedural rules in the Ukrainian Parliament, having no proper debate and with the use of hand raising as a legitimate way of voting. This law was, with as much ease at it was signed into bill, rescinded on the 28/29th of January 2014. Euromaidan resulted in 125 deaths, referred to as the heavenly hundred (Freeland, 2015), 1890 treated for their injuries, and many kidnapped and disappeared citizens. With the Ukrainian authorities’ excessive use of force, and subsequent deaths, the protesters’ demands became unforgiving, resulting in their unconditional wish that President Yanukovych had to step down (Afinkeevsky, 2015) (Wiegand & Schulz, 2015).

Representatives of the European Union reacted in sporadic, sometimes even outright clumsy ways. The former High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, and First Vice President of the European Commission, Catherine Ashton and former European Commissioner for Enlargement and ENP Štefan Füle travelled to Kiev to meet with President Yanukovych on the 10th of December 2013. Their goal, along with the American representatives, was ‘to support a way out of the political crisis’ (BBC , 2013). Simultaneously, Berkoet forces started a massive action directed towards the protesters on the Independence square, attempting to disperse the crowd (Afinkeevsky, 2015). A likely assumption is that President Yanukovych was the culprit behind the aforementioned Berkoet action, aiming at removing the crowd from the Kiev centre with the assumption that it the protests could be downplayed in the negotiations with the EU and US representatives. The EU’s, and particularly the opposition’s, negotiations with the Yanukovych administration was perceived by the protesters as very unfavourable, and this led to the loss of their credibility towards the protesters (Afinkeevsky, 2015). The, now famous, Members of the European Parliament, Belgian Guy Verhofstadt and Dutch Hans van Balen, stood on the 21st of February 2014, and stated with much enthusiasm that Europe stood with them, and that Europe should thank them. This profound action of support by two individuals compromised the European Union’s position as mediator and, more importantly, their neutrality (Segers, 2016).

The large number of deaths, and escalations throughout Ukraine, with protestors occupying government buildings in many cities, led to the government and opposition’s serious start of negotiations. Yanukovych’s unwillingness to make any serious concessions stalled the negotiations for many weeks, some even saw his offers as an attempt to divide the opposition by offering the opposition leaders positions in his new cabinet (Jansen, 2014). A few weeks after that, on the 28/29th of January 2014, Prime Minister Azarov offered his resignation to the Ukrainian Parliament (Verkhovna Rada). The weeks that followed led to more escalation of violence, a rising death toll, and the realisation on Yanukovych’s behalf that time was not on his side. It is, therefore, with great efforts that on the 21st of February 2014 that all parties signed an agreement that stated that there would be a provisional government that would lead to early presidential elections, and reinstatement of the 2004 Constitution that would limit the presidential competences. The protesters did not want to settle for the agreement and demanded the resignation of President Yanukovych the morning after. He saw that his position had become unsustainable, and fled to Russia 2 days later (Afinkeevsky, 2015) (Jansen, 2014) (Starink, 2016) (Freeland, 2015) (Mankoff, 2016) (Snyder, 2014).

The new government under Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsensyuk declared in early March they were ready to sign the AA/DCFTA, which happened the on 21st of March 2014, ‘the same day that Russia formally annexed Crimea, and exactly four months after the suspension decision’ (Wiegand & Schulz, 2015, p. 322), and on the 16th of September 2014 the AA/DCFTA between the EU and Ukraine was ratified by the Verkhovna Rada and the EP (Wiegand & Schulz, 2015). The newly elected President, Petro Poroshenko, gained 54,7% of the votes, not requiring a second round of voting (OSCE, 2014). The new government under President Poroshenko, and now Prime Minister Volodymyr Groysman, operates with a high level of pressure. This is evidenced in the resignation of two key actors in the first cabinet under Yatsenyuk, who officially resigned on the 14th of April 2016. The new Prime Minister Groysman is the former chairman of the Ukrainian parliament. Before the resignation of the Prime Minister, the Minister of Economic Development and Trade Aivaras Abromavičius resigned, a Lithuanian-born investment banker, because he felt that his job was made impossible by several Ukrainian politicians, including Deputy Head of the Bloc of Poroshenko, Ihor Kononenko, and that corruption was too much. This fact was underlined by US Vice-President Joe Biden’s speech in the Ukrainian Parliament, in which he stated that corruption was an issue that had to be addressed. Futhermore, President Poroshenko himself is an oligarch, and is often referred to as the chocolate king (Starink, 2016). In an interview with a German newspaper he stated that he would ‘sell the Roshen concern’, however has held on to his business interests to this day, for which he is heavily criticised.

On the same day, 21st of March 2014, that the EU and Ukraine signed the political parts of the AA, Russia formally annexed Crimea, following a referendum on the 16 March. The referendum was conceived and organised within 2 weeks, notably with the presence of masked soldiers in green camouflage outfits, making them popular with the term ‘little green men’. These soldiers, without any indication of which country’s military they belonged to, forced the Ukrainain military to stay within the confines of their camps. Putin later admitted that the annexation was an idea conceived by him, in a documentary on the first anniversary of its annexation, in the final days of the Sochi Olympics (Myers, 2014). The annexation was condemned by the United Nations General Assembly on 27 March (Wiegand & Schulz, 2015).

Tensions spread to other parts of Ukraine as well, and on 11 May 2014, referenda were held on the future of the Donetsk and Lugansk provinces, *oblast* in Russian. According to Wiegand & Schulz (2015, p. 324), ‘these referenda sought to legitimise the establishment of the seperatist “republics”, with the support of illegally armed militia’. The Donetsk and Lugansk People’s Republics remain to be recognised by any country (Wiegand & Schulz, 2015), including Russia, however are governed by the Russian state (Starink, 2016). One instance that proved that there is a Russian military presence in Eastern Ukraine was Dorzhi Batomunkuyev, a contracted Russian soldier that was wounded while fighting in Ukraine (Kostyuschenko, 2015). The Ukrainian government’s response to the seperatist republics was the so-called ‘Anti-Terror Operation’ (Wiegand & Schulz, 2015), supported by many volunteer batallions, such as the Azov batallion (Starink, 2016). Months of fighting, interrupted by two Minsk peace treaties, have resulted in Russia’s control over roughly 7% of Ukrainian territory.

# How does the Russian government incorporate the recent developments in Ukraine into its foreign policy?

As mentioned in earlier chapters, Ukraine has always had an important place in Russian foreign policy. In the tumultuous final months of the Soviet Union’s existence, two things led to its actual dissolution: the attempted coup in Moscow, and Ukraine’s subsequent declaration of independence, followed by a referendum in 1991. Apart from the historical and cultural context of Russia-Ukraine relations, which Putin stressed in his visit to Crimea in the summer of 2013 in light of the 1025st anniversary of the Christianization of the Kievan Rus (Jansen, 2014), Russia sees Ukraine as part of its sphere of influence, or as Trenin (2009) articulates it; ‘sphere of *interest*’. Therefore, the ‘encroachment’ of western, including the EU with its ENP and EaP, is seen as a threat to this sphere of *interest* (Mankoff, 2016)(Starink, 2016), and thus its national security interests (Pallin, 2016). The national security interests can be articulated in various ways, however, broadly speaking, one can establish some trends, Simâo (2016) states that ‘Russian foreign policy towards Ukraine results from a combination of two trends, reinforcing a Russian interventionist agenda: perceived threats to Russia’s interests in the near abroad and a radicalised and conservative national spectrum shaping foreign policy decisions’ (p. 491).

In expectation of his re-election, Putin expressed his wish for the establishment of an Eurasian Union, which according to Mankoff (2016, p. 257) was ‘allegedly modelled on the EU, but espousing an illiberal creed sharply at odds with European values’. As seen in the background chapter, the idea had been in the making for some time, and some can consider the CIS the precursor for this Eurasian Union. On the first of January, 2015, the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) entered into force. The EEU is the successor of the Customs Union, which contains Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus, with Armenia (2 January), and Kyrgyzstan (August) joining later. Armenia, as seen from a Russian foreign policy stance point, can be considered a foreign policy success, due to the fact that it was a part of the EaP programme, was therefore offered and AA, but chose integration with the EEU instead. President Putin’s intention was similar with regard to Ukraine, Starink (2016) claims that without Ukraine in the EEU, Russia considers it a ‘dull company’ (p. 12). She, furthermore, claims that ‘Ukraine’s choice for Europe is an embarrassment for Russia’ (p. 12). This is partly due to the fact that the AA makes it impossible for Ukraine to enter the EEU, and this is an absolute necessity for the Russian government (Jansen, 2014). However, what is more important is that Ukraine is a vital link in Russia’s quest for a united ‘Russkij Mir’, or Russian World.

### Russkij Mir

The most important proprietor of the concept of Russkij Mir has been Aleksandr Dugin. It comes out of a broader ideology of *Eurasianism*, which sets out a distinct role for Russia, as neither an Asian, nor a European state, and its culmination within the Kremlin is the EEU. In Dugin’s convictions, Russia is at odds with Europe, and the US, due to their profound differences in ideologies. This clash becoming violent is not an issue in Dugin’s mind, because Dugin is a strong supporter of the war against Ukraine. He even called for Crimea’s annexation as far back as 2008, when Russia was at war with Georgia. Dugin’s theories are shared with influential figures in, and around, the Kremlin, such as the Minister of Defence Sergey Shoygu, and FSB chief Alexander Bortnikov (Jensen, 2014). Domestic politics, which involves internal power plays, directly affects the foreign policy-making. Detracting from the policy evidences in Ukraine, one can conclude that the hardliners, also called the *silovki*, have become more influential during, and after, the Ukraine crisis. According to Myers (2014), the decision to invade Crimea was made with the consultation of a small group of trusted aides, excluding ‘senior officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the cadre of comparatively liberal advisers who might have foreseen the economic impact and potential consequences of American and European sanctions’. Jensen (2014) notes that the group of liberal advisers include ‘members of prime minister Dmitry Medvedev’s team, members of Boris Yeltsin’s family, and others’.

The fact that a small group of trusted aides form the entire foreign policy, instead of a foreign ministry, signifies a complete end to the chaotic 90’s, when shaking off the Soviet legacy meant a considerable de-centralisation. This rethinking of governing accompanied the creation of a new Russian elite, commonly referred to as the oligarchy, acquiring state companies, and gas/oil fields, for pennies, or in some cases, overtaking them by force. The chaotic 90’s are synonymous with capitalism and Western integration, it is, therefore, that many Russians have negative connotations with capitalism and democratisation. One of Putin’s first measures was to ‘win’ the war in Chechnya, put an end to the oligarchy ruling over the Kremlin, and terminating the regional elections, appointing them instead. In other words, under the Putin administration a re-centralisation took place. This allows him to portray himself ‘as a strong national and international leader’, which ‘contributed to improve Russia’s self-image in the post-Soviet context’ (Simâo, 2016, p. 492). Russia’s foreign policy concepts over the years have consistently argued that Russia preserves the right to protect its compatriots domestically, retaining full sovereignty over activities within its borders, and abroad. The notion that Russia has that international prestige, and capability (as evidenced by the reinstated 9th of May Victory military parades), shapes, for an important part, the foreign policy.

Simâo’s (2016, p. 491) states that a ‘radicalised and conservative national spectrum’ shapes the foreign policy decisions. A conservative agenda reinforces his legitimacy at home, and adds to his popularity, which is evidenced by his popularity after annexing Crimea. This indicates that, in light of the increasingly harsh nature of the Russian rhetoric, the Kremlin needs to maintain its hard-line course to avoid losing legitimacy, which reinforces the notion that, are according to Popescu and Leonard, Putin’s policies comparable to ‘riding a bicycle: unless he carries on peddling, he will fall over’ (2007, p. 12). Therefore, it is not an anomaly that Dugin is the main ideologist of the silovki, and their hard-line policies, favouring the restoration of the Russian world, within the bigger framework of Eurasianism. The EEU is the culmination of the popularity that hard-line methods bring the Kremlin, it is also a convenient tool that Putin applies to stay in power. He managed to break the back of the protest movement in 2011-12 with laws that , for example, outlawed, similar to Ukraine in January 2014, protesting (Starink, 2016) (Demirjian, 2014). Pallin (2016, p. 65) describes this situation as ‘Russia’s geopolitical and ideological motives are […] closely linked to domestic politics’, and the prestige from being a regional power is important, ‘but is also a rationale for legitimising the political and economic system offered by Putin at home: repression and diminishing real wages in exchange for a sense of national pride and a sense of entitlement vis-à-vis the countries in the post-Soviet space’. When such an important country as Ukraine, a part of the Russkij Mir, ‘chooses to align itself with the EU and its development model’, it means that the Russian public opinion can change as well, threatening Putin’s, and the whole of the silovki’s, position (Pallin, 2016, p. 65). Putin’s position appears to be secure, but the protests over fraudulent parliamentary elections in 2011 have made him more cautious regarding his situation (Mankoff, 2016). The fear that the Russian public will protest against the ‘repression and diminishing real wages’ (Pallin, 2016, p. 65), because they have observed Ukraine, a country part of the Russkij Mir, make a seemingly difficult transition possible (Starink, 2016).While the theories behind Putin’s populist agenda are varied, Judah (2014) notes that Putin was formed by his traumatic election loss during his time in the Saint Petersburg Municipality, which left him without an occupation (p. 23). Popescu and Leonard (2007) support the notion of a populist Kremlin, and note that the Kremlin’s ‘weekly polling and focus groups’ underline ‘Putin’s popularity’, which ‘stems from his remarkable capacity to crystallise, express and even pre-empt the public’s expectations’, while identifying the Kremlin as ‘sociology-obsessed (p. 12).

Popularising Dugin’s anti-Western rhetoric, through state-sponsored propaganda, is one way that Putin’s administration has increasingly demonised the EU, and the US. Russia Today, or RT, has been founded in 2005 by Mikhail Leshin, and posed itself as an alternative news channel to respected news broadcasters, such as BBC or CNN. RT soon introduced a separate broadcasting for Arabic, Spanish, and German, alongside offices around the world, including Washington D.C. in the US. It has achieved a reach of approximately 700 million people, employing many journalists from the countries they broadcast to. RT has manifested itself during the Russia-Georgia war, and has fallen into distaste by many, particularly in the Netherlands, due to its reports on the MH-17 downing above Ukraine. While its broadcasts supply the world with a variety of theories on controversial topics, its reports domestically have gone a degree further than their English reporting colleagues. Russian media reported that a 6-year old boy was crucified in Slavyansk, allegedly by the Ukrainian army, and his mom dragged through the streets on the back of an army truck. This story turned out to be made up completely, but fed the sentiment in Russia that Ukraine was being ruled by fascists and Nazi’s (Starink, 2016) (Somer & Iris, 2015) (Corstius & Oey, 2015). In fact, while RT’s in international context was to distort the truth by creating many versions of the truth, domestically it has brought out stories that claim European decadence, disorder, and distance to traditional Russian values (Mankoff, 2016); Russkij Okkupant is an example of this, viewed by 8 million, and shared by the deputy Prime-Minister of Russia (Corstius & Oey, 2015).

The concept of the Russkij Mir has aided the Kremlin in helping the Russians building a sense of identity, and has conveniently pointed the enemy of the possibility of the Russian world: Europe, the U.S., and most notably NATO. Integration with these two organisations are the biggest threats to the Russkij Mir, therefore the Russian nation, and therefore Russian sovereignty. Klinke (2012) provides an interesting narrative on this issue, stating that the EU views itself as a ‘postmodern’ (21st century) entity, while Russia is stuck in the ‘modern’ (20th century) manner of thinking and acting. The Russian elite is actively holding onto this ‘modern’ way of thinking, perceiving all foreign presence as a threat to its sovereignty, as evidenced in its laws requiring NGOs that receive donations from abroad and engage in activity, which could be perceived to have any connection to politics, to be registered in the Russian Ministry of Justice (ICNL, 2016). That is also why Russian media have demonised the new Ukrainian government by stating that it is a ‘fascist, junta regime’, which overthrew the democratically elected President with the aim to marginalise the position of the Russian minority. Ukraine’s choice for European integration can, therefore, be considered as a foreign policy failure for the Russian elite.

### Foreign policy to Ukraine

Russian foreign policy has evidenced itself in various ways in Ukraine. There is a clear distinction in how it approached various issues over the years. With the possibility of a NATO, and/or EU, member Ukraine, the rhetoric has become more unapologetic, and rather two-dimensional. However, as mentioned before, domestic politics play a substantial role in Russian foreign policy-making. Additionally, with Russia’s growing economy, certainly compared to the 1990s, it has felt more secure in asserting its economic wealth in various ways. According to Popescu and Leonard (2007) ‘Russians remark jokingly that when oil is at $15 a barrel, Russia is an appendage to the world economy, whilst at $70 a barrel, it is an energy superpower’ (p. 12). Russia’s main tool of pressuring Ukraine has been its economic wealth in later years, but an integral part has always been its energy policy. With Ukraine’s status as an important transit country for Russian gas to many European countries, Russia (but certainly also the EU) has depended on its relative stability, to be able to transport gas to Europe. While Russia has succeeded in gaining control over the gas pipelines in Belarus, with Belarussian leader Lukashenko giving in after many disputes, Ukraine held onto its pipelines, thus retaining the right to charge transit costs.

Therefore, the main difference in Russia’s reaction to the Orange revolution in 2004 and the Euromaidan in 2013-4 was mainly how secure the Kremlin saw itself, economically and militarily. The Kremlin’s reaction to the popularity of Yuschenko during the run-up of the Ukrainian elections in 2004, and Kuchma’s subsequent reaching out to Putin was not answered by the authorization of the use of force by the Russian Duma, as it has been the case in 2014 (Neuman, 2014) , but with money and campaign advisers (Afinkeevsky, 2015). Even in the face of a Yuschenko victory, Russia had not made such restrictive measures as in 2014. The main issue in Yuschenko-Timoshenko administration was the disputed gas deal, and this was also the main way Putin decided to pressure Yuschenko’s presidency. Russia dramatically increased the gas prices in 2005-06, from 50 to 230 dollar per thousand cubic meter gas, and when Ukraine refused to pay this price, Gazprom closed its flow of gas to Ukraine. Gazprom had also offered Ukraine to buy ‘significant shares in the Ukrainian national pipeline network’. Subsequently, Russia made it impossible for Ukraine to substitute the gas supply, by buying up Turkmenistan ‘complete gas output for the first quarter of the year’ (Hancock & Lane, 2016, p. 291). This affected many European states, which depended on the role of Ukraine as a transit country. Though the parties could come to terms with a lower price in that year, it was in 2009 that a new conflict arose over the gas trade. It was eventually settled by Prime Ministers Timoshenko and Putin, and Ukraine committed itself to a 10 year gas deal, which led to her arrest later (Jansen, 2014). The EU and Ukraine even ‘began negotiating an agreement (signed in March 2009) to modernize the Ukrainian gas transportation infrastructure, to reduce the waste and corruption that left Kiev vulnerable to Russian pressure over payment arrears’, which led to the gas crises in 2006 and 2009. In response, Russia threatened that ‘foreign assistance’ could further disrupt gas delivery, in due consideration of Gazprom’s interests (Mankoff, 2016, p. 270).

By the time Yanukovych sat in office, and even with him, Putin found himself struggling to improve relations with Ukraine. Yanukovych was still intent on signing the AA, and refused to transfer the ownership of the pipelines to the Kremlin , even calling for the eventual membership of Ukraine to the EU (Mankoff, 2016, p. 270). Ukraine maintained its aim to maximise its gains from relations with both parties, however, Yanukovych did eventually opt for the Russia deal over the AA, which led to his subsequent downfall. Russia is looking at substantial reservoirs under the Black Sea, which are ‘thought to rival the North Sea’. However, the technology required to do deep-sea exploration depends on technology that Russia does not possess, and with Western sanctions will have a hard time accessing (Hancock & Lane, 2016, p. 291). With sanctions, low oil prices, and a newly stimulated Ukrainian nationalism, it will be increasingly difficult for Russia to have a similar impact in Ukraine, comparing to the pre-Maidan Yanukovych administration. With little chance of Russia returning Crimea to Ukraine, or returning de-facto ownership of parts of the Donbass, and Ukraine, or any other European state for that matter, accepting the Crimean status, the conflict is set to last for a considerable amount of time.

# How do the recent developments affect the European Union and its foreign policy?

The development of foreign policy within the European Union is a difficult process, in which 28 member states have their pre-conceived notions about the priorities of its European External Action Service (EEAS). The enlargement in 2004, and 2007, has brought in many Central and Eastern European states that in the near past had lived under the rule of the Soviet Union, and/or Warsaw Pact. This led to the fact that the EU’s policy, which had been dominated mainly by Western European states, who’s priority towards the former Soviet Union primarily focussed on trade and economic development, shifted. Brussels had to maintain a sensitive balance between, on one hand, newly independent Central and Eastern European states, and ,on the other hand, the main successor of the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation. Negative sentiments, Russo-phobic in its nature, had to be managed with the sensitivity of the Russian governing class, besides concerns for a Yugoslavia scenario. With Russian sensitivities, lying mainly in the sphere of NATO enlargement, the EU had little reason to not seek integration with these states. Bernard Bot, then Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs, declared that opening the EU for accession of these states was a way for Brussels to redeem itself (Segers, 2016). Therefore, the creation of the UfM was quickly followed by an EaP, which increased in importance in recent years. Nonetheless, the EU remains a Supranational Organization that operates on the common denominator of its members’ interests. As a result, European policy-making is difficult to develop, and subsequently to carry out. It was, therefore, not entirely shocking that the EaP was a Polish-Swedish initiative, because these two states are at the forefront of the EU’s *Ostpolitik*, which leads to more caution towards Russian foreign policy, but also more empathy to the difficulties the EaP partner countries face.

### Partnership and Cooperation

The EU, but also the US’, reaction to the tumultuous months before the Soviet Union actually fell apart was characterised, first by optimism over surviving this phase of history without a large-scale nuclear destruction, and, to a certain degree, also hesitance to act decisively. The EU had been busy getting its own house in order in the early 90s, becoming the European Union, instead of the European Economic Community, which the EU was founded upon. Additionally, the war in the former Yugoslavia also kept the European nations occupied with its consequences. Therefore, while the EU’s policy towards Ukraine was characterised with ambivalence, a more important foreign policy issue, it dealt with Russia that was hardly interested in having an intrinsic relationship with the EU. The EU’s realisation that a framework had to be created for interaction with the newly founded states, some of which had never had the necessity to formulate foreign policy, lead to the PCA. It was signed in 1994, though did not enter into force until 1997 for Russia, and 1998 for Ukraine. Additionally, the PCAs with Russia and Ukraine included the possibility of setting up free trade areas in the future (Wiegand & Schulz, 2015, p. 327) The war in Chechnya was the main factor that led to the PCA entering into force only 3 years later in Russia’s case, the EU had its concerns about the human rights violations taking place in the Caucasus. While the gap in expectations stymied the negotiations on the PCA with Ukraine, making a transition from talks on cooperation to European integration (Dragneva & Wolczuk, 2015).

Ukraine, on the other hand, had European integration formulated as one of its foreign policy priorities. While the Russian Federation allowed many Central and Eastern European countries to seek European, and often also NATO, integration, this was not completely the case with Ukraine, and this caused grave concerns in the Ukrainian leadership. The signing of the Budapest Memorandum, thus securing Ukrainian sovereignty, including Crimea, did put some of Ukraine’s concerns to rest, but the realisation that European integration was a key to secure full sovereignty never stopped being a factor in the subsequent Ukrainian governments. This is also evidenced in Ukrainian hesitance with CIS integration, except for the observer status it always sought to maintain. European integration accompanied Ukrainian identity-building, and a manner to push itself out of a permanent ‘little brother’ status of Russia. In Ukraine’s transition to independence, it managed to avoid civil war, though at the cost of the Soviet elite retaining their key positions. It is, therefore, that Ukrainian wish for further European integration remained a foreign policy objective, rather than translating into domestic policy change. The EU was criticised for this lack of translation, because it had failed to incentivise Ukraine enough with financial compensation, or membership prospect.

For both, Russia and Ukraine, the PCA created an ‘institutional framework for interactions’ between European officials and their counterparts in Ukraine and Russia (Mankoff, 2016, p. 259). The PCA fit within the timeframe the EU operated, Willy Brandt’s ‘Wandel durch Annäherung’, or ‘Change through Engagement’ (Mankoff, 2016, p. 259) characterised the optimism of the EU in the 1990s (Segers, 2016). It was believed that through engagement of the post-Soviet space, one could instil European values, which included the rule of law, which is ‘central to the European project’, respect for human rights, democracy, and consensus (Popescu & Leonard, 2007, p. 3) (Mankoff, 2016). And, even though, the EU never considered Russia as a prospective member state, ‘Brussels pursued the PCA and similar steps to promote convergence around EU standard out of a belief that Russia would eventually follow the path toward political and economic liberalization trod by Poland and other post-communist states of Eastern Europe’ (Mankoff, 2016, p. 260). With regard to Ukraine, there was, and has been, little political will for a granting it a candidate membership. This was exemplified by Ukraine’s hope at the Helsinki European Council in December 1999 to have its aspirations met with membership perspective, but received instead a ‘Welcome of Ukraine’s European choice’ (Dragneva & Wolczuk, 2015, p. 38). The Ukraine PCA ‘explicitly disassociated cooperation from the prospect of EU membership, rendering it unsuitable as a vehicle for developing relations’ (Dragneva & Wolczuk, 2015, p. 38). It indicated the EU’s relatively little interest for deepening of the cooperation with Ukraine. Even with President Kuchma’s decree entitled ‘Strategy on Ukraine’s integration with the European Union, the EU’s interest remained limited. Brussels seemed to be simply too busy preparing Central and other Eastern European countries for membership, and shared no borders in Ukraine prior to the enlargement in 2004. It is in this context that the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) was developed, in order to ‘soften the political and economic divides between the ‘insiders’ and the ‘outsiders’’ (Dragneva & Wolczuk, 2015, p. 39).

### **Shared neighbourhood**

The PCAs, while institutionalizing relations between the post-Soviet space and the EU, it did not cover all areas, and neither did it ‘contain a dynamic agenda facilitating political and institutional reforms and much closer economic and sectoral cooperation’. Wiegand and Schulz classify this as ‘a rather loose form of commitment and a lack of real enforcement obligation as well as dispute settlement’ (Wiegand & Schulz, 2015, p. 327). For some the PCA symbolised a Stepping Stone to EU membership, ‘whereas for others they were more limited agreements designed to address specific problems but lacking the force of law’. The agreements that came out of the PCA were, therefore, designed to fit the need of both parties, and in some cases include the possibility of membership (Mankoff, 2016, p. 267). It was set to last for 10 years, would be, upon bilateral agreement, be renewed, however was not calculated to factor in the enlargements in 2004 and 2007. The ENP was constructed, ahead of the first enlargement round, for the purpose of creating a unified and common strategy that would deal with EU’s foreign policy towards its new neighbours (Mankoff, 2016). It meant that the EU could no longer have an ambiguous Foreign Policy towards Ukraine and Russia, it shared a common border. The European Commission (2003) states in its communication paper that it is determined to ‘avoid drawing new dividing lines in Europe’ (p. 4), which could be interpreted as the EU’s fear of large-scale migratory flows from neighbouring countries, however this aim would guide the ENP policies.

The EU realised it could not endlessly enlarge, that would be politically and financially unfeasible, due to diminishing domestic support for it domestically, and had to satisfy the increasingly popularised demand in Ukraine, for example, for European integration. As a result of this ‘enlargement fatigue’, the EU had to find a different solution to answer the membership question Ukraine repeatedly asked, and answered by simply leaving it out of the negotiations. The membership issue would be dealt with when the time, and political will, was more appropriate (Wiegand & Schulz, 2015). The ENP provided partner states with ‘a degree of integration going beyond normal cooperation with third countries’, and used tools, such as the Actions Plans and the Progress Reports, to help implement and monitor progress (Wiegand & Schulz, 2015, p. 330). The Action Plans were set to approximate the partner countries’ legislation with the EU’s *acquis communautaire*, and create adherence to European values, of which human rights and democracy are an example, with the incentive for EU internal market access (Dragneva & Wolczuk, 2015). Additionally, with the end of the PCA approaching, the EU, started negotiating a ‘new agreement’ In March 2007, later renamed as the ‘Association Agreement’. With Ukraine’s accession to the WTO, the EU launched negotiations on the DCFTA, ‘as a core element of the new agreement’ (Wiegand & Schulz, 2015, p. 331).

The EU had every intention of including Russia in the ENP, however the Russian government had no interest in becoming a part of a programme that would include it with its smaller, weaker neighbours. Additionally, the matter of the ENP’s *acquis* approximation policy was an important factor for Russia, because no aspiration of EU membership was relevant. Therefore, instead Russia and the EU agreed on the four ‘Common Spaces’, at the 12th EU-Russia Rome Summit in November 2003 (Mankoff, 2016) (Wiegand & Schulz, 2015). The four Common Spaces covered areas, such as ‘economics, freedom/security/justice, external security, and education/culture’. It is generally accepted as the EU’s willingness to extend EU-Russia relations, and respect Russian sensitivities, by laying the foundation for ‘convergence of Russian EU practices’, without any ‘implication that Russia was being forced to adopt EU standard as the price of cooperation’ (Mankoff, 2016, p. 268). Additionally, to build further, and ‘complement’, on the Common Spaces foundation, the EU and Russia launched the Partnership for Modernisation at the 25th EU-Russia summit in Rostov-on-Don in May/June 2010 (Wiegand & Schulz, 2015, p. 329).

With the French Presidency of the EU in 2008, the EU saw increased activity on the former French colonies around the Mediterranean, which became the UfM. In consideration of the creation of the UfM, and the fear in the Eastern European states that this would lead to the EU’s negligence of the Eastern perimeter of its borders, a Polish-Swedish initiative introduced the Eastern Partnership (EaP) in May 2008. The initiative was set to materialise in 2009, however the Russian-Georgian war in August 2008 led to the European Commission presenting its communication in December 2008. Georgia had already signed the ENP Action Plan in November 2006, and on 9 December 2008, after the 10-day war with Russia, the EU presented Georgia at the Ninth EU-Georgia Cooperation Council Meeting with the ‘main lines of the Communication on the Eastern Partnership […] which proposes the creation of a stronger policy framework for EU’s future relations with Eastern partners at both the bilateral and multilateral level’ (European Council, 2008, p. 2). Subsequently, the EU and Ukraine agreed, at the EU-Ukraine Paris Summit in September 2008, the New Agreement would be renamed Association Agreement, which meant that Ukraine would be the first AA candidate (Wiegand & Schulz, 2015). Therefore, the Georgian conflict strengthened the EU’s determination that it had a role to play in the South Caucasus, as well as in Eastern Europe, as it was evidenced in the 2013-14 EuroMaidan protests. The EuroMaidan protesters that waved the European flag signalled the desire of the Ukrainian citizens that Ukrainian domestic harmonisation with European values, at the least, was a necessity for Ukraine. As a Union that represented the rule of law, human rights, and democracy, it *had* to act. Therefore, the High Representative of the EU, Lady Catherine Ashton, was a frequently seen face in the Kiev negotiations. That MEPs Guy Verhofstadt and Hans van Balen, stood on the 21st of February 2014, and stated with much enthusiasm that Europe stood with them, and that Europe should thank them, was an individual act, however still represented the EU in some form, was unfortunate. It created some dissonance with Lady Ashton brokering a peace deal between the opposition leaders, and the Yanukovych administration, and the EU’s official role as mediator in early 2014. The ‘endorsement’ created false expectations with the protestors (Segers, 2016), and subsequently to a let-down when the brokered peace included a clause that allowed the Yanukovych administration to remain in power until elections would be held (Percy, 2012). The subsequent events lead to the election of a new President, Petro Poroshenko, and signing of the AA/DCFTA on 21 March 2014, at the Extraordinary EU-Ukraine Summit (Wiegand & Schulz, 2015).

The AAs that were introduced in the framework of the EaP became part of the most ambitious programme introduced by the EU. Its presence functioned as a ‘yardstick for measuring the EU’s foreign policy impact and transformative powers in its eastern neighbourhood ‘ (Wiegand & Schulz, 2015, p. 325). It could not have been different; the AAs that were offered to the EaP partner countries were the most ambitious EU foreign policy project, with the intention **not** to enlarge (Segers, 2016), which was created to date. The AAs would offer EaP partner countries access to its Internal Market of a scale unseen before. As a result, when President Yanukovych backed down from signing the AA at the 2013 Vilnius Summit, it sent shockwaves through the diplomatic community. Since the European states had lobbied extensively throughout 2013 to muster support for the AA with Ukraine, the let-down was substantial. Brussels faced criticism from all parties, some claimed it was too ambitious, some argued it was not ambitious enough. The EU sought to improve the ENP and EaP programmes, meaning that Brussels had to face some of the grave issues that the AAs left out, such as future membership. However, most agreed that ‘the Russian factor’ had to be examined more meticulously (Wiegand & Schulz, 2015).

The crises in EU-Russia relations have further increased the EU’s determination that it has to play a role in the ‘shared neighbourhood’ (Pallin, 2016), however have revealed some areas where the EU lacks in capability to act, let alone act in unison. How the EU will deal with the recent development on its Eastern frontiers will determine the EU’s future, as well as Ukraine’s. It’s inability to act will lead to a decrease in its credibility as an important regional actor, which in turn will lead to the decrease of its Eastern Partners’ belief in the European system over the Eurasian alternative (Mankoff, 2016). The precedent set will create a stronger divide on the European continent, namely that one is either ‘stuck’ in the ‘modern’, or ascended to the ‘post-modern’ (Klinke, 2012). A zero-sum game is currently at hand, where Russia will continue to refuse to return Crimea back to Ukraine, and Ukraine refuse to accept the current status quo. The EU’s dependence on Russian energy undermines its position, leaving it open to pressure from Moscow, however due to its commitment to European values obliging itself to maintaining a tough stance on Russian foreign policy in the shared neighbourhood (Mankoff, 2016).

# Conclusion

The Ukraine crisis has marked a turning point in EU-Russia relations. The carefully cultivated relationship from its foundation much has changed. With the PCAs in 1990s to the ENP, EaP, and the Common Spaces in the 2000s the institutionalised dialogue between the ‘Eastern partners’ and the EU has been instrumental in the relations between Russia and the EU (Mankoff, 2016). In fact, the last-minute decision by President Yanukovych to forgo the signing of the AA at the Vilnius summit in 2013 has started a motion of events that had not been intended when the EU devised the EaP programme. Like Russia, Ukraine’s first interaction with the EU as a newly independent state was the PCA, signed in 1994 and ratified in 1998 for Ukraine, and ratified in 1997 for Russia (Wiegand & Schulz, 2015). The unease in the European states on the human rights violations of Russia in Chechnya led to the delay in Russia’s case, and difference in expectations was a key factor in Ukraine’s situation (Dragneva & Wolczuk, 2015).

Ukraine and Russia have a considerable historical and cultural connection to one another. From the times of the Kievan Rus, to the Soviet Union, the Ukrainian and Russian history have, at times, shown great parallels. In fact, Ukraine with its current borders is a product of the Soviet Union, which brought the western and eastern parts of Ukraine together (Jansen, 2014). A large majority of the Ukrainians are bilingual, and Russians generally refer to them as their ‘little brothers’ (Starink, 2016). Additionally, Ukraine and Russia share the Orthodox Christian faith, however with two different Patriarchs in current times. Even though Ukrainians are culturally close to Russia, they have different views on the path their country should take. Even with the most pro-Russia President, Viktor Yanukovych, there was a strong call for European integration (Wiegand & Schulz, 2015). However, with the Soviet elite staying in power in post-Soviet Ukraine, it was set to the necessity to balance its European aspirations with Russian considerations (Jansen, 2014). This was not only exemplified by President Yanukovych in 2013-4, but under the Kuchma and Yuschenko administrations. President Yuschenko ran as a pro-NATO and pro-Europe candidate, however it was President Yanukovych who was close to signing the ‘New Agreement’, which would become the AA. His decision to back out at the last moment proved to be a disastrous decision, as it sparked protests that grew larger, partly in protest against disproportionate police reaction, and resulted in the peace accord that was brokered by the EU. Despite the fact that the deal constituted that President Yanukovych could remain in his position until the early elections, he packed up and left to Russia within a few days (Afinkeevsky, 2015). The new President, Petro Poroshenko, signed the political parts of the AA, the same day that Russia formally annexed the Crimean Peninsula (Wiegand & Schulz, 2015). Besides the annexation, President Poroshenko has had to face an insurgency in the Eastern parts of Ukraine, which have been proven to be fuelled by the Russian military. The subsequent peace deals, brokered by President Putin, have seen many violations, and will remain to be an issue in trilateral relations.

In President Putin’s current term Eurasian integration has become one of the key foreign policy objectives. In January 2015 the Eurasian Economic Union entered into force, and currently includes Russia, Kazakhstan, Armenia, and Kyrgyzstan (Pallin, 2016). Eurasian integration has been one of the key issues in the agenda of the Kremlin hardliners, whose chief theorist is Aleksandr Dugin, a renown *Eurasianist* (Newman, 2014). The hardliners, or silovki, have gained influence in recent years, and are among the inner circle of President Putin that advise him on his foreign policy choices (Myers, 2014) (Jensen, 2014). Moreover, foreign policy achievements that are have a Eurasian agenda generally are popular with the Russian public, as exemplified with Putin’s high popularity rate after the annexation of Crimea (Nardelli, Rankin, & Arnett, 2015) (Popescu & Leonard, 2007). An important aspect in his popularity is also the Russian state media, which have helped to gain public support by exerting Dugin’s anti-Western rhetoric. Furthermore, Ukraine cannot be considered a foreign policy success in the eyes of the silovki, due to the fact that Ukraine, which is seen to be a part of the ‘Russian world’, has chosen European integration over the Eurasian alternative (Starink, 2016). Russia’s changing view of the EU, becoming increasingly hostile (Mankoff, 2016), has also changed its foreign policy results to Ukraine. Where Russia used soft power, through economic pressure, before, it now applies hard power in the form of military measures (Jensen, 2014).

The inner dynamics of the EU play an important role in the resulting foreign policy. Moreover, policy-making has become more difficult, because of the enlargement rounds in 2004 and 2007. The countries that did become member states had a past under Soviet occupation, which is frequently demonstrated in Brussels. For example, the EaP was conceived as a reaction, by a Polish-Swedish initiative, to the EU’s shifting focus on the southern vector of its borders. The 1990s were also the years that the EU was occupied with getting its own house in order, becoming an actual union, and dealing with a conflict in the former Yugoslavia. However, the EU did comprise the PCA for the post-Soviet countries as an institutionalised framework for negotiations. Even though the EU did not seriously consider Russia as a future member, it did engage with the state, hoping that it would adapt European values in the long term. As the EU grew, its border shifted East to include a common border with Russia and Ukraine. The realisation that this could create a contrast between non-EU members and the EU led to the creation of the ENP and EaP programmes, and offered partner countries partial access to its Internal Market in return for complying with the *acquis communautaire*. In consideration of Russia’s sensitivities, it agreed with the EU to the four Common Spaces, which would deal with certain areas, and not bind Russia to any harmonisation with EU rules.

The future of the relations between the EU and Russia will be closely monitored by the post-Soviet countries, including the countries that are members of the EU. An important aspect in future developments will be the degree to which Russian and European domestic politics will progress. Would the EU further integrate, becoming a ‘United States of Europe’, it would mean that the EU would have improved mechanisms for acting in unison. The dynamics of the internal power play in Brussels have heavily influenced the extent to which the EU has been able to create a clear foreign policy. It has given validity to Russia’s view on the EU as an indecisive and overly bureaucratised institution, and subsequent preference to deal with individual members states. Russian foreign policy has been partly based on maintaining a divided EU, so that it can benefit from it the most. This is exemplified in the energy sector, where Russia charges different prices for the various countries, and politically, where Russia is a supporter of situations that undermine Brussels’ ability to act (Segers, 2016). The key to dealing most effectively with a Russian government that seeks out to undermine the EU is increasing the competency that Brussels has to act on behalf of the member states. Another option would be to have strict agreements with the member states to ensure that Russia cannot benefit from EU inner dynamics.

An important issue for the EU will be how Russia will react to future EU policies towards the shared neighbourhood. It will be determined in how well the EU can read into the Kremlin’s domestic situation, aside from its economic and geopolitical sensitivities. This will prove to be a great challenge, as experts do not agree themselves; Simâo (2016) and Segers (2016) both have opposite observations from Russian foreign policy making, where Simâo (2016) state that it is unpredictable in its nature, Segers (2016) finds that Putin’s wishes have always been clear. In the opinion of the author, both make valid arguments for their respective stance points. Whereas Simâo mentions Russia’s revisionist agenda as the primary reason for its increased unpredictability, Segers (2016) states that Putin’s sensitivities, or wishes, have been very clear from the start, namely that ‘Western’ encroachment into the post-Soviet space is a sensitive issue. One can certainly state that Russia’s actions in Ukraine were provoked by the EU’s offering of AAs to part of its former union. Whether this is an oversimplification or not, it does articulate Russia’s view on Ukraine’s European integration, and will be instrumental in how Russia will deal with future European integration. In order to maintain peace and stability in the shared neighbourhood, the EU must incorporate this into its foreign policy considerations.

Russia is stuck in a forward moving trend that forces it to go ‘all out’ in its foreign policy decisions, in order to keep peace at home. For example, Crimea could not simply be given back to Ukraine without it having serious repercussions for President Putin domestically. His position appears to be secure, it is certainly the view that he would like the Russian public to have, however Putin has an elite around him that increasingly consists of hardliners (Jensen, 2014). With the Russian economy undiversified, and heavily dependent on the international oil and gas prices (Popescu & Leonard, 2007), Putin’s domestic manoeuvring space is partly defined by his foreign policy successes. Whether Putin’s Russia will remain depends on the Kremlin hard-liners’ lifespan and the Russian public’s willingness to cope with the current economic hardships.

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