

# The Geopolitical Power of EU in the Making (?): A Question of the War in Ukraine

Oana-Antonia Colibășanu<sup>1</sup>

*Abstract:* This paper looks at the way the European Union has shifted its policymaking process to adapt to the crisis situation in Ukraine and how this serves the EU's goal of increasing its geopolitical power, becoming a global geopolitical actor. Looking at the specific geopolitical dimensions, the paper argues that the EU has upgraded its geopolitical posture, through cohesive policies taken against the aggressor. Following close monitoring of the EU working sessions and the flow of news, and considering focused interviews on the future of the EU, given the current events, this research brings forth two main scenarios for the EU, commenting on the potential risks for the bloc's unity considering the Russian aggression in Ukraine and beyond.

*Keywords:* geopolitical dimensions, EU cohesion, Russian threat.

## Introduction

The current European Commission has called for a stronger, geopolitical European Union (EU) in the world since its very first day in office, in December 2019. The challenges of the global pandemic have set the foundation for a better coordination among the member states, while also testing the boundaries of cooperation and therefore the limits of EU resilience. However, since 24 February 2022, when the current war in Ukraine started, it seems that the EU has intensified its cooperation in key areas, tackling essential issues for the Union's development, as well as important elements meant to deter Russia from advancing its influence into Europe.

It is important that the key elements increasing EU's geopolitical power be examined separately, even if they are converging. This way, we would have a framework for understanding how the EU policymaking is contributing to the strategic goal that the European Commission has announced. Perhaps more importantly, while current events in Ukraine seem to be of utmost importance for the way the global powers will position themselves in the near future, by monitoring the specific dimensions bringing forth the geopolitical power and the subsequent policymaking directions, we can understand the specific risks that the EU encounters in fulfilling its strategy.

## 1. Literature review

The investigation of how current events are impacting EU policy requires an in-depth reading and monitoring exercise of the works of most prominent European think tanks and media. While most think tanks have organised online events, so far

<sup>1</sup> Oana-Antonia Colibășanu, PhD is lecturer on international relations at the Romanian National University of Political Studies and Public Administration and Geopolitical Futures' Chief Operating Officer and Senior Geopolitical Analyst. E-mail: [antonia.colibasanu@dri.snspa.ro](mailto:antonia.colibasanu@dri.snspa.ro).

there are only a few investigative scientific reports written on the topic, given the still limited amount of time passed since 24 February<sup>2</sup>. However, there are several articles and reports pointing to the potential changes in the EU policymaking as a result of the events in Ukraine. Dylan Macchiarini Crosson from the Centre for European Policy Studies highlights that the EU seemed to have decided on a sort of Defence Union of action when the Council of the EU approved €450 million to Ukraine for (lethal) military materiel and a further €50 million for fuel and protective equipment<sup>3</sup>. Pierre Mirel from Robert Schumann Foundation has written about the effect and the future challenges that the current war in Ukraine might have on the Eastern Partnership<sup>4</sup>, the EU's strategy and policymaking tool in relation to its Eastern neighbourhood. At the same time, Francis Ghiles from Barcelona Centre for International Affairs noted<sup>5</sup> that the EU is likely to change its energy strategy, considering the Union's dependency on Russian natural gas and the German *realpolitik* switch in March 2022. Pinar Aktimar from the Turkish Sabanci Business School and Nienke van Heukelingen from the Dutch think tank Clingendael have pointed out, in the research report they have coordinated and published recently<sup>6</sup>, that the current war in Ukraine will significantly change the EU's strategy to Turkey and North Africa. Other think tanks and academic institutions have organized debates on the way the war in Ukraine is changing the priorities for the EU. Monika Grzegorzczuk and her colleagues at Bruegel have pointed out some of the effects<sup>7</sup> that the current events may have over future trade policies conducted by the EU together with the US, considering the recent sanctions the West has imposed on Russia. All in all, there is already a lot of consideration given to the way the EU will change its approach to the world and adapt its strategy and policymaking tools to the new reality emerging from the war in Ukraine.

## 2. Methodology

To offer a good review and analytical interpretation for the major trends for the future EU policymaking, this article considers several foundational works on geopolitics. First, because economic warfare is being fought along with the military warfare, this paper used the analytical framework presented by Robert D. Blackwill and Jennifer M. Harris in their book "War by Other Means" published in 2016<sup>8</sup>. At the same time, the methodology has relied upon the geopolitical analysis framework

---

<sup>2</sup> The article was developed between March and April 2022 and was last updated on the 6 May 2022.

<sup>3</sup> Macchiarini, C., "The European Peace Facility", Centre for European Policy Studies, 7 March 2022, available at <https://www.ceps.eu/the-european-peace-facility/> (accessed 28 March 2022).

<sup>4</sup> Mirel, P., "The Eastern Partnership: Between Resilience and Interference", Robert Schuman Foundation, European Issues no. 589, 31 March 2021, available at <https://www.robert-schuman.eu/en/doc/questions-d-europe/qe-589-en.pdf> (accessed 2 April 2022).

<sup>5</sup> Ghilès, F., "War in Ukraine and the Gas Crisis Force a Rethink of EU Foreign Policy", CIDOB notes internacionales no. 268. March 2022, available at [https://www.cidob.org/en/content/download/80563/2593924/version/11/file/268-FRANCIS%20GHILES\\_ANG.pdf](https://www.cidob.org/en/content/download/80563/2593924/version/11/file/268-FRANCIS%20GHILES_ANG.pdf) (accessed on 26 March 2022).

<sup>6</sup> Akpınar, P. et al., "A New Formula for Collaboration: Turkey, the EU & North Africa", Sabanci University, Clingendael Institute, March 2022, available at [https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/Report\\_New\\_formula\\_for\\_collaboration\\_Turkey\\_EU\\_NorthAfrica.pdf](https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/Report_New_formula_for_collaboration_Turkey_EU_NorthAfrica.pdf) (accessed 27 March 2022).

<sup>7</sup> Grzegorzczuk, M. et al., "The Decoupling of Russia: High-Tech Goods and Components", Bruegel, 28 March 2022, available at <https://www.bruegel.org/2022/03/the-decoupling-of-russia-high-tech-goods-and-components/> (accessed 28 March 2022).

<sup>8</sup> Blackwill, R. and Harris, J. *War by Other Means*, Belknap Harvard University Press, 2016.

reviewed and presented by the author in her latest book “Contemporary Geopolitics and Geoeconomics 2.0” along with the method provided by Jonathan S. Lockwood in his textbook for predictive analysis<sup>9</sup>.

To validate results and look into the nuances of what may change after the war in Ukraine, the paper also relies on individual, focus interviews with foreign policy and security experts from the EU and its Eastern neighbourhood. The results of the interviews are discussed in the fourth section of the article, which focuses on the scenarios and potential risks for the EU. Given the complex situation in the borderlands, the author could not get permission to disclose identities and answers from most experts living in the proximity of the war in Ukraine. Most of the times, honest answers were conditioned by anonymity. However, this may be perceived as a limit of the current paper as it lacks the details of the interviews conducted. Nevertheless, while the author hopes to address and correct in future research on the topic, the paper provides a good grasp of the major challenges that the EU and its borderlands confront with, making it possible for scenarios to be developed under current circumstances, precisely because honesty could be preserved.

The conclusion of this paper is founded on a qualitative analysis of current events viewed through official public releases of the EU institutions and member states, and specific literature available, as well as on the processed expert interviews. The scenarios developed within the proposed analytical framework need to be adjusted according to the way the conflict in Ukraine evolves.

### **3. The geopolitical dimensions**

There are several elements that need to be considered when we talk about the EU (or any other polity) as a geopolitical global actor. First, there is the economic power – which for the EU is essential, considering the Union has the largest integrated market in the world. Second, there is the political dimension which has been considered to be a building block, taking into account the “soft power” approach that Brussels has developed over the years and the constructivist views which have called for a slowly growing political role of the EU at the international level. The third is the military dimension, which has only recently become a subject of debate within the EU, considering Brexit and the need for a resilient Union in terms of security.

All three dimensions have been underlined since the European Commission announced in December 2019 that it would work for the EU to become a geopolitical actor of global importance. But the war in Ukraine really brought them forward as the EU needed to adapt to geopolitical events unfolding in its Eastern neighbourhood.

#### **3.1. The existing geopolitical dimension: the economy**

The EU has employed its economic power in taking its first policymaking decisions with regards to the war in Ukraine. The member states have agreed upon implementing new economic sanctions, on top of those imposed since 2014<sup>10</sup>. As the

---

<sup>9</sup> Lockwood, J., *The Lockwood Analytical Method for Prediction*, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013.

<sup>10</sup> Eur-Lex, “EU measures in solidarity with Ukraine”, last updated on 28 March 2022, available at <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/content/news/eu-measures-solidarity-ukraine.html> (accessed 3 April 2022).

war continues, new sanctions are discussed<sup>11</sup> and with that, economic policymaking has taken priority over other areas. Considering the energy sector is key when it comes to the EU-Russia co-dependence, the European Commission has put forward<sup>12</sup> a legislative proposal requiring that the underground gas storage across the EU to be filled up to at least 80% until the end of 2022 and 90% of its capacity by 1 October each year going forward<sup>13</sup>. At the same time, considering the growing energy prices, the Commission adopted a State aid Temporary Crisis Framework which allows states to further ease the economic burden for both industrial and household consumers<sup>14</sup>. In parallel, the European Commission has not lost focus on pushing forward its green transition goal, by signing grant agreements of €1.1 billion for seven large-scale projects via the EU Innovation Fund<sup>15</sup>. While gas dependencies are high for most countries in the EU, the Commission hopes to get member states to agree on placing an oil embargo on Russia. The EU envoys have been discussing ways to give the countries most affected by such sanctions (Hungary, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic) time to adapt and help them upgrade their refineries, so that they are able to process oil from other sources. Such a decision – if agreed upon – would delay their exit from Russian oil to 2024, according to recent reports in the media<sup>16</sup>.

All these decisions, as well as the discussions over sanctions and all economic retaliation measures against Russian aggression have been adopted in an unprecedentedly short timeframe. Not only that the head of the European Commission has been in close contact with the Ukrainian leadership, but the EU has also coordinated and maintained close communication with the American and British counterparts. Built upon the existing premises for cooperation, the crisis decision-making enhanced the transatlantic alliance, while also making the EU more cohesive, enhancing both its political and economic power at the global level. The EU-China summit at the beginning of April<sup>17</sup> has only confirmed the EU position on global affairs: the bloc has made use of its political coordination for the first time since the Union has expanded Eastwards.

---

<sup>11</sup> Zinets, N., “Germany says West agree more sanctions on Russia after Bucha killings”, Reuters, 3 April 2022, available at <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/ukraine-demands-new-russia-sanctions-over-massacre-2022-04-03/> (accessed 4 April 2022).

<sup>12</sup> European Commission, “REPowerEU: Joint European action for more affordable, secure and sustainable energy”, 8 March 2022, available at [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_22\\_1511](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_1511) (accessed 12 March 2022).

<sup>13</sup> European Commission, “Commission outlines options to mitigate high energy prices with common gas purchases and minimum gas storage obligations”, 23 March 2022, available at [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_22\\_1936](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_1936) (accessed 27 March 2022).

<sup>14</sup> European Commission, “State aid: Commission adopts Temporary Crisis Framework to support the economy in context of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine”, 23 March 2022, available at [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/statement\\_22\\_1949](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/statement_22_1949) (accessed 27 March 2022).

<sup>15</sup> European Commission, “Commission awards over €1 billion to innovative projects for the EU climate transition”, 1 April 2022, available at [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_22\\_2163](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_2163) (accessed 2 April 2022).

<sup>16</sup> Guarascio, F. and Emott, R., “EU tweaks Russian oil sanctions plan in bid to win over reluctant states – sources”, Reuters, 6 May 2022, available at <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/eu-tweaks-russia-oil-sanctions-plan-bid-win-over-reluctant-states-source-2022-05-06/> (accessed 6 May 2022).

<sup>17</sup> European Commission, “EU-China Summit: Restoring peace and stability in Ukraine is a shared responsibility”, 1 April 2022, available at [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_22\\_2214](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_2214) (accessed 2 April 2022).

### **3.2. Building the political and military geopolitical dimensions**

The EU political power increased on the background of the current crisis, as there was more mentioning and underlying of the EU's common voice and decisions, especially in what concerns economic policymaking advances. While the EU has condemned the war in Ukraine, not all EU member states have shared a common vision on what caused the war or on how to tackle the war politically.

The most visible outlier is Hungary, where Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has supported a neutral position for his country with regards to Russia, even if Hungary did not veto the sanctions against Russia. However, considering Hungary was in the midst of an electoral campaign throughout the month of March, it remains to be seen whether its position stays the same or if it changes as the war evolves. Most governments in the EU have remained silent on congratulating Viktor Orbán for another win and the media has even reported that a hold on EU funding may be on the table if the Hungarian government continues to keep good ties with Moscow while the EU is talking increasing sanctions.

At the time of writing, considering expert opinions taken during the interviews, the political consensus within the EU will be determined by the pressure that the anti-Russian states are able to project onto the rest of the EU member states. If the Union's common stance does not determine Hungary to reconsider its position in the first weeks/months after Orbán's re-election, it is likely that the bloc's political power remains fragile. It may be that Hungary will be joined by other countries which are not feeling the threat of war as most of the Eastern Europeans do.

Moreover, as further sanctions will cut into the economic welfare of the European member states, the fragility of the EU political power will be further exposed. The political coordination within the EU depends on the economic stability. Some of the war repercussions relate to increased prices to energy and food alike, since both Ukraine and Russia are major grain exporters. Under these conditions, keeping the momentum in implementing economic policymaking that keeps inflation and unemployment at bearable levels is a key element for EU decision-makers. If states begin to face socio-economic instability caused by the effects of sanctioning Russia, it is unlikely that they will stick together to endorse further sanctions or anything else that could cut into their overall stability. Populist parties will likely exploit such socio-economic instability and their campaigning – which at times comes in direct opposition to EU political coordination – may further weaken the Union. Not to mention that many of the populist movements in Europe are supported directly or indirectly by Russia who has heightened its own campaigning, or better said propaganda, within the EU.

If economic policymaking doesn't keep the momentum, and political coordination becomes hard to achieve among the EU member states, it is likely that plans for common EU defence and security will suffer as well. The EU military power is currently non-existent, but plans about building it are increasingly being discussed. The Europeans are currently dependent on NATO when it comes to defence. NATO has been so far strengthened since the war in Ukraine has started. Not only that it has

a common voice, but it has also made decisions to consolidate the Eastern Flank<sup>18</sup>, and talks of more coordination are ongoing.

At the same time, discussions about the EU Strategic Compass, the foundation for building the EU security arm, now include the Russian threat<sup>19</sup>. Concomitantly, similar and simultaneous talks are being held within NATO considering the current discussions regarding the 2030 Strategic Concept. In practical matters, the EU has also increased its peacekeeping troops in Bosnia Herzegovina, since a potential political crisis may incur the risk of renewed conflict in the region<sup>20</sup>. The decision was adopted based on the European External Action Service proposal and political discussions on the matter, showing coordination at both the high-level strategic communication and at the tactical level.

Most importantly, the adoption of the Strategic Compass shows that the EU is taking meaningful steps towards establishing the policymaking framework that would fall under the security and defence area of the EU – enhancing the military dimension of the Union. First, the EU is considering three levels: the global level, the regional level and that referring to threats against the EU. The global level considers the main elements that the EU needs to tackle, such as the slowdown of globalization, which is supporting growing economic and political rivalry between global powers, along with climate change which is driving the competition for resources, instrumentalization of irregular migration, and other threats to the multilateral system. The regional level deals with the traditional military threats and armed aggression, but also with the destabilizing interference/actions of state and non-state actors which eventually lead to conflict, state fragility, and inter-state tensions due to external influences. Ultimately, the EU considers the threats against its own existence to be related to the fact that state and non-state actors are targeting the EU with hybrid tools, including the misuse of disruptive technologies, cyber-attacks, disinformation, and other nonmilitary sources of malign influence, and terrorism<sup>21</sup>. The list indicates that the Strategic Compass, while referring to security and defence, will be supported by the multidimensional EU policymaking toolkit. Economic policymaking along with political build-up will need to go hand in hand in order for the EU to find common approaches to fight back the destabilizing interference of external forces for instance, not to mention hybrid threats.

#### **4. Scenarios and potential risks for the EU**

Considering the war in Ukraine, its effects on the EU policymaking agenda, and ultimately, the EU's goal of becoming a global geopolitical actor, we can identify potential scenarios regarding EU's action, based on an analysis of the interconnection between the three geopolitical dimensions: the economic, the political and the military aspects presented above. A set of four main questions were selected for focused

---

<sup>18</sup> NATO Shape, "NATO Allies Reinforcements to the Eastern Flank", 13 March 2022, available at <https://shape.nato.int/news-archive/2022/nato-allies-send-reinforcements-to-the-eastern-flank> (accessed 22 March 2022).

<sup>19</sup> European External Action Service, "The Strategic Compass factsheet", 21 March 2022, available at [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/2022-03-21\\_strategic\\_compass-factsheet.pdf](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/2022-03-21_strategic_compass-factsheet.pdf) (accessed on 3 April 2022).

<sup>20</sup> European External Action Service, "Press release on J. Borell visit in the Balkans", 22 March 2022, available at [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/hrvp-josep-borrell-western-balkans-your-future-our-future\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/hrvp-josep-borrell-western-balkans-your-future-our-future_en) (accessed on 4 April 2022).

<sup>21</sup> European External Action Service, "The Strategic Compass factsheet", 21 March 2022, available at [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/2022-03-21\\_strategic\\_compass-factsheet.pdf](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/2022-03-21_strategic_compass-factsheet.pdf) (accessed on 28 March 2022).



interviews with foreign policy and security experts in order to establish main scenarios for how the EU will develop further, as well as the risks associated with the EU's major goal of becoming a global geopolitical power:

- Question 1: please comment on the way the EU has reacted to the Russian war in Ukraine.
- Question 2: what are the main challenges you perceive for the EU that are directly linked with the Russian attack in Ukraine? What about the opportunities that the EU has?
- Question 3: which of the three geopolitical dimensions (politics, economics and military) of the EU have been affected most and in what way?
- Question 4: what do you think will be the most important challenge the EU will face in the next months, considering the Russian war in Ukraine? Do you have a scenario for the EU following the crisis and considering the challenge you have mentioned?

The interviews were conducted with experts from Belgium, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Romania, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, and Georgia. Conversations were held in an informal manner<sup>22</sup> and the information provided was qualitatively assessed. All interviewees have pointed out that the EU has acted in a coordinated manner to respond to the war in Ukraine. At the same time, all have highlighted the Russian threat as being the most important for the EU in the coming months, although they listed challenges regarding the EU economic security and political stability as well. Their views on the EU vulnerabilities when it comes to the Russian threat are diverse: they view Russia as a threat considering its economic and political penetration into the EU, as well as its use of sophisticated propaganda and hybrid warfare to support its strategy. At the same time, while most experts have pointed out that the EU has an opportunity to increase its influence in the EU neighbourhood, none of the experts believe that the EU will further expand, despite the hopes that Ukraine, Republic of Moldova and Georgia currently share. In turn, most of them have stressed the fact that the EU will likely have to address a potential socio-economic crisis in the Western Balkans, considering the weak statehood of the countries in the region, and the degree to which Russia is able to influence the regional politics. At the same time, the major problem that the experts believe the EU will have to confront refers to the economic consequences of the global pandemic, coupled with the repercussions of the Western sanctions on Russian economy.

The majority of the interviewees consider that, in case the West decides to further limit Russian energy into Europe or if Russia will further retaliate by cutting natural gas flows into the EU, the bloc's member states will find themselves into a difficult position: they will essentially have to establish priorities for their national economies, something that will further weaken their socio-economic stability and, overall will drive political instability. Moreover, the experts have insisted on the timeframe: the longer the military attacks continue in Ukraine, the easier it is for the EU to maintain

---

<sup>22</sup> All interviews were one-on-one. Most of the experts – all those living in the EU's neighbourhood countries have conditioned their answered on confidential terms on their identity and our conversation, quoting unstable and uncertain conditions for their safety given that the conflict was (and is) undergoing at the time of writing. The summary of findings is based on notes taken by the author which were validated with the experts at the end of each interview.

coordination. If Russia changes tactics and instead decides to use its knowledge about the EU's political and economic system, increasing the already heightened political warfare against the West, the EU will find it more difficult to maintain unity. This reality would result from the fact that Russia will further intensify propaganda at a time when the economic repercussions of the sanctions will start to be felt by ordinary citizens, which may further drive an increase in populist waves and generally, a disconnect between the EU member states.

Therefore, based on the expert interviews and the realities resulted from monitoring the shifts and accelerated decisions in the EU policymaking, two major scenarios take shape. The first one builds on the assumption that the Russian threat in the EU's neighbourhood will continue to grow, maintaining the EU's position united against Russia, despite the economic repercussions of the current package of Western sanctions.

The second scenario is a lot different: it builds on the assumption that Russia will pause its military attacks, leaving time to the EU member states to experience the economic fallout of the sanctions, and, coupled with the already vocal outliers, this will lead to a period of weakening of the EU's stance, not only tempering its policymaking ambitions but also its unity. Ultimately, in this scenario, the EU's potential growth into a geopolitical power, considering all three dimensions geopolitics cover will be significantly impacted. The two scenarios were mentioned by all experts, pointing to the Ukrainian war as a moment of either full unification and build-up for the EU, or, on the contrary, a moment that has the potential to shake its unity.

Most of the experts insisted upon the way that the EU has evolved during the first month of the conflict, and the way Germany has changed its position towards Russia in such a short time despite foreseeable economic troubles<sup>23</sup>, as well as the visibly increased role of the European External Action Service in contributing to the bloc's policymaking. Considering these elements, the experts highlighted that it is likely that the EU will strengthen its position as a consequence of the growing Russian threat.

All in all, considering the way that the military attack has evolved in Ukraine, Russia seemingly pausing its operations since the last week of March, it is likely that Moscow reorganizes its forces economically, as well. At the same time, taking into consideration the investigation over some of the Russian operations in Ukraine, of which the massacre in Bucha<sup>24</sup> is likely the most important to note, the West – the EU in particular – has kept united against what it perceived to be horrific acts of war conducted by Russia. As long as Russian military aggression in Ukraine continues and mounts in aggressivity levels, it is likely that the Europeans remain coordinated.

Therefore, the optimistic scenario of the EU member states' continued coordination of their efforts in containing Russia and, by doing so, increasing the EU's geopolitical dimensions (economics, politics and military/security capabilities), is dependent on the Europeans experiencing the repercussions of the war. As soon as

---

<sup>23</sup> Boutelet, C. "Avec la guerre en Ukraine, l'Allemagne est obligée de repenser son modèle économique" [With the war in Ukraine, Germany is obligated to rethink its economic model], *Le Monde*, 7 April 2022, available at [https://www.lemonde.fr/economie/article/2022/04/07/avec-la-guerre-en-ukraine-l-allemande-est-forcee-de-repenser-son-modele-economique\\_6120955\\_3234.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/economie/article/2022/04/07/avec-la-guerre-en-ukraine-l-allemande-est-forcee-de-repenser-son-modele-economique_6120955_3234.html) (accessed 8 April 2022).

<sup>24</sup> BBC Reality Check and BBC Monitoring Service, "Bucha killings: Satellite image of bodies site contradicts Russian claims", last updated on 11 April 2022, available at <https://www.bbc.com/news/60981238> (accessed 6 May 2022).



such repercussions cut into the European stability, the EU will get closer to the less optimistic scenario, where political coordination will get increasingly difficult.

### Conclusions

The war in Ukraine has increased the EU common awareness about the growing threat of Russia in its neighbourhood. During the first two months, the EU appears to have strengthened its position through accelerated policymaking in response to the Russian aggression, as well as to the potential crisis that the Ukrainian war might bring in other regions, such as the Balkans. Even if for most this indicates that the EU is developing into a truly geopolitical power, the repercussions of the sanctions the EU collectively imposed against Russia may bring forth new challenges, considering the already existing political outliers in the Union (of which the most vocal and prominent is Hungary).

Depending on the way that the war will continue and on whether the EU keeps the current pace of advancing policies which would contribute towards enhancing the unity of the bloc's economic, political and military dimensions, we will be able to say whether the geopolitical power of the EU is further increasing or not. Considering the two scenarios laid out in this paper, the way things evolved during the first two months of the war is bringing positive prospects, if coordination among the EU member states continues, not only that the war in Ukraine will be won by the West, but the EU will increase its geopolitical might.

### References

- Akpınar, P. et al., “A New Formula for Collaboration: Turkey, the EU & North Africa”, Sabanci University, Clingendael Institute, March 2022, available at [https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/Report New formula for collaboration Turkey EU NorthAfrica.pdf](https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/Report%20New%20formula%20for%20collaboration%20Turkey%20EU%20NorthAfrica.pdf) (accessed 27 March 2022).
- BBC Reality Check and BBC Monitoring Service, “Bucha killings: Satellite image of bodies site contradicts Russian claims”, last updated on 11 April 2022, available at <https://www.bbc.com/news/60981238> (accessed 6 May 2022).
- Blackwill, R., Harris, J. *War by Other Means*, Belknap Harvard University Press, 2016.
- Boutelet, C. “Avec la guerre en Ukraine, l’Allemagne est obligée de repenser son modèle économique” [With the war in Ukraine, Germany is obligated to rethink its economic model], *Le Monde*, 7 April 2022, available at [https://www.lemonde.fr/economie/article/2022/04/07/avec-la-guerre-en-ukraine-l-allemande-est-forcee-de-repenser-son-modele-economique\\_6120955\\_3234.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/economie/article/2022/04/07/avec-la-guerre-en-ukraine-l-allemande-est-forcee-de-repenser-son-modele-economique_6120955_3234.html) (accessed 8 April 2022).
- Eur-Lex, “EU measures in solidarity with Ukraine”, last updated on 28 March 2022, available at <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/content/news/eu-measures-solidarity-ukraine.html> (accessed 3 April 2022).
- European Commission, “Commission awards over €1 billion to innovative

- projects for the EU climate transition”, 1 April 2022, available at [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_22\\_2163](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_2163) (accessed 2 April 2022).
- European Commission, “Commission outlines options to mitigate high energy prices with common gas purchases and minimum gas storage obligations”, 23 March 2022, available at [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_22\\_1936](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_1936) (accessed 27 March 2022).
  - European Commission, “EU-China Summit: Restoring peace and stability in Ukraine is a shared responsibility”, 1 April 2022, available at [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_22\\_2214](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_2214) (accessed 2 April 2022).
  - European Commission, “REPowerEU: Joint European action for more affordable, secure and sustainable energy”, 8 March 2022, available at [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_22\\_1511](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_1511) (accessed 12 March 2022).
  - European Commission, “State aid: Commission adopts Temporary Crisis Framework to support the economy in context of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine”, 23 March 2022, available at [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/statement\\_22\\_1949](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/statement_22_1949) (accessed 27 March 2022).
  - European External Action Service, “The Strategic Compass factsheet”, 21 March 2022, available at [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/2022-03-21\\_strategic\\_compass-factsheet.pdf](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/2022-03-21_strategic_compass-factsheet.pdf) (accessed on 3 April 2022).
  - European External Action Service, “Press release on J. Borell visit in the Balkans”, 22 March 2022, available at [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/hrvp-josep-borrell-western-balkans-your-future-our-future\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/hrvp-josep-borrell-western-balkans-your-future-our-future_en) (accessed on 4 April 2022).
  - Ghilès, F., “War in Ukraine and the Gas Crisis Force a Rethink of EU Foreign Policy”, CIDOB notes internacionales no. 268. March 2022, available at [https://www.cidob.org/en/content/download/80563/2593924/version/11/file/268\\_FRANCIS%20GHILES\\_ANG.pdf](https://www.cidob.org/en/content/download/80563/2593924/version/11/file/268_FRANCIS%20GHILES_ANG.pdf) (accessed on 26 March 2022).
  - Grzegorzczuk, M. et al., “The Decoupling of Russia: High-Tech Goods and Components”, Bruegel, 28 March 2022, available at <https://www.bruegel.org/2022/03/the-decoupling-of-russia-high-tech-goods-and-components/> (accessed 28 March 2022).
  - Guarascio, F., Emott, R., “EU tweaks Russian oil sanctions plan in bid to win over reluctant states – sources”, Reuters, 6 May 2022, available at <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/eu-tweaks-russia-oil-sanctions-plan-bid-win-over-reluctant-states-source-2022-05-06/> (accessed 6 May 2022).
  - Lockwood, J., *The Lockwood Analytical Method for Prediction*, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013.
  - Macchiarini, C., “The European Peace Facility”, Centre for European Policy Studies, 7 March 2022, available at <https://www.ceps.eu/the-european-peace-facility/>

- [peace-facility/](#), accessed 28 March 2022.
- Mirel, P., “The Eastern Partnership: Between Resilience and Interference”, Robert Schuman Foundation, European Issues no. 589, 31 March 2021, available at <https://www.robert-schuman.eu/en/doc/questions-d-europe/pe-589-en.pdf> (accessed 2 April 2022).
- NATO Shape, “NATO Allies Reinforcements to the Eastern Flank”, 13 March 2022, available at <https://shape.nato.int/news-archive/2022/nato-allies-send-reinforcements-to-the-eastern-flank> (accessed 22 March 2022).
- Zinets, N., “Germany says West agree more sanctions on Russia after Bucha killings”, Reuters, 3 April 2022, available at <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/ukraine-demands-new-russia-sanctions-over-massacre-2022-04-03/> (accessed 4 April 2022).