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## The different faces of power in EU-Russia relations

Tom Casier

*'Power, like love, is easier to experience than to define or measure.'* (Nye 1990: 170).

### Introduction

While one of the core issues in politics and international affairs, power is among the most difficult concepts to grasp. Different schools of thought have defined power in diverging ways and increasingly it has been acknowledged that power is not a one-dimensional concept, but one that works at different levels, in various ways. It is surprising that power in relations between Russia and the EU (or by extension 'the West') has often been the subject of analysis, but has rarely been studied systematically.<sup>1</sup> The lack of critical reflection over conceptual issues of power has frequently led to reductionist views, narrowing power to a very limited context (e.g. energy dependence) and using one-sided concepts of power (e.g. coercive capacity or 'normative power'). Tuomas Forsberg has indicated the need to look at power in EU-Russia relations differently and to approach the concept in a more nuanced and differentiated way (Forsberg 2013). This article seeks to rethink power relations between Moscow and Brussels in terms of Barnett's and Duvall's taxonomy of power (Barnett and Duvall 2005). Their categorisation of power is by no means the only possible or ultimate one, but it has the advantage of integrating different theoretical approaches to power and therefore encompassing a wide spectrum of interpretations, looking at power in its various disguises of 'compulsion, institutional bias, privilege and unequal constraints on action' (Barnett and Duvall 2005: 62). Barnett and Duvall present a taxonomy of power distinguishing between compulsory, institutional, structural and productive power (see the next section). This article uses their framework to obtain a better understanding of EU-Russia relations. In other words, the purpose is to bring the complexity of power back into the scholarly debate. First Barnett's and Duvall's taxonomy is applied to EU-Russia interaction in the decade preceding the Ukraine crisis that started in 2014. In the last section their multi-dimensional framework is used to understand the dramatic change in power dynamics that took place with the crisis over Ukraine.<sup>2</sup> In doing so, the article seeks to understand how the annexation of Crimea and consecutive developments implied a profound shift in the nature of the power struggle between Russia and the EU.

The article seeks to make a contribution to our understanding of power in EU-Russia relations in the following ways. First, by applying Barnett's and Duvall's taxonomy of power, it looks at power from different angles, without a priori singling out any particular interpretation. In doing so the complexity of power, where multiple dimensions operate simultaneously, is acknowledged. This will lead to an analysis of issues such as identity production and institutional arrangements in the neighbourhood.

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<sup>1</sup> A recent exception is the Special Issue of JCMS Journal of Common Market Studies on EU power in the EU-Ukraine crisis (Cross and Karolewski 2017, Karolewski and Cross 2017). See also Forsberg 2013.

<sup>2</sup> Barnett and Duvall do not theorise change in their article, but the potential of change is mentioned regularly throughout the article.

The point is not that those have not been studied, but these issues have not often been approached in terms of a systematic power analysis. Secondly, the analysis seeks to understand power in EU-Russia relations by looking beyond their bilateral relations. The multi-dimensionality of power implies that power is not constrained to these bilateral relations. As will be explained in the theoretical section, power is not only exerted directly (in the bilateral relations between the EU and Russia) but also affects these relations indirectly (for example through arrangements with third countries). In other words, to fully understand power, we need to look at both direct and indirect forms of power. In this article indirect or diffuse power will mainly be explored through the role Russia and the EU play in their overlapping neighbourhood. The power they have over or in the countries in between determines their power position and therefore their internal, EU-Russia, power relations. These two aspects of power are ultimately interrelated: increasing mutual concerns about the projection of power in the post-Soviet space moved from a marginal position on the bilateral agenda to a core issue of competition. Thirdly, as explained below, power is not approached in terms of intentionalities. Whether power is the result of deliberate intent, or is the unintended consequence of an actor's position, behaviour, reputation, etc. does not matter. This is a clear added value of the model used here, because it avoids a classic trap in the analysis of relations between Russia and the EU, where the actual debate often concentrates on what Moscow and Brussels *intend* to achieve and on the power they *intend* to project. Finally, this article adds a new categorisation to Barnett and Duvall's concept of compulsory power, making a distinction between positive and negative compulsory power.

The point made in this article is that power in EU-Russia relations cannot be reduced to a single category. Their relations can only be understood in its different co-existing dimensions of power. Yet, it will be argued that the Ukraine crisis of 2014 has led Russian leaders to believe that they had lost the competition for power with the EU and the West along the dimensions which were key prior to the crisis: that of institutional power (institutional arrangements in the overlapping neighbourhood) and that of structural/productive power (hegemony of constitutive norms and production of identities).<sup>3</sup> This perception has prompted Russia to a change of strategy after the regime change in Ukraine in February 2014. It now gave a higher priority to a strategy of compulsory power, annexing Crimea (an act of 'positive' control) in a drastic surprise move and destabilising Eastern Ukraine. The latter is mainly aimed at preventing effective control by and to the advantage of the West. I will refer to it as 'negative' compulsory power. Importantly, this reinforced emphasis on compulsory power does not replace competition along any of the other power dimensions, that continue to co-exist.

The article is structured as follows. The first section is conceptual. It presents the four concepts of power in Barnett and Duvall's taxonomy, as a model to study the multi-dimensionality of power and gives an overview of how the four concepts of power feature implicitly in EU-Russia literature. In the next section it is argued that the logic of competition which developed in the decade preceding the 2014 Ukraine crisis has often been mistaken for a struggle over compulsory power, while it was predominantly over institutional and structural power. The last section deals with the fundamental change in the power struggle since the Ukraine crisis, where the emphasis has eventually shifted towards a struggle over compulsory power.

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<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that norms are relevant to all four power dimensions. Yet, in the case of compulsory and institutional power, norms are regulative norms, constraining behaviour. In the case of structural and productive power, they are constitutive norms, constituting identities and capacities.

## Bringing the complexity of power back in

This article starts from the assumption that power is a complex phenomenon that operates along different dimensions for all actors. Different forms of power are not mutually exclusive but all operate simultaneously. To get rid of a priori assumptions about which types of power are relevant in EU-Russia relations, our analysis will be guided by the taxonomy of power of Barnett and Duvall (2005), that integrates diverging theoretical approaches to power and thus transcends major debates in International Relations.

There are three major reasons why their Barnett and Duvall's taxonomy is particularly useful for studying EU-Russia relations. First, by acknowledging the plurality of concepts of power, their model allows to bring nuance and the complexity of power back into the debate. Secondly, the different forms of power are not mutually exclusive: Barnett and Duvall consider all of them to be present in all social relations. They operate simultaneously. Finally, their model does not presuppose intentionality. Power may also exist if an actor does not have the explicit intention to exert power. This is important to note for our study of EU-Russia relations, as the debate is to a great extent obscured by assumptions of intent. A substantial part of the analysis of EU-Russia relations interweaves power with the assumed intentions of both actors. It is important to realise the significance of this. In the rather dominant 'normative power'<sup>4</sup> approaches, the EU's ambition to diffuse its norms to third countries is conventionally seen as driven by its intrinsic attachment to these norms (the EU acts as a 'force for good'), not as driven by an intention to project power. Using the taxonomy of Barnett and Duvall means that it is not per se relevant whether the EU 'intends' to project its power or not. On the contrary, power is studied in terms of the de facto complex effects it produces.

Barnett and Duvall define power as 'the production in and through social relations, of effects that shape the capacities of actors to determine their circumstances and fate' (Barnett and Duvall 2005: 42). They conceptually distinguish forms of power along two dimensions, reflecting major theoretical debates in International Relations. A first dimension has to do with 'the kinds of social relations through which power works' (Barnett and Duvall 2005: 42). They take either the form of interaction or of constitution. In the former case power is an attribute. Social actors are assumed to be given, pre-constituted. In the case of constitution, power is 'a social process of constituting what actors are as social beings, that is, their social identities and capacities.' (Barnett and Duvall 2005: 42) Social relations themselves constitute meaning. A second dimension refers to 'the specificity of social relations through which effects on actors' capacities are produced' (Barnett and Duvall 2005: 42). As explained below, they are either socially specific and direct (assuming an immediate connection) or socially diffuse and indirect.

These two analytical dimensions lead to the following matrix of four concepts of power, summarised in figure 1. Each concept will be explained below and it will be highlighted how it has featured in the literature on EU-Russia relations (with a focus on the analysis before the 2014 Ukraine crisis).

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<sup>4</sup> It should be noted here that the term 'normative power' does not coincide with any of the concepts of power in Barnett's and Duvall's taxonomy. Normative power, as defined by Manners (2002) belongs to a different analytical category. It rests on the assumption that the normative basis 'is a crucial constitutive feature of the EU' (Manners 2002: 252). Moreover, it is based on the idea of intentionality, as it explicitly sees the EU as acting 'to change norms in the international system' (Manners 2002: 252).

**Figure 1: The taxonomy of power of Barnett and Duvall (2005: 48)**

		Relational specificity	
		Direct	Diffuse
Power works through	Interactions of specific actors	Compulsory	Institutional
	Social relations of constitution	Structural	Productive

1. **‘Compulsory power’** starts from a *relational perspective*. It refers to *direct interaction* between actors and their *capacity to control the other actor’s actions and circumstances*. Compulsory power may be exerted on the basis of both material and of ‘symbolic and normative resources’ that an actor possesses (Barnett and Duvall 2005: 50). The latter may for example be the shaming of country for not respecting fundamental norms. This concept comes closest to classic concepts of power, such as Dahl’s, in which power is the ability of one actor to make another actor do what it otherwise would not have done (or not do what it would have done) (Dahl 1957).

The clearest example of work on EU-Russia relations that focuses on *compulsory power* are Structural Realist analyses, that look at relations in terms of how capabilities allow one actor to control the action of the other. Balance of power approaches, presenting an analysis in function of zero sum games and spheres of influence fit this category most neatly (see for example Mearsheimer 2014). However, it should be stressed that compulsory power does not imply that we are simply looking at military capabilities or high politics. Articles focusing on the leverage generated by Russia’s capacity to shut down gas pipelines to Western Europe are equally focusing on compulsory power (see for example Baran 2007, Paillard 2010).

One of the major biases is that a large part of the literature has one-sidedly focused on aspects of compulsory power in EU-Russia bilateral relations, looking at the capacity of control in direct interaction between both actors. Moreover, compulsory power ambitions has often been attributed predominantly to Russia. As noted above, the country was often approached as a *Realpolitik* actor, driven by interests and seeking to maximise power. Many authors put a heavy emphasis on the threat Russia represents through its compulsory power (see for example Lucas 2009). On the other hand, a substantial part of the literature considered the EU to be a fundamentally different actor: power neutral or merely a norm promoter, soft or normative power (see for example Emerson 2009, Timmins 2002). Moscow was seen as an actor that seeks to put pressure on neighbouring states in a forceful way and aims at direct control of the other, for example through restrictive trade measures or military threats, while the EU was presented as merely diffusing its norms without aiming at control over its neighbours. Similarly, Russia was perceived as trying to exert power over the EU through direct control over gas supplies, another form of compulsory power, this time in direct relations with EU member states. As a result, other categories of power have often been neglected and actions by the EU have implicitly been assumed to be power-neutral.

2. Power as control may also take the form of **‘institutional power’** (Barnett and Duvall 2005: 48). The rules and regulative norms that make up institutions constrain and steer the actions or conditions of action of others. Control is *indirect*, because institutions are not ‘possessed’ by an actor, but varying institutional arrangements imply, for example, different capacities of agenda setting or unevenly distributed rewards. This is an idea prominent in Neoliberal Institutionalism. Also the concept of

interdependence reflects the idea of institutional power, as asymmetrical interdependence creates unequal control over outcomes and diverging costs. *Power in this approach is diffuse*, producing effects on different actors. It takes *different forms and shapes according to the issue area*.

Institutional power approaches have been particularly strong in the field of energy, focusing on the interdependence between the EU and Russia (see for example Proedrou 2007). This interdependence is of an asymmetrical nature and – in line with Keohane and Nye (1989) - is seen as creating a greater Russian control over outcomes, implying potentially higher costs for the EU. A considerable part of the literature has also focused on the diverging institutional arrangements both actors tried to set up in their overlapping neighbourhood. In particular the connection between the EU's Eastern Partnership and the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union has received considerable scholarly attention over the last years (see for example Dragneva and Wolczuk 2012). Yet, many authors have been reluctant to analyse the power aspects of this institutional arrangement. It is mainly with increasing tensions over Ukraine and mounting pressure on the country to choose between EU-centred and Russia-centred rivalling initiatives that scholarly attention on power aspects rose. Yet, several authors have studied aspects of institutional power in EU-Russia relations long before the Ukraine crisis. The very idea of diffuse, indirect constraining effects of the ENP and Eastern Partnership is strongly present in for example Haukkala's work on EU normative hegemony (Haukkala 2008, 2010, 2015), though his concept has elements of structural power as well. Tolstrup (2013) confronts the EU's democracy promotion with Russia's negative external influence on democratisation in the post-Soviet states (Tolstrup 2013).

3. In the case of '**structural power**', *the social capacities of an actor are produced through a social process of mutual constitution: actors occupy structural positions in a specific set of direct, structural relations. The actors produce social capacities and identities through their social practices, but these practices are part of direct structural relations* (Barnett and Duvall 2005: 52-53 and 55) *of relatively stable 'positions of super- and subordination'* (Barnett and Duvall 2005: 55). Social practices of domination are continuously reproduced and confirmed. Not only does this create privileges but it may also make subjugated actors 'accept' their position and subjectively understand their own identity and interests in function of this. This type of power analysis may be found inter alia in the work of Constructivists or Neo-Gramscianists.

4. When power is seen as '**productive power**', this social process of mutual constitution is seen as *diffuse social processes, 'networks of social forces perpetually shaping one another' through the creation of 'systems of signification and meaning'* (Barnett and Duvall 2005: 55). Those are not understood *as structures, but rather as diffuse networks*. Productive power thus implies *historical contingency* (Barnett and Duvall 2005: 56) *in constant diffuse social processes of changing (rather than fixed) meanings and social identities*. Power is thus intrinsic to daily diffuse discursive practices and systems of knowledge. It is the focus of Post-structuralist approaches.

There is a stream of literature that has analysed EU-Russia relations (or broader the position of Russia in Europe) on the basis of *structural* and (less) of *productive power*, but most of this was rather in the margin. A large part of the literature focuses on fairly stable structures of subordination – thus tending towards a structural power analysis - in terms of centre and periphery (for example Morozov and Rumelili 2012; Browning and Christou 2010), of modernity and backwardness (Neumann 1998), or of post-modernity and modernity (for example Klinke 2012). Also the idea of 'othering' has been used to analyse Europe-Russia relations (Browning 2003). Thomas Diez has used the concept of 'othering' in his critique of normative power discourse, arguing that power is inherent to this representation,

because it constructs categories of Self and Other, in which the latter is represented for example as inferior or as an existential threat (Diez 2005: 628). Several scholars have studied identities in EU-Russia relations (see for example Sakwa 2011 and 2012, DeBardeleben 2012, Tsygankov 2007, Splidsboel-Hansen 2002), though not all look into the power aspects. Neo-Gramscianist approaches equally cover structural power, approaching hegemony as not only coercion but also consent (see also Diez 2013). Structural power also shapes the 'self-understanding and subjective interests' of actors and can 'constrain some actors from recognising their own domination' (Barnett and Duvall 2005: 53). For the same reason, Haukkala's work also contains a structural power dimension. Interesting new work exploring these theoretical horizons was produced by Morozov (2015), who brings in post-colonial theory to analyse the dialectic of the subaltern and the empire. He sheds new light on the tension between the Eurocentrism which Russia has internalised and its semi-peripheral position in Europe. In practice it is not always easy to classify EU-Russia literature in terms of structural and productive power. Partly this is due to the rather limited theorisation in studies of EU-Russia relations. Also Barnett and Duvall note the overlap between productive and structural power (Barnett and Duvall 2005: 55). For these different reasons, this article will look at both types of power generated through 'social relations of constitution' jointly (Barnett and Duvall 2005: 48).

In this article the taxonomy of power will be operationalised in the following way. Power through direct interaction (compulsory power) is explored by looking at direct bilateral EU-Russia relations, both in its material, symbolic and normative resources. Power through indirect or diffuse interaction (institutional power) is explored through EU-Russia interaction through the institutional arrangements they make in the overlapping neighbourhood. This choice is justified by the fact that this was the main area of contest and concern between both actors. Self-evidently it does not exclude other forms of institutional power, such as costs following from asymmetrical interdependence or control over multilateral institutions. Power through constitutive relations, direct (structural power) or diffuse (productive power) will be considered jointly. The focus of both constitutive forms of power will be on the production of identities, be it in stable hierarchical or fluctuating, contingent forms.

The following analysis makes a comparison between power relations before and since the 2014 Ukraine crisis. It explores the neglected power dimensions of EU-Russia relations before the crisis – institutional, structural and productive -, arguing they are key to understand the logic of competition between Moscow and Brussels. The article then investigates how the events of February 2014 in Kyiv have prompted Russian leaders to invest in a strategy which favours compulsory power, changing the balance between different types of power, albeit in a predominantly negative way of preventing full control by the Euro-Atlantic community. The analysis is in the first place a theoretical reinterpretation of power in EU-Russia relations, underpinned by references to relevant policy documents and discursive practices.

Two additional conceptual and methodological points should be made in advance. First, with its 28 member states and different institutions, the EU is to some degree a 'disaggregated actor' (Cross and Karolewski 2017: 7) Before the Ukraine crisis of 2014, these actors were often highly divided on Russia. Russia has often been one of the most divisive issues within the Union and it is clear that bilateral relations between individual member states and Moscow are crucial to understand EU-Russia relations (see David, Gower and Haukkala 2013). This paper acknowledges this differentiation and will refer to the Union's dividedness where relevant. Yet even when divided, there are enough reasons to treat the EU's foreign policy as a whole and the EU as a 'normal actor on the international stage' (Cross and

Karolewski 2017: 4), on the grounds of the common policy it developed towards Russia and the dialogue it engaged in, but equally because of a degree of commonality of images on which this policy was based. In no way, this is meant to underplay the diversity within the EU or contradictions within its policies.

Secondly, this analysis focuses both on direct and indirect dimensions of power between the EU and Russia. The latter implies focusing on the relations between those actors and their neighbouring states, because the institutional arrangements and identity production in the neighbourhood inevitably have implications for the power of Russia and the EU. Yet the purpose is not to make an analysis of these relations (EU-neighbour; Russia-neighbour) themselves, but only to study them as indirect power dimension between Russia and the EU.

In the following section the neglected power dimensions in the study of EU-Russia relations will be highlighted. It is argued that before the Ukraine crisis institutional, structural and productive forms of power co-existed with forms of compulsory power but did not receive equivalent scholarly attention.

### **Analysing power before the Ukraine crisis: the neglected dimensions of institutional, structural and productive power**

Challenging this imbalanced approach to power, this section attempts to demonstrate that, until the crisis over Ukraine of 2014, the essence of the competition between the EU and Russia was not solely about compulsory power (as capacity of direct control over the other actor). While compulsory power was definitely present and at times very visible (for example in the energy conflicts of 2006 and 2009), the struggle over institutional, structural and productive power was equally if not more important. In other words the power relations between Moscow and Brussels were characterised to an important degree by their capacities of indirect control over the conditions in which they operate (institutional power) and by their capacities to produce identities and structures of subordination (structural power). Within these power relations the EU found itself in a rather hegemonic position and Russia was – throughout the decade preceding the Ukraine crisis – increasingly contesting and challenging this institutional and structural hegemony.

#### *Institutional power*

As mentioned in the previous section, the EU's and Russia's competing regional projects in the overlapping neighbourhood (i.e. the ENP/EaP and EEU) can be seen as conflicting ways of indirectly controlling the conditions in which the other actor operates. Therefore they form a clear instance of institutional power in EU-Russia relations. While originally in the margin of bilateral relations (Zagorski 2010), unease over each other's regional projects eventually made it to the heart of the EU-Russia agenda and became a major source of tensions. Russia was concerned that an Association Agreement between Ukraine and the EU would undermine its influence in the post-Soviet space – an area where it claimed to have 'privileged interests' (Medvedev quoted in Reynolds 2008); the EU was concerned that Ukrainian membership of the ECU/EEU would undermine its position in Eastern Europe.

To back up this point, we will first illustrate how these rival integration projects, while as such not part of direct relations between the EU and Russia, do have an indirect impact on the capacity of the other to control the conditions in which it operates within its 'neighbourhood' (and thus generate institutional power). We will do so on the basis of the choice Ukraine was facing in 2013 between signing an Association Agreement with the EU or joining the then Eurasian Customs Union (ECU) with Russia. After that it will be demonstrated how the concepts of 'normative hegemony' and 'sticky



power' have contributed to our insights in institutional power relations between Moscow and Brussels, reinforcing the view that institutional power was a most fundamental dimension of relations.

Let us first rewind to the choice Ukraine had to make on the eve of the Vilnius Eastern Partnership summit in 2013. Fundamentally the choice was this. Either Ukraine liberalised trade with the EU by abolishing tariffs in the framework of an Association Agreement or it accepted the Common External Tariff of the ECU in case it decided to join the organisation. Precisely because of these tariff obligations, both choices were incompatible, at least in the absence of free trade arrangements between the EU and the ECU. Inevitably Kyiv's choice would impact on trade and investment opportunities of both Brussels and Moscow: if Ukraine associated itself with the EU, this would indirectly reduce Russia's control over the conditions in which it operates. Russia would have worse trade terms or fewer investment opportunities in Ukraine. If Ukraine decided to join the ECU instead of signing an Association Agreement with the EU, this would affect the EU's trade and investment negatively. Indirectly Ukraine's choice would thus change the control over the conditions under which the EU / Russia operate in their region.

But there is more than just the impact of tariffs. Also the sizeable transfer of rules and norms under the Eastern Partnership determines the conditions under which third actors – like Russia - operate. By seeking to alter the political, legal and administrative system of neighbouring countries through the transfer of rules and institutional practices, the EU creates a wider European regulatory system that extends beyond its borders. While many of the rules may seem very technical, their transfer has clear power implications. By extending its regulatory sphere, the EU creates a wider economic sphere with relative stability and legal certainty. It goes without saying that this creates not only immediate economic opportunities for the EU, but also a beneficial environment in the longer term. Neighbouring countries become anchored in this system and get entangled with the EU in different economic, legal and institutional ways, making a commitment to longer term cooperation with the EU more likely. This has been studied in other contexts as 'sticky power' (Buenger 2016). It is power because it creates comparative advantages. It is sticky because it implies costs of withdrawal for the countries concerned.

As a result, the norms reflected in deep and comprehensive free trade arrangements, democracy promotion, foreign policy alignment, etc. produce regulatory and 'normative hegemony' (Haukkala 2008 and 2010). The rules and norms of the EU obtain a higher degree of legitimacy and become increasingly uncontested. The more countries accept these standards, rules and norms, the more this normative hegemony will be reinforced. This creates power in the form of longer term comparative advantages for the normative hegemon and negative effects on third countries – Russia in this case. Ultimately it constrains the room for political manoeuvre and affects leverage, increasing fears in Moscow over relative isolation. This is exactly one of the reasons why Russia has put a strong emphasis on Eurasian integration as *an alternative* for integration within and with the EU (Putin 2011). The Eurasian Customs Union (ECU, as of 2015 the Eurasian Economic Union – EEU) was presented as an escape from what is perceived as EU normative hegemony, with the Union's standards ultimately determining what is acceptable and unacceptable. This is illustrated by this quote of Foreign Minister Lavrov: 'There is only one criterion used [by the Western powers] to assess the readiness of a country to pass the "democratic" test – their readiness to follow in the slipstream of others' policies.' (Lavrov, quoted in Averre 2008: 33).

To summarise, EU-Russia power relations in the years before the Ukraine crisis were first and foremost a struggle over the EU's normative hegemony. Russian foreign policy increasingly aimed at challenging and contesting this hegemony. As Putin stated: 'A unilateral diktat and imposing one's own model produces the opposite results.' (Putin Valdai, 29/10/14) At the regional level Moscow rejected an EU-centric agenda and presented its alternative project for integration. At global level it challenged

Western hegemony through its neo-revisionist policy, aiming at making international structures of governance more representative and less dominated by the West (Sakwa 2012). In essence a key dimension of the power struggle was thus one over regional and global institutional arrangements that determined the conditions in which the EU and Russia operated and the comparative (dis)advantages for them. It was predominantly, but certainly not exclusively, about institutional power.

### *Structural and productive power*

Another underrated major dimension of EU-Russia relations before the Ukraine crisis was a struggle over structural power and productive power. Here we enter the field of power through constitution, identity politics and the power that is generated through (non-)recognition of the Other's identity. Sakwa underlines its importance stating that 'much of the post-Cold War malaise is derived from identity factors' (Sakwa 2011: 957). The successful creation of categories of Self and Other produces potentially enduring patterns of subordination or exclusion. They may reinforce isolation of the counterpart and anchor other countries into a political system. Moreover, they make certain representations acceptable and confirm patterns of dominance. We perceive similar patterns here as in the case of institutional power, where the EU appears as a hegemonic producer of identities, but Russia challenges this hegemony, seeing for itself a 'civilising mission on the Eurasian continent' (Putin quoted in Feklyunina, 2008: 619).

The hegemonic position of the EU as identity producer derives from its self-image as embodying European values (see Laffan 2004, Simão 2011) in a discourse where Europe and the EU implicitly coincide. Intertwined with other forms of power, the EU has a strong capacity to recognise identities of other states or to withhold that recognition. Most interesting in this respect, is the evolution which this identity recognition underwent. In the 1990s both Russia and Ukraine were recognised in key EU documents as countries sharing European values, members of the European civilisation and family. This recognition has been maintained and even reinforced for Ukraine during the negotiations about the Association Agreement. The Association Agenda, for example, recognises that 'Ukraine as a European country shares a common history and common values with the countries of the European Union. The EU acknowledged Ukraine's European aspirations and welcomed its European choice.' (Association Agenda 2009: 2). In the case of Russia, however, references to its 'Europeanness' largely disappeared from EU discourse. This is a clear example of inclusion and exclusion, captured in various terms such as constituting centre and periphery (Browning and Christou 2010) or 'othering' (Diez 2005). Klinke indicates that a binary of a post-modern EU versus modern Russia is more than political rhetoric and is ingrained deeply within broader epistemic communities of experts, journalists and EU officials (Klinke 2012). A similar pattern can be discerned in the (non-)recognition of Russia's international status, as a different category of identity. While the EU formally recognised Russia as an equal partner (using the label of 'Strategic Partnership' as of the late 1990s), it withheld a recognition of Russia as a 'normal great power' (Tsygankov 2005) and as a regional player. For example, when the EU refused to enter into direct negotiations with the Eurasian Customs Union, as Russia had demanded at the EU-Russia summit of June 2012, this was read by Moscow as unwillingness to recognise Russia's regional leadership role.

In Russia the EU's policies were seen as reflecting 'a spirit of primitive Russophobia' (Yastrzhembsky quoted in Sakwa, 2014: 21). As a reaction to this hegemonic structural power of the EU, Russia developed a counter strategy, challenging the EU's monopoly on identity recognition. It has also put forward alternative norms such as 'sovereign democracy' and started building its own identity around neo-traditionalist ideas. The latter has become more of a coherent ideological project (Sakwa 2014:

75) and ultimately seeks to make a similar claim to what the EU does, namely that Russia represents and protects 'genuine' European values (see also the next section).

To summarise, social relations of constitution were an important dimension of power between the EU and Russia. They involved the capacity to create socially accepted categories of identity, such as genuine Europeaness or great power status. Those do not only create privileges, but also categories of subordination or exclusion. In the final section, it will be argued that the Ukraine crisis led Russian leaders to believe that they had suffered a serious defeat in the struggle for institutional and structural/productive power. While the competition with the West continued on all fronts, Moscow took radical and unexpected action in the domain of compulsory power, taking control over Crimea and actively destabilising Ukraine post Yanukovich.

### **The Ukraine crisis: a shift to 'negative' compulsory power**

Above it was suggested that the competition between Russia and the EU up to the start of the Ukraine crisis was to a large extent situated along the often neglected dimensions of institutional and constitutive forms of power. The events in Ukraine in early 2014 came after a long process of culmination of tensions in EU-Russia relations (Haukkala 2015), but produced a radical change in the nature of their struggle for power. The ousting of Yanukovich and the change of regime were seen in Moscow as a crucial defeat in this competition over institutional arrangements in the neighbourhood and over identity production. The pro-EU choice of the new regime in Kyiv paved the way to the signing of the Association Agreement and shattered Russia's hopes for Ukraine to join the EEU. The fear that Ukraine would become part of a Western sphere of influence, was seen as harming Russia's vital interests. In reaction to the regime change Russia radically shifted its strategy towards one of gaining direct control (annexation of Crimea) and preventing 'the West' from taking control (destabilising and polarising Ukraine). The dominant logic was one of a geopolitical zero-sum game. In the framework of the taxonomy of power, this radical change of strategy may be understood as the result of Russia's understanding that it had to react forcefully and display strong compulsory power as it was losing out on other (institutional and structural) forms of power. Also Haukkala sees the developments over Ukraine in line with the longer term conflict over institutional arrangements in post-Cold War Europe: 'the crisis in Ukraine is in fact a proxy conflict between the EU and Russia. It can also be seen as a parting of ways with Russia clearly putting its foot down and renouncing its willingness to find its place in the unipolar EU-centric Europe.' (Haukkala 2015: 37) Putin justified this shift of strategy towards compulsory power means, as a pure and inevitable reaction: '... the infamous policy of containment, led in the 18th , 19th and 20th centuries, continues today. ... But there is a limit to everything. And with Ukraine, our western partners have crossed the line, playing the bear and acting irresponsibly and unprofessionally. ... Russia found itself in a position it could not retreat from. If you compress the spring all the way to its limit, it will snap back hard. You must always remember this.' (Putin, 2014)

The perception that Russia had 'lost' Ukraine with the regime change, prompted a Russian strategy based on two forms of compulsory power. With the annexation of Crimea Russia resorted to direct control over territory to safeguard strategic interests and strengthen its position vis-à-vis the West. With the destabilisation of Eastern Ukraine, Moscow primarily aimed to prevent the Euro-Atlantic community from gaining effective control over the country, thus withholding it the privileges that a closer association with Ukraine would otherwise deliver. In other words, it sought to make Ukraine a liability, rather than a benefit for the West, backed by a rhetoric of Ukraine becoming 'a failed state' (Vladimir Chizhov, Russian Ambassador to the EU, quoted in Pop 2014). This form of preventing control can be labelled 'negative' compulsory power.

The choice to play the radical card of annexation and destabilisation dramatically altered the nature of the power competition between Russia and the EU, shifting the emphasis from institutional and structural power to compulsory power. But they are not exclusively Russia's power game. Relations between Russia and the EU/Euro-Atlantic Community on both sides are coloured significantly stronger by different forms of compulsory power. This can be seen from the sanctions the EU and the US imposed and Russia's retaliation measures, as much as from the military build-up on both sides of NATO's eastern borders. These actions reflect the wide spectrum of instruments that may be categorised under 'compulsory power'. It goes without saying that this does not imply that these diverging instruments used by both parties are equivalent or comparable.

Self-evidently the dramatic change in the nature of the power struggle does not imply either that power relations among other dimensions have come to an end. In other words, the (negative) compulsory power dimension has not become the exclusive one, but has received a new impulse along with continued competition over other forms of power. Institutional power competition continues as before, with Russia and the EU pursuing their respective regional integration projects. The EU signed Association Agreements with Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine in 2014 and took further steps in the field of visa liberalisation. On the Russian side, the Eurasian Custom Union was rebaptised the Eurasian Economic Union in 2015 and reinforced with the membership of Armenia and Kyrgyzstan. The same holds for structural and productive power. In the field of norms, the EU saw the developments in Ukraine as a legitimisation of its norms and proof of the hegemonic consent it received. It reinforced its self-equation with a European identity and embraced Ukraine more strongly as a European country, further increasing the gap with Russia. In an increasingly influential 'paleoconservative ideology' Russia distanced itself from 'false' Europe and reinforced its civilizational claim that it is the representative of genuine European values (Morozov 2017), for which it also seeks support in certain radical right circles in EU countries. Furthermore, Moscow reinforced its counter hegemonic stance. Foreign Minister Lavrov seized several opportunities to declare the advent of a 'post-Western world' stating the liberal world order 'was pre-programmed for crisis right from the time when this vision of economic and political globalisation was conceived primarily as an instrument for ensuring the growth of an elite club of countries and its domination over everyone else.' (Lavrov 2017)

## **Conclusion**

Power, however hard to define, is complex and appears in many different disguises. In essence, the increasingly acrimonious relations between the EU and Russia in the years preceding the Ukraine crisis of 2014 were driven by a logic of competition over institutional arrangements in the overlapping neighbourhoods and over recognition of identities. Yet, a considerable part of the literature has studied EU-Russia relations in this era exclusively in terms of power as the capacity of direct control of one actor over the other.

This article sought to bring the complexity of power back into the debate by using Barnett and Duvall's taxonomy of power, suggesting that four different types of power – compulsory, institutional, structural and productive - operate simultaneously. Both before and since the Ukraine crisis power operated along different dimensions. In the decade preceding the Ukraine crisis, other dimensions of power than compulsory power received limited attention, while those were key to understand the relations between Russia and the EU. First 'institutional power', the capacity to control the conditions of the other actor indirectly, was at the heart of the competition. This appeared most strongly in rival institutional arrangements in the overlapping neighbourhood (Eastern Partnership versus Eurasian

Economic Union) and in competing norm diffusion. Secondly the power relations were strongly characterised by 'structural power' - the capacity to produce and recognise identities, such as Europeanness, within fairly stable structures of subordination -, and 'productive power', whereby mutual constitution happens in diffuse and historically contingent networks. In both fields the EU held a hegemonic position, which Russia chose to contest and to challenge.

The developments of early 2014 led to a radical change in this power struggle. Self-evidently, the competition for power continues along all four dimensions. But the regime change in Ukraine in February 2014, following the Euromaidan protests, led Russian leaders to believe - in a geopolitical reading of the events - that Russia had 'lost' Ukraine, and that Moscow had been unsuccessful in its competition with the EU over institutional arrangements in the neighbourhood (institutional power) and over normative hegemony and identity production (structural and productive power). The ousting of Yanukovych and the pro-Western choice of the new government in Kyiv confirmed that Ukraine had become anchored more firmly in Western and EU-led institutional structures than ever before (institutional power). The Euromaidan protests had proven the EU's identity politics successful, elevating the EU to the symbolic alternative for an unwelcome post-Soviet identity linked to Russia (structural/productive power). Still within this geopolitical framing, this prompted Russian leaders to a radical shift in strategy. While the struggle for power continued along all dimensions, Russia made a surprise move of drastic compulsory power, annexing Crimea and stirring up the conflict in Eastern Ukraine. It can be argued that Moscow pushed back on the front where it had not lost the battle. This led to a new logic of confrontation, based on enemy like structures, in which both sides resorted to power instruments aimed at direct control through very diverse instruments such as annexation, destabilisation, sanctions, retaliation, military build-up. Since Russia's strategic objectives are mainly about *preventing* the Euro-Atlantic community from gaining effective control over Ukraine, this could be seen as a form of 'negative' compulsory power. It goes without saying that all this does not imply that other forms of power have lost their relevance. In the field of institutional power, Russia continues efforts to increase control over institutional arrangements in the neighbourhood: the Eurasian Customs Union was reformed into the Eurasian Economic Union. Armenia, a state which like Ukraine had to make a choice between economic integration with Moscow or Brussels, joined the Eurasian Economic Union in 2015. In the field of structural and productive power, Russia has reinforced its neo-traditionalist or paleoconservative ideological stance, making a civilizational claim that Moscow represents the genuine values of Europe and positioning itself as a leader in the arrival of a post-Western world.

All this implies that a pluralistic approach to power retains its usefulness, also in times of direct confrontation and conflict. This is precisely where this article sought to make a contribution. Using the taxonomy of Barnett and Duvall, it brought a differentiated and multi-dimensional concept of power into a field where the concept of power has traditionally been mono-dimensional. Doing so adds nuance and deepens our insights into EU-Russia relations and the various settings of power. Moreover, as a more nuanced and multi-dimensional understanding of power highlights different aspects of power competition, this also contributes to understanding why perceptions in Moscow and Brussels diverge as much as they do.

The taxonomy of power was theoretically further refined by adding the concept of 'negative' compulsory power, as a way of preventing control by competing parties. This concept is particularly useful to understand Russia's current policies in Eastern Ukraine, primarily aimed at preventing the Euro-Atlantic community from obtaining beneficial control over the country. It goes without saying that also this negative compulsory power coexists with a wide array of differentiated forms of power.

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