"Russia" in the European Parliament

Voting patterns, discourse-coalitions and self-other representations

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Deutsche Zusammenfassung der Dissertationsschrift

Überblick

Wie strukturiert das Thema „Russland" politische Konflikte und Wettbewerb im Europäischen Parlament (EP) - und wie manifestiert sich dies im Abstimmungsverhalten der politischen Fraktionen (EPGs), im Inhalt von Reden und in diskursiven Strategien?

Diese Forschungsfrage steht im Mittelpunkt der vorliegenden Arbeit. Ziel ist es, heraus zu arbeiten, wie sich die Konfliktdynamik, Trennlinien („lines of conflict" oder „divides") und das Verhalten der Abgeordneten im EP (MdEPs) beim Umgang mit „Russland" als politischem Thema entwickeln. Dabei interessiert sich die Studie für die Trenn- bzw. Konfliktlinien, welche die Gesetzgebungsverfahren in Bezug auf die Russische Föderation charakterisieren; die Logik und Muster von Abstimmverhalten; sowie die tatsächliche Qualität oder Substanz der Konfliktlinien innerhalb der Parlamentsdebatten. Konfliktlinien werden hierbei als umfassende Phänomene verstanden: Einerseits umfassen sie repetitive Abstimmungsmuster, andererseits nimmt die Arbeit an, dass sich Konfliktlinien auch im Plenum abbilden und geschaffen werden.

Im Kern untersucht sie das Abstimmungsverhalten der EPGs sowie deren Interaktion im Plenarsaal, d.h. Stellungnahmen während der Debatten vor dem Hintergrund der Ukraine-Krise als außerordentlichen Konflikt an den EU-Außengrenzen. Die Arbeit interessiert sich dafür, ob die Gruppen mehr oder weniger stabile Positionen einnehmen und ob der politische Konflikt insofern strukturiert wird, dass die EPGs sich wiederholenden Mustern in Abstimmungen folgen und Diskurs-Koalitionen bilden (siehe Maag und Kriesi 2016, Hajer 1993, 1995). Darüber hinaus untersucht sie, wie sich die Interaktion uns Contestation zwischen den politischen Gruppen im Parlament vollzieht.

In der Literatur hat sich weitestgehend etabliert, dass EPGs und ihre politischen Positionen in einer zweidimensionalen Matrix angeordnet sind. Diese besteht aus einer redistributiven links-rechts-Dimension und einer zweiten Achse, welche sich auf die Befugnisse der EU-Institutionen bezieht (für oder gegen mehr EU-Integration). Vereinfacht ausgedrückt lässt sich die Abstimmentscheidung der Fraktionen am besten durch ihre Einstellung zu Fragen hinsichtlich Umverteilung erklären oder vorhersagen, oder durch das, was sie über die EU denken (z.B. mehr Integration vs. Zögern bei der Erweiterung der Kompetenzen der EU-Institutionen). Abstimmkoalitionen werden weitgehend entlang dieser beiden Dimensionen
gebildet.

In der Literatur wurde festgestellt, dass die Position der politischen Gruppen auf der links-rechts-Dimension der dominante Prädiktor für den Stimmentscheid ist, während die pro-/anti-EU-Dimension von untergeordneter Bedeutung ist (Hix und Lord 1997; Hix und Noury 2009; McElroy und Benoit 2007). Aktuelle Studien zu EP7 (2009-2014) beobachten eine Veränderung im politischen Raum, die vermutlich durch die Wirtschafts-, Flüchtlings- und Eurokrise, zusammengefasst unter dem Begriff der multiplen Krisen, ausgelöst wird. Vor dem Hintergrund dieser Herausforderungen scheint der Konflikt zwischen Befürwortern und Gegnern der europäischen Integration ausgeprägter zu sein, sodass die Bedeutung der pro-/anti-EU-Dimension für das Abstimmungsverhaltens der Abgeordneten verstärkt sind (Otjes und van der Veer 2016; Roger, Otjes und van der Veer 2017,

Cherepnalkoski et al. 2016, S. 18). Aus mehreren Gründen (Kapitel 2) eignen sich besonders Gesetzgebungsverfahren Russland betreffend dazu, diese Aspekte zu untersuchen.

Das Projekt wird vor dem Hintergrund von drei breiteren wissenschaftlichen Diskussionen durchgeführt. Ein Schwerpunkt befasst sich mit der Frage, wie sich die EU und ihre Institutionen angesichts der multiplen Krisen verändern, reagieren und anpassen und was sich über ihre Widerstandsfähigkeit gegen diese Herausforderungen sagen lässt (siehe u.a. Laffan 2016, Dalton 2016). Darüber hinaus trägt die Dissertation zur Debatte bei, wie politische Akteure während außenpolitischer Krisen interagieren und welche Muster beim Zusammenspiel von (populistischen) EU-kritischen MdEPs und etablierten (pro-EU) Fraktionen beobachtbar sind. Es wird darüber hinaus untersucht, inwiefern Politisierung in diesem Falle „manifest" oder sichtbar wird (Wilde, Leupold, und Schmidtke 2016, Grande und Hutter 2016).

Kurze Darstellung der Arbeit

Die Forschungsfrage nach der konfliktstrukturierenden Wirkung "Russlands" wird durch die Kombination verschiedener Daten und methodologischen Perspektiven beantwortet. Die Studie präsentiert ein Forschungsdesign, welches sowohl Abstimmungs- als auch Debattenanalysen umfasst. Dieser Ansatz erweist sich als wertvoll, um die Unterschiede zwischen gleichem Abstimmungsverhalten und substanziellen Diskurs-Koalitionen zu verstehen (siehe unten).

Angesichts der erheblichen Forschungslücke besteht der erste Schritt (Kapitel 4) in der Bestimmung der Politikfelder und -themen, welche Russland im EP konstituieren. Diese Kontextualisierung ist nötig um zu beurteilen, was das Thema im EP ausmacht und wie es sich im Laufe der Zeit entwickelt, insbesondere im Hinblick auf die bilateralen Spannungen im Zusammenhang mit der Ukrainekrise. In dieser Eingangsanalyse werden die primären und sekundären Themen im Zusammenhang mit Russland, die Verteilung auf die Ausschüsse und das Plenum, Veröffentlichungen des EP Think Tanks und Entschließungstexte (Resolutionen) untersucht. Die Analyse ergibt, dass Russland ein Thema im Überlappungsbereich zwischen auswärtigen Angelegenheiten, Sicherheit und Verteidigung, Menschenrechte und Handel ist. Auch zeigt sich, dass Russland thematisch sehr eng mit den Beziehungen zwischen der EU und der Ukraine verknüpft ist. Nach Ende 2013 (Euromaidan) sind die Entwicklungen innerhalb der Ukraine und der Themenbereich EU-Ukraine Beziehungen untrennbar mit den Beziehungen zwischen der EU und Russland verstrickt. Bei der Untersuchung des Themas Russland im Zeitverlauf bestätigt sich, dass es sich zu einem in erster Linie mit Sicherheit und Verteidigung verknüpften Thema entwickelt, mit einer Verlagerung von vorbereitender Ausschussarbeit zu dringenden ad-hoc Plenarsitzungen. Die Entschließungen zeugen dabei von angespannten Beziehungen und Entfremdung. Der veränderte Rahmen als krisenbezogenes Thema und seine bemerkenswerte Präsenz (188 Plenarveranstaltungen) trotz der geringen formalen Kompetenzen des EP im Bereich der EU-Russland Beziehungen deuten darauf hin, dass Russland, wie angenommen, polarisierend und wahrscheinlich anfällig dafür ist (bzw. wird), dass sich EPGs vorrangig mit identitätsbezogenen Fragen befassen, starke Positionen einnehmen und bei diesem Thema die pro-anti-EU Konfliktlinie in ihrer Bedeutung zunimmt.

Nachdem der allgemeine Kontext der mit Russland zusammenhängenden Gesetzgebungsverfahren sowie die Elemente, die das Thema umrahmen, festgelegt sind, identifizieren die folgenden zwei Kapitel die Konfliktlinien, welche in den mit Russland zusammenhängenden Roll-Calls (RCs, diejenigen Endabstimmungen, welche die Abstimmungsentscheidung der MdEPs namentlich registrieren; Kapitel 5). Im Anschluss werden diese Ergebnisse durch eine tiefgreifende inhaltliche Analyse der den Abstimmungen vorausgehenden Plenardebatten vertieft und geklärt (Kapitel 6). Die Abstimmungsanalyse von 16 RCs, als gängiger Ansatz bei der Erforschung der Konfliktlinien und des Verhaltens von EPGs, stellt eindeutig fest, dass sich ein Abstimm-Muster herausbildet und konsolidiert. Dieses besteht unabhängig von dem Politikbereich, in dem Russland besprochen wird: auf der einen Seite stehen ALDE, EVP, Grüne/ EFA, S&D und EKR („die 5"), während die EFDD, GUE/NGL Fraktion und die fraktionslosen MdEPs (NIs) ebenso eine sehr hohe Abstimmähnlichkeit („voting likeness", „voting similartiy" oder „co-voting") aufweisen. An diesem Punkt der Studie ist bei der Frage nach der konfliktstrukturierenden Wirkung Russlands zu schlussfolgern, dass EPGs tendenziell stabile Positionen einnehmen. „Die 5" befürworteten größtenteils jene Entschließungen, die gegenüber Russland kritischer sind (z. B. Beendigung der strategischen Partnerschaft, Unterstützung von Sanktionen) und die Beziehungen zwischen der EU und der Ukraine fördern (z. B. zugunsten des Partnerschaft- und Assoziierungsabkommens und der Finanzhilfen). „Die 3" neigten dazu, Russland neutraler gegenüber zu stehen, während sie diese Resolutionen häufig ablehnen oder sich enthalten.

Jedoch kann an dieser Stelle der Analyse keine klare Aussage über die primäre(n) Konfliktdimension(en) getroffen werden. Die herausgearbeiteten Abstimmungsmuster stellen der Forscherin mehrere Folgefragen: zum einen, da einige Befunde im Widerspruch zu bisherigen Studien zum Wahlverhalten in Russland-bezogenen RCs stehen. Zum anderen erfordern die Abstimmähnlichkeiten eine nähere Betrachtung, insbesondere die Abstimmungsähnlichkeit zwischen GUE/NGL (radikal links), EFDD und NIs (radikal rechts); sowie zwischen ECR (gemäßigte Euroskeptiker, sozial konservativ) und den pro-EU Gruppen (ALDE, S&D, EVP, Grüne). Somit unterstreichen die Zwischenergebnisse von Kapitel 5 die Notwendigkeit einer weiterführenden Analyse dieser Muster mit Hilfe ergänzender Daten: den Parlamentsdebatten. Denn nur durch deren Analyse wird deutlich, ob es sich um zufälliges gleiches Abstimmen handelt, oder ob es sich um eine tatsächliche „ad-hoc Koalition" handelt; und darüber hinaus, wie substanziell die Konfliktlinien und augenscheinlichen „Koalitionen" in der parlamentarischen Debatte wirklich sind.

Die Debattenanalyse (Kapitel 6) analysiert 19 Debatten und EXPVs (mündliche und schriftliche Erklärungen zur Abstimmung). Sie untersucht den Inhalt der Reden, die diskursiven Strategien und die Argumentation der MdEPs. Das Kapitel stellt fest, dass die Abstimmungsmuster bzw. die Abstimmähnlichkeit nicht notwendigerweise von Diskurskoalitionen getragen werden, und unterstreicht, dass „gleiche Verhaltensweisen" aus unterschiedlichen Rechtfertigungen und Standpunkten rühren. Dabei zeigt sich zum einen, dass sich „die 5" über einen zufälligen Abstimmblock hinaus als Diskurskoalition qualifizieren. Trotz inhaltlicher Spannungen und Widersprüche stimmen sie in den entscheidenden Fragen überein und präsentieren ähnliche oder kongruente Bewertungen, Kritiken, Vorschläge,

Forderungen und Lösungen für gegebene Probleme. Darüber hinaus wenden diese Fraktionen dieselben oder sehr ähnliche Benennungen, Beschreibungen, Charakterisierungen und rhetorischen Mittel an. Auch stützen oder „ummanteln" sie ihre Aussagen auf eine Reihe von kompatiblen Erzählverläufen („Storylines"). Dies bedeutet, dass sie ein kohärentes und kompatibles Verständnis bzw. Version von Ereignissen und der Realität teilen, auf die sie sich wiederum bei der Begründung ihrer Argumentation stützen.

In Bezug auf „die 3" stellt die Analyse zum anderen fest, dass eine Diskrepanz zwischen der in den RC-Daten suggerierten Abstimmähnlichkeit sowie den Debattenbeiträgen besteht. Weder das Bestehen einer „pro-russischen Allianz radikaler Kräfte", noch ein Block von EFDD, GUE /NGL und NIs, der über das gleiche Abstimmen hinausgeht, wird empirisch gestützt. Was diese drei Fraktionen teilen sind eine anti-atlantizistische Haltung, die Storyline eines illegitimen Staatsstreichs oder Putsches gegen den damaligen ukrainischen Präsidenten und die negative Haltung gegenüber dem Assoziierungsabkommens mit der Ukraine. Auf den ersten Blick erscheinen sie auch in ihrer EU-Kritik und gewissen euroskeptischen Forderungen als gleichgesinnt, welches bereits in früheren Studien suggeriert wurde (siehe z.B. Halikiopoulou, Nanou und Vasilopoulou 2012; Otjes und Louwerse 2015; van Elsas und van der Brug 2015).

Die tiefergehende Analyse ergibt jedoch, dass sich Umfang, Schwerpunkt und Stil ihrer EU-Kritik erheblich unterscheiden. Die radikale Linke (GUE/NGL) greift auf Argumente zurück, die in der Debatte eindeutig als EU-kritisch verstanden werden können: Sie kritisiert die EU konkret im Rahmen der Russlanddebatte, indem sie politische Entscheidungen der EU mit russlandbezogenen aktuellen Problemen verknüpft; hierbei präsentieren sie sich als „Watchdogs" und „Korrektive".

Die Kritik von EFDD und NIs geht weit über bloße Richtlinien und Verfahren hinaus. Sie kritisieren auch, was sie als strukturelle oder fundamentale Defizite der EU wahrnehmen. Oft betreffen die Argumente Russland nur nominell: Das Thema wird lediglich als Ausrede, Startpunkt oder Gelegenheit genutzt, um Defizite der EU zu illustrieren oder argumentativ einzubetten. Darüber hinaus präsentieren sich diese MdEPs als Sprecher der europäischen Bürger und kennzeichnen einen populistischen Stil (Moffit und Tormey 2014). Sprecher von EFDD, NIs oder GUE/NGL nehmen weder aufeinander Bezug, noch äußern sie gegenseitige Unterstützung oder Solidarität, oder gegenseitiges Verständnis und keine gemeinsamen Forderungen. Somit wird der Abstimmungsblock dieser drei Fraktionen in den Debatten nicht durch eine Diskurskoalition untermauert; ein Ergebnis, welches den Nutzen des Forschungsansatzes der Dissertation unterstreicht.

Ergebnisse der Untersuchung

Die Dissertation kommt erstens zu dem Schluss, dass Russland den politischen Konflikt insofern strukturiert, dass es das EP in EU-Integrationsbefürworter und Gegner oder EU-Minimalisten teilt. Generell wird der politische Konflikt auch stark vom nationalen Hintergrund der Abgeordneten beeinflusst, wenn in deren nationalem Kontext die Haltung entweder gegenüber Russland oder der EU sehr negativ ist. Die Kombination von RC-Daten mit Plenardebatten zeigt, dass Russland ein Thema ist, bei dem die Bedeutung der pro-/anti-EU-Konfliktdimension im Verhalten von EPGs deutlich hervortritt. In Übereinstimmung mit Otjes und van der Veer (2016) und Roger, Otjes und van der Veer (2017) deuten die Ergeb-

nisse darauf hin, dass sich diese Konfliktlinie während der bilateralen Krise zwischen der EU und Russland vor dem Hintergrund der Ereignis-se in der Ukraine verstärkt. Mit anderen Worten, wie eine Fraktion gegenüber der EU positioniert ist, erklärt am besten ihr Abstimmungs- und Debattenverhalten. Besonders wird dies deutlich, wenn z.B. über Beziehungen mit der Ukraine oder Wirtschaftssanktionen gegen Russland debattiert wird; dann werden allgemeine Grundsätze der EU-Integration und ihre Aktivitäten in der „Gemeinsamen Nachbarschaft" überdacht, hinterfragt und diskutiert.

Es hat sich gezeigt, dass eine geeignete Möglichkeit, um die politischen Konflikte zu diesem Thema zu konzeptualisieren, darin besteht, sich den Politikraum mit einer Achse für „Atlanticists", „Europeanists" und „Anti-Atlanticists" und einer weiteren orthogonalen Achse für EU-Integration vorzustellen (Chryssogelos 2015, Stahl et al. 2009). Bei der Betrachtung der RCs ist dies das geeignete Modell, um das Abstimmverhalten „der 3" und „der 5" zu interpretieren. Die Trennlinie verläuft zwischen denen, die sich gegen eine stärkere EU-Integration aussprechen, und denen, welche transatlantische Beziehungen befürworten oder intensivieren wollen. In den Debattenbeiträgen stellt sich heraus, dass die Haltung gegenüber transatlantischer Kooperation eher zweitrangig ist; die Position auf der Integrationsachse gewinnt an Bedeutung. Beide genannten Aspekte werden in der ersten Hälfte der achten Legislaturperiode des EP (EP8) nach den Wahlerfolgen der EU-kritischen Gruppen am deutlichsten.

Zweitens schlussfolgert die Dissertation, dass sich Trennlinien nicht nur im Abstimmungsverhalten zeigen; sie werden darüber hinaus auch aktiv geschaffen, d.h. Konfliktlinien werden produziert und konstruiert. Russland ist damit ein wichtiges Thema für Identitätskonstruktion, Rollenzuweisung und politische Konflikte.

Die Studie kommt zum Schluss, dass sich insbesondere die pro-anti-EU- Dimension in den von den EPGs verwendeten diskursiven Mitteln manifestiert. Die Analyse von Reden findet sich wiederholende Muster bei der Verwendung rhetorischer Mittel und Argumentationslinien, wobei pro-integrationistische Fraktionen sich von denjenigen absetzen, die zögerlicher bei der weiteren EU-Integration sind. Die MdEPs bilden in ihren Reden In- und Outgroups, vergeben Rollen und versuchen sich von anderen EPGs oder Abgeordneten abzugrenzen. Auf diese Weise gestalten sie aktiv die Entstehung einer Kluft oder Trennlinie. Die Analyse zeigt, dass die EPGs ein Repertoire an diskursiven Praktiken anwenden, die auf eine positive Selbstdarstellung abzielen (positive-self negative-other representation). Entweder sie präsentieren sich als die „ehrlichen Politiker", die als Anwälte der Menschen sprechen, als „Watchdogs", oder als „die Guten" (Europäer), die auf der richtigen Seite in der Geschichte stehen und andere beschuldigen, das Gegenteil zu sein oder zu tun. Eins der zentralen Erkenntnisse ist, dass für alle Fraktionen Russland – als das wesentliche „Andere" – die zentrale Rolle bei diesen positiven Selbstdarstellungen spielt; auch Verweise auf die Ukraine und deren europäische Perspektive sind entscheidend, da sie das positive Selbstbild verstärken und zu dessen Veranschaulichung herangezogen wird.

Jede Fraktion nutzt das Thema Russland auf seine ganz eigene Weise für sich. Das gesamte Spektrum der EPGs versucht, sich zu profilieren, betont ihre eigenen positiven Eigenschaften und betont gleichzeitig das negative Verhalten des Gegners. Russland ist somit Stellvertreterthema und Objekt für mehrere konkurrierende Agenden im EP und beleuchtet die Besonderheit des Parteienwettbewerbs

in dieser Institution. Wenn die MdEPs zu Russland, der Ukraine oder der EU Stellung nehmen, kommunizieren sie mit ihren Wählern, verhandeln über die Europäisch-sein und die Zugehörigkeit zu „uns" und „denen". Das Verhalten in Abstimmungen und insbesondere im Plenum während Russland-bezogener Themen sollte im Lichte des Parteienwettbewerbs ausgelegt werden: EP-Plenarsitzungen sind Anlässe für etablierte und neue EPGs und Parteien, sich voneinander zu abzugrenzen und abzuheben.

So geht es bei den Debatten über Russland nicht so sehr um Russland als solches, sondern um Fragen der Moral und Recht und der Wahrheit, der „richtigen" Interpretation von Ereignissen, europäischer Identität und wer welche Rolle in der parlamentarischen Interaktion übernimmt. Die Gesetzgebungsverfahren zu Russland sind sowohl Schauplatz als auch Proxy für einen Konflikt zwischen denjenigen, die zögerlich oder ablehnend gegenüber einer weiteren EU-Integration sind, und denen, die bereit sind, die transatlantische Zusammenarbeit und EU-Integration zu fördern.

Contents

Acronyms and Abbreviations

AFET	Committee on Foreign Affairs (European Parliament)
ALDE	Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
QCA	Qualitative Content Analysis
CHES	Chapel Hill Expert Survey
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
DC	discourse-coalition
DHA	Discourse Historical Analysis
DROI	Subcommittee on Human Rights
EaP	Eastern Partnership
EEAS	European External Action Service
EFD(D)	Europe of Freedom and (Direct) Democracy
ENF	Europe of Nations and Freedom
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy
EP	European Parliament
EP6	European Parliament's 6th legislative term (2004-2009)
EP7	European Parliament's 7th legislative term (2009-2014)
EP8	European Parliament's 8th legislative term (2014-2019)
EPG	European Political Group
EPP	European Peoples Party
EU	European Union
EUROMAN	Euromanifesto Project
eV	electronic Vote
EXPV	Explanation of Vote
Greens/EFA	The Greens/ European Free Alliance
GUE/NGL	Confederal Group of the European United Left/ Nordic Green Left
MEP	Member of European Parliament
MPD	Manifesto Project Database
NI	Non-Inscrits/ Non-Attached Members of European Parliament
OEIL	Legislative Observatory
PCA	Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (between the EU and Russia)
PCC	Parliamentary Cooperation Committee
RC	Roll-Call
RCV	Roll-Call Vote
RF	Russian Federation
RoD	Register of Documents
S&D	Socialists and Democrats
SEDE	Subcommittee on Security and Defense
SoH	Showing of Hands
TEU	Treaty on European Union
TFEU	Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Crises in the focus of political science research

Political and economic crises are extraordinary times that are often turning points that trigger a re-thinking of current policies, strategies, political instruments, as well as strategic priorities in general and generate discussions on their reform (P. Müller 2016, pp. 361, 368). Crises give rise and opportunity to manifold questions and allow academic research to review previous findings and to observe the emergence or shift of certain phenomena and trends (Cotta and Isernia 2021; DeBardeleben and Viju 2013; Laffan 2016; Voltolini, Natorski, and Hay 2020).

Of particular relevance for political science is a sequence of crises with which the European Union (EU) has been confronted since 2009. These include the so-called Euro(zone) crisis, the immigration or refugee crisis, Brexit, the constitutional change and democratic backsliding in Hungary and Poland, and crises in the EU foreign and neighbourhood policy (Braghiroli 2021; Hutter and Kriesi 2019; Kriesi 2016; Louwerse et al. 2021).[1] These EU-wide, partly overlapping and interrelated developments are accompanied by diverse challenges to the EU member states, EU institutions, and their legitimacy (Laffan 2016, p. 915). Political science summarises these developments under the term of the so-called "polycrisis" (Juncker 2016; Zeitlin, Nicoli, and Laffan 2019) or "multiple crises" (among others Hutter and Kriesi 2019, Cotta and Isernia 2021, p. 1).

The multiple crises have shaped research on the politicisation of European integration as well as on lines of conflict and party competition in the European Parliament. Politicisation research is concerned with the intensified, more extensive and increasingly polarised debate on European integration, the EU and its components, practices and decision-making processes (see e.g. de Wilde, Leupold, and Schmidtke 2016; Grande and Hutter

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[1]Newer studies also mention the COVID-19 pandemic as another episode (Braghiroli 2021; Louwerse et al. 2021).

2016; Hooghe and Marks 2009; Hutter, Grande, and Kriesi 2016).

This strand of research builds on the observation that as the EU stretches its authority in a growing number of political and economic areas, it is increasingly challenged and contested by a growing number of political and societal actors and a more visible object of public debate (de Wilde and Zürn 2012, pp. 140, 141; Hooghe and Marks 2009, 7sqq. de Wilde 2011, 560sq.). EU elites are considered to be more constrained in decision-making processes and EU "policies and decisions [...] no longer escape the wider public's attention" (Gheyle 2019, p. 230; Hooghe and Marks 2009, p. 5). This development has been prominently summarised under the tagline of the "end of the permissive consensus and the rise of a constraining dissensus" for further integration (Hooghe and Marks 2009; Zürn 2019, 982sq.).

In light of the multiple crises being exceptional challenges for Europe as a whole, EU-related issues have gained a new level of salience, polarised actors and tested the cohesion of the Union (Voltolini, Natorski, and Hay 2020, p. 609). Recent research addresses, amongst other things, the effect of EU-wide crises on the degree of politicisation and with what regional differences (e.g. Hutter, Grande, and Kriesi 2016; Hutter and Kriesi 2019), the drivers and agents of politicisation, and how mobilisation of that topic takes place.

Some still understudied aspects are the crises in the field of EU foreign- and neighbourhood policy through the lens of party competition and politicisation. This dissertation is conducted against the background of the "Ukraine crisis" associated with the so-called *Euromaidan*, the Annexation of Crimea by Russia, the separatist war in East Ukraine, and the subsequent bilateral tensions in EU-Russia relations; a EU foreign policy crisis that has so far not been extensively examined in that regard, even though this "geopolitical crisis involv[es] both Russia and the US, as well as other areas on the southern and eastern borders of the EU" (Cotta and Isernia 2021, p. 2), "Putin's imperial aspirations" and the associated significant deterioration of EU-Russia relations are also mentioned as part of the multiple crises (Kriesi 2016, p. 32; Góra, Styczynska, and Zubek 2019, p. 9). The study aims to determine how conflict dynamics, divides, and behaviour of Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) take shape when dealing with "Russia" as a political issue in the years 2009-2016, and especially in light of the Ukraine crisis.

The European Parliament (EP), with its 750 MEPs from 28 different national backgrounds, is scientifically interesting terrain for research on plenary behaviour and partisan competition (Corbett, Jacobs, and Shackleton 2016, p. 3, Wodak 2009, Hix and Noury 2009; Hix, Noury, and Roland 2009; Finke 2016) and has been identified as relevant, but still understudied arena to study politicisation (de Wilde, Leupold, and Schmidtke 2016, p. 7, Gheyle 2019; Zürn 2019, Zürn 2016, p. 168, de Wilde, Leupold, and Schmidtke 2016, p. 7, Hurrelmann, Gora, and A. Wagner 2015, p. 45).

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Literature on lines of conflict and party competition in the EP examines how the crises have influenced voting behaviour and voting coalitions in the EP. After the Euro crisis, there has been a change in the voting behaviour of political groups and conflict lines in certain policy areas, as well as a change in conflict constellations and party competition (Otjes and van der Veer 2016; Roger, Otjes, and van der Veer 2017, Cherepnalkoski et al. 2016, p. 18). Against the background of those challenges, the dichotomy between supporters and opponents of European integration seems to be more pronounced (Cherepnalkoski et al. 2016, p. 18; Otjes and van der Veer 2016; Roger, Otjes, and van der Veer 2017).

In this context, research is also focusing on the patterns of behaviour that can be observed during these crises when mainstream parties interact with challenger parties (Adam et al. 2017; Novak, Rozenberg, and Bendjaballah 2020; Wonka 2016), and how, against the background of the polycrisis, the conflict between supporters and opponents of European integration develops and unfolds.

Several questions require further exploration, especially with regard to the European Parliament, inter alia how the relationship between supporters and opponents of European integration takes shape in this particular institution (Gheyle 2019; Hurrelmann, Gora, and A. Wagner 2015, p. 44; de Wilde, Leupold, and Schmidtke 2016, p. 7; Otjes and van der Veer 2016; Roger, Otjes, and van der Veer 2017).

To begin, it is still unanswered whether the lines of conflict and determinants of voting behaviour in the EP are shifting permanently, and whether this shift is limited to legislative procedures that relate to competencies of the EU and the future of EU integration (Otjes and van der Veer 2016, p. 257; Braghiroli 2015a). How does party competition in the European Parliament develop with regard to the so-called "Eurosceptic challengers" or newcomers, which are much more strongly present in EP8 after the 2014 elections? There is an ongoing discussion about "contestation patterns and politicisation of selected EU policies in both conceptual and empirical terms" (Góra, Styczynska, and Zubek 2019, p. 10).

Secondly, from the perspective of politicisation research, the question remains in which arenas or fields politicisation becomes visible or manifests itself, apart from election manifestos, mass media, protest movements and national parliaments (de Wilde, Leupold, and Schmidtke 2016; Grande and Hutter 2016). A related question is the role of the EP as an observation point for politicisation (Zürn 2016). As Hurrelmann, Gora, and A. Wagner (2015, p. 44) argue, "existing literature often does not distinguish clearly enough between different arenas in which politicisation may occur, different aspects of EU integration that may become politicised, or different member states whose political contexts may shape patterns of politicisation". Further work is needed to explore the politicisation of sub-issues

of EU integration or specific policies (Góra, Styczynska, and Zubek 2019, 13sq.), under which conditions certain policies are politicised and how this unfolds (Angelucci and Isernia 2020; Oriol Costa 2019).

Thirdly, another aspect that needs further scrutiny is the interaction between politicisation and foreign policy crises. To what extent do foreign policy crises favour the politicisation of the EU or one of its components, i.e. external relations? Which political actors use such crises for mobilisation and how – so far, research focused mostly on populist parties? And at the same time, to what extent do crises offer windows of opportunity for further EU integration, e.g. in the area of EU Common Foreign and Security policy (CFSP/CSDP) (Russo 2016)?

This study seeks to contribute to the "empirical stocktaking of the politicisation of European integration" (Grande and Hutter 2016, p. 8) which predominantly focused on national elections, Europeanised political protests and public debates on major integration steps, primarily in Western Europe (see volume by Hutter, Grande, and Kriesi 2016), mostly studied via content analyses of mass media (Zürn 2016, p. 166). Therefore, this work chooses to examine legislative procedures that deal with the Russian Federation, particularly in the context of the Ukraine crisis.

It is argued that the analysis of crises related to EU foreign policy and neighbourhood through the lens of party competition and politicisation holds a lot of potential to contribute to the gaps outlined above. The analysis is conducted against the background of the bilateral tensions in EU-Russia relations associated with the Ukraine crisis, that is the so-called *Euromaidan* protests in Kiev, the annexation of Crimea by Russia (2014) and the separatist war in Donbass; a EU foreign policy crisis that has so far been rather overlooked, even though it is considered as "the most profound menace to European security for many decades" (Youngs 2017, p. 1) or "one of the most important challenges to the post-Cold War international order" (Natorski 2017, p. 178; Kriesi 2016, p. 32; Cotta and Isernia 2021, p. 3) that has impaired the overall relations with Russia (Cotta and Isernia 2021, p. 3). It has been argued that these tensions "extended beyond the Ukraine crisis to other fields and theatres" (Siddi 2020, p. 1) and are not just a regional conflict. It further negatively affected the "stiffening of relationships between NATO and Russia" (Cotta and Isernia 2021, p. 3) and tensions become visible during "Russia's military intervention in the Syrian crisis in September 2015 [, ...] the alleged Russian support of European far right parties [... and Russia being] accused of interfering in Western democratic [election] processes as part of a multifaceted 'hybrid war'" (Siddi 2020, 1, 59sqq.).

Research question and methodological considerations

This dissertation aims to determine how conflict dynamics and MEPs' behaviour in the European Parliament take shape when dealing with "Russia" as a political issue in the years 2009 to 2016, particularly in light of the Ukraine crisis. It is interested in the "lines of conflict" that characterise legislative procedures on the Russian Federation; the logic and patterns of voting behaviour as well as the quality of divides in parliamentary debates; and the dominant actor constellations within this space, both in votes and debates. It is assumed that within EP plenary debates, lines of conflict are not only reflected by different positions, but that their emergence can also be observed through interaction between the European Political Groups (EPGs). The study thus understands divides or lines of conflicts as "comprehensive packages" which include repetitive patterns of voting (co-voting, splits and trench formation), the position and argumentation of EPGs towards given issues, discursive alignment and cooperation of EPGs, the discursive construction of in- and out-groups, and patterns of justification and blaming. The analysis is interested in whether the groups adopt more or less stable positions and whether the political conflict is structured in the sense that the EPGs follow repetitive patterns in voting and form discourse coalitions (see Hajer 1993, 1995; Maag and Kriesi 2016).

The main research question poses as follows:

> How does the topic of "Russia" structure political conflict and competition in the European Parliament (EP) between 2009 and 2016 and how does this manifest in voting behaviour, statements and discursive strategies used by the European Political Groups (EPGs)?

The study answers these questions by focusing on three aspects. It analyses (1) *where* and *within which contexts* the Russian Federation is discussed (policy fields and arenas, i.e. committees and plenary sessions); (2) how political groups *vote* on Russia-related questions; and what patterns can be identified there (i.e. which ad-hoc voting coalitions can be identified, on which issues, etc.); and (3) the content of their *statements* in Russia-related plenary debates (claims, arguments, discursive means). Are these voting coalitions also detectable in the debates, how are the voting decisions justified, and are the lines of conflict also detectable in the speeches? How pronounced is the conflict over Russia in the debates? Special interest is devoted to the interaction between established EPGs and Eurosceptic newcomers. Russia may or may not "structure" the parliamentary interaction when, following Maag and Kriesi (2016, p. 207), actors take more or less stable positions within a political space; when there is a "process whereby political conflicts become institutionalised in the sense that actors form sta-

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ble, routinised patterns of oppositions and coalitions around a limited set of basic conflicts".

The study combines quantitative and qualitative data and research methods. I examine voting behaviour of political groups through the analysis of *Roll-Call votes* (RCVs) in 16 final votes in EP plenary sessions on Russia-related topics, between September 2009 to August 2014 (EP7) and September 2014 to February 2016 (EP8). In order to trace argumentation, justifications, and the background of their voting decision I scrutinise debates that relate to these final votes, including written and oral speeches of MEPs as well as Explanations of Vote (EXPVs).

The objective is to, on the one hand, examine to what extent "Russia" is a window that provides insight into the conflict constellations in the EP during important conflicts in the field of foreign and security policy, and how politicisation of the EU or its CFSP/CSDP can be observed there (see also Angelucci and Isernia 2020; Oriol Costa 2019; Ikani 2020; Natorski 2020). On the other hand, the study scrutinises which rhetorical strategies mainstream EPGs use towards Eurosceptic challengers, and the implications for the conflict dynamics and interaction within the plenary (Adam et al. 2017; Novak, Rozenberg, and Bendjaballah 2020; van Berlo and Natorski 2020). So far, there are only few studies on how "contestation and politicisation [unfolds] within [the field of] European foreign policy" (Góra, Styczynska, and Zubek 2019, p. 10, Cianciara 2016; van Berlo and Natorski 2020).

There are many reasons why the Russian Federation is a fruitful case to analyse and illustrate "the parliamentary face" of the multiple crises (Braghiroli 2012a, p. 5) as well as manifestations of politicisation (of CFSP/CSDP) (Dolezal, Grande, and Hutter 2016, p. 32). The Russian Federation and the Member States of the EU share a long history of cultural and economic exchange. As will be elaborated in chapter 2.2.2, the Russian Federation as policy issue, its priority status to the EU and the complexity of conflicts that go with it makes it particularly interesting to observe.[2]

Most importantly, (the state of) bilateral relations to Russia are directly connected to the "Ukraine crisis" as recent extraordinary, highly relevant conflict at the EU's eastern borders (see for instance Dragneva and Wolczuk 2015; Góra, Styczynska, and Zubek 2019; Natorski 2017; Siddi 2020; Youngs 2017). It raises questions such as how these developments influence the willingness of EU member states and EPGs to cooperate more in the field of CFSP/ CSDP, with which consequences for the degree of controversy within the EU institutions (see Russo 2016); whether the negotiations and signing of the EU-Ukraine Partnership and Association Agreement (EU-UKR-PAA) is to be considered as a step to a further widening of the EU,

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[2]Bastian 2006, pp. 73–143; Braghiroli 2015b; Dias 2013; European Commission 2017; Leonard and Popescu 2007; Lukyanov 2008; Popescu 2016; Russell 2016a,c.

which itself triggers politicisation (see Hutter, Braun, and Kerscher 2016); and lastly, the Ukraine crisis is, as Cianciara (2016, p. 2) maintains, an „interesting, timely and relevant case for studying contestation of EU external action (policy contestation) and of the European integration project more broadly (system contestation)". In light of deteriorating EU-Russia relations, the EP reconsiders or re-evaluates its policies and strategies towards Russia, Ukraine and the "Shared Neighbourhood" while general questions and principles regarding EU integration and enlargement are put to discussion. This makes Russia-related debates a perfect case to examine the presence and quality of intra-EP lines of conflict.

Thesis outline

The next chapter puts forward the bilateral crisis in EU-Russia relations and the Ukraine crisis as fruitful cases for the study of contestation and politicisation of EU foreign policy. It introduces party families and EP groups in the Parliament's 7th and 8th legislative term and reviews current literature on EP party competition and the changes within the EU political space in light of the multiple crises. It shows why Russia is a valuable case to investigate the changing dynamic between the EPGs and what research is needed regarding the interaction of established and challenger groups.

The Methodology chapter contains information on case selection and data; how key terms are operationalised; as well as the analytical framework underlying the study. It argues that researching the lines of conflict in the EP requires data from Roll-Calls (votes in which the names of MEPs are recorded along with their vote), complemented by a detailed analysis of what and how MEPs argue in the debates accompanying the final vote. Accordingly, speeches of MEPs within the overall contexts of those EP debates are examined by means of qualitative content analysis, and enriched by means of Discourse Historical Analysis (DHA).

The dissertation is subsequently separated into three analytical chapters that ask *where and how often* Russia was on the agenda (chapter 4), *how EPGs voted* (chapter 5) and *how it was discussed* (chapter 6).

Chapter 4 — "Russia" as Agenda Item: Identifies *key elements* and *subtopics of the discourse* on Russia and its development in the period under review. Of main interest are topics and policy issues which characterise, frame, have been constituent for or connected to Russia-related legislative procedures.

Chapter 4 starts by showing how the EP works on Russia from an organisational perspective and addresses the role and competencies of the EP with regard to CFSP/CSDP, trade and human rights. It contains an exploratory content analysis of EP plenary debate topics and committee meetings with

special regard to the salience of "Russia" in order to examine which questions or issues stand at the core of the topic "Russia" and how this develops over time. The analysis finds that in view of the significant deterioration of EU-Russia relations since 2013, Russia has increasingly been discussed as an issue of crisis and matter of security.

Chapter 5 — Voting Behaviour: Scrutinises how political groups vote in Russia-related final votes. By examining the degree of voting correspondence between the groups, it illuminates patterns in voting behaviour across time and policy fields.

After having established the general features and context of Russia-related activities in the EP, chapter 5 on voting behaviour examines 16 final votes that employed Roll-Call. Drawing on previous studies on voting behaviour in Russia-related and foreign-policy issues, it develops working hypotheses that structure the analysis. The voting analysis finds that in Russia-related votes, the EP is divided; two voting blocs emerge and consolidate over time. Voting behaviour of EPGs follows a "5 versus 3" co-voting pattern that has been consolidating since EP8. The results contradict several aspects suggested in the literature and need further scrutiny, given that the results alone do not tell much about the *nature and substance* of co-voting patterns and divides.

The last analytical chapter examines this "5 : 3" pattern in depth. Based on a qualitative content analysis, it explores whether the co-voting is coincidental or substantiated, i.e. whether it is grounded in a discourse-coalition (Hajer 1993, 1995). It examines the content of speeches, the discursive strategies, the use of metaphors and other rhetorical means, the storylines and the way EPGs design their argumentation.

Chapter 6a — Content: Focuses on speeches in debates preceding the final votes. What do EPGs argue, and do they justify or explain their voting behaviour? Which arguments are brought forward by whom? Who are the dominant speakers and groups?

Chapter 6b — Discursive Strategies: examines how arguments are presented, while being interested in how speakers use discursive means to describe, predicate actors; use argumentation schemes (storylines, topoi) in order to justify and support their arguments.

In a comparative time-group-perspective, these steps examine how statements related to Russia *differ* among the groups by scrutinising arguments and the use of discursive strategies of EPGs.[3] In doing so, the chapter focuses on how divides in the chamber are produced and how they evolve.

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[3]The term "strategy" is understood neutrally and unintentionally, similar to the term "tool". As Reisigl and Wodak (2001, p. 31) put it, strategy is "a (more or less accurate and more or less intentional) plan of practices, including discursive practices adopted to achieve a particular social, political, psychological or linguistic goal".

The content and discourse analysis of debates finds that co-voting patterns are not automatically linked to discourse coalitions. The voting bloc of "the 5" is substantiated by similar demands, suggestions, evaluations, and descriptions of actors and problems. The voting bloc of GUE/NGL, EFDD and NIs, on the other hand, is not. It shares an anti-Atlanticist standpoint, but does not display mutual understanding or common demands. The speeches reveal significant differences between these three groups, best captured by distinguishing between EU-critical (GUE/NGL) and anti-EU comments (EFDD and NIs).

General findings

The dissertation concludes that, firstly, "Russia" structures political conflict by dividing the chamber in a pro-integration and anti- or less integration camp. Generally, political conflict in the EP is also strongly influenced by the national background of MEPs if the domestic attitude is very negative towards Russia *or* the EU. Combining Roll-Call data with parliamentary speeches indicates that Russia is a topic which amplifies the importance of the pro-/anti-EU dimension of conflict in the behaviour of EPGs. In line with Otjes and van der Veer (2016) and Roger, Otjes, and van der Veer (2017), findings suggest that the pro-anti-dimension strengthens during the EU-Russia bilateral and Ukraine crises. In other words, how the EPG is positioned towards the EU best explains their voting and debate behaviour. The dividing line is particularly pronounced for debates on EU-Ukraine relations and economic sanctions against Russia, where general principles of EU integration and its activities in the Shared Neighbourhood are reconsidered and discussed.

The suitable way to conceptualise political conflict on that topic is to imagine the political space with one axis for Atlanticists, Europeanists, Anti-Atlanticist and another orthogonal axis for integration (Chryssogelos 2015); this particularly goes for interpreting the voting likeness of "the 3" and "the 5". The dividing line cuts through those opposing more EU integration and those who seek to foster EU-Atlantic relations. In the debate speeches, however, it turns out that the position on the integration axis becomes more relevant. Both aspects become most visible in the first half of the EP's eighth legislative term (EP8) after the electoral successes of EU-critical groups.

Secondly, the study illustrates how the EU's policy towards Russia has been contested inside the EP, and which content and styles of contestation are observable. Divides materialise not just in voting behaviour; the divides emerge as being actively produced and constructed. Russia is a crucial topic for identity construction, role attribution and political conflict. The analysis of speeches discovers repetitive patterns in the use of dis-

cursive tools and lines of argumentation, pitting pro-integrationist EPGs groups against those being more hesitant towards further EU-integration. Particularly striking are the incompatible and concurring interpretations of the events in Ukraine.

MEPs, in their speeches, create in- and outgroups, attribute roles and assign parts, and demarcate from other EPGs or MEPs. By doing so, they actively shape the divide and it "comes into being". The analysis reveals that the EPGs apply a repertoire of discursive practices that aim towards positive-self-negative- other-representation. Either they present themselves as the "good politicians" who speak as advocates of the people, as "watch-dogs", or as "good" (Europeans) who stand on the right side of history, and accuse others to be or do the opposite. Here, one of the most common methods is the semantic field of calling someone "pro-Russian", a discursive tactic primarily used by the political establishment targeting radical and Eurosceptic (newcomer) parties.

The study gives insight into the cohesion of political groups in the EP on Russia-related issues and explores whether coalitions are formed in the same way for different policy areas. The dissertation adds to existing academic findings with its discourse analytical perspective on voting behaviour. The study generates insight into what contestation during a major foreign policy and security crisis looks like with a view to not only populist or radical, but all EPGs. It contributes to the scholarly debate on the EP's changing lines of conflict and shows that the topic "Russia" is a case where intensified political conflict over European integration and its subdomain CFSP/CSDP take place. It illustrates the discursive construction of divides in plenary sessions, i.e. how in- and out-groups, and lines of conflict are constructed and generated through speeches and plenary interaction. It highlights the differences between co-voting and substantial discourse-coalitions, as well as the advantages that come with a research design that comprises different kinds of data and methods.

Chapter 2

Studying bilateral EU-Russia relations in light of party competition and politicisation

Divides or lines of conflict in the European Parliament (EP) and legislative behaviour of European Political Groups (EPGs) in the context of the "multiple crises" (Cotta and Isernia 2021, p. 1; Hutter and Kriesi 2019, p. 996) are a main interest of political science research on the EP. The EP, as the only directly elected EU institution, is different from most other parliaments; this makes it relevant and fruitful terrain for research on plenary behaviour, partisan competition, and parliaments in general (Corbett, Jacobs, and Shackleton 2016, p. 3). In contrast to the national parliaments of EU member states, the EP lacks a classic government-opposition dynamic. The EP goes without ties between the executive and majority coalition in the EU's legislative chamber. This makes its members less constrained than in many other parliamentary systems since they are less bound by the expectation to "rubber stamp decisions made at the executive level" (Corbett, Jacobs, and Shackleton 2011, p. 189). Last but not least, it differs from national parliaments because in the EP, ideological divides and national dissents overlap. The EP, therefore, is a diorama that reflects a variety of larger conflicts.

In their everyday work, its 750 Members (MEPs) prepare and co-decide legislation alongside the Commission and the Council. MEPs meet in thematic committees, write reports, and engage in inter-parliamentary cooperation. The EP sends delegations to third countries and conducts hearings with Commission representatives. Most visibly, it debates and votes on resolutions and current issues.[4] It is "master of its own agenda. It may

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[4]Research has established the different facets and purposes of political speeches in the chamber. Votes and deliberations in the plenary are about position taking and reinforcing political messages (Proksch and Slapin 2015, p. 174); addressing and solving problems

discuss (or not) what it likes, when it likes, and according to its own priorities" (Corbett, Jacobs, and Shackleton 2011, p. 194). The maelstrom of national traditions, ideological orientations, cultural differences, and multilingualism challenge everyday work and collaboration between the parliamentarians and account for the EP's exceptionalism (Wodak 2009). Votes and plenary debates follow the logic of competition between the seven to eight EPGs (Corbett, Jacobs, and Shackleton 2016, p. 3) which comprise about 200 political parties from the entire political spectrum.

Recent academic research on the EP engages with the question of how it has been affected by the electoral successes of Eurosceptic parties in the EP elections of 2014, the financial- and refugee or migration crises, and Brexit. How did these developments subsumed under the term multiple crises affect its daily work, the interplay and behaviour of its political groups, and the logic of party competition in the chamber? What impact do these predicaments have on the facets of plenary activity, such as its organising principle of consensus (van Berlo and Natorski 2020, p. 193)?

One of the most fruitful data sets that contribute to the understanding of the EP's changing lines of conflict, party competition within this institution, as well as the politicisation of EU foreign affairs and external relations (CFSP/CDSP), are legislative procedures related to the Russian Federation – particularly with regard to the Ukraine crisis. This has been considered as a major recent crisis posed to the EU and its Member states in their Eastern Neighbourhood (Natorski 2017; Youngs 2017). In light of these developments, the EU-Russia relationship has changed significantly in quality, design and degree of institutionalisation. Given the limited empirical knowledge on forms of politicisation in the EP, it is worthwhile to examine whether and how "Russia" is a case where politicisation of EU integration culminates/ becomes visible.

This chapter posits that Russia-related EP procedures are valuable data to "a more precise understanding of the parliamentary face" of the multiple crises (Braghiroli 2012a, p. 5). Scrutinising interparty competition and the lines of conflict which structure Russia-related EP procedures provides valuable insight into the complexity and logic of intra-EU divides and the legislative behaviour of EPGs. Their analysis contributes to the literature on the EP's (changing) lines of conflict, the impact of crises on parliamentary work and interaction between different political actors. These EP legislative procedures are potential "windows of observation" to capture manifestations of politicisation (Dolezal, Grande, and Hutter 2016, p. 32), there-

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through argumentation (Garssen 2016); informing the political audience of one's policy position, persuading or convincing colleagues or adversaries (Ringe, Victor, and Gross 2013); representation: speaking up for others, arguing on behalf of others (Mayhew 1974); justifying and explaining legislative decisions (Lord 2013, p. 253), providing explicit reasons for positions taken and "rounded statement about motives" (Burke 1969, pp. xv–xvi); identity formation (Krzyzanowski 2010; Wodak 2009).

fore it is fruitful to examine whether and how "Russia" is a case where intensified political conflict over European integration issues take place.

The chapter will combine several literatures and provide information on the political groups of the EP, their work on Russia, and the Ukraine crisis as a main event influencing EU-Russia relations. It posits that EU-Russia relations and the Ukraine crisis is another crisis that should be analysed in order to broaden the understanding of divides and politicisation of foreign relations as subdomain of EU integration. It is subsequently structured as follows. The first section introduces the EU-Russia bilateral crisis against the background of the Ukraine crisis and presents it as a valuable case to study political conflict in the EP. The added value of studying "Russia" will be highlighted continuously throughout the chapter. Then, the chapter describes the political landscape of the EP's seventh and eighth legislative term (EP7, 2009-2014; and EP8, 2014-2019). It provides information about EPGs, voting behaviour of MEPs, and how party competition is structured. It continues with the academic debate on the changing lines of conflict in the EP, the so-called polycrisis and politicisation literature. It then elaborates on the research on how multiple crises have affected the voting behaviour of MEPs.

2.1 The crisis in EU-Russia relations and the Ukraine crisis as part of the polycrisis

Investigating interparty competition and the lines of conflict which structure EP debates on "Russia" against the background of the Ukraine crisis provides valuable insight into the complexity and logic of intra-EU divides, the legislative behaviour of EPGs, and the politicisation of CFSP/CDSP for several reasons.[5] Relations to the Russian Federation (RF) are exceptional in many ways. It is one of the EU's most important economic and strategic partners and salient in most of the member states; on the other hand, this topic is both nationally and ideologically divisive and touches on diverging national and economic interests and identities.[6] Russia has for centuries been a major reference point for Europe to demarcate its identity and identifying what is European and what is not (Neumann 1999; Siddi 2018; Wolff 1994). Most importantly, the EU-Russia bilateral tensions against the background of the Ukraine crisis are considered to be one of the most severe

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[5]"Russia" is written in inverted commas or italicised in order to highlight that the topic, in the first place, is understood as a realm of subtopics and issues. This means "Russia" in the plenary inter alia includes relations to the RF, its domestic policy and political system, cooperation with Russia in other international institutions, etc. The specific elements of "Russia" in plenary will be subject of analysis in chapter 4.

[6]Averre 2009; Braghiroli 2015b; Dias 2013; Haukkala 2015,European Commission External Relations 2016; A. Wilson, Popescu, and Noel 2009.

crises that the EU had to face in recent times. Simultaneously, bilateral relations to the Russian Federation are strained and tensions culminate after the Annexation of Crimea and the Donbass separatist war. These events not only raise questions of national security, but also on the future design of policies in the field of EU foreign affairs and energy security, Europeanisation of and further cooperation and integration within those policy domains. All this takes place against the background of a politicised EU that is faced with a series of interrelated and overlapping crises and has its role, efficacy and purpose questioned. The subject of Russia relates to trade, foreign policy, energy security, and EU enlargement – all topics that are potentially reconsidered and judged from a pro-/anti-EU integration angle. Given that the competences of the EP in EU-Russia relations are limited, "Russia" as a topic in the EP might be prone to moral and identity-related questions and projections. It is therefore likely and plausible that Russia-debates are both a diorama (or "laboratory", Hix 2004, p. 201) and playing field for various conflicts.

Scientific value of crises and "multiple crises"

Central to this dissertation are the multiple crises (Cotta and Isernia 2021, p. 1, Hutter and Kriesi 2019, p. 996), a series of crises that, since 2008, have hit the EU and "were unprecedented in the seriousness of the challenges levelled against [its] very foundations", member states and its institutions (Cotta and Isernia 2021, p. 1), with multilevel effects, at the regional, national, and supranational level (DeBardeleben and Viju 2013, p. 12; for consequences of the Euro crisis see volume by Dăianu et al. 2014). They include the Eurozone economic and financial crisis, the immigration or refugee crisis, as well as the "geopolitical crisis involving both Russia and the US, as well as other areas on the southern and eastern borders of the EU" (Cotta and Isernia 2021, p. 2). They "not only occurred at approximately the same time, but they have had the capacity to severely test the European Union, to shake and potentially undermine the very foundations of the European institutions, easily portrayed as ineffective in dealing with them, and even more to question their legitimacy to act in critical situations" (Cotta and Isernia 2021, p. 2).

Crises are considered as phases which reveal intra-institutional tensions and disputes, put their resilience to test, and challenge or question former decisions (Cotta and Isernia 2021; DeBardeleben and Viju 2013; Laffan 2016). At the same time, political actors polarise during these moments of crises; "disagreements arise over the political order's basic underlying bargains, norms and principles, [. . .] basic rules and norms of the order are renegotiated, and new bargains [might] replace old ones" (Krotz and Maher 2016, 4sq.), or the actors and institutions adapt in the sense that the current "mechanisms [. . .] are altered or modified. New rules and institutions are added to cope with new challenges, disagreements and problems"

(P. Müller 2016, p. 368). They are particularly revealing, inter alia because „routine EU legislative politics [. . . bear] limited potential for politicisation" (Wonka 2016, p. 141).

The notion of *crisis* suggests "an unexpected occurrence that disrupts the normal functioning of socio-political structures" (Voltolini, Natorski, and Hay 2020, p. 615) or a state of intense danger or threat which requires extraordinary responses that go beyond ordinary procedures (Hooghe and Marks 2019, p. 1118; Leek and Morozov 2018, p. 130). At the same time, Voltolini, Natorski, and Hay (2020, 615sq.) emphasise the constructed and discursive nature of crises.

> "Crises have material bases, but it is their perception, interpretation and discursive construction by actors that make an event recognisable as a crisis (and, indeed, as a crisis of a particular kind) [...] Unexpected events do not speak for themselves; they possess an inherent 'interpretive ambiguity' ('is this a crisis?', 'of what is this a crisis?') [. . .] a moment only becomes a crisis if identified failures come to be widely perceived as symptomatic of a wider problem."

For this study it is most important to take into account the (the state of) bilateral relations with Russia because they are directly connected to the "Ukraine crisis" as a recent extraordinary conflict at the EU's eastern borders. Natorski (2017, 177sq.) summarises that it "encompasses two fundamentally different phenomena: on the one hand, the domestic protests against President Yanukovych (November 2013 to February 2014); on the other, the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula by the Russian Federation in March 2014, followed by the war in Eastern Ukraine with pro-Russian separatists and Russian armed forces".

The "conflict in Ukraine remained a major source [and driver] of confrontation between the EU and Russia", fuelling the crisis in EU–Russia relations (Siddi 2020, p. 59). Against the backdrop of the Annexation of Crimea and the separatist war in East Ukraine, the bilateral relations between the RF and the EU deteriorated significantly during 2013 and 2014.[7]

Two of the main causes for the Ukraine crisis named in the literature are the negotiations and signing of the EU-Ukraine Partnership and Association Agreement (EU-UKR-PAA), and what Kriesi (2016, p. 32) called "Putin's imperial aspirations" in Russia's near abroad (Dias 2013; Russell 2016c). In light of a tense security situation, it is plausible that polarisation processes are intensified. Cotta and Isernia (2021, p. 3) argue that "while this [has ...] impact on all EU member states, the way each of them has been perceived, approached and processed varies from country to country and

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[7]Bastian 2006, pp. 73–143; Braghiroli 2015b; Dias 2013; European Commission 2017; Leonard and Popescu 2007; Lukyanov 2008; Popescu 2016; Russell 2016a,c.

this variety of impacts and responses heavily affects intra-EU relationships and dynamics". For several EU Member states, the events in Ukraine negatively impact their national security, which might foster the willingness to cooperate more in the field of CFSP/CSDP (see Russo 2016). It "could serve as a catalyst for the creation of a more robust European security and defence framework, for example, either among the [member states] or embedded within EU structures and institutions" (Krotz and Maher 2016, p. 5; see also P. Müller 2016, 361sq.). Hutter, Braun, and Kerscher (2016) have argued that (attempts to) widen and deepen the EU, on the other side, trigger politicisation. This would include both the EU-UKR-PAA and any plans and ambition to cooperate more in the field of foreign and security policy (see also Styczynska 2019, 170sqq.).

In addition to this external condition, the EP faces a considerable number of Eurosceptic newcomers in Sep 2014, who challenge the thrust and political choices of previous legislatures. Also, "politicians from [different] sides offer different ways to get out of the crisis" (Otjes and van der Veer 2016, p. 243). The answers to those challenges vary depending on the national and ideological backgrounds of MEPs, which fuels tensions inside the chamber. Those two factors catalyse intra-EP conflicts and make Russia-related debates useful material for examining the changing dynamic of conflicting lines.

The EU-Russia diplomatic crisis in face of the Ukraine crisis

The Russian Federation and the EU Member States are not just connected through historical events, they share a long history of economic, cultural and diplomatic exchange. Given its economic relevance in terms of energy supply and trade, positive relationships with Russia are important to many members and to the EU itself (European Commission 2017; Kulesa 2016; Russell 2016a). Russia and the EU have always been important strategic and geopolitical partners, with good bilateral relations being one of the top priorities in EU foreign relations (European Union Committee 2015, p. 9; Kulesa 2016).[8] Their harmonious cooperation is considered to be "of vital economic, energy and cultural importance for Member States, and the security of Europe as a whole" (European Union Committee 2015, p. 9). Bilateral EU-Russia relations have also been of highest importance to the EP, despite the low formal influence of the EP in that policy field (Pridham 2014; van Ham 2015; see 2.2.2).

EU-Russia relations were first institutionalised within the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) which to this day forms the contractual basis of EU-Russia relations. This programme was originally designed for ten years. Negotiations on a follow-up started in 2008. Between 2009

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[8]Bastian 2006, pp. 73–143; Braghiroli 2015b; Dias 2013; European Commission 2017; Leonard and Popescu 2007; Lukyanov 2008; Popescu 2016; Russell 2016a,c.

and 2010 in particular, EU-Russia relations were framed in the spirit of *Partnership for Modernization*. Within "Four Common Spaces", this programme aimed to modernise Russia's energy-, transport- and technology sector; it addressed trade liberalisation and investment facilitation, corruption, etc. supported by the EU (European Union External Action Service 2016). Russian president Medvedev was considered as a reformer (Hahn 2010; Shevtsova 2010). The EU and Russia used to meet in numerous diplomatic arrangements. Next to biannual EU-Russia summits, the *Interparliamentary Cooperation Committee* (PCC) between the Russian State Duma and the EP worked as a constant delegation for knowledge- and experience exchange, best practices and socialisation of parliamentary actors. Braghiroli (2015b, p. 69) finds that in the beginning of the 7th term (2004 – 2009) the EP had "adopted a friendlier voting stance towards Moscow which is likely to be reflected in its legislative and non-legislative activities". However, it has been noted that the 2008 Russia-Georgia war "revealed a growing rift between the EU and Russia" (Dias 2013, p. 7; Averre 2009; Haukkala 2015; Kulesa 2016; Russo 2016).

Between 2012 and 2013, however, structural and situational factors led to a decline in relations. Some scholars mention contradicting identities, interests, activities and miscommunication related to the Shared Neighbourhood which followed "a mostly competing and mutually exclusive logic" (Dias 2013, p. 257; see also Casier 2016, 18sqq.).[9] Others argue that the EU "grew increasingly critical of Russia's internal developments [such as the deterioration of human rights situation or Vladimir Putin's candidature for the Presidency in 2012, WA], its assertive policy towards its neighbours and attempts to gain influence over EU decision-making" (Kulesa 2016, p. 8).

One of the turning points for their diplomatic relations was the EU's pursuit of the EU-UKR-PAA and its final stage of negotiations in 2013 in particular.[10, 11] It included a *Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area* which, according to analyses, was incompatible with both Russia's economic and security interests in the region and Kiev's commitments to free trade with Russia (van Ham 2015, p. 5; European Union Committee 2015, p. 67; Dragneva and Wolczuk 2015, pp. 3, 46). In Russia's perception, as various scholars argue, this (as another piece of the EU's Eastern Partnership agenda and Eastern Neighbourhood policies) was a sign of disrespect and igno-

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[9]Averre 2005, 2009; Dias 2013; European Union Committee 2015; Kulesa 2016; Smith 2015.

[10]European Commission External Relations (2016), European Union Committee (2015), Haukkala (2015), van der Loo (2016, 100 sqq.), and Dragneva and Wolczuk (2015, p. 94)) and contribution by Forsberg and Haukkala in Nitou (2016).

[11]There were more structural and situational factors that fostered the decline of relations; the majority of publications mention the tensions between Georgia and Russia in 2008, or Russian President Putin's speech in Munich as starting point (European Union Committee 2015; Haukkala 2015 give brief overviews).

rance towards Russia's interests in the region.[12] 2014 eventually marked a downturn in EU-Russia relations (van Ham 2015).

The Ukraine crisis as extraordinary foreign relations and security crisis

About a week before signing it at a summit in Vilnius, the Ukrainian president Yanukovych announced he was suspending preparations and eventually refused to sign the EU-UKR-PAA. This decision was followed by demonstrations referred to as "Euromaidan" in Kiev. After a series of events, including the escape of the president and the change of Ukrainian government in early 2014,[13] Russia sent military troops to Crimea peninsula and held a referendum which resulted in a disintegration from Ukraine while accending as 84th and 85th federal subjects to the Russian Federation. It was not accepted internationally and criticised as a breach of international law. The Annexation of Crimea in March 2014 was coupled with a series of uprisings in the Donbass region of eastern Ukraine that resulted in separatist military revolts and the establishment of unrecognised, self-proclaimed peoples' republics of Donetsk and Luhansk.

The developments in bilateral relations, the tensions on the EU's Eastern borders, the armed conflict in Ukraine's Donbass region and the Annexation of Crimea affected the EU institutions' work with and on Russia. The EU suspended the negotiations on a follow-up for the PCA. As a reaction to the Annexation of Crimea, both the EEAS (which was mandated to negotiate the new PCA on behalf of the Commission) and the Council

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[12]Kulesa 2016; Pridham 2014; European Union Committee 2015, p. 38; Dias 2013, p. 257 on how the Shared Neighbourhood countries emerge as linchpins for the EU's and Russia's internal and regional security strategies; Debate on competing regime preferences in the Shared Neighbourhood discussed by Averre 2005, 2009; Smith 2015 – and criticised from a constructivist standpoint by Casier (2016, 13sqq.). Authors further posit that miscommunication and counterproductive behaviour, most notably during summer 2013 and the following months, fed tensions between the stakeholders (e.g. Natorski 2017, pp. 180, 183; Dragneva and Wolczuk 2015, p. 80). During late autumn 2013, Moscow and Kiev proposed trilateral meetings to discuss the impact of the planned Association Agreement. However, those requests were not accepted by the EU, in the understanding that Russia was not a legitimate stakeholder in Ukraine's negotiations with the EU (Natorski 2017, p. 184). In Russia's perception, as different scholars have argued, this was a sign of disrespect and ignorance. Dragneva and Wolczuk (2015, p. 4) instead emphasise the mostly overlooked "domestic dynamics in Ukraine and their interface with the regional integration dynamics in the post-Soviet space" as major factors. Elaborating on the academic debate on all these reasons is, however, neither feasible nor the aim of this dissertation.

[13]In brief: Demonstrations in Kiev (Nov 2013) against Ukrainian President Yanukovych who refused to sign the EU-UKR-PAA, a failed mediation between the Ukrainian president and protesters in Feb 2014, a lost vote of no confidence and the escape of the president from Kiev to an unknown destination outside of Ukraine, the eventual set-up of an interim government, the change of Ukrainian government in early 2014 (Pridham 2014). Siddi (2020, 56sqq.) and Dragneva and Wolczuk (2015) provide detailed and considerate overviews about the origins and development of events.

paused the bilateral cooperation with the RF until further notice.[14]

The European External Action Service (EEAS) and the Council officially condemned the Annexation of Crimea and Russia's support of separatists in Eastern Ukraine by calling it a "violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity".[15] The last biannual EU-Russia Summit took place in January 2014 and follow-ups were postponed until further notice (European Council 2014). From this moment on, one can speak of a bilateral crisis in the long history of institutionalised cooperation.

Owing to the fact that Russia, in the EU's perspective, does not fulfil the regulations of the "Minsk-Agreements", the EU imposed "sanctions and pressure" on their counterpart: asset freezes, travel bans, and financial sanctions, a ban on trade and investment between EU and Crimea, and sanctions on military and high-tech energy products (Russell 2016c).[16]

According to its Resolutions, the EP follows the line of the Council and the Commission. The PCC between the Russian State Duma and the EP was terminated after the *EP resolution of 13 March 2014 on the invasion of Ukraine by Russia* (2014/2627(RSP)). A formal suspension of the PCC followed in June 2015, as response to the blacklisting of MEPs who were no longer allowed to enter the RF.[17] The EP has further restricted access by Russian diplomats to its buildings (Russell 2016c, p. 8).[18] It has ever since

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[14]Cf. "The Russian Federation and the European Union (EU): Political Relations" at the EEAS website (http://eeas.europa.eu/topics/sanctions-policy/720/the-russian-federation-and-the-european-union-eu_en, last accessed 26 Sep 2016)., "Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on Crimea", Press Release, 18 March 2016. Available online: http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/03/18-hr-eu-crimea/?utm_source=dsms-auto&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Declaration+by+the+High+Representative+on+behalf+of+the+EU+on+Crimea, last accessed 02 Feb 2017. The Council of the European Union officially condemned the Annexation of Crimea and Russia's involvement in Eastern Ukraine by calling it "violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity": Council of the European Union, 2016: "Timeline - EU restrictive measures in response to the crisis in Ukraine" (available online: http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/sanctions/ukraine-crisis/history-ukraine-crisis/, accessed 26 Sep 2016), and Press Release, 3304th Council meeting, Foreign Affairs, Brussels, 17 March 2014, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/141614.pdf.

[15]Council of the European Union 2014, 2016, 2018; European External Action Service 2016.

[16]The Council website "Timeline - EU restrictive measures in response to the crisis in Ukraine" lists the variety of restrictions against the RF (http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/sanctions/ukraine-crisis/history-ukraine-crisis/, last accessed 26 Sep 2016). Moret et al. (2016, p. 9) and Russell (2016b, p. 2) contain flowcharts and overviews on the crisis and sanctions.

[17]European Parliament 2014b. See also Delegation to the EU-Russia Parliamentary Cooperation Committee 2014.

[18]EP Resolutions so far showed that the Parliament promotes "selective engagement" with the RF in global issues, calling for cooperation with Russia on topics like counterterrorism and the Middle East Peace Process. At the same time it condemns attacks on civilians in Syria and demands to end them (European Parliament resolution of 10 June

been supporting the extension of sanctions, calling on EU Member States "to remain firm and united in their commitment to [...] sanctions" against Russia.[19] In September 2014, the Parliament urged to go beyond existing sanctions, as it suggested to exclude Russia from SWIFT banking system (European Parliament 2014a).

In its 2015 Resolution on the European Energy Union, the EP describes Russia as "an unreliable partner [...] which uses its energy supplies as a political weapon" (European Parliament 2015b, paragraph Q, R). It supports plans to improve the resilience to Russia's so-called "energy muscle".[20] The parliament also initiated different activities to counteract Russia's "disinformation strategy" and "propaganda warfare" directed at the EU; an AFET report advocated transparency and prohibition of party financing by Russia.[21]

Given the salience of Russia in many national contexts and deteriorating bilateral affairs, Russia-related debates in the EP certainly changed their foci. As will be explained below, the EP holds a self-conception of being a moral advisor and "guardian of European values". In the field of foreign affairs, the Parliament strives to consider moral- and value-based aspects. At the same time, it is usually "less concerned with the utility of foreign policy for the Member States" (Zanon 2005, p. 13). Notwithstanding, Russia remains relevant for many EU national economies and for the EU as a whole. It is therefore plausible to assume that this impacts the deliberations within the plenary and leads to heated debates.

The events in Ukraine and strained EU-Russia relations give rise to a nexus of concerns, uncertainties, and inconvenient truths (Krotz and Maher 2016). They address economic, energy and military security and the future thereof (given that for some member states, the armed conflict in Ukraine's Donbass region and the Annexation of Crimea are associated with a higher probability of a threat to national security); They lead to a reconsideration of the level of like-mindedness and the diplomatic reliability of Russia, the loss of trust in the once strategic partner (Cotta and Isernia 2021, p. 3); and finally, to evaluate EU policies, or its role in them, and its mistakes or poor decisions. The Ukraine crisis poses "intricate questions about the role of CFSP/CSDP [... and] triggered reflections on strategic

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2015 on the state of EU-Russia relations (2015/2001(INI), paragraph 5 and 6; European Parliament resolution of 6 October 2016 on Syria (2016/2894(RSP), paragraph 3).

[19]European Parliament 2015a, paragraph I; European Parliament 2016, paragraph 7.

[20]Resolution of 15 December 2015 on Towards a European Energy Union, (2015/2113(INI), paragraph Q sq.; Siddi 2018, 262sqq. criticises this notion.

[21]European Parliament resolution of 23 November 2016 on EU strategic communication to counteract propaganda against it by third parties (2016/2030(INI)); see also "Landsbergis report", Motion for a European Parliament Resolution on the state of EU-Russia relations (2015/2001(INI)), paragraph 14 and 21. VoteWatch.eu website provides all press releases and reports related to Russia: http://www.votewatch.eu/search.php, search term "Russia". Last accessed 14 Mar 2017.

priorities, techniques and [its] instruments" (P. Müller 2016, pp. 361, 368). Similarly, the role and trajectory of the EU's ENP, eastwards integration and EU-UKR-PAA is rerevised (see e.g. Oriol Costa 2019; Krotz and Maher 2016, P. Müller 2016, pp. 361, 368). As Otjes and van der Veer (2016, p. 243) point out, "politicians from [different] sides offer different ways to get out of the crisis". The answers to those developments vary depending on the national and ideological backgrounds of MEPs, which leads to tensions inside the chamber.

The Ukraine crisis furthermore is an „interesting, timely and relevant case for studying contestation of EU external action (policy contestation) and of the European integration project more broadly (system contestation)" (Cianciara 2016, p. 2). In other words, this crisis is a case study to observe how and to what extent MEPs challenge, criticise or contest specific policies and strategies of the EU, or how and for whom it serves as an opportunity to utter general criticism or scepticism about EU integration. Firstly, the Ukraine crisis and the EU-UKR-PAA coincides with the strong increase of Eurosceptic parties in the 2014 EP elections. Simultaneously with the turn in EU-Russia relations, the composition of the EP changed significantly after the 2014 elections for EP8. Fundamental changes in the landscape of EPGs lead to the assumption that in the beginning of EP8, recently initiated procedures and the Parliament's position towards Russia-related issues during EP7 in general are being challenged/ questioned, and legislative procedures initiated by the previous parliament are contested. In light of deteriorating EU-Russia relations since 2013, the EP reconsiders or re-evaluates its own policies and strategies towards Russia, Ukraine and the Shared Neighbourhood. Throughout this context, general questions and principles regarding EU integration and enlargement are put to discussion. Many questions regarding Russia are therefore potentially reconsidered or re-interpreted in a pro-/anti-EU manner (e.g. Adam et al. 2017, pp. 262, 264). Given that MEPs are not as bound by diplomatic etiquette as, for instance, the Council, and the formal impact of the EP in the area of foreign relations is limited, strong opinions and pronounced differences between EPGs and national delegations are more likely to come to the surface (Góra, Styczynska, and Zubek 2019, p. 11). Political conflict in the EP likely involves persuasion and political advertisement. This makes Russia-related debates a perfect case to examine the presence and quality of intra-EP lines of conflict.

2.2 Lines of conflict and the two-dimensionality of the political space

Russia is also a valuable case to investigate the logic of party competition in the EP. Given Russia's high salience in many national contexts, it influ-

ences voting patterns of MEPs. Considering questions on "Russia" relate to trade, foreign policy, energy security, and EU enlargement – all topics which are potentially reconsidered in a pro-/anti-EU integration manner – they provide valuable insight into the complexity and logic of intra-EU divides and the legislative behaviour of EPGs.

2.2.1 Overview: European Political Groups (EPGs) and their interplay

Legislative activities and decision-making in the EP are not conducted by atomised politicians, but organised around political groups. The MEPs are not seated by national-, but by political affiliation an EPG. They are ideology-based, transnational party alliances. While affiliated with this political group, every legislator remains a member of his or her national party (Hix, Noury, and Roland 2009, p. 821).

EPGs fulfil a role similar to those of parties in national parliaments. They are the gatekeepers and arenas of political opinion formation, internal alliance building, mitigation, and negotiation between MEPs and national delegations. Even though they are founded on the bases of a shared ideology, EPGs are not homogeneous entities and need to reconcile the different opinions of national delegations before they are capable of expressing a common position (Zanon 2005, p. 13). During group weeks, usually prior to Strasbourg's plenary sessions, they conduct intra-group meetings where positions on the subjects on the agenda are discussed and formulated. Before every vote in plenary, the political groups scrutinise the reports proposed by the Committees, table amendments and prepare voting lists. Some groups employ whips to coordinate and monitor the voting behaviour of members in important or close votes (they often instruct members on how to vote on particular issues via voting lists) and "coordinators" with a similar function within committees (Hix, Noury, and Roland 2007, p. 134). A group can be founded by at least 25 members from seven or more different EU member states.

Formation of and membership in an EPG is highly beneficial (Hix, Noury, and Roland 2009, p. 821). EPGs enjoy significant privileges concerning allocated speaking time and speaking time "on behalf of..." during debates, the nomination of committee members, and the selection of rapporteurs (Finke 2016, p. 606; depending on their size). The EP endows them a dedicated assistive infrastructure, i.e. a bureau, advisors, a secretariat and other personnel. Bureaus consist of the group chair(s), the national delegation leaders, chairs of the EP committees (if group-affiliated), and selected MEPs. Their meetings (sometimes two to three times per month) give the groups strategic and political direction and help formulate the questions the groups will ask in the Committees and the Plenary (Fiott 2015). Each secretariat employs advisors and research units who feed information into

the group apparatus for the relevant committee areas.

Important for the EP's daily work and the interaction of MEPs is "consensus as organising principle" (van Berlo and Natorski 2020, p. 193). This is an intra-EP standard social convention that determines individual behaviour of MEPs in a way that leads them to focus on negotiating a consensus or a compromised institutional position. MEPs are being socialised into the willingness to "depart from their individual, national, or EPG preference", engage in negotiations, and involve themselves in order to find a compromise that eventually "reflects on the diversities of sensitivities in the EP" (van Berlo and Natorski 2020, p. 193). In this sense, the *organising principle of consensus* is an expectation and convention that is intended to ensure the working capacity and efficiency of the Parliament.

EPGs in the EP's 7th and 8th legislative term

In its seventh (EP7) and eighth (EP8) legislative term, MEPs were organised in the following seven to eight groups:[22] The *European Peoples Party* (EPP), *Alliance of Liberals and Democrats* (ALDE), *Socialist and Democrats* (S&D), *The Greens* (Greens/EFA), *Europe of Nations and Freedom* (ENF, since June 2015), *Europe of Freedom and (Direct) Democracy* (EFD(D)), and the *European United Left* (GUE/NGL) group. Those MEPs not belonging to any political group are known as *Non-Attached* Members (NIs, Non-Inscrits) (European Parliament 2017a). The distribution of seats is displayed in Table 2.1, p. 36. EPGs reflect a broad spectrum of political ideology and have their own policy positions and preferences (see 2.2.1; Hix, Noury, and Roland 2009; McElroy and Benoit 2007).

The political groups are composed of mostly like-minded party families and gather parties from the entire political spectrum: ecological (green), socialist, social democratic, liberal, Christian democratic, conservative, nationalist, agrarian, ethnic and regional(ist), confessional, special issue parties, (populist) radical right and -left parties.[23, 24]

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[22]Seven groups between September 2009 and June 2015 (roughly a year after EP8 elections). The Europe of Nations and Freedom (ENF) group, becoming the eighth EPG, was founded on 15 June 2015.

[23]Refer to Figures 2.A to 2.I (Annex, pp. I–II) which display those proportions for EP8. They are based on Bakker et al. 2015; Braun et al. 2015; March 2011; Mudde 2009; Schmitt et al. 2016; Volkens et al. 2014.

[24]Literature on political parties builds on three predominant databases which label and categorise parties according to their ideological stances, political goals, viewpoints on a broad range of topics, etc.: Manifesto Project Database MPD (Volkens et al. 2014), the Chapel Hill Expert Survey CHES (Bakker et al. 2015), and the Euromanifestos Project EUROMAN (Braun et al. (2015) and Schmitt et al. (2016)). While their labels are not 1:1 equivalent, comparing the party families shows that MPD, CHES and EUROMAN mostly agree on how to categorise parties in EP7 and EP8. CHES refers to "radical right" and "radical left" whereas MPD does not. Moreover, some parties remain uncategorised. Therefore, Mudde (2009) and March (2008) were considered, two leading scholars who have been publishing

Table 2.1: European Parliament seat distribution by group, as to European Parliament 2017b,d; combined with Bakker et al. 2015; Braun et al. 2015; March 2011; Mudde 2009; Schmitt et al. 2016; Volkens et al. 2014 (compiled by the author)

EP Group	Seat Distribution		Party Families
	EP7	EP 8	
EPP	265	216 (-49)	conservative/ Christian democratic; some liberal, agrarian, confessional
S&D	184	189 (+5)	social democratic/socialist, very few populist radical left
ECR	54	74 (+20)	conservative, nationalist, regionalist, confessional and populist radical right
ALDE	84	68 (-16)	liberal or conservative/ liberal; agrarian
GUE/NGL	35	52 (+17)	regional/ special issue; reform communists, social populists, populist socialists (= radical left), and very few conservative communists (extreme left)
Greens/EFA	55	51 (-4)	green/ ecological, regional/ethnic, special issue and few (yet) unspecified parties, very few populist radical left
EFD(D)*)	32	42 (+10)	nationalist or regionalist, special issue and (populist) radical right
ENF	--**)	39 (+39)	nationalist or regionalist, special issue and (populist) radical right
NI	27	19 (-8)	radical right/ nationalist; extreme right or extreme left (conservative communist)
Total	*736*	*750*	

*) EFD until the beginning of EP8; new name EFDD from Sep 2014 onwards.
**) ENF was founded on 15 Jun 2015.

The *European Peoples Party* (EPP) mainly represents conservative/ Christian democratic, some liberal and confessional parties; together with EPP, *Alliance of Liberals and Democrats* (ALDE) has the largest share of agrarian parties and first and foremost liberal or conservative/ liberal members. *Socialist and Democrats* (S&D) is the most homogeneous group representing about 90% social democratic/ socialist MEPs. Next to green/ ecological parties, the *Greens/ European Free Alliance* (Greens/ EFA) assembles regional/ethnic, special issue and small, unspecified parties. *European Conservatives and Reformists* (ECR) is an agglomeration of conservative, nationalist, regionalist, confessional and populist radical right politicians. Most of the populist radical right is represented in the *Europe of Freedom and (Direct) Democracy*

(EFD(D)) and *Europe of Nations and Freedom* (ENF) group: they are composed of nationalist or regionalist, special issue and (populist) radical right parliamentarians. The *Confederal Group of the European United Left/ Nordic Green Left* (GUE/NGL) brings together radical left (reform communists, social populists, populist socialists), regional/ special issue parties and very few conservative communists (extreme left). The *Non-Attached* MEPs are members of radical right/ nationalist; extreme right or -left (conservative communist) parties.

Measuring policy preferences and ideal-typical policy positions

EPGs reflect a broad spectrum of political ideology, and therefore have their own policy positions and preferences (Hix, Noury, and Roland 2009; McElroy and Benoit 2007). EPGs are ideology-based and transnational; they align, and form ad-hoc and topic-specific voting coalitions (e.g. Hix and Noury 2009). As research on voting behaviour has shown, party competition is not structured along national lines, but is primarily ideology-/partisan based. In other words, how MEPs vote is to a large extent determined by affiliation to their political group, which reflects the ideological position of an MEP. Parliamentarians are usually more conditioned by party allegiance than by their nationality and therefore more likely to vote in line with their EPG (Hix and Noury 2009; Hix, Noury, and Roland 2009; Finke 2016; see chapter 5.1). Voting behaviour of EPGs is largely cohesive and predictable in most policy fields (Hix and Noury 2009; Hix, Noury, and Roland 2009; Finke 2016).

Estimating "the policy positions of key political actors, whether these be individual legislators or the political parties [or EPGs] to which they affiliate" (Lowe et al. 2011, p. 123) is a crucial precondition to understand party competition, polarisation, lines of conflict and the dimensionality of legislative competition. Knowledge of policy preferences is derived from either political speeches (statements, speeches in debates), expert surveys,

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about radical parties in Europe. Mudde (2009) distinguishes *radical*, *far* and *extreme* right. Whereas the extreme right rejects democracy altogether, the radical right accepts popular sovereignty and popular rule, but neglects minority rights and pluralism. He attributes the radical right with authoritarianism and nativism, the latter combining nationalism and xenophobia. Mudde (2009) further suggests populism as the key feature of the contemporary *populist* radical right. In his broad definition (Mudde 2004, p. 543), populism is defined as thin-centered "ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite', and which argues that politics should be an expression of the volonté générale (general will) of the people". Even though this basic ideological feature overlaps with populist radical left parties, the main difference is that the radical left has a different concept of "the people": Their promoted nationalism is not ethnic, but civic (Halikiopoulou, Nanou, and Vasilopoulou 2012; March 2008). March (2008) distinguishes conservative communists (who he counts as extreme left) from reform communist, social populists and populist socialist, the latter being radical left predominantly in their rhetoric.

political texts (such as election manifestos, written submissions), or legislative behaviour (bill sponsorship, voting decisions in Roll Call votes). Only a few studies measure policy positions through statements in debates (mostly mass text analysis).[25] In the literature on political groups on the EP, two sources prevail: One strand builds on positions "encoded" in manifestos issued by national parties and Europarties to the EP elections (referred to as Euromanifestos), then aggregated in a group.[26]

The second, and most common approach to research conflicting lines in the EP is to examine voting behaviour in Roll Call votes (RCV or RC).[27] This electronic system registers whether an MEP abstains, votes for or against an amendment or the final text *by name*. It shows the exact vote share and who approves, disagrees, refrains or is not around. "These [. . .] rules allow the principals of MEPs, namely the citizens, parties etc., to monitor systematically their agents' behaviour in the final stage of their legislative work" (Hug 2016, p. 213). Since a rule change in 2009, RC is mandatory when voting on final texts.[28] Also, EP groups or a minimum of 40 MEPs can request the use of Roll Call (European Parliament 2014c, cf. Rule 167).[29]. Despite some criticism regarding their shortcomings, RC analyses stand at the core of EP related research. Analysing RCVs allows scholars to address questions such as group cohesion, homogeneity, voting alliances or coalitions, and principal-agent issues. Most notably, they provide insight into the policy positions of EPGs and the degree of controversy of a topic. Knowledge of policy positions is, in turn, the cornerstone of designing or mapping the EU political space and gaining insight into the so-called "lines of conflict". Political Science allegorises patterns of legislative behaviour and the logic of party competition as "lines of conflict" or "divides" in the chamber. As will subsequently be explained in more detail, EPGs and their policy preferences are positioned in a matrix, which holds explanatory value for how the groups (co-) vote and align. The following section will describe the set-up of this two-dimensional space including the dimensions underlying

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[25]Laver, Benoit, and Garry (2003) employ a Word Scoring Technique but focus on Irish Dáil 1991; Lauderdale and Herzog (2016) compare the Irish Dáil to the US Senate, more specifically they examine "expressed disagreement" in legislative speeches in debates with Wordfish. Slapin and Proksch (2009/2010) on the EP.

[26]The availability of materials in electronic form facilitated the statistical analysis of word patterns in political text and allows for (semi-)automated methods for scaling positions from them. For instance Gabel and Hix (2002) content analysis focuses on the policy positions of Europarties as presented in their electoral manifestos; Lowe et al. (2011) is more a methodological discussion about the most effective scaling technique for continuous left-right policy positions.

[27]There are in total four distinct types of voting procedures, see 3.4 3.4 Analysing voting behaviour.

[28]Rule 159a (new), Amendment 35, adopted 6 May 2009; see Report of 24 April on the general revision of Parliament's Rules of Procedure (2007/2124(REG), European Parliament 2009).

[29]For a literature review on RCVs as a subject under scrutiny, see Thierse (2016)

MEPs voting decision/ positions, and which voting blocs were identified in the literature.

The two-dimensionality of the EU political space

The EU political space builds on the concept of spatial theories, which typically assume that party positions exist on continuous scales (Lowe et al. 2011, p. 125). These scales are in some way related to each other, for instance, when being arranged in a matrix. Several studies have investigated the specifics and relationships of such scales and continua. This knowledge serves as a template to study the dimension of conflict underlying legislative activities in the EP. Existing literature agrees that the EP is characterised by few lines of conflict, and predicts that conflict in the EP is structured around two dimensions. Research converges on the finding that votes predominantly follow the socio-economic left-right conflict known from national politics (Gabel and Hix 2002), where EPGs are positioned on a left-right continuum. This continuum is the first axis of the political space. As positions of EPGs are not one-dimensional, a second dimension separates MEPs according to their preferences regarding the European integration process and the powers and scope of EU institutions, frequently referred to as "pro/anti-EU integration" (Hix, Noury, and Roland 2007). Thus, the political groups are positioned along the left-right- *and* pro-anti-EU integration political divides. In other words, the policy positions of the groups differ in their degree of social and economic liberalism, which become apparent in economic, social or moral questions as well as in debates/ votes that focus on the EU's institutional future (further EU integration versus demarcation or national sovereignty).

Despite competing interpretations regarding the design or set-up of the "political space", the Hix-Lord model (Hix and Lord 1997) has largely established itself in the literature (Otjes and van der Veer 2016, p. 244).[30]. In their model, the authors describe the two dimensions as orthogonal and unrelated: with pro-/anti-EU integration on the vertical axis, and socio-economic left-right on the horizontal axis. Those dimensions being "unrelated" suggests that the location on one axis does not automatically produce the position on the other. EPGs' positioning regarding questions on the authority and institutional future of the EU does not predict their location on the redistributive left-right axis. In this Matrix, the EPGs take ideal-typical policy positions.

Following this concept, literature identifies several wings, which form ad hoc and policy specific voting blocs along these two dimensions. Put more plainly, how the groups vote can best be explained or predicted by their attitude towards distributional/socio-economic questions, or by what

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[30]cf. Hooghe, Marks, and C. J. Wilson 2002; Marks and Steenbergen 2002.

they think about the EU (more integration versus hesitation towards increasing competences of EU institutions). It is important to mention that in the fifth, sixth and early seventh legislature of the EP (1999-2004 and 2004-2009) the former dominates and the latter is of secondary importance (Hix and Lord 1997; Hix and Noury 2009; McElroy and Benoit 2007; see also Kreppel and Hix 2003).

First, EPP and ALDE are traditionally pro-European, pro-integration, and on the centre-right of the redistributive spectrum/ economically centre-right to liberal. Second, S&D and the Greens/EFA are both considered pro-integrationist, but socially liberal and economically positioned on the redistributive centre-left. Those four groups mostly favour increasing the areas in which the EU may set policy.

Third, the GUE/NGL is socially liberal, economically left and though being not Eurosceptic as such, this group shows more hesitancy on further integration (especially in military and collective security terms) and EU expansion.[31]

Fourth, Members of ECR, soft Eurosceptics and Reformists, are hesitant to further deepening or expanding the EU with a mostly socially conservative agenda. The EFD(D) and ENF group (together with the majority of *Non-Attached* MEPs), on the economic right and promoting conservative social policy, are categorised as distinctly Eurosceptic, EU-Rejectionists or Revisionists (Flood and Usherwood 2007, p. 6), and prefer a union of nation-states instead of the contemporary EU institutional setting.

Even though the EP lacks a classic government-opposition relationship known from national parliaments (Corbett, Jacobs, and Shackleton 2016, p. 3), literature considers ECR, EFDD, ENF and NIs and GUE/NGL as opposition groups, whereas EPP and ALDE are seen as a governmental coalition. The Greens are described as a governmental opposition party as they tend to coalesce only on institutional votes (votes on the EU, its policies, its institutional future), while they oppose most of the political votes (Braghiroli and Smaldore 2011, pp. 7, 9, Braghiroli 2015a, p. 103).[32] S&D appear to stay at the margins of the governmental coalition. Whereas this distribu-

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[31]According to March (2008), the radical left is one of the most divided party families in terms of attitudes towards the EU. It counts as an extremely heterogeneous group which has its main common denominator as representative of the left but not as social democratic or green (Almeida 2012, p. 69). Almeida (2012, pp. 69, 88) describes the group's dissent over the desirability and scope of further EU integration: according to its Euromanifestos, it shows the highest standard deviation within the ratios of positive and negative statements on the EU.

[32]See also studies by Bressanelli, Koop, and Reh (2016) and Hagemann and Høyland (2010) who show that the pro-European centrist groups build broad legislative coalitions during inter-institutional conflicts. McElroy and Benoit (2007) find the highest degree of policy differences in social and immigration policy, followed by questions on taxes and deregulation. The least contested policy dimension is the environment. Generally, the EP is more cohesive on budgetary issues (77% agreement) than on legislative (73%) or non-legislative issues (71%) (Hix and Noury 2009, p. 164).

tion of roles applies to until EP7, it might change in light of the arrival of the number of Eurosceptic newcomers in the 2014 EP8 election.

The political space in foreign policy and external relations of the Union

Given that relations to Russia are part of foreign and security policy, two aspects are important to mention. Firstly, the structure of the political space on foreign policy issues differs, and secondly, so do votes on such issues, scholars have suggested (Chryssogelos 2015; Raunio and W. Wagner 2017a; Stahl et al. 2004). Similar to the Hix-Lord model, it is defined by an integration axis. However, its orthogonal axis relates to issues of transatlantic cooperation (Atlanticists - Europeanists - Anti-Atlanticists) (Chryssogelos 2015). It was Stahl et al. (2004, p. 418) who proposed three camps which reflect the different *EU member state* positions in CFSP/CSDP: Atlanticists, Europeanists and Neutrals. The criteria underlying the categorisation of member states into the taxonomy are, amongst others, the preferred partner countries, preferred type of cooperation in security policy, and the position on the development of a CSDP (Stahl et al. 2004, p. 420). The main reference point for categorising a member state is thus the position to either the US, transatlantic cooperation, or the future role of European member state cooperation and new institutions in that field. Russia, even though one might think that Transatlantic cooperation cannot be conceptualised without a reference to it, is not referred to as criterion for classification (see also Onderco 2019).

Drawing from that, Chryssogelos (2015, 15sqq.) suggests that *EP* partisan competition on EU foreign policy is structured around two conflict dimensions. One axis relates to (more or less) EU integration, and the other axis from Atlanticism to Anti-Atlanticism (Figure 5.E, Annex; see chapter 5.4). However, his study does not build on RC data but on party document analyses and interviews instead. It moreover excludes the Greens and ECR.

2.2.2 Russia as highly relevant and divisive topic

As mentioned above, the RF and the EU Member States are connected through historical events, and a shared history of economic, cultural and diplomatic exchange. That being said, "Russia" touches on diverging national and economic interests, identities, and ideologies and is highly salient in many national contexts of EU Member states (Averre 2009; Braghiroli 2015b; Dias 2013; European Commission External Relations 2016; Haukkala 2015; A. Wilson, Popescu, and Noel 2009). Each Member state looks differently at this history and interdependency and draws different conclusions as to what EU-Russia relations should look like (Asmus and Vondra 2005). As studies have shown, Russia ranks among the most contentious issues in the Council of the EU (Braghiroli 2015b; Braghiroli and Carta 2009; Carta

and Braghiroli 2011; David 2016; European Union Committee 2015; Moret et al. 2016). As Siddi (2020, p. 3) summarises, relations with Russia "have proven to be one of the most dividing issues among European Union countries [... Russia is] an essential, though often very controversial factor in the European security architecture" (see also Russo 2016, 198sq.). Notwithstanding, "research on position of *parties* in the EU on foreign policy and especially *European foreign policy* is relatively meagre" (Góra, Styczynska, and Zubek 2019, p. 12, Onderco 2019).

Given that "Russia" and the design of bilateral EU-Russia relations are both controversial and salient to most of the member states, in the EP, national allegiances of MEPs collide with ideological predispositions of their EPG (Braghiroli 2015a,b; David 2016). Research has shown that if a topic is highly relevant in the national context, strong national interests compete with ideological positions of MEPs. Then, the national allegiance is expected to outweigh partisan loyalty and MEPs tend to vote according to their national background (see more in chapter 5.1).[33] Political conflict likely involves strong opinions and pronounced differences between EPGs and national delegations. Raunio and W. Wagner (2017a, p. 9) conclude that in the field of external relations and foreign policy of the EU, strong national interest likely "overshadow[s] party-political differences".

Having said that, concrete studies on the lines of conflict in Russia-related votes are less clear-cut and unequivocal. They find that while Russia-related votes in the EP's sixth legislative term (EP6, 2004-2009) indeed show national predispositions, this trend decreases between 2009 and 2014 (Braghiroli 2015a; Dennison and Pardijs 2016b). In most votes in EP7, the effect of nationality appears marginal whereas the more significant factor for voting decision is the ideological affiliation (Braghiroli 2015a; Dennison and Pardijs 2016b; further Styczynska 2019, p. 178). Chapter 5.1 will elaborate more on conflicting results of past studies.

Russia as identitarian topic

Even though the de jure competences of the EP in the nexus of EU-Russia relations are rather limited, it devotes considerable resources to the topic. Russia's salience in the EP plenary activities implies that this topic is discussed according to different logic – through the lens of morality and identity. In the plenary, this section argues, Russia-related questions – human rights, (energy) security, borders of Europe(an), neighbourhood – are topics where values and identities are formulated and negotiated through processes of "othering".

EU-Russia relations fall under the domain of Common Foreign Security- and Defence Policy (CFSP/CFDP) of the Union. From a conventional le-

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[33]Klüver and Spoon 2013; Krekó, Macaulay, et al. 2014; Oksanen 2015; Raunio and W. Wagner 2017a; VoteWatch.EU 2013.

gal perspective, the EP's *de jure* impact on CSFP/CSDP and the "diplomacy-side" of EU-Russia relations is limited. Aside from its veto powers in trade-, Association-, Partnership and Cooperation Agreements, the EP has little power to initiate, block, or veto activities in this policy field. Russell (2016b, p. 12) describes it as that of a commentator, critic or backer. Fiott (2015) concludes that "the CFSP/CSDP still remains overwhelmingly intergovernmental in nature" (see also Raunio and W. Wagner 2017b, p. 6, Barbé and Herranz 2005a, p. 2, Kaminska 2017).

Nevertheless, the EP has developed its own stance on many international conflicts and relationships to third states (Stavridis and Jančić 2017, p. 12). Literature showes that foreign-policy related Resolution texts and press releases feature a coherent, shared role conception of being a normative power or "moral tribune" (Stavridis and Jančić 2017, p. 8). It "holds a coherent institutional role conception of itself as a parliamentary oversight body over the CFSP [...] while it actively contributes to the EU's policy debates about the Union's international identity" (Redei 2013, p. 186; see also Kaminska 2017, p. 149). This understanding of the EU's role in global politics leads the EP to approach foreign policy issues "through the prism of promoting fundamental democratic rights" (Redei 2013, p. i). The EP holds a coherent institutional role conception as moral advisor, a "guardian of European values" (Bajtay 2015, p. 23), or a "normative voice" (Feliu and Serra 2015). During debates on foreign policy issues, MEPs advocate that policy choices "should be guided by the principle of furthering the actualisation of fundamental democratic norms" (Redei 2013, p. 186), which in their view, goes hand in hand with the normative nature and identity of the EU (as foreign policy actor).

While the EP has few formal powers to influence the EU's CFSP/CDSP, this policy area nonetheless ranks high in political parties' manifestos and programmatic documents of the EPGs (Barbé and Herranz 2005b). This "inspires" the EP's engagement in Parliamentary Diplomacy.[34]

In addition, the EP sustains a considerable institutional body working on foreign affairs and external relations (Kaminska 2017, 139sqq.): four Committees, their secretariats, and interparliamentary delegations stand at the core of parliamentary activities on these topics (see also chapter 4). It developed a "strong diplomatic portfolio" (Stavridis and Jančić 2017, p. 11) working in the realm of EU-Russia relations. Until March 2014, it maintained the PCC with Russian State Duma representatives. It served as a

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[34]This term refers to the EP and its political groups adopting autonomous foreign policy stances and are actively pursuing diplomatic activities (Fiott 2015; Jančić 2017; Zanon 2005). European Parliamentary diplomacy is understood as manifold diplomatic activities conducted by parliamentarians or EPGs. More precisely, "individual or collective action by parliamentarians aimed at catalysing, facilitating and strengthening the existing constitutional functions of parliaments through dialogues between peers on countless open policy questions across continents and levels of governance" (Stavridis and Jančić 2017, p. 6).

permanent biannual delegation for knowledge- and experience exchange, best practices and socialisation of parliamentary actors. The AFET Committee moreover employs a group of experts and consultants working on and monitoring political developments in Russia.

The fact that Russia is important for the Parliament despite few formal competences indicates that this is a topic which is discussed, above all, from a moral or identitarian perspective. First, foreign policy and the EU's relations to third states are both visible and straightforward to the public. They provide occasions for the EP to formulate its own and the EU's identity through othering and self-other representations (for instance through demarcating "Europe" from the US, China, or Russia). Second, in light of the limited competences and duties the EP has in this field, the EPGs are not forced to be pragmatic and reasonable in their deliberations, nor do they have to make feasible or practicable demands. They need to be "less concerned with the utility of foreign policy for the Member States" and can easily be "more attentive to promoting the values specific to the European Union" (Zanon 2005, p. 13). That being said, the topic "Russia" is prone to become an arena for the general question on "quo vadis EU".

In an institution like the EP, (European) identity is formed and negotiated (Wodak 2009, p. 77), as "it emerges as the intentional or unintentional consequence of [this] social interaction" (Fligstein 2009, p. 134).[35] At the same time, "the debate about who 'we' are is politically charged" (Hooghe and Marks 2009, p. 23). Identity is broadly defined here as "images of individuality and distinctiveness ('selfhood') held and projected by an actor and formed (and modified over time) through relations with significant 'others'" (Jepperson, Wendt, and Katzenstein 1996, p. 59), because "identity does not reside in essential and readily identifiable cultural traits but in relations, and the question of where and how borders towards 'the other' should be drawn [...] become crucial" (Neumann 1996, p. 1). Therefore, the "construction of an 'other'" is central, given that "who we are is usually framed as response to some 'other' group" (Fligstein 2009, p. 135; see also Tulmets 2014, 6sq.). Identity thus implies sameness and distinctiveness, "which differentiates the members of a group that are distinct from 'Others', the non-members" (Wodak and Boukala 2015, p. 88).

In her study on the EP and "Europeanness", Wodak (2009) interviews MEPs about the constituent features of "European". Most of them mention that member states feel united by a particular common cultural, historical, and linguistic richness, coupled with common traditions and similar social

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[35]Tulmets (2014, p. 23) distinguishes between historical and political identity: Historical identity "is defined on the basis of [shared] interpretations of the past" (Tulmets 2014, p. 21). Political identity "is defined on the basis of norms and values" and "represents the core foreign policy directions defended by the political parties and society" and might translate into policies or programmes abroad, and "promotion of norms and values" (Tulmets 2014, pp. 21, 23).

models that bind them together. They refer to a common past, present, and future (Wodak 2009, p. 97). Her interviews confirm that identity is, to some extent, based on the formation of sameness and difference (Wodak 2009, p. 100). The usual notion about the EU holds "that EU member states are tied historically and culturally; that there is an added value in being part of the Union; that the EU is a way for the future; and that part of what distinguishes Europe from other political/ geographical entities is its social character" (Wodak 2009; see also Tulmets 2014, 23sqq.). The statements of Wodak's interviewees fall in line with the core of "European Identity" in the eyes of official EU documents. These comprise defending the principles of representative democracy, of the rule of law, of social justice and the respect for human rights, whilst preserving the rich diversity of national cultures (European Communities 1973, p. 118). The study conducted by Wodak also exemplifies the role of otherness.

Neumann (1999, 65sqq.) and Wolff (1994) argue that processes of othering and the "Russian Other" in particular play a crucial role in "making Europe" (see also Krzyzanowski 2010, 40, 46 sq. Morozov and Rumelili 2012, Fligstein 2009, 134sq. Case 2009). For centuries, Russia has been a mirror or projection for (Western) Europe to build its collective identity through means of othering, self-other representations and inverted characterisation (e.g. Siddi 2018, Siddi 2020, 11sqq. Tulmets 2014). As Zwolski (2018, p. 169) puts it, "Russia has always been the most significant *other*, prompting questions about the scope and geopolitical boundaries of European integration".

EP Resolutions show that the majority of MEPs support the demands of Maidan protests and advocate a closer economic and political relationship between the EU and Ukraine.[36] This implies that Ukraine marks the Eastern border of Europe (where Europe ends), whilst Russia's engagement in the Shared Neighbourhood region is interpreted as mutually exclusive (Dias 2013, p. 257, Averre 2005, 2009; Smith 2015). That hints to Russia's and Ukraine's centrality for the overall discourse on European identity formation (Morozov and Rumelili 2012; Tulmets 2014).[37]

Given all of that, Russia is most likely a topic where the EPGs engage in moral and identity-related questions and projections *and* national and ideological allegiances come to the fore, making "Russia" a valuable case. Against this background, investigating intergroup competition and the lines

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[36]European Parliament resolution of 15 January 2015 on the situation in Ukraine (2014/2965(RSP); European Parliament resolution of 21 January 2016 on Association Agreements / Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas with Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine (2015/3032(RSP).

[37]See also Hülsse 2006, p. 397, who suggests that "the EU's former others, the Central and Eastern European countries (CEECs), wanted to become part of the self. This put old understandings of Europe into question and forced the EU to reflect upon itself and its future borders [...]. The enlargement-discourse can thus be read as an identity-discourse."

of conflict which structure EP debates on Russia contributes significantly to research on legislative behaviour of EPGs, the dynamic and quality of intra-EU divides, issue-specific politicisation processes and the EP's changing lines of conflict.

2.3   Politicisation research and the shift in the EP's lines of conflict

As mentioned above, literature finds that an economic left-right dimension and a pro-/anti-EU dimension are the main lines of conflict. In the fifth (1999-2004), sixth (2004-2009) and early seventh legislature of the EP (2009 onwards), the primary predictor for voting behaviour is the left/right dimension while pro/anti-EU is of secondary importance (Hix and Lord 1997; Hix and Noury 2009; McElroy and Benoit 2007; cf. Proksch and Slapin 2009, p. 608). Previous research shows that over the years, patterns of inter-party competition and voting alignments changed (Kreppel and Hix 2003).

Studies on the EP's seventh legislative term (EP7, 2009-2014) find that the economic, migration and Euro crises shaped the voting behaviour of Members of the EP (Otjes and van der Veer 2016; Roger, Otjes, and van der Veer 2017). Against the background of those challenges subsumed under the tag multiple crises or polycrisis, it is argued that the dichotomy between supporters and opponents of European integration seems to be more pronounced (Cherepnalkoski et al. 2016, p. 18). These developments amplified the importance of the pro-/anti-EU dimension in shaping the voting behaviour of MEPs, especially in votes on economic issues (Otjes and van der Veer 2016; Roger, Otjes, and van der Veer 2017). This implies a shift in the EU political space in which both dimensions either play an equally significant role, or the pro/anti-EU dimension slightly outweighs the former.

This is not surprising, given the polycrisis, comprising i.a. international financial and debt crisis, influx of refugees, go hand in hand with questions on the scope of the EU's competences, transnational solidarity, task- and burden-sharing; and stock-taking of the EU's policies and principles. Otjes and van der Veer (2016, p. 249) propose that the political conflict "does not just concern the economic solutions but rather the shift of competences from the national to the European level". Highly divisive deliberations dealing with those crises reveal new patterns of cross-cleavage alignments (Braghiroli 2015a).

Those crises also affected the seat distribution and the debates in the EP. Against the background of the multiple crises of 2009 and beyond, the seat distribution in the EP changed significantly in EP8 to the advantage of Eurosceptic groups and right-wing populist parties (e.g. Brack 2015), which also influenced the working style of the parliament (Styczynska 2019, 163sq.).

2.3.1 Politicisation

Analyses on the EP's changing lines of conflict should be seen in the context of ongoing research on *politicisation of the EU*. The concept of politicisation is a dominant issue in the current academic debates of European integration (Zürn 2019, p. 977). It studies the intensified and expanded scope of political conflict over European integration and governance issues (see e.g. de Wilde, Leupold, and Schmidtke 2016; Grande and Hutter 2016; Zürn 2019). According to this literature, EU integration and governance are increasingly challenged and contested, both by political actors and in the public.

Broadly speaking, politicisation is understood as "the demand for, or the act of, transporting an issue or an institution into the sphere of politics" (Zürn 2019, p. 977) or "turning something political" (Gheyle 2019, p. 230). This indicates the attempt to move something in the realm of collectively binding decision making (Zürn 2016, p. 169; Hurrelmann, Gora, and A. Wagner 2015, p. 44), leading to an expanded scope of conflict within a political system (Grande and Hutter 2016, pp. 7–8). Zürn (2019, p. 978) explains that "the more salient [and visible] an issue, the more actors and people participate in the debate, the more positions are polarised, and the more politicised [is] a decision or institution".

Politicisation of the EU means intensified and expanded scope of political conflict over European integration and governance issues (Grande and Hutter 2016), manifested in increased political contentiousness (Hooghe and Marks 2012, p. 840) or "increasing controversiality" (Gheyle 2019, p. 227) towards European political integration. It has become the object of intensified conflict over national sovereignty, political identity and financial redistribution (Hooghe and Marks 2009; Hutter and Grande 2014). This strand of research builds on the observation that EU integration and its broadening to non-economic policy areas, i.e. the EU stretching its authority in a growing number of political and economic areas, is more and more challenged and contested by a growing number of actors and is a more salient object of public debate (de Wilde and Zürn 2012, pp. 140, 141; Hooghe and Marks 2009, 7sqq.).

Compared to the EU's early years, after the Maastricht treaty and up until the Constitutional Treaty referenda held in the Netherlands and France in 2005 at the latest, EU elites are more constrained in decision-making processes and must now "look over their shoulders when negotiating" questions on the future course of Europe (Hooghe and Marks 2009, p. 5); the EU has become a topic of media and mass politics where its "policies and decisions are debated and no longer escape the wider public's attention" (Gheyle 2019, p. 230; critical: Hurrelmann, Gora, and A. Wagner 2015). This development away from "a stance of indifference" (Gheyle 2019, p. 227) to increased salience and multitude contentiousness of EU issues, institutions,

decision-making processes and practices (de Wilde 2011, 560sq.) has been prominently summarised under the tagline of the "end of the permissive consensus and the rise of a constraining dissensus" for further integration (Hooghe and Marks 2009; Zürn 2019, 982sq.).

Following the widely used definition of de Wilde (2011), politicisation comprises three dimensions. First is the growing issue salience and visibility of the EU, which means the importance attributed to the EU and European integration in national elections and public debates. Second, it involves polarisation of opinion, i.e. the occupation of more extreme positions – either in favour of or against different aspects of EU governance – and/ or a depletion of neutral, ambivalent or indifferent attitudes. And third, is an expansion of actors and audiences engaged in monitoring EU affairs (de Wilde, Leupold, and Schmidtke 2016, p. 4, Zürn 2016, p. 165, Grande and Hutter 2016, p. 8; see also de Wilde 2011; Hooghe and Marks 2009; Hutter and Grande 2014). If an issue is politicised in all three dimensions, it is considered fully politicised (Kriesi 2016, p. 33; Zürn 2016, p. 170).[38] This conceptualisation implies that politicisation is, firstly, discursive (Voltolini, Natorski, and Hay 2020, p. 614; Hurrelmann, Gora, and A. Wagner 2015, p. 45), and secondly, comprises political or societal "subjects or the agents of politicisation" (de Wilde and Zürn 2012, p. 140; Angelucci and Isernia 2020, p. 68) who seek "publicity and resonance with a wider audience who are able to witness" their activities (Gheyle 2019, p. 230, see also Hooghe and Marks 2012, p. 844, Hooghe and Marks 2009, p. 13).

Causes and drivers of politicisation

Institutions, decision-making processes and issues can become objects of politicisation (de Wilde 2011, 560sq.); Hurrelmann, Gora, and A. Wagner (2015, p. 45) further mention membership itself and domesticated issues, i.e. tasks, regulations, policies or problems that are results of EU membership.

Academia agrees that politicisation of the EU does take place (Zürn 2016, p. 164, Statham and Trenz 2015, p. 287) and a certain, yet moderate level of politicisation can be observed in all EU member states (Hoeglinger 2016, pp. 54, 58). Most studies build on the analysis of either national election campaigns, protests, public opinion and debates on integration steps, whereas few focus on the analysis of debates in order to understand the habits of politicising and de-politicising.

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[38]See (Zürn 2016, 168sq.) who argues that future research needs to focus also on not fully politicised issues, i.e. which lack politicisation in one or two of the three dimensions. He argues that "the public sphere as reflected in mass media is not necessarily identical with the political" (Zürn 2016, p. 166); many political yet relevant topics are not covered by the media, even though debates in the EP are competitive and a testimony of the attempt to move an issue into the political sphere (Zürn 2016, p. 168).

Studies have found a "patchwork of politicising moments" (Hutter and Kriesi 2019, p. 997) since the 1970s instead of a steady linear process towards higher levels of politicisation (e.g. Hutter and Grande 2014; Hutter, Grande, and Kriesi 2016). Grande and Kriesi (2016, p. 283) interpret it as "punctuated politicisation" that features "spikes in controversy" (de Wilde and Zürn 2012, p. 140) during enlargement rounds, before treaties are adopted, or "during extraordinary, but predictable institutional and policy-related events [like] European summits [or] national referendums on the issue" (Kriesi 2016, p. 33). Hutter, Grande, and Kriesi (2016) and Kriesi (2016, p. 34) conclude that there are many country-specific variations in how (intensively) the politicisation process in the national electoral arena proceeds/ unfolds. In order to shed light on this variation, Hutter, Braun, and Kerscher (2016) analyse elections campaigns and Europeanised protests by distinguishing between constitutive issues and policy-related issues.[39] While policy-related issues refer to the actual policy-making of the EU institutions and their output (Hutter, Braun, and Kerscher 2016, pp. 137, 153), constitutive issues centre around either the decision of one's own accession to the EU, or "deepening", or "widening" of the Union (Hutter, Braun, and Kerscher 2016, 137, 139sq.). Deepening includes questions related to the expansion of competencies for the EU level in economic and non-economic areas or authority transfer from the national to the European level; widening refers to the accession of new members (or granting potential candidate status, strategic partnerships or Association Agreements). For the authors, common foreign policy towards Russia falls under the category "policy related issue in a non-economic field"; EU-accession and eastern enlargement, obviously, belongs to the category "widening" (Hutter, Braun, and Kerscher 2016, p. 140).

The data clearly indicates that constitutive issues are to be considered as a crucial driving force of politicisation in election campaigns. They trigger higher levels of politicisation than any other issue (Hutter, Braun, and Kerscher 2016, pp. 137, 144). Constitutive issues – and membership questions as a sub-issue in particular – are more salient, more polarised, and display a higher degree of actor expansion than policy issues (Hutter, Braun, and Kerscher 2016, pp. 137, 138, 142–146). Here, the authors explain, questions about the EU's functional and territorial boundaries are at stake, and they pose general questions about the usefulness and overall direction of the EU project (Hutter, Braun, and Kerscher 2016, pp. 137, 142; Styczynska 2019, p. 162). In addition, these issues are not embedded into the socio-economic right-left dimension of political conflict, and therefore potentially intensify conflicts and competition between mainstream parties and bear strategic incentives for challengers to mobilise around those topics (Hutter, Braun, and Kerscher 2016, pp. 137, 141).

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[39]In Germany, France, Austria, Great Britain, Sweden and Switzerland.

However, politicisation is not to be understood as mere reaction to EU integration steps (Grande and Hutter 2016; Grande and Kriesi 2014). Instead, intensified political conflict over European integration issues is a product of "new structural conflicts over national sovereignty, -identity, and transnational solidarity" (Grande and Hutter 2016, p. 6; see also Hooghe and Marks 2019, p. 1122, Hutter and Kriesi 2019, p. 996, Hooghe and Marks 2018). It must be interpreted in the context of the transformation of political conflict which is seen as a consequence of economic and cultural globalisation since the 1980s. While globalisation produced very heterogenous groups of "winners and losers" (Grande and Kriesi 2014, p. 193, Kriesi et al. 2006, p. 922) it also led to the emergence of a new societal cleavage, thus conflicts on the EU are embedded in a general cleavage between green, alternative, libertarian values and traditionalism, authority, nationalism on the other side (GAL-TAN dimension; Hooghe and Marks 2018, p. 123; others refer to it as integration-demarcation dimension, cosmopolitan-communitarian/ nationalist dimension). This produced several new areas of conflict (see also Zürn 2019, p. 983). The impact on political competition is that parties exploit and mobilise this cleavage differently, and radical and populist (right) parties most successfully (Kriesi et al. 2006, 925sqq., 929, Grande and Kriesi 2014, p. 191).

The multiple crises, as has been argued, amplified on the one hand the conflict between cosmopolitan-oriented elites and more communitarian-minded electorates (Grande and Kriesi 2014, p. 191, Zürn 2019, p. 983, Schäfer et al. 2020, p. 5) and on the other hand the "political conflicts on national sovereignty and solidarity" (Grande and Kriesi 2014, p. 211), pitting North versus South, old versus new, surplus- versus debtor-states (see below; Hooghe and Marks 2018, 117sqq.).

Eurosceptic parties have been found to be the main drivers of politicisation of European integration, while pro-European parties have applied various strategies to de-politicise EU integration (Kriesi 2016, p. 32; Hutter and Kriesi 2019, 999sq.).[40] De-politicising means, in this context, the attempt to de-emphasise integration-related questions (Hutter and Kriesi 2019, 999sq.); this could be, amongst others, downplaying or shifting/ distracting public interest, deciding to not link a relevant national issue to EU

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[40]Green-Pedersen (2012) argues that the (pro-European) mainstream do not necessarily want to de-politicise the topic, but that these parties lack incentives to politicise this issue. They consider it as an unattractive issue because, firstly, "party positions on the issue deviate from the left–right dimension [and that] makes the coalition-building impact of politicisation uncertain" (Green-Pedersen 2012, p. 115). Secondly, "voting behaviour with regard to European integration depends crucially on how the issue is framed and this makes the electoral impact of politicisation more unpredictable for mainstream parties than is the case with politicisation of, for example, immigration" (Green-Pedersen 2012, pp. 115, 120). Hooghe and Marks (2018, p. 118) on "sticky" and programmatically inflexible established parties. Adam et al. (2017, 262sqq.) on the strategic repertoire of pro-European catch-all parties to strategically respond to Eurosceptic challengers.

integration (not making the connection that it has to do with the EU and avoiding bringing up the topic as EU-related), blurring as an avoidance strategy to not formulate a position at all, or providing only ambivalent statements (see Adam et al. 2017, p. 263).

Research has furthermore scrutinised the conditions under which issues become (de-)politicised (Hooghe and Marks 2012, 845sq. Angelucci and Isernia 2020, 68sq.); potential trajectories, consequences and effects of politicisation (de Wilde, Leupold, and Schmidtke 2016, 12sqq. Maag and Kriesi 2016); or whether politicisation can be stopped or "reversed" (de Wilde and Zürn 2012). So far, studies have focused on political protests and social movements as reactions to integration steps or particular policies (Hutter, Grande, and Kriesi 2016; Kriesi et al. 2006); (media coverage on) national election campaigns (mid-1970s to 2009 or 2000-2017 Hutter and Kriesi 2019), globalisation including European integration (2004-2006) and on the Euro crisis (2009-2012) in West European member states (Grande and Kriesi 2014, 191sq.); business newspapers (Leupold 2015); Euromanifestos between 1979 and 2014 (Schäfer et al. 2020); national parliamentary debates (Wonka 2016), and press releases of parties prior to the EP7 elections (Adam et al. 2017). Exceptions are Hurrelmann, Gora, and A. Wagner (2015) who analyse focus groups (further Novak, Rozenberg, and Bendjaballah 2020).

Parliamentary debates as relevant arena to study politicisation

There is an ongoing debate about the degree, intensity and forms of politicisation (Grande and Hutter 2016, 5sq.), in which settings politicisation can be located (de Wilde, Leupold, and Schmidtke 2016, p. 5) or be observed and becomes manifest or "visible for researchers to study its existence and extent" (Gheyle 2019, p. 230). It is assumed that depending on the setting and location in which it unfolds, we face differentiated forms of politicisation (de Wilde, Leupold, and Schmidtke 2016, p. 15). Each arena and type of political discourse, Hurrelmann, Gora, and A. Wagner (2015, p. 45) argue, "has its own rules that structure communication, which are likely to be reflected in distinct patterns of politicisation". In a similar vein, Zürn (2016, pp. 168, 170) posits that further research is needed to better understand the degrees of politicisation, given that integration and politicisation are not "binary factors, but come in different forms and degrees" (Herranz-Surrallés 2019, p. 30).

If politicisation is a "political, social and [first and foremost] communicative process" de Wilde and Lord (2016, p. 149), then evidence of politicisation can be found in any setting or arena where an audience is able to follow an unfolding political debate. Against this background, the EP and parliamentary communication has been identified as the location and manifestation of politicisation (de Wilde, Leupold, and Schmidtke 2016, p. 7, Gheyle 2019; Zürn 2019, Zürn 2016, p. 168, de Wilde, Leupold, and

Schmidtke 2016, p. 7, Hurrelmann, Gora, and A. Wagner 2015, p. 45). As de Wilde and Lord (2016, p. 149) posit, politicisation goes hand in hand with contestation, a discursive intervention (Gheyle 2019, p. 230) or "social practice [that] entails objection to specific issues that matter to people [and that is] performed either explicitly (by contention, objection, questioning or deliberation) or implicitly (through neglect, negation or disregard)" (Wiener 2014, pp. 1, 2). In line with this, Zürn points out that the competitive and controversial debates within the (European) parliament indicate the attempt to move something into the political sphere, i.e. the realm or sphere of collectively binding decision making (Zürn 2016, 167sq., 170), and therefore need to be captured more thoroughly by future politicisation research – even if they are not (yet) being covered by media outlets.

Politicisation and the multiple crises

A large strand of politicisation literature analyses consequences or implications of the "polycrisis" (Juncker 2016; Zeitlin, Nicoli, and Laffan 2019) for (the degree of) politicisation, its effects on the structure of domestic and EU political conflict (Hutter and Kriesi 2019; Schäfer et al. 2020), and the rationale of political actors for mobilising the crisis for their own agenda. During the crisis, parties from the radical left and radical right politicise European integration even more in Eurosceptic terms (Hutter and Kriesi 2019, p. 1013).

These predicaments, however, also pronounced the divides and rifts between member states and within domestic political systems, where actors are mobilised and polarise in different, unpredictable ways (Zeitlin, Nicoli, and Laffan 2019, p. 966). It is maintained that these challenges "have created multiple spaces for politicisation at both the domestic and European level [... and] increased dramatically the salience of the issues at stake, polarised political actors, and increased political mobilisation" (Zeitlin, Nicoli, and Laffan 2019, p. 965; Hooghe and Marks 2018, 116sqq. Voltolini, Natorski, and Hay 2020, 609sq.). Those crises, it is argued, concern "core state powers [...], raise issues of statehood, national community and self-determination" and are at the same time very distinct in each member state (Hutter and Kriesi 2019, p. 997). The intergovernmental conflicts at the European level "fed into" inter-party conflicts at the national level (Hutter and Kriesi 2019, p. 997). Often, compromises were vigorously contested by domestic actors (Zeitlin, Nicoli, and Laffan 2019, p. 966); resulting in a "deadlock" or "politics-trap" (Zeitlin, Nicoli, and Laffan 2019, pp. 966, 965). It is asked whether for instance the Eurocrisis restructured political conflict and if it is to be considered as "critical juncture" or not (Schäfer et al. 2020; Grande and Hutter 2016, p. 28). Other scholars study the role of the crises for institutional and policy innovation, i.e. how opportunities were created for further integration (Voltolini, Natorski, and Hay

2020, p. 613; P. Müller 2016).

Further research has been conducted on the question of how the crises affected the level of politicisation and reinforced and reshaped conflicts within and across the different "macro regions" in the EU (Hutter and Kriesi 2019, p. 998). Even though Hutter and Kriesi (2019, p. 1013) conclude that the structuration of the party systems in North and Western Europe did not undergo a fundamental change (see also Schäfer et al. 2020), Kriesi (2016) and Hutter and Kriesi (2019) find a substantial increase in politicisation, with strong region- and crisis-specific varieties, subsumed as "differentiated politicisation" (Kriesi 2016, p. 32); because of the different national conflict structures and the different ways the crises impacted the local populations (see also Leupold 2015; Voltolini, Natorski, and Hay 2020, p. 611). From a discursive viewpoint Voltolini, Natorski, and Hay (2020, p. 610) argue that it is not the mere existence of something (be it a situation, phase, or development) that might be referred to as crisis in itself leads to higher levels of politicisation. Instead, the authors maintain that the way in which crises are framed and contested determines whether its impacts the level of politicisation.

2.3.2 Politicisation research and the Ukraine crisis

Politicisation literature benefitted from the crises in at least two fields. The crises allowed further research on the question how crises trigger opportunities for policy re- or innovation of policies and institutions or integration; and secondly, made it possible to learn more about the relationship and competition between established and (Eurosceptic) challenger parties (Adam et al. 2017; Wonka 2016).

The findings on how the Ukraine crisis influenced the future integration of EU foreign policy is however inconclusive. The academic debate starts from the expectation that in general, crises create the necessity to reassess current policies, techniques and political instruments, as well as strategic priorities in general (P. Müller 2016, pp. 361, 368; Youngs 2020, p. 156; Voltolini, Natorski, and Hay 2020, p. 618; Ikani 2020, p. 772). P. Müller (2016, pp. 359, 360) posits that "it would be reasonable to expect that the EU's CEU's foreign policy [. . .] could be upgraded in the light of multiple challenges [. . .] because the more sizeable crisis-related pressures for policy change are, the more likely it will be that a crisis will lead to policy reform". It is further plausible to assume that "alliances are formed to counterbalance a common enemy" (Russo 2016, p. 196), for instance a state that appears to engage in expansionist activities, and those tensions foster further foreign policy integration (Angelucci and Isernia 2020, p. 64). This, however, is not the case; the "profound challenges" could not "be turned into an opportunity" for reforming EU foreign policy, and the broad trajectory of EU foreign policy has not accelerated or changed (P. Müller 2016,

p. 359).[41]

In contrast, Youngs (2020, p. 156) mentions that the strained relations with Russia facilitated that "a core EU line has taken shape". Despite their often contradictory traditions of foreign policy preferences (P. Müller 2016, p. 361), surprisingly, the member states could agree on sanctions, increased NATO cooperation, and intensified Eastern Partnership (EaP) support in Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova. In his study on the perceived threat of Russia among national elites after the Georgia-Russian war in 2008, Russo (2016, pp. 203, 204) shows that the perception of a threat posed by Russia increased the likelihood of supporting a CFSP for MPs who do not trust the EU, whereas it made no difference for already pro-integrationist MPs. In other words, perceiving a threat results in increasing support for integration of external relations among the least Euro-enthusiast MPs. In a similar vein, Natorski (2020, p. 733) and Ikani (2020, p. 772) consider the Ukraine crisis and the bilateral tensions with the RF as "stimuli for the review" of the ENP, and the constitutive norms that underpin EU external relations in general (Oriol Costa 2019, p. 1). Other authors point out that during "event-generated crises", identity change is more probable than at other times (Leek and Morozov 2018, p. 123). During crises, political actors usually fall into "automatised" behaviour, that is they try to "inscribe them [the events] in the pre-existing narratives" (Leek and Morozov 2018, p. 124). If, however, dominant conceptions and discourses are "confronted by new events that they cannot explain, represent, or in other way domesticate" (Leek and Morozov 2018, 129sq.), then this opens up the likelihood of a policy review or shift.

Related to that, it has been observed that the EU external relations themselves turned into objects of politicisation and political conflict (Oriol Costa 2019, p. 1).

Politicisation of EU foreign policy

CFSP/CSDP have for a long time been a domain that fell "within the rhetoric of 'permissive consensus'" (Barbé and Morillas 2019, p. 754). While some argue that Eurobarometers display that public opinion in EU member states favours more cooperation within that policy area (Peters 2014), other studies draw a more nuanced picture. They find that the national populations differ considerably in their views on the preferred extent of EU-level coordination needed in external relations (and in non-crisis situations display a low intensity of feelings about this question), whereas EU elites are more supportive for further integrations, and far less divided on the question of future integration of foreign policy (Angelucci and Isernia 2020, 74sq.).

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[41]Kempin and Overhaus (2014) see this related to the fact that because of the Eurozone crises, budgetary cuts also influenced/ hampered the financial means of foreign policy.

External relations therefore represent "a silent source of conflict among the wider public, whose polarised opinions could be seized by issue entrepreneurs [... therefore,] CSDP emerges as an exploitable source of politicisation" (Angelucci and Isernia 2020, pp. 82, 76).

Most of the recent work on that topic (Oriol Costa 2019; Herranz-Surrallés 2019; Ikani 2020; Natorski 2020) meanwhile argues that external relations are no longer "isolated from the broader trends of politicisation" (Barbé and Morillas 2019, p. 754) and object of a gradual politicisation (Herranz-Surrallés 2019, pp. 30, 35). This is not surprising if one acknowledges that the norms of CFSP mirror widely accepted EU internal values – and if EU integration is politicised as a whole, then it is not surprising that at some point polarisation and actor expansion occurs in the field of foreign policy, where general questions about the EU's role in the world are negotiated (Oriol Costa 2019, p. 2).

The study of Herranz-Surrallés (2019, pp. 30, 35) illustrates how, in the course of three EP legislative terms, defence policy (as subdomain of foreign relations in the EP) became more controversial or contested, with a shrinking share of neutral attitudes. In EP6 and EP7 "defence issues were highly consensual, with an average support of 78 [and 75]% ", and "non-support was largely expressed in terms of abstention (11%)" (Herranz-Surrallés 2019, p. 35; Kluger Rasmussen 2008 on abstentions as alternative to voting against). In contrast to that, since 2014, "in the [8th] parliamentary term, average support has gone down to 67% and the average share of no-votes has doubled to 26%." (Herranz-Surrallés 2019, p. 35; see also Cianciara 2016, p. 8).

Political competition and interaction of mainstream and challengers

Only a few studies engage with the question of how foreign policy or external relations are contested in the EP and which patterns prevail thereof (Cianciara 2016; Styczynska 2019; van Berlo and Natorski 2020). On the one hand, these studies seek to better understand the potential consequences of populist contestation for the coherence of the EP and its foreign policy actorness, i.e. "its ability to act [... in light of] the effectiveness of its actions" (Niemann and Hoffmann 2019, p. 35). This strand starts from the point that growing internal contestation weakens the EP's usually strong majority and coherence and makes it look weaker in the EU inter-institutional cooperation. On the other hand, Cianciara (2016, p. 2) points out that despite the manifold studies on EU actorness and the EP's more or less obvious attempts to become an important external relations actor, there are so far only very few studies on how the EP reaches and formulates its decisions, and how the decision-making process proceeded. This in turn would be a relevant puzzle piece in understanding the politicisation of this particular policy area.

The first study analyses the involvement of the GUE/NGL and the EFDD in the parliamentary work on the Syrian and Ukraine crisis. More specifically, they trace the debate involvement, and the criticism MEPs utter against the backdrop of the amendments or contributions they make to the (joint) motions for resolutions. The authors aim to show that populist EPGs disregard the EP's organising and working principle of consensus – and instead seek to "normalise contestation above any substantive consideration" (van Berlo and Natorski 2020, p. 192).[42]

They find that even though populist MEPs participate "vociferously" (van Berlo and Natorski 2020, p. 199) in the debates, these EPGs did merely participate in the elaboration of motions and "abstain from institutional politics" (van Berlo and Natorski 2020, p. 199, see also Styczynska 2019, p. 170). Populist MEPs from both camps mostly criticise NATO, the US, and mention the EU as contributor to the crises. If they contribute to draft texts though, then their criticism has a different focus and is much more tame (van Berlo and Natorski 2020, p. 201). The only conclusion left for the authors is that populists are united in their "inconsistent contestation without the honest intention to contribute [...] and their tendency to oppose elites, [which] is so strong that the positions taken [...] largely overlap" (van Berlo and Natorski 2020, p. 207), even though the the EPGs under scrutiny stand at the opposing poles of the political spectrum.

On the one hand, they did not search for ways for their views to be incorporated into the institutional EP position (van Berlo and Natorski 2020, pp. 198, 202). Eventually, populist EPGs are unlikely to substantially influence the content of the EP foreign policy resolutions (van Berlo and Natorski 2020, pp. 206, 208). On the other hand, this is not a problem, because they do not seek to contribute any added value to a joint motion for resolution to influence the institutional position of the EP anyway (van Berlo and Natorski 2020, p. 195). This "is not their main objective [...] they do not seek to influence the institutional consensus, it only seeks to oppose it", van Berlo and Natorski (2020, p. 206) point out.

This non-engagement, or the implicit neglect of engagement in negotiations, coupled with "explicit contention", are the two elements of a "populist mode of contestation" in EU foreign policy (van Berlo and Natorski 2020, 192sq. cf. Wiener 2014). MEPs tend to refer to principles of justice, or a violated volonté general, are critically questioning societal rules, regulations, procedures and refuse to be involved in the search for consensual

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[42]*Consensus as organising principle* in this case is a social convention that determines individual behaviour of MEPs when cooperating with others, e.g. when working and negotiating on resolution texts. MEPs are being socialised into the willingness to work on a compromised institutional position that "departs from their individual, national, or EPG preference", engage in negotiations, and involve themselves for the higher goal of a compromise that "reflects on the diversities of sensitivities in the EP" (van Berlo and Natorski 2020, p. 193).

positions (van Berlo and Natorski 2020, p. 198).

Unfortunately, the authors do not consider any alternative explanation for why GUE/NGL and EFDD often refrain from participating in the drafting stage. Alternative motives could have also been borrowed from the manifold literature on MEPs' legislative behaviour, and their incentives behind their decisions. Conducting interviews, for instance, in order to triangulate the results would have clarified the motives and given these conclusions some credibility; it would have been beneficial to confront MEPs with this observation and ask them for their explanation.

Studying the patterns of contestation in the case of the EU's policy towards Russia in voting behaviour, debate statements and EXPVs, Cianciara (2016, p. 8) similarly finds that the Eurosceptics become more and more vocal during the debates and more time was spent on their "interventions" proportionally, but in regards to the actual content of a final text, their impact is minimal (Cianciara 2016, p. 8). Compared to van Berlo and Natorski (2020), the author paints a more nuanced picture of their input for motions for resolutions. She emphasises that only minor text brackets were accepted, "which understandably let them not sign joint motions. As their proposals were not accepted at the drafting stage, their strategy was to table amendments during the plenary session [...which] were being rejected by the majority" (Cianciara 2016, p. 8).

Novak, Rozenberg, and Bendjaballah (2020) analyse how the crises affected voting behaviour and the attitude or working principle of consensus. Contrary to what other studies have insinuated, the working principle of consensus does not seem to be seriously in danger. They suggest that the influx of Eurosceptic MEPs in EP8 increased the willingness to be consensual between the mainstream/ centre EPGs, "and even to cartelise" (Novak, Rozenberg, and Bendjaballah 2020, pp. 2, 6, 13):

> "[...] the proportion of convergent votes on the part of the EPP and the S&D was high and stable until 2014 and that between 2014 and 2019, it became even higher, increasing to 80%. [...] The tendency of the pro-EU forces to form alliances against outliers is illustrated by the unprecedented 2015 decision to break with a solid tradition of proportional distribution of the positions within the assembly. The two dominant groups agreed that the newly-formed Europe of Nations and Freedom would be deprived of official positions." (Novak, Rozenberg, and Bendjaballah 2020, p. 14)

2.3.3 Gaps in research

As this chapter showed, there is manifold research on politicisation and the lines of conflict in the EP. Despite extensive research, however, several aspects still need further clarification.

The observation that lines of conflict in EP7 are shifting (Otjes and van der Veer 2016; Roger, Otjes, and van der Veer 2017) creates questions with

respect to the EP in particular, but also with regard to politicisation of EU foreign policy in general. So far it remains open whether this shift is limited to legislative procedures that relate to competencies of the EU and the future of EU integration in the first place, or whether this line of conflict, as a general trend, started to dominate other policy areas. It is unclear whether to interpret the observation as a short-term peak, a cyclical shift or as a general change that will persist in the long term (Otjes and van der Veer 2016, p. 257).

Even though a large body of literature exists on voting habits, coalition formation and, broadly speaking, the "who votes when and how"-side of divides in the parliament, little has been published about how lines of conflict manifest empirically beyond voting (exception is Styczynska 2019). A yet undiscovered (and unposed) question is how the lines of conflict in EP7 and EP8 manifest themselves aside from voting behaviour. More precisely, it is yet to be determined how statements and rhetorical means used by EPGs shape divides, and in turn, bring the lines of conflict into being.

Literature offers either Roll Call based estimations of policy preferences and conflicting lines in the EP, or text scalings of manifestos and statistical analysis of other textual data. Moreover, the differences and similarities between Roll Call results and speeches on the same topic remain unexplored (Schwarz, Traber, and Benoit 2015). Proksch and Slapin (2009, p. 608) find that when examining EP *speeches*, the EU integration-/demarcation dimension of conflict explains the (policy) positions of EPGs better than the left/right dimension. When the pro-/anti European dimension is the most important in speeches, but only secondary for explaining voting behaviour, then this implies that both speeches *and* votes should be scrutinised holistically. Drawing on Proksch and Slapin (2009), further research should include final votes *and* debates. I posit that lines of conflict and the pro-/anti-EU divide in particular are not only reflected in voting dynamics, but in the deliberations of the EP as well. For that reason, this study promotes the analysis of Roll-Calls with preceding debates and Explanations of vote (EXPVs) (more in section 3.1). This allows for a comparison of the positions and conflicting lines estimated through Roll Call to those put forward in legislative speeches. It sheds light on the "face" of a conflicting line and how it comes to life during debates. In other words: how the conflict dimensions reflect in argumentation and rhetorical strategies used by the EPGs. The research approach will be explained in more detail in the methodology chapter.

As mentioned earlier, the diplomatic EU-Russia crisis and the Ukraine crisis counts among the multiple crises (e.g. Cotta and Isernia 2021, p. 3). Scholars have described it as "the most profound menace to European security for many decades" (Youngs 2017, p. 1) or "one of most important challenges to the post-Cold War international order" (Natorski 2017, p. 178). It has been argued that these tensions are not just a regional conflict, but also

affected NATO-Russia relations and the EU-Russia cooperation on a global level (Siddi 2020, 1, 59sqq. Cotta and Isernia 2021, p. 3)

Nevertheless, research has so far understudied them in light of contestation or politicisation of EU foreign relations, let alone with a focus on the EP (Voltolini, Natorski, and Hay 2020, p. 610, Oriol Costa 2019, p. 8; exception is Natorski 2020).[43]

Hurrelmann, Gora, and A. Wagner (2015, p. 44) posit that existing studies do "not distinguish clearly enough between different arenas in which politicisation might occur [and] different aspects of European integration that may become politicised" (see also Góra, Styczynska, and Zubek 2019, p. 14). This would be crucial because the "shape and implications" of politicisation are expected to differ depending on the context where it is observed (Hurrelmann, Gora, and A. Wagner 2015, pp. 45, 44).

Assuming that politicisation comes in degrees (Zürn 2016, 168sq.) opens up the question which legislative procedures (and policy areas) have and will become "windows of observation" to "capture manifestations of politicisation" (Dolezal, Grande, and Hutter 2016, p. 32; de Wilde, Leupold, and Schmidtke 2016, p. 9). How and where does politicisation materialise, at which levels and in which forms (Góra, Styczynska, and Zubek 2019, 11, 15sqq.)?

This perspective is similarly acknowledged by Herranz-Surrallés (2019, p. 30) who claims that EU foreign policy in particular provides an ideal case to assess the impact of different types of integration and politicisation on supranational parliamentary involvement. Beyond think tank reports, however, academia has not yet systematically assessed whether, how and under which conditions political conflict in this policy field unfolds (Oriol Costa 2019, p. 3; Angelucci and Isernia 2020, p. 65). This perspective adds to the questions in which settings and to which extent the politicisation of European governance and integration can be located; a gap in research identified by inter alia de Wilde, Leupold, and Schmidtke (2016, p. 5) and Hutter, Grande, and Kriesi (2016).

As explained earlier, parliaments are considered as one out of three central political settings particularly relevant for (research on) EU politicisation (de Wilde, Leupold, and Schmidtke 2016, p. 7; Wonka 2016, p. 127). Nevertheless, the EP has not been in the focus of this strand of research. As of today, only a limited number of publications study voting and debate habits in the eighth EP (Braghiroli 2015a, 2021; Cherepnalkoski et al. 2016; Jankowski and Lewandowsky 2018; unpublished working papers: Braghiroli 2012b; debates by Styczynska 2019).

If each arena and type of political discourse, as Hurrelmann, Gora, and

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[43]Natorski (2020, p. 734) studies the "(de)politicisation of the Ukrainian crisis within the EU foreign policy institutional arena (European Council, Council, European Commission, EEAS) rather than on national political arenas, which predominates in politicisation studies".

A. Wagner (2015, pp. 45, 46) propose, "has its own rules that structure communication, which are likely to be reflected in distinct patterns of politicisation", this study will contribute knowledge and insight into the EP-specific patterns of politicisation and contestation, and address questions such as: What is the extent of conflict in EU-related debates? Which cleavages occur and how are positions distributed in the political space? Which arguments are brought forward (Hurrelmann, Gora, and A. Wagner 2015, 45sq.)?

Lastly, there are still gaps in the literature on the plenary interaction and party competition between (Eurosceptic) challengers and (pro-EU) EPGs. Previous studies on the interplay between challenger, populist, or radical parties and mainstream parties are united by the sole focus on populist or challenger parties, and a lack of relational perspective (e.g. van Berlo and Natorski 2020; exception is Adam et al. 2017). The results are therefore not interpreted in light of the overall dynamic in the chamber. Here, future research should firstly, focus more on mainstream parties (Green-Pedersen 2012), and secondly, create a "comparative baseline" (Adam et al. 2017, p. 261) by including both pro-European (mainstream) and Eurosceptic EPGs.

A common denominator of many studies is their subliminal assumption that pro-European or mainstream parties are always in a reactive role, and not the proactive part of the interaction. They have to "meet [the Eurosceptics'] challenge" (Adam et al. 2017, p. 263), "respond" (Adam et al. 2017, p. 263), and "react" to what Eurosceptics are saying or proposing. This is plausible, given that Eurosceptic parties are usually seen as agenda setters, occupying topics that catch-all parties are hesitant to (Green-Pedersen 2012, pp. 115, 120; Hooghe and Marks 2018, p. 118, Adam et al. 2017, 262sqq.). Having said that, this perspective ignores the underlying dynamics within the plenary. Eurosceptics or populists themselves are also reacting to what previous speakers have said or accused. Including all EPGs into a dataset would allow researchers to describe plenary interaction/ behaviour from a more open standpoint.

Following this, it is still an empirically open question how contestation unfolds (Góra, Styczynska, and Zubek 2019, p. 10), not just with regards to the content and the rhetorical strategies they apply, but also with regard to its performance (beyond populism as style, Moffitt and Tormey 2014; and this goes both ways, the challengers and the "defenders"). In this context, the research of Novak, Rozenberg, and Bendjaballah (2020) already hints at patterns of cartelisation.

Bridging "changing lines of conflict" and politicisation, the study assumes that the European Parliament is another arena where politicisation manifests and EP legislative procedures on Russia are potential "windows of observation" to capture manifestations of EU foreign policy politicisation (Dolezal, Grande, and Hutter 2016, p. 32). Yet, how Russia has been discussed in the EP has so far barely been systematically analysed (Onderco

2019). Only a few publications examine (unspecified) statements of party officials, press releases or amendments of MEPs in EP committee meetings (Krekó and Györi 2016; Nestoras 2016).

My research aims to connect those open ends. To recapitulate, it seeks to determine firstly, which lines of conflict or divides characterise the legislative procedures in the EP on the topic of "Russia" and how this is expressed in votes and plenary debates; and how the conflict dynamics and the behaviour of MEPs in dealing with "Russia" as a political issue develop over time (especially against the background of the Ukraine crisis, i.e. in the years 2009-2016). Secondly, it seeks to understand whether the groups adopt more or less stable positions and whether the political conflict is structured in that the EPGs follow repetitive patterns in voting and form discourse coalitions. In this context, the objective of the thesis is to investigate to what extent the topic of "Russia" is a window that provides insight into, on the one hand, the conflict constellations in the EP in important foreign and security policy conflicts or (changes in) conflict lines in the policy field of EU foreign and security policy – or to what extent the politicisation of the EU can be observed here (or of the sub-field of CFSP, see also Angelucci and Isernia 2020; Oriol Costa 2019). And on the other hand, what rhetorical strategies or repertoires mainstream parties use vis-à-vis Eurosceptic challengers (Adam et al. 2017), and with what consequences for the conflict dynamics between the groups? Against this background, investigating intergroup competition and the lines of conflict that structure EP debates on Russia seeks to contribute to research on legislative behaviour of EPGs, the dynamic and quality of intra-EU divides, issue-specific politicisation processes and the EP's changing lines of conflict.

Chapter 3

Methodology

This chapter outlines the design and procedures of the study. The first part presents the overall methodological approach, that is the lens through which the researcher views and makes decisions about the study, including the paradigmatic guidelines and their justification (Mills 2014). It also reflects on the role of the researcher, the limitations of the results, and requirements of reliability and transferability. The second part describes the research setting and sample, data collection, and methods of analysis: It recapitulates the choice for the period of investigation (3.2.1), explains the process of data collection, data preparation and the text corpus generation (3.2). Finally, it clarifies how the analyses have been conducted (3.3).

3.1 Research approach

The objective of this thesis is to determine conflict dynamics and MEPs' behaviour in the EP in legislative procedures dealing with "Russia" as a political issue. *How does the topic of "Russia" structure political conflict and competition in the EP and how does this manifest in voting behaviour, statements and discursive strategies used by the EPGs?* Which lines of conflict characterise debate on the Russian Federation in the EP across time and policy fields? The typical roadmap found in existing literature is quantitative, in this caste through analysing voting behaviour based on Roll-Call (RC) data. Undoubtedly, voting behaviour derived from RC data is a vital proxy which reveals political preferences and conflicting lines in the EP. However, knowledge solely built on RC results shows weak spots, gaps, and therefore opportunities to address them and contribute to academic literature.

This section develops a useful methodological manner to answer the posed research question. I argue that RC data is best combined with a broader set of data and methods, namely by additionally analysing the content and rhetorical means in legislative speeches. This approach – the combination of both quantitative and qualitative methods – allows for insights

and interpretation omitted from mere RC analyses.

3.1.1 Drawbacks of Roll-Call based studies

Roll-Call analysis is the standard approach to research that estimates group cohesion and conflicting lines in the EP. However, many scholars argue that "if one seeks to estimate the diversity of positions taken by legislators both within and across parties", RC analysis is useful but incomprehensive (Lauderdale and Herzog 2016, p. 1). A considerable number of studies highlight two issues with this type of data: lack of representativeness and overinterpretation.

First, given that they represent no more than one-third of all votes taken (Kaniok and Mocek 2017), RC data may suffer from selection bias. Critics argue that if RCs only represent a small percentage of decisions taken and are not distributed evenly throughout the voting population, literature might know less than expected and over-estimate intra-group cohesion (e.g. Carrubba et al. 2006, p. 701).

Moreover, strong party discipline tends to make voting a strategic act of decision-making instead of a sincere indication of political preferences (Carrubba et al. 2006; Kluger Rasmussen 2008; Trumm 2015). Voting is to be interpreted as more of a political tool than a reflection of preferences and divides (Yordanova and Mühlböck 2015). RCs are the perfect occasion for signalling (showing attitude to the target audience or opponents, demonstrating political will, signaling policy positions, etc.), publicising which parties or groups uphold or turn down a decision, or disciplining their group.[44]

Finke (2016, p. 619) claims that voting behaviour does not inform the dividing lines between EPGs per se. In contrast, voting decisions and RC results should instead "be understood as resulting from an interaction of agenda-setting and electoral rules" against the backdrop of conflicting interests between national delegations and one's EPG. He comes to the same conclusion as Carrubba et al. (2006, 694, emph. add.) who reason that RCV results "might tell us more about the areas of conflict parties want to *highlight* than the true dimensions of conflict in the legislature". Given the "public nature of RC" the choices of parliamentarians could be influenced by considerations of "sanctions or consequences" (Trumm 2015, p. 1129).[45]

Kluger Rasmussen (2008) and Trumm (2015) for instance illustrate that

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[44]Attiná 1990; Bowler and McElroy 2015; Carrubba et al. 2006; Bressanelli (2014) and others find a significant correlation between announcing or demanding an RCV and EP group cohesion.

[45]This claim is contested. Political science argues about "whether observed party cohesion is an over- or underestimate of the true level in all votes" (Hug 2016, p. 205). Some authors (Hix, Noury, and Roland 2018) find RC party cohesion similar to non-RC; Yordanova and Mühlböck (2015) suggest non-RC cohesion to be higher than RC.

assuming MEPs vote ideologically rather than nationally does not apply when voting anonymously. In both SoH and eV, MEPs are more likely to become an EP group rebel, preferring the national interest rather than following the EPG's official line. Hug (2016, p. 213) concludes that "it is very difficult, if not impossible to infer general voting behaviour of MEPs, on the basis of the roll call record from the EP characteristics". It suggests that if the majority of the vote is not recorded, some lines of conflict might have less substance than assumed.[46]

Whether criticism of RC data is justified, or if it represents the actual dimensions of conflict, are questions that are not unanimously answered by academic literature. Yet this is the standard approach to researching conflicting lines in the EP (Lord 2013, p. 243). Analysing RC data is seen as the yellow brick road: researchers inevitably get to the Emerald City. However, this study argues that scholars see more exciting sights if they are open to taking a detour from the main road. The criticism mentioned above is taken as a starting point for further inquiry and alternative methodologies, as it invites numerous unexplored questions that cannot be answered by RC: how do the political groups highlight conflict in the debate? How substantial is it in the plenary? And how are divides filled with life in the actual setting of the EP plenary?

3.1.2 Parliamentary debates as necessary data in researching lines of conflict

For a comprehensive understanding of the conflict lines in the EP, this study proposes to combine quantitative data on voting behaviour and a detailed analysis of what politicians state in the debate accompanying the final vote. Results from voting analysis cannot be interpreted thoroughly without scrutinising related parliamentary debates, and disaggregation and differentiation between "votes and words" will reveal valuable insight into the EP's dimensions of conflict.

There are five reasons why plenary debates, consisting of speeches and EXPVs, are fruitful terrain for scrutiny: They contain argumentation and justifications for votes and abstentions. They further give MEPs the opportunity to produce a sanction-free dissent from the group line and thus provide insight into group heterogeneity. Given that speeches are not as bi-

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[46]Since the change of Parliament's Rules of Procedure (Rule 159a, Amendment 35) in 2009, RC is mandatorily applied when voting on final texts (European Parliament 2009). Thus, some of the original criticism regarding the representativeness of RC might be considered as obsolete for studies on EP7 and subsequent legislative periods (Kaniok and Mocek 2017). However, scholarly literature on dimensions of conflict nevertheless builds on the "old" data. Given the new "permanent observation" situation (Hug 2016), academic debates engage with the question of how this rule change affects voting behaviour of MEPs and group cohesion. Hug (2016) study on party pressure since the rule change concludes that it does not matter at all.

nary as a voting choice, they presumably reveal the intensity of the voting position taken. As debates are not aggregated in a large data set, their analysis also takes into account the political weight of certain debates compared to others.

First, EP debates are about argumentation and justification, which by themselves are a valuable source of information. Even though it has been argued that much of the "real discussions" happens in the Committee stage, the plenary matters "from a point of providing justification for the decisions of the [European] parliament" (Lord 2013, p. 253). In line with this argument, I posit that political speeches of MEPs target a different audience than their votes (Schwarz, Traber, and Benoit 2015, p. 16). Speeches neither persuade nor aim at convincing colleagues, but rather send and reinforce messages (Proksch and Slapin 2015, p. 174). Following Lord (2013, p. 243), the crucial work of the EP is not just voting but also "voice", given that "speaking up for others, arguing on behalf of others and above all, justifying opinions to others are also important aspects of representation" (see also Mayhew 1974). Speeches provide justification and explicit reasons for positions taken; Lord finds that in EP6, only 9.6% of speeches contain no justification at all whereas about 58% give one or more reasons for their voting choice (Lord 2013, p. 255). Following Mayhew (1974) and Burke (1969), debates contain valuable information about judgments and motives, ideally packed as what the latter calls "rounded statement about motives" (Burke 1969, p. xv). Speeches offer "some kind of answers to these five questions: what was done (act), when or where it was done (scene), who did it (agent), how he did it (agency), and why (purpose)" (Burke 1969, p. xv). The observation that text proposals made by the committees are usually not heavily modified in the plenary readings pushes the plenary's role towards being an arena for justification, identity formation, and communication towards principals even more. This particularly goes for EU-Russia relations, to which the EPGs invest a significant amount of resources despite the majority of legislative activities being non-binding resolutions. I argue that MEPs strategically and deliberately use other speeches in the plenary to inform their political audience of their policy position, and to justify their vote.

Second, as debates hold the opportunity for "deviant" or "national" behaviour, they provide insight into the diversity and heterogeneity of EPGs. This, in turn, enriches the understanding of the actual substance of the divides. Finke's surveys show that members of the same EPG hold diverse policy preferences (Finke 2016, p. 606). Voting against or in favour of a resolution does not imply that the individual shares the group's attitude per se, making ideological lines of conflict in the EP less "solid" and substantive than assumed. Some MEPs might vote in favour of a resolution but express contradictory views during the debate, given that legislative speeches are relatively unconstrained, as party leaders are less likely to punish MPs for

speaking freely as long as they vote with the party line (Schwarz, Traber, and Benoit 2015, p. 2, Highton and Rocca 2005). It is plausible that voting behaviour and content of statements do not necessarily have to be compatible or accordant, given that MEPs sometimes only "agree to agree" to the group line. In this regard, votes on Russia-related questions alone only partly reflect the EPGs' heterogeneity and lines of conflict in the EP. Following Lauderdale and Herzog (2016, p. 1), this thesis maintains that "if one seeks to estimate the *diversity* of positions taken by legislators both within and across parties", RC analysis is useful but incomprehensive.

Similarly, Schwarz, Traber, and Benoit (2015) illustrate that positions expressed in legislative speeches reveal a considerable heterogeneity in intraparty preferences (see also Baumann, Debus, and J. Müller 2015; Braghiroli 2015a). They find that spoken positions display a considerably wider range of preferences than those expressed through voting, particularly within EPGs with highly unified voting behaviour (usually the large centrist groups). Given that Russia-related issues have become increasingly multifaceted and include national interests of the EU Member States, like energy, security, trade, and human rights, one can expect MEPs' preferences to be similarly multidimensional. For those reasons, it is useful to analytically disaggregate the EPGs and to analyse debates using a more individual focus (see also Ringe, Victor, and Gross 2013), and thereafter, consider groups positions (reflected in speeches on behalf of the group) and individual speeches in a comparative perspective.[47]

Third, since voting procedures present only binary choices without a measure of how strong or weak parliamentarians agree or disagree (Lord 2013, p. 256), debates provide better insight into the *intensity* of MEPs' preferences and divides in the chamber. In RC studies it remains unexplored whether an MEP is a passionate supporter, or modestly convinced, if supporting a proposal "is to be taken [...] as grudging support" or how to interpret abstentions and non-voting (Kluger Rasmussen 2008, p. 12). It is known that group cohesion is high, but is it paying lip-service or "sung from the heart"? In contrast, speeches reveal the circumstances, the level of "passion", disclose motives or the *why* (Kalaf-Hughes 2013, Brock et al. 2005, p. 68). For instance, Lord (2013, p. 256) showed that in contentious and polarised issues, the deliberate quality of debates decreases and speeches increasingly are prone to personal- or partisan attacks; what is usually called a "heated debate". Scrutinising oral and written statements in debates allows understanding to which degree voting behaviour is driven by enthusiasm or obedience and prevents drawing false conclusions about motives for certain voting behaviour.

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[47]Presuppositions: It is assumed that MEPs are a) honest in their speeches, whilst their voting is driven by b) ideological convictions and c) career/office-seeking ambitions. That being so, they give insight into the policy position and policy emphases of the speaker (e.g. Rheault et al. 2016; see also Mayhew 1974).

Fourth, debate analysis takes into account the fact that some legislative procedures "matter more" than others. Usually, aggregated RC datasets do not capture the relative political weight of a topic or vote. All final votes are given the same weight, although some legislative procedures and resolutions are arguably more important (and consequential) than others (to the MEPs – Klüver and Spoon 2013; see also Bolin 2015, p. 68; Maurer 2003, p. 242).

And finally, because reasons for abstaining are stated in the course of debates or before a vote, it becomes possible to better understand them. Previous RC analyses pay little attention to the issue of how to interpret abstentions correctly (for instance by being indifferent about the type of abstention: (a) not showing up for the vote, (b) being present but not voting, and (c) explicit abstentions by casting an 'Abstain'/'Present' vote) (Mühlböck and Yordanova 2017). Based on qualitative interviews, Kluger Rasmussen (2008) interprets the use of abstentions as an exit strategy, i.e. as a means of dealing with conflicts between the national party and the EPG. If they cannot handle the conflict, they abstain. This substantiates the argument that MEPs are not always voting with regard to the content or issue as such, but with an eye on the conflicts or social sanctions that may arise from a particular (deviant) behaviour. Scrutinising the debates and explanations of votes for justifications for abstentions or "exit strategic behaviour" reveals a still mostly unresearched aspect of legislative behaviour.

3.1.3 Complementing quantitative and qualitative research methods

Despite their apparent benefits, qualitative case studies have been mostly uncommon in the study of legislative behaviour of EPGs and the EP's lines of conflict. Qualitative designs that draw on interviews, field studies, and surveys are few but prove fruitful for understanding legislative behaviour (e.g. Kluger Rasmussen 2008; Proksch and Slapin 2015; Styczynska 2019; Wodak 2009). Intra-EPG differences are mostly under-researched. Literature offers either quantitative RC-based estimations of policy preferences and conflicting lines in the EP, or text scalings of manifestos and statistical analysis of other textual data. Yet, position-taking outside the domain of Roll-Calls, or the differences and similarities between voting results and speeches on the same topic remain understudied (Highton and Rocca 2005; McHugh 2010; Schwarz, Traber, and Benoit 2015). No research has been conducted to show how dimensions of conflict materialise in the parliamentary interaction or how they come into being and are communicated through rhetoric action.

In order to fill this gap, this study develops a comprehensive portrayal of the EP's conflicting lines: It scrutinises how divides manifest themselves in voting behaviour and, additionally, what manner they reflect in speeches

and discursive strategies used by the EPGs. It discloses which debate topics and statements are linked to which discursive strategies and rhetorical means; and the way identities, in- and out-groups are constructed and characterised through communication, language and style. It does so by successively combining quantitative and qualitative methods of research. To the best of my knowledge, this research strategy has not yet or barely been adopted in the context of this research topic.

The dissertation is designed as a case study that scrutinises "Russia" as a topic in the EP. With the case being "Russia", the project explores the particularity and complexity of that topic in the EP. Designed as an inquiry that draws on the advantages of quantitative and qualitative methods, this project commits to exploring the case, its particularities and uniqueness in greater detail (Flick 2014, p. 5; Simons 2009). The study builds on two sources of data in order to arrive at a holistic picture of the phenomenon within its real-life setting ("thick description", says Geertz 1973, 9 sq.): RC data and plenary debates. This combination of material and methods ensures that the issue is explored through a variety of perspectives, and allows for multiple facets to be revealed and understood (Harrison et al. 2017; Miles and Huberman 1994). The project emphasises the importance of context and seeks to create a deep understanding of the research objects' perceived reality (Jonas 2018; Thomas 2011). In this work, "the characterisation of the case and the events, as well as a description of the discovery process of these features [...] is the process of research itself" (Mesec 1998, p. 45, translated in Starman 2013, p. 31). "The case story [sic] is itself the result" (Flyvbjerg 2006, p. 238).

The study is informed by a constructivist paradigm (Guba and Lincoln 1994). It assumes that divides in the EP do not only exist in numbers of Roll-Calls. They are also social constructions, which come into being through activities within the EP, more specifically, parliamentary debates. The lines of conflict are produced and shaped by language and interaction within the chamber. They do not only exist in voting. *Divides are embodied in legislative speeches*. They (1) come into being, (2) are shaped and (3) perpetuated through speech acts of the actors involved (Gee 1999, p. 12; Hajer 1993, p. 44). Following Hülsse (2006, p. 404), the dissertation is interested in the reality that follows from the speeches, hence the effects of debate statements on social reality within the spatially bounded context of the EP. Speeches, in this view, shape reality and consequently condition the possibilities for political action and -cooperation.[48] There is "a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and the situation(s), institution(s) and social structure(s), which frame it. (...) Discourse is so-

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[48] As will be explained below, speeches "encompass both speeches given on the floor of the plenary, [...] written statements that may be appended to the public debate record" (Proksch and Slapin 2015, p. 154), as well as Explanations of Vote.

cially constitutive as well as socially shaped: it constitutes situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities of and relationships between [groups of] people" (Fairclough and Wodak 1997, p. 258). The same goes for "Russia": what the topic comprises is likewise socially constructed in the EP. This process mirrors how, within the chamber, its members also construct "Europe" or "being European" (Krzyzanowski 2010). As Hooghe and Marks (2009, p. 12) put it, "identity does not speak for itself in relation to most political objects, but must be politically constructed". Therefore, the logical source for researching divides and intergroup-dynamics within the chamber are EP debates (see Hülsse and Spencer 2008). Here, constructions and interpretations of divides and the subject "Russia" are derived from the data (inductive approach).

The thesis considers speech acts within debates as constitutive for the parliamentary discourse on Russia. It understands discourse as defined by a macro-topic that appears in different spheres (Reisigl 2014; Reisigl and Wodak 2001; Wodak and Meyer 2001). The parliamentary discourse on Russia is constituted and defined by the sum of all parliamentary events and speech acts related to it. Wodak (2001a, p. 66) defines discourses as a "complex bundle of simultaneous and sequential interrelated linguistic acts, which manifest themselves within and across the social fields of action as thematically interrelated semiotic, oral or written tokens [texts], that belong to specific semiotic types [genres]." The distinguishing features of discourses are their macro-topic and several sub-topics. In other words, a discourse is the sum of all linguistic acts related to a macro-topic through time and space; while speech acts constantly shape the nature of the discourse. Speech acts stand for all oral and written statements belonging to different genres (e.g. political speeches, statements, manifestos) and taking place across various fields (e.g. in a newspaper, national parliament, party conference). Discourses contain argumentation about validity claims (truth and normative rightness), carried by social actors with different perspectives (Reisigl 2014). Following Wodak and Reisigl, the discourse on the Russian Federation in the EP shall be defined as a complex bundle of simultaneously and sequentially interrelated linguistic acts, manifesting themselves in EP debates as thematically interrelated parliamentary speeches, oral and written statements which are related to the Russian Federation.

With this definition, this work stands in the tradition of Discourse Historical Approach (DHA), which is a part of Critical Discourse Studies. This strand of research or school is considered to be "fundamentally concerned with analysing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language. [...] [It] aims to investigate critically social inequality as it is expressed, signalled, constituted, legitimised and so on by language use (or in discourse)" (Wodak 2001b, p. 2). It "embraces" several "interconnected aspects" or levels of critique (Wodak 2001a, p. 64). As Wodak (2001a, p. 65)

elaborates, they aim at "discovering inconsistencies, (self-) contradictions, paradoxes, and dilemmas in the text-internal or discourse-internal structures". They are further concerned with "the demystifying exposure of the – manifest or latent – possibly persuasive or 'manipulative' character of discursive practices" (ibid.; Wodak 2015b, p. 3).

The DHA has been chosen for its four distinctive characteristics. First of all, it is "context-sensitive" (Reisigl and Wodak 2001, p. xii). As the name suggests, the discourse *historical* approach considers the historical development and context as crucial for the sound interpretation of speech acts and discourses. It seeks "to integrate as much available information as possible on the historical background and the original historical sources in which discursive 'events' are embedded, as well as by tracing the diachronic change, which particular types of discourse undergo during a specified period of time" (Krzyzanowski 2010, p. 40).

Secondly, this school traditionally examines various constructions of individual and collective (cultural, political, institutional) identities. Whereas DHA studies usually focused on racism and discrimination (e.g. Reisigl and Wodak 2001), newer studies on the European Parliament (Wodak 2009) proved the added value of this approach for the exploration of "identity politics and patterns of decision-making in EU organisations" (Wodak 2015b, p. 2; see also Wodak and Boukala 2015).

Thirdly, the DHA is particularly interested in the analysis of contents of argumentation schemes. It "tries to distinguish between sound and fallacious argumentation, where possible. [. . .] [It] is the only school of Critical Discourse Analysis that includes argumentation and multi-perspectivity as formal constitutive elements in the theoretical conception of 'discourse'" (Reisigl 2014, p. 69).

And fourthly, the DHA not only offers an applicable definition of 'discourse'; it also provides categories of analysis, analytical means, and a research programme to examine discourses. The methodological toolbox discusses in great detail the steps of analysis, for instance, how the construction of identities, in- and outgroups, and patterns of argumentation can be detected. These advantages make the DHA a valuable approach to examine the discursive construction of groups, actors and the dynamics of othering; the way in which actors are labelled; and how parliamentary divides show themselves in the panoply of rhetorical means.

3.1.4   Steps of analysis

In light of the considerations made so far, the analysis proceeds in three major consecutive steps (see Table 3.1, p. 73). They are aligned with the DHA's principles of triangulation and contextualisation, and its "endeavour to work interdisciplinarily [and] multimethodically" (Reisigl and Wodak 2001, 35, 40 sqq.). The researcher should include diverse empirical data, back-

ground information and as many sources as possible (Bowen 2009; Wodak 2001a). Ideally, she should reassess her findings and interpretation through observational or ethnographic data and combine different methods in order to arrive at a more holistic understanding (Wodak 2015b, p. 2). Contextualisation means illuminating the context in which the research object is embedded as extensively as possible. This includes not only the historical context, but also background information about the specifics of the respective genre (like EP debates) or social field in which the discourse is examined (Reisigl and Wodak 2001, p. 35).

The first analytical chapter identifies topics and policy fields which characterise or frame "Russia"-related debates and their development over time. It builds on the analyses of EP Resolutions, plenary event summaries, and EP Think Tank publications (Hsieh and Shannon 2005; Mayring 2015, p. 67 sqq.). EPGs position themselves or form ad- hoc coalitions depending on the policy field. If "Russia" is, for instance, interpreted or framed in economic or trade-related terms, other conflicting lines are expected to stand out compared to if "Russia" is discussed with regard to human rights or as an issue of security policy. Against this background, the first analytical step is to understand how "Russia" as agenda item changes over time.

The underlying purpose is to sketch the parliamentary discourse on the Russian Federation, i.e. its contents, topics, and boundaries during the period under review (Reisigl and Wodak 2016, p. 32; Wodak 2015b, p. 5): which policy areas and which questions define and delimit the topic of "Russia" or shape it (through which topics and events the discourse on Russia is realised); whether and at what point in time it became a crisis issue. Despite the academic interest in EU-Russia relations on the one hand, and the polycrises (e.g. Zeitlin, Nicoli, and Laffan 2019) on the other, those aspects have so far not been addressed by political science. However, for understanding or interpreting the behaviour of EPGs this contextualisation is necessary.

The second step is to examine the voting behaviour of EPGs, particularly their voting similarity (Attiná 1990; Viola 2000). Drawing on RC results, it asks how political groups vote in Russia-related resolutions and which patterns in voting behaviour can be observed across time, group, and policy field. Divides in the Parliament traditionally are detectable through the analysis of RC data. Analysing voting behaviour and voting similarity of EPGs is crucial as it helps to identify which and where divides and blocs exist. Against the backdrop of the Ukraine crisis and the larger share of EU-critical MEPs since September 2014, another task is to examine whether traditional dividing lines disappear, merge or are replaced.

The third analytical chapter scrutinises the debates preceding the Roll-Calls previously analysed. With a two-fold focus, it examines the content of oral and written statements *and* the use of discursive strategies. It conducts a computer-assisted Qualitative Content Analysis (Schreier 2012;

Friese 2014) combined with means of DHA (Reisigl and Wodak 2016; Wodak 2001a). This combination will trace how the MEPs construct their argumentation, divides, and in- and outgroups in the plenary.

The study first focuses on by whom and which content and type of argument is brought forward. Even though quantitative or corpus linguistic analyses of texts are methodologically advanced, this qualitative-discursive approach is preferred, because automated text analysis goes hand in hand with a deductive approach to the material. Automated text analysis further experiences difficulties with the coding of latent content, irony, emotionality (anger words, swear words) and function words.[49] Jones (2016, p. 630) found that the latter (words like "we", "they", "our") shape and connect the content of thoughts and reveal processes of othering, group formation and differentiation. This step reveals which EPGs pose, claim, and share similar arguments and positions: who claims what?

Then, it examines the rhetorical means and discursive strategies that are employed for the construction of conflicting lines and actors (self-other representations, othering and differentiation). It further scrutinises argumentation schemes and the manner in which actors embed discursive strategies into their argumentation and justification. Finishing the study at this point and dismissing the discourse analysis would leave the reader with "who says what whilst agreeing and disagreeing with whom"-information. Only through the application of a discursive approach to the data does this work illuminate how MEPs perceive, shape and construct divides through speech acts and their rhetorical action, and how MEPs communicate and "convey content to others" (Jones 2016, p. 630). Debates, and the variation in the use of discursive strategies and argumentation is the last puzzle piece when investigating the nature, emergence and shift of divides. It illuminates patterns of communication and contestation through the concept of discourse-coalitions (Hajer 1993, 2005, see 3.5.3). It sheds light on the nuances between voting and statements, or the misfit between individual MEPs and their group line; unravels drivers and justifications for voting behaviour, as well as patterns of justification and blaming; and the position of the speakers towards given issues and their level of salience. It allows for a better understanding of the nature and quality of divides in the EP.

Table 3.1 (p. 73) displays the analytical framework of this project and summarises the key concepts, data, methods and main authors of each analytical step.

3.1.5 Limitations, delimitations and reliability

This study cannot and is not intended to be a thorough DHA study. Ideally, according to Wodak (2015b, 12 sq.), such a study should comprise an

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[49]Jones 2016; Pennebaker 2011; Schreier 2014; cf. Rheault et al. 2016.

Table 3.1: Framework for analysis

Chapter	Specifying "Russia"	Voting Behaviour	Debate Activity	
Analytical Level	"Topic Dimension"	"Voting Dimension"	"Debate/ Discursive Dimension"	
Focus	What is "Russia"?	How do they vote?	Who says what, and how do they say it?	
Key Concepts	Frequency Salience	Voting Similarity Blocs, Splits, Divides, Iteration	Discourse-Coalition	
			Content of Statement (Description/ Characterisation, Evaluation, Accusation/ Criticism, Demand/ Suggestion, Sentiment/ Understanding) Co-Occurrence Speaker/Content	Discursive Strategy Topoi Nomination Predication Perspectivation Argumentation
Method + *Main Authors*	Document Analysis Scaling Content Analysis Bowen 2009, Mayring 2015	*Attiná 1990, Viola 2000*	Qualitative Content Analysis *Friese 2014, Schreier 2012, Saldaña 2016* *Toulmin 1958, Hajer 1993 & 1995*	Discourse Analysis *Wodak 2001, Reisigl and Wodak 2015, Pennebaker 2011, Jones 2016*
Data	Legislative procedures; Committee events; Plenary events; EP Think Tank publications	Roll-Call results	Verbatim reports of Plenary debates (transcription of oral statements, translated into English); Written statements (translated into English); Explanations of Vote (translated into English)	

eight-stage programme with various case studies; it should examine the discourse in different fields of action, formulate a critique and focus on the investigation of the discourse. When scrutinising language use, argumentation and interaction, an extensive level of detail would be applied (see e.g. Reisigl and Wodak 2001, 44 sqq.).

However, this dissertation does not centre on the discourse on Russia in the EP, but on the lines of conflict in the parliament and their discursive emergence. Thus, the selected discourse-analytical tools are a medium to, among other things, uncover and track down discourse-coalitions. The work attempts to employ discourse-analytical or interpretative methods and analytical categories without getting bogged down in details. Instead, the author is motivated by the overarching aim of "'seeing through', of 'illuminating' and 'making transparent'" (Reisigl and Wodak 2001, p. 33). This follows Reisigl and Wodak (2016, p. 32) who consider the analytical categories and methods employed in DHA as "not fixed once and for all. They must be elaborated for each analysis according to the specific problem under investigation". Therefore, only those analytical units and rhetorical or discursive means were included in the analytical framework that are considered relevant to answer the research question (see also 3.5.3). In addition, the author attempts to compensate for what she considers to be weaknesses in the instructions for conducting a DHA by combining it with qualitative content analysis.

Generalisation – traditionally in terms of generality of the findings drawn from a data sample that is representative regarding its properties – is not the goal of this study (Maxwell and Chmiel 2014, p. 540). It instead pursues transferability, which is the ability to apply findings in similar contexts or settings (Rapley 2014): "the concept analogous to generalisability [...] is *transferability*, which is itself dependent upon the degree of similarity (fittingness) between two contexts. [It does not attempt to] form generalisations that will hold in all times and in all places, but to form working hypotheses that may be transferred from one context to another depending upon the degree of 'fit' between the contexts" (Rapley 2014, 52, emph. add.). "Russia" is only one of many agenda items prone to being identity- and conflict-laden, as well as re-read in terms of pro-anti-EU. Therefore, the results of this project may be plausibly transferred to other policy fields with similar significance, or to other crises in the field of external relations.

It is acknowledged that the researcher is the primary instrument of data preparation, analysis and interpretation. Peshkin (2000, p. 5) describes the interpretative process as a series of decision points that involve "interpolating and extrapolating, judgement-making and assuming, doubting, and affirming". Interactivity characterises the research process, an on-going process of conducting research and gaining understanding. In her role as an "instrument of analysis", the author is aware that the analysis is therefore not detached from her concepts, values, and identities. "A researcher's

self, or identity in a situation, intertwines with his or her understanding of the object of the investigation" (Peshkin 2000, p. 5). As language is socially constructing and constructed, and never static, the researcher herself is not immune to the process and products of these constructions. For transparency purposes, illustrative data excerpts are included in the analytical chapters; the Annex provides the coding frequencies (pp. XI sqq.) as well as the codebook (pp. XXV sqq.).

From a technical perspective, the content and discourse analysis is affected by language skills and translations. Although the utmost care has been taken in the translation of speeches, when translating from the original languages into English, losses of nuances in rhetorical means and content might occur.

The study is delimited in five respects, i.e. intentionally imposed conditions or parameters to limit the scope of the project. It omits the formulation of so-called "future-related prospective critique" (Wodak 2015b, p. 3) which would present ideas and guidelines to adapt the current behaviour. An ideal-type DHA study would engage "in the attempt to contribute to the transformation and improvement of communication within public institutions by elaborating proposals and guidelines for reducing language barriers" or any discriminatory or exclusionary language (Reisigl and Wodak 2016, p. 34).[50] The study refrains from extensively scrutinising intertextual and interdiscursive relationships between EP debates, or other genres and fields (cf. Wodak 2015b, p. 5).[51] It is furthermore not interested in the thinking or motives behind the speeches (Hülsse 2006, p. 404; Willig 2014, p. 345). Neither does the study calculate which discourse-coalition predominates within the debates, nor which story-line most strongly shapes the EP's Russia-related decisions or policy formulation (cf. Hajer 2008, 220sqq.). Then, as regards the sample of cases, only legislative procedures ended by a RC were included, while SoH and eV procedures were left out. Therefore, the sample under scrutiny does not include the entire corpus of plenary debates devoted to "Russia". And lastly, the period of investigation takes into account EP7 and the first half of EP8; this covers the period from September 2009 until February 2016 (see below). The study does not

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[50]This form of future-oriented and action-oriented critique is due to the fact that the classic contents of the DHA are racism, discrimination, anti-Semitism and dealing with the Nazi past (see Wodak 2001a, 70 sqq.).

[51]Inter*textualities* are references made in an EP speech to, for instance, public debates, or to speeches made by MEPs in a different debate; either in the past, or in present (Reisigl and Wodak 2016, p. 28; e.g. a cross-reference to debates on China's human rights situation when Russia's developments in that domain are debated). In a similar fashion, inter*discursivity* "signifies that discourses are linked to each other in various ways" (Reisigl and Wodak 2016, p. 28). It should be possible to observe that the discourse about "Russia" frequently refers to topics or subtopics of other discourses, such as (energy) security, European history or trade. Such observations will be noted during the analysis, but will not be explored in-depth.

consider parliamentary activity prior to that.

In order to conduct research of integrity and meet the expectation/ criterion of triangulation, the author combined several different sources of data and methods (Bowen 2009; Wodak 2001a). During a research visit to the European Parliament between April and June 2016, the author conducted semi-structured interviews with MEPs from different EPGs and AFET secretary staff. Information gathered in these interviews as well as the resulting field notes enriched the insights and interpretation gained through the analyses. The author also organised two reliability tests: Intra- and Inter-coder reliability (see Mayring 2015, p. 125 sqq.). Reliability, as the "trustworthiness" of measurement, in this study refers to the quality of the coding scheme (precision, intersubjective traceability) and to the manner latent content is interpreted. Intra-coder reliability is met if the author codes a text sequence at point A in time, and again after a time interval at point B, and this text passage has been applied to the same codes. In addition, inter-coder reliability is met if two people with the same material, guided by the codebook, code text passages with the same categories separately from each other.

3.2   Data collection and case selection

This section describes all data collection procedures, including where and how data was retrieved. Empirically, this study draws on two different types of data. First, it examines voting behaviour of EPGs through the analysis of *RC data* in final votes in EP plenary sessions on Russia-related topics. Second, it scrutinises the plenary debate preceding the exact same final vote. This includes oral and written speeches of MEPs as well as their EXPVs.

3.2.1   Period of investigation

This work examines two legislative periods: EP7 from September 2009 to July 2014 and EP8 from September 2014 to February 2016. Three factors determine this time frame. First, the scientific debate on the EP's changing lines of conflict after 2009/2010 require a study that takes into account a period of time that comprises two legislative periods. Second, EP7 and EP8 are two legislatures in which EU-Russia relations changed significantly. The years 2009 to 2016 combine both periods of cooperation and closeness as well as conflict and confrontation, most notably the "Ukraine crisis". Against that background, the changing nature of EU-Russia relations find its way into the debates of the EP. Third, due to the significant changes in the composition of the EP after the 2014 elections, legislative procedures initiated by the previous parliament are contested while divides are thrown

into sharp relief.

Braghiroli (2015b, p. 69) finds that the stance of the EP towards Russia varies between legislative terms: Whereas EP6 (2004 – 2009) appears to have a tougher stance, he finds that in the beginning of the 7th term the EP has "adopted a friendlier voting stance towards Moscow which is likely to be reflected in its legislative and non-legislative activities". This is attributed to the presidency of Medvedev after president Putin's "Munich speech" (2007) and the 2008 Russian-Georgian war. Between 2009 and 2010 in particular, EU-Russia relations were framed in the spirit of *Partnership for Modernisation*, a programme aimed to modernise Russia's energy-, transport- and technology sector; it addressed trade liberalisation and investment facilitation, corruption, etc. with the support of the EU (European Union External Action Service 2016; Larionova 2015). Bearing in mind the slightly tense and "sobered" nature of the relationship since the 2008 Russia-Georgia war, the years 2009 to 2012 are nevertheless considered as era of strategic auxiliary cooperation.[52]

As explained in chapter 2.1, between 2012 and 2013 structural and situational factors led to a decline of bilateral relations. Amongst other reasons, this is attributed to contradicting interests, activities and miscommunication related to the Shared Neighbourhood and the EU's growing and open criticism with regard to Russia's internal developments and its policy towards its neighbours.[53] Relations significantly deteriorated over the course of late 2013 during the final stage of negotiations for the EU-Ukraine PAA and marked a lowpoint in 2014. At that time, as a consequence of the March 2014 Annexation of Crimea, the EU institutions decided to pause the bilateral cooperation and imposed sanctions against the RF.[54,55]

Thus, on the one hand, EP7 corresponded with a significant turn in EU-Russia relations which suggests that plenary debates likewise became contentious and intra-EP divides came to the fore.

The EP8 elections in May 2014, on the other hand, significantly changed the composition of the EP and the landscape of EPGs; while at the same time, EU-Russia relations were particularly strained since the recent incidents in Crimea. While the "old Parliament" still deals with those issues, the new designated Parliament became the "elephant in the room". In EP8, the latest, recent decisions and the EP's position towards Russia-related issues taken during EP7 are now questioned, whilst divides are thrown into sharp relief.

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[52]Dias 2013, p. 7; Averre 2009; Haukkala 2015; Kulesa 2016.

[53]Dias 2013, p. 257; see also Averre 2005, 2009; European Union Committee 2015; Kulesa 2016; Smith 2015).

[54]European Commission External Relations 2016; van Ham 2015; see contribution by Forsberg and Haukkala in Nitou 2016; European Union Committee 2015; Haukkala 2015; van der Loo 2016, 100 sqq.

[55]Moret et al. 2016, p. 9; Russell 2016b, p. 2; Council of the European Union 2018.

In EP8, 48.5% of MEPs were new to the EP and 51.5% were Members in the previous term (European Parliament 2017b,d). Scholars argue that in the first months of any newly elected EP, between and within EPGs, the level of confrontation and disagreement is much higher compared to the usual "times of high cohesion". In this stage, MEPs are still in an "initial learning period", a process of sorting themselves into political groups and deciding "how to behave in relation to their political group whips and leaders" (Hix and Noury 2009, p. 173). Supporting that, the study of Kluger Rasmussen (2008, p. 14) shows that serving national interests is higher at the beginning of legislative terms when new, unsocialised MEPs and groups still have to form their stances. As a recent study illustrates, this might not be applicable to all groups: new MEPs in non-centrist EPGs (those groups are usually much less cohesive) tend to follow the line of the leading party, i.e. the Sweden Democrats follow UKIP (Bolin 2015, p. 70).

EP8, however, marks a turning point not only in the turnover of its MEPs, but also in the landscape of groups. In the 2014 elections, the share of Eurosceptic and populist right parties increased. About a year after its constituent session, the *Europe of Nations and Freedom* (ENF) group was founded by newcomers and former non-attached MEPs with a populist radical right and EU-critical political background. It is likely that EPGs or MEPs with an EU-critical ideological background challenge legislative initiatives related to Russia taken by the former Parliament, for instance regarding Ukraine, Eastern Partnership, Association Agreements with other Post-Soviet states, or questions related to the enlargement and deepening of the EU. The dichotomy between supporters and opponents of European integration is even more pronounced (Cherepnalkoski et al. 2016, p. 16).

All this happens in the context of a politicised EU, which has dealt with Euro-, financial, and migration crises. Against this background, existing research already points to a shift in the dynamics of the EP (Otjes and van der Veer 2016). Dalton (2016, p. 532) summarises that the elections of 2009 and 2014 were

> "confronted by extraordinary times [...], [and therefore they] provide an opportunity to examine the degree to which parties alter their political offerings in reaction to a changing political context. If political parties significantly adapt to the political environment, this seems to be a natural experiment to observe this process".

Lauderdale and Herzog (2016, p. 19) state that "legislative speech [...] is a core component of the strategies adopted by legislators in response to the political and electoral environments that they face". Following that argument, legislative speeches mirror developments in the chamber, politicisation processes and the diplomatic atmosphere (see also Rheault et al. 2016).

In the first weeks of EP8, a series of important final votes were taken by the Parliament, inter alia the ratification of the EU-UKR-PAA and the

renewal of sanctions. This is a time where the EP is not only under stress because of its internal changes, but also because of external factors. Plenary debates are expected to be controversial in nature and provide valuable insight into the dividing lines of EPGs.

In this light, it is necessary to include the first half of EP8 into the period under review. The period of investigation ends in January 2016 when the positions within the EP were expected to stabilise; this also marks the end of the first half of the 8th legislative term. This milestone after the first 18 months is common in previous studies (Hix, Noury, and Roland 2018; Hug 2016; Yordanova and Mühlböck 2015). Including EP8 is a prerequisite for the holistic interpretation of behavioural patterns of EPGs and the formation of divides. In view of the changed distribution of seats for the benefit of EU-critical MEPs and newcomers, the established groups are under increased scrutiny and pressure to justify themselves. What was agreed on before is now called into question. Other dynamics and conflicting lines arise in the debates. It remains to be seen how certain groups unite or turn away from each other. In view of the influx of EU critics, it will become clear to what extent EU criticism is communicated on the the topic of "Russia". Thus, including EP8 allows us to find out whether Russia, as an agenda item, will make the dividing line between pro-EU and anti-EU groups stand out. Is it an item that divides the EP through the logic of established versus newcomers, or centre versus radical, or EU establishment versus EU critical groups?

3.2.2 Preselection of legislative procedures

The EU provides the vast majority of agendas and minutes of events online. They are accessible through the procedure file in either the EP's web-based *Legislative Observatory* (OEIL), or *Register of Documents* (RoD) which is the overarching database for EU publications of any kind. In order to identify legislative procedures and plenary events that tackle the Russian Federation in the broader sense, a search within the RoD, section "Verbatim report of proceedings, revised version / Minutes" of the plenary was conducted with the search term *Russia*.[56] This query provided a list of *all* plenary events which mention the Russian Federation in their title or summary within the given time frame (September 2009 through January 2016). Results were sorted by authority (institution), date, and language and also

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[56] Access via the EP website: Register of Documents: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegistreWeb/search/typedoc.htm?codeTypeDocu=PCRER. In RoD, the procedure was as follows: search "by document type", "1. Documents relating to parliamentary activity", "1.2 Plenary documents" and selected "Verbatim report of proceedings, revised version / Minutes". Here, a search with the term "Russia*" was conducted. Additionally, following a four-eye-principle, written minutes of debates are also available by searching for *Agendas* of the plenary sittings here: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/plenary/en/agendas.html. Last accessed on 22 Feb 2016.

gave access to the procedure files (numerical code of a procedure), summaries of the resolution text and the debate, as well as a link to the full wording of every debate in its original language.

3.2.3 "Russia-related" legislative procedures and plenary events

The search results at any point mentioned the RF, however not all of them dealt with it *substantially*. To guarantee that not every debate in which Russia is mentioned is considered "Russia related", another filter was applied. The necessary condition to be considered as *"substantially dealing with Russia"* or *"Russia-related"* was that the RF has *explicitly been addressed* or is *mentioned as a central stakeholder* either in the adopted text, the summary of the resolution, or – in case no final vote has taken place – the last debate. These documents are accessible online, via each Procedure File (section "Key events"). They were skim-read as a "first-pass document review, in which meaningful and relevant passages [...] are identified" (Bowen 2009, p. 32). At this stage the guiding question was whether Russia is either directly addressed or mentioned as the main stakeholder through signal words or sentences like the EP "asks, calls on..." Russia to do something. Those EP procedures fulfilling the requirements of being Russia-related were listed and sorted by date and legislative procedure.

3.2.4 Voting data collection

There are two ways to assemble data on voting habits of MEPs. The first option to access RCV data is via the EP procedure file on the EP's website. The type of voting procedure is listed at the very bottom of a debate file where either the electronic-Vote-ratio or Roll Call-Vote data is available as .doc, .pdf or .xls-file. The second option is the database of VoteWatch Europe. Within the field of RC data processing and analysis, this is one of the most relevant NGOs for collecting, scrutinising and reporting on the EPGs' voting behaviour and plenary debates. It retrieves data from Roll Call Votes and conveniently provides it as a browsable, copyable online database back to EP6 (2004-2009).

For all relevant Russia-related legislative procedures between 2009 and 2014, all RCV data was taken from the EP website. This task required downloading a .doc-file from the EP website which listed the *names* and voting decision of every MEP. However, it did not contain information on the *total* number of votes per EPG nor on how many MEPs *were present*. Therefore, it had to be counted manually. For reasons of convenience, RCV data from September 2014 onwards was downloaded from VoteWatch.

3.2.5 Access to verbatim reports of debates and EXPVs

Each procedure file contains a link to the full text of the debate, including all oral and written statements, as well as a link to the EXPV. These are one-to-one transcripts of all speeches in their original language. Until 2012, the EU used to translate all debates from their original language into English, German and French, making access and analysis of debates convenient. After 2012, the EU stopped that procedure. As compensation, each debate in the plenary gets video-recorded and simultaneously interpreted. The EP provides these video recordings and simultaneous interpretations of every plenary debate. Those video files with audio channels in different languages are accessible on "EuroparlTV" or via the procedure file.

3.3 Analysing "Russia" as topic in the EP

The first analytical step was to find out which policy fields and broader questions the Russian Federation is connected to and under which subjects it is put on the agenda. The central aim was to discover which topics and issues are found in Russia-related debates and how this develops over time. It studied how often Russia has been on the agenda in the plenary and the committees, in which formats, and how salient it is compared to other topics. This in turn shows how the topic is realised in the chamber, as well as the boundaries of the parliamentary discourse.

Subtopics

The full list of plenary events substantially dealing with Russia was first grouped according to their procedure. Each procedure file provided information under which *subject* Russia was scheduled, i.e. the itemised thematic area such as "Third-country political situation, local and regional conflicts (Geographical Area: Russia)". That information served as the primary indicator for the policy fields.

Frequency and salience

Knowing the absolute frequency of Russia-related debates from the query in the RoD did not indicate how important it was compared to other countries or EU partners in the field of foreign policy, human rights, security and trade. To assess the salience of Russia in relation to other topics, the importance of Russia in EP *committees* was considered as proxy, given that "plenary sittings represent the culmination of the legislative work done in committee" (European Parliament 2018c).

As a first step, an inventory list of all events scheduled by AFET, DROI, SEDE and INTA was generated (accessed through the committees' websites, "Events" section).[57]

Then, all titles and brief descriptions of these four committee events between 2009 and February 2016 were scanned, and all mentions of third states or international organisations were noted simultaneously.

Finally, the items on this list were used as search terms in the minutes of the committees in the RoD.[58] A list comprising the frequency of all discussed countries and issues was generated, allowing an estimate of the significance of the Russian Federation in relation to all other third states relevant to the EP. The same procedure was applied to publications of the EP Think Tank.

Tone

Additionally, all summaries of plenary events were scrutinised in order to trace the overall tone in which the EP presents its Russia-related debates in a time perspective. These are condensed summaries, written ex-post by the EP and provided in the Procedure File. Documents such as these "provide a means of tracking change and development, [...] the researcher can compare them to identify the changes" (Bowen 2009, p. 30, see also Coffey 2014, p. 371).

This step was adapted from the Scaling Content Analysis described by Mayring (2015, 97 sqq., "Skalierende Strukturierung").[59] Put briefly, the aim is to first filter out certain aspects of content from the material in order to then "*assess* the material or certain parts of the material *on a scale* (usually ordinal scale)" (Mayring 2015, 67, 106, emph. add.). The units on the scale depend on which aspect and intensity in the material is relevant to the research question. In this case, that is the general tone of the Russia-related debate, condensed in the debate summary. The resolutions were assessed on a scale from -3 (particularly negative, pessimistic, critical) to 0 (neutral) to +3 (particularly positive, optimistic). For this purpose, annotations regarding the contents of the debates were taken in a table, in addition to salient verbs, adjectives and other signal words that justify the scaling of the general tone (e.g. to welcome, urge, condemn, ask, demand, regret;

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[57]Those four Committees turned out to be the main arenas in which Russia was set on the agenda (in 103 committee meetings versus 21 committee meetings in all other Committees). Access via European Parliament Committees (http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/home.html), then tab "Events" (http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/events-hearings.html, both accessed 21 Feb 2018). In the "Events" section there are up to six types of events, inter alia hearings, workshops and conferences.

[58]Via http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegistreWeb/search/simpleSearchHome.-htm?language=EN (accessed 22 Feb 2016).

[59]It should be noted that some steps (Mayring 2015, p. 107) have been shortened or omitted.

deeply, firmly).

3.4 Analysing voting behaviour

In the period of investigation, 45 legislative procedures substantially dealt with the Russian Federation. To analyse voting behaviour of EPGs, only the final votes (votes on the final text) were subjected to analysis; those regarding amendments, objections, changes of the agenda, etc. were set aside.

There are four distinct types of voting procedures. As the name suggests, in (1) *Showing of Hands* (SoH), MEPs just raise their hands and the presidency estimates whether an amendment is approved or rejected. Neither the exact vote share nor names are registered. Being the "general rule" (European Parliament 2014c, 97, Rule 178 sq.), this procedure is however limited to unanimous decisions or to votes where majorities can easily be estimated. In more controversial or "doubtful results" concerning amendments and paragraphs, the EP Presidency employs (2) standard *electronic votes* (eV) to show an exact numerical outcome. In this case however, voting is anonymous. (3) *Secret ballots* are only done when nominations and appointments take place. Due to the lack of information about the individual voting decision of MEPs, it is impossible to estimate the behaviour of EPGs in all procedures mentioned above. Those procedures are therefore excluded from the analysis.

The only valuable option is (4) *Roll-Call vote*, an electronic system which registers whether an MEP abstains, votes for or against an amendment or the final text *by name*. The results are published on the EP website and show the exact vote share, who approves, disagrees, refrains or is not present (European Parliament 2014c, cf. Rule 167).

Of 45 legislative procedures, seven ended without a vote and 22 with SoH procedure. The 16 remaining procedures made use of RC; those 16 voting results are singled out to analyse EPGs' voting behaviour (see Table 3.A and 4.A, Annex). The question of *how* and how *similar* EPGs vote in different policy issues guided the analysis of RCV data. The following subsection presents the indicators and benchmarks which frame the analysis; how the network visualisation software *Gephi* presented the findings; and what is understood as a pattern or bloc.

Co-voting and voting similarity

To determine the degree to which EPGs vote alike or *co-vote*, *Voting Similarity Percentage* (VSP) was chosen as an indicator. The "index of voting likeness" was first introduced in 1928 by Stuart Rice and used by Attiná (1990) or Viola (2000), amongst others. The latter examines voting behaviour of

MEPs related to foreign policy decisions of the European Communities. According to Rice (1928), the VSP between two EPGs A and B is calculated by formula 3.1:

$$VSP_{A;B} = [100\% - (\%_{Vote\ of\ A} - \%_{Vote\ of\ B})] \qquad (3.1)$$

where:

VSP	=	Voting Similarity Percentage
A	=	European Parliamentary Group (EPG) A
B	=	European Parliamentary Group (EPG) B
100	=	The maximum possible percentage of agreement
A;B	=	between A and B
$\%_{Vote\ of\ A}$	=	% of present MEPs of EPG A voted in Final Vote
$\%_{Vote\ of\ B}$	=	% of present MEPs of EPG B voted in Final Vote

The VSP ranged between 0 – which indicates maximum disagreement – and 100 percent – completely congruent voting behaviour.

In this analysis, *voting behaviour* combined approval (for), disapproval (against) and abstention (abstain). The overall VSP between two EPGs was thus calculated by including percentages of votes for, against, abstain – and accordingly, divided by three. For every RCV, those MEPs *being present* were considered the baseline. Thus, voting behaviour only relates to the percentage of EPG attendants and disregards absenteeism. To calculate the VSP between European Parliamentary Group 1 (EPG1) and 2 (EPG2) per Final Vote, the formula is adapted accordingly (formula 3.2):

$$
\begin{aligned}
VSP_{EPG1;EPG2} = &[100\% - (\%_{EPG1}^{for/} - \%_{EPG2}^{for/})] \\
&+ [100\% - (\%_{EPG1}^{against/} - \%_{EPG2}^{against/})] \\
&\underline{+ [100\% - (\%_{EPG1}^{abstain/} - \%_{EPG2}^{abstain/})]} \\
&(divided\ by)\ 3
\end{aligned} \qquad (3.2)
$$

where:

$\%_{EPG1}^{for/}$	=	% of present MEPs of EPG1 voted *for*
$\%_{EPG2}^{for/}$	=	% of present MEPs of EPG2 voted *for*
$\%_{EPG1}^{against/}$	=	% of present MEPs of EPG1 voted *against*
$\%_{EPG2}^{against/}$	=	% of present MEPs of EPG2 voted *against*
$\%_{EPG1}^{abstain/}$	=	% of present MEPs of EPG1 voted *abstain*
$\%_{EPG2}^{abstain/}$	=	% of present MEPs of EPG2 voted *abstain*

For each of the 16 RCVs, this formula was applied to all possible 28 (pre-ENF) or 36 combinations. The *overall VSP* between two EPGs was calculated by adding all 16 VSP and dividing the sum by the number of votes.

What do these numbers tell? The VSP ranged between 0 – maximum disagreement between two EPGs – and 100 percent – identical voting behaviour. Following Viola (2000, p. 267),

Voting Similarity (VS) is:

extremely low	if VSP ranges between 0 and 9.99% (maximum *dis*agreement);
very low	between 10 and 19.99%;
low	between 20 and 29.99%;
fairly low	between 30 and 30.99%;
slightly below average	between 40 and 49.99%;
medium average	between 50 and 59.99%;
fairly high	between 60 and 69.99%;
high	between 70 and 79.99%;
very high	between 80 and 89.99%;
extremely high	between 90 and 100% (congruent/ maximum agreement).

Three types of voting patterns

The study of voting behaviour attempted to identify certain *patterns* in co-voting across policy fields and between EPGs, and if such patterns occur, whether conclusions can be drawn regarding their degree or quality. The study determines three different types of patterns or particularities:

A voting *bloc* or *coalition* is formed "when [...] several groups exhibit a high degree of co-voting agreement on a subject" (Cherepnalkoski et al. 2016, p. 2; see also Hosli 1996; Ringe, Victor, and Gross 2013). Put more precisely, if voting similarity between two or more EPGs was "high", "very high" or "extremely high" (≥70%) in 12 or more RCVs (≥75%). It was deliberately decided to opt out of the term *alliance*. Whereas *co-voting* leaves out intentionality, alliance implies a conscious decision for cooperation between two groups: "an agreement between [...] or a group of people, political parties, etc. to work together in order to achieve something that they all want" (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary 2016). It therefore argues that using "alliance" is only appropriate if actors mention inter-group cooperation in their speeches or if one can find incidents of speakers referring to other MEPs across party lines (see 3.5).

Two EPGs were considered as *split* or as *divided* if voting similarity was "low", "very low" or "extremely low" (≥29.99%) in 12 or more cases (≥75%).

If blocs or splits were found in 12 or more final votes (≥75%) or in RCs of one policy area, it was considered an *iteration*.

Visualisation of voting similarities

For illustration purposes, the VSPs of every Roll Call were visualised with the network visualisation software *Gephi 0.9.1*. The "Force Atlas 2" algorithm was applied to show the centrality of and distance between EPGs (Jacomy et al. 2014).

The higher the *centrality* of a group, the more it co-voted with a larger number of other EPGs. Accordingly, those groups who did not have much in common with other groups (overall medium average to extremely low VSP) were displayed on the outskirts of the network. Force Atlas 2 algorithm put the stakeholder with the highest centrality in the centre of the graph.

Distance between EPGs is related to the concept of centrality, but also slightly differs. It points to the degree of (dis-)agreement between two groups by arranging them closer or more distant from each other. In other words, the farther away they were from each other in the network, the higher their level of disagreement.

3.5 Content and discourse analysis of debates

The last analytical steps were devoted to the "debate dimension" of divides, more specifically the content and the use of discursive strategies in the speeches of EPGs. The analysis comprised a computer-assisted Qualitative Content Analysis (Schreier 2012, Friese 2014) in combination with means of Critical Discourse Analysis (Reisigl and Wodak 2016; Wodak 2001a).

A computer-assisted Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) is a systematic procedure which grasps and describes the content of qualitative data, for example written and audio recordings of parliamentary debates. While asking descriptive 'what' questions, content analysis aims to describe and reduce content ("it is above all a descriptive method", Schreier 2012, p. 47). The aim is to reduce large amounts of data, and to find patterns and re-occurring themes in the content. Content analysis by itself neither entails assumptions about the relationship between language and power or reality, nor is it concerned with the process of how language constructs reality (Schreier 2012, 44sqq.). In contrast, as already explained in section 3.1, discourse analysis "opens up" the content of texts, and is interested in ways in which language is used and shapes reality, and "what is left unsaid" (Schreier 2012, 47sq., 50).

Schreier proposes that "despite these differences, [. . .] QCA and discourse analysis can be combined by putting the method of QCA into the service of the critical-interpretive attitude underlying discourse analysis" (Schreier 2012, p. 50). Depending on the research question, those methods can be combined by using them simultaneously, or one after the other, for

instance in order "to have a more in-depth look at a part of your material that strikes you as especially interesting or relevant" (Schreier 2012, p. 57). This thesis argues that a discourse historical analysis benefits from the systematic guidelines that the QCA provides for describing the content of the material. Even though the DHA offers detailed instructions on which and how discourse analytical categories have to be applied to the material, there is little information about how the researcher has to sum up or extract the actual content (referred to as "topics" in the sample studies) which later is analysed with a focus on discursive strategies. This task usually stands at the very beginning of a DHA; it is often only referred to as the selection and listing of the discourse topics. How exactly this should be done, in a structured and non-intuitive manner, remains unexplained.

The debate analysis had two main foci: The content-analytical part explored the actual content of the debates, that is, which issues, topics, questions, demands etc. were brought up during the plenary meetings. It thereby aimed to find out who says or claims what (co-occurrence of speaker and statement). Along with identifying dominant speakers and groups, the analysis was guided by questions as: Which positions or opinions do politicians put forward? How do they explain their voting behaviour? How do statements differ between EPGs? The discourse-analytical part was an in-depth scrutiny, asking amongst others what kind of discursive means, argumentative patterns and cross-references are observable. The combination of these two analytical perspectives targeted at identifying discourse-coalitions across EPGs (Hajer 1993, 1995, see below).

The following section explicates the notions of co-occurrence and *discourse-coalition*, which both play a central role in the analysis. It then describes how verbatim reports were processed into a debate text corpus and continues with elaborating on the coding procedure and codebook development. It ends by presenting discursive strategies and argumentation schemes.

Co-occurrence of speaker and content

To explore this, the first central analytical concept is *co-occurrence of speaker and content-related codes*. Co-occurrence is the coexistence of two codes on the same pieces of information (speech sequence, quotation) (Friese 2014, p. 185). Speakers and codes were co-occurring if they appeared simultaneously – in other words, if they were linked through the same quotation or statement (see also Janning et al. 2009, p. 73). It answers the question: Who says what?

During coding, sequences first of all were linked to a code referring to their content. Statements were simultaneously linked to their origin: *who said it*, in order to study which EPGs or MEPs bring forward which opinions. Every speech in a parliamentary debate is done by a politician

either speaking for himself or on behalf of his group. The main benefit of using co-occurrence in Atlas.TI was that one could extract which EPG or MEPs expressed certain opinions, arguments, or claims.

A "claim" shall be understood as part of an argument posed within a speech act.[60] Argumentation is a "non-violent linguistic [...] pattern of problem-solving that manifests itself in a more or less regulated sequence of speech acts which, altogether, form a [...] network of statements or utterances" (Reisigl 2014, p. 70). Argumentation fulfils two purposes: either to persuade, that is to attempt to move an audience to accept or identify with a particular point of view. In this way it relies on reasoning and proof to influence belief or behaviour. It also justifies decisions or behaviour, drawing on validity claims of truth and normative rightness, which "relates to practical questions of how to do the right thing, i.e. to questions of practical norms or ethical and moral standards, to questions of what should be done or must not be done or what is recommended or forbidden" (Reisigl 2014, p. 70, see also Garssen 2016; Wodak 2015a).

The affiliated concept is *co-occurrence of content-related codes*. Content-related codes are co-occurring if they appeared in the same speech act or followed after another, e.g. if a sequence or speech acts carries multiple messages (e.g. a statement with obvious and latent content). This allows the researcher to reconstruct which arguments and topics are interrelated, connected to or followed by each other. The co-occurrence approach traces the positioning of speakers within a discursive space and allows for the identification of discourse-coalitions (Hajer 1993, 1995).

Discourse-coalitions and story-lines

Hajer (1993, 1995) introduced two key terms that are central to this analysis: discourse-coalitions and story-lines. This subsection will provide an overview about the two concepts, and subsequently adapt and operationalise them in the context of this research project.

In his study "The politics of environmental discourse", Hajer (1995) investigates the shift of how ecological problems (like pollution or hazards) are framed, exemplified through a study of acid rain policies in the UK and the Netherlands between 1972 and 1990. Assuming that language is not only a mirror of reality, but also influences reality itself, Hajer (1995) argues that the way in which ecological problems are conceptualised decides how future policies are designed.[61] He scrutinises the rise of the so-called "eco-

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[60]The terms "statements", "speeches", "utterances", "interventions" and "speech acts" are used interchangeably. They together refer to the spoken and written utterances of MEPs during the debates.

[61]One of Hajer's often cited (or translated) passage is the one of the "dead trees", in which he illustrates his approach to discursive construction and interpretation of real-life phenomena (e.g. Hajer 1993, p. 44; Hajer 2002, p. 63; Hajer 2005, p. 299; Hajer 2008, p. 213).

logical modernisation" discourse which lead to a "significantly different interpretation of social-political as well as natural phenomena" (Hajer 2003b, p. 272), and the role modern societies and industrialisation play for causing current ecological hazards or anomalies. His study comprises a comparative analysis of why the Netherlands and the UK dealt with the question of how to regulate and react to the acid rain problem in such different ways.[62] Later studies most often refer to his findings concerning the United Kingdom. This part of his study explored why the British government in the 1980s, despite clear scientific data (compared to the Netherlands as frontrunner), neglected and denied the role of sulphur dioxide emissions from coal-fired power plants as a major cause for acid rain.

The author argues that the definition of problems on the one hand and chosen policy solutions on the other are interrelated (Hajer and Versteeg 2012, p. 84). According to Hajer, the debate on the recognition of acid rain as a serious problem was intertwined with the debate on the future shape or direction of environmental policies. He concludes that two groups, or what he introduces as "discourse-coalitions", were competing for dominance in the field of British environmental policy regulation. These opposing discourse-coalitions were based on different story-lines to explain and frame this environmental problem, and consequently derived different ideas about how to deal with it (Hajer 2003b, p. 272).[63] The terms "discourse-coalition" and "story-line" will subsequently be adapted to this research project.

Discourse-coalition

The approach suggests that "politics is a process in which different actors

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[62]Hajer (1995, p. 6) describes acid rain as "one of the prime anomalies [,... as] an example of the new generation of environmental hazards that started to dominate the environmental agenda in the 1980s". According to Hajer, it is similar to "the greenhouse effect and the diminishing ozone layer", given it is an "international" issue independent form national borders and "by nature more or less invisible yet cumulative in its effects" (Hajer 1995, p. 6).

[63]The "traditional-pragmatist story-line" (Hajer 1995, 112sq.), on the one hand, conceptualised the acid rain problem as issue that needed further scientific proof and investigation before any state intervention or regulation would take place, such as the introduction of "Flue Gas Desulphurization" (FGD) as technology to remove sulphur dioxide from fossil-fuel power plants. In any case, all actions taken should be cost-effective. "It had to be established whether there was genuine environmental damage which could be attributed to sulphur emissions [...]. If this could be proved, and if FGD would be shown to be environmentally effective as well as the most cost-effective solution, FGD should be installed. Acid rain certainly looked like a serious pollution issue but it was not seen as an anomaly to the institutionalised way of dealing with pollution. [...] in the early 1980s, [the Central Electricity Generating Board] still argued that the available evidence was 'anecdotal and intuitive' and that there was a need for 'proper' research" (Hajer 1995, p. 112). His study set the stage for numerous analyses that scrutinise the interplay of groups of actors, their arguments, interaction within a discourse and their role for actual policy change in the field of, inter alia, environmental governance.

from various backgrounds form specific coalitions around specific story lines" (Hajer 1993, p. 47), all organised around a discourse. "Discourse-coalition" (DC) (Hajer 1995, p. 65) refers to a group of actors who, for a certain period of time, draw on the same narratives (or story-lines), concepts, arguments and practices and usually share similar beliefs or understanding of reality – while not necessarily being united in terms of shared interests and goals (see also Hajer 2008, p. 217).

> "[Discourse] coalitions are formed among actors [...] that, for various reasons (!) are attracted to a specific (set of) story-lines. Discourse-coalitions are defined as the ensemble of (1) a set of story-lines; (2) the actors who utter these story-lines; and (3) the practices in which this discursive activity is based." (Hajer 1995, p. 65)

In contrast to political coalitions or alliances, the coalition does not have to be a conscious arrangement or of a strategic nature. Actors can "reproduce or fight a given bias without necessarily orchestrating or co-ordinating their actions" (Hajer 1993, p. 48). As Szarka (2004, p. 319) points out, this conceptualisation would include "cases of 'objective alliances' or 'strange bedfellows'[, ...] involving little or no communication on common positions, possibly characterised by mutual mistrust" (see also Hajer and Versteeg 2012, p. 87). Instead, given that DCs do not require a conscious decision, coordination, or strategy from its affiliates, a DC evolves from the common reference to the same set of storylines. Viehöver elaborates that their identity is determined by a jointly shared narration of the problem, which is the precondition for their cooperation (Viehöver 2001, p. 185). This implies that the common repertoire of story-lines are key to identifying and demarcating DCs from another.

Story-lines

Hajer defines story-lines as condensed and "crisp generative statements" (Hajer 2003a, p. 104) or "short cues" (Hajer 2005, p. 302) that summarise complex narratives or problems. They "give meaning to specific physical or social phenomena" (Hajer 1995, p. 56) and serve as mechanisms to reduce the complexity of a problem or phenomenon (Hajer 1995, p. 56, 2008, 216sqq.). A complex issue is broken down to a "catchphrase" (Schneider and Janning 2006, p. 181) that allows the audience to quickly grasp the problem, its context, its roots etc. Story-lines are ways to "conceptualise the world" (Hajer 1993, p. 47). They usually entail linguistic devices such as similes and metaphors which support the reduction of complexity and thus facilitate communication and cooperation between different groups of actors (Hajer 2003a, p. 105). In debates, story-lines establish connections between arguments, facts or information, and diffuse or latent basic assumptions. In doing so, they firstly help the listener to intuitively understand a

complex problem, secondly to position themselves vis-à-vis this problem, and thirdly to affiliate themselves with a discourse-coalition.

Their key functions, Hajer summarises, are the "clustering of knowledge, the positioning of actors, and ultimately, [...] the creation of coalitions amongst the actors of a given domain" (Hajer 1995, p. 63). He considers story-lines as the "discursive cement that keeps a discourse-coalition together" (Hajer 1995, p. 65). This means that actors draw on the same, similar or at least compatible story-lines to justify their interpretation in order to impose their view of the problem on other participants in the discourse, but also to distinguish themselves from others. Story-lines demarcate social networks from each other and serve as "boundary markers" (Viehöver 2001, p. 187). They position relevant actors in a matrix of relationships (Viehöver 2001, p. 187).

They entail core values, norms, and ideational structures of discourses and are "the medium through which actors try to impose their view of reality on others, suggest certain social positions and practices, and criticise alternative social arrangements" (Hajer 1993, p. 47). Teräväinen (2010, p. 205) emphasises that a story-line is internally consistent and might overlap with another, but they cannot be reduced to each other. Despite similar viewpoints, each story-line produces distinct constructions of issues that reflect specific understandings of the prevailing or desired reality or outcome (Teräväinen 2010, p. 205). Hajer points out that the "actors try to impose their views of reality on others, sometimes through debate and persuasion, but also through manipulation and exercise of power" (Hajer 1993, p. 45). Following Hajer, the EP debates under scrutiny are argumentative interactions in which MEPs engage in "a struggle for discursive hegemony in which actors try to secure support for their definition of reality" (Hajer 1995, p. 59).

Viehöver (2001, p. 185) posits that Hajer's operationalisation of story-lines would benefit from more precision. In doing so, he concurs with the criticism voiced by other authors. According to Schneider and Janning (2006, 186sq.), Hajer does not sufficiently (or transparently) disclose his actual analytical and interpretative steps for the identification and reconstruction of the story-lines and DCs in the scrutinised policy debates. Instead, the reader is only confronted with the results, that is the already demarcated story-lines and DCs Schneider and Janning (2006, 186sq.).

Viehöver (2001, p. 178) presents story-lines as part of narrative schemata which individual and collective actors use to give coherence, meaning and regularity to their interpretations of the world and their social practices. He considers narratives as part of collective communicative practices that actors use to create, change meaning, and understand and construct identity (Viehöver 2001, p. 179).

The ideal-type narrative consists, according to Viehöver (2001, 194sqq.) of episodes or sequences that form a story, actors that have a determined

position towards each other (i.e. concurring or opposing), and a narrative plot. Complex stories include a conflict definition (introduction), various episodes where the conflict unfolds, a resolution, and an end with the moral or message of the story. With regards to a political question, Viehöver notes, the narrative might comprise descriptions of problem, its causes, consequences, solutions or attempted solutions, and the legitimising principles that underlie the preferred solution. The magic that happens in the story-line is that this "catchphrase" manages to communicate these elements in a brief sentence, statement or metaphor, and that the audience understands it and it "sounds right" (Hajer 1995, p. 63, 2005, p. 302).

Following Viehöver, it is assumed that story-lines found in the speeches of MEPs are ideally centred around a conflict or obstacle, while competing ideological positions prevail. Otherwise "no narrative is recognisable" (Viehöver 2001, p. 194), given that the "pair of opposites is a constitutive feature of narratives" (Viehöver 2001, p. 196). Depending on the plot and the speaker, the roles of the actors change, and the actors are described differently. In order to thoroughly scrutinise and demarcate story-lines, the author suggests several questions which may guide their thorough analysis (Viehöver 2001, pp. 193, 199).[64] In this project, those questions will be kept in mind when identifying and describing the story-lines, but they will not be analysed in detail.

Operationalising DCs in the context of this study

The operationalisation follows Hajer's argument that the definition of problems and the preferred political answer are interrelated (Hajer and Versteeg 2012, p. 84). From Hajer and Viehöver I adopt the premise that recourse to the same or compatible set of storylines is the prerequisite for qualifying as a DC. This makes story-lines the distinguishing factor between co-voters and DCs.

Drawing on the same repertoire of story-lines is a necessary, but not sufficient condition for a DC. If two or more EPGs (with most of their MEPs) not only share compatible standpoints, but in addition use a "common language" (i.e. similar metaphors, references) and display common understanding – manifested both in compatible story-lines and similar argumentation logic – only then does it qualify as discourse-coalition (see Table 3.2).

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[64]Viehöver provides several questions that should guide the analysis, inter alia: "Which examples, slogans, [...], anecdotes and symbols are used to refer to a specific problem, a problem solution, [...], an event, a person, an object, etc.? Which causalities emerge in the process? By which central catchwords or symbols are certain actors characterised? What is their relationship to each other and what actions do they perform, by what means, to what purpose and with what success? Does the use of symbols, descriptions, catchwords, visualisations lead to the creation of opposing values or antagonists (for instance good vs. evil)? If so, are they constitutive for the story-line, or do they structure it, and therefore recur in different speech acts? Which concepts of morality and reality can be traced?".

Table 3.2: Discourse-Coalition criteria

Similar/ Congruent...	Co-voters	Discourse-coalition
Representations	O	✓
Criticism	O	O
Conclusions	O	✓
Positive cross-references	O	O
Rhetorical means (metaphors, etc.) + Argumentation structure	O	✓
(Use of) Story-lines	✗	✓

✓ = necessary criterion   ✗ = not necessary   O = optional criterion

This makes the use of story-lines the distinguishing feature to be considered as DC, and elevates a group of actors from being co-voters. An ideal DC, comprising two or more EPGs (with most of their MEPs), would (1) communicate the same positions in their speeches. This means overlapping, similar, compatible and not contradicting claims and conclusions (which demands and suggestions do they make?). They would also (2) communicate similar representations (how they describe and position themselves towards the problem, the actors involved, etc.). An additional indication would be when (3) speakers across EPGs affirm, confirm or support each other.

Most importantly, the DC would (4) display a common language. That includes the use of the same (similar, congruent) repertoire of story-lines, metaphors, and ideally a similar manner of merging discursive strategies into their argumentation logic. In order to scrutinise the latter, the argumentation schemes will be taken under consideration as well.

If MEPs communicate the same positions and communicate similar representations, but their story-lines are contradicting or incompatible, they are not considered as discourse-coalition.[65] Given that using similar story-lines is not a sufficient condition, political actors in the EP who draw on the same story-lines, but develop different conclusions, do not qualify as DC as well.

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[65]It is important to note that it is unlikely that actors use the same story-lines but use different representations of actors, since the way they are constructed goes hand in hand with the representations they deploy. However, Hajer and Versteeg (2012, p. 84) have argued, groups of actors might use the same story-lines but derive different claims and suggestions from them.

3.5.1 Data preparation

The text corpus consisted of 15 *debates* and four *Explanations of Vote* (EXPVs).[66]

For the purpose of analysis, all oral and written statements within the debates and the EXPVs were translated into English, using Google Translate. For the first step, the transcript of a debate in its original language was copied into a Microsoft Word document. Then, the audio stream of the English translation of speeches was transcribed and added to the text.

In order to account for the differences in length and depth between the oral statements and English translations, the English translations were accompanied by a copy of the original statement run through Google Translate. A merged, annotated version of the statement was used for analysis.

The analysis itself was conducted with ATLAS.ti, a software for computer-assisted qualitative research projects (Friese 2014). It facilitates different coding techniques, multi-layer coding and codebook design.

3.5.2 Coding procedure and codebook development

QCA Overview

Schreier (2012, 7 sq.) emphasises that the main goal of a qualitative content analysis is to reduce and summarise material or data with a focus "on selected aspects". QCA systematically grasps and describes the content of data by breaking them into smaller analytical units (quotes in the form of paragraphs, sentences, sequences); adding descriptive, summarising or conceptual labels to them (coding), and building a codebook (category scheme, coding frame) that is then applied to the remaining material. Schreier (2012) further explains the crucial steps to conduct a data-driven QCA. After the text corpus has been compiled, the researcher proceeds in a cyclic analytical process which other authors have described as a "first and second cycle coding" technique (Saldaña 2016). In "a process of Noticing, Collecting and Thinking" (Friese 2014, 12sqq. with reference to Seidel 1998), a codebook is created inductively while coding the first texts. In this case, the first cycle was an exploratory coding of three sample debates (see below).

The coding scheme includes both descriptive and interpretative codes and eventually organises data into categories (Hsieh and Shannon 2005; Saldaña 2016), with the main aim to reduce the amount and variety of data in the material. Codes are supposed to cover not only the manifest content – top-layer, obvious and literal statements or ideas, but also latent content

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[66]EXPVs are a way to express one's opinion after a vote takes place: "Votes in plenary take place after the debates [...]. At the end of voting, *those Members who so wish may speak in order to give an explanation of vote.* [...] Explanations of votes may be given orally or in writing, individually or on behalf of a group." (European Parliament 2015c, 20, 26, emphasis added. Cf. Rule 183 in "Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament").

that potentially gets lost in a quantitative text analysis is taken into account by deep-reading and interpreting the subtext of a statement (Schreier 2012, 15, 176 sq.). In the coding process, all specific information is reduced and classified "as instances of higher order categories" (Schreier 2012, p. 7).

While continuing to examine more texts, the codebook is used both by applying existing codes or continuously expanded by creating new ones. At some point, the coding scheme needs to be merged and reorganised. The categories within the coding frame should become "sufficiently abstract to allow for comparison and sufficiently concrete so as to preserve as many specifics as possible" (Schreier 2012, p. 8). With an enhanced second version, the coding process continues with new texts, and so forth (Friese 2011; Schreier 2012, 194sqq.). The goal is to generate a coding scheme that allows other scholars to understand or replicate the results, while representing mutually exclusive and distinguished codes. The systematic splitting of texts, the abstraction of its content, and the descriptive focus form the basis of a QCA.

Units of analysis

With regards to the *units of analysis*, the QCA included all statements on behalf of the group, individual speeches, and written statements and EXPVs, hereinafter referred to as *speech acts* of MEPs. Taking individual speeches and not just on-behalf-of-group speeches into account was considered beneficial because they give MEPs room to manoeuvre without being defiant vis-à-vis the group.

All speech acts of MEPs were examined on a *sequential* basis. The debates were read and divided into text units known as "quasi-sentences", i.e. text segments with a flexible length which are defined by their content. Quasi-sentences are textual units that express a policy proposition and may be either a complete natural sentence or part of one (cf. Lowe et al. 2011, p. 126. Once identified, the quasi-sentence is then assigned to categories (frames, descriptive codes, invivo codes...), distributed across five broad activities such as "describes", "criticises", "demands", "..." (see Table 3.3, 97). As will be explained subsequently, those were derived from a test-coding.

Test-coding and codebook development

Drawing on Schreier (2012, 146sqq.) and Friese (2011), the analysis started with a test-coding of three sample debates. This first cycle of "open coding" coded manifest and latent content as well as the speaker of a statement, in order to develop a first basic version of the coding frame.

During this step, the decision on how to code a speech segment was guided by two main questions. Firstly, if it fits into a category that already exists or if a new one needs to be generated. Secondly, which types of utterances and general patterns can be identified across the speeches. Via descriptive- and In-Vivo-coding (Saldaña 2016), the obvious, manifest content was summarised and paraphrased. In-Vivo-Codes grasp the exact wording of the speaker. They reflect politicians' language when emotions boil up, e.g. the boldest, cheesiest, most aggressive quotes. To focus on implicit messages, "polysemous" or "latent content" (Schreier 2012, p. 177), specific attention was paid to stylistic elements like irony, similes and metaphors. To be more focused when scrutinising the three sample debates (Schreier 2012, 58sq.), I pre-selected several main objects as markers to lead through the sample-coding/ to which I paid attention to during coding: Russia (particularly Russia's political leadership and political elites), the EU (either as a whole, or certain institutions), specific policies, or other MEPs and EPGs (see Table 3.3, column "object of speech act").

The test-coding cycle showed that the debates feature similarities regarding the overall category of utterance, displayed in the right column in Table 3.3. The speakers might utter 1) rather neutral descriptions or factual statements which describe current events or problems; or (2) they evaluate a decision that has been taken, an outcome, behaviour, or a policy in the light of effectiveness and efficiency, or morality. Speeches may contain (3) accusations and criticism that comprise negative and critical comments; (4) demands and suggestions addressing future behaviour, further steps, changes or adaptations of policies; and lastly, showing (5) sentiment and understanding (see Table 3.3). The latter are codes that stand for particularly friendly, emotional statements on a debate object (e.g. Ukraine, Russia, the EU, the EP). *(Pro-...)Sentiment* for something means that the speaker expressed positive feelings or views (like apologia, denial) by means of exaggeration, metaphors, or similes. Accordingly, a *pro-Ukrainian statement* for instance would be "Ukraine, a country dear to my heart" because it expresses positive feelings of attachment to Ukraine and its citizens. To give some examples for an affirmative pro-Russian statement: "the EU has to reject anti-Russian policies" or "russiophobia among member states", "mistrusting Russia is counter-productive" and "Russia is much closer to the EU than Turkey is".

In view of this commonality, I decided to construct the coding frame 2.0 around those five descriptive categories.[67]

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[67]They are referred to as "descriptive" because they first and foremost describe or summarise the content, and are not conceptual or theory-building. Descriptions, evaluations, and accusations appeared to have fluent boundaries at first, and to delimit them was intricate in the first two cycles. However, the more content was coded, the more obvious it was to distinguish a demand from a suggestion, or an evaluation from an accusation or description: based on the linguistic markers and read in the context of the sequence, for instance

Table 3.3: Descriptive categories and codes

Speaker		Object of Speech Act		Descriptive Category	Example
			→	Description Characterisation	*The Ukraine is as European as Poland is. Russia's human rights are deteriorating.*
	→	Russia's leadership	→		
	→	Ukraine	→	Evaluation (Approval, Disapproval, Appreciation)	*We made success in… It was a good decision to ratify the Association Agreement.*
Individual MEP	→	EU as a whole	→		
Speaker on behalf of the Group	→	EU institutions	→	Accusation, Criticism	*It was the EU's main fault to… Russia should not have...*
	→	EU policies, strategies	→	Demand, Suggestion	*The EP should… The EU Member States must stand united…*
		MEPs / EPGs	→	Sentiment, Understanding	*Ukraine, a country dear to my heart…*

In the following, codes were merged and turned into process codes. Process codes label what the speaker *is doing* in the course of his comment. In this case, they paraphrase what a speaker "describes", "evaluates" ("appreciates", "disapproves"), "criticises", "demands" or "suggests". Process codes are therefore to be understood as the first level of abstraction or "meso labels" that sum up the foregrounding content. They have the sole purpose to better structure the codes, to further reduce the content, and to design a cluster that organises the content, and to decide whether the quotes already belonging to this category still match or not. Each code does not collect the quotes literally, but eventually aims to comprise all utterances that would be paraphrased like that.

After more debates from the corpus have been analysed and coded, the codebook was further refined. The second cycle identified overlaps between categories and unclear phrasings, which suggested further code book refinement and improvement (Schreier 2012, p. 162). If new codes were generated by the subsequent material, then the debate was re-analysed to determine the presence of those categories. "By doing so, I filled in underdeveloped categories and narrowed excess ones" (Bowen 2009, p. 37). When codes were merged or renamed, their quotes were checked to make sure that they still fit into this category. This was followed by round three

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words that communicate urgency, strong negative emotions, exclamation marks, rhetorical questions, and so forth.

and so forth, until all debates were scrutinised.

When analysing the debates, special attention was given to the national background of a speaker and to the overall context of a statement (for instance links to other topics or current events) (Wodak 2001a, p. 67; van Leeuwen 2007). In each statement where Russia was mentioned, the follow-up question became how important and contextualised the statement was. During coding, it was noted if Russia served as an example or illustration, was only mentioned implicitly or if it was the core of the argument.

Populist appeals

Another aspect added to the codebook were *populist appeals* ("Argumentum ad populum", Wodak 2009, pp. 43, 45). In such a speech act, speakers present themselves as the people's advocates and suggest that they "really know what people are thinking" and wanting (Moffitt and Tormey 2014, p. 391), while the core message is criticism of the elite in the name of the people. Such utterances draw on the definitions by Moffitt and Tormey (2014) and Mudde (2004). The latter defines populism as a thin-centred ideology "that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite', and which argues that politics should be an expression of the volonté générale (general will) of the people" (Mudde 2004, pp. 543, 544).

Moffitt and Tormey (2014, 386sqq., 390) conceptualise populism as political style and thereby emphasise the relevance of the "performative elements" of populism. They argue that performance is more than "a one-sided relationship in which a politician 'performs' for a passive audience, but rather a feedback loop whereby the performance can actually change or create the audience's subjectivity" (Moffitt and Tormey 2014, p. 389). Acknowledging "the collapsing of style and content in these 'spectacular' times", the authors focus on performative repertoires and "how the performances of [these political actors] influence the relationship between the populist leader and 'the people', and vice versa [. . .]" (Moffitt and Tormey 2014, 387sq.).

In their model, the authors suggest three elements of a populist style that should come together in order to classify a speech act as populist (Moffitt and Tormey 2014, 391sq.). A speaker would (1) refer to 'the people' as both their central audience and as the peer-group they claim to represent. The "dichotomous division of society between 'the people' and others", Moffitt and Tormey (2014, p. 391) emphasise, is context-specific, which means that the antagonist(s) of 'the people' does not have to be the elite, but any "other group in society [. . .] or even institutions [. . .] the establishment, the state, the system" (Moffitt and Tormey 2014, p. 391). One would also identify (2) the reference to some sort of (moral, economic, political, . . .) crisis, a potential breakdown, emergency or threat that often finds its

roots in the group opposed to 'the people'. There are "demands to act decisively and immediately", offering common sense and simplified solutions to complex and lengthy decision-making procedures (Moffitt and Tormey 2014, p. 391). Through this, speakers display "a more general distrust of the complex machinery of modern governance, the complicated nature of policy solutions", and "slow politics" (Moffitt and Tormey 2014, p. 392). Lastly, populist speeches (3) disregard or indirectly oppose the "appropriate way of acting in the political realm" (Moffitt and Tormey 2014, p. 392), i.e. the unspoken rules of behaviour that have been set up by the elite. Those "bad manners" might include "slang, swearing, political incorrectness, [...] directness, playfulness, a certain disregard for hierarchy and tradition, ready resort to anecdote as 'evidence'", etc. (Moffitt and Tormey 2014, p. 392). This way of talking demonstrates that the speaker is neither part of or socialised into the ruling elite nor accepts "their" rules of behaviour, whilst using the language that 'the people' understand and can relate to. Following Hawkins (2009), Moffitt and Tormey (2014), and Mudde (2004), the *Populism* code family thus includes elements of style, rhetoric tools and explicit statements which refer to the antagonism between 'the people' and their opponent (for instance the elite), presenting the speaker as the peoples' advocate.

Eventually, the final codebook (see Annex) consists of codes according to the model "Process: Object: Content", for instance: "Criticises: RUS: human rights situation" or "evaluates: Eastern Partnership: aggressive". Speakers on behalf of their group were coded "Group_Last name of MEP" or, if speaking as individual MEP, as "Last name of MEP_Group". This scheme was applied until all debates were scrutinised.

3.5.3 Analysing discursive strategies and argumentation

The discourse analytical part of this study examines patterns of parliamentarians' linguistic repertoires and how these are linked to different schemes of argumentation. It draws on Discourse Historical Analysis (Reisigl and Wodak 2016; Wodak and Meyer 2016). This analytical step focuses on, firstly, nomination and predicational strategies (membership categorisation and the manner in which certain qualities or attributes get linked to particular objects or groups), perspectivisation (the positioning and involvement of the speaker), linguistic tools to frame in-group and out-groups, and other strategies deployed to justify voting behaviour or the way political actors are represented. Secondly, it is devoted to the argumentation scheme or -logic of MEPs, particularly how the discursive strategies are incorporated into the argumentation. Which rhetorical means or discursive strategies deploy the speakers to strengthen their arguments and construct different groups of actors and which patterns prevail thereof (Poopuu 2015, p. 135)? How do these aspects vary depending on the speaker; and (how) do argu-

ments and language use change over time – which milestones or turning points can be identified?

During the process of describing, characterising, evaluating, accusing and criticising, demanding and suggesting, showing sentiment and understanding, each MEP makes use of rhetorical devices and discursive strategies, which eventually construct social reality and social actors in the EP. During the content analytical procedure, the researcher also coded metaphors, references, rhetorical means, and references to other events or MEPs and EPGs. In that sense, as far as the coding procedure was concerned, the QCA and the discourse analysis were parallel steps.

With the descriptive codes as starting points or markers, it was now time to scrutinise how speakers build their arguments, perform justifications and self-other representations through systematic ways of using language (discursive strategies) (Žagar 2010, p. 18). The term "discursive *strategy*" shall be understood as neutrally as a "tool": It is "a (more or less accurate and more or less intentional) plan of practices, including discursive practices adopted to achieve a particular social, political, psychological or linguistic goal" (Reisigl and Wodak 2001, p. 31).

A note on the role of rhetorical means

This work considers rhetorical means to be solely linguistic or grammatical markers. Being intermediary steps during analysis, they serve as waypoints or markers to detect and trace discursive strategies. The means themselves are not objects under scrutiny. Therefore, they are illustrated in speech passage examples, but no further exemplification of their meaning is provided here. The common rhetorical means, as suggested by Reisigl and Wodak (2016), are included in figure 3.4. Reading it from left to right, it illustrates the workflow of how the discourse analytical part of the study evolves from the content analysis.

Discursive strategies for the representation of actors

Drawing on Krzyzanowski (2010), Reisigl and Wodak (2016, p. 33), van Leeuwen (2008, 23 sq.), the following catalogue compiles three consecutive discursive strategies which stand at the core of the in-depth analysis: Nomination and Reference, Predication, and Perspectivisation. Those three discursive strategies are involved in positive-self and negative-other representations.[68] The discursive construction of "us" and "them" is the

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[68]The DHA presented by Wodak and her colleagues moreover examines *intertextualities and interdiscursivity* (see Footnote 51) as well as *intensification and mitigation*. By intensification or mitigation, the speaker modifies (increases or weakens) the force and status of an utterance (Reisigl and Wodak 2016, pp. 33, 234). Linguistic markers are diminutives, hesitations, vague expressions, words like "assume, feel, think" instead of "know, be certain", and rhetorical questions. This discursive strategy, though generally valuable, only partly

Figure 3.4: Discourse analysis overview (van Leeuwen 2008, p. 52, Reisigl and Wodak 2016; compiled by the author)
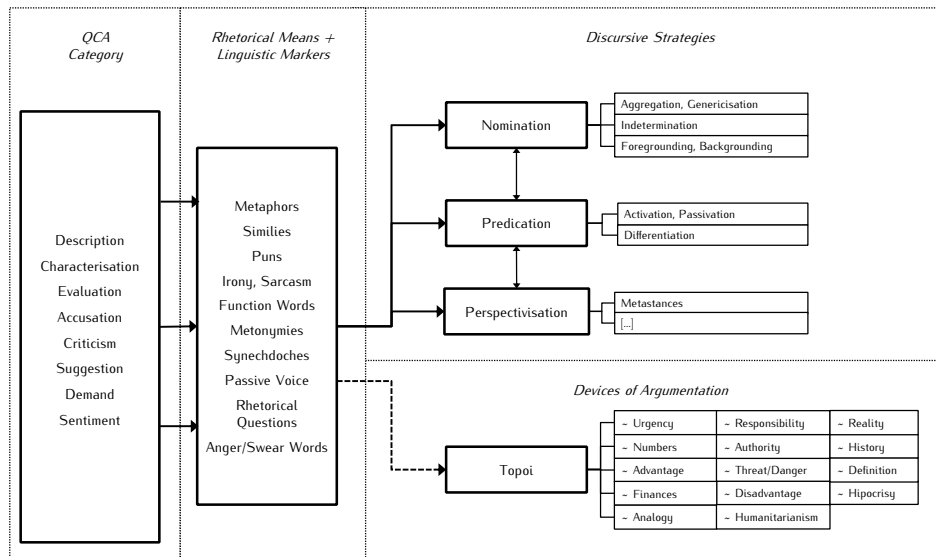
foundation for identity construction, as well as the construction of lines of conflict. Each contains a selection of potential rhetoric means or devices (Krzyzanowski 2010) through which the strategy realises; those mentioned subsequently serve as inventory rather than as a full list of "musts".

Nomination and reference

"Social actors can be represented either in terms of their unique identity, by being nominated, or in terms of identities and functions they share with others (categorisation)" (van Leeuwen 2008, p. 40). How are persons named and referred to linguistically? Which membership categorisations or groups are mentioned? The analysis pays attention to function words (I, like, we, us, our, them), nouns and their formality, synecdoches, metaphors, metonymies and indetermination of actors into unspecified anonymous groups (someone, many believe, the Russians,...). It shows which actors are put into the foreground and which are "de-emphasised, pushed into the background" (Foregrounding/ Backgrounding; for instance, debates about Ukraine background Ukraine whilst only talking about Russia and the EU); aggregation/ assimilation/ genericisation into collective or homogeneous entities.

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contributes to the research goals, and therefore is set aside in this project.

Predication

Predication means the "discursive qualification of actors, objects, etc. [. . .] by semiotic means of ascription and attribution such as adjectives, prepositional phrases, [etc.]" (Reisigl and Wodak 2016, p. 235). What traits, characteristics, qualities and features are attributed to those social actors? In what manner are certain qualities or attributes linked to particular objects, and how are in-groups and out-groups separated from one another? This aspect addresses how social actors are labelled implicitly and explicitly: positively or negatively, deprecatory or appreciatively. It looks for stereotypical, evaluative attributions of traits; role allocation (activation and passivation, the specific role that social actors play, e.g. agent and victim); differentiation (if a statement explicitly differentiates a group of actors from another similar group, creating the difference between the self and the other; impersonalisation (when actors are represented by linguistic forms which do not include the semantic feature 'human').

Perspectivisation

Perspectivisation refers to the process of "positioning the speaker's point of view and expressing involvement or distance" (Reisigl and Wodak 2016, p. 33).[69] From what perspective or point of view are labels, attributions, and arguments expressed? How does the speaker express involvement, what is the speaker's point of view and level of involvement? Signalled by words like "my", "I know for sure that. . . ", active sentence constructions, irony or sarcasm, quotation marks and by metastances.

Metastances are statements that quote refer to what someone else (just) said. "When a speaker quotes [or refers to] someone else's words [. . .] the quotation is not neutral. Instead it always reflects the current speaker's stance [. . .]. Metastances thus involve both framing the previous thirdparty stance (speaker representing author's utterance) and taking a stance on the author's utterance (speaker taking a stance on the previous stance)" (Vandergriff 2012, p. 58).

Argumentation and topoi in speech acts

A simplified argumentation analysis will scrutinise the style and justification- or argumentation logic of EPGs, asking how the EPGs construct their argumentation. Previous analytical steps established the positions, demands, criticism, and the way political actors describe each other. As explained in section 3.5, discourse-coalitions feature a "common language" (i.e. similar metaphors, references) and display common understanding – manifested both in story-lines and similar argumentation logic. In their

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[69]The authors use either perspectivation (e.g. Reisigl and Wodak 2001, p. 81) or perspectiv*is*ation (e.g. Wodak 2015b, p. 8).

speeches, MEPs explain, justify, and try to convince their audience by argumentation. The analysis therefore focuses on two aspects. First, on the warrant of the arguments. Second, how the speakers deploy rhetorical means and representations of actors into their argumentation and fuse it into a claim.

When analysing argumentation, literature in the field of DHA/ QCA often builds on the Toulmin functional model of argumentation (Toulmin 1958, 92sqq.). Arguments consist of six elements, three of which are essential to this analysis (Toulmin 1958, p. 90; Reisigl 2014, p. 74): (1) The claim: the statement/ thesis in question, which is argued and has to be justified, or which the audience is asked to accept (as true or legitimate). (2) Data/ grounds are the evidence or facts used to prove the claim; it is assumed that the grounds as such are not challenged. Finally, (3) the warrant or conclusion rule. Warrants connect the claim (the disputed, contested thesis or statement that has to be justified or refuted) with the data (the evidence, facts used to prove the claim). They legitimise the claim by showing the relevance of the grounds: Why does that data mean someone's claim is valid? Warrants may take the form of rules, principles, or conventions particular to certain fields. In most arguments, they are implicit and hence unstated. Since they lack "obvious linguistic markers" or "adverbs that signal their presence", warrants are challenging for the researcher and demand interpretation (Keith and Beard 2008, p. 30). This implicitness moreover gives space for the other person to question and expose the warrant, perhaps to show it is weak or unfounded. In a nutshell, warrants are the tacit knowledge, presumptions or "propositions" that serve as a "bridge" leading from the claim to the data (Toulmin 1958, p. 91) in order to "certify the soundness" of the arguments (Toulmin 1958, p. 92). Since it connects the argument with the conclusion, argumentation analysis considers it as the central element.

In DHA studies, the role of warrants is often taken over by topoi. Topoi are described as central devices of argumentation that belong to the premises. Similar to warrants, they justify the transition from the argument(s) to the conclusion, but compared to Toulmin's warrants, they are often norm driven and on a more abstract level (cf. Keith and Beard 2008; Žagar 2010). Topoi are typically implicit but can be made explicit as conditional or causal paraphrases such as "if x, then y" or "y, because of x" (Wodak 2001, 2009, see Table 3.5). It is assumed here that topoi fulfil two tasks: justification of voting choice and justification of positive/ negative attributions of other actors (Wodak 2009, 44). These devices are thus part of argumentation strategies.

Krzyzanowski (2010, 105sqq.) and Wodak (2015a, p. 7, 2009, p. 44) identified topoi that are particularly frequent in political speeches, for instance when "negotiating specific agenda in meetings, or trying to convince an audience of one's interests, visions or positions" (Wodak 2009, p. 42). Even though the list displayed in Table 3.5 (p. 105) is incomplete and the analysis

remains inductive, they are considered waypoints during analysis.

To summarise, this step will scrutinise the speeches through the lens of Toulmin's model. It asks how the MEPs construct their argument through variations in the combination of rhetorical means, representations, and story-lines either as claim, or data/ ground, or warrant. In a comparative perspective, the analysis will reconstruct how the MEPs deploy rhetorical means and representations into their argumentation and develop their claim. It aims to identify the different use of topoi, i.e. which topoi and their function in the argumentation.

The following chapter, as the first analytical chapter, maps the content and establishes the (thematic) boundaries of the discourse on Russia in the EP.

Table 3.5: Common topoi in the political sphere (Krzyzanowski 2010, 125sqq., 127, 128, Wodak 2015a, p. 7, Wodak 2009, p. 44; compiled by the author)

Topos	Conditional paraphrase
Topos of Advantage or Usefulness	If an action under a specific relevant point of view will be useful, then one should perform it.
Topos of Uselessness or Disadvantage	If one can anticipate that the prognosticated consequences of a decision will not occur, then the decision has to be rejected. If existing rulings do not help to reach the declared aims, they have to be changed.
Topos of Threat or Danger	If there are specific dangers or threats, one should do something against them.
Topos of Humanitarianism	If a political action or decision does or does not conform to human rights or humanitarian convictions and values, then one should or should not perform or make it.
Topos of Finances	If a specific situation or action costs too much money or causes a loss of revenue, one should perform actions that diminish the costs or help to avoid the loss.
Topos of Reality	Because reality is as it is, a specific action/ decision should be performed/ made.
Topos of Numbers	If the numbers prove a specific topos, a specific action should be performed/ not be carried out.
Topos of History	Because history teaches that specific actions have specific consequences, one should perform or omit a specific action in a specific situation (allegedly) comparable with the historical example referred to.
Topos of Authority	If a law, an otherwise codified norm, or an authority (like an institution, or "facts") prescribe or forbid a specific action, it has to be performed or omitted.
Topos of Definition	If an action, thing, problem, person or a group is named/ designated (as) X, it carries the qualities/ traits/ attributes contained in the (literal) meaning of X.
Topos of Urgency	Decisions or actions need to be drawn/ found/ done very quickly because of an external, important and unchangeable event beyond one's own reach and responsibility
Topos of Responsibility	Because a state or a group of persons or actors is responsible for the emergence of specific problems, it or they should act in order to find solutions to these problems.
Topos of Hypocrisy	If standards apply to one situation or group of persons, they should apply to another.
Topos of Analogy	If things are alike in an obvious way, they also will be alike in other ways.

Chapter 4

"Russia" as agenda item

What is "Russia" in the EP, based on how it is scheduled on the EP agenda? How salient and within which policy fields is the topic addressed in the EP plenary and committees? Russia and the EU member states share a long history of trade, exchange, and interdependency (see 2.1. 2013 and 2014 undeniably marked a downturn in their bilateral cooperation (van Ham 2015). During the final stage of negotiations for the EU-UKR-PAA and the subsequent "Euromaidan" events in Kiev, diplomatic ties became strained. Against the background of Russia responding with the Annexation of the Crimean peninsula and the separatist war in Eastern Ukraine, EU-Russia relations chilled significantly and culminated in the hibernation of institutionalised diplomatic cooperation in March 2014. Overall, EU-Russia relationship has changed in quality, design and degree of institutionalisation.

Knowing all that, however, little academic attention has been paid to how "Russia" as topic has been addressed and changed in the EP, let alone what actually constitutes the subject in the plenary. This knowledge, however, is a crucial prerogative to "create the context" for analysing voting behaviour and speeches, and to estimate whether Russia polarises MEPs and brings dynamism and hierarchy into the patterns of divides. This chapter is therefore devoted to the key elements that constitute the Russian Federation as plenary issue (or agenda item) in the Parliament. It examines the salience of the Russian Federation in the EP, the policy fields linked to it and how both develop in the light of the changing nature of EU-Russia relations. What is "Russia" in the EP? How often, how prominent and under which subjects has Russia been on the agenda of EP plenary and committee meetings and how did this develop between 2009 and the beginning of 2016? The central conclusion drawn from this chapter is that "Russia" became a topic of crisis, which is reflected in the ways it is itemised in the EP agenda. Given that, votes and debates dealing with that topic are likely moments in which the changing dynamics of divides in the EP are highlighted.

The chapter proceeds as follows. The first section describes the Parliament's competencies, activities and role in respect to EU-Russia relations. It summarises how the committees and other intra-EP structures are involved in the thematic and legislative work on this particular third state. Following that, the subsequent sections first analyse the frequency and types of Russia-related legislative procedures, as well as the number of plenary events (plenary sessions and committee meetings). After that, those numbers are put in perspective: it estimates Russia's salience compared to other third countries relevant to the EP. Based on information provided in the procedure files, the analysis next examines the subjects under which Russia is tabled and traces the development over time. The analysis is complemented by the investigation of resolution texts and debate summaries.

The analysis finds that the Russian Federation ranks among the four most frequently discussed third countries. Data indicates that it is predominantly discussed in the light of four subtopics: human rights and civil liberties, EU external policies and diplomatic relations, security and defence, and trade. Relations with Russia are moreover closely linked to EU-Ukraine relations, namely through the EU-Ukraine PAA. Resolution texts and debate summaries show that not only has the dynamic of the four subtopics changed, but also the tone of each strand. Wording which indicates assistance and cooperation slowly turns into diction that suggests urgency, structural deficits and alienation. The overall tone of Russia-related resolution texts changes from strategic partner to "frenemy".[70] With certainty, "Russia" became a topic of crisis.

4.1   EP institutions working on Russia

The first section describes the Parliament's activities and institutions engaged in the thematic work on the RF, in order to set the context for the subsequent analysis. It summarises how the committees and other intra-EP structures are involved in the thematic and legislative work on this particular third state.

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[70]The portmanteau word "frenemy" combines friend and enemy. Marwick and Boyd define frenemy as someone "who, at least at the surface, appears to be a friend but with whom there is great distrust and uncertainty about the relationship. [... A frenemy is] both an enemy who is disguised as a friend and a relationship that is both mutually beneficial or dependent while being competitive [and] fraught with risk and mistrust" (Marwick and Boyd 2011, p. 1). The term has meanwhile been included into the Oxford dictionaries, defined as "a person with whom one is friendly despite a fundamental dislike or rivalry" and as a "person or organization that you are friends with because it is useful or necessary to be their friend, in spite of the fact that you really dislike or disagree with them" (Oxford Dictionary 2018).

Formal competences of the EP in shaping EU-Russia relations

As already described in chapter 2.1, EU-Russia relations belong to the domain of Common Foreign Security- and Defence Policy (CFSP/CFDP) of the Union. Aside from its veto powers in trade-, Association-, Partnership and Cooperation Agreements, the EP has little power to initiate, bloc, or veto CSFP/CSDP activities. That being so, the EP's *de jure* impact on EU-Russia relations remains limited.

Generally, the scope of legislative competences depends on a) the type of legislative procedure and b) the policy domain. The Parliament engages with either legislative or non-legislative procedures. *Legislative* procedures aim to create or adjust EU law; they include a *legislatively consequential vote*. In Ordinary legislative procedures (COD), Consent procedures (APP), and consultation procedures (CNS), the EP needs to comment, vote or give its consent to a law proposal such as a regulation, directive, or a decision. The Parliament acts as a joint author alongside the Council (Maurer 2003, p. 242). In contrast, *non-legislative* procedures have no direct legislative consequences. Resolutions on topical subjects (RSPs) and reports published as the output of Own-Initiative procedures (INI) are non-binding and of a communicative, recommendable nature. They address various issues and target audiences (e.g. the Council, the public, governments of partner/third countries). Even though Resolutions are not formally binding, their impact is considered wide-ranging. They generally call upon or recommend the Commission or the Member States to take immediate measures, they identify and name states, organisations or persons as human rights violators, etc.

The *formal* role of the EP in foreign policy-making is threefold: budgetary influence, the right of information and consultation as specified in Article 36 Treaty on European Union (TEU), and the required "yes" to international agreements. Parliament's budgetary co-decision powers shape the scale and scope of CFSP/ CSDP, as well as the budget of human rights related financial instruments associated with the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP); cf. Troszczyńska-van Genderen and Legrand 2017).

Another aspect of its formal competences is the right to information and consultation about the CFSP/CSDP. The Parliament holds *Joint Consultation Meetings* with the High Representative (HR) of the Union for CFSP (European Communities 2012, Article 36). In those semi-annual debates on progress reports, its Members ask questions and make recommendations to the Council, the HR, and special representatives appointed for specific regions or issues.

The Parliament also plays a role in monitoring the negotiation and implementation of Association Agreements, Partnership and Cooperation- (PCAs) and Trade Agreements. The EP needs to consent with a simple majority to trade and association agreements under negotiation (Article 218(6)

sq. Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), and "Treaty establishing the European Community (Amsterdam consolidated version), Article 300; Hix 2008, p. 417).

When the EP is involved in such negotiations, or when it comes to the admittance or association of third states, the task taken over by the EP is to evaluate the state of human rights in the respective country. The strict adherence to the Human Rights clauses is required and part of every association-, partnership- or cooperation-agreement; the clause reserves the ability to partly or wholly suspend such agreements/ negotiations in the case of severe violations.[71]

Economic sanctions and other restrictive measures belong to the domain of CFSP. The TEU understands the imposition of sanctions as *political* tools in order to support and safeguard "democracy, the rule of law, the universality and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for human dignity, the principles of equality and solidarity, and respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law" (Article 21 (1) TEU). Accordingly, the EU applies restrictive measures *in pursuit of the specific objectives* of the CFSP (European Union External Action Service 2008).

The right of initiative lies either with the HR, possibly endorsed by the Commission, or with any Member State (Article 215 (1) TFEU). The final decision is made in the Council. The Parliament must be informed thereof and is not entitled to veto or block the process. That being so, the EP has limited formal power in decisions on EU sanctions.

Committee and delegation work

The Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET), its two subcommittees on Security and Defence (SEDE) and Human Rights (DROI), and the Committee on International Trade (INTA) conduct the a substantial part of the EP's thematic work on CFSP. Mamadouh and Raunio (2003) and Yordanova (2009) summarise three main legislative activities of committees: First, information accumulation, backed by their own secretariats conducting research and advisory work. On a regular basis, heads of mission, heads of delegation and other senior EU officials are invited as experts to committee events such as hearings, workshops, and conferences.

Second, committees amend legislative proposals by the Commission, and prepare requested reports, INIs and resolution texts. Through reports and opinions, they provide input and act as the Parliament's primary communication channel towards other EU institutions, the Council Presiden-

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[71]Cf. "Commission Communication on the Inclusion of Respect for Democratic Principles and Human Rights in Agreements between the Community and Third Countries", COM(95)216 and EU Council Conclusions of 29 May 1995 (reported in EU Bulletin 1995-5, point 1.2.3).

cies, national parliaments of the Member States and international organisations like the UN. In case of trade negotiations, INTA prepares the entire process with third countries and regional organisations.

And last, they serve as an arena for majority formation. After the Commission made a legislative proposal, it is in the committees where the "[p]arliament's positions are in most cases decided in practice", before the plenary stage (Mamadouh and Raunio 2003, p. 348). In case of controversial topics or if the outcome of the vote cannot be foreseen, rapporteurs and shadow rapporteurs "prepare" votes during the proposal stage by intra-committee negotiations (see studies by Finke 2012; Jensen and Winzen 2011; Roger and Winzen 2015). According to Bowler and Farrell (1995, p. 234) it is uncommon for committee proposals to be heavily modified or rejected in plenary. This, in turn, suggests that the plenary debate is a matter of justification instead of content-related adjustments.

The AFET Committee employs a group of experts and consultants working on and monitoring political developments in Russia. The Subcommittee on Human Rights (DROI) prepares all operational or symbolic EP activities in the realm of democratisation and human rights policies. For instance, DROI briefs the EP to annually awards the Sakharov Prize to individuals or organisations who advocate for human rights and fundamental freedoms (European Parliament 2017c). The Subcommittee further publishes annual reports (one concerning the situation within the EU and another one concerning human rights worldwide).

Until March 2014, the EP maintained the *Interparliamentary Cooperation Committee* (PCC) with Russian State Duma representatives. It served as a permanent biannual delegation for knowledge- and experience exchange, best practices and socialisation of parliamentary actors.[72]

To summarise, the EP has limited formal influence on the EU's policies vis-à-vis Russia. Its role is mostly that of a counsellor or listener. Nevertheless, the EP devotes a significant amount of time and resources to foreign policy issues, and to Russia in particular. In light of these institutional bodies involved in CFSP/CSDP, how important and salient is the topic "Russia", how much attention and resources is it given in parliamentary work and which subjects constitute "Russia"?

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[72]The EP halted inter-parliamentary meetings with their Russian counterparts after the *EP resolution of 13 March 2014 on the invasion of Ukraine by Russia* (2014/2627(RSP)). A formal suspension of the PCC followed in June 2015, as a response to a "blacklist" of MEPs who were not allowed to enter the RF anymore. For more information on the delegation's activities refer to Delegation to the EU-Russia Parliamentary Cooperation Committee (2014).

4.2 Russia's salience in the EP

4.2.1 Frequency in the plenary and committees

In the period of investigation, the query in the EP RoD found 45 procedures with 56 plenary- and 132 committee events that substantially dealt with the Russian Federation. This indicates that Russia is particularly important to the European Parliament.

Two legislative and 43 non-legislative procedures (INIs, NLEs and RSPs) focused on Russia (see Table 4.A, Annex). Two ordinary legislative procedures (CODs) dealt with customs duties on goods originating in Ukraine and on the question whether the EU should provide macro-financial assistance after the Euromaidan events in late 2013. Four own-initiative procedures (INIs) are devoted to the state of EU-Russia relations, the renewal of the PCA, and the strategic military situation in the Black Sea after the Annexation of Crimea by Russia. The EP writes INI reports on its initiative, prepared by the committee responsible. They have no legislative impact as such but aim to set agendas, pave the way for legislative proposals, or convince the Commission to come up with proposals on the matter concerned. Three NLE procedures focus on the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement and, as a formal notice, on the Accession of Russia to the 1980 convention on the civil aspects of International Child Abduction.

Table 4.1 shows that non-legislative RSP procedures stand at the core of legislative activities regarding Russia; the vast majority of events were debates within non-legislative RSP procedures (80%). This suggests that the EP exerts little legislative impact on EU-Russia relations while being very active in communicating towards other EU institutions and the public. The RSPs in question cover issues of diplomatic relations with Russia in general, as well as assistance, support, and trade with Russia. They focus on its political and human rights situation; the EU's CFSP/CFDP strategies in general and European neighbourhood policy; the political situation in Ukraine (most notably regional conflicts) and EU-Ukraine trade relations (see below, 4.3).

What does this mean in practice, for the daily work of the EP? Depending on the topic in question and its urgency, these RSP procedures cover various formats. Either a committee, a group of EPGs or at least 40 MEPs draft a report or table resolution text proposals. A rapporteur presents this, followed by a debate with "questions and answers" (Q&A). Alternatively, Commission or Council officials report on current developments or give an account of their work. Those hearings of about 90 minutes go along with oral questions during "Question Time", a debate similar to Q&A with delegated officials. The procedure may close with a (joint) motion for a resolution. In a final vote, the EP decides on adopting a resolution text, for example in the form of a public statement or a recommendation to a different

Table 4.1: Russia-related legislative procedures and plenary events 2009-2016

Procedure Type		Nr. of Procedures	Nr. of Events	Event Type			
				Debate	Joint Debate	Key Debate	EXPV
Non-legislative Procedures	Own-Initiative procedure (INI)	4	5	4			1
	Resolutions on topical subjects (RSP)	36	46	36		1	9
	Non-legislative enactments (NLE)	3	3		1		2
Legislative Procedures	Ordinary legislative procedure (COD)	2	2	2			
Total		*45*	*56*	*42*	*1*	*1*	*12*

EU institution (recommendations to or "calls on" either the Commission or the Council).

In the plenary, 56 events focused on Russia: 40 regular debates, one joint- and one key debate, and 12 Explanations of Vote (EXPVs). Whereas joint debates discuss two committee proposals or hearings, key debates are "selected by the Conference of Presidents as being of major political importance [...]. During key debates, no other meetings may be organised in parallel" (European Parliament 2015a, p. 12). They tackle political issues of utmost importance and mostly include Council hearings (European Parliament 2015a, p. 12). Explanations of Vote are a way to express one's opinion after a vote took place: "Votes in plenary take place after the debates [. . .]. At the end of voting, those Members who so wish may speak in order to give an explanation of vote. [. . .] [They] may be given orally or in writing, individually or on behalf of a group. [...] Speaking time for oral explanations of votes is one minute if the Member is speaking in a personal capacity and two minutes if the Member is speaking on behalf of a political group" (cf. Rule 183 in Rules of Procedure of the EP; European Parliament 2015a, pp. 20, 26).

In the same period, 132 committee events, i.e. regular- and preparatory meetings, hearings, conferences and workshops, dealt with Russia as the main topic (Table 4.B, Annex). In the majority of cases, Russia was scheduled in the AFET committee, its subcommittees DROI and SEDE as well as in the INTA committee. If AFET meets about 35 times per year (European Parliament 2018a,b), the committee would have scheduled this topic for every eighth session. On a regular basis, these four committees invite heads of mission, heads of delegation and other senior EU officials during their parliamentary committee meetings and hearings.

Figure 4.2: Russia's agenda item frequency over time
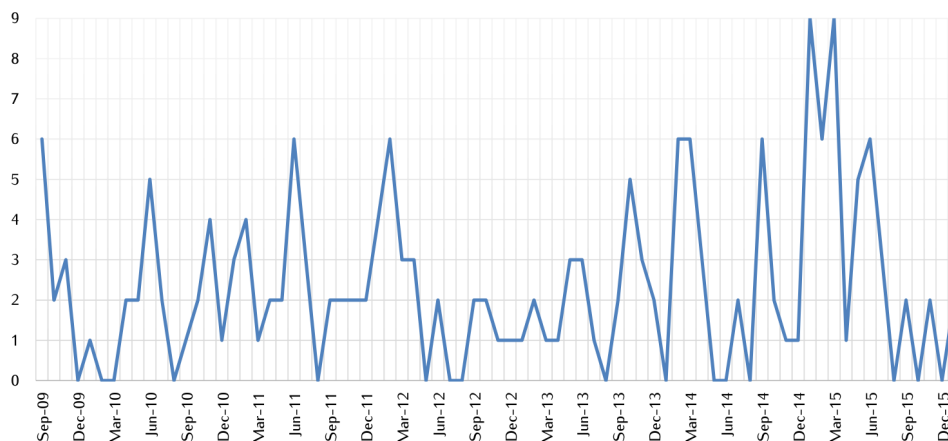
The frequency of Russia-related events slightly increased over time; this topic saw several peaks (Figure 4.2). Until 2013, biannual EU-Russia summits and their preparation, political developments in Russia (Duma and presidential elections, political opposition), together with monitoring the state of human rights and civil liberties form their contextual background. The topic gained momentum after September 2014 and, most strikingly, in March 2014 and after September 2014, against the background of developments in Ukraine (Euromaidan, change of government and president, Annexation of Crimea, separatist war in Donbass region).

4.2.2 Frequencies in perspective

Apparently, with 188 events in total, Russia matters to the EP. However, absolute numbers do not reveal the relative importance compared to other issues. To contextualise those numbers, the researcher conducted an exploratory search within the minutes and events of the four main EP committees, and an analysis of publications of EP Think Tank (see 3.3).

Figures 4.3 to 4.6 (p. 114 - 116) summarise regular agenda items, conferences, hearings and workshops, and illustrate the Russian Federation's relevance in AFET, DROI, SEDE and INTA compared to other third countries of interest to the EU. Evidently, Russia ranks among the most frequently discussed third countries in these four committees. In DROI, Russia – right after China – is the most frequent item. In AFET, together with Kosovo, Russia is the third-most scheduled topic (after the Balkan region and Ukraine). In SEDE, only the NATO and a few Sub-Saharan states were more prevalent. In INTA, it ranks ninth out of 32 topics. Russia has doubtlessly been one of the dominant topics with a high salience in the agendas of EP committees. The prominence of Russia in the work of the

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Figure 4.3: *Russia* in AFET committee, 2009-2015
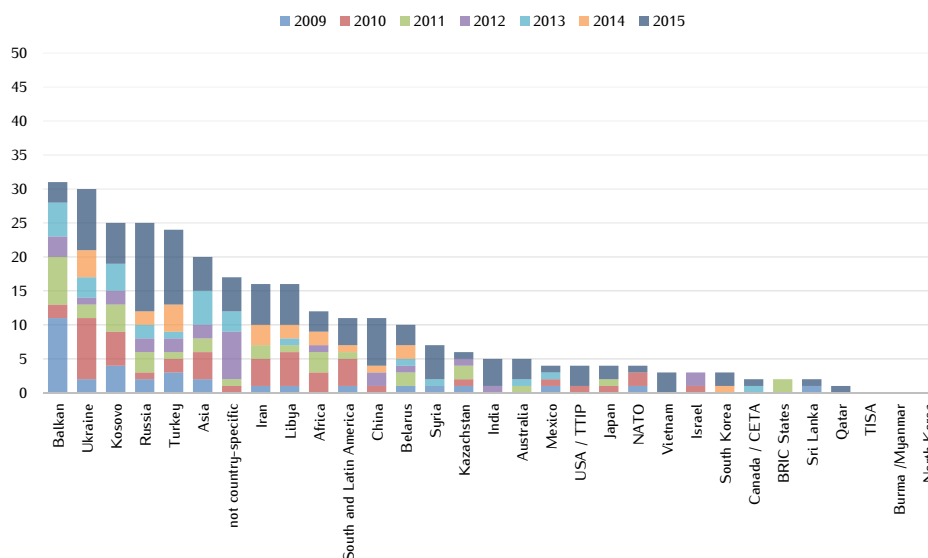
EP is further substantiated by the fact that about 138 publications of the EP's in-house Think Tank were devoted to Russia (Table 4.C, Annex). Addressing MEPs and their staff for their parliamentary work, its publications are considered "the documents that help shape new EU legislation" (European Parliament Think Tank 2018). To the EP Think Tank, Russia is one out of nine geographical areas of interest. 39 so-called "At a glance" short reports, 35 briefings, 30 in-depth analyses and 34 studies on Russia add up to about 9% of all regionally focused reports. After Asia and Pacific, Canada and the US, Mediterranean and the Middle East, Russia ranked fourth outside continental Europe. Whereas all other geographical research clusters summarise entire regions, it is the most individually researched country.

The first two sections showed that Russia ranks among the most frequently discussed third countries. It is of particular interest to AFET, DROI, SEDE and INTA committees and to the EP Think Tank. Most of the Russia-related plenary activities belong to non-legislative procedures, namely resolutions on topical subjects (RSPs). Against the backdrop of Annexation of Crimea, the secession war in eastern Ukraine, and the ratification of the EU-Ukraine Partnership and Association Agreement in the newly elected EP8, the frequency of this topic grows sharply during the course of late 2013 and 2014. The following section examines in more detail which subjects and topics are related to Russia.

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Figure 4.4: *Russia* in DROI committee, 2009-2015
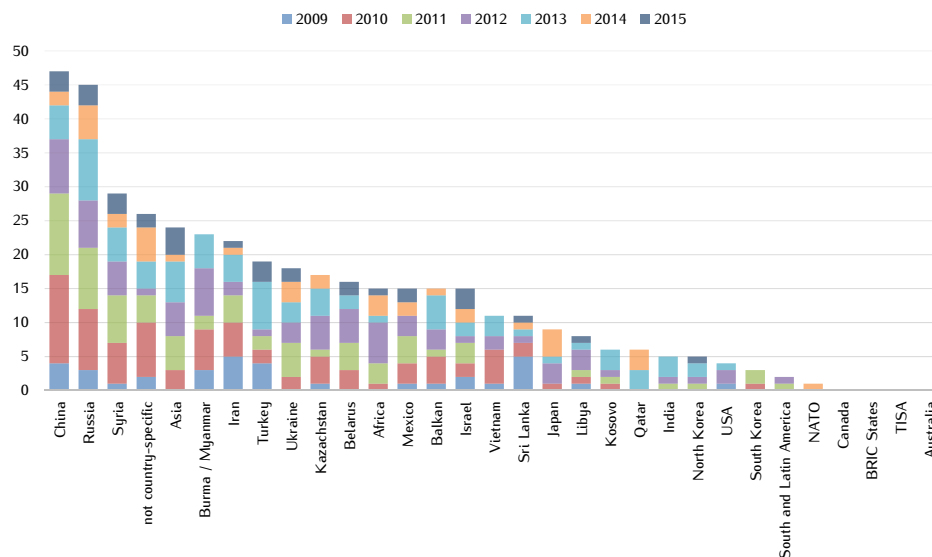
Figure 4.5: *Russia* in INTA committee, 2009-2015
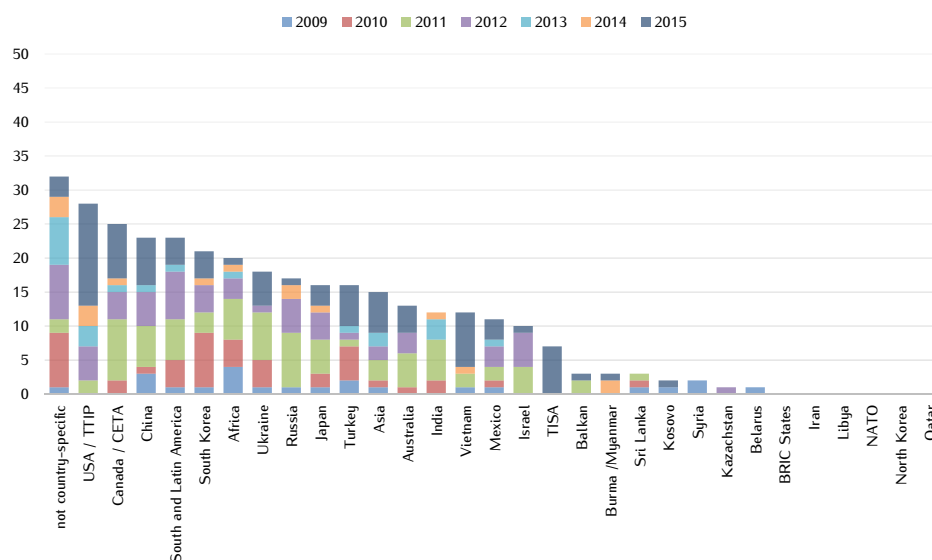
Figure 4.6: *Russia* in SEDE committee, 2009-2015
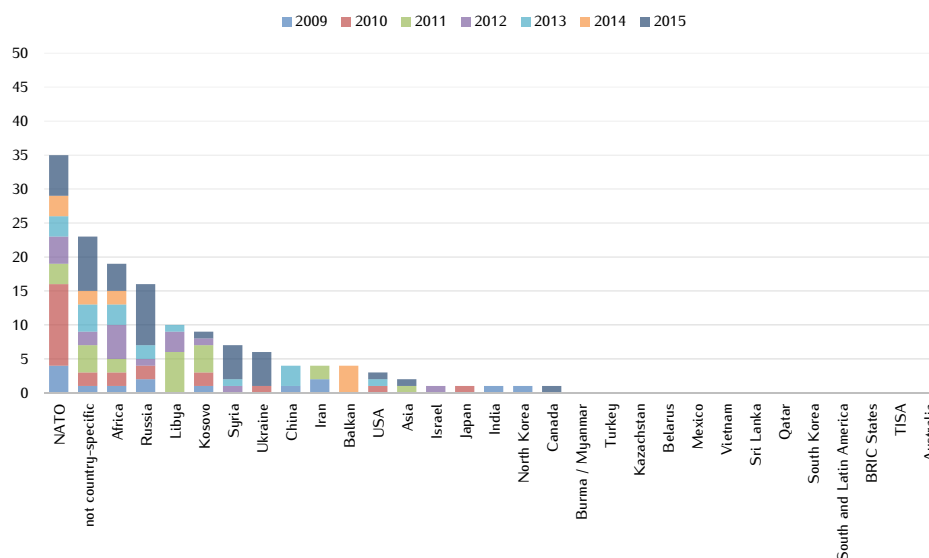
4.3 Subjects and policy fields shaping "Russia"

To identify the main topics related to Russia, the researcher clustered the corpus of 56 EP plenary sittings according to their primary and secondary subjects as specified in each procedure file. Those official subjects are systematised in a thematic catalogue, subdivided and usually particularised with "Geographical area (GA)". Russia-related plenary events (PEs) were tabled in 21 different subjects, which themselves were grouped into ten meso topics (in descending order): Relations with Russian Federation and the EU's CFSP/CFDP strategy in general (17 + 6 PEs); Political situation, state of civil liberties and human rights in Russia (14 PEs); Political situation in Ukraine (13 PEs); European neighbourhood policy (9 PEs), Trade and economic relations with Russia (6 PEs), Trade and economic Relations with Ukraine (6 PEs), Trade, Agriculture and economic Relations of the EU in general (5 PEs), Assistance and Cooperation with Russia (1 PE) and Family Policy (1 PE). Figure 4.7 visualises their ratio. It demonstrates four points: the EP mostly concerns itself with Russia through the lenses of EU foreign policy and diplomacy; Russia's human rights issues are in the spotlight whereas energy and trade relations are not; and there are no EU-Ukraine relations without Russia.

Figure 4.7: Meso-topics of Russia-related plenary events
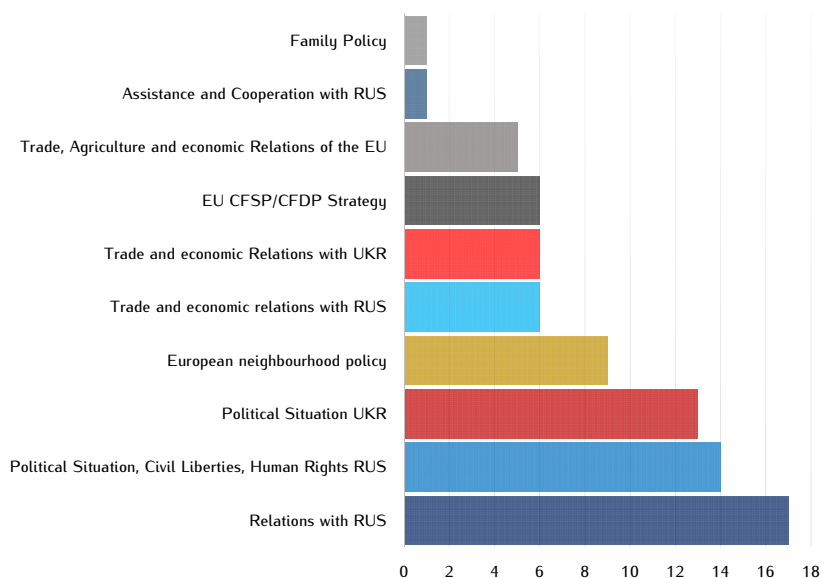
Russia as a matter of Foreign Policy

Unsurprisingly, the highest share of PEs tackles EU-Russia (bilateral diplomatic) relations in general. Several plenary sittings engage with the current state and future design of EU-Russia relations and the question of how the EU should (re)adjust its CFSP and diplomatic strategy vis-à-vis Russia after the end of the PCA ("New EU-Russia agreement"), against the background of the Annexation of Crimea and the separatist war in East Ukraine. During hearings and question times with Commission officials, it evaluates the current state of EU-Russia relations and bilateral summits and makes use of its right to be informed of the strategic decisions taken or planned by the HR ("EU-Russia Summit on... in..., Council and Commission statements", "Conclusions of the EU/Russia summit", "State of EU-Russia relations").

The remarkable share of debates devoted to that domain supports scholars who claim that the EP communicates towards other EU institutions (and the public) through non-legislative resolutions and seeks to "frame the debate" based on European values (Fiott 2015, p. 2). Through those activities, the EP "stretches its institutional task of exerting parliamentary oversight over the EU's CFSP actors and activities, while it actively contributes to the EU's policy debates about the Union's international identity" (Redei 2013, p. 186). Despite their non-binding nature, RSPs are still

consequential: they shape the public perception of (disputes with) the RF, and stand at the core of the EP's activities in shaping its own identity as a political institution and chamber that represents the citizens and values of the EU.

Focus on state of human rights and political landscape

The EP is, to a considerable extent, concerned with the state of human rights, civil liberties, democracy, political opposition and other developments in Russia's party system and opposition landscape. Only a few debates had a merely reporting, descriptive, or "factual" focus ("Preparations for the Russian State Duma elections" and "Outcome of the presidential elections in Russia"). Most PEs were outspokenly problem-oriented. Titles such as "Rule of law in Russia", "Situation in Russia", "Rule of law and human rights, xenophobia and homophobia", "Political use of justice in Russia", "Detention of Greenpeace activists in Russia", "Murder of . . . in Russia", "Russia: sentencing of demonstrators involved in the Bolotnaya Square events", "Closing down of Memorial (Sakharov Prize 2009) in Russia", "Russia, in particular the case of Alexey Navalny", "Murder of the Russian opposition leader... and the state of democracy in Russia" indicate the rather critical and cautious stance of the EP. It shows how the EP is particularly interested in Russia's domestic political developments and spends a great amount of time reporting and tracing them. This supports Braghiroli (2015b, p. 69) who states that "more than 60% of [... Russia-related] RCVs in the 7th EP between 2009 and 2012 deal with the issue of human and political rights in Russia. [...] this datum seems to suggest a more cautious stance of the EP in this specific field"; a trend that continues in EP8.

This observation underlines the argument that the EP considers itself a normative voice and human rights watchdog (European Parliament 2017c; Redei 2013; Zanon 2005, see 4.1. For that reason, it is plausible that the EP engages in the debate on HR in Ukraine prior to the ratification of the EU-UKR-PAA, and as well as against the background of the PCA with Russia.

The main "outputs" of the EP in this domain were resolutions. Although non-binding, they are important given that they identify and name states, organisations or persons as human rights violators. The Parliament in its resolutions generally calls upon the Commission or the Member States to take immediate measures against violations or violators of fundamental rights.

Trade and energy supply as secondary

In contrast to foreign policy and the human rights domain, it is trade policy where the EP becomes a significant player, given that the EP needs to

consent to trade and association agreements under negotiation (cf. Article 218 (6) sq. TFEU). It is empowered to issue resolutions or to state opinions, propose modifications, and recommendations at any time it wishes.

Despite their strong economic ties (European Commission 2018) and the sanctions imposed as a reaction to the Annexation of Crimea, only a couple of debates addressed Russia with regard to trade ("Discriminatory customs procedures against Lithuanian trucks at the Russian border", "Implementation of the EU-Russia visa facilitation agreement", "EU-Russia trade relations following Russia's accession to the WTO", "Impact on European agriculture of the trade ban on agricultural products and foodstuffs from the EU, imposed by the Russian Federation"). Since Russia continues to be the EU's primary supplier of crude oil and natural gas and meanwhile emerges as the leading supplier of solid fuels (Eurostat 2017), EU strategies strive for energy independence from Russia and diversification of its energy sources. Contrary to the expectation that Russia is discussed against the background of the EU's energy policy, it plays only a minor role in the committee on Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE) and no debates addressed this topic.

Russia as third party in the *Shared Neighbourhood* and EU-Ukraine relations

As a counterpart in the "Shared Neighbourhood", it seems unsurprising that Russia is permanently mentioned or addressed in broader questions on European neighbourhood policy (ENP), Eastern partnership policies (EaP) and EaP summits. Only one event in 2011 tackled the future of EaP *without* specifically referring to Russia ("Eastern partnership summit (Warsaw, 29 September)"). Yet, PE titles such as "*Pressure* exercised by Russia on countries of the Eastern Partnership (in the context of the upcoming Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius)" and "*Russian pressure* on Eastern Partnership countries and in particular destabilisation of eastern Ukraine" imply Russia's role within this setting is rather negative.

What further stands out is that Russia is the third party in debates that have their primary focus on Ukraine. It plays a central role in discussions regarding the EU-Ukraine PAA and the launch of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area with Ukraine ("Outcome of the Vilnius Summit and the future of the Eastern Partnership, in particular regards Ukraine", Association Agreements / Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements with Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine", "Macro-financial assistance to Ukraine"). Similar to the previous argument, this finding seems unsurprising, but needs further clarification.

Whereas it is not surprising that Russia is actively mentioned in EU-Ukraine relations, ENP or Shared Neighbourhood issues, the remarkable detail is that this has only been the case since late 2013; at a time when

then acting Ukrainian president Yanukovych had already refused to sign the EU-UKR-PAA which triggered the events dubbed Euromaidan protests shortly after. All the years before, Russia was not mentioned in Ukraine-related PEs. Most of the resolutions and debates on Ukraine between 2009 and 2012 failed the "substantially dealing with Russia"-threshold. One year later, within the first plenary weeks of the newly elected EP8, the once rejected PAA was set on the agenda again, and eventually signed by both the EP and the new Ukrainian president Poroshenko.

Various debates are devoted to Ukraine's internal political developments and crises, for instance the Euromaidan protests and presidential elections. The Annexation of Crimea and the war in Donbass were milestones in the work of the EP on both Ukraine and Russia ("Situation in Ukraine", "Invasion of Ukraine by Russia", "Resolution on the situation in Ukraine", Strategic military situation in the Black Sea Basin following the illegal annexation of Crimea by Russia"). They led to the reconsideration and questioning of EU-Russia relations in general ("Situation in Ukraine and state of play of EU-Russia relations", "Strategic military situation in the Black Sea Basin following the illegal annexation of Crimea by Russia"). At the same time, this implies there is almost no debate on Ukraine without problematising EU-Russia relations: only 11 PEs (i.e. 10 legislative procedures) tackled Ukraine *without* substantially dealing with Russia, most of them in 2010 and 2011 on presidential elections and the imprisonment of Yulia Tymoshenko. Since March 2013 ("Situation in Ukraine", focusing on EU-Ukraine relations, namely preparations for the Association Agreement, political prisoners, and the state of rule of law), all Ukraine-related debates have been linked to Russia, making them intertwined topics.

What is "Russia" in the plenary? "Russia" is first of all an important matter of foreign policy and diplomacy, in conjunction with its role as the EU's biggest geographical neighbour. Russia is a problem child in terms of the state of its human rights, civil liberties and the domestic political scene; the most important player in EU-Ukraine relations and in questions on the Shared Neighbourhood. In this line, Russia is mostly discussed in the committees on human rights, foreign affairs of the EU, trade and security and defence. As hosts of 113 out of 132 PEs, they form the main arenas for Russia-related questions (summarised in Table 4.B, Annex). Those policy areas mark the core topics which frame Russia-related debates throughout the period of investigation.

4.4 Development over time: from strategic partner to *frenemy*

After having identified the main policy areas that shape Russia, this section focuses on how Russia as an agenda item developed *over time*. It includes

two aspects. One, it scrutinises the committees responsible as well as the primary topics stated in the procedure files in a perspective over time. And two, it looks into the wording of resolution texts. This approach allows for the observation that the subject, in clearly identifiable phases of growing estrangement, changed from a positively to a negatively framed issue, summarised under the portmanteau word "frenemy".

4.4.1 From committee work to urgent issue in the plenary

Figure 4.8 (p. 122) displays all plenary events and their arena, that is their distribution among committees and the plenary over time. "Other committees" include all others except for AFET, SEDE, DROI and SEDE (merely 19 events in total did not take place in those four). Being mostly discussed in DROI, AFET, INTA and SEDE, those policy areas mark the core topics which frame Russia-related debates throughout the period under review. The figure insinuates how Russia, ubiquitous throughout the legislative periods, shifts from a topic discussed under human rights aspects and trade (red and yellow spikes) to an issue of diplomacy, security and defence (light blue and purple spikes). DROI, AFET, INTA and SEDE mark the core topics which frame Russia-related debates throughout the period of investigation. However, the dynamic between those core committees and the plenary changes in three phases. In the first phase, from Sep 2009 to May/Jul 2013, work in the committees dominates the EP's engagement on Russia, with only a few plenary sittings. DROI is the primary arena; its meetings take place as a reaction to current events in Russia's political landscape (State Duma elections, presidential elections, political opposition, incidents of political murders, repression of opposition, etc.).

Between Sep 2013 and Nov 2014 (Phase 2), this picture changes. While the work in the committees decreases sharply, it shows a significant rise of activities in the plenary (black spikes). In the light of the events in Ukraine – refusal to sign the EU-UKR-PAA, Euromaidan protests, government overthrow, elections, Annexation of Crimea, war in the Donbass area – this suggests that the EP reacted with urgency, probably not taking its time for background committee work or not seeing the need for preparatory activities of the committees. This is remarkable, given that previous research shows that the work in the committees is "the centre of EP policy making [... and] arenas in which MEPs prepare all of the EP's substantive legislative choices" (Roger and Winzen 2014, p. 391), and in which most legislative negotiations take place, and eventually, where the EP's "positions are in most cases decided in practice", before the plenary stage (Mamadouh and Raunio 2003, p. 348; see also Yordanova 2009). In the first two phases, Russia is more a manifold topic (grey spikes) and scheduled in different committees. This picture changes in the course of early 2014 at the latest.

While remaining a frequent item on the agenda of the plenary, since De-

Figure 4.8: Distribution of Russia-related plenary events among committees and plenary, over time
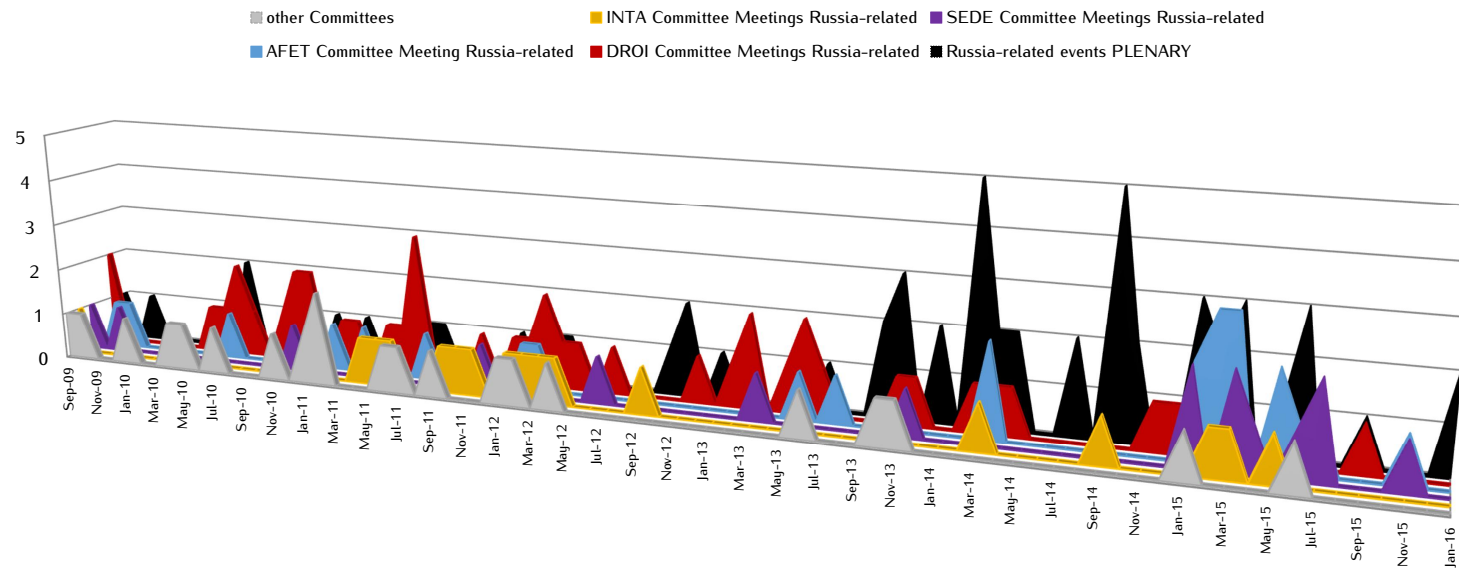
cember 2014 (beginning of the third phase), AFET and SEDE dominate the committee work in that field. Noteworthy is that the EP regularly engages with financial and economic sanctions ("restrictive measures") imposed on Russia – despite the fact that the Parliament is not entitled to initiate or veto the process (Russell 2016a, p. 13, see 4.1). Here, once more, it does take its role as commentator or backer quite seriously. The observation substantiates previous studies that emphasise the EP's pursuit of value-mainstreaming or discursive impact, particularly in domains beyond its reach (Bajtay 2015, p. 23; Feliu and Serra 2015; Fiott 2015, p. 24; Redei 2013, pp. 1, 186; Jančić 2017, p. 23).

Figure 4.9 (p. 124) sheds light on the activities in the *plenary*, and asks how the subjects in the *plenary* develop over time. It shows the development of plenary events in the light of primary subjects according to the procedure file/ legislative observatory. Like in Figure 4.7, debates directly scheduled under EU-Russia relations or addressing Russia's state of human rights are coloured blueish; Ukraine-related subjects in shades of red; European neighbourhood policy in yellow; and all other EU-centred in grey.

The figure shows two aspects. First, until 2013, Russia is mostly discussed as such, i.e. Relations to the Russian Federation, assistance, cooperation, trade on the one hand, and the state of its political landscape and human rights on the other. Looking into the summaries of debates and resolution texts reveals that a lot of debates scheduled as "EU-Russia relations" in essence address Russia's internal developments, e.g. state of human rights, as a secondary topic.

Second, Figure 4.9 demonstrates how the picture changes after Sep 2013. It turns into a topic which is linked to EaP and (the political situation in) Ukraine in the first place. The most striking observation is the change from topics in the nexus of cooperation, support and assistance during the kick-start of the *Partnership for Modernisation* (P4M) in 2010[73] to an increasing share of debates predominantly related to EaP and Ukraine, which are at the same time framed as issues of security and defence (indicated by the shift to AFET and SEDE). From March 2014 onwards (late EP7, after the Annexation of Crimea by Russia), economic cooperation, sanctions, the war in Eastern Ukraine and the reformulation of EU-Russia relations are the dominating components of parliamentary activity on Russia. The second peak in Sep 2014 refers to the joint ratification of the EU-UKR-PAA in a live session.

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[73]Within "Four Common Spaces", P4M aimed at modernising Russia's energy-, transport- and technology sector; it addressed trade liberalisation and investment facilitation, corruption, etc. supported by the EU (European External Action Service 2016). On the hopes and "spirits" related to P4M, Larionova 2015, p. 76 concludes: "The P4M has become a cognitive institution, generated new discourse and narratives, given rise to new mechanisms, contributing to new policy initiatives at the Russia-EU member states level".

Figure 4.9: Primary topics (subjects) of Russia-related plenary events over time
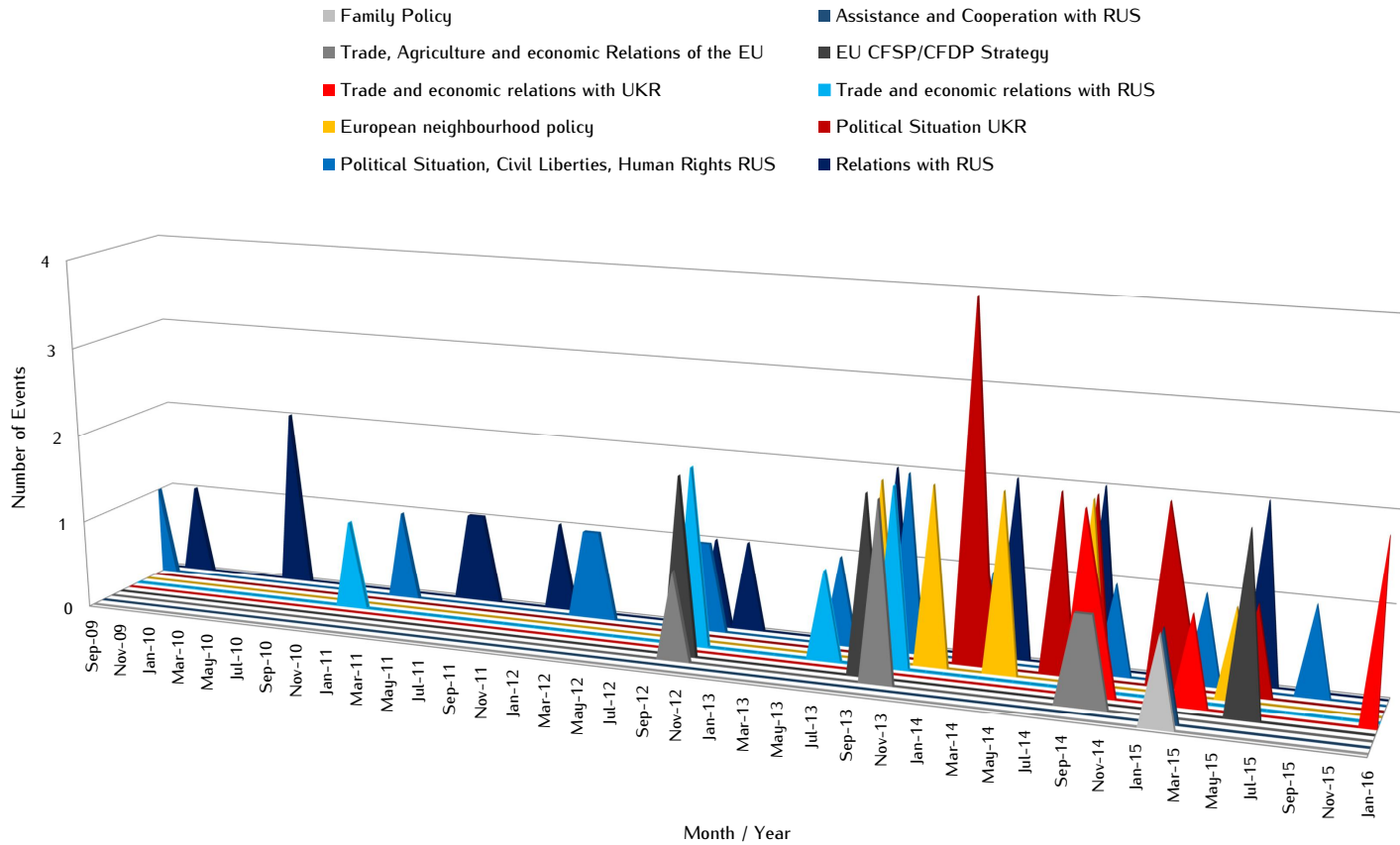
4.4.2 Increasing disaffection witnessed in resolution texts

Not just the topical focus of Russia-related debates change; the overall tone of resolutions does as well. Analysing the wording of resolution- and debate summaries (Bowen 2009; Mayring 2015) reveals a significant trend from neutral and commenting to extremely critical. This becomes obvious in resolutions on human rights (from assistance-oriented to disillusion) and in the subject of EU-Russia relations (friend and client, estrangement, to the declared end of the strategic partnership).

Between 2009 and 2011, debates and resolution texts subject to „Fundamental freedoms, human rights, democracy in general (GA: Russia)" differ from those of 2012 onwards. They address the state of human rights and the rule of law, as well as individual incidents of human rights violations and trouble spots like the North Caucasus. Until 2011 and early 2012, those problems are recognised and critically commented. However, they are more considered as individual incidents and not of systematic nature. Within that phase, the EU offers the Russian government assistance in addressing its problems and criminal incidents. The Russian government is considered as an audience thankful for the advice and support provided by the EU.[74]

In a similar fashion, resolutions in the subject "Relations to the Russian Federation" have an optimistic, positive, hands-on tone. While mostly addressing EU-Russia summits, the Visa Facilitation Agreement and the Partnership for Modernisation, Russia – personified by president Medvedev – is framed as a cooperative partner who is willing to learn. In 2011, in a debate on the future of EU-Russia relations, the EP emphasises its willingness to renew the PCA and give their relationship an updated framework.[75] The 2011 Russian State Duma elections, the subsequent protests and Vladimir Putin's run for president in 2012 mark the first turning points in the overall tone (end of honeymoon). In light of the lack of political competition, Medvedev is still addressee for suggestions regarding modernisation and civil liberties.[76]

During the course of 2012, the EP starts to evaluate Russia's modernisation progress more neutrally. Until this point, the EP mostly "recommended" or "noted". Aside from disapproving the state of democracy or the malfunctioning of the judiciary, the EP now begins to "call on Russia" to adopt or change human rights and NGO laws. Even though the PCA 2.0 and Russia's WTO accession were highly appreciated at that time, more critical voices call for Russia's need to comply with international standards

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[74]2009/2677(RSP), 2011/2515(RSP). For better readability of this subsection all subsequent references to procedures files were put in footnotes.

[75]2009/2700(RSP), 2010/2709(RSP), 2010/2910(RSP), 2011/2716(RSP)

[76]2011/2752(RSP), 2011/2948(RSP), 2012/2505(RSP)

and agreements.[77]

The Bolotnaya square protests and imprisonments in May 2012 eventually sobered the EP's stance towards Russia.[78] Since then, the EP notices the deteriorating human and political rights, and monitors and harshly criticises all legislative developments in that field (NGO laws, "propaganda" and LGBT law, foreign agents, Memorial, etc.).[79] From this point onwards, the problem is *structural*, and the Russian political elites were considered as responsible and unwilling to comply with international obligations that they agreed to.

In 2013, the interest of the EP shifted to Russia's role in the EaP in general and to EU-Ukraine relations in particular. The tone worsened and became more urgent. The EP frequently "urged", "condemned", "demanded" Russia to change its current negative behaviour (pressure, threats, energy muscle, deconstructive attitude, "near abroad" policy, retaliatory measures).[80] This diction continued during Euromaidan protests and came to a head in the March 2014 Resolution on the Annexation of Crimea.[81] In it, the EP condemns Russia's activities and announces a zero-tolerance policy. This event marked a milestone for all subsequent resolutions, irrespective of policy field. Russia was considered as being aggressive, expansionist and imperialist, non-tolerable; "harshly criticised" for the support of Donbass separatists, its hybrid war and its sanctions on food imports of EU origin.[82]

In that account, the state of Russia's civil society symbolises the overall downturn of Russia. It was described as a country which breaches international laws and where the law is being used as a political instrument.[83] After the murder of Boris Nemtsov, the EP openly addressed the growing number of unresolved politically motivated murders and suspicious deaths perpetrated in Russia; a trend that in the eyes of the EP began as early as in 1998 but was not addressed that frankly before.[84]

Russia continued to be described as intimidating and complicated, and not as trusted negotiation partner.[85] Even though the resolution texts became more neutral when all sides negotiated the Minsk Agreements,[86] this trend did not continue. At the beginning of 2015, the EP stopped considering Russia as a strategic partner of the EU.[87] In its highly critical resolution

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[77]2012/2573(RSP), 2012/2789(RSP), 2012/2142(INI), 2012/2695(RSP), 2011/2050(INI)

[78]2013/2667(RSP), 2014/2628(RSP)

[79]2013/2667(RSP), 2014/2628(RSP)

[80]2013/2826(RSP), 2013/2868(RSP), 2013/2983(RSP), 2014/2547(RSP), 2014/2533(RSP), 2014/2595(RSP)

[81]2014/2627(RSP)

[82]2014/2699(RSP), 2014/2717(RSP), 2014/2835(RSP), 2014/2841(RSP), 2014/2965(RSP)

[83]2014/2903(RSP), 2015/2503(RSP)

[84]2015/2592(RSP), 2015/2838(RSP)

[85]2015/2610(RSP), 2015/2560(RSP)

[86]2015/2560(RSP), 2015/2541(RSP)

[87]2015/2001(INI)

on the military situation in the Black Sea, it describes Russia as responsible for the "territorially crippled" (sic!) countries Ukraine and Georgia.[88] The resolution texts show that over time, the way in which the EP communicated towards Russia changed dramatically. The tone implies that Russia is associated with crisis-loaded, negative questions.

On 13 March 2014, in its "Resolution on the invasion of Ukraine by Russia", the EP announced a pause in inter-parliamentary meetings with their Russian counterparts. It supports the extension of sanctions ever since, and calls on EU member states "to remain firm and united in their commitment to [...] sanctions" against Russia.[89] In 2016, the parliament has initiates different activities to counteract Russia's "disinformation strategy" and "propaganda warfare" directed at the EU; an AFET report advocated the transparency in and prohibition of party financing by Russia.[90]

This chapter studied Russia's salience and presence in the EP's institutional setting between Sep 2009 and Feb 2016, i.e. EP7 and the first half of EP8. It illustrated that in the period under review, Russia ranked among the three most frequently discussed third countries. It was an issue of high priority to AFET, DROI, SEDE and INTA committees and to the EP Think Tank. Debates were primarily embedded in the field of foreign relations and security policy, visa regulation and trade relations (both with Russia directly and indirectly through the Association Agreement with Ukraine), and topics related to human rights and democracy. Most strikingly, relations to Russia are directly linked to EU-Ukraine relations, making them intertwined topics in the plenary. Those policy areas mark the core topics which frame Russia-related debates throughout the entire period.

Which subject is the dominant one changes over time: until 2013, trade, diplomatic cooperation and assistance matter more, since late 2013, Russia's human rights situation and its role in Ukraine's opt-out of the PAA, the Annexation of Crimea and the Donbass war were abundantly pronounced. Against the backdrop of those events and the ratification of the EU-UKR-PAA in the newly elected EP8, the urgency of this topic grew sharply in the course of late 2013 and 2014. The chapter showed how "Russia", over time, shifted from being a topic associated with cooperation and mutual interest to an issue of security and foreign policy. As the quality of EU-Russia relations changed in 2014, so did the context and policy fields their cooperation was framed in the EP. Based on this finding, it is to be expected that the lines of conflict in the EP altered depending on how Russia is framed.

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[88] 2015/2036(INI)

[89] European Parliament 2015a, paragraph I; European Parliament 2016, paragraph 7.

[90] European Parliament resolution of 23 November 2016 on EU strategic communication to counteract propaganda against it by third parties (2016/2030(INI)); see also "Landsbergis report", Motion for a European Parliament Resolution on the state of EU-Russia relations (2015/2001(INI)), paragraph 14 and 21.

It is not only the dynamic of the subjects that has changed but also the tone of EP resolutions. Meta-themes and overall tone underlying the resolution texts changed significantly from neutrality and optimism to harsh critique and alienation. Even though the resolutions are non-binding, they do have an impact. A disagreeing, critical or jubilant EP shapes the perception of (relations with) third states like the RF. When resolutions, for instance, identify and name states as human rights violators, or condemn their political activities, they simultaneously call upon the political will of the Commission or the Member States to take political steps or immediate measures. As the only directly elected EU body, its resolutions cannot be ignored by the other institutions and therefore "can be politically effective" (Jančić 2017, p. 40; see also Youngs and Manrique Gil 2012).

From 2014 onwards, discussing "Russia" means dealing with a crisis. At the same time, as it turned into a topic of crisis, the EP reconsiders or re-evaluates its own policies and strategies towards Russia, Ukraine and the "Shared Neighbourhood". Through this, general questions and principles regarding EU integration and enlargement are put to discussion. Many questions regarding Russia are therefore all potentially reconsidered under a pro-/anti-EU perspective.

The next chapter scrutinises *voting behaviour* in Russia-related Roll-Call votes, guided by the questions which patterns of co-voting and splits arise, and which divides predominate in view of the mesotopics and different points in time.

Chapter 5

Voting on "Russia"

The previous chapter established that firstly, Russia turned into a topic that is framed as a crisis. Since late 2013, Russia's human rights situation and its role in Ukraine's opt-out of the PCA, the Annexation of Crimea and the Donbass war were predominant in the chamber. Against the backdrop of those events, "Russia" shifted from being a topic associated with cooperation and mutual interest to an issue of security and defence policy. Secondly, the chapter illustrated that Russia and EU-Ukraine relations became intertwined topics: "no Ukraine-crisis without Russia".

Those insights hint at several questions related to voting behaviour represented by Roll-Call data. (How) is the framing of Russia as topic of crisis, security and defence issue reflected in the voting behaviour? Do the votes become polarised over time (particularly after Dec 2013, Mar 2014)? Do Ukraine-related votes differ from votes which only concern Russia? Which patterns can be seen in the RCs? Which divides emerge, and when? Guided by these questions, this chapter scrutinises the voting behaviour of EPGs in 16 Roll-Calls. It analyses how they vote, and how similar to other EPGs. This chapter's purpose is to identify and illuminate patterns of voting: reiterations (repetitive behaviour), blocs and divides, and whether they emerge in specific policy fields or at a certain point in time.

The chapter proceeds as follows. The first section combines previous studies on voting behaviour and group alignment with research on preferences and conflicting lines in Russia-related votes. The second section compares average voting similarities of Russia-votes with other CFSP/ CDSP votes. Between 2009 and 2016, the EP conducted 16 Russia-related final votes recorded with Roll-Calls (Table 3.A, Annex). Following that, it examines voting in four issue areas. (1) Russia's fundamental freedoms and human rights, and (2) relations with the Russian Federation; (3) Third-country political situation (GA: Ukraine), and (4) the votes on the EU-Ukraine Partnership and Association Agreement (PAA) and on "Macro-Financial Assistance to Ukraine". It discovers where voting similarities and

alignments face irregularities, changes, or where behaviour contradicts expectation.

The data re-emphasises that Russia is a divisive, polarising topic. The analysis of average voting behaviour across all policy fields suggests that Russia-votes differ from the average Foreign-Relations-vote. Analysing the RCs over time further indicates the emergence of two blocs. A "5 versus 3" pattern iterates and consolidates. The correct interpretation of this divide is, however, not straightforward. The data also hints at the importance of national allegiances of MEPs, or the role of strong national delegations within the groups.

5.1   Voting habits of EPGs

Studies on the EP engage with the question of how and why MEPs/ EPGs behave the way they do (voting, group cohesion, group (dis)loyalty). From studies based on RC data, researchers know that EPGs display a high group cohesion and vote homogeneously; MEPs vote based on their ideology instead of their national background; EPGs form ad hoc coalitions with other groups, depending on the policy field; behaviour in RC votes most likely differs from secret or anonymous votes; and nationality might outrule/ outweigh group loyalty if a topic is highly salient in the national context of an MEP.

As chapter 2 explains, in EP7 and EP8, were organised in seven to eight groups:[91] The *European Peoples Party* (EPP), *Alliance of Liberals and Democrats* (ALDE), *Socialist and Democrats* (S&D), *The Greens* (Greens/EFA), *Europe of Nations and Freedom* (ENF, since June 2015), *Europe of Freedom and (Direct) Democracy* (EFD(D)), and the *European United Left* (GUE/NGL) group. Those MEPs not belonging to any political group are known as *Non-Attached* Members (NIs) (European Parliament 2017a). The distribution of seats is displayed in Table 2.1, page 36.

5.1.1   Group loyalty and voting cohesion

EPGs are formed by ideological attachment. Bressanelli (2012) shows that ideological compatibility is the most decisive factor for transnational affiliation. Legislators join groups because of ideological commitment and intrinsic values shared by the members. In addition to the apparent practical advantages of EPG membership, literature also identifies rational motives for group membership and loyalty (career goals, office-seeking, perceived preference coherence between expert and non-expert legislators, Ringe 2009).

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[91]Seven groups between September 2009 and June 2015 (roughly a year after EP8 elections). The Europe of Nations and Freedom (ENF) group, becoming the eighth EPG, was founded on 15 June 2015.

When MEPs become members of transnational EP groups, they remain members of their home party. Given that, literature postulates a principal-agent relationship between the EPG and the national party on the one hand (the principals) and the individual MEP (the agent) on the other (cf. Brack and Olivier Costa 2013, p. 4). Both principals have mechanisms through which they try to keep the voting unity of their agents. Thus, the voting decision of an MEP is strongly influenced by the activities of the two principals, given that each of them pushes the agent to adopt its position in a given vote (Coman 2009). Research finds that MEPs are torn between their principals (their national party affiliation, local constituency/ electoral district, and EP group).

Most literature on EP voting behaviour indicates that parliamentarians usually are more likely to vote along party lines than along national lines, being conditioned more by party allegiance than by nationality (Hix and Noury 2009). If a conflict of loyalties arises, for instance between the national party and the EPG's preference, MEPs tend to vote according to the group line (Finke 2016). To illustrate this, Hix, Noury, and Roland (2009, p. 821) explain that "if one only knows which political group an MEP belongs to, one could correctly predict her voting behaviour 90 per cent of the time, while if one knows only which member state an MEP belongs to, one could correctly predict her voting behaviour only 10 per cent of the time". Building on all Roll Call votes, Hix, Noury, and Roland (2007, Chapter 7) provide a comparative analysis of voting cohesion in the first five EP legislatures. Their overall conclusion is that EPGs became more and more cohesive as the competences and relevance of the EP increased (cf. Bowler and McElroy 2015). Coman (2009, p. 1104) states that the ideological closeness (agreement) between the members of an EPG "is the glue holding together its members [...]. People who share common beliefs are more likely to agree on political issues and therefore to vote in the same way".

At the same time, MEPs have strong incentives to vote with their group leadership because they pursue career goals (Meserve, Pemstein, and Bernhard 2009) and seek office (Baumann, Debus, and J. Müller 2015). Even though the national party controls electoral nominations, it is the EPG leadership who influences committee assignments and bill rapporteurships. They control the speaking agenda within the plenary, nominate MEPs to the Parliamentary Bureau, and "sanction" deviant behaviour.[92] Those circumstances facilitate group loyalty, which itself manifests in mostly high group cohesion in votes (even though larger groups appear more cohesive than smaller EPGs, see for example Almeida 2012). In a nutshell, unity

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[92]For how speaking time is allocated in the groups, see Proksch and Slapin (2015, p. 149); Hausemer (2006, p. 523) finds that MEPs who act according to the group line obtain more salient reports than those who frequently vote against the group.

in voting (a high group cohesion) is thus explained by the sum of ideological consensus, disciplinary mechanisms, incentives, and socialisation processes. This leads to the observation that MEPs vote according to ideological lines, not according to their national interests.

When EPGs vote, they form "ad hoc" and policy specific voting coalitions, which mostly depend on their location within the integration-redistribution matrix.

5.1.2 Voting in off-record votes and on highly salient topics

The common pattern of more "ideological" than "national" legislative behaviour does not apply in secret votes and when voting on highly salient topics. Studies drawing on interviews and questionnaires show that how MEPs vote changes depending on the voting procedure. "Ideological voting" habits are broken when MEPs vote anonymously or by showing of hands (Kluger Rasmussen 2008; Trumm 2015). In case of RC, voting is public and monitored. This "public nature" (Trumm 2015, p. 1129) supposedly influences the choices of parliamentarians. In anonymous votes, MEPs are much more likely to become an EPG "rebel". Rather than following their EPG's paradigm or preference, the national allegiance comes back and determines the vote.[93]

One strand in literature argues that MEPs' voting patterns in foreign policy issues show a higher relevance of national-territorial compared to party-political affiliation. If a topic is highly salient in the national context, the third state is of special domestic importance (both in positive and negative ways), and the national position differs from that of the EPG, MEPs tend to disobey the group line (Klüver and Spoon 2013; see for instance Denmark and environment: Kluger Rasmussen 2008; voting on Turkey: Braghiroli 2012a; Yuvaci 2013; Raunio and W. Wagner 2017a; R. M. Scully and Farrell 2003; Proksch and Slapin 2015). Then, the national allegiance is expected to outweigh partisan loyalty and MEPs tend to vote according to their national background. Raunio and W. Wagner (2017a, p. 9) conclude that in the field of external relations and foreign policy of the EU, strong national interest likely "overshadow[s] party-political differences". Such salient topics are, for instance, relations to third states like the Russian Federation. The following subsection links general voting behaviour research to studies devoted to Russia.

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[93]Cf. Finke 2016 on factors like domestic electoral rules and the electoral standing of MEPs in their home constituency. By means of time-series analysis of the behaviour of new MEPs during the first months EP6, R. Scully (2005) shows the lacking tendency to become increasingly likely to side with their European rather than national party colleagues when these two forms of party loyalty come into conflict. In other words: Socialisation into being European is much weaker than expected; in case of a conflict, the MEP tends to choose the side of the national party.

5.1.3 Hypothesising voting behaviour in votes on Russia

Many studies analyse the foreign policy preferences of EU member states, finding that they stem from "long established traditions" (P. Müller 2016, p. 361, Angelucci and Isernia 2020, p. 65, Stahl et al. 2004). In this strand, studies emphasise Russia's national political relevance for many EU member states. Their approach towards Russia and EU-Russia relations ranges from "frosty" (Leonard and Popescu 2007, pp. 42, 48) to "friendly" (Braghiroli and Carta 2009, p. 20) or "malleable" and "docile" (Carta and Braghiroli 2011, p. 272, see also Russell 2016b, Moret et al. 2016, p. 5). According to those studies, the level of "Russian Friendliness" (Braghiroli and Carta 2009, p. 8) roots in a complex set of structural, pragmatic, and emotional factors.

Even though the research on foreign policy preferences of the EU Member States is vast, there is little systematic research on foreign policy preferences of *parties*, or on parties' attitude towards Russia (Angelucci and Isernia 2020, p. 66, exceptions are Dennison and Pardijs 2016b; Onderco 2019).[94] An analysis of 260 party manifestos across all European regions between 1991 and 2018 reveals that European parties have paid very little attention to Russia in their manifestos, and if so, they displayed a mostly positive view Onderco (2019, pp. 533, 540). While no deep-seated hostility could be traced in any of the regions, negative stances appear to be a reaction to the Annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014. It is noteworthy that since then, the topic "Russia" polarised the parties even more, instead of all parties perceiving Russia negatively (Onderco 2019, pp. 527, 541). Moreover, it were more Western parties who were becoming more negative than parties in Central and Eastern Europe (Onderco 2019, p. 541).

Looking at the variations in partisan views along categories like geography, time, and ideology, Onderco (2019, p. 527) concludes that firstly, geographical proximity does not structure attitude towards the country. Secondly, only after 2014/2015, Russia was mentioned as a threat by some parties. And thirdly, most importantly, the overall influence of ideology on attitudes towards Russia seems to be minimal, "with no clear pattern across parties and attitudes [in a cross regional comparison]" Onderco (2019, pp. 527, 538). This conclusion is coherent with other studies (see below) that find that the position on the left-right axis is not predictive for the attitude towards Russia. How can these results be applied to the attitude and voting behaviour of MEPs?

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[94]A lot of scholarly and media attention has paid on the connection between radical or far right parties and Russia, but not systematically scrutinised them, left alone over time (Onderco 2019, p. 527). Most of publications in this field are think tank publications, for instance Klapsis (2015), Political Capital Policy Research and Consulting Institute (2014), Polyakova et al. (2016), and Shekhovtsov (2014, 2015).

EP: Decreasing role of national predispositions in EP7

Taking the attitude of member states as a starting point, Braghiroli and Carta (2009) and Carta and Braghiroli (2011) scrutinise whether MEPs vote according to their national background or in line with their EPG. Drawing on RCVs between 2004 and 2008, they ask whether national delegations across different EPGs in the EP "tend to mirror national positions over sensitive [or salient] issues or to vote ideologically, according to their party lines" (Braghiroli and Carta 2009, p. 9).

For EP6, they show that when national interests are at stake or Russia is considered of special domestic importance, national allegiances indeed outweigh partisan loyalties (see also Carta and Braghiroli 2011, 277sqq.). In the case of the MEP from a Member State with a particularly strong attitude towards Russia (one of the antipodal categories), MEPs are more likely to vote nationally against the EPG line (Braghiroli and Carta 2009, p. 30; Carta and Braghiroli 2011, p. 283). Notably Czech, Latvian, Estonian and Polish MEPs are the most defiant and contradict their EPG the most (Braghiroli and Carta 2009, p. 22). Here, the positions of the Member States and their MEPs coincide remarkably and go beyond ideological orientations. The authors confirm that defection rates depend on salience in the national contexts. If a topic is considered as a matter of primary national concern, defection rate is significantly higher (Carta and Braghiroli 2011, p. 279). Apparently then, Russia-related votes from 2004 to 2009 show influence by national predispositions. This is in line with previous research that contends that in external relations, political conflict is more conditioned by national allegiances (Raunio and W. Wagner 2017a).

In his redux study on EP7, Braghiroli (2015b) finds different results. He re-evaluates his previous results regarding the relative importance of national affiliation in determining MEP's voting stances with data from 2009 to 2012. The author concludes that while Russia-related votes in EP6 show national predispositions, this trend decreases in EP7 (2009-2014). In most votes, the effect of nationality appears marginal whereas the more significant factor is *ideological* affiliation (Braghiroli 2015b, p. 73). The author qualifies this observation.

ECR, ALDE and Greens as "Russia-critics"; GUE/NGL, EFDD, EPP and S&D "Russia-friendly"

Braghiroli (2015b, p. 70) further elaborates that voting behaviour in questions on Russia is not determined by the position on the redistributional left-right axis. He identifies an "imperfect ideological match" (Braghiroli 2015b, p. 70), a moderately low association with the EPG's location on the left-right continuum. On average, ECR and its precursor UEN, ALDE and the Greens have lower scores (which means they are more negative towards

Russia) compared to GUE/NGL, EFD and EPP and S&D on the other end of the continuum (Braghiroli 2015b, 71sq.). In other words, to what extent a political group appears "Russian friendly" (Braghiroli and Carta 2009, p. 8) does not depend on their economic left-right orientation.

A study by the European Council of Foreign Relations supports those results. Dennison and Pardijs (2016a) scrutinised foreign policy positions of 45 fringe parties across all EU Member States, including those with seats in the EP. Based on interviews and surveys they find that

> "views on Russia policy *do not fall naturally along the lines of left and right*, but tend more towards national perspectives [. . .] – for example, in Germany, both *Die Linke* and *AfD* believe that the sanctions on Russia should be lifted, while in Greece, *Syriza* and *Golden Dawn* agree on this. On the question of Ukraine's accession [...] more of a left-right *split* is evident, with parties on the left generally more supportive of Ukraine's path to EU membership" (Dennison and Pardijs 2016a, 4, emph. add.).

The results of Braghiroli (2015b) and Dennison and Pardijs (2016a) seem contradictory at first, given that the latter emphasise the role of the national background. However, both studies agree in terms of their overall interpretation. The common denominator in their argumentation is that the dominant explanatory factor is "the *nature* of the party group" (Braghiroli 2015b, emph. add.).

Mainstream party groups appear to display a positive "Russian-friendly" voting stance, whereas minor and non-mainstream groups (Eurosceptic and radical MEPs) are characterised by more *negative* scores (more negative towards the RF). Braghiroli explains this gap by "the different *liberté de manoeuvre* of the party groups vis-à-vis the other EU institutions and, in particular, the Council" (Braghiroli 2015b, p. 71). Given that most of the governments represented in the Council are composed of national political parties affiliated either with EPP or with S&D, they are

> "very likely to disincentive parliamentary voting behaviours that might overrule unanimously agreed package deals or parliamentary motions that might push EU-Russia relationships in undesired directions. Most of the non-mainstream party groups completely lack this inter-institutional connection and are therefore free from such kind of pragmatic constraints" (Braghiroli 2015b, p. 71).

In sum, not only does Braghiroli's study suggest that left or right barely matters, but he also finds that ECR, ALDE and Greens/EFA feature negative voting stances whereas GUE/NGL, EFD(D), EPP and S&D appear to have a more "Russia friendly" voting behaviour. According to his interpretation, what he calls mainstream party groups (or those with links to national ruling party) appear to display a positive voting stance, whereas minor and non-mainstream groups (Eurosceptic and radical MEPs; or opposition parties in the national context) are affiliated with a more critical

attitude. His explanation comes from the point of view that sees EPGs as torn between national party affiliation, inter-institutional bargaining etc.

Instead of a left-right pattern, it is at this point assumed that the lines of conflict and alignments change according to the specific policy field. EPGs position themselves or form ad-hoc coalitions depending on the policy field. If the topic "Russia" is interpreted or framed in economic or trade-related terms, other conflicting lines are expected to stand out compared to if Russia is discussed with regard to human rights or as an issue of security policy.[95] When "Russia" is agenda item in terms of human rights violations, the Parliament shows a low level of divides and a high group cohesion (Cianciara 2016, p. 3). As explained earlier, academic research established that in line with the EP's role concept of being a normative voice and moral advisor, it promotes the mainstreaming of human rights as one of the fundamental objectives in the majority of policy fields (Zanon 2005, p. 13; Redei 2013). If political crises or relations with third-states affect human rights and the rule of law, the EP easily builds an internal consensus and shows significant cohesion across all groups (Viola 2000). Fiott (2015) explains that

> "[. . .] most of the EP groups give unanimous support to the overarching objectives of the CFSP: promoting human rights, the rule of law, and democracy [. . .]. Indeed, the majority of groups [...] unambiguously refer to human rights, democracy, and the rule of law as key elements of their own international policies and they call for the EU to do the same".

It is therefore likely that the Parliament shows only a low level of contestation when Russia is an agenda item in terms of human rights violations.

It is also expected that the voting patterns change according to the point in time. In light of growing tensions in EU-Russia relations since 2013/2014, predicaments like the Eurozone crisis, and the electoral successes of Eurosceptic parliamentarians, it is likely that over time, the pro-/anti-EU dimension becomes more dominant in shaping the legislative behaviour of MEPs.

To summarise, literature suggests the following – complementary, not mutually exclusive – assumptions regarding the voting behaviour of EPGs in Russia-related votes: The lines of conflict change according to the specific policy field Russia is scheduled in and the point in time. In the field of human rights, a high group cohesion, few objections and a mostly unanimous EP is likely. It lacks a left-right pattern in the votes. Mainstream (or government-related) party groups display a positive "Russian-friendly" voting stance, whereas minor and non-mainstream groups (Eurosceptic/radical MEPs) appear more *negative* towards the RF.

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[95]This is supported by Russo (2016, p. 201) who finds that national parliamentarians' position on the left-right axis does not exert influence on the willingness to build a CFSP, if all other variables are taken into account.

Note on the meaning of voting in favour or against a resolution

In order to contextualise the voting patterns of EPGs, it should briefly be discussed what it means to support, decline or abstain from a final text. Its resolutions and official press releases since the Ukraine crisis showed that the EP has been increasingly critical and creates a clear policy vis-à-vis Russia (see 4.4.2). Therefore, voting in favour of the Final Text eventually means being firm, "critical" towards Russia, whereas voting against the resolution suggest a more neutral, pragmatic or positive position.

5.2 Overview: Average voting behaviour in Russia-related votes

Between 2009 and 2016, the EP conducted 16 Russia-related Final Votes recorded with Roll-Calls (Table 3.A, Annex). One fourth addresses Russia's "fundamental freedoms, human rights, democracy in general" (RC1, 3, 10, 16); another fourth bilateral political and economic "relations to the Russian Federation" (RC2, 4, 8, 14)); four RCs "bilateral economic and trade agreements and relations" with Ukraine (RC6, 7, 9, 13); and another four Ukraine's "[Third-country] political situation, local and regional conflicts" (RC 5, 8, 11, 15). Roll-Calls 4, 6 and 7 are also scheduled under the domain of "European Neighbourhood Policy" (ENP), where the EP reconsiders or re-evaluates its own policies and strategies towards Russia, Ukraine, enlargement and the "Shared Neighbourhood". RC12, in the domain of family policy and judicial cooperation with the RF, is an NLE procedure in which the EP needs to consent to Russia's Accession to an international agreement on child abduction; it is more a formality and does not include a debate. Obviously, one half of the votes tackle Russia or the EU's relations to it directly, while the other half engages with Ukraine in broader and narrower senses: its relationship to the EU as well as its political and regional conflicts at a time. Russia, Ukraine and the ENP are thematically intertwined, but only since 2013 (see section 5.3).

Russia-related and average CFSP/CSDP votes compared

The degree of voting similarity in Russia-related RCs differs from the overall VSPs in the area of external relations in two respects: Different alignments and co-voting habits of the EPGs; Higher degree of polarisation and extension of the network. Given the increasing role of "party-political contestation structuring parliamentary debates and votes in this increasingly politicised issue area", Raunio and W. Wagner (2017a, 2017b, p. 32) calculate voting likeness and coalitions in 754 external relations-votes between 2009 and 2014 (see Table 5.A, Annex; visualisation in Network 5.1). Their database excludes the NIs. The Gephi network shows a high degree of

Network 5.1: Average voting similarity in 754 external relations votes 2009-2014 (Raunio and Wagner 2017b, compiled by the author)
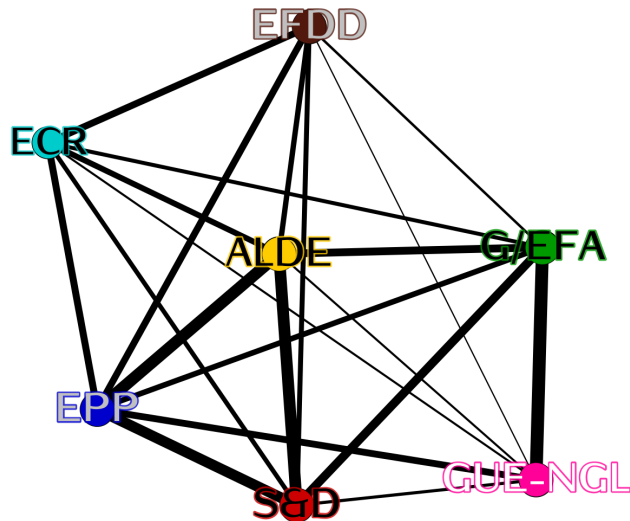
voting correspondence between EPP, ALDE, S&D; those groups are known to form voting coalitions. The Greens and GUE/NGL display a very high level of voting agreement. Those five EPGs barely co-vote with ECR and EFDD, making RCs on external relations form along "for- or against further EU-integration" lines. This is plausible, given that the design and future of the Union's External Relations relates to its powers and extent/extensions of competencies.

Now this analysis turns to the average voting similarity in votes on Russia during the period under review, summarised in Table 5.B (Annex).[96] The calculation indicates two trends (see Network 5.2). First, the existence of a bloc of "large EPGs" on the one side, and "fringe, small EPGs" on the other. And second, by doing so, RCs on Russia display more pronounced co-voting percentages than the average of CFSP/CSDP votes in the EP, with a shift in voting coalitions. Those observations give the first hint at the polarisation potential of the topic "Russia".

On average, the voting similarity percentages (VSPs) of EPP, ALDE, S&D, Greens and ECR are (extremely) high (<86%). This turns them into one of two voting blocs. Among each other, they have the highest voting similarity (descending; either extremely or very high VS):

EPP: ALDE (98.6), S&D (92.0), ECR (90.9), Greens (89.1)

ALDE: EPP (98.6), S&D (92.4), ECR (91.03), Greens (89.7)

S&D: ALDE (92.4), EPP (92.0), ECR (87.6), Greens (86.7)

[96]Based on 15 votes before the foundation of the ENF group. This vote, chronologically the last one, was left aside in the calculation for reasons of clarity.

Network 5.2: Average voting similarity in 15 Russia-related votes 2009-2016 (NI excluded)
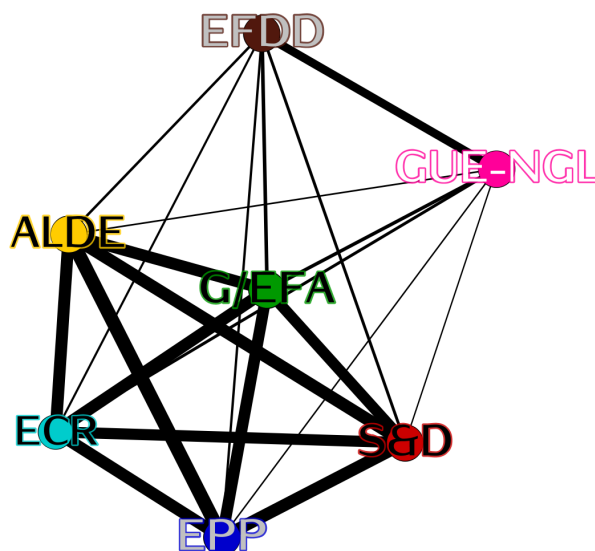
Greens: ECR (90.6), ALDE (89.7), EPP (89.1), S&D (86.7)

This observation seems straightforward, given that they represent the big four centrist, pro-European groups. What is noteworthy though is that ECR joins as the fifth player, with a higher VS to EPP, ALDE and S&D than the Greens:

ECR: ALDE (91.03), Greens (90.6), EPP (90.9), S&D (87.6)

ECR sharing an extremely high voting similarity with the pro-EU centrist group requires further explanation. Apparently, with ECR being a (soft) Eurosceptic group, it is not so much the pro/anti-EU dimension that offers the most explanatory power for their voting behaviour. A convincing interpretation is that ECR is dominated by British and Polish MEPs, which are known to have strong national stances towards Russia in light of its high salience in their national contexts (see e.g. Zwolski 2018). The ECR likely undertook an intra-group appraisal process where its members outweigh the support for the pro-European groups for the sake of its Russia-agenda (with the result that co-voting with the Europhiles is the lesser evil).

On the opposite side of those five, as the second group, stand GUE/NGL, EFDD, and NIs. As groups of radical left, (populist) radical right parties, and Eurosceptics, they share the highest voting similarity; although they are only "highly" similar, i.e. in the 70ies per cent:

GUE/NGL: NI (78.8), EFDD (76.2)

NI: GUE/NGL (78.8), EFDD (77.7)

EFDD: NI (77.7), GUE/NGL (76.2)

Those two EPGs together with the Non-Attached overall exhibit only medium average or below average degrees of co-voting agreement with the large groups. As literature suggests, they are also less cohesive or face a low group discipline in light of member heterogeneity. The average VSPs also suggest that GUE/NGL – consisting of mostly radical left parties – co-votes with (populist) radical right MEPs from EFDD and the non-attached MEPs.

In sum, Russia-related votes strikingly differ from co-voting habits in CFSP/CDSP votes in three aspects (see Network 5.2). First, compared to the average of votes in the area of external relations, here the coalition between ALDE, EPP, S&D and Greens is much more pronounced. At the same time, GUE/NGL distances themselves from the voting bloc, and shows a higher degree of voting likeness with EFDD and the NIs. Second, ECR plays a different role. According to Raunio's and Wagner's calculation, the ECR group generally exhibits much lower voting likeness with EPP, ALDE, Greens and S&D. It usually ranks between fairly low and fairly high (45 – 60%). In votes on Russia, however, the ECR group happens to co-vote with them. This observation supports the abovementioned interpretation of Russia as a topic in which, among other things, strong national delegations dominate the group line. Third, in External Relations votes, the two blocks are less sharp than in Russia-related votes, and the polarisation in the chamber is increased (inferred from the expansion of the network and the thickness of the connecting lines). Those findings remain applicable even when the Non-attached are included into the calculation (see Network 5.D, Annex).

The role of ENF in the interplay of EPGs

Since only one vote took place after the ENF foundation on 15 Jun 2015 (RC16, subject area human rights), data does not substantiate conclusions on the voting similarity patterns with ENF. However, it still marks a unique role in the interplay of groups: they exhibit the lowest voting similarity and thus mostly are disconnected from the others, while the degree of voting correspondence between large centrist groups is extremely high (Table 5.C, Annex; see also Network 5.3 on RC16, page 143).

In this one RC, ENF appears to be mostly detached from the others, with fairly low co-voting results with the aforementioned "bloc of five": ALDE, EPP, Greens/EFA, ECR (and partly S&D). The ENF, predominantly former (populist) radical right NIs and EFDD members or newly elected Eurosceptic MEPs, displays by far the lowest VSP with those groups (34 – 38%). At the same time, ENF demonstrates a high voting similarity with GUE/NGL and the Non-Attached; which appears as cooperation beyond ideology. These findings need further scrutiny in a debate content analysis (see next chapter). Again, ALDE, EPP, G/EFA form a coherent co-voting bloc. The Greens' voting similarity with ALDE, ECR, and EPP even exceeds

the average (96,38 and 97,7% compared to average 89 and 90%). In contrast to the average VS, it appears that S&D is internally divided, and this time does not belong to this group. As will be discussed below, this RC is part of the policy field "Human Rights Issues". Apparently, the EPGs are not voting as unanimously as suggested by the literature.

5.3 The rise and consolidation of two voting blocs

How do the political groups vote, with a more detailed perspective? The following subsections examine how occurrences found in average numbers perpetuate when examining the 16 RCs individually. Looking at RCs in view of specific policy fields according to the plenary subjects posed in OEIL and over time, the analysis focuses on voting ratios (for, against, abstentions), on deviations from this average, and on controversial votes (i.e. votes contrary to the average, low group cohesion).

We find a pattern of 5 versus 3 in three of the four policy areas. This pattern, firstly, consolidates over time, and secondly, is particularly strong in Ukraine-related votes. The agreement-distance between EPGs increases over time, and shows that the rift between the bloc of 5 and its three adversaries is growing.

5.3.1 Voting on Russia-centred topics

Decreasing consensus in votes on human rights (2009-2015)

Literature suggests that the EP has a clear stance when voting on human rights. However, the RCs in the period under review present a mixed picture. Especially two votes on quite prominent topics show a unanimous EP, with high abstention rates and low group cohesion. The four RCs were devoted to the murder of human rights activists (RC1), the sentencing of demonstrators involved in the Bolotnaya Square events (RC3), the closure of the NGO Memorial (RC10) and the illegal imprisonment of Estonian and Ukrainian citizens (RC16).

ALDE, ECR, EPP and Greens/EFA consistently co-vote in favour of the resolutions, thus forming a predictable majority with high group cohesions. Their average VS is extremely high, as it ranges between 98- and 100%. While the Non-Attached and the ENF (only in RC16) vote against, the EFDD's role is less consistent. Either its MEPs are absent, or only a few members are present (RC1, RC3), or the group is split between the options (RC10, RC16). Similarly, the members of GUE/NGL appear to follow their agenda instead of sticking to a group line (RC1, RC3, RC10, RC16) or prefer to abstain (RC1, RC3). This falls in line with studies that show the low group cohesion of EFDD ever since and the radical left being internally divided. Generally, though, GUE/NGL seems to feature a higher degree of

centrality than the others, given that on average its voting likeness with the large groups is (fairly) high. S&D performs as an "undecisive", less cohesive group. It sometimes supports a resolution together with the other large groups (RC3,10), against (RC1), or split (particularly RC16).

Reading the numbers differently, they show that the large groups (Bloc I, ECR included), except for S&D, always support those resolutions which, at their core, criticise the deteriorating state of human rights in Russia. At the same time, several MEPs are either indecisive or torn (especially EFDD and GUE/NGL) or vote against those resolutions (generally NIs and ENF).

Overall, compared to votes of other issue areas under review, more MEPs tend to vote in favour of human rights resolutions while less people vote against (79,4% for and 9,9% against, compared to 77,6% and 14% respectively in all other votes). However, in October 2014 (RC10) and even more in September 2015 (RC16), the EP splits; despite the issues in question are prominent, and from a human right's perspective straightforward. Many MEPs attend the vote. RC10 addresses a resolution on the shutdown of the NGO Memorial; Memorial as one of Russia's most famous and established NGOs that represents protection and observation of Human Rights. The final text criticised the "Foreign Agents law" and considers the closing down of this NGO as symbolic of Russia's deterioration, with worsening conditions for a critical civil society. Even though 529 MEPs voted in favour, the 43 of 47 NIs voted against, while GUE/NGL and EFDD were torn between voting against, agreement, and abstention.

Most remarkable is RC16, which deals with Estonian and Ukrainian citizens who were illegally arrested, detained, or abducted to Russian territory and kept as prisoners. In the final resolution text, the EP "harshly condemns Russia". Looking at the voting results, the EP is far from being united. While 378 MEPs vote in favour, 111 vote against and 138 abstain (60%:17%:22%). This vote, in a broader comparison, features two peculiarities. First of all, it is the second least supported resolution with the highest abstention rate of all final votes. Second of all, when consulting the plenary debate recorded on video, the plenary is mostly empty. This suggests that the final vote is a typical list-voting, i.e. where groups vote on pre-agreed terms, mediated in advance by, for instance, group-whips (those lists are non-disclosed). The role of S&D stands out, as it is internally divided (see below).

Decreasing unanimity (or fragmentation) in the chamber makes sense when reading the data in a time perspective, i.e. contextualising the votes with the tensions with Ukraine and the change from EP7 to EP8. From this standpoint, it is plausible that the chamber is divided in 2016, even when voting on an "harmonious" topic as human rights violations. It strengthens the argument that Russia, in light of the crises surrounding Ukraine and Russia-relations, turns into a polarising and objectified topic where

Network 5.3: Roll-Call 16: Voting similarities
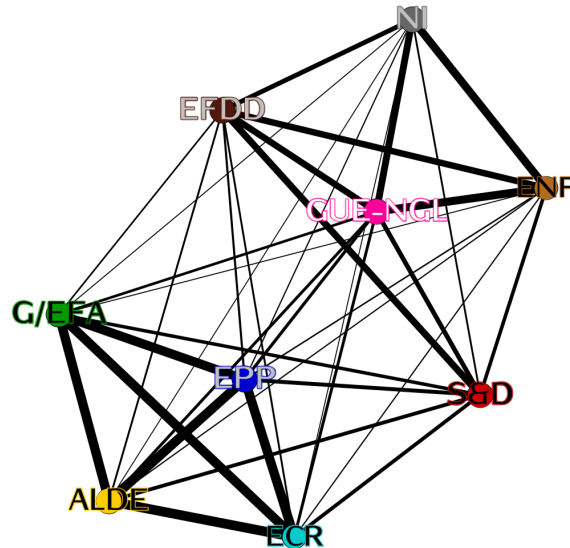
national predispositions lead to high abstention rates.[97]

Abstentions and dissent in votes on the state and future of EU-Russia relations (2012-2015)

Overall, some observations made in the policy area of human rights likewise appear in final votes of the EU-Russia relations domain: a stable voting coalition of ALDE and EPP, whereas GUE/NGL is inclined to vote the contrary; EFDD being usually divided between the options, similar to S&D that tends to be in two minds about whether to abstain or support the final text.

The resolutions in this field mirror the developments of bilateral political relations between the RF and the EU. RC2 (in 2012) solely focuses on Russia, as it discusses the renewal and importance of the PCA. The resolution on a "New EU-Russia Agreement" in Dec 2012 emphasises the EU's wish for a close cooperation with the RF especially in trade and energy. It deprecates president Putin's supposed lack of interest in negotiations and mentions the need for supporting Russia's civil society. The majority of EPGs supports the resolution, with minor reservations: EFDD and NIs are torn between support, refusal and abstention; while GUE/NGL is the only group not voting in favour at all. Its MEPs chose to decline or abstain from

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[97]This finding is consistent with Cianciara (2016, p. 8) who observes signs of fragmentation, indicated however by the decreasing number of EPGs who signed joint motions for resolutions.

the vote.

RC4, 8, and 14 (in 2014 and 2015) re-read the state and future of their relations against the backdrop of the events in Ukraine. Their titles indicate that they took place shortly after the Annexation of Crimea and uprisings in Donbass ("Russian pressure on Eastern Partnership countries and in particular destabilisation of eastern Ukraine", RC4) and elaborate on the "quo vadis" with the bilateral EU-RUS cooperation ("Situation in Ukraine and state of play of EU-Russia relations", RC8; "State of EU-Russia relations", RC14). GUE/NGL is the only EPG which declines to support a harsh critique of Russia's support for separatists and the Crimean referendum. The group refuses the demand to review contracts with Russia regarding their possible suspension (RC4). While ALDE, EPP, ECR and Greens support the resolution, the overall abstention rates increase.

This tendency continues during the vote in Sep 2014 when the new Parliament appreciates the Association Agreement with Ukraine and the sanctions against Russia, whilst condemning its "hybrid war" (RC8). Here, large parts of GUE/NGL, EFDD, ECR and Greens abstain from the vote, which leads to an abstention rate of about 18% – While ALDE and EPP unanimously vote in favour (together with the second half of EFDD and NIs). This makes RC8 one of the exceptional (atypical) votes (see below). In the Jun 2015 final vote on the "State of EU-Russia relations" (RC14), the EP considers Russia to no longer be a strategic partner. Abstentions and rebels are found throughout all EPGs, this time also in ALDE (4 vs. 57), EPP (18 vs. 191), and again in S&D (24 vs. 154). The resolution is not supported by EFDD, GUE/NGL and the NIs.

Interpretation: A matter of framing

The Roll-Call data implies that in the domain "Relations to the Russian Federation", the more the dispute between the EU, Russia and Ukraine continues, the more MEPs choose to abstain from the vote, or the more individual MEPs appear as group rebels (especially in the larger groups) while intra-group cohesion decreases. This is remarkable in the case of both the Greens and the Social Democrats, who in this domain usually either co-vote with the pro-EU centre or abstain. Given the decisive wording of the resolution texts versus the national predispositions of the delegations within the groups, one likely explanation is a conflict of interest between the principals. That is, the national background of MEPs influence their decision, particularly with important linkages and leverages to Russia.

Another way to read the data is that how MEPs vote depends on how Russia and bilateral relations are framed in the resolution text. In cases where they are not (yet) connected to Ukraine, but instead the resolutions and reports primarily concern design and future of EU-Russia relations, most MEPs tend to vote pragmatically and to the purpose. They are aware

of the political and economic relevance of Russia to the EU and their Member State of origin. This changes from the moment that the relations to Russia are put in the context of the Ukraine crisis; this aspect will be deepened in the following subsection.

5.3.2 Voting on Ukraine-related issues and the consolidation of the "5 versus 3" pattern

The EP already dealt with EU-Ukraine relations, Ukraine's modernisation, and its current state of civil rights in previous legislatures. It addressed the presidential- and general elections of 2010/2012, the political imprisonment of Yulia Timoshenko, the rule of law and the state of LGBT rights. The plenary sporadically dealt with the Association Agreement as early as Nov 2010 (Procedure 2010/2934(RSP)). However, none of the resolutions has been substantially dealing with or taking account of the Russian Federation as a relevant stakeholder. It has only been since 2014, after the Ukrainian president refused to sign the PAA at the Vilnius summit, that the Russian Federation begins to play a substantial role when the EP tackles the country's political and regional conflicts.

Ukraine's political situation and regional conflicts (2014-2015)

Against the background of the Annexation of Crimea and the separatist war in Donbass, the EP first voted on Ukraine's political situation, local and regional conflicts in July 2014 (RC5, 8). The EP considers Russia's strategy towards Ukraine as aggressive and unacceptable and declares its support for the extensions of sanctions. The resolutions in 2015 discuss the EU-Russia-Ukraine crisis and the separatist elections in Ukraine. They consider Russia as aggressive and expansionist and support to uphold the sanctions (RC11). In an Own-Initiative Procedure (INI), the EP evaluates the "Strategic military situation in the Black Sea Basin" (RC15). Its resolution is highly critical towards Russia's military activities and troops on Ukrainian territory. While the resolution texts appear outspoken and firm, the final votes display dissent and two opposing camps in the chamber.

First, the VSPs in that domain indicate that the degree of voting correspondence between ALDE, EPP, ECR is very or extremely high. They broadly support the resolutions (RC5, 11, 15). At the same time, GUE/NGL disagrees with them in all votes. Thus, the political situation in Ukraine turns out to be the issue area where the GUE/NGL displays by far the lowest voting agreement with them (36,5% to 38,9%).

Second, the EPGs' overall abstention rates in this issue area are relatively high (10,6% compared to 8,2% in other topics). For EFDD, heterogeneous voting is common. However, in the case of Ukraine's current crises,

the Greens and S&D are also less cohesive and often torn between the options, at odds with each other. This is particularly the case for RC15, in which the EP discusses the future and state of EU-Russia relations, Crimea, and Eastern Ukraine against the background of the security situation in the Black Sea region. With only 56% MEPs voting in favour, 28% voting against, and 15% abstaining, this is the most contested vote in the dataset. We find ALDE and EPP to mostly co-vote with ECR. GUE/NGL, EFDD and NIs rather unanimously vote against, while the Greens are torn between voting against and abstaining. The S&D group, in this vote, is split: Almost as many MEPs as vote in favour of the resolution, vote against it or abstain (88:24:54).

Network 5.4: Roll-Call 15: Voting similarities
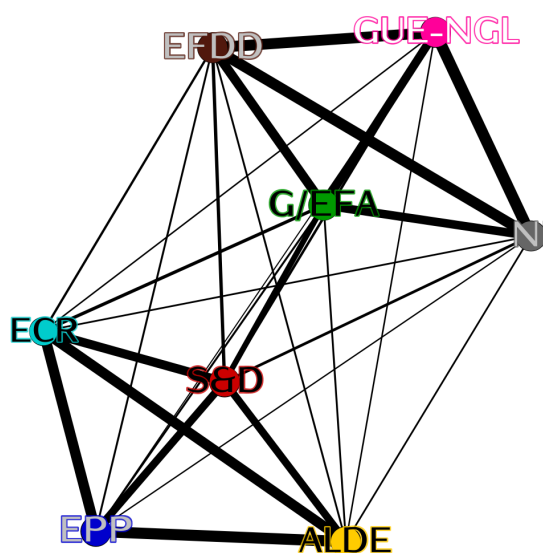
The Greens are assumed to distance themselves from the ALDE/ EPP/ ECR bloc because through this vote the EP supports military cooperation and "awareness", militarisation in this geographical area. The final text re-emphasises the need for a closer cooperation of EU military forces and NATO as an important partner.[98] Considering that in the area of CFDP, the Greens are more anti-military and NATO-critical than the liberal and conservative EPGs (see MPD, CHES).

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[98]The resolution "believes that the EU and the Member States must have a security response to these challenges [posed by Russia in the Black Sea, W.A.] and reconsider their foreign and security policies in light of this, which must be reflected in a reviewed European Security Strategy, in the European Maritime Security Strategy and in the EU Strategy for the Black Sea; [...] Urges the Commission to support the Member States in their efforts to identify solutions for increasing their defence budget to the level of 2%."

The PAA and macro-financial assistance (2014-2015)

When looking at the results of votes regarding the PAA with Ukraine, the picture that ALDE, EPP, Greens, S&D, ECR stand opposed to GUE/NGL, NI, and mostly EFDD (which is again internally divided), iterates. There are two votes on the EU-Ukraine association agreement (RC6, 7) in which the EP had to give its consent. They took place in the first plenary weeks of EP8 (Sep 2014). The ratification of the PAA was accompanied by a speech of Petro Poroshenko, the Ukrainian president at the time. In March 2015, the EP decided to grant macro-financial assistance to Ukraine (RC13). This vote in March 2015 decided whether the EU should support Ukraine financially and with other resources (such as support programmes, knowledge exchange). RC6, 7 and 13 officially belong to the plenary subject "Bilateral economic and trade agreements and relations (Geographical Area: Ukraine)". In fact, they cannot be understood seperately from, firstly, the tensions between Russia, Ukraine and the EU; and secondly, voting on Ukraine co-occurs with the changes in the chamber to the advantage of EPGs opposing the pro-EU centre. It is therefore not surprising that the pattern of "5:3" blocs prevails. The next section elaborates on the two voting blocs in more detail.

5.3.3   The two voting blocs in detail

The most striking aspect demonstrated in the previous sections is that time, or the point in time, matters. *When* the vote takes place matters. The voting similarity percentages in a time perspective suggest the emergence of two consistent blocs, and a rift that is "intensifying" as time continues. The networks 5.5 to 5.7 illustrate how the divide in the chamber intensifies over time. Whereas one exists ever since, the second however consolidates on a later point. Except for three RCs that stand out as controversial or deviant, their behaviour is largely predictable and repetitive.

The first bloc, containing EPP, ALDE, and Greens together with ECR and S&D, remains consistent over the period under review. They demonstrate a rather predictable level of agreement. The second bloc II are the small or "fringe" EPGs, GUE/NGL, NIs (and partly EFDD), and present a more mixed picture, even though they in 9 of 16 cases their voting similarity is high to extremely high. The overall impression EFDD gives is its role of a "swing voter", standing in the middle between centre and fringe groups. It seems their voting, until RC13, does not follow a clear pattern.

Bloc I assembles five EPGs. EPP and ALDE keep their extremely high voting similarity over time; there are no deviant cases and their VSP ranges between 96 and 100%. This makes ALDE and EPP a stable voting coalition and the core of Group I (see Figure 5.8 below). With two limitations, ECR and the Greens also remain co-voters of ALDE and EPP.

Network 5.5: Roll-Call 6: Voting similarities
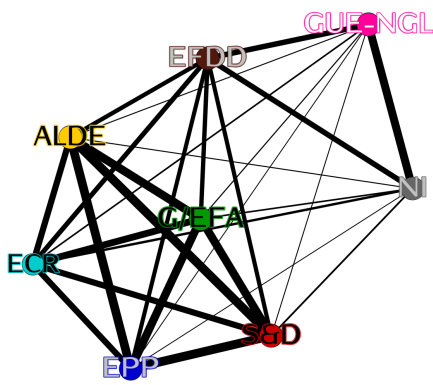
Network 5.6: Roll-Call 9: Voting similarities
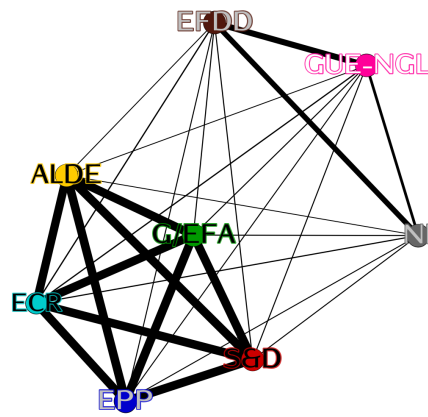
Network 5.7: Roll-Call 13: Voting similarities
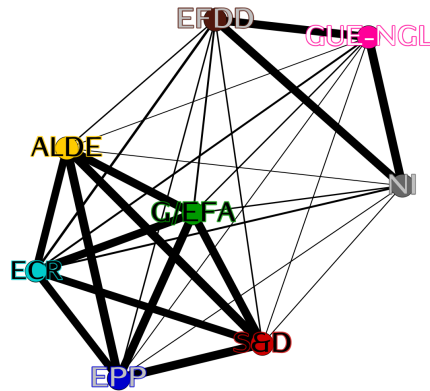
Figure 5.8: Bloc 1 (ALDE, EPP, G/EFA, S&D, ECR)

BLOC I

EPP & ALDE (16/16 >96%)
ECR (2/16 >78%, 13/16 >90%)
Greens (14/16 >93%)
S&D (12/16 >95%)
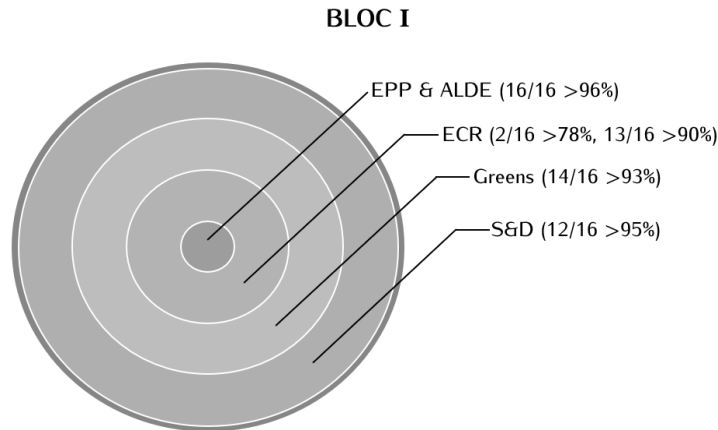
In two Roll Calls this inner circle faces disagreement and a VS below 50%: RC8 on the "Situation in Ukraine…" (18.09.2014) and the "Strategic military situation in the Black Sea Basin" (RC15, 10.06.2015). In those votes, both Greens and ECR rather co-vote with the fringe groups. RC15 is the only final vote where the Greens co-vote with EFDD, GUE/NGL and the Non-Attached; and ECR with EFDD and GUE/NGL (see subsection below).

S&D stands at the outer circle of Group I. It is torn more between the EPGs and displays the highest VSPs with ECR; it almost never co-votes with GUE/NGL (in 12 out of 16 RCs >50%). In RC8, S&D votes with ALDE, EPP and the NIs. S&D, though belonging to group I, displays a higher centrality, which means its deviations are more common (about four times only 50 to 70% VS instead of 92% on average).

Bloc II stands on the opposite side, with GUE/NGL and the Non-Attached representing its inner circle. However, with 10 of 16 RCs featuring a VS above 78%, the group appears looser and more occasional than Group I. This group consolidates only after RC12. Until March 2015, EFDD occasionally co-votes with them (RC2, 5) and generally presents a VS range from below 35% to about 80%; there is no clear pattern except the "absence of a pattern". In RC13 to 16, EFDD appears as +1 co-voter of GUE/NGL and the NIs.

Controversial and Deviant RCs

There are only three exemptions from this "5 versus 3" pattern. There are two RCs who break the voting habits particularly of bloc I. The RC data indicates that three votes feature a peculiar distribution between against, for, and abstentions, EPGs "change allegiances", or were controversial. Atyp-

ical/deviant votes refer to those in which voting behaviour differed significantly from the average VSPs, or where blocs were discontinued. Controversial refers to the level of animosity in the chamber, that is the distribution between against, for, and abstentions.[99] RC8, on the "Situation in Ukraine and state of play of EU-Russia relations", in which S&D co-votes with EPP, ALDE and the NIs while the Greens co-vote with GUE/NGL, and ECR. It is the only RC in which the voting similarity between ECR and the coalition of EPP, ALDE, and S&D drops to slightly below average. With 481 MEPs in favour, 38 against and 114 abstentions, it has the 2nd highest abstention rate. RC15 about the Strategic Military Situation in the Black Sea basin is the only vote where the Greens were highly convergent with bloc II (EFDD, GUE/NGL, and NIs); similarly, ECR voted with EFDD and GUE/NGL, while S&D was internally divided.

The data gives the impression that whereas bloc I persists over time as rather stable voting coalition, the second bloc iterates after RC12. The emergence of bloc II is related to the topic "Ukraine"; probably, then, the second group performs more "anti-THEM" votes instead of "WE against" group. In other words, their co-voting is more "accidental" than a coalition of quality. Whether this assumption holds will be examined in the debate analysis.

5.4 Inconclusive results and open questions

The previous sections showed how a 5 versus 3 pattern consolidates over time and in the majority of policy fields. However, the interpretation, categorisation, or making sense of this dividing line remains challenging. Several open questions posed by co-voting patterns, deviant and controversial votes request the triangulation with additional data: debates that precede the Roll Call.

The analysis showed that voting behaviour partly met the expectations derived from literature. They however require some nuancing or qualifications. The analysis showed that lines of conflict and co-voting patterns in Russia-related votes indeed differ between the specific policy field Russia is scheduled in, however consolidated and reiterated after RC12. Then, no matter the topic, the pattern exists and even intensifies. The EU-Ukraine-Russia crisis beginning in 2013 marks a decisive point in the alignments of EPGs. Lastly, as assumed, there were no indications for a redistributional left-right divide in the chamber.

Many insights of the voting analysis contradict the assumptions posed

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[99]It turns out not all "atypical" votes are also controversial. For instance, RC12 on the "Accession of Russia to the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction" was mostly a formality to accept Russia's accession to an international convention. Here, almost all EPGs give their consent and the blocs vanish.

in the literature. The chapter finds that in the field of human rights, RCs feature high abstention rates; group cohesion of S&D in particular is low; the EP is less unanimous than expected and the bilateral tensions with Russia reflect on that policy field. It turns out that the voting stances mentioned above (section 5.1.3)– ECR, ALDE, Greens/EFA more negative, and GUE/NGL, EFD(D), EPP, S&D more "Russia friendly" (Braghiroli 2015b, p. 70) – do not apply to late EP7 and EP8. First and foremost S&D and EPP belong to the bloc of more *Russia critical* EPGs, together with ALDE, the Greens and ECR; and GUE/NGL, NI and EFDD on the opposing side. Without deviations, this "5:3 pattern" of two camps has been consolidating since March 2013 after RC13. This divide is particularly distinct during votes on the EU-Ukraine Partnership and Association Agreement and other questions concerning the future of EU-Ukraine relations, in questions regarding the 2014 Annexation of Crimean peninsula and subsequent economic sanctions against Russia.

Braghiroli (2015b) suggests that the voting behaviour of EPGs depend on their relations with the national government and their opposition habitus (see 5.1.3). The analysis suggests a different explanation. It is assumed that from 2013 onwards, the *nature* of the party group indeed matters, but most likely in the terms of Hix' and Lord' two-dimensional space. The core question is not who has the most room to manoeuvre vis-à-vis its own government or the Council, but the political group's attitude towards the EU.

Since deteriorating EU-Russia relations in 2013, and particularly after the EP elections in 2014, pro-EU integrationist EPGs are pitted against groups hesitant to or anti-EU integration, which suggests this is the primary dimension of conflict. Thus, at first sight, it seems that it cuts across four pro-integrationist or EU-friendly EPGs on the one side, and three EU-hesitant, -sceptical, -minimalist EPGs on the other.

Another interpretation looks at the party families within the EPGs. The political centre consisting of conservative, liberal, social democratic, and green groups on the one side, and the radical left and right EPGs on the opposing side find their *voting* positions overlap. Thus, mainstream party groups display a "Russia-critical" voting stance, whereas minor and non-mainstream groups (Eurosceptic/ radical MEPs) are more positive (or neutral) towards the RF. The GUE/NGL gathers populist-, radical- and extreme left parties. It is mainly the EFD(D), ENF and NIs who represent the (populist) radical right. ALDE, S&D, EPP, and the Greens, in contrast, represent only very few MEPs originating in radical parties. In this case, we would observe a centre versus fringe/radical divide.

However, in both cases, the ECR group hampers the interpretation. This group of *Conservatives and Reformists* is a soft Eurosceptic political group, which interferes with the first explanation. Some parties in the ECR group are also categorised as (populists) radical right and anti-establishment (Mudde 2009), which hinders a clear line between radical parties and non-

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radical parties. What the case of ECR exemplifies is the strong influence of national delegations in cases when Russia is of particular national salience to the member state of origin. ECR remains a Russia critic, because of its two dominant national delegations at the time: Poland and Great Britain. Both have been negative towards the RF ever since and decisively gave direction to the ECR's agenda (see e.g. Zwolski 2018).

The third alternative lens closes the gap between the two. Chryssogelos (2015, p. 16) suggests that EP partisan competition on EU foreign policy is structured around two conflict dimensions. One axis relates to (more or less) EU integration, and the other axis from Atlanticism to Anti-Atlanticism (see Figure 5.E, Annex). Drawing on the work of Stahl et al. (2004)[100], *Atlanticists* support an increased role for NATO in EU affairs (Chryssogelos 2015, p. 4). Europe and the US – which make "the West" – are natural allies. At the same time, there is suspicion of "Russian motives and influence in Europe" and the world (Chryssogelos 2015, p. 4). *Anti-Atlanticists* stand on the opposite pole; they reject close cooperation with the US, prefer a multipolar world and the EU to orient more towards Russia. Chryssogelos suggests *Europeanism* as in-between those two (Chryssogelos 2015, p. 16). "America is seen as needed partner in the management of world affairs, but is not exempt fropm criticism. Same with Russia [...] an inescapable partner in Europe, but not without reservations" (Chryssogelos 2015, p. 6). In general, Europeanists' vision is the emancipated role for the EU in global affairs, with both Russia and the US as "interlocutors" (Chryssogelos 2015, p. 4).

Chryssogelos (2015, p. 16) positions ALDE, EPP and PES (pre-S&D) in the pro-integration/Europeanism-Atlanticism quadrant of the policy space. The radical left and right, in contrast, are positioned in the less-integration/ Anti-Atlanticism quadrant. His study does not build on RC data but on party document analyses and interviews. It excludes the Greens and ECR. Despite this, his design of the policy space provides a useful lense to understand the role of ECR; Asmus and Vondra (2005, p. 203) describe Poland and the British as "staunchly Atlanticist" delegations. They might rank lower on the integration axis, but their Atlanticist orientation makes them

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[100]Stahl et al. (2004) identified three camps which reflect the different member state positions in CFSP/CSDP: Atlanticists, Europeanists and Neutrals (Austria, Ireland, Sweden). In their paper on the Atlanticist-Europeanist divide in CFSP, the authors analyse the foreign policy of Denmark, France, Germany and Sweden. The criteria underlying the categorisation of these states into the taxonomy are: preferred partner countries (USA-centred or not), preferred type of cooperation in security policy, position on the development of a common European security and defence policy (promoter, supporter, passive compliers, reluctant followers, obstructor), position on the Anglo-American policy concerning Iraq 2003 (Stahl et al. 2004, p. 420). The main reference point for categorising a member state, thus, is the position to either the US, transatlantic cooperation, or the future role of European member state cooperation and new institutions in that field. Russia does not play a role in this. Stahl et. al. servers as basis for the article published by Chryssogelos (2015).

co-vote with ALDE, EPP and S&D. The question at hand is, whether one conflict dimension has more explanatory power than the other.

Russia-votes as proxy

One part of this chapter was devoted to the question "what the EP voted on". As regards to OEIL, it voted on four broader plenary subjects: the state of Russia's political and civil sphere, EU-Russia relations, the political crises and unrest in Ukraine, or EU-Ukraine relations. However, this chapter finds evidence in support of the assumption that "what the EP *actually* voted on" was not necessarily congruent with the title of the legislative procedures. Examining the RC data in a time- and cross-policy-field perspective indicates that since March 2015, votes on Russia follow a predictable pattern of two opposing voting blocs. Independent from the topic, the EP is divided.

The inevitable question following that observation is, if not the topic as such, what else do/would they vote on? No matter the topic, the pattern exists and even intensifies. This suggests that the votes are somehow disconnected to the topic in question. Instead they are related to the "state of the EP" or internal factors rather than related to the plenary subject in question.

Russia-votes could be interpreted as "institutional votes" (Braghiroli and Smaldore 2011, p. 7): Votes are not of political nature (related to the topic as such, the subject in question [Russia]), but turn into "institutional votes": Votes on the EU, its policies, its (institutional) future, while EPGs are signalling their position on those questions.[101] "Russia", then, is objectified, and becomes a proxy for struggles between the pro-EU integration groups and those more hesitant towards the EU.

While this argument is not entirely new, so far, no study stands on solid empirical grounds. Mudde (2014, p. 4) for instance discusses "pro-Russian" or "Russian-friendly" behaviour of EPGs in the light of anti-EU attitudes; but does not present empirical data. He refers to Euroscepticism being one of the ideological and rhetorical similarities between the radical left and the radical right in the EP.[102] Other scholars suggest that the more Russian-

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[101]Given the lack of a classic government-opposition relationship known from national parliaments (Corbett, Jacobs, and Shackleton 2016, p. 3), several attempts cluster or model the groups according to their role in the interaction of EPGs and policy-making, e.g. into opposition, "government"-coalition, centre, mainstream, newcomers, establishment. Braghiroli's and Smaldores' "variable-geometry government–opposition model" (Braghiroli and Smaldore 2011, p. 9, Braghiroli 2015a, p. 103) suggests to distinguish between institutional and political votes. While institutional votes refer to the extent of EU and EP competencies, "their financial resources" (Braghiroli and Smaldore 2011, p. 7) and budgeting, political votes focus on the actual content of the policy in question (Braghiroli and Smaldore 2011, p. 7).

[102]The Euroscepticism of radical parties discuss van Elsas and van der Brug 2015, Kriesi

friendly voting patterns are first and foremost tactical, "rather opportunistic than ideologically motivated" (Higgins 2014, p. 3). Voting against the Brussels establishment and in favour of the Russian Federation despite violations of human rights and breaches of international law puts political actors in the spotlight of media and gives the opportunity to present themselves as edgy, given that "just being Eurosceptic" is since 2014 not a unique selling point in party competition (Brack and Startin 2015, Leconte 2010, p. 107; see also Meijers 2015).[103]

Implications for further steps of analysis

Examining RCs was a necessary first step to identify patterns of behaviour. Yet, some questions remain unanswered and new questions evolved during analysis: the low group cohesion of the Social Democrats, voting behaviour in human rights votes, deviant and controversial votes and especially the role of ECR. What explains ECR co-voting with the pro-EU centre?

Is the voting decision rooted in national positions, is it about the EU, is it a centre-fringe divide, is it about Atlanticists and Anti-Atlanticists, all or none of the aforementioned? In other words, of which substance are those patterns? How should one interpret the co-voting patterns? Given the dataset of 16 votes, are we being fooled by randomness? From the data it remains unanswered whether the voting blocs are substantial or their level of voting likeness is a coincidence.

Triangulation with debates can address these "open ends". Debates accompanying the final vote prove a worthwhile source of information *and* object for analysis. Speeches in debates allow for a better understanding of the nature and quality of divides as well as give insight into justifications for voting decisions. A yet undiscovered question is how the lines of conflict in EP7 and EP8 manifest themselves aside from voting behaviour. More precisely, it is not yet explored how statements and rhetorical means used by EPGs shape divides, and in turn, bring the pro-anti-EU dimension into being. Examining parliamentary deliberations leads to "a more precise understanding of the parliamentary face" of the crises (Braghiroli 2015a). How Russia is being *discussed* in the EP has so far not been systematically analysed. Only a few publications examine (unspecified) statements of party officials, press releases or amendments of MEPs in EP Committee meetings (Krekó and Győri 2016; Nestoras 2016).

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et al. 2006 and Almeida 2010; Caiani and Conti 2014; Ennser 2010

[103]This argument builds on the assumption that "party leaders seek to politicise an issue when they see electoral advantage in doing so. [...] The greater a party's potential electoral popularity on an issue, the more it is induced to inject it into competition with other parties" (Hooghe and Marks 2009, p. 19). It is an incentive for parties to identify topics that have so far blind-sided by their competitors (see also Rovny 2014, p. 643).

The next chapter examines these aspects. With means of a qualitative content- and discourse analysis, the chapter scrutinises the nature and quality of the divide and how EPGs employ discursive strategies to justify their position.

Chapter 6

Debating "Russia"

The previous chapter found the emergence and consolidation of a "5 versus 3" co-voting pattern in the Roll-Calls: ECR, EPP, ALDE, Greens, and S&D on the one side, with GUE/NGL, EFDD and the NIs opposing them. This chapter takes those voting patterns as a starting point for further analysis.

In this chapter, the Qualitative Content Analysis of the debates and EX-PVs examines the nature of the "5 versus 3" voting pattern. The analysis focuses on three related questions: Of which quality are the voting blocs? Do they turn out to be accidental or does the voting coincide with behaviour in debates? Put differently, *are voting blocs substantiated by discourse-coalitions*? The chapter scrutinises what the EPGs argue and how they present their positions. The analysis addresses similarities and differences in argumentation and justification, the use of storylines and plenary behaviour ("style", rhetorical means). *Which dividing lines structure the debates, and how do political actors, through speeches, behaviour and interaction in the plenary, produce or construct these divides?*

Imagining the political space as structured by an Anti-Atlanticisism/ Europeanism/ Atlanticism- and orthogonal pro-/anti-integration axis proves valuable when analysing the speeches (see Chryssogelos 2015 on dividing lines in EU foreign policy). In the speeches of "the 5", the main pro-integration Europeanist and Atlanticist claims play a role (strong and coherent EU, EU as a community of values, US- and NATO cooperation), with tensions mostly regarding whether Russia is considered as partner or threat, and the level of pragmatism in both EU-Russia- and EU-Ukraine relations. However, the EPGs of the "3" do not take up these issues or only to a limited extent. Instead, they communicate general criticism of the EU, or specific decisions, activities and strategies. In doing so they position themselves as either advocate of their (European) people or as a corrective or watchdog.

The analysis concludes that complementary to the voting pattern, there is a discourse-coalition (DC) between "the 5": ECR, EPP, ALDE, Greens,

and S&D. However, there is no such DC between EFDD, GUE/NGL and the NIs. The analysis discovers that political actors, through speeches, behaviour and interaction in the plenary, produce or construct these divides both passively (through their different positions, representations, storylines) and actively (through role-attribution and blaming).

Four tables provide the numerical data for the subsequent findings (see Annex pp. XII-XXI, Tables 6.A sqq.). Each of them displays one aspect of the content of speeches: Table 6.A ("Representations") shows the descriptions, characterisations, and names given for various actors. Table 6.B ("Criticism") presents the variety of criticism of the EU. Table 6.C ("Conclusions") displays claims, suggestions, and demands on the EU and how its relations to Russia and Ukraine should be designed. Accordingly, references in this chapter to, for instance, A.3.1 refer to Table 6.*A* in the Annex, section 3, code 1. Finally, Table 6.S lists the storylines identified in the speeches. As will be explained later in this chapter, this format (representations – criticism – conclusions – storylines) corresponds to the components of the speakers' argumentation structure. It also determines the structure of this chapter. The subsequent sections contain several quotes and fragments from speeches. The parts of sentences which are italicised serve to highlight the detail that supports the interpretation.

A brief introduction to the genre of plenary debates

Plenary sittings usually follow the same choreography, with small configurations due to interactive elements such as Blue-Card questions. The speaking order depends on the type of event (Council/ Commission hearings or Committee reports). All plenary sittings in this study are *debates*. They usually start with Council or Commission hearings or with speeches by rapporteurs (related to their work in the Committees).

In the beginning of the debate as such, there are strict rules about who can speak and for how long. In descending order of their size, every EPG and the NIs have the opportunity to give a speech *on behalf of the group*. The content is expected to be mostly negotiated within the group and delivered by a prominent or specialised group member. The second round of speeches follows the same logic. Corresponding to their number of seats, every group has a pre-set amount of speeches and speaking time (about one to two minutes per MEP). At the end of a debate, there is sometimes room for one-minute speeches.

This structure mostly hinders a lively dialogue and tends to make EP debates "highly monologic" (**Noren.2013**). However, Garssen (2016, p. 31) emphasises that despite the debates being "highly regulated" in terms of speaking order and timing, the speeches themselves are not regulated by content. That means that MEPs are free to say what they want and how they want it, as long as it respects the EP's general rules of behaviour.

This in turn leads to argumentative chain reactions and spontaneous interactions.

This "spontaneity" happens, for instance, through blue-card questions and catch-the-eye-procedures. A blue-card question, indicated by holding up a blue card, is a spontaneous question raised by MEP A during the speech of MEP B. The latter is free to take or ignore the question; the answer has to be very brief. In Catch-the-eye procedure the President selects Members in the Chamber indicating the wish to speak. If this is the case, then the Member will have up to a minute to make a short speech. Normally the agenda sets aside five minutes for catch-the-eye, but the President can choose to either shorten or extend this period. MEPs who did not have the opportunity to speak during a session can hand in a statement of up to 200 words, which is appended to the debate's verbatim report as a *written statement*.

EXPVs are a way to express one's opinion after a vote takes place: "Votes in plenary take place after the debates [...]. At the end of voting, *those Members who so wish may speak in order to give an explanation of vote.* [...] Explanations of votes may be given orally or in writing, individually or on behalf of a group." (European Parliament 2015c, 20, 26, emphasis added. Cf. Rule 183 in "Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament").

6.1 Content of speeches

All statements put forward by the eight EPGs were coded.[104] The contributions can be grouped into five thematic areas. They address (1) Ukraine, the causes, triggers and culprits of the Ukraine crisis, and the future of EU-Ukraine relations as a current challenge (A.7, A.8, C.4); (2) descriptions and characterisations (hereinafter *representations*) of Russia, including its foreign and military activities and political development (A.3, A.4, A.5), accompanied by the set-up and future of EU-Russia relations (A.6, C.3); (3) criticism and evaluations of previous strategies of the EU/EP (B.1, B.2., B.3), as well as (4) demands, suggestions, solutions in regards to future political decisions and directions (C.1, C.2). The speeches also tackle, both explicitly and latently, (5) the EU itself and what it represents (A.1, A.2). The first step is to consider the positions expressed independently of the voting blocs that were established in the previous chapter. Which groups can be identified when it comes to the content of the speeches?

The common denominator of all political groups lies in two points. First, they agree that EU-Russia relations are relevant to the EU (A.5.1,

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[104]Generally, for the analysis, all German quotations were translated into English. In this chapter, few exceptions were made. The German version of the quotation was retained either if (1) it is linguistically significant, or (2) no ideal or appropriate translation into English could be achieved, or (3) a certain expression should be shown in the text passage.

A.6.1). Next, they share a negative attitude towards Russia's current political system, the deterioration of human rights situation, its policy towards Ukraine and all related activities (annexation of the Crimea, involvement with the separatists in Eastern Ukraine; A.3-4).

Apart from these correspondences, Figure 6.1 illustrates that at least two camps with divergent or opposing positions can be identified. The figure is based on the Summary Table (Annex, p. XI). It shows that there is a clear difference in the contents of ALDE, EPP, Greens, S&D and ECR and the other three EPGs. While these five political groups tend to present the EU in a positive light, the others are more (self-)critical of the EU, its institutions, and prior decisions. The EFDD, GUE/NGL and NIs are much more critical of Ukraine, EU-Ukraine strategies and are more reserved about the Partnership and Association Agreement (PAA). They also assess the EU's behaviour towards Russia as provocative and counterproductive. This divide is also reflected in the question of whether the sanctions against Russia should be maintained or extended (as mostly argued by the five) or whether they are (still) appropriate and effective.

Figure 6.1: Overview: EPGs and their statement meta-categories
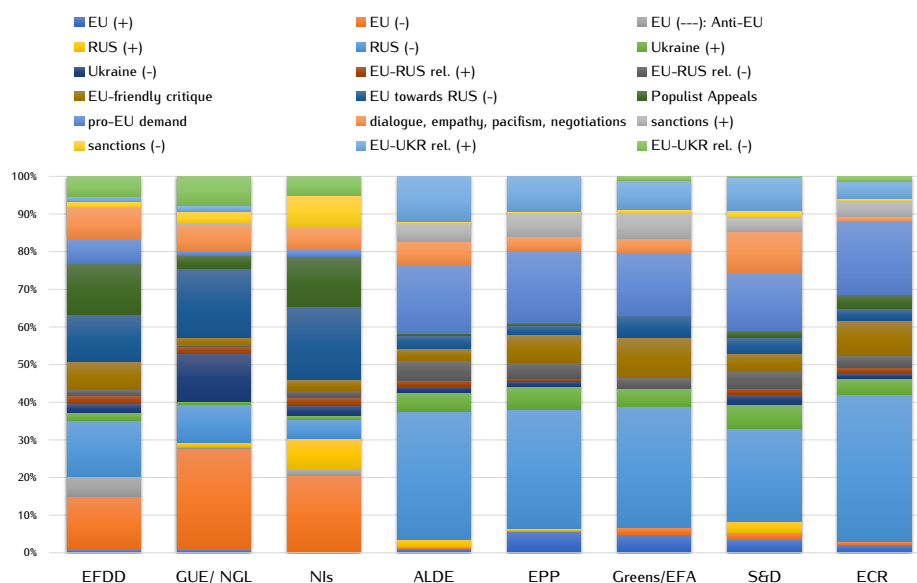
Even though EFDD, GUE/NGL, and NIs differ from "the 5", this does not mean they are a homogenous entity themselves. Aside from their critical attitude towards the sanctions, the Ukraine policy and the critical statements of the EU, they show very different views. This general overview hints that they are not only heterogeneous in their representations and conclusions but also mutually exclusive in some respects. This applies to

the positive and apologetic statements on Russia, the recourse to populist appeals and especially to statements on the current situation in Ukraine (where the Left emphasises the "fascist coup"). Conversely, the data in the Summary Table (p. XI, Annex) indicates that in terms of the content, the co-voting bloc of the five EPGs recurs within the plenary debates. Although there are also tensions and contradictions between EPP, ALDE, Greens, S&D and ECR, they give the impression that they agree on major points such as EU representations, "quo Vadis EU" (pro-EU, integrationist demands) and the added value of EU-Ukraine relations.

After this very general overview, this section is dedicated to the (voting) blocs and their coherence in terms of content. It presents the critique, claims, suggestions, and conclusions that the EGPs put forward.[105]

6.1.1 Priority topics

ALDE, EPP, G/EFA, S&D and ECR ("the 5") set different priorities than GUE/NGL, NIs and EFDD. If one first looks at the distribution between Representations, Criticism and Conclusions, it becomes clear that for these five political groups, critique of the EU accounts for the smallest part. Criticism of the EU only amounts to a maximum of 15% of the codings per EPG. Their appraisal of the EU includes the fact that they criticise the EU's weakness vis-'a-vis Russia. In their view the EU may be weak, uncoordinated and lack coherence, but this is a pity because of the positive vision the speaker has of the EU project. Hence, their EU criticism is primarily framed as "pro-European". In other words, the judgement remains pro-EU driven and remains EU-friendly at the core ("pro-integrationist" critique in the framework of Chryssogelos 2015).

"The 5" share two thematic focal points, which each combine one-third of their codings. On average, one-third of their group statements are devoted to negative representations and evaluations of Russia's domestic and foreign policy as well as its conduct within EU-Russia relations. ALDE, EPP, Greens and ECR have up to two of their "top 3" codes in this subcategory. Another third are the demands on the EU as to how it should shape EU-Russia and EU-Ukraine relations in the future. Here, too, the demands are EU-friendly: The EU should be strong and united, continue or expand sanctions, should be more pro-active and less passive when dealing with Russia. The EU is called upon to continue to promote EU-Ukraine relations and to remain committed to Ukraine.

Aside from those similarities in priority topics, the EPGs highlight different aspects and core claims. According to their five most frequently used codes, the members of ALDE, EPP and (the Polish delegation of) ECR put their focus on the threat posed by Russia, the necessity of sanctions and the

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[105]For better readability, NIs are subsumed as group, knowing that it is not an EPG.

EU's inability to react firmly and decisively. The Greens elaborate more on Ukraine's European path, emphasising Ukraine "European choice", how it "overthrew its king". Their second concern is Russia's domestic political development, i.e. authoritarian trend and call on the EU to place greater emphasis on human rights issues when dealing with Russia. This group mostly sets aside the issue of how-to set-up EU-Russia relations in the future.

In comparison, S&D puts emphasis on the future of EU-Russia relations and promotes an alternative critical perspective on EU's contribution to the Ukraine crisis. In a similar fashion, ECR stresses the relevance of pragmatism in bilateral relations with the RF. Its critical remarks are multifaceted: what is not working in the EU, in Ukraine, in Russia; that the current situation in Ukraine is also the EU's fault; that the PAA is both appreciated and disapproved.

EFDD, GUE/NGL and NIs appeared as a voting bloc. To begin with, both the foci and priorities of "the 5" differ to those of GUE/NGL, EFDD and NIs. While they contribute to the future of EU-Russia and EU-Ukraine relations as well, they invest less in negative representations and evaluations of Russia, while focusing more on EU-related critique. If we then turn to the content of speeches, we find some overlaps regarding their prioritised topics. In the centre of their attention, quite generally, stand negative representations of the EU (A.1) and critique of specific EU institutions and actors (B.3), of other MEPs (A.2), as well as on general behaviour, actions, directions of the EU – both diffuse and specified (B.1).

They invest the least amount of their speaking time on questions related to (the future of) EU-Russia relations (A.5-6) and on evaluations of Russia's foreign policy activities (A.4). They do not significantly elaborate on Ukraine's Europeanness or to-do's related to EU-Ukraine cooperation (C.4, A.7). In that area, their major concern seems to be the disapproval of the PAA and the end of the EU's involvement in Ukraine (C.4, C.6-7).

6.1.2 "The Five's" shared demands and divergencies

The pro-European, integrationist core

After having introduced contradictions and tensions within the voting bloc of "the 5", this section delves into shared viewpoints and visions of the parliamentary groups. The previous subsection already mentioned contradictions and tensions between ALDE, EPP, G/EFA, ECR and S&D. Notwithstanding, the groups agree on the "crucial points" which are, in essence, pro-European and Europeanist conclusions. To begin with, the groups consider the PAA with Ukraine as beneficial (for both sides) and welcomed.[106]

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[106]Except for some ECR members.

Granting Ukraine macro-financial assistance is consensually supported.[107] Though there are some marginalised voices which express concerns about Ukraine's capability to reform and modernise its political system, the overall tenor is enthusiastic and optimistic.

While there are different ideas about how ENP and EaP should proceed in the future, there is agreement that both policies are generally positive and necessary. Further Association Agreements and dialogue with Moldova should continue. The speakers call on the EP and the Commission to pay more attention to human rights violations in Russia and, in negotiations with Russia, to insist firmly on respect for democratic values and human rights.

The current crises in Ukraine, starting with the Annexation of Crimea and the separatist movements and war in Eastern Ukraine is primarily blamed on Russia. The annexation of Crimea is unanimously condemned as a breach of international law, and Russia should stop using energy as a political pressure tool (its "energy muscle"[108]) and respect the integrity of its neighbouring states. Even though they consider Russia as an important partner of the EU that needs to be kept close through dialogue, sanctions are necessary and should remain intact – or even extended – until Russia shows willingness and concrete steps to fulfil the requirements of the Minsk Agreements. According to all five groups, Russia is no longer to be considered as a strategic partner.

The speakers conclude that the EU's policies vis-à-vis Russia so far apparently have been clueless, ineffective, uncoordinated – and weak. The EU did not draw lessons from past events and suffers from a too naïve and faithful approach towards the RF. They criticise the functioning of the EU, but solely to the extent that it does not live up to its full potential. EU institutions involved in bilateral relations do not do enough, or with not enough devotion and ambition. MEPs regret the lack of firmness and coherence between individual Member states, in decision making, or policies, summarised in the metaphor of "one postbox in Brussels" (e.g. 5:58 S&D_Siwiec): in order to work properly and to be able to solve contemporary challenges and tasks successfully, the EU needs to speak with one voice. According to the speakers, the EU needs to overcome its number one problem "passiveness" and to "wake up", become active, and finally unfold its full potential.[109] In line with this, the answer to current challenges

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[107]The Greens, for example, in their Group speech, emphasise that their EPG "is unreservedly in favor of this proposal, and we believe that it is very important to safeguard the sovereignty of the Ukrainian state by avoiding its liquidation. It would be the worst thing that could happen to Ukraine's sovereignty" (15:17 Greens/EFA_Group:Hautala).

[108]10:58 EFDD_Mazuronis calls it "energy blackmail"; similar: 18:83 EPP_Buda.

[109]The EPP, for instance, criticises that "the European Union was founded on two pillars, prosperity and peace", but these days both are in crisis; the EU should "wake up from an illusion in which we thought to have forever and maybe we have not done enough

is more integration, closer cooperation, and more EU-driven initiatives.

The EU-related criticism, evaluations and conclusions demonstrate a common pro-European stance of the five groups. One could assume that given their agreement on these core topics, they can overlook the differences and tensions.

Unchallenged and ignored disagreements

There not only seem to be aspects that the five EPGs prioritise differently but, on some issues, they take different or opposing positions. However, the five rarely object to contradicting positions openly if they come from their peers (i.e. from one of the five themselves). The three issues that are subject to tension are, one, how to assess Russia's level of deficiency (evilness, maliciousness); two, how Russia's relationship with the EU is to be assessed; and finally, how EU-Russia relations should be shaped in the future.

When comparing EPP, S&D, Greens/EFA and ALDE, it becomes evident that ALDE's speeches are the most balanced and ALDE appears to have the highest *centrality*. Looking at the distribution of codes among the EPGs, ALDE is the common denominator or middle ground of the other four. For instance, in terms of its criticism and claims concerning EU strategies or behaviour, representations of the involved actors, and its rather unemotional perspective on Russia's role as the EU's partner (see below, section on 6.2.1 on *Representations*). It does not stand out in terms of emotional language or metaphors, or cross-references to WWI, WWII, or any other rhetorical comparison.

In contrast to that, the EPP is a strong critic of the EU's "too pragmatic" approach towards Russia; economic interests should not outweigh values, according to the group. There are only three occurrences in which EPP members consider Russia as an inevitable partner of the EU. *"Fascism is coming from Moscow, not from Kiev"* and *"Russia wants to rebuild its empire"* – two (in-vivo) codes that are found in speeches of EPP and ECR (see also 6.2.4). The Greens, together with ALDE, refrain from contributing to whether the EU should save or protect the CEE or EaP states from Russia's "expansion to the West".

Generally, though, the EPP's and ECR's anticipated scenario of the invasion of CEE states is neither actively shared or promoted by the others, nor is it challenged or openly questioned. The only exception occurs during RC15, the debate on military activities in the Black Sea Basin. The reso-

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to protect them in the past, when they were not in danger" (10:121 EPP_Gardini). Here, the EU is presented as too passive, and felt too comfortable to act. All current events and developments "force the EU to grow up very quickly. 70 years of peace and prosperity is, of course, a success, but on the other hand, that success tends to lull us to sleep" (10:108 EPP_deLange).

lution supports further military equipment and support for the black sea. The chamber splits into three wings: those who continue to consider Russia as a threat and therefore demand more military presence in the region (mostly EPP); those who appear to have been given a "reality check", concluding that what is suggested in the draft resolution is insane and goes too far (Greens, ALDE, parts of S&D); and those, as a reaction to those in shock, note that "we told you so" (GUE/NGL). Unsurprisingly, the Greens, coming from an anti-militaristic ideological background, are not satisfied with the text presented and consider militarisation as counterproductive. In addition, ALDE starts questioning their colleagues in the bloc of 5. The speaker on behalf of the Group criticises the "sectarist and militaristic drift" of some MEPs. He notes that some aspects that justify the resolution text are "truffled assumptions and not facts" and the EP must return to a "rational trend" (18:13 ALDE_Group:Barandiaran). The overall tenor in the chamber is that some national delegations (indirectly talking about CEE and Baltic MEPs) need to overcome their "Russiophobia", and that the militarisation of the Black Sea on the part of the EU goes too far.

Another question in which differences between the groups become apparent is the design and set-up of EU-Russia relations. To begin with, ALDE and the Greens do not contribute to the issue of EU-Russia relations in a noteworthy fashion (beyond "dialogue should continue"), and there is only one occurrence of an ALDE-MEP calling the EU hypocritical or guided by irrationality, in a very tame or diplomatic manner (6:86 ALDE_Nart).

Particularly in that issue area, S&D and ECR (the British delegation) are the only groups that criticise the EU beyond its deficiency to act decisively/ internal shortcomings. While the others agree on the ENP as not conflicting or contradicting Russia's policies or security interests, S&D criticises the EU's sometimes arrogant approach towards Russia and, concordant with ECR, demands that the EU in the future shows (more) empathy and respect in its negotiations and activities.[110] S&D speakers point out that Russia should, firstly, be "listened to and understood from its own starting point" (3:2 S&D_Repo), and secondly, reassure Russia that Ukraine accession to NATO

> "[...] is not a realistic hypothesis. I believe that a balanced policy of Ukraine against the West and at the same time Russia is indispensable and beneficial for both sides. [...] EU and NATO enlargement to the East is seen by Russia as a threat to its security and it is the duty of Western countries to understand and share the Russian sen-

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[110]As will be explained later in the section on Representations (6.2), the main difference is that ECR wants empathy with Russia because it is a "bear" that should not be poked, or some kind of unpredictable giant (or monster) that should not be provoked; just because the EU cannot handle such a conflict (because of its dependency and internal weakness). The S&D instead, is more showing that the long tradition and history of EU-Russia relations roots in common values and partnership.

sibility on this point. Russia is a strategic partner and for the EU it is indispensable to have a relaxed and clear relationship that allows the necessary cooperation in many areas with this great power" (16:120 S&D_Panzeri).

In doing so, they show limited empathy with Russia's behaviour and critically remark the necessity of tripartite consultations between Ukraine, Russia and the EU when conceptualising future policies in the field of Shared Neighbourhood: "[...] And our policy must be consistent, primarily a policy of regional balance" (18:12 ECR_Group:Jurek).

Whereas EPP describes EU-Russia relations as shaped by asymmetry and opposing interests, the S&D and ECR display bilateral relations more neutrally. Of those two, it is the S&D group that, throughout all plenary events, invests more speaking time and speeches on behalf of the Group in arguing that EU-Russia relations are valuable and necessary:

> "Ukraine's relations with Russia must be balanced so as not to cause an escalation of the conflict, which has claimed many victims already among the civilian population. The European Union should try to alleviate this conflict. At the same time there can be no rupture of diplomatic relations with Russia, because their rebuilding will be very difficult" (9:60 S&D_Liberadzki).

Russia is seen as a relevant strategic partner with whom the interests are not competing but overlapping:

> "We only have to look back at history to understand the need to maintain this [strategic] relationship. Russia has been a partner, and can be a partner in resolving some of the major international conflicts with which we are confronted today. And so it seems that we have to find the best balance. Of course we support the legitimate Ukrainian aspirations, while at the same time containing significant diplomatic effort to foster good relations with Russia" (10:125 S&D_Assis).

> "The fight against such a dangerous enemy as 'Islamic state' cannot be successful without Russian participation. Yes, now between western countries and Russia are the contradictions and problems of which we need to talk, but we also have more important tasks that we can only solve together, only by working together." (16:11 S&D_Mamikins).

Given the international challenges, "as we have seen, we need strategic, reasonable and long-lasting relations" (17:92 S&D_Liberadzki). Despite tensions,

> "the doors must be opened to dialogue and the aim must be to build a new confidence. Common interests and challenges are combating climate change, terrorism, cross-border co-operation and, for example, the Northern Dimension policy is an example of how everyday co-operation is already underway" (17:10 S&D_Group:Jaakonsaari).

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Among the five, S&D and few British ECR members are the only partici-pants that acknowledge the EU's contribution to the Ukraine crisis and the complexity of responsibilities:

> "[...] the situation in Ukraine is worsening and the European Union should accept its responsibilities. Various colleagues have said that Russia is destabilizing Ukraine, but these colleagues forget that we have been here to start this process. From the very beginning of the crisis, together with the United States, we have been heavily involved in the country, encouraging violent actions and putting Ukraine part against the other. We should not have used Ukraine as a means of op-posing Russia on behalf of third parties. We should have committed ourselves to building a strategic partnership with both, based on trust and cooperation" (5:116, S&D_Arlacchi).

Another speaker points out "that the story that involves the Ukraine is complicated, it is quite clear, as are complex responsibilities. Of course, it is not allowed for Russia to invade a country [...]. Europe has to solve problems and not deepen them" (10:74 S&D_Panzeri, similar 5:136 Greens/ EFA_ Smith). MEP Campell Bannerman (ECR, 13:37) stresses that he has a positive attachment to Ukraine and is "certainly no excuser of Putin's Rus-sia. Nevertheless, I am deeply concerned at the mess the EU has made of its intervention in Ukraine to date". In doing so, they are the "corrective factor" in among the five (see also Table 6.B, Annex).

Notwithstanding some overlaps, ECR and S&D do not pursue the same direction when it comes to fundamental questions. Although S&D appears as a corrective force in some areas, its support for the general integrationist thrust is given. ECR often refrains from straightforward integrationist de-mands or suggestions and is a critic in multiple directions. The general impression is that S&D members are mitigating the Russia-critical speech acts of EPP (and Polish ECR) by pointing at Russia's and the EU's common interests, and that it should not be seen as a competitor or "antagonist" only. Overall, S&D's more considerate and corrective comments match the voting patterns, which suggests the group's role as standing more at the periphery than at the core of the bloc (if imagined as network). S&D is also the only EPG that actively promotes visa facilitation and liberalisation (re-jected by ALDE and EPP): "At the same time we should do everything we can to get an agreement on visa liberalisation, visa facilitation. This is in the interest of people of both the EU and Russia [...]" (2:75, S&D_Tabajdi).

As suggested in the literature, this behaviour is plausible in two ways: first, the Social Democrat's mindset influenced by the legacies of *Ostpolitik*. A higher sensitivity towards Russia characterises this mindset.[111] Second,

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[111]This reference to famous Social Democrats' view on Russia is even brought up in a speech on behalf of the S&D group, where MEP Jaakonsaari quotes that "[. . .] 'For without Russia there is no peace in Europe', as the veteran of Eastern politics Helmut Schmidt has said" (17:7 S&D_Group:Jaakonsaari).

the dominant German national delegation in S&D is considered to generally promote a pragmatic stance towards Russia (i.a. speeches by MEP Fleckenstein as prominent S&D representative), and also indicated by its usually more hesitant attitude towards the efficiency of sanctions.

Turning to ECR, this group needs to harmonise two dominant national delegations, i.e. the Polish and British. Both stress the threat coming from "Moscow/ Putin". The former supports the PAA with Ukraine. The latter engages in shortcomings and weaknesses of the EU in the face of a strong Russia, partly disapproves of the PAA and questions further eastwards enlargement and integration policies which would involve "unnecessary" deepening of the Union:

> "I am seeking stricter sanctions and an urgent agreement among the member states on a unique appearance towards Russia in order to finally stop the end of instability in the east of our continent. For that we do not need further integration, joint institutions or EU armies, but only a little goodwill and common sense." (6:126 ECR_Hannen)

> "Whilst I support a Ukrainian trade deal, the EU Association Agreement is nakedly political. It talks of convergence in foreign and security policy and of military cooperation. An EEAS official has even said there is a clash of geopolitical rivalries of two competing empires. The EU must exhibit its strength, and now Ukraine wants to join NATO. All this just pokes the Russian bear." (13:37 ECR_CampbellBannerman)

Being both for and against, and joined in its Russia-critical attitude, the ECR – as soft Eurosceptics – need to rhetorically compensate or frame the alignment with the pro-EU (or integrationist) camp. ECR communicates, as the only EPG in that bloc, by "We versus you" argumentative constructions. That means that ECR tries to distance itself from the EPGs it usually disagrees with in other circumstances (debates), as illustrated by the following example:

> "A number of breaches of international law, particularly by Russia, have been denounced today. That is certainly right, because these are violations of international law, particularly through the annexation of the Crimea. But in the same resolution [...] you now want to consider Ukraine's membership of the EU. I wonder, then, whether we have not already had enough problems among ourselves in the current form of the EU to now have to think about enlarging this EU even further. And then [...] give serious thought to whether Ukraine might not be a member of NATO in the future. I really do wonder whether you are actually still taking note of realities. Do you actually still take note of what your task is, *ladies and gentlemen of the majority groups*? After all, we want to adopt a resolution on Russia tomorrow, which will give quite outspoken support to interference in Russia's internal affairs with considerable financial resources. That is hypocrisy, and it cannot get any worse!" (13:88, ECR_Pretzell)

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The speakers try to convince the audience that they are not part of the "mainstream", that s/he is not part of the decision made by "(you,) the established groups" ("You decided that..."); that the speaker considers decisions or text proposals as typical of Euro-bureaucrats, counterproductive, against common sense, against the people's will. This type of rhetorical mean is otherwise only used by the NIs and EFDD members (see Table 6.B.1.3-5; and below).

In brief, it is thus the ECR and some S&D speakers who object to or differentiate the statements of ALDE, EPP and the Greens. Usually, though, in questions where contradictions and tensions exist, the five do rarely object to contradicting positions openly if they come from their peers (i.e. from one of the five themselves). Even though all groups have different priorities, the five EPGs agree on the "crucial points" which are, in essence, pro-European and pro-integrationist conclusions. Those two aspects are indications for a discourse-coalition.

6.1.3 "Same same, but different": "The Three" criticising the EU

After having described the differences between "the 5", this section focuses on the other three groups. At first glance, it seems as if their statements fully oppose those of the five, but the analysis finds that EFDD and GUE/NGL see Russia critically as well. GUE/NGL, EFDD and NI do criticise the US/NATO and the EU, but in very different manners and foci.

Similar standpoints

The analysis reveals that radical MEPs of GUE/NGL, NI and EFDD communicate several similar positions. Particularly the GUE/NGL and some NIs problematise the EU's (in their eyes) Atlanticist orientation. They consider the close cooperation with the US and/ or NATO as problematic, given that the US is seen as an expansionist power (A.1.6; see also quote 17:50 below). Linked to that, they find the EU not free from US influence and (becoming) more aggressive and expansionist itself, and (turning into) a hypocrite when judging or deciding on third countries it maintains (economic) relations with:

> "If we follow the logic of previous actions and votes, Kiev should be threatened with the worst reprisals, but this time our Parliament approves of Kiev and lets it quietly massacre its civilian population. We have to pull ourselves together!" (6:68 NI_Schaffhauser)

> "It is fairly obvious what sort of an individual Vladimir Putin is – not a very nice individual – but, unfortunately, the European Union at this stage has given up any right to lecture anyone on sovereignty. I say that as someone who comes from the Republic of Ireland, where we had a referendum on the Nice Treaty. You did not like the result,

> so you brought in the propaganda tanks and we then voted 'yes'. [...]
> Then, on the Lisbon Treaty – your glorified European Constitution –
> we voted against it. What happened? Did you – the people who are
> lecturing Russia [...] – listen to us? No, you did not. You brought in
> the EU Commission tanks with your money and you forced us again
> to change our vote. [...] This Union should shut the hell up about
> sovereignty until it learns what it really means. You have not got a
> bloody clue." (16:12 GUE/NGL_Flanagan)

Through its actions and strategies related to the Shared Neighbourhood
and Ukraine, the EU acts counterproductively and provocatively, as it ig-
nores or plays down RUS's perspective and security concerns (whether in-
tentionally or not differs according to the speaker).

> "Today we are rushing through, at undue speed, an Association Agree-
> ment with the Ukraine, and as we speak there are NATO soldiers
> engaged in military exercises in the Ukraine. Have we taken leave
> of our senses? Do we actually want to have a war with Putin? Be-
> cause if we do, we are certainly going about it the right way." (10:32
> EFDD_Group:Farage)

In the eyes of those three groups, the EU (and the US) are to blame or at
least played a significant role in causing and fuelling the crisis in Ukraine.

> "I would like to emphasise that the serious negotiations should [have]
> start[ed] much earlier, i.e. before the association agreement, i.e. before
> November 2013. The Association Agreement is one of the key factors
> contributing to the open military conflict and civil war. The European
> Union, especially its commissioners, and the European Parliament,
> which did not intervene in a timely manner, played a major role in
> the situation." (6:15 GUE/NGL_Group:Mastalka)

In the view of the EFDD, Russia is

> "far from innocent in this crisis, but there is blame on both sides and
> the EU's actions have done nothing to promote peace and reconcili-
> ation. Where are we now after all of this from the self-declared pre-
> server of European peace? In the most dangerous world since the
> collapse of the Iron Curtain [...]." (17:50 EFDD_Carver)

> "I am quite sure Members of the Parliament will join me in expressing
> concerns for those suffering in the ongoing conflict in Ukraine and in
> hoping for a quick resolution. But it is my firm belief that the EU
> contributed to starting this conflict in the first place and that signing
> an agreement for deeper political ties with the Ukraine was simply
> irresponsible, especially while taunting Russia with sanctions." (6:51
> EFDD_Hookem)

They consider "the association agreement signed with Ukraine was an early
and imprudent step, and we call for Europe to remain as neutral as possi-
ble" (6:66 EFDD_Tamburrano). Before the vote on the PAA, the NIs criti-
cally remark that

> "Do not say you cannot know that for twenty-five years, the United States seek to integrate Ukraine and Georgia into NATO in order to cut these countries away from Russia. You cannot say you did not know that Ukraine is a country torn between East and West and it would have been necessary from the beginning to work with Moscow that Ukraine is an interface between the European Union and Russia, for Ukraine to be a federal and neutral state." (10:82 NI_Chauprade)

In general, "the 3's" criticism of the EU with regard to EU-Russia relations is much less driven by integrationist motives/ subtexts (B.2, C.2, C.1). GUE/NGL, EFDD and NIs are generally more hesitant towards efficiency and prolongation of sanctions. Speakers call on pragmatic reasons for cooperation with Russia despite their critical attitude towards its foreign policy activities, calling sanctions and the crisis in Ukraine "lose-lose-lose-scenarios" (13:43 EFDD_Castaldo).

When they demonstrate EU critique or Eurosceptic attitudes, they express solidarity or empathy with the Russian Federation. It goes with criticism directed at EU integration strategies, policy failures, EU structure and the idea of the European Union itself. At the same time, most of "the 3" do criticise Russia's domestic and foreign policies equally as for example S&D or ALDE. The predominant attitude of GUE/NGL, EFDD and NIs is: we criticise Russia, the deteriorating state of human rights and its aggression in Eastern Ukraine, but we also blame the European Union for its intervention, "game", involvement or role in causing the current Ukrainian predicament.

Given their limited variety, the *conclusions* (demands) of the three can be summarised briefly (C.1-2). They differ fundamentally to those of the other five EPGs. Compared to "the 5", they refrain from any demands related to more integration or delegation to the European level. Their only "agenda" seems to be, firstly, de-escalation, the continuation of negotiations, and appeasement. These are the reasons they present when they put more emphasis on the downside of sanctions (C.3.5). Secondly, they see the EU's "interference" in Ukraine as both one of the causes and fuel to the conflict with Russia (e.g. 9:10 GUE/NGL_Zuber). By using the negatively connotated term *interference*, they already position themselves: The EU is not cooperating, negotiating, trading, helping/ supporting Ukraine, but interfering, which means "intervening in a situation without invitation or necessity"[112]. "The West should recite the mea culpa for contributing to overthrow a democratically and regularly elected head of state" (16:130 EFDD_Tamburrano). They therefore suggest a more neutral and less inviting attitude towards Ukraine (C.4), inter alia to avoid further tensions with Russia. Fostering Ukraine relations should not outweigh good and important relations to Russia, international security and regional security on the

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[112]Source: Oxford British English Dictionary Online, "interfere" (https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/interfere, accessed 30 Aug 2019)

EU's eastern borders. The ENP should be designed without creating foreign policy tensions. This more hesitant attitude towards Ukraine includes also disapproval of the PAA (that is about to bring "the inevitable return of a cold war in Europe", 6:29 NI_Ferrand) – a view not at all shared by "the 5".

Different foci and style of criticism

Aside from these apparent first glance commonalities, the *scope* or *target* and *style of criticism* differs significantly among them. The EFDD's and NIs' criticism goes far beyond mere policies and procedures. Unlike the Left, they also criticise what they perceive as structural or fundamental deficits of the EU; while being much less specific and more diffuse in their judgement.

Specific and diffuse EU-critique

GUE/NGL stands out in the frequency of pacifist, anti-militarist claims (C.3.4, B.3.5) and Anti-Americanism (A.1.6b). They openly oppose NATO involvement in the Black Sea. Contrary to EFDD and NIs, the Left comments on Russia's autocratic development and points to the deteriorating human rights situation (A.3; see 7.2.1). This EPG has two core topics. The coup d'état in Ukraine and the right-wing organisations that are involved with the new political leadership; and the EU's contribution to the Ukraine crisis and the need to evaluate and recalibrate (A.7.5, A.8.5).

The Left disapproves of EU support for the new Poroshenko-Yatsenyuk government which, in their view, came to power through a coup against a legitimately elected president. The EU is accused of being hypocritical and blind in the right eye: Many statements emphasise "nationalist, fascist and neo-Nazi forces" (15:35 GUE/NGL_Zuber), the "Svoboda government or the Azov division that makes up the bulk of Ukrainian troops and has the same emblem as the Nazi Division 'Das Reich'" (9:70 GUE/NGL_Melenchon; similar: 5:27 GUE/NGL_Group:Scholz, 8:20 GUE/NGL_Spinelli) and dangerous nationalism in Ukraine.

> "It is extraordinary that this report is concerned about the increasingly intense contacts and cooperation, tolerated by the Russian leadership, between populist, fascist and far-right European parties and nationalist forces in Russia. The majority of this Parliament, on the other hand, does not seem at all concerned [and] is no longer bothered [by] the presence of fascist forces in the Ukrainian government and the repression of democratic freedoms." (17:129 GUE/NGL_Zuber, similar: 9:70 GUE/NGL_Melenchon)

The speakers question whether the EU should support Ukraine at all costs while risking world peace and bilateral relationships with Russia (e.g. 10: 136 GUE/NGL_Ferreira).

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When taking into account the frequencies of codes related to EU-self-criticism (A.8.5, B.1.2), GUE/NGL becomes and promotes itself as the corrective voice or watchdog of the EP, as an entity who points a critical finger toward inconvenient truths. GUE/NGL often uses sentence constructions synonymous with "However" plus "let me remind you", "we should not forget", or "I would like to recall":

> "I fully understand the objections raised by colleague Harms and I also agree about the responsibilities of Russia and the need for territorial integrity. However I'd like to recall that in the East and in the Donbass region there are paramilitary fascist and even neo-Nazi and that the battalion Azov in particular depends directly on the Ministry of Interior of Kiev." (13:21 GUE/NGL_Spinelli)

The EU is criticised in terms of the overall decisions it has taken, some procedural deficits, and hasty decisions clouded by emotions (i.e. because of sentiment for Ukraine).

> "The EP is supposed to nod off something here today that – against the rules – has not been analysed and discussed, neither in the EP, in the EU nor in Ukrainian society and certainly not with partners like Russia. The message is clear: the citizens will pay the bill, and we are a compliant instrument. That is why my group is calling for the Association Agreement not to be voted on today and for a roadmap to be submitted to the EP in the short term as to how the overall complex of economic relations between the EU, Ukraine and Russia is to be regulated in a way that is transparent to all." (8:11 GUE/NGL_Group:Scholz)

> "Here are the points that *should be clarified before* any agreement [is signed]: The government of Kiev considered illegitimate by half of Ukrainians; the EU should seek to dissolve immediately extreme right militias and neo-Nazis employed by the Ministry of Interior in Kiev. The need to protect Russian populations in east and south of Ukraine, otherwise we give to Putin all the reasons for an invasion." (8:20 GUE/ NGL_Spinelli)

At the same time, Russia is also criticised, but to a much lesser and descriptive extent than for example EPP, ECR, and the Greens do.

> "[According to the report,] Russia, contrary to the spirit of good neighbourly relations and in violation of international law, rules and standards, has deliberately adopted actions aimed at destabilising neighbouring countries through illegal commercial embargoes or the conclusion of treaties. [This] may describe Russia's action *but also describes exactly what the European Union has been doing*, through sanctions, political, economic or military pressures in various parts of the world, especially in the region which is in the vicinity of the EU and Russia". (16:97 GUE/NGL_Matias)

> "Sinn Féin recognizes and condemns Russia's human rights abuses, including the discrimination against the LGBTI community and the

imprisonment of political opponents and critics of the Putin regime
[...]. However, the main focus of the report relates to the crisis in
Ukraine, which is now at the core of current EU-Russia relations. [...]
The conflict in Ukraine has stemmed from a zero-sum geopolitical
game between Russia and the West that put Ukraine in the position of
choosing to ally itself with one or the other. Russia and the EU should
have been working together to create mutually beneficial and nonex-
clusive economic, political and social relationships with Ukraine. In-
stead Russian and EU strategic interests in the region have plunged
Ukraine into crisis. While the report acknowledges the corrosive part
played by Russia in the region it completely ignores any responsibility
of the EU for its role in the development of this conflict. It is simply an
unbalanced report. Furthermore, the report strikes the wrong note for
future EU-Russia Relations. We believe that open dialogue, not con-
frontation, between the EU and Russia is what is needed to de-escalate
tensions. That is why I abstained." (16:23 GUE/NGL_Anderson, para-
phrased statement: GUE/NGL_Carthy, GUE/NGL_NiRiada)

For GUE/NGL, the majority of problems or issues linked to Russia and
Ukraine are more symptomatic than "unique": The obstacles reveal that
the EU probably made some bad decisions (or is about to), lost the bigger
picture, and needs a course correction.

"The report's criticism of Russia is correct. I condemn the annexa-
tion of the Crimea, as well Russia's crimes against human rights such
as the persecution of LBTQ people and Restrictions on freedom of
opinion and meeting. My criticism of Putin's authoritarian and cor-
rupt rule is clear. However, I deeply disagree with the report's con-
clusion that consolidation and deepening of the EU's common for-
eign and security policy is required. On the contrary, I believe that
alliance-free EU countries, such as Sweden, need to maintain their
own independent opportunity to act for relaxation, peace and disar-
mament. I also oppose the closer cooperation between the EU and
NATO. Militarization and superpower construction do not solve con-
flicts. I also wanted the report to be more clearly emphasised and
focused on strategies for peaceful civil conflict resolution." (16:34
GUE/NGL_Björk)

Despite all the criticism, the statements appear rather worried and con-
cerned in the sense that the overall attitude towards the EU project is pos-
itive and intact. Most of the critical statements are specific procedure- and
policy-related EU-critique.

The NIs are the harshest opponents toward the sanctions, given that
"sanctions are not an instrument for de-escalation; they are *poison* in co-
operation between European peoples" (6:77 NI_Voigt). They are the most
enthusiastic about the EU and Russia being strategic partners and sharing
the same values. It is therefore not surprising that NIs criticise other MEPs
heavily as Russiophobics (B.3.6). They are the only MEPs who communi-
cate a positive image of president Putin and openly consider the Crimean

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Referendum as legitimate, given that "the Crimean people seemed to be clearly in favour of this attachment to the Russia" (16:25 NI_Arnautu, similar: 17:29 NI_Chauprade). Unfortunately, though, "[the government in Ukraine] has no respect for the right to self-determination of peoples including the people of eastern Ukraine and Crimea [...]" (15:22 NI_Graaff).

> "[In this report] The Russian Federation is indeed accused of all the evils: of having initiated the war with Georgia, while the responsibility of Tbilisi had been put forward by the independent international commission; Or "illegally annexing the Crimea", when the democratically elected government of the Crimea had demanded its attachment to the Russian Federation." (16:75 NI_Jalkh)

Some of them mention not only the EU and the US contribution to the crisis in Ukraine, but the Euromaidan was *orchestrated* by the West (5:46 NI_Brons). Those aspects force them to reiterate a self-defense that they are no "Putin Fans".

As suggested in the voting analysis, the EFDD is a rather heterogeneous group. It is dominated by the British UKIP, Movimento 5 Stelle and one Lithuanian MEP. This EPG very much focuses on the shortcomings and deficits of the EU (about 30% of their statements) while framing themselves as advocates of the people (more in section 6.3).

> "A few months ago we did not answer the question of Ukraine's readiness for associate membership. A few months ago we did not answer the question of whether we can afford to lose Ukraine. Now we are not finding the answer to the question of whether we can stop the war in Ukraine. [...] Having dedicated our energies to these things, we have turned out to be politicians who are unable to solve not only rising social exclusion, youth unemployment problems, but, above all, defending against war one nation and the whole of Europe." (5:43 EFD_Paksas)

They usually do not contribute any specific suggestions or ideas for further action. Often, their criticism remains diffuse, with the message that the EU is undemocratic and a project that evokes their rejection:

> "Ukraine needs the opportunity to take control of its own internal affairs to achieve its ambition of becoming a sustainable and united democracy. [...] What Ukraine does not need is an EU or Russian puppet master pulling its strings, moving forward." (18:26 EFDD_Group: Hookem)

> "The Ukrainians threw out their corrupt pro-Russian President and Government because they were under the domination of Russia. [...] The Ukrainians are between a rock and a hard place. They see no alternative to the Russian threat but to seek closer association with the EU. I regret that but I understand their position. I hope that the Ukrainians eventually achieve independence and freedom without

the need to submit themselves to the undemocratic EU. I wish them well in that ambition." (13:113 EFDD_Batten)

"Amongst the long list of foreign policy failures and contradictions in the last few years, including of course the bombing of Libya and the desire to arm the rebels in Syria, has been the unnecessary provocation of Vladimir Putin. This EU empire, ever seeking to expand, stated its territorial claim on the Ukraine some years ago. Just to make that worse, some NATO members said they would like the Ukraine to join NATO. We directly encouraged the uprising in the Ukraine that led to the toppling of President Yanukovych; that led in turn to Vladimir Putin reacting; and the moral of the story is: if you poke the Russian bear with a stick, do not be surprised when he reacts." (10:31 EFDD_Group:Farage)

Their second focus lies on negative representations of Russia's foreign and military activities (A.4). They rhetorically combine Russia-criticism with EU-critique. The EU is uncoordinated, weak vis-à-vis Russia, and Russia is strong: "Do you agree that there is a very limited range of things that the EU mouse can do to affect the Russian bear?" (17:33 EFDD_Etheridge, similar: 10:31 EFDD_Group:Farage). The "bear that must not be poked" is however a comparison not meant in a positive sense. Section 7.3.2 explores this aspect in more depth.

Style of criticism and speeches and the use of populist appeals

Both the Left, EFDD and the NIs one way or the other criticise the Atlanticist orientation of the EU. However, it is first and foremost the NIs who pathetically call it "submissiveness", or the EU being a "*slave* to the United States". They vote against reports because they are "preconceived and full of anti-Russian prejudices. Anti-Russian politics imposed on the EU by the Americans must be inverted [...]" (16:39 NI_Buonanno). "This unilateral union has become a representative of American interests" (16:1 NI_Balczo), the "deputies of the majority [...] serve only the United States at the expense of the Member States they represent" (16:41 NI_Briois, also: NI_DOrnano), and the EP turned into "the third Chamber of Washington" (13:43 EFDD_Castaldo).

Also very much unlike the Left, they simultaneously put themselves forward as the defenders of European citizens, adding populist appeals to their discursive toolbox. The NIs and EFDD are the speakers who use Populist Appeals the most (they rank first, second and fifth of their most frequent codes). That means that they aim to represent themselves as advocates of European citizens (or their national origin) who fight in their name against EU elitist and unworldly decisions. As the following speech shows, the tensions with Russia are used to present the deficits of the EU institutions and the problems of the people, of whom the speaker is the delegate:

"On 17 July, the accident flight Malaysia Airlines MH17 killed two hundred and ninety-six people, and eighty children. During the immediate start of the investigation it was found that it is not a simple plane crash, but a real military attack. [...] Dear colleagues, *how is it possible* that there is no clear responsibility, *given the countless bodies that should protect European citizens*? We talk about the security of all European citizens. [T]here is also an economic, political and social dimension to this. Many companies, also in Italy are collapsing because of sanctions imposed either by the EU, or by Russia. People are becoming desperate. There are many sectors: agri-food, but also textile, transport, energy, that are highly dependent on Russia." (10:69 EFDD_Aiuto)

"Russia and the European Union have for years now, in fact since NATO's eastward enlargement and Russia's first military reaction in South Ossetia in 2008, been the subject of a worrying auction, a dangerous auction, a spiral of mutual provocation, which is exacerbating the situation and which, since 1914, we have known can lead to a major war. No one has improved from these mutual provocations, not European farmers, not Russian farmers, not the Russian economy and not the economy in the EU Member States. Strictly condemning Russian violations of the consultation principle, as in Crimea, for example, is one thing. To bind the countries of the European Union to a geostrategic and economic de facto attachment of Ukraine, promising the people there a promise of money and immigration on behalf of the peoples of the EU, is another matter [...]." (16:2 NI_Annemans)

As mentioned above, for EFDD, the EU plays a central role in causing the Ukraine crisis. However, they want to make sure that they separate themselves from the EP majority by "We versus You" constructions along the lines of

"[...] there should be a huge degree of guilt in this House about what provoked all of this in the first place. We saw Western Ukrainians waving European flags, rioting, setting fire to things and effectively staging a coup d'état which brought down the Ukrainian President, leading to this instability. Yes, you are the guilty people and you refuse to accept it." (10:35 EFDD_Farage)

The rhetorical combination of "people advocacy" and "We versus You" notions distinguishes them from the other EPGs.

There are also several points in which EFDD, GUE/NGL and NIs do not match with each other at all. The GUE/NGL central notion of the coup against the legitimate Yanukovich government gets rejected (and reframed) by "the 5". While the Left emphasise the links between radical and extreme right organisations and the new Ukrainian leadership, this is largely ignored by the EFDD and the NIs. The latter, while also talking about a coup d'état, consider it to be orchestrated by the West. Both claims get strongly condemned by "the 5", as illustrated by the example:

> "On the day when [the Ukrainian] Parliament decided by a large majority, [...] to reinstate the 2004 Constitution, I was in the Parliament. I did not see assault rifles, but I saw cheerful people who exercised democracy, people who demonstrated under the flags of Europe. In other words, people who obviously understood democracy, while *your* argument supports the Putin regime, which is not liberal. You should be *ashamed* to take such positions here!" (6:38 EPP_Brok)

The positive attitude of Golden Dawn, Lega Nord and Front National NI members towards Russia's political leadership and their opinion of the Crimean referendum stand diametrically opposed to the position of EFDD and GUE/ NGL (and the other five EPGs). If uttered during the debate, it, for the most part, evokes critical blue-card questions. The following excerpt is a blue-card dialogue between MEPs Synadinos (NI, Greece, 18:68) and Złotowski (ECR, Poland, 18:67) and shows the usual actio-reactio pattern:

> *Synadinos*: Mr President, many EU states are involved against their will in geopolitical influence games between NATO, EU and the Eurasian Union. NATO's efforts to expand and the EU's interests in Caucasus, Moldova and Ukraine; the energy, hybrid and online warfare in the Baltic region and the peninsula of the Balkan countries and the Crimea, the sanctions against Russia, are all part of the ongoing struggle for power amongst the major players of the above mentioned organisations. Let us first note that the annexation, or rather the reunification of Crimea with Russia, is not illegal, because the people of Crimea wanted it and it is proven historically. The other Baltic countries with the excuse of big, bad Russia, have fallen into the trap of German foreign and economic policy, as dictated by the US. So, they were forced into a tough internal devaluation, which was extremely painful for the citizens, in order to maintain a stable connection to the euro, with absolutely no support from the eurozone. [...]

> *Złotowski:* You seem to be telling us that the referendum held in Crimea is legal, and that after all there are historic reasons for the Crimea to return to Russia, but there are also historical reasons for Crimea to go back to Turkey. There are also historical reasons, for Constantinople to go back to Greece. Sir, if the Turkish army marched into Athens, what would be the outcome of the referendum in Athens?

> *Synadinos*: What is the evidence you have that the referendum was not legal, in respect of the people of Crimea and their will?

Here, the blue-card question is used by the questioner as an instrument for rhetorical questions to underline his/her viewpoint and the impudence/ indecency of the apologetic statement.[113]

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[113]Other examples include MEPs Lebreton (NI, 13:33) and Brok (EPP, 13:34); MEPs Chauprade (NI, 17:29) and Kalniete (EPP, 17:30); MEPs Voigt (NI, 18:57) and Kovatchev (EPP, 18:58).

The difference between the three EPGs can be captured by dividing it between EU-*critical* and *anti*-EU comments. The radical Left represented by GUE/NGL uses arguments which can clearly be understood in debates as being EU-critical: they criticise the EU very concretely in the context of the debate on Russia, linking EU policy decisions and Russia-related issues. The arguments used by the (populist) radical Right in EFDD and NIs on the other hand often concern Russia nominally: the theme is merely used as an excuse to attack the EU, regardless of policy or procedures. Unlike the Left, they offer no suggestions on how to repair what is in their eyes clearly broken; except for the minimisation of the EU as an institution.

The analysis allows us to derive three types of anti-EU statements. One, general and diffuse anti-EU statements, which attack the EU broadly and fundamentally ("Moreover, I think the EU must be destroyed", 17:83 NI_KorwinMikke) and EU-Russia relations are another example of the EU's malfunctioning, for instance along the lines of

> "Let me conclude by saying that once again Europe is getting into a
> fight by Russia, when we really should live in peace with them. But
> I say more: If had it my way, it would be nice when Putin invaded
> Europe, so we'd all better." (18:102 NI_Buonanno)

Two, populist agenda-surfers, calling the EU a club of "Euroidiots" because what they decide harms the people of Europe (10:61 NI_Buonanno). Three, straightforward anti-capitalist statements like those by Greek communist MEPs on conspiracies (4:19 GUE/NGL_Toussas); and four, no-sense statements like "the EU is now definitively the eastern branch of NATO and wants to bring Europe to the Third World War" (16:130 EFDD_Tamburrano).

In a nutshell, the three EPGs differ despite their similarity at first glance. Each of the groups connects the topic "Russia" with EU-critique, but all on their own terms. EFDD and NIs instrumentalise "Russia" for their fundamental, often unspecific and anti-EU claims and comments, wrapped in populist rhetoric. The EU as an institution does not need to be fixed. The GUE/NGL is more concerned about the direction the EU and EP debates have taken. They refer to specific aspects of policies, and certain decisions or the EU turning a blind eye toward anti-democratic organisations.

6.2   Representations of Russia and Ukraine

This section analyses discursive strategies: how the speakers name, describe and characterise political actors. Discursive strategies include names given (nominations), descriptions and characterisations (predications), metaphors and several other rhetorical means. They are used to represent political actors and to demonstrate the position the speaker tries to take vis-à-vis his peers or opponents (perspectivation). As explained in the Methodology chapter, the DHA understands the term discursive *strategy* as uninten-

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tional and neutral as a *tool*. In order to avoid terminological confusion, I will henceforth use the term discursive *mean* or discursive *tool*.

The analysis shows that MEPs of EPP, ECR, ALDE, S&D, and the Greens apply similar discursive strategies when referring to the stakeholders (Russia, Ukraine, the EU, themselves, the EP) and the current situation or reality. GUE/NGL and EFDD see Russia similarly as the aforementioned, but present different representations of Ukraine, the EU, the EP and their role in the chamber. The distinguishing factor between the political groups are the salience, style and emotionality of representations. The majority of NIs appear to be disconnected from the others, as they display Russia in a rather positive light. Subsection 6.3 then elaborates on how the political groups use these representations in different ways for self-representation.

6.2.1 United in negative representations of Russia

The first subsection is devoted to the representations (nominations and predications) of the RF. Barring some exceptions, the representations of Russia are literally and metaphorically negative. As will be shown later, there are, however, differences in the intensity, extent and vividness of language and emotionality. Speeches often follow the scheme of negative-other positive-self representation, where Russia is "the other".

Russia as aggressor

The Russia representations match the overall notion that Russia is the negative, aggressive other. The general tone is distanced and gloomy: "[...] We are facing a situation which constitutes aggression, a breach of international law, with thousands of people killed, Russian forces in Ukraine, and other measures characteristic of certain services in Russia" (10:53 ALDE_ Telicka).

Aggressive to the inside

It is described by all EPGs[114] as aggressive to the inside as well as to the outside. It violates human rights and takes an authoritarian turn. "It is a very aggressive power, both in terms of its domestic policy and in terms of its external relations" (17:31 EPP_Preda). It "[...] doesn't have any respect for its own people, neither for members of the international community" (17:137 EPP_Macovei). "Civil society, journalists and opposition figures are all repressed and intimidated and the Russian people live in an unfree free society, although propaganda suggests otherwise. Laws systematically undermine freedoms and give authorities greater unchecked

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[114]There are some NIs (Front National, Lega Nord, Golden Dawn) who do not share this viewpoint, but for the sake of simplicity, in this section, I will not add "except for few NIs" anymore.

powers" (12:12 ALDE_Schaake). "Mister Putin" establishes "step by step, inside of his country, a dictatorship [and] blows down (*niederknüppeln*) his opposition" (3:34 EPP_Posselt). The "the arsenal of repressive laws" (3:19 GUE/NGL_Vergiat) is an offensive "onslaught against human rights [and] traumatic for all those who want to defend human rights" (1:26 GUE/NGL _ Tavares).

Its actions speak for its values and character; both have deteriorated. "They do not hesitate to use bandit methods, such as abductions and lies" (EPP_Stetina 19:13). ALDE confirms that abducting people from their home territory (as in the case of Khover and Solchenko, RC16) "are, essentially, gangster methods. This has nothing to do with a society which respects human rights" (19:12 ALDE_Group:Telicka). The political leadership is described as "corrupt regime" that "has become confident in securing its position and does not hesitate to use all means to make this clear" (3:6 ALDE_Ojuland). Court cases are "judicial farces" and presidential amnesties follow "the most total arbitrariness" (3:18 GUE/NGL_Vergiat).

The country faces a "moral crisis": the "tendency to trivialise death, de-humanisation, relativism and vanishing values". This, and "the impunity of law enforcement agencies" (3:19 GUE/NGL_Vergiat), are the reasons why the "problem of political murders is not taken seriously" (1:17 EPP_ Group:Kaczmarek):

> "The fact that the Russian authorities are not actively investigating [Politkovskaya and other] crimes, that no real results have been achieved and that the perpetrators remain at large, not only proves the complete ineffectiveness of the authorities' actions, but also their tacit consent and indifference" (1:11 ECR_Poreba).

The GUE/NGL is likewise concerned. If the perpetrators of for instance Anna Politkovskaya are not found and arrested, "there is a risk of *more bloodshed* and it will be seen as *a licence to commit* acts of this kind. What we expect is [...] for this matter to be dealt with ruthlessly, for Russia not to wait any longer but to take up the fight to protect human rights itself" (1:14 GUE/NGL_Ernst).

Aggressive to the outside

The EPGs characterise Russia as aggressive and call it aggressor (e.g. 10:58 EFDD_Mazuronis, 13:92 EPP_Pabriks). "Relations between us and Russia have never been as bad as they are now. They are a result of the aggressive policies of President Putin" (17:4 EPP_Group:SaryuszWolski). "There is a consensus in the hall: Russia is implementing an imperial and aggressive policy. This must be stopped by direct and strict sanctions, a swift and radical change in energy policy [...] (5:112 S&D_Zala). The RF wants "to subvert the order of peace and security in Europe by using force and, more

and more, heavy weapons" (16:19 EPP_CorazzaBildt). He "has a long-term strategy of crippling Russia's neighbours" (17:18 ALDE_Group:vanBaalen).

This corrupt regime mentioned above "[exported] corruption to Europe for years. There are so many shady, pragmatic, selfish interests and deals which are betraying and undermining the EU's solidarity, common values and ability to act decisively" (5:126 EPP_Kelam); it is therefore considered aggressive as such, even if there would be no physical invasion.

The groups not only condemn Russia's domestic and foreign policy, but utter concerns about its diplomatic behaviour. Russia is seen as an unreliable and difficult negotiation partner whose "words are markedly different from action" (6:117 S&D_Balcytis, similar: 10:53 ALDE_Telicka). Putin "sometimes speaks words of conciliation but his actions are different" (6:13 ALDE_Group:vanBaalen); he "says he wants peace, but his actions prove the opposite" (6:45 ECR_Demesmaeker). According to the speakers, there are many examples that prove this claim:

> "In 1994, Russia signed the Budapest Memorandum, in which Ukraine surrenders its nuclear arsenal to Russia. In return Russia is committed to respecting the territorial integrity of Ukraine. Twenty years after this, *Russia has trampled this treaty*. It is not for the first time. *Any treaty signed with Russia is worth the paper on which it is written*. And it's not the last time. Today, Russia violates the agreements signed in Minsk and reiterates its contempt for democratic principles and respect for international law. I ask you, Commissioner, how long will we still be humiliated by the Russian Federation?" (17:117 EPP_Stetina)

Russia caused and fuels the Ukraine crisis

Its aggressiveness to "the outside" shows in its disrespect for international law and for the integrity of neighbouring states, particularly Ukraine. It is known that "all five frozen conflicts [in the Black Sea were] created by Russia [...] but the biggest tension comes from the continued Russian aggression in eastern Ukraine and the annexation of the Crimea" (18:77 ALDE_Paet). The majority within the five EPGs agree that Russia caused the Ukraine crisis, which is the ultimate proof for its aggressiveness. "It must be said clearly - it is not we who caused this conflict [...]" (17:139 EPP_Jazlowiecka, similar: 13:32 EPP_Brok); "Aggressive behaviour of Russia is the sole cause of the crisis" (13:110 EPP_Kovachev). "Russia bears clear responsibility for the fact that the situation in the eastern regions of Ukraine could escalate that far" (6:5 S&D_Group:Fleckenstein, similar: 6:64 ALDE_Austrevicius). "Sadly, the causes of the war in eastern Ukraine must be sought in the Russian government. No one, especially no German, would dare to claim today that Belgium has started shooting" (13:18 Greens/EFA_Group:Harms). It was "Putin's invasion of Ukraine" (5:126 EPP_Kelam). The EFDD, for example, points out that they "condemn the EU for its actions in Ukraine,

[but I] make it clear that I equally condemn Russia's President Putin for his own expansionist ambitions" (18:25 EFDD_ Group:Hookem). Russia's behaviour regarding Ukraine seems to be pathological:

> "[...] Crimea has been incorporated by Putin and a civil war is looming in the east of the country. [...] We do not yet know how far he will go, but it is sad that he himself [Putin] is causing and continuing to cause unrest [...]. Instability is the petrol of the Russian political model. How sad." (5:59 ALDE_Gerbrandy)

In Eastern Ukraine, (unspecified) "forces systematically create chaos on behalf of the Kremlin" (3:34 EPP_Posselt):

> "Russia's responsibility in what is happening in Eastern Ukraine is undeniable. Uniformed, heavily armed men without badges, they are popularly called "green men". And those green men are not from the planet Mars. We know where they come from." (5:163 Greens/EFA_ Demesmaeker)

> "[...] Russia is now on the receiving end of warnings of further sanctions. It has only itself to thank, and we may indeed need to increase pressure even further. [...] The Russian Government has [...] succeeded in hoodwinking its own population into supporting a policy that is putting the country on a collision course with its neighbours and wrecking its economy [...]." (17:98 S&D_Gill)

Through his actions, "Putin puts the security of the whole planet at stake" (10:97 S&D_Gomes). Its "aggressive politics towards Georgia and Ukraine [...] complement the image of the Kremlin as a destabilizer of this region of the world and Europe" (3:11 ECR_Bielan). "If Geneva fails, we should say that Russia is destroying the multilateral international law that has brought us peace for many decades. Helsinki and all that is being destroyed" (5:32 EPP_Brok).

Russia as the active part

Another aspect of name-giving and characterisation is the question of to what role an actor gets attributed. According to van Leeuwen (2008, p. 33), representations endow political actors with either active or passive roles: "Activation occurs when social actors are represented as the active, dynamic forces in an activity, passivation when they are represented as 'undergoing' the activity, or as being 'at the receiving end of it'." In this case, Russia is the *active* part; Russia is doing something *to* someone. It is given the role of the agent who is responsible for the action. The one being passivated is given the role of a "recipient":

> "Ukraine's choice, born and raised at the beginning of this year in Maidan, - to live freely, democratically, to embark on political and economic reforms - did not match Russia's future plan. *Russia has taken*

> all kinds of political, diplomatic, economic, military and other actions *to destroy* Ukraine's statehood and the free choice of the nation." (6:63 ALDE_Austrevicius)

> "[...] Im Osten der Ukraine ist *die Gewalt von Russland über die Grenzen getragen worden*. Ohne die Panzer und Raketenwerfer und die Kämpfer, die täglich dort über die Grenze kommen, gäbe es dort keine Gewalt. *Putin eskaliert täglich die Lage*, statt zu deeskalieren. Er testet uns, wie weit er gehen kann." (6:97 EPP_Gahler)

Accordingly, Russia's neighbours – Ukraine, other EaP states, the Baltic States – are passive, and clearly the victims (see below, subsection on Ukraine). There are several examples of both Russia's *active* aggressiveness and the *passive* we. They "are being threatened", "are taken to war", "are observed by Russia", "are being controlled by Russia's energy muscle". Ukraine "is facing the aggression from Russia" (10:16 ECR_Group:Tannock), "is humiliated and destroyed by Russia" (5:63 ECR_Zile), "Putin [...] partitions and swallows up the whole of Ukraine" (5:18 ECR_Group:Tannock). The EU "has become the subject of an extremely aggressive propaganda campaign and a campaign of pressure from Russia" (17:146 EPP_Rosati). „Wir als Europäer haben uns belügen lassen nach Strich und Faden von russischen Diplomaten und russischen Politikern" (10:28 Greens/EFA_Group:Harms). Quote 10:20 is another illustration of the above-mentioned points:

> "We are witnessing a war going on and war crimes being committed in Europe. This has deconstructed the European security system and exposed Ukraine to undeclared aggression from Russia. The pretext for Russia's military action against Ukraine was the choice – by the free will of the Ukrainian people and the country's new leadership – of a European perspective to create new and more transparent governance, to fight corruption and to develop a free-trade exchange with the European Union. Is that a crime or a danger for the existing system? Who can presume to sit in judgment and decide to impose a harsh situation on neighbouring countries?" (10:20 ALDE_Group:Austrevicius)

As the first two sentences of the quote above suggest, there is a group of "we" who is (passively) observing the frightful developments in geographical Europe. Russia's activities are far reaching. The European security system *is deconstructed* and Ukraine *is exposed* to Russia. And all this happened because Ukraine, by free will, chose the *European perspective*. The rhetorical questions at the end of the speech suggest that the MEP condemns Russia's interference.

There are only a couple of Non-Attached MEPs who display Russia as a victim instead of a perpetrator. They seek understanding for Russia's behaviour in light of NATO's aggressiveness:

> "To deal with anybody, one must understand him. Let us try to understand Russia. [...] From their point of view, they see constant aggres-

sion from NATO, which has *swallowed* the German Democratic Republic, then the Comecon countries, then the Baltic States, and now NATO is trying to subdue Ukraine and perhaps install its missiles there. They are defending themselves against a strong aggressive power." (10:76 NI_KorwinMikke)

President Putin stands for the bad part of the whole

What has already become apparent in some previous quotations is that the negative traits and behaviour of Russia are personalised and personified. They are focused on, or incarnated by its political leadership, namely president Vladimir Putin. He and synonymous expressions for the Russian political leadership, for instance "the Kremlin" (3:11 ECR_Bielan) or "Moscow" (17:130 EPP_Turcanu, 1:24 EPP_Sonik, 6:60 S&D_Pascu, 13:22 ECR_Tannock) stand for the *negative* whole (pars pro toto synecdoche). "The Kremlin" is the "destabiliser of this region of the world and Europe" (3:11 ECR_Bielan), "Putin's Russia began aggression [...]" (17:85 S&D_Gomes).

Putin is used synonymously with aggression, moral ambiguity, and authoritarianism: "Putinisation means the restoration of the Soviet empire" (6:130 EPP_Zver). Since 1991, "there have unfortunately been massive setbacks, and these setbacks have a name, and that name is Putin" (2:49 EPP_Posselt). Putin "lamented the moral decline of the country, but it is going from top to bottom. As if he were talking about himself, Putin misses mercy and empathy above all else" (2:19 Greens/EFA_Group:Schulz). He "believes that he can get away with it [...]" when he violates the borders of a neighbouring state (5:23 ECR_Group:Tannock).

> "*The regime of Putin is breaking international law and undermining the European peace order*, and he is waging war in the free nation of Ukraine in Europe. [...] No one is threatening Russia. But the Putin regime *fears democracy, the rule of law and freedom of expression*. They fear the open dialogue that we want." (17:119 EPP_Hökmark)

The *good* or *positive* Russia are its citizens. The EU supports and feels connected with the Russian people who become more and more repressed by its government: "Russia is characterised by a system of autocratic, kleptocratic and reactionary power. *The first victims* are its citizens, the Democrats and the Progressives" (3:21 GUE/NGL_Vergiat).

Some voices call out that "the people in Russia" are not the government, and that all decisions by the EP aim at "harming the Russian leadership" and are not intended at the citizens. They "see a clear difference between *ill-guided Kremlin policies* and the population of Russia, and we support their aspirations for a just, democratic and free Russia" (12:14 ALDE_Schaake). The EU needs to be "hard on Putin but willing to cooperate with Russian civil society, because many Russians want peace as well." (17:18 ALDE_Group:vanBaalen). The MEPs are reminded that "there is a Russia *other*

than the one we are dealing with now – the Russia of Sakharov, Politkovskaya, Nemtsov, Kovalyov and Memorial, and of all those Russians, *of that great nation*, who have been honoured with our Sakharov Prize" (17:4 EPP‗Group:SaryuszWolski). Therefore, sanctions should hit "the Russian economy and Putin's clique" (5:9 ALDE‗Group:vanBaalen). The EP

> "should [...] emphasise that we have no problem with the Russian people. We would like to have Russian society as partners [...]. What we have a problem with is Russia's current leadership, and especially the way they use state power, both internally and externally" (17:46 Greens/EFA‗Meszerics).

> "With its aggression against Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea, Russian leadership has put EU-Russia relations at a crossroads. It is now up to the Kremlin to decide the direction: cooperation or greater isolation. I am convinced that the Russian people like us all want peace, not war [...]. Meanwhile, we must send a strong message to Russian leadership, emphasizing our closeness to the victims of its aggression and those who defend the values on which the EU is founded." (16:42 S&D‗Caputo)

By doing so, as the previous two quotes illustrated, the speakers antagonise the people and the political elite, victimise the people and foster the rhetorical "devilling" (**Hayle.2013**) of the Russian leadership. Again, Russia (its government) is the active part and the citizens the passive (good, but helpless) part (the speakers ignore the fact that Putin needs to be elected).

Expansionism and the notion of rebuilding the Soviet empire

It is plausible to assume, according to ECR and EPP representatives, and the Lithuanian EFDD member, that Russia wants to rebuild its (lost Soviet) empire. Russia indulges in "Neo-Soviet expansionism" (6:113 EPP‗Hellvig). Several speakers mention President Putin's speech in which he called the collapse of the Soviet Union "the greatest geopolitical tragedy of the twentieth century" (e.g. 18:10 ECR‗Group:Jurek, 5:111 EPP‗Macovei, 6:130 EPP‗Zver). According to many speakers, particularly from CEE and Baltic Member States, it is a valid interpretation that the "Kremlin's invasive policies [...] clearly strive for the restoration of the Soviet empire" (5:76 ECR‗Bielan). To them, Russia is revanchist and wants to dominate former states of the Soviet Union; wants to expand its sphere of influence to the cost of neighbouring states; summarised under the label that Russia "wants to rebuild its empire", "Neo-Soviet expansionism", logic of "spheres of influence" from the Cold War era: "Vladimir Putin is carried away by imperial ambition" (10:57 EFDD‗Mazuronis, see also 18:25 EFDD‗Group:Hookem).

It refers to the idea of a "Kremlin strategy" or "Russia's geopolitical game" to take over the former SU states/ CIS/ CEE states. "Russia is revisiting its imperial past – refusing to accept that its large neighbour in the

21st century is an independent sovereign nation that has the right to take charge of its own destiny" (10:16 ECR_Group:Tannock).

However, "Mr Putin will certainly not dismantle his neo-imperialist agenda by himself" (10:103 EPP_Kelam). They use this as a main frame of interpretation for Russia's annexation of Crimea and the involvement with Donbass separatists:

> "[...] His policy is very simple [...]: for him the greatest geopolitical tragedy of the twentieth century was the collapse of the Soviet Union. And Putin's policy simply aims to rebuild this prison of nations, though of course he wants the prison to change a bit, i.e. change the facade and repaint the walls. However, the goal remains the same." (18:10 ECR_Group:Jurek)

Speakers from CEE (with Poland and the Baltic states in particular) therefore "express concerns for other countries of the region because we cannot know where Putin's ambitions are going to end" (5:160 ECR_Tomasic). MEP Mazuronis concludes that "if we do not respond properly [to the war in Ukraine] the question will be just one: which European country will be the next? Will it be my homeland, Lithuania or other Baltic states, or perhaps Moldova or any other country in Europe?" (6:27 EFDD_Mazuronis).

Russia as monster

Russia is not just the perpetrator, but in many speeches metaphorically or literally displayed as dehumanised/ inhuman, or as a monster. Russia is "a *thorn* in Ukraine's side and a thorn for the European Union's eastern border security and defence" (18:97 S&D_Frunzulica). Given that there is no EU army, "we can only tease the bear. The bear lies at the border of Ukraine" (10:78 NI_KorwinMikke). By fostering the PAA with Ukraine, the EU "*annoyed the monster* of reborn Russian fascism; thus we are guilty and should be struck down as well" (5:133 EPP_Landsbergis). Europe is faced with "authoritarian and Putinist Russia, who despite tremendous words and signatures in international agreements *behaves like a beast*" (19:18 Greens/EFA_Tarand). Russia "wants to make chaos a reality, wants violence in the streets, wants terrorist actions to be a reality for the towns and cities of this country" (5:56 S&D_Siwiec). Putin is "a KGB officer who is trying to restore the Soviet Union through *blood, terror, genocide*" (5:111 EPP_Macovei). For Russia,

> "the main, if not the only, remaining value and virtue now is military *muscle and force*. The only international law still valid and observed by *non-European and anti-European Russia* is *force majeure*." (5:131 EPP_Landsbergis)

"Russia is a hypocrite; on the one hand it defends the interests of Russians in Ukraine, but on the other hand denies those rights to Chechens." The statement continues to illustrate that Russia is inhuman and brutal against

its own citizens: „Demands for [self-determination] are answered with military force, bombs, *death* and *destruction*" (5:68 EPP‗Pöttering). Prominent EPP MEP Landsbergis, rapporteur, uses an anecdote to illustrate how disturbed the president of Russia is, and compares his answer to "worthy of 'Mein Kampf'", the book written by Adolf Hitler:

> "A clear signal came some time ago, when the ruler of Russia went to the national TV forum to answer call-in questions. He was asked one by a little boy: 'Mr President, among my classmates there are two boys constantly fighting. Which one of them is guilty for that?' The President answered him then, but also you, ladies and gentlemen: 'The one who was beaten is guilty'. Did you listen? No. That sentence, worthy of the entire 'Mein Kampf', was never debated." (5:135 EPP‗Landsbergis)

By using this anecdote – which he interprets out of context into his own argumentation – the MEP aims to illustrate firstly, that Putin (incarnating Russia) is bullyish and follows the logic of "the power of the fittest"; and secondly, his anecdote is a metaphor for Russia's "activities" in Ukraine. Ukraine is beaten (invaded, parts of it got annexed) by Russia; for Russia, Ukraine *is guilty,* otherwise it would not have been beaten.

Different styles and emotionality of representations

Emotionally loaded and theatrical/pathetic: ECR, EPP and EFDD

While speakers of all groups depict Russia in a negative manner, there are differences in the use of metaphors, pictorial language, the use of references and comparisons to dictators or WWI/II, "political correctness" and emotionality. EPP, ECR and EFDD stand out in terms of vividness and intensity of their negative predications; they take the negative representations one step further. For instance, Russia is the source of all current predicaments:

> "It must be said clearly - it is not we who caused this conflict [...]. Even the current crisis linked to *the massive influx of illegal immigrants* into southern Europe *has its roots in the Kremlin*. If Moscow's support of Bashar al-Asad's regime had not been met, the civil war in Syria would have long since ended and there would be no tragedy." (17:139 EPP‗Jazlowiecka)

According to Tannock (ECR), Russia not only took an authoritarian turn and tried to launch the Eurasian Customs Union, but instead,

> "his real goal was to recreate, by force if necessary, a *crony capitalist version* of the Soviet Union [...]. Where Putin has not succeeded in *bullying* his neighbours into joining the Eurasian Customs Union, *he has spread war and chaos*. [...] what he intends, in reality, is the unravelling of the post-war settlements, based on the rule of law and human rights, *in favour of the 'might is right' dogma*." (17:107 ECR‗Tannock)

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According to MEP Batten (EFDD), in Russia, "state-sponsored terrorism, corruption, intimidation and murder are commonplace"; "President Putin is not our friend or ally: he is the leader of a gangster state" (13:113 EFDD_Batten).

According to that, Russia is not "just" invading Ukraine or violating international law and borders. It is for instance "history repeating" (4:4 EPP_Posselt), or "the second phase in President *Putin's aggressive plan* to partition or *swallow up* the whole of Ukraine *based on a pack of lies*" (5:18 ECR_Group:Tannock). "Mister Putin" is "a *megalomaniac aggressor* [who] abuses a nationality problem he himself has orchestrated in order to then be able to act as a power of order" (4:4 EPP_Posselt). "Moscow has lit, in Ukraine, a barrel of powder, a slow burning wick. Slow burning because it is a systematic undertaking of in-depth destabilization of a free and sovereign state [...]" (5:80 EPP_Danjean).

He "believes that *he can get away with it*, but the West must not allow a democratic potential future EU Member State to be *carved up* or destroyed *under our very noses*" (5:23 ECR_Group:Tannock). Another MEP rhetorically asks his colleagues,

> "if the free breath of my nation, the free will of my nation to join the European Union and NATO means aggression towards Russia, should these nations simply die or not breathe? I do not accept such arguments [...]." (18:29 EPP_Pabriks)

As a response to the GUE/NGL's notion of a fascist coup (see below), Tannock rhetorically asks MEP Harms (G/EFA) whether she would agree "that the true fascists are the Russian aggressors?". He continues by illustrating the treatment of the Jewish and Tatar community of the Crimea, with "swastikas daubed on" the synagogue by Russians, concluding that "Fascism is coming from Moscow, not from Kiev" (13:22 ECR_Tannock).

> "Russia not only fosters aggressive actions on the territory of Ukraine. She is the aggressor - the aggressor who *tries to show Europe with lies and propaganda* that the aggression in Crimea and in eastern Ukraine is the action unspecified separatists. We should speak clearly: Putin's Russia is responsible for the aggression against Ukraine. [...] Anyone who uses the word separatists in the context of what happened in the Crimea, is part of the rhetoric of the lying propaganda of Putin on the war in Ukraine." (18:95 ECR_Gosiewska)

Putin is "a KGB officer who is trying to restore the Soviet Union *through blood, terror, genocide*" (5:111 EPP_Macovei). Ukraine is condemned, "because Russia will never go back, it will never step back – unless it feels resistance, if there is not taken appropriate action" (13:68 ECR_Fotyga). In a similar fashion MEP Kalniete predicts that "we are probably a few hours or a few days away from a real war between the nuclear state of Russia and Ukraine. *Putin's goal* is to make Ukraine a failed country. But let's not

let the illusions go! *Putin will not stop with Ukraine.* His *dream is to restore control over the entire former Soviet empire*" (6:79 EPP_Kalniete).

> "What are we going to do, wait until Russian troops stopped any aggression, withdraws from the Ukrainian border to leave room for OSCE troops? Let us be united, resolute and strong, *talk in the same voice* and show Russia that *communism was defeated by democracy and lost!*" (13:101 EPP_Macovei)

MEPs from EPP (and few ECR) bring up the notion of Russia's *divide et impera* "master plan". Following the EPP, they find proof that its "ultimate goal is not East Ukraine or even the whole of Ukraine, it is the disintegration of the European Union. President Putin's letter to individual EU leaders on gas supplies shows how he exploits aggression in Ukraine to divide the Union" (5:145 EPP_Zalewski). "The Russian leadership is trying to gain [influence] within the EU, trying to divide us and not let us be united" (17:148 EPP_Landsbergis). It is "trying to divide the European Union" by "playing on the trade relations, energy dependence" (17:103 EPP_Plenkovic; see more in section 6.4.1 on storylines). The Polish ECR MEP Zlotowski (19:17) suggest revenge/ retaliation for the abductions and illegal arrests of EU citizens and members of the military:

> "[...] This is extreme impudence on the part of Russia - the kidnapping of a citizen of the European Union, or the sentencing in the farce trial of Mr Kolchenko and Mr Sentsov. [...] We are calling [on Russia], and rightly so, because [this] language is understandable to the people of the European Union, but it is not understandable in Russia, and I therefore call not only on the European Commission, but above all on the Member States of the European Union, *to take retaliatory action.* What is it that we will not find a single Russian spy on European Union territory? Yes, *we can find him, we can arrest him and we have to do so*, because *Russia only understands the language it speaks.*"

Again, as mentioned above, the other MEPs in ALDE, S&D, and Greens do not openly criticise those straightforward nominations and predications until RC15. Even then, mutual criticism takes place only sporadically. This is another hint that either the other MEPs "remain silent" because of the sensitivity of the topic for some MEPs (those with East European background) or those straightforward descriptions do not stand in the way of the overall direction.

S&D and GUE/NGL as mitigators

Those emotional speeches stand in stark contrast to those of the S&D and GUE/NGL on the one hand, and those of the NIs (Lega Nord, Front National and Golden Dawn) on the other. While the former two refer to Russia more neutrally and less emotionally, the latter are straightforwardly displaying a positive sentimental attachment to Russia.

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Particularly speakers from GUE/NGL and the S&D group point out that Russia, "this great power" (16:120 S&D_Panzeri), remains the EU's strategic and important partner "which we must treat without complacency or inimity" (16:115 GUE/NGL_Vergiat), given its global relevance and shared history. Russia is regarded as a global and important partner in the fight against the Islamic State in the Middle East (17:92 S&D_ Liberadzki). The special role of EU-Russia Relations is attributed not only to global challenges of today, but also the longstanding history of cooperation. Accordingly, Tavares states that "the relations between Europe and Russia are *of the greatest importance* and [...] Europe *owes much* to Russia" (1:27 GUE/NGL_Tavares). The same line is taken by Assis who argues that we "[...] only have to look back at history to understand the need to maintain this relationship. Russia has been a partner, and can be a partner in resolving some of the major international conflicts with which we are confronted today" (10:125 S&D_Assis). Parliamentarians of GUE/NGL proceed to claim that "that relations between the EU and Russia should be treated with the utmost care and great responsibility [...].. But above all, there is a double standard difficult to digest by anyone who knows the history of Europe in the last twenty-five years." (16:52 GUE/NGL_CousoPermuy, paraphrased 16:85 GUE/NGL_LopezBermejo).

In one instance, Russia is characterised as European. Following this argumentation, the autocratic tendencies in Russian domestic policy have a direct impact on European affairs. It is therefore considered a tragedy that it took an autocratic turn:

> "[...] in addition to the Ukrainian crisis, the Russian state also violates the rights of its own citizens. [...] The new laws suppressing civil liberties, the arbitrary detentions and convictions of protesters and the oppression of minorities should no longer be a reality *in the old European civilization country that is Russia.*" (3:1 S&D_Repo)

Positive Russia-representations by the NIs

Russia's closeness and relevance to the EU is not to be doubted, in the eyes of the NIs. Russians are "our friends and colleagues from the East" (17:54 NI_Borghezio, also 16:124 NI_Salvini) and not less European than Ukraine:

> "I keep hearing only the question and the call for sanctions. However, sanctions are not an instrument for de-escalation; they are poison in cooperation between European peoples. I think that Russia is just as much a European country as Ukraine. Mr Juncker said this morning that 'I welcome the people of Ukraine, which is a European state and belongs to Europe'. That, ladies and gentlemen, naturally also applies to Russia, which belongs to Europe - unlike the United States of America." (6:77 NI_Voigt)

Russia is "an example for economy and development, whereas Europe is an example of the contrary. This is what I said and that is what I repeat. For me, Putin is a great leader [...]" (12:21 NI_Buonanno).

NIs are thus the only MEPs who positively display president Putin. To summarise, GUE/NGL align mostly with S&D, who put emphasis on Russia being the EU's strategic and inevitable partner, and with the Greens, who criticise human rights, LGBT rights, and the authoritarian trend Russia takes. All in all, this group sees Russia more neutrally and less emotionally.

It is first and foremost the EFDD that contributes negative illustrations of Russia, often in an unconventional manner (Russia should "unpack its equipment and get out of the Crimea", 17:69 EFDD_Lundgren). Putin and Russia are aggressive, Russia is the perpetrator, and "a gangster state" (13:113 EFDD_Batten).

There are many aspects of negative representations made by ALDE, EPP, the Greens, ECR and S&D that GUE/NGL and EFDD do not contribute to (Table 6.A.4). Those two political groups do not add something to the question of whether Russia is a difficult negotiation partner or liar; or whether Russia has some kind of master plan (the Lithuanian EFDD member is the only one who joins the interpretation of Russia wanting to rebuild its empire). To a much lesser extent and depth than EPP, ECR, and ALDE, Russia is not constructed as active part or dehumanised. They display Putin as a bad part that stands for the whole, but there is generally less focus on the person.

As mentioned earlier, all MEPs (except for the NIs) represent Russia as "the other" (see section 6.2.3). However, and this is the main difference between "the 5 "and "the 3": EFDD, GUE/NGL and NIs did not appear to be "frightened" or "traumatised", and also appear less metaphorical than the others. Their statements *related to Russia directly* show, in a nutshell, a lower level of emotionality. The dividing line in Russia's representations are NIs versus the rest, with many facets among the other groups having their roots in the national background of MEPs. The usually emotional, metaphorical and straightforwardly negative representations of Russia come from speakers with a national background that experienced Soviet rule very negatively.

6.2.2 Ukraine between Europeanness and otherness

Representations of Ukraine follow a pattern similar to that of the votes. There are two alternating "coherent sets" of representations. One set describes Ukraine as a European country that, in an act of self-liberation, chose to break its ties with Russia and (re)turn to the EU; this is mainly represented by ALDE, EPP, Greens, S&D and ECR. Their Ukraine-representations are less heterogeneous than those of Russia and there appear to be

less tensions between the five.

The other MEPs – GUE/NGL, EFDD and NIs – contribute only a few nominations and characterisations of Ukraine to the debate. This set largely excludes questions on Ukraine's Europeanism or return to Europe – the Europeanness of Ukraine remains uncertain. Contrary to "the 5"'s notion of legitimate self-liberation, NIs and GUE/NGL consider the change in power as a *coup d'état*; but they do so from different angles. The Left focuses on the rise of political (extreme) right-wing organisations and actors in the Ukrainian political scene, which according to them is an aspect tolerated and played down by the EU. When referring to the change in government, the NIs and the EFDD are mostly concerned with the role the EU played in it: they understand the coup as orchestrated or fuelled by the EU. The developments in Ukraine are first and foremost a challenge for the EU and reveal its shortcomings.

From victim to self-liberation and return to Europe

The five EPGs ALDE, EPP, ECR, Greens, and S&D, overall, demonstrate a rather positive attitude towards Ukraine. This reflects how Ukraine is represented: Ukraine is displayed as a (former) passive victim that managed to free itself from old structures and Russian dominance in an act of self-liberation and self-determination. Ukraine is constructed as the counterpart to Russia, in a triangle between Russia and the EU. It is an essential element in the logic of self-other representations of MEPs.

Their interpretation of the Maidan protests and the PAA is unanimously positive and connected to metaphors of fight and victory, heroes, and the latent notion of "end of history". It was a legitimate, peaceful act of self-liberation by the Ukrainian people (7:1 S&D_Schulz, 6:30 EFDD_ Mazuronis). The aim was to gain democracy, wealth, and prosperity. Ukraine is "on its way to political and economic reforms, on its way to democracy and the rule of law and prosperity. That is what drove the people of Kiev to the Maidan" (10:43 S&D_Fleckenstein), leading to "the *heroic and victorious* Euromaidan, which was a sign of the wish and will of the Ukrainian nation to make its European choice" (8:1 EPP_SaryuszWolski). "[...] On Maidan Square people gathered in a cold Ukrainian winter and asked that Ukraine stick to its path towards Europe [...]" (13:70 EPP_Landsbergis); "people are *fighting and dying* to be able to live in peace and according to European values" (10:108 EPP_deLange, similar: 6:62 ECR_Czarnecki).

Among ALDE, EPP, ECR, Greens and S&D, there is no doubt that the impeachment of Yanukovich was a legal dismissal (e.g. 5:10 Greens/EFA_ Group:Harms, 6:11 ALDE_Group:vanBaalen, 5:66 ECR_Tannock).

> "It is our task to emphasise again and again that the citizens of Ukraine participated in order to realize a constitutional state, to regain the validity of the law, to make a successful life possible for the Ukrainians.

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> These are the European values that have been disputed for a whole winter and actually for years before." (5:11 Greens/EFA_Group: Harms)

They had the right to "decide their fate" (10:10 S&D_Group:Pittella), "by the free will of the Ukrainian people and the country's new leadership" (10:20 ALDE_Group:Austrevicius; similar: 6:30 EFDD_Mazuronis). Ukraine "should be allowed to go their own way. That deserves our support" (5:150 EPP_Jeggle).

That makes the PAA "a symbol for freedom and self-determination, [...] an expression of sovereign people who can choose their own future [and] does not let itself be forced to make choices under the threat of military or economic violence by its great neighbour" (10:102 S&D_Piri). "The European choice of Ukraine, through this ratification today, will be institutionalised in the form of an Association Agreement and will in future bind the European Union and the Ukraine together." (8:1 EPP_SaryuszWolski). The simultaneous ratification of the PAA in the European and Ukrainian Parliament is

> "*an act of huge symbolism* which *holds out the hand of friendship* to the people of Ukraine when there are *attempts to divide* us. It is a sign of *our* absolute *unity*. It is the democratic mark of the right of sovereign countries and of their peoples to decide their own futures." (10:65 S&D_Howitt)

The PAA "is [...] the choice of the Ukrainians is for a free, democratic and prosperous Ukraine" (10:102 S&D_Piri). "When I vote [on the PAA], I will have in mind that some Ukrainians gave their lives for their country coming closer to Europe" (10:62 EPP_Preda).

> "It is necessary to recall what the PAA means in Ukraine. That is not what the Ukrainians wanted. The Ukrainians wanted membership of the European Union, and from the very beginning there have been many who have perceived [it] as an instrument of the European Union to keep Ukraine some distance away. It is not thanks to Mr Barroso, Mrs Ashton, Mr Füle, Mr De Gucht, Merkel, Hollande or others that this Association Agreement exists today. The fact that we can and want to ratify it today has to do with the fact that the citizens of Ukraine fought for freedom and democracy. We did not take it as seriously at all as we should have." (10:25 Greens/EFA_Group:Harms)

The ratification of the PAA is "a great opportunity [...] for Ukraine to further consolidate its efforts to strengthen the rule of law, fight against corruption and guarantee compliance with human rights and fundamental freedoms" (8:10 ALDE_Group:Kallas). The choice for the PAA, "the choice of a European perspective to create new and more transparent governance, to fight corruption and to develop a free-trade exchange with the EU [...] was the pretext for Russia's military action" (10:20 ALDE_Group:Austrevicius). It is "Russia's war against Ukraine's European choice" (10:86 EPP_Kalniete):

"Ukraine's choice, born and raised at the beginning of this year in Maidan – to live freely, democratically, to embark on political and economic reforms – did not match Russia's future plan. Russia has taken all kinds of political, diplomatic, economic, military and other actions to destroy Ukraine's statehood and the free choice of the nation." (6:63 ALDE_Austrevicius)

Two notions of a coup d'état

EFDD, the NIs and GUE/NGL share neither the representations of the PAA nor those of the Euromaidan. The PAA, in the eyes of the Left and the NIs, is not helping anything but economic interests.

"This aid that the European Union intends to give to the Ukrainian people is also known in Portugal. In exchange for financial aid the European Union will impose the liberalization of the economy, it will dismantle the productive apparatus of that country, which cannot compete with the big European companies. What the European Union wants is not to help, it is only to extend its market to new consumers and to have access to Ukrainian raw materials." (11:12 GUE/NGL_ Viegas)

Anticipating a potential misinterpretation of this speech, the speaker frames this statement as not anti-Ukrainian: "Madam President, we are equally supportive of the Ukrainian people". The PAA does not "serve the interests of the Ukrainian people, knowing that this treaty is one of the reasons that led Ukraine to tear for several months now" (9:73 GUE/NGL_Omarjee). In their argumentation, the GUE/NGL is "class conscious": the Ukrainians need protection from (the influx of) economic interest groups. This EPG seems to categorise the Ukrainians not so much as European/ not European, but as a group of people with a certain class affiliation.

Aside from the internal dimension, the PAA is a provocative action towards Russia, an "early and imprudent step" (6:66 EFDD_Tamburrano), with "despicable" timing (8:14 EFDD_Group:Carver), that is about to bring "the inevitable return of a cold war in Europe" (6:29 NI_Ferrand). Lastly, "the EU has now negotiated this agreement with fascist and neo-Nazi coup forces" (9:10 GUE/NGL_Zuber).

"The EU-Ukraine association agreement, that the legitimate authorities of the country in the exercise of their sovereign right refused to sign, is now signed with the coup authorities. A deal with high costs for the Ukrainian economy and to the people of this country – which was unable to comment on it in a referendum." (10:136 GUE/NGL_ Ferreira)

All those aspects make the PAA an unacceptable contract, according to both groups.

Some speakers agree with "the 5" that "the Ukrainians threw out their corrupt pro-Russian President and government because they want to be free of Russian domination" (13:113 EFDD_Batten). However, the primary interpretation of the events related to Euromaidan contrast with "the 5's" notion of "Ukraine's self-liberation". Instead, there are two complementary versions of the events. First, as common denominator of EFDD, NI and GUE/NGL, the impeachment of the president and the political demonstrations were a coup d'état. The Left qualifies this by categorising it as a coup of right-wing forces. The second aspect concerns the level of intentionality and involvement of the EU: The coup was either accepted, tolerated, supported by the EU; or it was orchestrated, planned, initiated by the EU. One could imagine the question of intentionality as a continuum between "(passive) acceptance" and "(active, intentional) orchestration". When describing the developments in Ukraine, the MEPs of those three political groups are not fully on the same page, but one is rather the radicalised version of the other. None of the three reassures or refer to the other. The Right ignores the Left's critique related to right-wing organisations completely.

The NIs and EFDD consider the Maidan not as peaceful revolution, but as "civil disturbances" (5:46 NI_Brons) and as a coup d'état; i.e. an illegitimate change of political leadership.

> "Please remember what happened on the Maidan, how a supposedly democratic movement supported by the European Union suddenly handled assault rifles and machine guns and subsequently pushed a government away, not with the necessary 75% quorum in the Kiev Rada that would have been necessary, but below it. Here, too, people have closed their eyes to this false decision of a coup. Subsequently, they also closed their eyes when 400 Blackwater mercenaries of the US administration were suddenly discovered in Ukraine, according to a report in the German magazine 'Der Spiegel'." (6:33 NI_Vilimsky)

> "We might not like Mr. Yanukovych – and there is much about him I do not like, if it is true – but his removal as President did not fall within the categories in Article 108 of the Constitution of Ukraine, and the procedure for impeachment in Article 111 was not followed." (5:45 NI_Brons)

The Left argues that "nationalist forces, fascist and neo-Nazi *stormed to power* in Kiev" (9:10 GUE/NGL_Zuber; paraphrased by 9:41 GUE/NGL_Ferreira), "fascist armed gangs pursu[ed] left-wing politicians and trade unionists" (9:12 GUE/NGL_Viegas). "Reactionary elements and criminal Nazi organizations coup took over the government, conducting prosecutions against communists and ethnic minorities" (4:19 GUE/NGL_Toussas). On many occasions, GUE/NGL speakers point out that the EP

> "can't speak with a forked tongue here. Violence is violence. [...] And, therefore, the primacy of the law is what should guide the governments. And what was done there was a coup. I insist, a violent coup

d'état. Yanukovych has no sympathy from me, none. But he was the Head of State, voted by the Ukrainians. And it is the Ukrainians who have to solve their destiny. [...] I believe in democracy; I believe in constitutional legality. And if ever armed paramilitary people near this Parliament burn it, violate it to impose its order, that is not my order or the democratic order." (5:65 GUE/NGL_Meyer)

Despite the GUE/NGL's notion of the coup, there are a couple of speeches in which they link it to reaffirmations that their general attitude towards Ukraine is positive and supportive. The following quotes show how the GUE/NGL is very critical towards the new political leadership in Ukraine but communicates a positive and supportive attitude towards Ukraine:

"Ukrainians traded a government of thieves, who was behind Yanukovich, against the government of murderers, who is behind Poroshenko. It must be said that today's economic situation is catastrophic [...]. I believe that we should go this way and realise that in the EP we have to create a group to support Ukraine. That is not the support of those who rule there today [...], but to support the people of Ukraine." (8:18 GUE/NGL_Ransdorf)

"Our group, like others, wants Ukraine to be a sovereign and territorially undivided country. Our group also wants Ukraine to develop into a country with functioning democratic structures, but also into a country in which people can be socially secure, politically self-determined and democratically free, free of the influence of the still unhindered oligarchs. And our group also sees in which extremely difficult economic situation the country and above all its people are. However, we are voting against [the MFA] because we believe that the economic policy course linked to macro-financial assistance has already failed in the EU, with Greece as its name. We voted against it because we do not accept that the parliament organically evades a debate on how to deal with Ukraine's apparent insolvency in the future. [...]" (15:14 GUE/NGL_Group:Scholz)

Particularly GUE/NGL members from Spain and Portugal engage in the question of the EU's role in the coup. According to their statements, the coup was (at least) accepted, tolerated, and supported by the EU. "The rise to power of openly fascistic forces following the coup, had the *approval* of the European Union, the US and NATO" (10:136 GUE/NGL_Ferreira); the coup was "supported *enthusiastically* by the EU, despite all the abuses documented" (9:12 GUE/NGL_Viegas). "The far right took power in a coup *legitimised* by the EU" (16:60 GUE/NGL_Ferreira). The EU was "*complicit* in the provocations, with instigating the violence, the violation of freedoms and rights and the crimes of ultra-nationalist and fascist forces that were perpetrators of a coup *promoted* by the EU itself" (10:142 GUE/NGL_Zuber). The coup had the EU's "*explicit* support [...], a supreme demonstration of complete hypocrisy and contempt for national institutions and the international order" (6:128 GUE/NGL_Viegas).

The same subgroup of MEPs, in line with a couple of NIs, argue that this destabilisation of Ukraine was "*organised* between the US Government and the EU, which have financed, supported, sustained, jolted that coup" (5:64 GUE/NGL_Meyer). The EU is "now concerned about the violence in Ukraine, when the EU was the *initiator* of it" (4:13 GUE/NGL_Meyer). In five individually submitted but identical EXPVs,[115] the delegation of the Communist Party of Portugal declares that

> "the spiral of violence in Ukraine is the result of a coup against the legitimate president Yanukovich instigated by the US and the EU itself. In fact, the partnership agreement itself that the EU has signed with Ukraine, which was what led to the coup, is being used as a weapon against Russia. This, coupled with the new sanctions approved by the Council against Russia on September 12, in no way can be considered an example of good neighbourliness from the EU to Russia." (9:5 GUE/NGL_Guzman; GUE/NGL_CousoPermuy, GUE/NGL_Vallina, GUE/NGL_LopezBermejo, GUE/NGL_SenraRodriguez)

Some NIs describe it as orchestration, which suggests a malicious intention:

> "The civil disturbances in Ukraine *were orchestrated* from the EU when Yanukovych rejected the EU trade agreement. This was just as much interference in Ukraine, and with less justification, than anything that Russia has done. The taped conversation of Victoria Nuland and Geoffrey Pyatt about who should lead Ukraine was evidence of blatant US interference." (5:46 NI_Brons)

Ukraine as the passive part

Even though all EPGs blame different actors for causing the crisis in Ukraine, they all consider Ukraine to play the passive part and that of the victim. Ukraine is a battleground, a "bloody civil war with unpredictable consequences" (6:66 EFDD_Tamburrano), the background of historic events. "The situation in Ukraine takes us to some of the darkest chapters in European history" (10:136 GUE/NGL_Ferreira). The events overran Ukraine. It is "today's *front*" (11:2 EPP_Landsbergis).

While Russia is active, Ukraine is passivated and victimised: Ukraine is one of aggressive Russia's "peaceful neighbours" (3:33 EPP_Posselt). It is "the victim of outright military aggression from Russia" (15:26 EPP_Rosati), "Ukraine is in a state of war today, a war of survival in the face of an aggression by Russia that carries out a hybrid war, undeclared, but imposed [...]" (15:6 S&D_Group:Bostinaru). "The situation in Ukraine is escalating, but it is being escalated by Russia" (6:1 EPP_SaryuszWolski). "[The terrorist attacks that took place in Volnovakha are] another proof that Ukraine is a victim of aggression and unpublished hybrid war by Russia [...]" (13:66

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[115]This is interesting in two ways: how small EPGs use EXPVs, and why do Portuguese and Spanish MEPs contribute that much to this debate?

EPP_Plenkovic). "Eastern Ukraine *has been transformed* into a magnified Transnistria *whose instability is being used by Russia* to try both to control Kiev and to prevent its efforts to implement the association agreement with the EU" (6:60 S&D_Pascu). Ukraine needs the EU's help "in withstanding the hybrid war *waged against her* by Russia" (9:58 EPP_Landsbergis). If Ukraine does not "feel our [the EU's] real support" and is left alone with Russia, it "will be groaning under the pressure" (10:41 EPP_SaryuszWolski).

The country "is threatened" (5:92 S&D_Lyubchevka), "was invaded" (6:79 EPP_Kalniete), "is attacked from the outside, and from the inside loses territories against all international rules" (5:87 EPP_Marinescu). MEPs are "expressing concerns for those suffering in the ongoing conflict in Ukraine" (6:51 EFDD_Hookem), and caring "for the thousands of innocent victims who died" (8:15 S&D_Fajon). The only exception where Ukraine is not displayed as victim of Russia's aggression is (again) an S&D speaker who mentions internal factors:

> "I think it is clear to all that there would be no such tension in Ukraine if there are only external factors. Internal factors are also available to all analysts who are exploring the situation in Ukraine, this is a fact. [...] I have seen things that clearly show the existence of internal factors that cause tension." (5:94 S&D_Lyubchevka)

In some statements on the current crisis, Ukraine is backgrounded; that both passivates and objectifies Ukraine even more. There are several examples in which the speaker manages to not mention Ukraine once, even though it stands at the core of the issue:

> "The Russian leadership very often relies on the concept of sovereignty. [...] We should be fully aware that sovereignty has its limits. One of the limits of sovereignty is the sovereignty of your neighbour, and this has been violated by Russia in the last year and a half. The other obvious limit on sovereignty is international law and international norms. Until and unless Russia goes back to endorsing the international norms and international law relevant to its behaviour, there is no room for re-engagement. However, once that happens, we need to find a way to live together peacefully in this region with Russia. But the ball is in Russia's court." (17:47 Greens/EFA_Meszerics)

In many speech passages, Ukraine is described as an object that has been traded or decided on by the EU, the US and Russia, as exemplified in the subsequent passage:

> "Do not say you cannot know that for twenty-five years, the United States seek to integrate Ukraine and Georgia into NATO in order to cut these countries away from Russia. You cannot say you did not know that Ukraine is a country torn between East and West and it would have been necessary from the beginning to work with Moscow that Ukraine is an interface between the European Union and Russia, for Ukraine to be a federal and neutral state." (10:82 NI_Chauprade)

The duty of the EU to support Ukraine (see below) goes so far that the EU acts on behalf of the Ukraine's well-being:

> "Wir haben einen wahnsinnig schwierigen Weg vor uns. Es steht überhaupt alles in Frage in diesem Handelsabkommen. Und wir werden nur das bekommen, was die Ukraine braucht, wenn wir uns jetzt wirklich der Ukraine widmen, wenn wir alles tun, damit politische, gesellschaftliche und wirtschaftliche Reformen stattfinden." (10:28 Greens/EFA_Group:Harms)

The good citizens symbolise the whole

Whereas Putin (equated with the political leadership) symbolises the bad part of the whole in Russia, this (group of) actors is backgrounded or almost deleted when "the 5" are speaking about Ukraine. Ukraine means "the Ukrainian people", which is the good part that is used to represent the whole. For instance, the *"Ukrainian people"* have the "desire to live in a democratic, civilised state that also respects the rights of the national ethnic minorities" (13:108 S&D_Frunzulica).

Despite a few utterances on reducing corruption (13:8 S&D_Group: Fleckenstein), hardly any of them mentions the government, individual or groups of political actors. In various statements similar to "[Constitutional, tax, election, public administration, energy] reform are the priorities that *have to be taken into consideration* when it comes to the situation in Ukraine" (13:66 EPP_ Plenkovic), it lacks the agency. Often, whole speeches manage to background the government, even though it stands at the core of the suggestion or claim:

> "It is up to the people of Ukraine to decide on their path. They did it in an impressive way in the elections in 2014, where I had the honour to be an observer, but our task is to help them confront the aggressor, rebuild their economy and strengthen their democracy. We must help Ukraine implement the Association Agreement and support their efforts to tackle corruption." (13:74 EPP_CorazzaBildt)

> "The worst part is that most Ukrainians want a unified state, want a single Ukraine, and this state cannot defend itself, there is no army, there is nothing that normally always stands behind the law - a system that can enforce this law. There are some winners who would like to replace the old corruption system with their own system. The state is clumsy which is a major concern [...]." (5:57 S&D_Siwiec)

The speakers rather convey the image that the Ukrainian population (which itself is homogeneous and genericised into "Ukrainians") is one with the new political leadership, which was democratically elected from it. There is no antagonism between people and politics. There is, rather, a unity of government and citizens in the wish to transform into something new:

> "It is our task to emphasise again and again that the citizens of Ukraine participated in order to realize a constitutional state, to regain the validity of the law, to make a successful life possible for the Ukrainians. These are the European values that have been disputed for a whole winter and actually for years before." (5:11 Greens/EFA_Group: Harms)

> "We will do this so that *the dream of the people of Ukraine*, the dream of the people who have fought on the Maidan, so that *the demands of the Ukrainian people* can become reality. We are fighting for a democratic Ukraine, based on the rule of law, whose constitution and electoral law have been reformed, *a country that wants* to take massive action against corruption, in which human rights are respected and, above all, the rights of minorities are protected. We support a Ukraine whose economy is thriving, in which the social divide is closing and all people have a good future. The day on which this Ukraine will become a reality will be the day on which the promise of peaceful revolution on the Maidan will be fulfilled [...]". (7:3 S&D_Schulz)

This backgrounding of the Ukrainian political sphere is not done by the EFDD, the NIs and GUE/NGL. As mentioned above, the Left in particular puts most of its emphasis on referring to the political leadership which has been in power since Euromaidan.

Ukraine as a "raw" European country that is not yet "us"

Ukraine is (more) European (than Russia); it does not belong to the other, even though it does not fully belong to "us". Ukraine is on the one hand European-ish. Ukraine "is not and should not be part of a vassal of the Soviet space" (10:115 S&D_Picula). It is considered either as "strategic partner for the European Union and the Euro-Atlantic world" (15:7 S&D_Group: Bostinaru) or as "a long-standing and, one might say, long-suffering friend" (8:16 ECR_Kirkhope, also 13:65 NI_Morvai) who has "very clearly chosen Europe" (10:72 EPP_Plenkovic). "It is part of European culture and will become a part of political Europe in the future" (6:62 ECR_ Czarnecki). "Ukraine - *like any other European country* - has a European perspective and asks to become a member of the European Union" (9:11 EPP_Winkler); "we have always worked to bring Ukraine closer to Europe because it is *part of the European family of nations*" (10:37 NI_Vilimsky). "[...] As a European state Ukraine may apply for EU membership" (13:117 EPP_Kelam) and there should be "[...] no fatigue in providing our support to the Ukrainian people to gradually achieve its key goal - EU membership" (6:74 S&D_Picula).

Ukrainians and the EU share the same values, are like-minded, or on the same page in terms of morally right and wrong. "[The simultaneous ratification of the PAA in Strasbourg and Kiev is] proof of sharing the common European values and destiny" (8:2 EPP_SaryuszWolski). "Ukraine is an example of the *struggle* for pro-European values" (13:86 S&D_Fajon); they

"decided to join our European values" (5:3 S&D_Group:Roucek). "Just as Kurdish fighters in Iraq, Ukraine is defending Europe" (13:102 EPP_Stetina).

There are little manifest explanations given why it is European: because of its geographical closeness and intertwined history, and probably because it chose the right set of values, or it demonstrated its European nature because it chose the EU through Euromaidan. The more the speaker goes East, the more likely Ukraine is predicated as European. The common denominator is that Ukraine is certainly not the other: "the last few months in Ukraine have thrown into sharp relief the contrast between that country and its former overlord, Russia" (3:35 ECR_Tannock).

> "[...] Ukrainian citizens *proved to be committed to* European values and *willing to fight for* the country's democratic development. Ukrainian society has paid the highest price for their European aspirations, grieving the deaths of numerous people, suffering territorial occupation by Russia and experiencing a deteriorating economic situation." (8:1 EPP_SaryuszWolski)

Ukraine chose Europe or the EU: "[...] I believe that it is time to unite and to show our respect for the pro-European choice made by the Ukrainian people" (11:10 ALDE_Guoga).

> "Die Ukraine hat mit 70, 80 % der Bevölkerung seit Anfang der Neunzigerjahre in jeder Wahl den proeuropäischen Kurs beschlossen. Und dieser proeuropäische Kurs wird von uns aufgenommen, weil dieses Land den freiheitlichen Weg gehen möchte, wie andere europäische Länder das getan haben." (17:57 EPP_Brok)

> "[...] the heroic and victorious Euromaidan, which was a sign of the wish and will of the Ukrainian nation to make its European choice. The European choice of Ukraine, [...] will be institutionalised in the form of an Association Agreement and will in future bind the European Union and the Ukraine together." (8:1 EPP_SaryuszWolski)

Generally, Ukraine is more likeminded with Europe than Russia, and the speakers feel more sympathy for it. On the other hand, there is still something "dark" about Ukraine. Aspects of the Ukrainian reality that cannot be fully understood by (West) Europeans; these are, inter alia, the "the still unhindered oligarchs" (15:14 GUE/NGL_Group:Scholz), who are corrupt and "far from being paragons of virtue" (16:115 GUE/NGL_Vergiat).

> "I have heard people say that, of the EUR 1.83 billion [Euros aid], a billion will go to the people of Ukraine and EUR 0.83 billion will end up in the pockets of the oligarchs." (15:19 S&D_Martin, similar: 15:31 ECR_Dzhambazki, 15:32 ALDE_Paet).

"Corruption and double standards, lacking legal certainty and rule of law" (13:118 EPP_Gall-Pelcz), the political leadership reminding of a "corrupt gang" (15:22 NI_Graaff) with "intransparent links between economy and

politics"; "and political parties which are little more than a façade for the business projects of oligarchs" (10:23 GUE/NGL Group:Katrougkalos).

> "What his government has achieved to date are massively frozen social benefits, mass layoffs, drastic price rises, a privatisation programme that [...] is completely random, once again making only oligarchs like Firtash richer and more influential. There is a drastic increase in military spending, of which 30 percent have disappeared into corrupt channels. The 2015 budget does not include a hryvnia for the supposedly central fight against corruption." (13:15 GUE/NGL Group:Scholz)

And lastly, the situation of minorities, more specifically the inscrutable and overcomplex relationship between Russian-speaking and Ukrainian-speaking citizens.[116]

Ukraine remains somehow mystified, and not fully part of what is "the We", the "European Us". Despite all the enthusiasm, there are still reservations; that goes particularly for the GUE/NGL, EFDD and NIs ("Ukraine has not carried out the necessary reforms in legislation [...] – it is generally not ready to join the European Union", 10:70 NI Epitideios).

The notions of choice and duty

Those aspects are interrelated and carried by two notions: the notion of "choosing" and the notion of "duty". Again, the notions rest on positive-self negative-other-representations: Having faced two options – staying with Russia or moving towards the EU – Ukraine *chose* to be European or to return to Europe and everything it symbolises (values, democracy, independence).

Through this choice, its (raw, not yet mature) Europeanness, and Russia's "grossly violation [of] the core principles upon which peace and security in Europe are based" (13:74 EPP CorazzaBildt), the EU has a *duty*: to protect and support Ukraine, e.g. in designing and carrying out reforms, maturing, becoming more European:

> "The duty of the European Union is to support the Ukrainian nation, because it is part of European culture and will become a part of political Europe in the future, and let nobody say otherwise." (6:62 ECR Czarnecki)

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[116] Aside from that, there are issues with "growing threat of nationalism" and lacking respect and awareness for the rights of Hungarian (Transcarpathian), German-speaking, Tatar, and Bulgarian-speaking minority. "The attitude of the new government to these minorities and their rights is peculiar", given that it "is going to abolish the use of their native languages and the names of the minority population" (13:73 ECR Dzhambazki). A couple of speakers therefore demand that "minorities need increased political protection" (13:57 S&D Szanyi, 6:116 EPP Csaky), "promote respect for fundamental human and minority rights and minority languages" (6:105 EPP Bocskor), and to "take into consideration these aspects as well at the current discussions between the European Union and High Representative and the Kiev representatives" (13:57 S&D Szanyi).

"Let us recall that Ukrainians did not hesitate to demonstrate their will to join Europe, defying all risks and sacrifices" (5:124 EPP_Kelam). "Helping Ukraine must be an imperative for the European Union" (13:74 EPP_CorazzaBildt), "We are, *of course*, *obliged to* defend international law and *it is a duty to respond* to the Ukrainian aspirations towards the European Union" (10:124 S&D_Assis). What "we *must do* is further support the democratic independent path of Ukraine, the European path of Ukraine" (6:76 ALDE_Vajgl). In congruence with this, the macro-financial assistance is

> "not only our moral obligation, it is also a very sensible political decision because we are providing support to a pro-European, pro-reform and democratic government and, in this way, we contribute to our own security. Second, the decision to extend MFA is a manifestation of our European solidarity [and] a sign of our sense of responsibility for stability in the region." (15:26 EPP_Rosati)[117, 118]

Expressing pro-Ukraine sentiment

What the quotes in the previous paragraphs hint at is that several speakers emotionally express their positive attitude towards Ukraine. The positive attitude towards Ukraine culminates in emotional expressions of pro-Ukrainian sentiment. MEPs of ECR, EPP, few S&D, ALDE and Greens straightforwardly explain or demonstrate their emotional or positive relationship with Ukraine or Ukrainian citizens ("our Ukrainian friends", 15:9 ECR_Group:Demesmaeker); for instance ratifying the PAA is

> "*an act of huge symbolism* which *holds out the hand of friendship* to the people of Ukraine when there are *attempts to divide* us. It is a sign of

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[117]There are many examples for the notion of *duty* (e.g. 8:21 EPP_Bocskor, 17:128 EPP_Adaktusson, 10:16 ECR_Group:Tannock, 16:44 EPP_Casa, 10:80 EPP_Caspary, 15:7 S&D_Group:Bostinaru). The notion of duty refers to owing something to someone, special responsibility, and international solidarity: The EU has a "special responsibility for safeguarding respect for our values of democracy" (6:3 EPP_SaryuszWolski);"We have a responsibility for a socially and economically stable Ukraine" (5:151 EPP_Jeggle). "The European Union cannot now withdraw from an aid to the growth of the country and for this we find that the granting of assistance is necessary. [...] at this stage it is necessary to continue to send a strong signal to people in difficulty" (15:24 S&D_Mosca); "In the name of international solidarity, we should support the task of financial support for our eastern neighbour" (15:4 EPP_Group_Szejnfeld).

[118]Within ECR, there is only one Slovakian MEP who dissents with its group line. He emphasises that even though he considers the annexation of Crimea as breach of international law, "the EU's role is not to solve the economic problems of all the countries that surround us. The EU has a huge amount of their own problems - massive debt, unemployment and stagnation. People who want to send money to Ukraine, they do it from a stranger, not of its own. Ukrainians must solve their economic problems themselves, because for 20 years have elected governments who were failing to reform, and were cheating. If today one must help Ukraine economically, we have the IMF, whose members include all EU countries. If it is this way the EU plans to engage further than before, it will be experiencing a second Greece." (13:83 ECR_Sulik)

our absolute *unity*. It is the democratic mark of the right of sovereign countries and of their peoples to decide their own futures." (10:65 S&D_Howitt)

Ukraine and future development are of subjective importance for the speaker and she is emotionally involved in its well-being (e.g. 10:28 Greens/ EFA_Group:Harms, 13:37 ECR_CampbellBannerman). In those statements, the speaker attributes Ukraine to self-determination, heroism, and (metaphors related to) the fight for freedom:

> "Today we know that sanctions are effective, the currency is weakened, investors are fleeing and growth falls. [...] Therefore, the call for Europe's Social Democrats is: Say No to the abolition of sanctions, do not let the fight for freedom in Ukraine." (13:85 EPP_Adaktusson)

> "[...] we should *salute* the Ukrainian people for having organised independent, free and fair presidential elections which brought a clear result: *that is the result of democracy.* [...] The extremist vote was very small and this was a very good election result [...]. *So let us salute the Ukrainian people* and their new democratically elected President." (6:11 ALDE_Group:vanBaalen)

> "I was in Kiev, I was only in Maidan six times since November. I know that this is very little, but I have the impression that many speakers speaking today in our Parliament were not there once [...]. I saw young people in Ukraine of the age of children and grandchildren of those who speak today, who fought for the sovereignty of their country. And if they ask me today about this debate in our Parliament, I will use the right to silence, because I do not want to quote the nonsense I heard here. The duty of the European Union is to support the Ukrainian nation, because it is part of European culture and will become a part of political Europe in the future, and let nobody say otherwise." (6:62 ECR_Czarnecki)

> "Wir wollen, dass am 25. Mai nicht nur in der Europäischen Union gewählt wird, sondern es soll auch in der Ukraine – so wie das die Mehrheit des gewählten ukrainischen Parlaments mit den Stimmen der Fraktion von Wiktor Janukowytsch beschlossen hat – frei und neu gewählt werden, wer der Präsident der Ukraine ist. Es wäre für uns eine *ganz schlimme Schmach*, wenn diese Wahl nicht stattfinden könnte." (5:10 Greens/EFA_Group:Harms)

This emotional involvement further manifests, for instance, in speeches where MEPs from ECR and EPP directly address or salute the imaginary (Ukrainian) audience:

> „We start and embark on the new European future for Ukraine. Ukraine: welcome to this new relationship with the European Union." (8:4 EPP_SaryuszWolski)

> "Long live the solidarity of fighters for freedom! Long live the solidarity of the European Union with Ukraine!" (5:147 EPP_Zalewski)

"This is our message to the people there – not only in Kiev, but also in Donetsk, Luhansk, Mariupol and Simferopol: We support your struggle for freedom and the rule of law and your orientation towards integration in a democratic Europe. [...] Slawa Ukraini!" (Glory to Ukraine; 10:95 EPP_Gahler)

"I would like to make an urgent request for concrete aid. Dozens of seriously injured soldiers need urgent professional medical assistance in our hospitals. Hundreds of thousands of refugees need help. Reconstruction in the east, the liberated areas, must begin as quickly as possible. I hope that the European Union will be able to help here soon. Long live Ukraine." (8:9 ECR_Group:Demesmaeker)

Pro-Ukraine sentimental statements that would be comparable to the ones mentioned above are barely made by the speakers of GUE/NGL, NIs and EFDD.

The subsections on Russia- and Ukraine-representations found that all groups, aside from the NIs, describe Russia as fairly negative. While "the 5" represent Ukraine as European nation returning to Europe, incarnated by the "Euromaidan" protests, "the 3" hold a different view. For them, both the PAA and the change in government should be seen critically. The next section discusses how the EPGs use these representations for constructing "the self".

6.3 Representing the EU through self-other representations

For the speakers, Russia and Ukraine play a crucial role in the discursive construction of we-ness, Europeanness, role attribution/ assignment of roles, and in the EPG's self-representation.

MEPs of "the 5" and "the 3" *use* representations differently. They contrast in the way they connect negative-other representations to their self-representation: either as positive-self representation or as momentum to highlight own (EP/EU) shortcomings. ALDE, EPP, S&D, Greens, and ECR display Russia as negative other, while pointing out that "we" (the EU, the EP) are its positive opposite (positive-self negative-other representation). Russia is something else, which contrasts with the EU and the values it stands for. Rhetorically, those groups tend to link the representations and critique on Russia to positive, integrationist EU-related demands.

EFDD, GUE/NGL, and some NIs display Russia as negative other as well. However, instead of investing in positive self-representations of the EU, their criticism on Russia gets linked to EU-critique (negative-self negative-other representation). They do not or only partially belong to the "EU-self". Depending on the speaker's ideological background, the

positive-self is the politician who criticises or supervises the establishment and reminds them of the interests of the people.

6.3.1   "The 5": Negative-other positive-self representations

When MEPs of "the 5" refer to Russia, they combine negative-other representations with positive-self representations. It is a classic scheme of representing political actors: Russia is displayed as the negative other, while pointing out that "we" or the EU are its positive opposite. "Putin's corrupt dictatorship" is the total opposite "to democracy and self-determination" (8:12 Greens/EFA_Group:Jadot). All aspects mentioned in the previous sections 6.2.1 and 6.2.2 come and fit together to show/ illustrate that Russia is something else, which contrasts with the EU and the values it stands for. In that sense, Russia is (again) used to define what is "European" (see e.g. Neumann.1999, Wolff.1994).

Similar to the equating of *bad Russia = Putin*, referring to the EU works as a synecdoche. The EU is equated with a canon of specific values and with (geographical) Europe; there is no heterogeneity in the EU but a community of values (totum pro parte synecdoche; see below, subsection on the EU).

The speakers find many examples to show how the EU differs from Russia. In those comparisons, the roles are clearly assigned: "We are *unlike* Mr Putin who represents the bad face of Russia. We do not threaten third parties to join, but offer partnerships and cooperation with associated states"; "we do not threaten the neighbours, unlike Mr Putin: he comes with tanks, we come with banks" (17:62 ALDE_Austrevicius); "Putin's Russia began aggression [...] not only against the independence of Ukraine, against International Law and global peace and security. We do not want war. We are and always have been open to dialogue and cooperation [...]" (17:85 S&D_Gomes).

"The European Union [...] has also become a gravitational force that draws the Balkans, Eastern Europe, European Caucasus" (5:112 S&D_Zala) because "we want these countries to be strong, independent and developed, and the Russian Federation wants these countries to be weak and controllable so that they can be blackmailed" (17:143 EPP_Muresan); "in the European Union, law dictates power, and not power – as is currently the case in Russia – dictates law" (5:69 EPP_Pöttering). Given that Russia "is not giving value to humanity, it is also very difficult to expect an intrinsic change in EU-Russia relations" (17:135 ALDE_Paet).

"Today's Russia is not brave enough to face this horrific truth [of the Katyń massacre]. Its current government is providing unconvincing justifications for their former alliance with Hitler." The speaker continues to explain that among "our ranks", nations were able to deal with the past, which shows the clear contrast to Russia:

> "The histories of many countries contain horrific events. It is a measure of the maturity of a nation when it is able to confront its past and denounce that which needs to be denounced in its history. Today's Germany is an example of such an attitude. It is only then that the past will cease to be a burden for today's Russia and will allow it to enter the community of free and democratic nations with its head held high. Only then will Russia be able, once and for all, to drop the millstone of its Stalinist past from around its neck, and to stop fighting against its own citizens, who are currently risking their lives to defend fundamental freedoms and human rights." (1:24 EPP_Sonik)

> "*The regime of Putin is breaking international law and undermining the European peace order*, and he is waging war in the free nation of Ukraine in Europe. [...] No one is threatening Russia. But the Putin regime *fears democracy, the rule of law and freedom of expression*. They fear the open dialogue that we want." (17:119 EPP_Hökmark)

The quote above argues that we want open dialogue (good), but "Putin's regime" (negatively connotated nomination) *fears* democracy, the rule of law and so on; which are essentially the values the EU stands for; "the original values of the European Union" (5:127 EPP_Kelam). Given that, "Putin would prefer it if we were to forget about the domestic human rights situation in Russia. *But we will not*" (3:24 ALDE_Group:Schaake).

> "The violations of the above-mentioned international law clearly show that Russia does not respect its promises made to its partners. It is *our duty* to show that this behaviour is not acceptable and deserves Europe's disappointment." (19:7 ALDE_Kallas)

Why are the human rights in third countries of "our" interest, and why is it *our duty* to make Russia understand that violations of international law is unacceptable and "should concern us all as democrats" (10:17 ECR_Group: Tannock)? The speaker argues that *we*, thereby meaning the representatives of European citizens and values, will not forget the domestic human rights situation *because it stands at the core* of our self-perception, and because *we are democrats*, not autocrats or wildlings. Letting those values go, or forgetting them, stands at the opposite of "our" ideals. As MEP Landsbergis explains, the EU

> "adheres to the very clear principles of the rule of law, transparency and self-determination, therefore numerous different formats and initiatives were offered to Russia in order to usher the Russian people to the path of democracy and reform. The European Union was even generous in offering strategic partnership or 'common spaces' initiatives, but the respect of human rights and democratic principles kept on deteriorating in Russia [...]." (17:3 EPP_Landsbergis)

Even though this "supportive and understanding strategy" that is rooted in the EU's principles did not lead to success,

> "We must remain anchored in our European values and not depart from the principles in which we all believe, but we cannot remain indifferent to such challenging actions [like the constant military support offered by Russia to the separatists, the rhetoric of denying Russia's involvement in the conflict in Ukraine and the MEP black list]."
> (17:58 S&D_Bostinaru)

It is therefore consistent to consider the blacklist with several EU officials and MEPs not as a shame, but as another sign that "we" stand on the right side of history:

> "I think [the blacklist of MEPs] is a list of honour. It is an honour to be on a list with so many colleagues who are pro-Ukrainian but who also love the Russian people and want to get Russia back on track. So again, to be on that list is an honour and a pleasure. We will not change anything. Putin has to change." (17:18 ALDE_Group: vanBaalen, similar: 17:62 ALDE_Austrevicius)

Using Ukraine to boost the positive-self representation

Ukraine is the second essential element in the logic of self-other representations of MEPs. It is constructed as a third player, not the same as us, but different than Russia, in a triangle between Russia and the EU. Representations of Ukraine are used to nurture, improve, or expand the positive-self representations. They illustrate Europeanness, what is good, and what is bad. The ratification of the PAA "is proof that we care for the thousands of innocent victims who died. This is our debt. Today we stand on the side of those who suffer most in Ukraine" (8:15 S&D_Fajon). The EU wants the best for Ukraine and supports the weak: "We" wanted to set up the PAA "in favour of a democratic and economically prosperous development in Ukraine" (6:22 Greens/EFA_Harms). "It is obvious that what we are trying to do at this moment is an attempt to strengthen the economies of countries in need. It is a clear political signal that on the one hand we do not agree to aggression and, on the other hand, we do not leave those in need" (11:11 EPP_Walesa). In this "war of nerves", the EU is "based on solidarity with victims and European values" (13:116 EPP_Kelam).

Linking Ukraine *and* Russia is used by the EU to define and demarcate itself positively, as the two examples show:

> "There is no internal or intergovernmental conflict *in Europe* that justifies armed violence. To enforce *the right of the strongest* in 21st century Europe by force of arms is a *deeply Stalinist approach*. *We* are responding *peacefully*: with sanctions that make it clear to Russia that it can only lose with this policy." (10:94 EPP_Gahler)

> "We need a good, consistent EU policy, which emphasises human rights, citizens' fundamental rights, conflict avoidance and, closer economic and cooperation between the people in the nearby areas. This

means in the long term, the consolidation and intensification of co-
operation with Russia. *We do not create permanent enemy images.*" (9:4
EPP_Pietikäinen)

The last sentence in this example excludes the ending "as others (i.e. Rus-
sia) do". It is not necessary to say it out loud; the listener understands the
positive self-image.

6.3.2 Negative Russia-representations combined with negative EU-representations

EFDD and GUE/NGL describe Russia negatively as well. However, in con-
trast to ALDE, EPP, S&D, and G/EFA, they do not link it with positive EU-
self images. Instead, they use Russia and partly Ukraine to show that the
EU has minor to major deficiencies.

The EFDD group uses negative-other representations in a two-step way.
As a first step, they combine (negative) representations of Russia with neg-
ative representations of the EU: "Russia is not as strong as we are weak,
because we are divided and we are afraid [...]" (13:92 EPP_Pabriks). "What
Ukraine does not need is an EU or Russian *puppet master pulling its strings*,
moving forward" (18:26 EFDD_Group:Hookem).

> "The Ukrainians threw out their corrupt pro-Russian President and
> Government because they were under the domination of Russia. [...]
> The Ukrainians are between a rock and a hard place. They see no
> alternative to the Russian threat but to seek closer association with
> the EU. I regret that but I understand their position. I hope that the
> Ukrainians eventually achieve independence and freedom without
> the need to *submit themselves to the undemocratic EU*. I wish them well
> in that ambition." (13:113 EFDD_Batten)

> "In the last decade of the twentieth century the West failed to push
> back Russia from containing its imperial ambitions. In the first decade
> of the twenty-first century the West failed to establish a partnership
> for integrating Russia within the European system of security, stabil-
> ity, freedom and prosperity. In the second decade of the twenty-first
> century the West finds itself in front of an assertive Russia which is
> no longer the old enemy and not quite its ally, but which is in a con-
> test of interests with it. The problem is that the EU is unable to define
> a common position concerning its geo-strategic interests. Therefore
> it prefers to engage in a deadened way of exporting values by trans-
> forming the adoption of its standards beyond the need for interoper-
> ability into the conditionality for the progress of political cooperation.
> Russia could not be forced to accept such a deal and the EU has no
> strength to impose it." (2:52 NI_Severin)

*Negative other = EU establishment; Positive-self = themselves, as advocates of the
people*

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As a second step, while Russia and the EU are established as the negative, they position themselves as positive outsiders; in a more or less obvious way. Russia is as bad as the EU or EP majority groups are weak; except of the EFDD, who are the people's advocates and the only reasonable politicians:

> "Well it is all just wonderful isn't it? I am just hearing a lot of wind here. No-one is coming up with solutions. We are not talking about some sort of tin-pot state, we are talking about Russia, which lost 80 million people in the last century: the siege of Leningrad, the battle of Stalingrad, a revolution. Sanctions are not going to work, militarism is not going to work. So come on, give us some answers, because nobody is putting forward constructive proposals." (6:46 EFD_Nuttall)

> "On 17 July, the accident flight Malaysia Airlines MH17 killed two hundred and ninety-six people, and eighty children. The immediate start of the investigation it was found that it is not a simple plane crash, but a real military attack. [...] Dear colleagues, how is it possible that there is no clear responsibility, given the *countless bodies that should protect European citizens*? We talk about the security of all European citizens. [T]here is also an economic, political and social dimension to this. Many companies, also in Italy are collapsing because of sanctions imposed either by the EU, or by Russia. People are becoming desperate. There are many sectors: agri-food, but also textile, transport, energy, that are highly dependent on Russia." (10:69 EFDD_Aiuto)

> "[...] there should be a huge degree of guilt in this House about what provoked all of this in the first place. We saw Western Ukrainians waving European flags, rioting, setting fire to things and effectively staging a coup d'état which brought down the Ukrainian President, leading to this instability. Yes, you are the guilty people and you refuse to accept it." (10:35 EFDD_Farage)

They distance themselves from the majority groups by „we versus you"-constructions or metaphors and neologisms like "Euroidiots" (10:61 NI_Buonanno):

> "I heard your speech, and there is a lot of *huff and puff* today about what should be done. Do you agree that there is a very limited range of things that the EU mouse can do to affect the Russian bear? And when you talk in this harsh rhetoric and tough way, you need to be very careful about what might lead from it – and this is from someone who, I can assure you, is *in the pay of nobody whatsoever except the British taxpayer*." (17:33 EFDD_Etheridge)

While the EFDD combines negative Russia- and EU-representations with positive self-portrayal, the GUE/NGL does not. This speech shows how the GUE/NGL criticises the EU's activities, but does not add any positive-self images to it:

"Who is interested in that there are no good neighbourly relations with Russia? It is no good neighbourhood with a violent change of government with neo-Nazi elements; neither is good neighbourliness NATO expansion or missile shields. Using a trade agreement as a weapon is [not] good neighbourliness [either]. I don't think this is [a] serious talk of [a] partnership." (10:131 GUE/NGL_CousoPermuy)

This section on representations of the EU showed that the speakers construct we-ness through othering Russia and Ukraine. Both play a crucial role in demarcating and defining Europeanness: Russia is something else, which contrasts with the EU and the values it stands for. Depending on the EPG, representations are used differently: either as positive-self representation (ALDE, EPP, S&D, Greens, and ECR) or as momentum to highlight their own (EP/EU) shortcomings (EFDD, GUE/NGL, and some NIs). The latter, instead of investing in positive self-representations of the EU, link criticism on Russia to EU-critique (negative-self negative-other representation). The following section begins by recapitulating the chapter and assesses whether both voting blocs qualify as discourse-coalition.

6.4   Co-Voting or discourse-coalitions?

So far, this chapter, as the last analytical step of this thesis, analysed the speeches of MEPs in 15 plenary debates and 4 EXPVs. The purpose of this chapter was to scrutinise the nature of the voting blocs found in the voting analysis in order to establish whether they are coincidental co-voting or accompanied by substance (like a discourse-coalition). The analysis examined what and how the EPGs argue and present their positions, while being guided by the overarching questions *how the topic "Russia" structures plenary interaction and competition in the EP, i.e. which "lines of conflict" structure the plenary debates and what is the dominating dimension of conflict in the chamber.* The chapter itself was particularly interested in how divides evolve, how they are being constructed, and where they are traceable/ observable. So far, the analysis has been able to establish the following points:

On some topics, all groups share a consensus or display similar attitudes. Until November 2013, the dominating discourse on Russia is that Russia is Europe's strategic partner, that they are mutually dependent and also helping each other with domestic and foreign policy issues. The only tensions concerned the extent that Russians share Europe's values and how much they should be emphasised vis-à-vis Russia. In the course of the events in Ukraine this neutral to positive view on Russia rapidly broke down, being at its low point in September 2014 when the newly elected EP voted for the EU-Ukraine Partnership and Association agreement. All seven EPGs and parts of the NIs display a negative, critical attitude towards Russia; its representations are overwhelmingly negative. Meta the-

mes when discussing Russia were pragmatism, identity, and threat (with varying degree). As anticipated, Human Rights related debates were plenary events in which the groups unanimously reaffirm the necessity of the protection and respect of fundamental rights in their statements whilst emphasising the values and role of the EU in shaping third states in Human Rights compliance. All EPGs in one way or the other embedded Russia (and Ukraine) for positive-self representations.

In contrast to the literature, the expectation of deviant or disagreeing MEPs contributing more to the debates or using them to give their opinion did not find any evidence. Quite on the contrary, it appears that all groups send either prominent speakers or those concerned as speakers.[119] The general impression is that in Russia-related debates, much floor is given to speakers from CEE states. About 43% of all speakers in the analysed debates have a CEE background, with Poland and the Baltic States as most frequent contributors. Moreover, about 47% of speakers on behalf of the group are from CEE states. This matches with the research of (Proksch and Slapin 2015, p. 151) which shows that "national issue relevance" is the fourth most decisive factor to receive speaking time in the plenary; MEPs may be allocated time to express national opinions on sensitive matters. Those MEPs with a national background that features a high salience of Russia were indeed more likely to contribute to EP debates and use this channel to express their view.

While there is not much intra-EPG controversy observable during the debate, an interesting aspect is the observation that a couple of deviant MEPs, from ALDE and EPP for instance, chose to use EXPVs to express that they did abstain and not co-voted with the group line because they think some general points in the resolution were wrong. In their explanations, they give insight into personal attitudes and doubts; and, most interestingly, they agree to claims made by the adversary EPGs. The following three examples are taken from the EXPVs on the "Situation in Ukraine and state of play of EU-Russia relations" (RC8, 16 Sep 2014). Among others, the resolution text suggests further sanctions and that Russia is no longer considered to be a strategic partner:

> "I decided not to support the resolution for the following reasons.
> First, the resolution largely ignores the fact that the Ukraine crisis is

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[119]The prominent speakers have in common their known expertise in the field or hold an office in the thematic area. For example MEP Brok (EPP Germany, AFET chair), MEP Landsbergis (EPP Lithuania, rapporteur for EU-RUS-relations), MEP Harms (Greens Germany, group chair, involved in EaP relations and known for engagement with Russian civil society), MEP Tannock (ECR British Conservatives, DROI member, vice president for EU-Ukraine PCC, ECR speaker in AFET), MEP Scholz (GUE/NGL Germany, EU-Belarus and EU-Moldau delegation); MEP Saryusz-Wolski (EPP Poland, vice group chair, AFET member, delegate to EU-Ukraine PAA), MEP Mazuronis (Lithuania, EFDD's "quota CEE representative", delegate to EU-Ukraine PAA), MEP van Baalen (ALDE Netherlands, AFET und SEDE member), MEP Fleckenstein (S&D Germany).

essentially a civil war, even if with significant involvement by foreign actors. Second, in the period of the long-expected ceasefire the resolution justifies the logic of sanctions which proved to be inefficient in the case of such a complicated partner as Russia. Furthermore, existing sanctions and calls for new sanctions may undermine the fragile peace process in Ukraine. Third, the resolution does not pay enough attention to the issue of human rights violations by all parties involved into the conflict. I am especially worried that the signals sent to the Ukrainian Government in this respect are too vague to be taken seriously. Fourth, *some statements in the resolution are based on media reports, low-quality analytics and/or based on information from biased or unreliable sources.*" (9:23 ALDE_Toom)

"It was not easy to make a decision on this resolution. My group is composed mostly of people who, until the end of the 80s, fought against the oppression of the Soviet Union. I, while sharing the basic values of these colleagues, have the same experience, and I can make out what is being done in the name of socialism and what is being done in the name of Russia. And, not being blinded by fear, *I see that the European position is doing damage in Europe, with an efficacy on which I have serious doubts.* I'd like to start a serious debate, calm, objective, pending which is why I preferred to *abstain to avoid being misunderstood.*" (9:17 EPP_Cirio)

"I abstained on the report by my colleague Gabrielius Landsbergis on the state of relations between the EU and Russia. This report notes the deterioration of relations between the European Union and Russia, but unfortunately does not offer viable solutions for a peaceful exit from the crisis. The text *is indeed unnecessarily aggressive* and proposes measures which would only increase the already strong tension between the Union and the Russian Federation. It would also close the door to any dialogue between the two sides by no longer considering Russia as a strategic ally of the Union whose cooperation is vital for the peaceful settlement of the situation in Iran or the Middle East for example." (16:76 EPP_Jouland)

Thus, while the speeches did not reveal a broader variety of positions within a political group, EXPVs proved to be an aspect of legislative activity that needs further scientific attention.

The initial explorative overview of shared and divergent views (section 6.1.1) indicated that the voting blocs identified previously are roughly reproduced in the speeches. After that, a closer examination found that the voting bloc consisting of EPP, ALDE, G/EFA, S&D and ECR (referred to as "the 5"), shares similar critique, and conclusions. Exceptions are marginal dissent voices and tensions with regard to NATO cooperation and militarisation of the Black Sea Basin (RC15). These five political groups use representations of Ukraine and Russia for positive-self representations, as those two "others" are taken as examples to positively demarcate what is Europe or European, and what defines being a legislator in the European

Parliament.

Analysing the speeches of GUE/NGL, EFDD, and NIs showed that they have a couple of overlapping positions. At first glance, all three are first and foremost critical of the EU, do not support the PAA with Ukraine, and see Ukraine in a much more critical light than "the 5" do. However, their focus and style of criticism differs, and so do the conclusions they bring forward. Speeches and EXPVs suggest that the voting behaviour of GUE/NGL, EFDD and NIs is driven by different motives, even though the outcome (voting) is the same.

The previous paragraphs provided a brief summary on the findings regarding the contents of speeches ("what" they say). The analysis established the positions, demands, criticism, and the way political actors are described. While the need for investigating the content of speeches (i.e. the positions put forward) is evident, it is less obvious/ straightforward why the style and justification- or argumentation logic of the EPGs ("how" they argue) matter as well.

When the EPGs not only share compatible standpoints, but in addition use a "common language" (i.e. similar metaphors, references) and display common understanding – manifested both in storylines and similar argumentation logic – then it is possible to speak of a discourse-coalition (see 3.2). This is why the patterns of argumentation are scrutinised as well.

In their speeches, MEPs explain, justify, and try to convince their audience by argumentation. The last section is therefore devoted to the questions of how EPGs present or convey their content as well as what is their argumentation logic/pattern? How do the EPGs construct their argumentation? The analysis finds that firstly, the speakers connect their conclusions (i.e. demands or suggestions) with representations. Secondly, representations and conclusions are linked by and embedded in several storylines, which together make three core elements of the speaker's argumentation. Those two points will be explained in the following two subsections.

6.4.1 Storylines as connector between representations and conclusions

This subsection focuses on the storylines identified in the speeches. Storylines are coherent ideas about the current situation, dangers, challenges, and distribution of roles between the actors (good/bad, perpetrator/victim, represented through nominations and predications as aforementioned). They stand for a perception of the situation/ reality and subsume it in one sentence or metaphor, making them "shortcuts" for a perception of reality (Hajer 1993, 1995; see 3.5). The analysis identified six storylines (S.1 – S.6, see Table 6.S, p. XX, Annex).

The Ukraine-crisis is a litmus test for the EU (S.1)

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The EU or the "West" faces a turning point in history because of the challenges and threats posed by Russia. The crisis in Ukraine (including Russia's foreign policy and military activities) is a "litmus test" and one of the biggest challenges for the EU as an institution and as a group of like-minded states. It challenges its problem-solving capacities, its unity, its ability to cooperate beyond individual interests of member states, the extent of its soft power, and whether its values are only empty words or sound/ substantiated: "The way we finally react to Russia's aggression will decide our own future: how we stick to the original values of the European Union" (5:127 EPP_Kelam, similar: 13:80 EPP_Kukan). "Ukraine and the crisis in Ukraine today represent a true test of the credibility of the European Union's foreign policy, its full approach, our values [...]" (6:90 EPP_Plenkovic). It also refers to the notion that Russia is testing the EU's nerves, the limits of tolerance (18:2 EPP_Group:Landsbergis, 18:6 S&D_ Szanyi).

Will the EU fail, or will it succeed? The moment of truth has come (10:114 S&D_Picula): "The events in Ukraine [...] will reveal which vision is more relevant. Putin's partial renewal of Russian power from the past or our European Union as the future joint home of all Europeans who want it" (5:72 S&D_Picula). What happens in Ukraine is not "an isolated conflict in a faraway land, but rather it is part of a wider struggle in which democratic nations on our own doorstep are fighting off the revanchist and irredentist ideals of a Putin-led authoritarian and revisionist regime that boasts of a nuclear arsenal" (10:17 ECR_Group:Tannock). Either the EU will cope with it, or it will not be able to deal with Russia's behaviour or "expansion".

> "[...] The geopolitical context in Ukraine should be the best incentive for Europe to unite and respond robustly to the Russian Federation's illegal aggression. Let us show them what history has taught us! If we divide we will falter, but if we stand together we will thrive." (16:87 EPP_Macovei)

If the EU manages to deal with the challenge(r)s from inside and outside its boundaries (e.g. through better cooperation, unselfishness, etc.), then it will evolve as better, stronger, empowered self *("What does not kill you makes you stronger")*. „But the crisis in Ukraine is a test for the Union, either we go out with strength, or divided, or weak" (5:96 EPP_Grzyb).

> „As I said, the future of Ukraine is at stake, but the future of the European Union is at stake. The old saying says "what will not kill you will strengthen you", or we will come out of this confrontation with the Russian Federation stronger, more integrated and introduce more politicians to our daily routine, or we will split as Putin writes 18 letters on Energy politics, disregarding that there is one address in Brussels where the same letter could be sent. Well, he'll get the answer from one place." (5:58 S&D_Siwiec)

The storyline points at the elephant in the room: it refers to the idea that the crisis leads to the crucial question of "Quo Vadis EU". Will the EU

integrate further and delegate more competences to the supranational level (e.g. border control, military cooperation, EU army), will it invite more countries to membership (Moldova, ...) or associated states? Or will this lead to a minimalisation of the EU or even a disintegration? The answer depends on the EPG affiliation (see more in the next section).

> "In Ukraine, the crisis is on all fronts. The war has not stopped, the human cost is heavy: deaths every day and hundreds of thousands of migrants fleeing the fighting zone. The economy is shrinking, inflation is booming, money is falling apart. [...] We must also simplify our procedures, reduce our decision-making and payment deadlines so that we can respond in real time to obvious emergencies. When there is fire in the house, we do not discuss the price of water. In this dramatic context, the European Union must accept the leadership of the coordination and ensure the right balance between the austerity of the aid and the acceptability of the conditionality measures by the Ukrainian people, a courageous but suffering people, a people waiting results to regain hope and confidence in the future. Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, Ukraine is, in all respects, the test of truth for the European Union." (15:25 ALDE_Arthuis)

> "The EU must draw the right conclusions and make every effort to create a strong European energy union. Only solidarity, rather than a fractured and divided Europe will be able to withstand the external pressure. Hopefully, the European Union will remain united in this test of solidarity with regard to Russia." 17:118 S&D_Balcytis

The Ukraine-crisis is decisive for Europe's future; Ukraine's stability is vital to the EU (S.2)

The political and/ or economic stability of Ukraine and its territorial integrity is vital to the EU as a whole (e.g 5:1 EPP_Group:SalaS'anNeyra, 5:30 EPP_Brok, 5:61 ALDE_Gerbrandy). It is "extremely serious for the security and balance of the European continent, and we must unambiguously denounce these actions" (5:81 EPP_Danjean). "This is not only a matter for Ukraine or for relations between Ukraine and Russia, but it is also a concern for all Europeans, for the peaceful order we established on the continent after 1945" (5:5 S&D_Group:Roucek).

Ukraine is considered as a buffer state or bridge between the EU and Russia. It relates to the metaphor how "Ukraine must stand" („Just as Kurdish fighters in Iraq, Ukraine is defending Europe"; 13:102 EPP_Stetina). A "failed state" Ukraine, "an empty shell, a state only in name" (6:61 S&D_Pascu) or a frozen conflict would endanger Europe's security: "The war on Ukraine has dangerously weakened the foundations of European security, restored mistrust and red-lighted threats, gave birth to the risk of regional terrorism and new frozen conflicts" (6:64 ALDE_Austrevicius).

The speaker expresses that the overall situation concerning Ukraine – all bilateral or trilateral tensions between Russia, Ukraine, the EU and

partly the US – could, if handled wrongly, have serious negative consequences for the security of all European states.

> "This is a crisis which has critical humanitarian consequences in the country and on its borders, and far-reaching political consequences for the country, the Neighbourhood, and for Europe itself." (6:100 S&D_Howitt)

> "[...] today we have an unstable, conflict-torn, fragmented and destabilized Ukraine, which poses a serious threat not only to the security of its immediate neighbors, the Baltic States, but also to the security of the European Union as a whole." (6:118 S&D_Balcytis)

> "This is a major European crisis. We must be able to respond responsibly and decisively, not only because this crisis will have an impact on our security, but also on the future of relations with our neighbors, with whom we share interests. So we have to take responsibility and be robust, and we have to ask ourselves, in this Parliament, Member States, the High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security question: Do we want a new Cold War in Europe?" (10:9 S&D_Group:Pittella)

Whole Europe is under attack (S.3)

The ideas of the EU being tested and Ukraine's stability being crucial for Europe's future are connected to the storyline of how the whole of Europe is being under attack. It builds on the creation of a threat scenario.

> „It is important to understand that this is not just war against Ukraine. This military conflict is a reflection of the global conflict between Russia and Western civilization and Europe. If we do not respond properly, the question will be just one: which European country will be the other? Will it be my homeland, Lithuania or other Baltic states, or perhaps Moldova or any other country in the world or Europe¿' (6:27 EFDD_Mazuronis)

As the quote illustrates, the aggression against Ukraine and the disrespect of its territorial integrity and Russia's behaviour as an invader is not only a threat and attack against Ukraine. "In the East, not only Ukraine but also the rest of Europe is attacked" (5:146 EPP_Zalewski).

> „The sovereignty, independence and indeed the democracy of a great European nation are under attack – but it is more than that. The core principles upon which peace and security in Europe are based are being grossly violated." (13:74 EPP_CorazzaBildt)

It is an offence and assault against the whole of Europe; against its integrity as an entity, but also against its values and what it symbolises (e.g 18:107 EPP_Kukan; 19:10 S&D_Group:Lauristin; 10:40 EPP_SaryuszWolski: "We are faced with a conflict whose stake is not only the sovereignty of Ukraine, but also our security, security in Europe and the stability of the order based on democracy and the rule of law.").

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> "In the meantime, he [Putin] is ready to wage a war, a war which will never be declared, which will take place on the territory of Ukraine, but which is directed against freedom, democracy and European values as a whole." (10:26 Greens/EFA_Group:Harms)

> „[When] defending the Ukraine, we are defending Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and all other European Union countries. While defending Ukraine and its sovereignty, we are defending Europe, we are defending our homes. Can there be anything more important¿' (13:27 EFDD_Group:Mazuronis)

The speakers construct the current tensions and crises as representative/ symbolic of a fight of (value) systems, "a wider struggle": the West versus the East, authoritarianism versus democracy, conservativism versus modernism, rule of law versus "the right of the strong", etc.

> „Terrorists have many faces, from jihadists to Talibanis, to Islamists in Northern Nigeria, and the Russian-backed and -funded bandits in eastern Ukraine. But all of them have one thing in common: hatred of Western liberties and democratic societies." (13:50 ALDE_Austrevicius)

Some of the speakers create a dark and pessimistic vision: if "the law of the jungle" / "might is right" dogma continues (because it already started when the international law was broken without consequences), then the future of the continent/ society/ peaceful cooperation will be dystopic.

> "[...] since the end of February, parts of Europe have been living in a completely different era in international relations. Forget the validity of the principles of international law, forget about the inclusion policy. All this is no longer working. Let's not imagine that the aggressor will be able to survive and ruin. What is happening in Ukraine now is the struggle between different values and political systems, between democracy and authoritarianism." (5:139 EPP_Saudargas)

> "Colleagues, we have all been shocked by pictures of burning books in Crimea. Those books were declared dangerous to the official policy line. Colleagues, the 1930s are back to Europe. Totalitarianism is banging on Europe's doors. Let us not be blind and deaf." (12:30 ALDE_Austrevicius)

Ukraine was just the beginning; other CIS/CEE states might fall soon (S.4)

According to the speaker, the unrightful annexation of Crimea and invasion of Ukraine by Russia was just the beginning in a series of similar unrightful events. "We can not know where Putin's ambitions are going to end" (5:160 ECR_Tomasic). "But let's not let the illusions go! Putin will not stop with Ukraine" (6:79 EPP_Kalniete). Russia's leadership, summarised under *Putin*, understands those actions as a test balloon for the EU: how will the EU react to this provocation?

"Putin" will continue to exceed/ break the law and other CIS/ CEE/ Shared Neighbourhood states will be attacked/ invaded; or his revanchist plans stretch into taking over parts of the Black Sea. "The next victim is Moldova, more precisely the eastern part of the Republic of Moldova, Transnistria" (5:115 EPP_Preda). „Russia is threatening to turn the international waters of the Black Sea into its internal sea" (18:28 EPP_Pabriks).

> „[...] and now we see how the situation is developing. We have Transnistria and an escalating situation in Ukraine. I think that soon we will have Russian troops near the mouth of the Danube, which will create a huge problem for the security of the European Union." (18:65 ALDE_Nicolai)

This is particularly the case if "he" realises that the EU/ international community does not react in the way the speaker proposes:

> "Crimea was just a test to assess Europe's readiness to respond adequately. We have not shown sufficient determination and unity, and it was perceived by Putin as a clear sign to be able to continue. Unfortunately, I do not think it ends with Ukraine." (5:122 EPP_Ibrisagic)

> "If we do not respond properly, the question will be just one: which European country will be the other? Will it be my homeland, Lithuania or other Baltic states, or perhaps Moldova or any other country in the world or Europe?" (6:27 EFDD_Mazuronis)

Russia wants to weaken or split the EU (S.5)

MEP/EPG shares the opinion that the eventual aim/ strategy of Russia is to weaken and/ or split the European Union; with "divisive politics" (16:35 S&D_Blinkeviciute, 16:71 ALDE_Guoga), Putin wants to "divide and conquer" the EU (17:72 EPP_Kalniete). „Russia considers us not as partners but as adversaries to be weakened, split and compromised" (18:46 EPP_Kelam). The actions of the Kremlin mirror this intention.

He does so by exporting "corruption to Europe for years [...], many shady, pragmatic, selfish interests and deals which are betraying and undermining the EU's solidarity, common values and ability to act decisively" (5:126 EPP_Kelam). "Russia is trying to drive a wedge between individual member states of the Union" (17:106 S&D_Freund). "Playing on the trade relations, energy dependence, these are elements to which Russia is trying to divide the European Union" (17:103 EPP_Plenkovic; similar: 17:114 S&D_Zala). „Russia is making every effort to break up European solidarity" (17:144 EPP_Rosati).

The speakers moreover bring up that Russia is trying to gain influence inside of the EU, for example through party sponsoring or other (financial) benefits:

„At the same time we have to be conscious about the influence that the Russian leadership is trying to gain within the EU, trying to divide us and not let us be united. We have heard that – some of it today, here in this House – from some of the politicians as if they were under the influence of the Kremlin.“ (17:148 EPP_Landsbergis)

The speakers demand to not „let Russia destabilise Europe!“ (16:78 EPP_Kalinowski). „The European Parliament does not accept Russian aggression towards its neighbour or threats towards Europe, and the Kremlin propaganda will not succeed in dividing us and destabilising Europe“ (17:108 EPP_CorazzaBildt).

„Russia's ultimate goal is not East Ukraine or even the whole of Ukraine, it is the disintegration of the European Union. President Putin's letter to individual EU leaders on gas supplies shows how he exploits aggression in Ukraine to divide the Union.“ (5:145 EPP_Zalewski)

A Coup d'état and not an impeachment (S.6)

The dominating and broadly accepted version of the events in winter 2013 and spring 2014 in Ukraine is that people gathered on the Maidan square in Kiev, demonstrated against the president's decision to not sign the PAA on the Vilnius Summit; the Ukrainian parliament voted on impeachment of the president while he has fled the country. Thus, the president was legally and officially "fired" in an impeachment procedure in the Rada.

Contrary to this version of events, the "coup"-storyline interprets the replacement of the Ukrainian president Yanukovich highly doubtful and illegal, given the lack of such regulations in the constitution and not reaching the parliamentary quorum for such a decision. At the core of the storyline stands the nomination of a *coup d'état*. Framing the impeachment as coup suggests unrightful, illegitimate and illegal overthrow, and breach of the constitution (see also 6.2.2): a "supposedly democratic movement [...] pushed a government away, not with the necessary 75% quorum in the Kiev Rada that would have been necessary, but below it" (6:33 NI_Vilimsky; similar: 5:45 NI_Brons). The change of political leadership is also connected to the use of violence (e.g. 5:65 GUE/NGL_Meyer), which supports the aspect of unrightfulness.

Reduced to their essentials/ bottom line, the storylines 1 to 5 draw on a threat scenario; they can be read as successive escalation levels. The focus shifts from the EU and "the bigger picture" (S.1-3) to a more threat-oriented perception (S.4-5).

As Table S (Annex, p. XX) shows, the analysis finds that "the 5" draw on the same and complementary repertoire of storylines. Speakers of ALDE, EPP, S&D and ECR employ storylines 1 to 5 the most. In these five storylines, the discursive tools are embedded. These storylines fit to the negative representations of Russia, the passivation of Ukraine, and the role of

the EU either as good, or as opponent of the bad. "The 5" have storylines as their "common ground", and somehow this proves that they share the understanding of the current events. The use of identical and complementary storylines creates the impression of like-mindedness on the part of the speakers and eventually enables cooperation between EPGs despite differences in content.

Of these five, the EPP uses storylines literally or metaphorically the most. The picturesque and "pathetic" character of the storylines matches with the general impression that speakers from CEE, mostly found in the EPP and ECR group, tend to communicate in emotional and picturesque language.

EFDD, NIs and GUE/NGL mostly employ the storyline of the coup, but emphasise different core messages, such as if it was a coup with the involvement of the radical right, or how to assess the role of the EU (see Table S, S.6.1-3). Their interpretation of the current situation, the perception of the challenges is different to that of the other five EPGs. They essentially never express storylines 1 to 5 literally. Despite the common storyline, the question still remaining is: if and how these groups use or draw on this storyline in their speeches, what role does the storyline take in their argumentation?

In the speeches, these six storylines "nourish" the statements and argumentation of MEPs. The following subsection explains how representations, storylines and conclusions come together. These three components – representation, storyline and conclusion – can be conceptualised with the help of Toulmin's (1958) argumentation scheme.

6.4.2   Dismantling the argumentation logic of EPGs

The chapter established that speeches contain three basic elements: conclusions (including demands, suggestions); representations of Ukraine, Russia, the EU (descriptions, nominations, predications); and storylines. How do these three come together?

Generally, the demands presented by the speakers are not just put out in the expectation that the audience will accept the claim. In order to support, back or guide through the argumentation, the speaker explicitly or implicitly draws on representations and/ or storylines (and might add some facts or information as backing). The speaker's recommendation for action (her conclusion) is in itself logical and coherent with the representations, facts and storyline.

The analysis finds that the EPGs differ in the manner they construct their argument, and eventually in setting up their speeches. The EPGs link characterisations of Russia and the EU to EU-related demands in different ways. EFDD and the NIs use representations to illustrate the need for a minimisation of the EU, for slowing down or pausing further integration.

GUE/NGL uses EU-, Russia- and Ukraine-representations not so much for persuasion of an EU-sceptical agenda, but for illustration that the EU needs to readjust, stay (more) neutral towards Ukraine and more empathetic or "wise" towards Russia. Generally, the three political groups are very diverse in how and what they combine as representations, warrants, information, and conclusions to build their argument.

In comparison to that, ALDE, EPP, Greens, and S&D tend to derive pro-integrationist claims and suggestions from their representations. They draw on five different storylines to back their claims. The storyline functions as warrant for the argumentation. This distinguishes them from the other three groups who either desist from storylines or rather employ them as data than as warrant. Generally, compared to the other three, they allow for the detection of a prototypical way in which argumentation is designed.

The following results draw on Toulmin's functional model of argumentation (1958). Referring to his terminology, the conclusions (demands) are Toulmin's *claim*. They can be introduced by "therefore...". The second element comprise data, facts, information, evidence – any observation that gives the reason for or against the (controversial) claim/ conclusion. The third element, the conclusion role (or *warrant*), guarantees the connection or is the bridge between the observation ("data") to the claim. It justifies the transition from the argument to the conclusion (more in the Methodology chapter).

Linking representations to EU-critical or anti-EU demands

Section 6.4.1 and Table S showed that EFDD, GUE/NGL and the NIs share the storyline of the *Coup* while rarely using the other five storylines. It has also been shown in 6.1.3 that the demands of those three groups address de-escalation, the continuation of negotiations, appeasement, a more neutral stance towards Ukraine (including ending the intervention), cautious strategies and policies vis-à-vis Russia in the Shared Neighbourhood. How do they construct their argumentation and what role do storylines play?

Generally, the EFDD and NIs connect representations to communicate demands that are against further integration, or even rejection of the EU. When doing so, their argumentation often lacks a situation-related demand. The representations of Russia and Ukraine are used as a springboard to communicate their EU-criticism/ scepticism.

As mentioned in section 6.1.3, the EFDD often uses the topic of Russia to demonstrate that the EU does not work properly, exhibits hypocrisy or is disconnected from its citizens. Their speech pattern is that the argumentation builds on "topic surfing" and the actual claim remains hidden, as the following quote from RC16 illustrates:

> Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, it seems clear to me that human rights violations against Kohver, Sentsov or Kolchenko have to be fo-

cused on and condemned by this Parliament. What is known, however, is that the tool for human rights violations is used in an ineffective manner, and not appropriate[ly]; Often and willingly, there is a part of this Parliament that only uses it to make targeted political attacks against certain states rather than others. This, unfortunately, is what we have noticed this year, in addition to the fact that we often and willingly fail to follow what is the vote on these resolutions, so, in short, what I am asking is if we succeed to bring the same weight and the same measure against all the violations against any state and not to make continuous resolutions against Russia, to which then follows up nothing." (19:4 EFDD_Corrao)

This quote is one example for a speech by EFDD where the audience asks: so what does he want? The connection to the issue-in-question (the illegal abduction of Kohver and others) ends after the first sentence. His claim, hidden in the last sentences, addresses the EP itself. He demands that the EP should not apply double standards to states it has relations with, and if passing a resolution, concrete actions (and not just words) should follow.

It often lacks a specific problem-centred suggestion, and there are no reasons or data given to support the argument. There are many more examples in which the EFDD connects its representations of Ukraine and Russia to fundamental EU critique *without* communicating any specific demand or conclusion for what should be done (except for reducing EU competences or limiting further integration). Those speeches, if at all, use storylines only marginally and not as warrant for their argument. The following example illustrates how the speaker MEP Winberg (13:52 EFDD) uses the storyline more as an example, but not as warrant for his claim:

"It is never acceptable to change national borders by force. It is a fundamental international legal principle that I and my party [Sweden Democrats] fully supports. [↦ Russia-critique]
Moreover, we are equally convinced that it is always wrong to use violence to unseat a legitimate and democratically elected government. [↦ negative reference to the *Coup*]
We want to be clear that we are opposed to any extension of this EU project, [↦ Claim/ Demand]
as in all respects, has its own life and now *extends its tentacles* towards countries to the east.
This applies whether the extension is expressed in effective membership or some form of association agreement. [↦ explanation how the case of Ukraine is connected to the Claim]
As regards the situation in Ukraine, there are many different aspects to consider, not least from a security policy perspective. [↦ the actual and only reference to the issue of the debate]
Sweden Democrats' primary consideration is that the EU should under no circumstances be extended. [↦ renewed emphasis on the Claim]
This consideration is equally relevant whether the subject [is a] mat-

ter of enlargement, Moldova, Turkey or, as in this case, Ukraine. [↦ explanation how the case of Ukraine is connected to the Claim]"

This quote contains the representation of the EU as animalised, monstrous or octopoid with tentacles (a metaphor also used by 17:53 EFDD_Carver when he criticises that EU-Russia related debates are "turning into a love fest for EU expansion"). It does not give any reason why extension of the EU is rejected.

The subsequent quotes illustrate how NIs and the GUE/NGL both criticise the resolution text of RC13 (Russia not strategic partner, extension of sanctions) as counterproductive and bellicose, and demand to reject the resolution. All three speeches are displayed schematically in Figures 6.2 to 6.4.

> "The report on the state of play of relations between the European and Russia is deeply scandalous. Indeed, this text is extremely martial and seeks only to accentuate the EU's confrontation with the Russian Federation, whereas the only reasonable foreign policy to be pursued would be a calming and a return to normalcy. For example, this report accuses the RF of being responsible for the outbreak of the Georgian crisis in 2008, even though a report by the independent international commission led by the Swiss diplomat Heidi Tagliavini and financed by the Union had established in 2009 that responsibility for the outbreak of the conflict lay with Georgia. Russia is a partner of the European Union and must be treated as such, neither more nor less. I regret to see that some seem to respond through the vote of this text to the injunctions of the United States. Surreptitiously, this report also promotes more and more integration. Consequently, less sovereignty for the Member States. For all these reasons, I am voting against this text." (16:32 NI_Bilde)

Turning to two speakers of GUE/NGL, in the same debate, they use similar representations and conclusions:

> "Russia is the main neighbour of the European Union, one of its main trading partners – especially with the Energy needs - and a country with which all the countries of the European Union have shared a part of history closely. Therefore, I believe that relations between the EU and Russia should be treated with the utmost care and great responsibility. In the text put to the vote, however, I have encountered a disproportionate and condemning vocabulary. But above all, there is a double standard difficult to digest by anyone who knows the history of Europe in the last twenty-five years. I voted against this report because, according to the text adopted, Russia should no longer be a strategic partner for the European Union, which is of particular concern in the light of common interests." (16:22 GUE/NGL Guzman)

> "The report on relations with Russia adopts a line of confrontation which only reinforces the mistrust between two groups obliged to agree. By taking part in a confrontation and returning the Russian

provocations, we play the toughest tendencies of the Russian power by legitimating its vision of a power besieged by a hostile West. To escape from these provocations requires to react intelligently and not to respond by threatening more. Therefore, if I strongly condemn the bans on access to Russian territory to European deputies and diplomats, I do not support any similar retaliatory measures that fuel the nationalist rhetoric of the Russian power. Nor do I support the rewriting of the history observed in Russia over the Stalinist period, nor the arguments put forward here to encompass Nazism and communism in a totalitarian whole. On the contrary, I support dialogue and the maintenance of existing cooperation, which is the means of maintaining channels of discussion at a time when political powers are confronting each other. Without naivete, especially vis-a-vis the attempts of Russian influences on the European political parties, nor spirit of confrontation. That is why I voted against it." (16:82 GUE/NGL_LeHyaric)

The GUE/NGL and NIs use similar representations and conclusions (the resolution should be rejected because the text is counterproductive, provocative, ...). The main differences are that the EFDD and NIs use the representation as "hook-in" or "peg for the 2nd layer argument" for their general claim that the EU should not integrate or expand further (see Figure 6.2). The Left's argumentation targets a different meta message: the EU needs to act responsibly. Displaying the quotes in schematic figures shows the two layers of the statement and the different set-up of the argument (see Figures 6.2 to 6.4).

The common denominator between the three political groups is that they do not draw on storylines as warrants when designing their argument; if at all, they use representations as warrants; and they use the topoi of reality and disadvantages. EFDD, GUE/NGL, and NIs might share the notion of the coup d'état in Ukraine, but this overlap does not lead to mutual understanding or joint demands.

Prototypical argumentation: Linking representations to EU-integrationist demands through storylines

The analysis finds that "the five" other EPGs have a different argumentation logic than the other three. The most striking detail that distinguishes ALDE, EPP, Greens, S&D and ECR from the others is the manner how they weave storylines into their argumentation.

ALDE, EPP, Greens, S&D and ECR see the current problems (such as the threat posed by Russia) as signs of the need for closer cooperation, (more) solidarity and a shoulder-to-shoulder stance between the Member States. "Narrow mercantile interests cannot paralyse our European policy" (10:42 EPP_SaryuszWolski). "As the Commissioner said, 'The more cohesive the EU is in relation to Russia, the more we can promote to the European core

Figure 6.2: Argumentation scheme of MEP Bilde (NI)
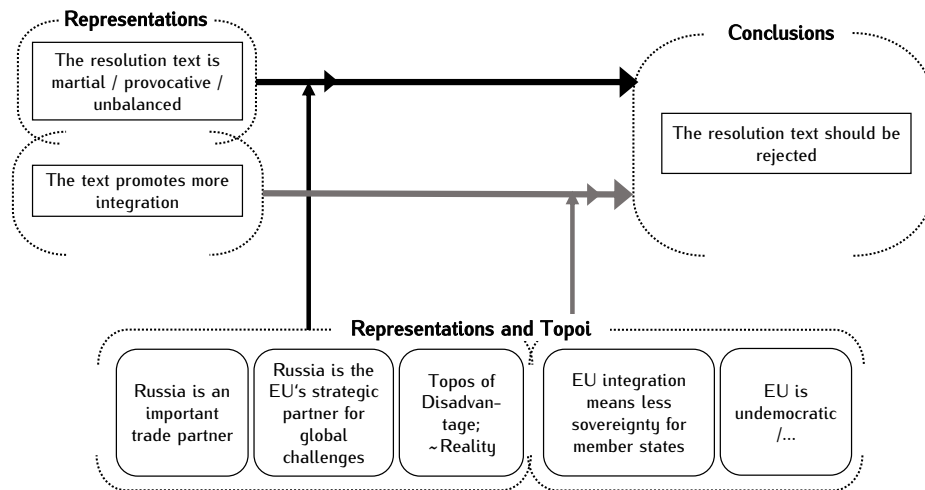
values: democracy, the rule of law and human rights"' (17:7 S&D_Group: Jaakonsaari).

> "'Unity Makes Power' is the motto of Bulgaria, and that is precisely what we need today more than ever in the EU. Europe must remain united with the challenges facing us coming from the East and the South." (17:126 EPP_Kovachev)

"The West, and the European Union in particular, must stand united in condemning Putin's revanchist doctrine of annexing territory by force" (18:80 ECR_Tannock). A united EU, speaking with one voice and "identify[ing] a new unified approach [...] is the only viable answer to the threats by Russia" (9:63 EPP_Manescu). "Russia can do this [sending anonymous soldiers to Ukraine] because it knows that the European Union lacks strength" (5:163 Greens/EFA_Demesmaeker).

> "Russia knows how to defend its interests; we do not always know how to defend ours. In the case of Russia we should be strong in order to finally have a good agreement with Russia." (2:57 S&D_Swoboda)[120]

The EU is unfortunately a weak soft power, but the speaker claims that it could become stronger or more influential. Therefore, further cooperation in the CFSP/CSDP area and Energy Union is favourable, as the following four quotes show:

> "The EU should support Ukraine also in its military effort [...]. Existing concessions from the EU where perceived in Russia as weakness

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[120]Other examples for "the EU should remain united and solidary" include 18:9 S&D_Group:Gomes, 9:52 EPP_Hellvig, 16:78 EPP_Kalinowski, and more.

Figure 6.3: Argumentation scheme of MEP Guzman (GUE/NGL)

Representations

The resolution contains disproportionate and condemning vocabulary

The resolution suggests to not consider Russia as strategic partner

The EP/EU is hypocrite

Conclusions

Relations between the EU and Russia should be treated with the utmost care and great responsibility

The resolution text should be rejected

Representations and Topoi

Russia is main neighbour and main trade partner

Russia and the EU member states share important part of history

Russia and the EU share common interests

Topos of Disadvantage; ~Reality

and an encouragement to further aggressive steps and the progressive invasion. I'm afraid that postponing of further economic sanctions will be perceived as the same - encourage Russia to further aggressive steps. The Russian aggression *reinforces the need for our common and united foreign policy* and strengthening the military capabilities and defence of the European Union and NATO. Narrow mercantile interests cannot paralyse our European policy." (10:42 EPP_SaryuszWolski)

"[...] I was disappointed by what you [the Commissioner] said and, at the same time, surprised that you talked only about the soft power of the European Union. We need real European Union common security and defence – real common security capabilities. Otherwise we are not going to play any role." (18:97 S&D_Frunzulica)

"We have to be prepared to use all the legislative instruments laid down in the Lisbon Treaty, such as the solidarity clause and the mutual defence clause. [...] The EU has the necessary tools to properly manage this crisis. We have postponed our common security defence plan for more than 50 years after the failure of the European Defence Community. It is now the time to step forward. The EU belongs to its citizens, and we have to be responsible and ensure them peace and security." (16:87 EPP_Macovei)

"The European Union has for many years consistently endeavored to develop mutually beneficial strategic partnership with Russia. However, the illegal annexation of Crimea, Ukraine conflict and consolidation of democracy and human rights mentioned in Russia is a serious challenge for the European Union and a challenge for our solidarity. The Baltic States are well aware of what it means to be in the current Russian neighbourhood. They felt the first Russian restrictions and sanctions hit their economies. However, they withstood. For many years we talked about Russia using energy as a political pressure tool.

Figure 6.4: Argumentation scheme of MEP LeHyaric (GUE/NGL)
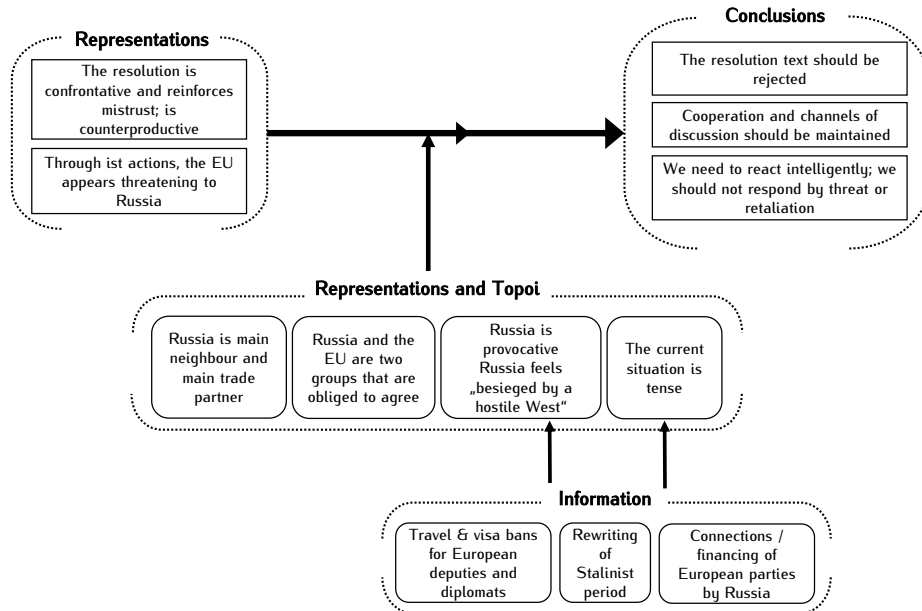
The European Union *must draw the right conclusions and make every effort to create a strong European energy union*. Only solidarity, *rather than a fractured and divided Europe* will be able to withstand the external pressure. Hopefully, the European Union will remain united in this test of solidarity with regard to Russia." (17:118 S&D_Balcytis)

Given Russia's expansionism westwards and its threat to other CEE/EaP states, the best way to face "Russian imperialism" is, according to an S&D representative:

"a rapid transformation of the European Union from soft power into a real force capable of protecting the security and interests of NATO non-member states who are interested in embarking on a European path and moving closer to the European Union or becoming a member of the European Union. This is what we all have to realise." (5:113 S&D_Zala)

The second-best way of saving them is to tie them to the EU by associating them:

"[...] I would first of all like to refer to the Republic of Moldova and to say that the only way to protect the Republic of Moldova from Soviet aggression and Putin's organised and planned aggression is to bring Moldova as close as possible to the European Union, to bring Moldova in the European Union. [...] The only way, I repeat, to protect the Republic of Moldova is to bring it into the European Union." (5:110 EPP_Macovei)

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ECR, in this case, stands again "on the side" of EPP, ALDE, S&D and the Greens.

> "I think citizens in the East and Central Europe of the EU remember the imperial power, no matter how it is called - the Soviet Union or the Russian Empire. And these citizens - citizens of the European Union - *want to see clear action from European politicians*, not another resolution that the Russian ambassador will send us back to Brussels." (5:62 ECR_Zile)

> "It is actually a reawakening of Europe in relation to Russian imperialism. [...] But it's too late in my view for this awakening and we are not doing enough against the challenge of Russian imperialism. But it's good that this awakening has occurred. It can be the basis for a good policy, a consistent policy to continue the economic sanctions against Russia. We should also increase NATO presence in this part of the world, and express support for Ukraine and other Eastern Partnership countries. It must also mean that Europe is on its feet. European Union countries should be ready to spend 2% of the GDP on defense policy in order to just be an important part of global security." (18:87 ECR_Ujazdowski)

In the "Russia"-context, ECR acting as a supporter of closer cooperation within and strengthening of the EU is an indicator that national interests might outweigh the attitude towards the EU, particularly in the case where the national delegation's stance towards Russia is particularly negative.

The quotes above have two things in common. First of all, they use the *topos of urgency, danger and threat, humanitarianism* and *history*, as the following quote illustrates (15:25 ALDE_Arthuis):

> "In Ukraine, the crisis is on all fronts. The war has not stopped, the human cost is heavy: deaths every day and hundreds of thousands of migrants fleeing the fighting zone. The economy is shrinking, inflation is booming, money is falling apart. [...] [↦ Representation of Ukraine as victim, war zone; creation of an atmosphere of urgency, need for humanitarianism]
> We must also simplify our procedures, reduce our decision-making [↦ Claim 1: improve EU decision making process, more efficiency]
> and payment deadlines so that we can respond in real time to obvious emergencies. [↦ Claim 2: the EU should support Ukraine ASAP]
> When there is fire in the house, we do not discuss the price of water."
> [↦ reaffirmation of Topos of Urgency]

Secondly, they use the storylines 1 to 5 either as outspoken or implicit links or bridges between the representation and the (pro-EU) claim. The argumentation logic of "the 5" fits to Toulmin's functional model of argumentation as follows. Referring to his terminology, the conclusions (demands) are Toulmin's *claim*. They can be introduced by "therefore...". Representations are his *data, facts, observations* or the situation. The storylines, backed

by information, form the conclusion role (*warrant*) for the speaker's argumentation and justification (Figure 6.5).

Figure 6.5: Prototypical Argumentation logic of "the 5" in Russia-related debates; based on Toulmin 1958, Reisigl 2014, p. 74, compiled by the author
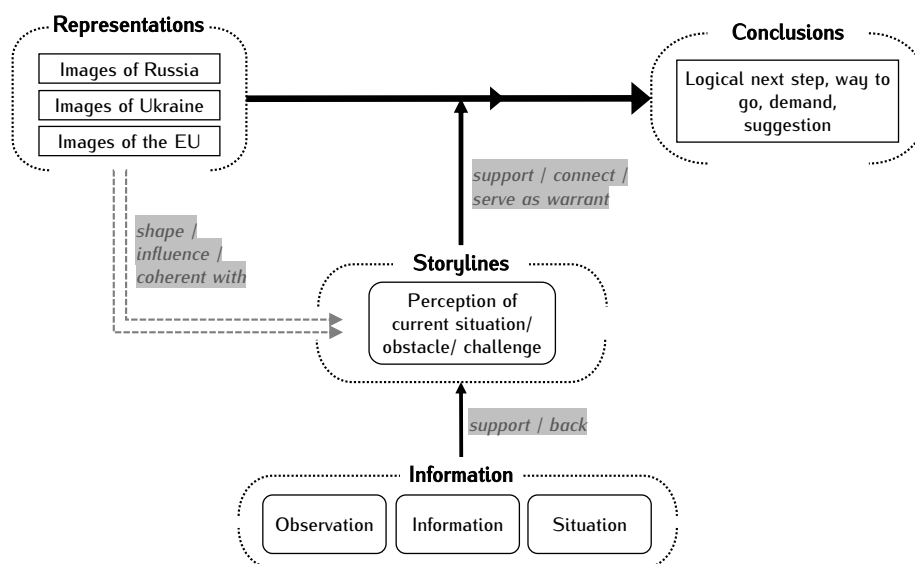
Getting back to the example speech by MEP Zala (5:113):

> "Russian imperialism shows that [↦ Representation of Russia as "fact"] the Eastern Partnership must be secured and guaranteed by the power of the European Union. [↦ Claim/Conclusion/Demand 1]
> The European Union is also obliged to provide security for the members of the Eastern Partnership. [↦ Claim 2]
> This requires a rapid transformation of the European Union from soft power into a real force capable of protecting the security and interests of NATO non-member states who are interested in embarking on a European path and moving closer to the European Union or becoming a member of the European Union. [↦ Claim 3]"

What the speaker leaves open for interpretation is exactly why he thinks that Russian imperialism takes place, and how he exactly convinces the audience that "Russia's imperialism" leads to the conclusion that protection is necessary. This is implicitly done by drawing on the storylines 1 and 4, as well as on the topoi of urgency and threat. The speaker does not need to refer to the storylines directly, as they exist in the overall tenor in the debate and the wording of Russian "imperialism" already suggests that Russia expands westwards and is threatening. His claims are linked to the question of Quo Vadis EU, which is carried in the storylines. The example speech by MEP Zala is visualised in Figure 6.6.

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In a nutshell, how the five EPGs argue differs in several ways from the other three. EFDD, GUE/NGL and NIs do not draw on storylines as warrants when designing their argument; if at all, they use representations as warrants; and they use different topoi.

Figure 6.6: Argumentation scheme of MEP Zala (S&D)
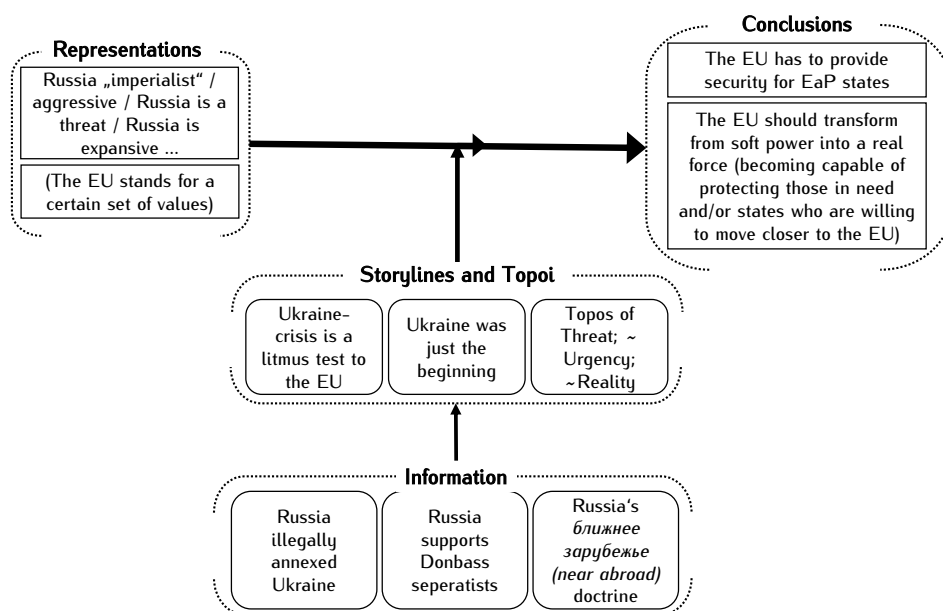
The chapter draws the three following conclusions.

"The 5": Both voting bloc and discourse-coalition

Despite tensions and contradictions, ALDE, EPP, S&D, Greens and ECR present similar or congruent evaluations, critique, suggestions, demands, and solutions. The five EPGs agree on the crucial questions. They employ the same set of nominations, predications, and rhetorical means. They draw on a coherent repertoire of storylines, the literal or metaphorical shortcuts for a common perception of reality, manifested in similar discursive tools or rhetorical means, which eventually influence the preferred consequences (claims, demands, suggestions).

Those interrelated elements are then used by the speakers to build a common argumentation strategy/ "design" their argumentation. Storylines are, on the one hand, used to frame and back their argumentation. They serve as the "rhetorical glue" that suggests the external audience homogeneity ("one line") of the EPGs, despite tensions and indisputable differences in content. On the other hand, for the speakers themselves, the use of identical and complementary storylines creates the impression

of like-mindedness and eventually enables cooperation between EPGs despite differences in content. Storylines tie the groups together. Common representations and storylines are a reaffirmation that a coherent or compatible worldview is shared.

The combination of similar representations, critique and conclusions, backed by coherent storylines and cross-references to their colleagues qualifies the voting bloc of EPP, ALDE, Greens/EFA and ECR as a discourse-coalition (see Table 6.7).

Smoke and mirrors: the so-called bloc of "the 3"

The chapter further finds that there is no empirical support for the existence of a bloc of EFDD, GUE/NGL and NIs beyond co-voting. Contrary to the discourse-coalition of "the 5", there is no such coalition between the EFDD, GUE/NGL and NIs (see Table 6.7).

Indeed, EFDD, GUE/NGL, and the NIs are critical towards the EU. In contrast to the other five EPGs, this critique is not "Europeanist" or integrationist. Instead, it addresses procedures, particular policies, and the EU's involvement with Ukraine. Even though GUE/NGL, the NIs and EFDD tie in with their Anti-Atlanticist attitude, they differ in their position on the integration axis. The biggest difference between the three is their focus and style of critique (watchdog or corrective factor versus advocate of the people). Aside from their common negative descriptions of Russia and the US, their representations of the EU and Ukraine tackles other aspects (ranging from procedural deficits versus fundamental critique of the EU project).

The speakers from the bloc of "the 5" back their argumentation on a set of coherent storylines, narratives, metaphors; the voting bloc of "the 3" does not, except for the commonality of Anti-Americanism, Anti-Atlanticism and NATO-criticism and the *coup*-storyline (S.6). EFDD, GUE/NGL, and NIs do not share an EU-critical storyline. Despite some overlapping positions, they do not refer to a common "story" of reality.

There is no link between similar representations or positions to overlapping demands. For instance, the three are anti-American or US/NATO-critical, but there is no conclusion derived from this. They also lack dominant metaphors that are shared between them. Quite on the contrary, speakers of GUE/NGL and EFDD/NI co-exist without cross-references to each other. The only referrals in speeches are directed at the camp of "the 5". There is a communication gap between the three EPGs of that wing. Analysing the debates eventually supported the assumption that voting blocs do not have to be sustained by discourse-coalitions.

Table 6.7: Overview: Discourse-coalitions?

Similar/ Congruent...	"the 3"			"the 5"		
	EU	UKR	RUS	EU	UKR	RUS
Representations	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓
Criticism	✗(*)	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓
Conclusions	✗	O	O	✓	✓	✗
Dominant metaphors	(✓)	✗		✓		
Linked by Storyline		✗			✓	
Positive cross-references		✗			✓	

✓ = yes   ✗ = no / mixed results   O = not applicable / no data
(*) different focus / style

Passive and active construction of divides

On the one hand, dividing lines emerge indirectly or passively through the positions the EPGs take, through the demands and claims they make, whether they describe political actors as one way or the other, and through the use of storylines.

The analysis finds that on the other hand, MEPs also create and construct dividing lines *pro-actively*. They seek to *demarcate* themselves from their political adversaries, thereby creating a divide in the chamber, be it by arguing that one is not part of the "EU bureaucrats" who are disconnected from the people (see 6.3.2), or by framing one group as a supporter of the autocrat, or as radicals who "joined their forces". In either way, both demarcation strategies have a delegitimising effect/ purpose, whilst emphasising their own moral and factual rightness through labelling and blaming ("Putin Fans"; "useful idiots", 16:8 ALDE_Rohde; "the 'Advocates of Mr Putin' group here in Parliament", 10:51 ALDE_Telicka; the "'party of friends of Russia' in Europe [. . .] which we all see, know and feel", 17:59 ECR_Czarnecki).

Examples include MEPs of the GUE/NGL group explicitly being excluded from the introductory greetings to Commissioners, EP presidency and colleagues because "I think you are debating below standard" (13:18 Greens/EFA_Group:Harms, see also excerpt in the Annex, p. XXII). There are
speeches directed at MEPs of "the 3", "to those who say they admire Putin [NIs] and who in this debate seek to oppose the agreement [EFDD, GUE/

NGL] [...]". By pointing out that "perhaps they and all of us when we come to vote will remember the thousand people who gave their lives in the Euromaidan so that this [PAA] could come forward" (10:66 S&D_Howitt), the speaker demonstrates the self-image of moral superiority, and draws the line between those in favour of the PAA, and those opposing it; indifferent to the reasons they may have.

The "voting bloc of 3" assembles mainly radical right and radical left members. Therefore, "the 5" recognise their co-voting as an "alliance" of radical groups. The EPP and ECR are outraged by the "kind of mental Hitler-Stalin pact [that] is apparently underway here, from the far left and the far right" (13:96 EPP_Gahler), "the alignment of forces in this Chamber who are reluctant even to point out what is happening internally in Russia" (16:15 ECR_Hannan); the EP is "divided and we are afraid – [...] also partly because of the assistance of our far right and far left, which are united in order to weaken the European Union" (13:92 EPP_Pabriks) – which is probably "their underlying agenda" (10:108 EPP_deLange). The "far left and populist right" MEPs who are still "lenient" with Russia are considered as probably "the greatest threat, not only to our friendly neighbours, but also to the entire European Union as such" (10:108 EPP_deLange).

The often EU-critical or "watchdog" statements by GUE/NGL or EFDD, paired with the apologetic speeches by the NIs, reinforce the other EPGs' claim that this alliance is supportive of Russia, has an affinity to Russia, or Russia is "getting sympathy from the far right and the far left, even from those sitting here in the house, by luring them with money or credit" (17:106 S&D_Friend, similar: 17:97 S&D_Gill). Their "almost uncritical support for the current position of Russia" is considered as "deeply dangerous" (17:36 S&D_Howitt). EPP remarks that "we have people on the right here who are promoting Russian aggression, and we have people on the extreme left who are cheering them" (15:38 EPP_Brok). He continues that supporting Ukraine financially is "about the freedom struggle of a nation, which we have to support against the right and left supporters of a dictatorship, for the freedom of the whole of Europe". The far left and right in the EP is living in "an illusion or disinformation" about the expanding NATO (18:29 EPP_Pabriks).

The assumption of a cooperation or alliance of "the fringes", however, is not substantiated. The existence of a pro-Russian radical alliance beyond co-voting lacks empirical evidence, as the chapter has shown. Except from some NIs and Italian EFDD members, those EPGs are moreover not "pro-Putin" or "Russian-friendly" by themselves. Instead, in many occasions, statements are re-framed to their disadvantage by the MEPs belonging to the other five political groups (see debate excerpt in the Annex, p. XXII).

The chapter concludes that MEPs construct the dividing lines passively and pro-actively. Dividing lines are "products" of plenary activities and party competition, as they emerge indirectly or passively through the posi-

tions the EPGs take, their demands and claims, the representations they refer to/ apply, and their repertoire of storylines as shortcuts to describe their perspective on reality. MEPs also engage in the pro-active construction of dividing lines by investing in demarcation from their political adversaries. This is done either through demonstrating or arguing that he/ she is not part of the EU establishment, or by framing others as supporters of the autocrat, or as the fringes who cooperate. Thereby, they create a divide in the chamber. In short, lines of conflict are products of positions, behaviour, interaction and discourse.

The following concluding chapter summarises the results gained in the three analytical chapters. It further seeks to answer the guiding research question posed in the introduction of this dissertation and puts the results in the context to the broader literature on party competition and contestation.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

How does the topic "Russia" structure political conflict and competition in the EP – and how does this manifest in the EPGs' voting behaviour, speech content and discursive strategies? This research question stood at the centre of the present study. Its objective was to determine how conflict dynamics, divides, and MEPs' behaviour in the EP take shape when dealing with "Russia" as a political issue. The dissertation was interested in the "lines of conflict" including the dominant actor constellations that characterise legislative procedures on the Russian Federation; the logic and patterns of voting behaviour; the modes of contestation as well as the quality of divides in parliamentary debates.

It understood lines of conflict as a combination of repetitive patterns of voting on one hand, and plenary behavioural patterns on the other. At its core, it examined the voting behaviour of EPGs in RCs as well as their plenary interaction, i.e. statements during debates; while being interested in whether the groups take more or less stable positions, and whether the political conflict becomes institutionalised in the sense that the EPGs follow routinised patterns of co-voting or opposition and build discourse-coalitions (see Hajer 1993, 1995; Maag and Kriesi 2016).

When posing the question of the "structuring effect" of the topic Russia, the project related to the image of political competition taking place in a political space. Accordingly, political groups are positioned in a two-dimensional matrix and their competition is organised around conflict dimensions. Depending on the issue-in-question, lines of conflict or dividing lines for instance cut across those standing on the redistributional left and those on the right; or those supporting more EU-integration and those more reluctant to do so.

The study sought to contribute to the understanding of contestation during an important foreign policy and security crisis, and to the research on politicisation of CFSP/CDSP as a domain of EU integration. The project was completed against the background of the broader discussions currently

relevant in academic research on the EP, which is how the EU and its institutions changed, reacted, and adapted in light of the multiple crises that occurred in the EU since 2009.

Overall aim

The study followed the research approach that suggests a need for a context-sensitive and comprehensive research design that includes voting- and debate analysis, aiming at three major contributions. Firstly, by combining quantitative and qualitative methods, the nuances and contrasts between voting behaviour on the one hand and plenary speeches on the other hand should be highlighted. Otherwise, as argued in chapter 3, one tends to conclude that similar behaviour of different stakeholders is the same and caused by similar motives whereas it is not. The aim was to eventually distinguish discourse coalitions from voting coalitions.

As a follow-up to previous studies, the second aim of the study was to trace the discursive construction of divides in plenary work. In this way, it was to be traced how the contestation of EU foreign policy is expressed in day-to-day plenary work and how political competition unfolds during a foreign policy and security crisis.

The third cornerstone was to extend the content analysis of statements to MEPs from the entire spectrum. This made it possible to capture the interaction and contextualising of the speeches. Previous studies focused mainly on populists or radicals, so their statements and performance were presented without context or "comparative baseline" (Adam et al. 2017, p. 261).

The added value of the debate analysis was thus, firstly, that it shed light on the results from the election analysis and to ascertain how tangible and substantial both the lines of conflict and the apparent coalitions in parliamentary debate really are. Secondly, that it explored how the contestation has been taking place and how it has been argued.

Recap of the descriptive results of the study

Given a significant research gap in this field, the first analytical step (chapter 4) is required to determine which policy fields and topics "Russia" is linked to in order to assess what constitutes the topic in the EP and how it develops over time; particularly in light of the bilateral tensions and the Ukraine crises. This entry-analysis established that "Russia" is a topic discussed as issue of foreign affairs, security and defence, human rights, and trade. It also revealed that after winter 2013, developments in Ukraine and EU-Ukraine relations were inseparably mixed with EU-Russia relations.

Tracing how the issue "Russia" developed over time confirmed the assumption that it turned into a topic that is primarily linked to security and

defence, with a shift from committee preparatory work to urgent, more "ad-hoc" plenary sessions. Resolution texts witnessed strained relations and alienation. The shifted framing as a crisis-related topic and its remarkable presence (188 PEs) despite the EP's low formal competences in the field of EU-Russia relations suggest that "Russia", as presumed, is polarising and likely prone to be(come) a topic where EPGs engage in identity-related questions and take strong positions, and a topic where the pro-anti EU dimension of conflict is pronounced.

After having established the general context of Russia-related legislative procedures as well as the elements that frame the topic "Russia", the following two chapters identified the lines of conflict in Russia-related Roll-Calls (chapter 5; those final votes that register the MEPs' voting decision by name) and, in addition, deepened and clarified these results through a thorough examination of plenary debates precedent to these final votes (chapter 6).

The voting analysis, as a common approach in research on dividing lines and EP group behaviour, found the emergence and consolidation of a co-voting pattern which prevailed independently from the policy field in which Russia was scheduled. In these votes, ALDE, EPP, Greens/EFA, S&D and ECR ("the 5") were pitted against the three other EPGs EFDD, GUE/NGL and NIs. At this point in the study, when asked for the structuring effect of Russia on political competition, it concluded that EPGs tend to take stable positions. "The 5" mostly supported resolutions that are more critical towards Russia (e.g. ending strategic partnership, supporting sanctions) and foster EU-Ukraine relations (e.g in favour of the PAA and macro-financial assistance). "The 3" tended to be more neutral to positive towards Russia, while frequently abstaining or voting against these resolutions.

The primary dimension(s) of conflict, however, remained inconclusive and the voting patterns posed several follow-up questions to the researcher. On the one hand, many aspects found in the data contrasted with previous studies of voting behaviour in Russia-related RCs. On the other hand, considering the alignments of EPGs: for instance the very high voting likeness between GUE/NGL (radical left), EFDD and NIs (radical right); or the voting similarity between ECR (soft Eurosceptics, socially conservative) and the pro-EU groups (ALDE, S&D, EPP, Greens). This re-emphasised the need for in-depth scrutiny with complementary data. They, from a broader perspective, emphasised that co-voting is only one aspect of dividing lines.

The debate analysis (chapter 6) examined the content of speeches, the discursive strategies and argumentation employed by the speakers. The chapter found that co-voting patterns are not necessarily linked to discourse-coalitions and emphasises what appears as "same behaviour" roots in different motivation and standpoints.

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The debates showed that the voting bloc of EPP, ALDE, S&D, Greens/ EFA and ECR qualifies as a discourse-coalition. Despite tensions and contradictions, they agree on the crucial questions and present similar or congruent evaluations, critique, suggestions, demands, and solutions. In addition, these political groups employ the same set of nominations, predications, and rhetorical means while drawing on a coherent set of storylines. This means that they share a coherent or compatible understanding or version of the events, which they draw on when setting up their argumentation.

Regarding "the 3", there is a gap between what RC data suggested and what can actually be witnessed in the plenary. Neither the existence of a "pro-Russian radical alliance" (see below) nor a bloc of EFDD, GUE/NGL and NIs beyond co-voting is supported empirically, as the debate analysis revealed. What they share are anti-Atlanticist representations, the storyline of an illegitimate coup d'état against the then-Ukrainian president Yanukovich, and the negative attitude towards the PAA. At first glance, they also appeared as "likeminded" in their EU-sceptical criticism and claims, as suggested by previous studies (Halikiopoulou, Nanou, and Vasilopoulou 2012, Harmsen 2010; Hooghe, Marks, and C. J. Wilson 2002; Otjes and Louwerse 2015; van Elsas and van der Brug 2015).

The in-depth analysis revealed that in contrast to this commonality at first glance, the *scope*, *focus* and *style* of their criticism significantly differs. The difference can be captured by the division between EU-*critical* and *anti-EU* comments. The radical Left uses arguments which can clearly be understood in debates as being EU-critical: they criticise the EU concretely in the context of the debate on Russia, linking EU policy decisions and Russia-related issues; here, they present themselves as "watchdogs" and "correctives". Unlike the Left, the EFDD and NIs' criticism goes far beyond mere policies and procedures. They also criticise what they perceive as structural deficits of the EU. Often, the arguments concern Russia only nominally: the theme is merely used as an excuse to attack the EU ("salt in the wound"-, "mocking the broken" attitude). Furthermore, they simultaneously put themselves forward as the defenders of European citizens, adding a distinct populistic style to the mixture. Given the diversity of criticism, it is not surprising that politicians of EFDD, NIs or GUE/NGL neither referred to each other, nor did they announce support or solidarity. They do not display mutual understanding or common demands. A discourse-coalition or alliance between those three EPGs and thereby radical parties of the left and right lacks empirical evidence. The voting bloc of "the 3" is not substantiated by a discourse-coalition in the debates. While this finding might appear trivial at first, it needs to be acknowledged that countless articles were published which address the presumed cooperation between radical left and radical right parties. In these texts on "pro-Russian alliance from the left and the right" and "strange bedfellows" (Zeitlin, Nicoli, and Laffan

2019, p. 966), however, the obviously very noteworthy nuances between the two party families are barely explored (e.g. van Berlo and Natorski 2020, p. 207).

How Russia structures political conflict in the EP

Russia structures the political conflict in the EP and the political groups take predictable positions. Noteworthy is the strong influence of the national background of MEPs if in their national context the attitude towards either Russia or the EU is known to be tense or negative. Combining RC data and speeches suggests that, first of all, Russia structures political conflict in the EP mostly by pitting those who are for more EU integration against "the rest". It is "the 5", a co-voting bloc carried by a discourse-coalition, versus "the 3" co-voters. The primary line of conflict is pro-/anti-EU integration. In line with Otjes and van der Veer (2016) and Roger, Otjes, and van der Veer (2017), findings suggest that the pro-anti-EU dimension of conflict is particularly pronounced in the first half of the EP's eighth legislative term after the electoral successes of EU-critical groups, and in debates on EU-Ukraine relations and economic sanctions against Russia, where general principles of EU integration and its activities in the Shared Neighbourhood are reconsidered and discussed. My research illustrates how the EP divides evolve around the question of how appropriate the EU strategies towards Russia and Ukraine were and what should be done in the future (Oriol Costa 2019, p. 1; Herranz-Surrallés 2019). The pro-/anti-EU dimension of conflict is reinforced during the bilateral EU-Russia crisis in light of the events in Ukraine.

The question at hand, therefore, is, were "the contours of political conflict on EU external relations [indeed] being redrawn", as Oriol Costa (2019, p. 2) has suggested? My study finds that the political conflict in this policy domain has not changed its general set-up, but has amplified or sharpened the dividing lines between opponents of the EU and pro-EU EPGs.

The conflict space or policy space can best be represented with one axis for "Atlanticists", "Europeanists" and "Anti-Atlanticists" and another orthogonal axis for less or more EU integration (Chryssogelos 2015; Stahl et al. 2004). When looking at *Roll-Calls*, this is the appropriate model to interpret the plenary behaviour of "the 3" and "the 5". Distinguishing Atlanticists, Europeanists and Anti-Atlanticists is a helpful lens to interpret, firstly, the co-voting of GUE/NGL, EFDD and NIs; and secondly, the alignment of ECR with the other four groups. The dividing line cuts through those opposing more EU integration and those who seek to foster EU-Atlantic relations (see Figure 7.1).

However, the debate analysis in particular has revealed important insights into the interaction between the political groups in the parliament

– the contribution of this study lies here. The dividing line as just described appears far less concise in the debates. Here, the positioning on the Atlanticism-axis appears to be less relevant for explaining the interventions of "the 3". It is doubtful that for EFDD and GUE/NGL in particular, Anti-Atlanticism is really decisive in determining the content of their speeches. These MEPs appear to put more emphasis on overarching political concepts like free trade, militarisation or EU integration as such. This finding could not have been drawn from a mere RC analysis.

It was observed that for ECR, the Atlanticist and Russia-critical stance of its dominant British and Polish national delegations outweighs its soft Eurosceptic position. Likewise, the debate analysis clearly showed the strong influence of national delegations and/ or the national background of MEPs: those from a member state with a particular negative attitude or salience of Russia (Poland, Baltic states, UK) or with a negative or tense attitude towards the EU (Greece, Portugal). Both subgroups contributed more often and stood out with regards to their conclusions, rhetorical means and style.

In his analysis of party manifestos across time and European regions, Onderco (2019, p. 533) had found that the salience of Russia in these documents is generally low, with approximately less than five references per party manifesto. Interestingly for this study, he finds Portuguese parties to be those with the lowest salience (only one mention of Russia in all manifestos). The observation that Portuguese MEPs are very active in the debates on Russia, even though the national parties do not even mention Russia, supports the argument that their participation is driven by an EU-critical attitude, and that what they are arguing or contributing to the debate does not have to do with Russia or Ukraine directly (see below).

In turn, no evidence was found that MEPs from particularly "Russia-friendly" states (see Braghiroli and Carta 2009) appear as more Russia-friendly speakers. The positioning of EPGs in a matrix therefore requires a separation into national delegations and suggests being presented as areas rather than as points (see Figure 7.1, p. 242).

Figure 7.1: Policy space in Russia-related legislative procedures, adopted from Chryssogelos 2015, p. 16 (compiled by the author)
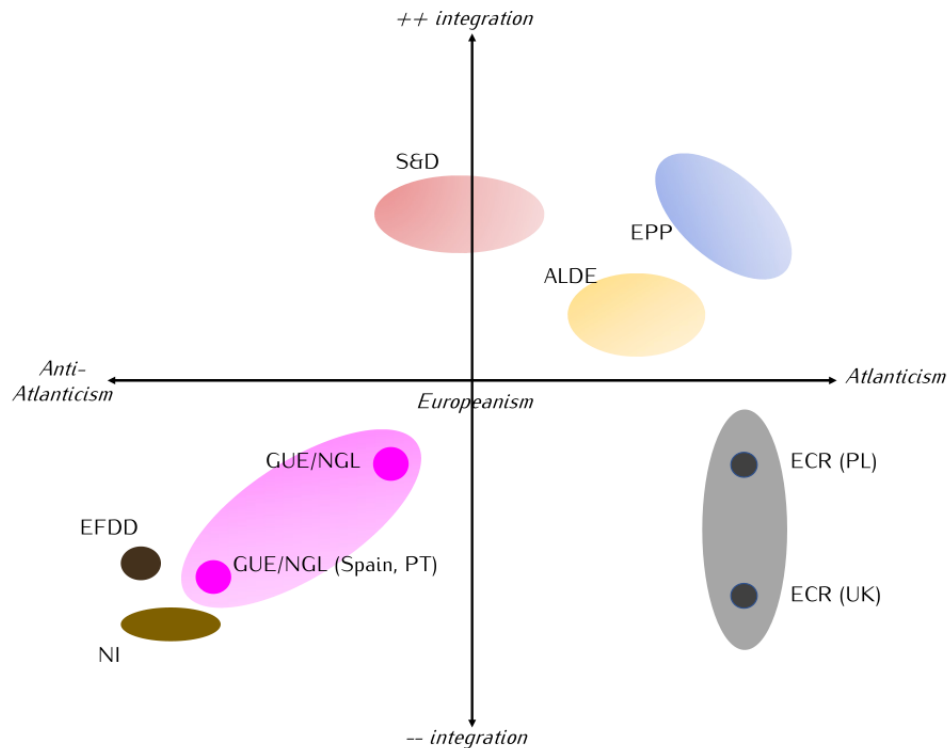
While lines of conflict exist in RC votes, they exist in plenary debates as well. In this setting, they emerge passively through different standpoints, realities, and versions of the same event, and lead to passive group affiliations. In Russia-related procedures, dividing lines are formed along group lines and along the use of competing or complementary storylines. The use of a repertoire of storylines matches with EPGs and the voting blocs, with the restriction that "the 3" use different, only partially overlapping storylines.

The debate analysis revealed two major takeaways. One, it showed how conflicting interpretations of the Euromaidan and subsequent developments competed with each other in the plenary, with one version of the events eventually dominating the other (Leek and Morozov 2018, p. 132). Two, it showed how MEPs actively engage in cultivating dividing lines.

The framing of crises and their simplification determine their political answer

To begin, the debate analysis underlines what Voltolini, Natorski, and Hay (2020, pp. 616, 618, 620) and Hajer (1993, p. 45) have argued, which is that the way a crisis or problem is framed will determine and constrain the policy to answer it or the type of intervention required to redress such failures, and "change fundamentally the nature of the response required to address it" (Voltolini, Natorski, and Hay 2020, p. 620). Different actors compete around how to frame a crisis, its origins, and one will be more successful in defining/ framing the events. This means, related to my study, that if the events in Ukraine are framed (successfully) as fight for a European path, a protest against a corrupt regime, and an invasion of an expansionist neighbouring power, then the political answer will be different than if it is framed predominantly as a result of internal-Ukrainian struggles.

The debate analysis showed how the representations of Ukraine were built into the argumentation of proponents of the EU-UKR-PAA and the closer relationship between Ukraine and the EU. Here, one of the observations was that the Russian-, but more so the Ukrainian political elite be conceived or constructed separately from the people.

This falls in line with earlier studies. Casier (2016) has suggested that the perceived or attributed level of Europeanness determines whether the EU prioritises certain countries in its neighbourhood above others. Since the EP sees the domestic Russian economy and polity as increasingly authoritarian and therefore *less* Europeanised, as the debates indicate, this successively marginalised Russia and places bilateral EU-Russia relations on a more conflictual level, while overemphasising the closeness to Ukraine.

Natorski (2017, p. 186) proposed that a simplified image of Ukraine as country divided by "the essentialist opposition between Europe and Russia, or between the East and the West" nurtured the representation of crisis in Ukraine among EU elites. The broad diversity of political options and preferences among the public are simplified/ neglected, while at the same time internal tensions are reduced to an intra-Ukrainian East-West division and "dilemma in foreign policy orientations" (Natorski 2017, p. 186; Dragneva and Wolczuk 2015). This reduction of complexity in turn helps EU decision makers make sense of and "explain the dichotomy between the authorities and society, whereas political parties with support in Eastern Ukraine represent a mainly corrupt oligarchic system of patronage governance" (Natorski 2017, p. 186). In addition, "[...] clearcut oppositions [also] simplify the representation of *developments* in Ukraine. A focus on the opposition between [pro-European] society and [pro-Russian] authorities during the Euromaidan revolution placed the EU outside the axis of conflict and facilitated its self-representation as a solution to the conflict" (Natorski 2017, p. 191).

It was thus necessary that the Ukrainian political elite be conceived or constructed separately from the people, otherwise the MEPs would not be able to convey congruence for themselves or believe that Ukrainians are as European as the MEPs wish or need them to be. The desire to establish congruence is human. The MEPs have to go down this mental path, otherwise they would not be able to formulate the argument conclusively for themselves that the Ukrainians, in their desire for a European path, must be helped in any case.

The results further reflect many similarities to the observations made by Leek and Morozov (2018, 135sqq.) on the EU's reaction to the Libyan crisis in 2011. The authors showed that one part of the European and national elites (successfully) constructed the uprisings as democratic revolts against an oppressive regime and as reincarnations of the peaceful revolutions in Eastern Europe, whilst playing down the differences between Libyans and Europeans. Quite on the contrary, they share an universal wish to live according to the "silver thread values" of the EU Leek and Morozov (2018, p. 144). They further showed that Libyan leader Gaddafi was displayed as the brutal, violent, illegitimate 'other' Leek and Morozov (2018, p. 144) – which, in DHA terms is another case of mentally and discursively separating the people from the political leadership, where eventually one part stands for the whole (similar to Euromaidan where a clear cut was made between the pro-European protesters and the corrupt government). These discursive constructions of actors went hand in hand, "selling" the argument that by repressing the demonstrators, Gaddafi stood also against Europe and what it stands for.

So, the way the EPGs made sense of Euromaidan and how they constructed their justification for why a certain action must follow from that (European wishes must be answered, they want to get out of Putin's hand) seems to be plausible, given that "decision makers seek to legitimise their policy choices by linking them with particular representations of the European self", as Leek and Morozov (2018, p. 133) have argued.

Lines of conflict and divides are produced and cultivated in parliamentary interaction

Secondly, the study concludes that lines of conflict evolve through the way legislators behave and interact in the plenary. Debates and roles become routinised, with few surprises; roles are distributed according to the internalised roles of the stakeholders, with reflexive reactions to statements from the opposite camp. Everyone speaks according to his/her role: the pro-EU moralists who stand at the right side of history; the watchdogs who are proud of being pragmatic, unbiased towards Russia and not blinded by emotions; the people's advocates; and those who rub "salt in the wound".

Here, MEPs *actively* construct divides and demarcation from others

through role-attribution and self-representation. EPGs apply a repertoire of discursive practices that aim at positive-self-negative- other-representation. MEPs, in their speeches, create in- and outgroups, attribute roles and assign parts, and demarcate from other EPGs or MEPs.

By doing so, they actively shape the pro-anti-EU divide and it "comes into being". It is particularly the pro-anti-EU-dimension of conflict which manifests in discursive means used by the EPGs. The speech analysis discovered repetitive patterns in the use of discursive tools and lines of argumentation, pitting pro-integrationist EPGs groups against those more hesitant towards further EU-integration.

The central observation is that for all political groups, Russia – as the "other" – plays the central role in these positive self-representations. References to Ukraine are also crucial, as they are employed to boost and illustrate the positive-self-image. My study thus provided another example for the outstanding relevance of discursive "identity-based constructions of Russia as a threat and as Europe's 'Other'" (Siddi 2018, p. 267; Morozov and Rumelili 2012).

MEPs seek to demarcate themselves from their political adversaries, thereby creating a divide in the chamber, either by presenting themselves as not belonging to the disconnected EU elite; or by demarcating themselves from radical EPGs (GUE/NGL, EFDD and NIs) by suggesting a deliberate cooperation of the fringes in favour of Russia, where there is none. Either way, both demarcation strategies have a delegitimising effect, whilst emphasising someone's moral and factual rightness through labelling and blaming. MEPs deliberately draw a divide between those, for instance, in favour of the PAA, and those opposing it, while being indifferent to the various reasons for such a stance. Interestingly, all MEPs present themselves, in their own way, as the only clear-headed person in the chamber, as non-ideological, and not blurred by naivety.

So-called "pro-Russian" MEPs

EPGs apply a repertoire of discursive practices that aim at positive-self-negative- other-representation. Among these, a neologism that evolved in the course of 2014 are nominations and attributions synonymous to "pro-Russian". At its core, this term means displaying a positive stance on or different ways of supporting the political elite of the Russian Federation. Pro-Russian voting behaviour is that "which essentially suites Russian interests" (Krekó, Macaulay, et al. 2014), for instance voting *against* resolutions that eventually harm or clearly disadvantage the RF while voting *for* what benefits the RF. This, in the eyes of the nominator, is negative: pro-Russian mostly equals pro-Putin, whereby the common interpretation is that the Russian Federation during Vladimir Putin's presidencies follows an authoritarian backslide. "Pro-Russian" MEPs are accused of being Rus-

sia's voice, advocate, as Russia's "useful idiots" (Lévy 2015; Marguier 2014) (with or without even recognising it).

In the chamber, there seemed to be a clear idea of which behaviour is to be classified as "pro-Russian".[121] Idioms in the nexus of *pro-Russian* addressed to opposing MEPs are inventions, constructions or neologisms in order to describe and label arguments of MEPs within GUE/NGL, EFDD and NIs. However, as the debate analysis has shown, only very few statements are "genuinely" pro-Russian. For instance, 100% of GUE/NGL and EFDD statements directly referring to president Putin were clearly negative and condemn Russia's diplomacy regarding Ukraine. The broad majority of statements by these EPGs combine being critical towards Russia and the EU. EFDD and GUE/NGL do criticise Russia's domestic and foreign policies as *equally as ALDE and S&D*. Their predominant message is: we criticise Russia, the deteriorating state of human rights and its aggression in Eastern Ukraine, *but we also blame the European Union*.

The predication is attributed spontaneously to political actors. Many speeches, for example Ukraine-critical statements (but not those of S&D or ALDE), underly a process of reframing by "the 5" EPGs. GUE/NGL and EFDD are hesitant or against the PAA and financial aid to Ukraine or demonstrate a non-hurrah attitude towards the Euromaidan protests (e.g. as coup d'état-interpretation, neo-fascists in the government, nationalist/ right-wing tendencies and riots). This standpoint as such does not mean that they are supporters of Russia. Instead, when speaking or voting in favour of Russia or its anticipated interests, MEPs vote as contestant of overarching political concepts like free trade, militarisation or EU integration as such. Their political self as a corrective, pragmatic – and tactical – politician determines plenary performance (see also Proksch and Slapin 2015, p. xiii, Carta 2015). MEPs develop their sense of identity in connection with the nature of their institutional role or position and the group or ideology they primarily feel to represent.

Over time, "pro-Russian" became synonymous to anti-democratic, anti-liberal and anti-EU. By constructing this dichotomy between pro-European and pro-Russian, labelling someone as "pro-Russian" is an instrument in a discursive toolbox, frequently used to delegitimise fringe, radical, Eurosceptic (newcomer) parties. This observation contributes to the literature on cartelisation and how it materialises in real life settings like the EP (Katz and Mair 1995, 2009). More specifically, the findings suggest that pro-EU groups engage in discursive cartelisation. As a complement to previous studies who usually focus on populists alone, my analysis could also show

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[121]It needs to be said that the author is highly critical of the term as such. There have been some attempts by Think Tanks to define the term. However, those were unsystematic, anecdote-based and lead to terminological overstretching. Two vibrant examples are "The Kremlin's Trojan Horses" study (Polyakova et al. 2016) and Györi and Krekó (2016) who distinguish "three shades of Putinism".

that the five mainstream EPGs are not innocent lambs who are only reacting to the challenges, provocative statements, or incitements of the populists and Eurosceptics. Quite the contrary. Often, they engage in proactive blaming and shaming.

As a concluding remark to this section, it should be noted that for the researcher (and the MEPs in the plenary) it was not difficult to dismantle obvious anti-EU statements or the few speeches which contain positive representations of Putin or the Annexation of Crimea. Similarly, these speeches which foresee Russia's (Putin's) masterplan to take over CEE and "rebuild its empire" were straightforward. The challenge for the researcher was to deconstruct more subtle nominational and predicational strategies, mostly used by "the 5" to describe their counterparts. The analysis concludes that "the 5" displayed more passive aggressive behaviour and makes use of a broader set of delegitimisation strategies.

"Russia" as object

Debates on Russia mirror how European identities are contested and embattled. The analysis showed that each EPG uses the topic "Russia" in its very own way. The whole spectrum of EPGs are trying to profile themselves, emphasising their own positive characteristics and at the same time highlighting the negative behaviour of the opponent. "Russia" is proxy for several competing "agendas" in the EP and sheds light on party competition in the EP. Every EPG tries to make the best from the topic. The position the EPGs take in votes and debates are based on different motives and serve various purposes.

When MEPs deliver speeches – mostly in the native language of an MEP – on Russia, Ukraine or the EU, they communicate with their voters. And they negotiate Europeanness and the membership of "us" and "them". The majority of statements by ALDE, S&D, EPP and ECR reveal the self-concept of the ideal type of politician who is pragmatic, "down-to-earth", and in a way un-ideological and non-populist; GUE/NGL is the "watchdog"; and EFDD and the Non-Attached are "the voice of the(ir) people".

To begin, the study adds to the question of how crises open op opportunities for further integration, and which agents leverage such phases (Russo 2016). A previous study among national elites on how the perceived threat of Russia increases the willingness of Eurosceptic national MPs to foster or cooperate more in the field of CFSP showed that the perception of a threat increased the likelihood of supporting a CFSP for MPs who do not trust the EU, whereas it made no difference for Europeanist MPs Russo (2016, pp. 203, 204). In other words, perceiving a threat leads to increasing support for integration of external relations among the least Euro-enthusiast MPs, making them reconsider. My study showed a different picture, which is that the pro-EU EPGs displayed even more firmly in-

tegrationist stances and the others remained in a Euro-critical attitude, and did not ask for more CFSP integration as an answer to the crisis. The analysis shows that it is particularly the pro-EU groups that take the Ukraine crisis and the perceived threat of a not trustworthy Russia as an example to argue for more cooperation in the realm of external relations. GUE/NGL, EFDD, NIs and parts of ECR try to mobilise the Ukraine crisis for their EU-critical standpoint/ agenda but mostly fail to dominate the debate – they do not manage to sell their message without being verbally condemned by the others. They do not get their EU-critical stances heard or seriously taken into account in the plenary.

For the NIs, sympathising, apologising or expressing solidarity with the Russian Federation goes with harsh Euroscepticism targeting all levels: criticism directed at EU structures, the idea of the EU, and EU policies. It therefore remains open whether "pro-Russian" statements in the chamber are elements of (populist) style (Moffitt and Tormey 2014) or ideology-based. In a similar fashion, but with little respect for the Russian Federation, the UKIP and M5S members within EFDD criticise the EU. Many MEPs vote against Russia-sanctions or financial aid for Ukraine after they present themselves as representatives of Europe's citizens who are the ones who suffer from "chessgames of the elites". It is therefore plausible to interpret that the (populist) radical right in the EP objectifies the topic to communicate their anti-EU agenda. Those results are consistent with Cianciara (2016, pp. 8, 16) who also concluded that "contestation of EU policy towards Ukraine and Russia in fact serves [a more encompassing] purpose, namely to challenge basic foundations of EU foreign policy as well as to undermine EU legitimacy not only at the policy but also at the systemic level (aka contestation of the EU governance system and the logic of the integration process)". In doing so, they carve out a niche in party competition. Arguing against the mainstream in an emotionally-loaded issue like "Russia" generates media and voter's attention.

Having said that, it is also a natural reaction that non-centre, radical parties follow and adjust to the discursive patterns of the dominating discourse: if a dichotomy between "pro-Russia" and "pro-EU" has been created, it is a natural consequence that they adapt to that. Russia-related debates serve as a free-riding opportunity to EU-criticism since they open the floor to point at procedural and policy-related deficits of EU institutions. It provides MEPs the opportunity to present themselves as the true peoples' representatives. It is an act of defiance to the European Union establishment or elite consensus. This then makes "Russia" a proxy or "tip of the iceberg" symptom for a conflict between the pro-European establishment and an anti-European (populist) opposition.

Therefore, plenary behaviour in Russia-related procedures should be interpreted in light of party competition: Plenary sittings are occasions for both established and newcomer parties to distinguish themselves from

each other. Arguing against a broad consensus attracts media and voters' attention, especially since MEPs claim to speak in the name of European citizens.

While for some parliamentarians contestation of the ENP and EU foreign relations serves a more encompassing purpose, i.e. to undermine legitimacy of the EU integration project, Cianciara (2017, p. 304) also notes that it also works the other way around. One of the key functions of the ENP (and overemphasising the benefits of bringing the Ukraine closer to Europe), aims to legitimise the EU project as a whole, both internally and externally. In this way, Russia and Ukraine are used by both sides.

MEPs particularly from Poland and the Baltic states (in EPP and ECR) are probably the only ones who really refer to "subject Russia" as such (as a threat). They keep repeating their anxiety and stress related to the threat they feel from Russia, often with references to their national history. This may hint to a feeling of being ignored or not taken seriously in their fear of a Russian invasion; their anti-Russian pro-European stance follows from perceived violation of national interests.

At the bottom line, many debates on Russia are not so much about Russia as such, but negotiate questions of moral rightness and appropriateness, truth and interpretations of events, European identity, and who takes over which role in the parliamentary interaction. Legislative procedures on Russia are both an arena and a proxy for conflict between those more hesitant towards more EU integration, and those who are willing to foster EU and Atlanticist cooperation.

Contribution of this study and follow-up questions

The findings of this project contribute to the literature in different respects. First, the results underline that researching lines of conflict and party competition benefits from the inclusion of debates as data. This sheds light on the substance, nature, and quality of divides, and whether co-voting is coincidental (or not). It illustrates how coalitions and divides evolve, how they are formed and constructed; and to what degree speeches correspond to co-voting patterns. However, the study does not only cover the question which divides structure votes and debates on Russia.

Generally, it contributes to the literature on legislative behaviour and competition of EPGs and the logic and predictability thereof. It adds a discourse-analytical perspective on voting behaviour and broadens the understanding of group cohesion in highly emotional or nationally salient topics. Through analysing the lines of conflict in EU foreign relations, it contributes to a strand of research that is considered as underdeveloped (Oriol Costa 2019, pp. 3, 8; Voltolini, Natorski, and Hay 2020, p. 610).

Several lessons can be drawn regarding the political competition in the

EP, and more specifically about the interaction between mainstream and populist or Eurosceptic challengers. Insight was provided into how (discursive) cartelisation (Katz and Mair 1995, 2009) or discursive struggles (Leek and Morozov 2018; Novak, Rozenberg, and Bendjaballah 2020) proceed in the EP. The results indirectly contributed to the debate on "pro-Russian" parties. The project illustrates that in the case of Russia, one (again) does not observe traditional electoral competition (competition among parties for voters). Instead, three questions are negotiated: (1) European identity and we-ness, (2) what it means to be "for" the EU, and (3) who is good or bad. EPGs compete for whose truth prevails (compete for power in and over discourse); while for some it gets increasingly difficult to place their standpoints without (moral) sanction (or "shaming and blaming"). Debates on Russia are therefore considered to be momentous in which established pro-EU centrist EPGs aim to prevail over EU-critical newcomers or non-centrist EPGs – not just in terms of voting, but in terms of discursive dominance. In doing so, my study provided insight into how the parliament develops its positions on this policy field (Cianciara 2016, p. 2).

This, in turn, is a new perspective on the question of how, in a crisis or in the face of an external challenge, pro-EU groups react to their challengers and how the dynamics in the EP develop. This is an aspect that should be continued in further studies.

Also, the study illustrates how contestation within the foreign policy domain unfolds (Cianciara 2016; Góra, Styczynska, and Zubek 2019; van Berlo and Natorski 2020). The study showed that each EPG uses the topic "Russia" in its own unique way. The whole spectrum of EPGs tried to profile themselves, emphasising their own positive characteristics and at the same time highlighting the negative behaviour of the opponent. In doing so, the analysis underlined that a crucial element of contestation is, aside from argumentation and performance, self-other representations. My study once more showed Russia's relevance for identity formation and demarcation. The analysis was able to show that Russia is not only important for the EP as "the Other", but that the MEPs among themselves also refer to Russia as "other" in their argumentation, making it central to their positive-self negative-other representations.

This dissertation adds to the literature by illustrating the interaction of all EPGs in the plenary and drawing a more holistic picture of how the plenary interaction unfolds. The study shifts from solely analysing the contestation by populists or Eurosceptics. One-sided studies like van Berlo and Natorski (2020) do not display a full picture, and conclusions are drawn without putting the content of speeches into perspective. The study also shed light on the rhetorical strategies that are used by the mainstream groups.

There are many studies on EU actorness and the EP's wish or ambition

to stretch its competencies in that field, but there are so far only a few studies on how the decision-making process in the EP takes place, and how external relations strategies and policies are internally contested (Cianciara 2016, p. 2). These often analyse contestation with a sole focus on populist EPGs, and not with a view toward the overall dynamic between all EPGs. This lack of perspective is a clear gap my study contributed to, as it showed that the plenary behaviour of radical EPGs needs to be put into perspective against the background of the statements of the other five EPGs. My study presents the overall interaction between all EPGs and finds that it is not just the radicals making noise for their own entertainment, but that there is a clear actio-reactio pattern between the two camps, and that one camp uses their dominance in the chamber to bluntly criticise MEPs who do not contribute to the enthusiasm as regards the EU-UKR-PAA, just to mention one example. This finding is consistent with a more recent study of Novak, Rozenberg, and Bendjaballah (2020, pp. 13, 14) who also observed the convergence of votes, "formation of alliances against outliers" and cartelisation of centre groups.

In addition, my study adds to the question of which content and styles of contestation are observable. A clear advantage of my approach was to include all EPGs into the analysis. This comprehensive perspective allowed me to better contextualise the dynamic between challengers and mainstream EPGs. The benefit is that the plenary behaviour of Eurosceptic, or populist, or challenger EPGs needs to be seen in light of the discursive dominance and also the cartelisation habits of the mainstream EPGs (see Novak, Rozenberg, and Bendjaballah 2020). My study also adds a puzzle piece to the alternative explanations for populists' "non-engangement". From my results one could hypothesise that the choice to refrain from interinstitutional bargaining and negotiating is based on a cost-benefit- calculation, acknowledging that the effort to influence the resolution text is out of proportion to what could realistically be achieved in the end. Moreover, MEPs could have guessed that the stances on the responsibility of the EU for causing the Ukraine crisis (just to give an example) are so far apart that it is unlikely that a completely contrary view of the events will find its way into the final text.

Compared to previous studies like that of Adam et al. (2017), my results indicate that mainstream parties are less passive or reactive than subliminally supposed, but the active and offensive ones in parliamentary interaction. Complementing the study by Wonka (2016) who scrutinised how the parties within the German Bundestag handled the financial crisis, I was able to show that pro-EU parties do not point to arguments such as efficiency and economic aspects when formulating solutions to the Ukraine crisis. In this case, they were the ones who use the argumentation category "moral rightness and superiority", European identity and solidarity the most. Drawing on Russo (2016), the Ukraine crisis is to be considered

as case where external threats create a window of opportunity that pro-integrationist groups use to place and legitimise their agenda for more co-operation in the CFSP.

The study contributed to the discussion on the EP's changing lines of conflict (Otjes and van der Veer 2016) by showing that besides economic questions, other policy fields may be objictied to put the general purpose and flaws of the EU to discussion, even though the general set-up of political space does not change, and even though the lines of conflict are not changing, intensified political conflict over the EU takes place.

For Hutter, Braun, and Kerscher (2016, p. 140), common foreign policy towards Russia falls under the category of "policy related issue in a non-economic field". EU-accession, Association Agreements and eastern enlargement belongs to the constitutive issues sub-category of "widening". The authors argue that constitutive issues are more salient, polarised and a driving force for politicisation "because they touch upon the most essential elements of the political system: its competencies, decision-making rules and [potential] membership" (Hutter, Braun, and Kerscher 2016, p. 141).

In light of my analysis, the question needs to be raised whether or not issues can have dimensions of both, and how this affects the level of polarisation and contestation. This study suggests that it depends heavily on how a topic is framed in the plenary. In the debates, both opponents and supporters have framed the PAA as related to a the first step towards membership and have included this in their argumentation. A referendum mobilised by the organisation GeenPeil took place in the Netherlands on this particular question; several EU-critical groups under this umbrella tried to put the Dutch government in a dilemma by holding a referendum: the population should reject the PAA in the referendum and instruct the government to vote against it in the Council. Thus, the PAA and the Ukraine crisis were given a clear "constitutive dimension" in the national context of the Netherlands, through which EU-sceptic mobilisation took place.

If bilateral Russia-EU-relations are inextricably linked to and dominated by EU-Ukraine relations, the EU-UKR-PAA and the Ukraine crisis, as has been shown in this analysis, the distinction blurs, leading to the question when does a political issue remain policy-related or already become constitutive? Thinking about the link between bilateral Russia-EU relations and the PAA, the question remains whether there is a moment in time when EU-Russia relations become (or are constructed as) a consitutive issue (for instance in the EP vote in September 2015 on the EU-UKR-PAA).

Having shown that the Eurosceptics' attempts to mobilise the Ukraine crisis for their EU-critical standpoint backfire and fail, new food for thought has been provided for the academic debate on the involvement of populists and/ or Eurosceptics in the plenary work. My results open up the debate for further hypothesis of motives for the populists' non-engagement in, for

instance, intra-EP negotiations (and their ignorance towards the EP's working principles).

Further research should delve into voting behaviour and speeches outside from RC votes, i.e. in SoH procedures. This would better illuminate the strategic dimension of plenary behaviour and shed light on how the EPGs argue when the vote is not recorded. In line with this, it would further be valuable to observe the interaction of MEPs and the lines of conflict within the committees. During the interviews it was mentioned that committee work is always less contentious, and MEPs apparently adapt their behaviour to the level of public visibility.

It would also be worthwhile to investigate how the topic of Russia developed during the course of the second half of EP8, after the consolidation of the ENF as a political group. It is to be unravelled how this EPG, with a clear anti-EU and radical right composition, influences the voting likeness and role-attribution in the Parliament.

Likewise, this dissertation offered many open ends with regard to the ongoing processes of self-other representations, and how "the self" and "the other" changes with a view to, for instance, the ENF, or Ukraine. Given the political developments in Ukraine since 2016, including several backslides in corruption-, administration- and government reform and the current presidential affair, further studies should examine the framing of "Ukraine" in the EP over time. From a discourse-analytical perspective, future research should combine visual and audio data from the debates to contribute to the literature on different styles of representation during polarising issues.

Russia is a crucial topic for identity construction, role attribution and political conflict. Plenary debates on Russia mirror ongoing processes of definition, redefinition and negotiation of we-ness and otherness; good and bad. Both the feeling of being part of a group (sharing some sort of common mission and destiny) and the feeling of belonging to different clusters (the centre, the non-radicals, the only true and honest politicians, the pragmatists, the realists) converge in the debates on Russia. Several representations of nationality, political identity and ideology, self-concepts coexist; they are discursively, by means of language and behaviour, produced, reproduced and transformed. That makes Russia both a "window" to observe intensified political conflict over the EU's foreign policy and how European identities are contested and embattled.

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Annex

Annex to Chapter 2
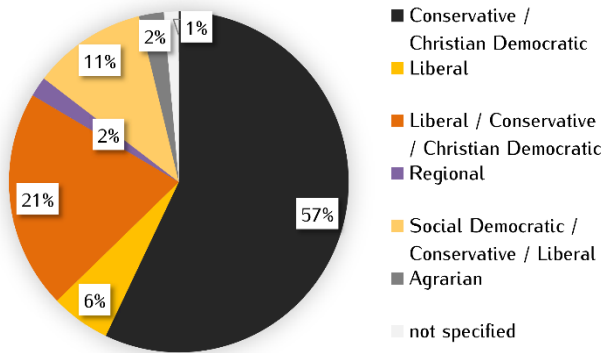
Figure 2.A: EPP composition in EP8
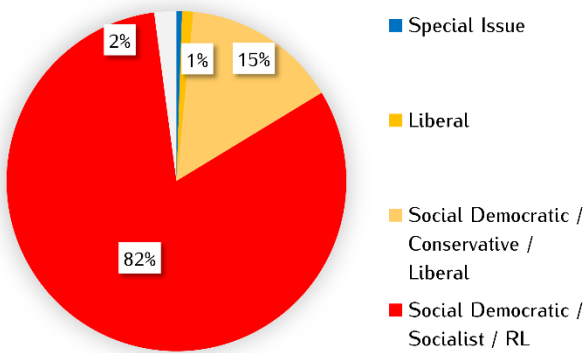
Figure 2.B: S&D composition in EP8

Figure 2.C: ECR composition in EP8
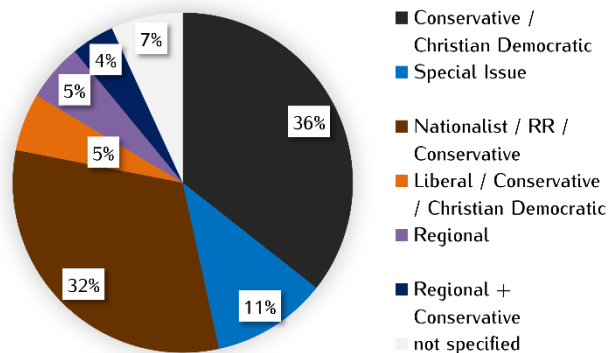
Figure 2.D: ALDE composition in EP8
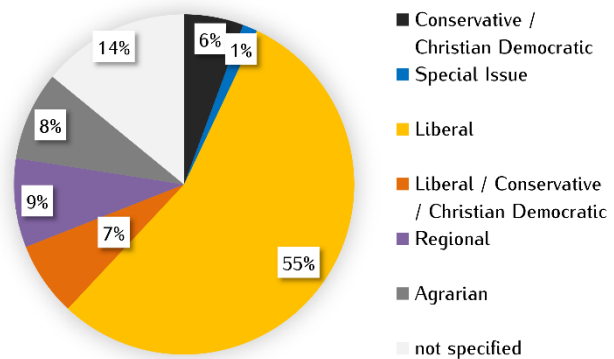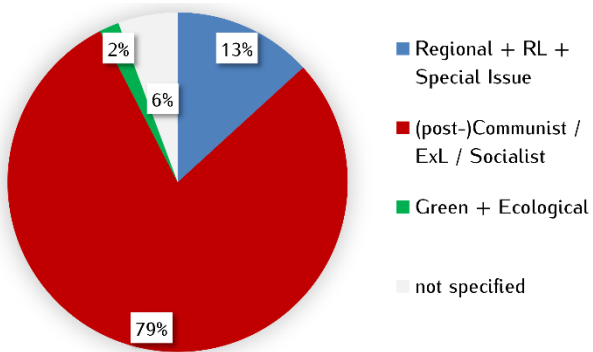
Figure 2.E: GUE/NGL composition in EP8

Legend (Figure 2.E):
- ■ Regional + RL + Special Issue
- ■ (post-)Communist / ExL / Socialist
- ■ Green + Ecological
- ☐ not specified
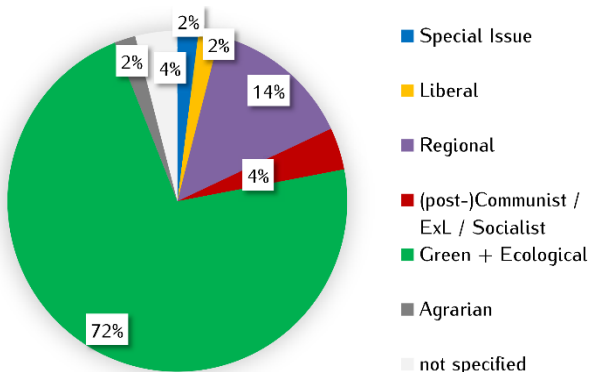
Figure 2.F: Greens/EFA composition in EP8

Legend (Figure 2.F):
- ■ Special Issue
- ■ Liberal
- ■ Regional
- ■ (post-)Communist / ExL / Socialist
- ■ Green + Ecological
- ■ Agrarian
- ☐ not specified
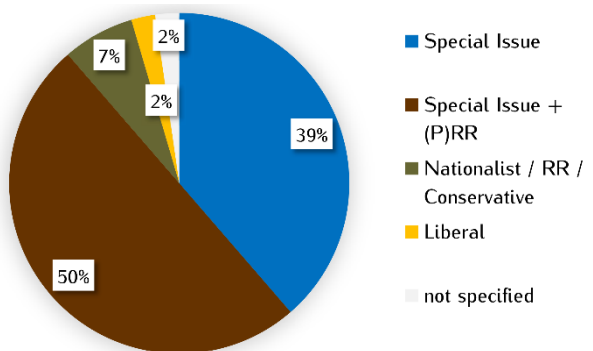
Figure 2.G: EFDD composition in EP8

Legend (Figure 2.G):
- ■ Special Issue
- ■ Special Issue + (P)RR
- ■ Nationalist / RR / Conservative
- ■ Liberal
- ☐ not specified
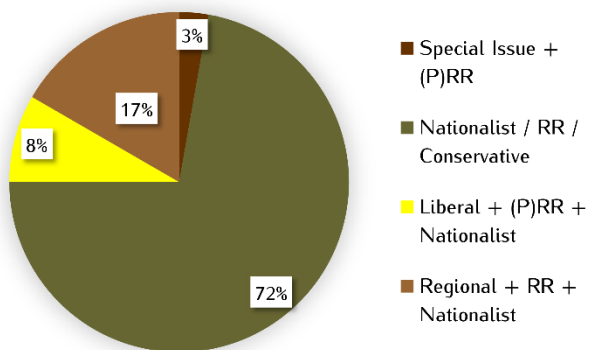
Figure 2.H: ENF composition in EP8

Legend (Figure 2.H):
- ■ Special Issue + (P)RR
- ■ Nationalist / RR / Conservative
- ■ Liberal + (P)RR + Nationalist
- ■ Regional + RR + Nationalist
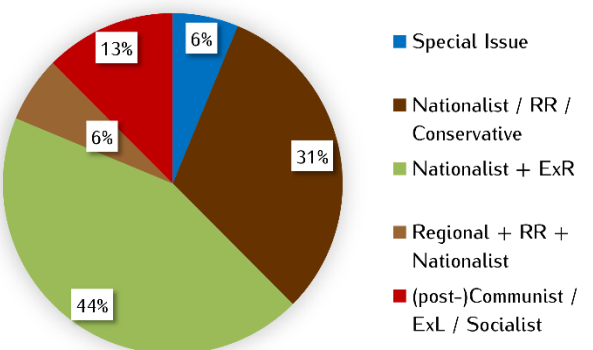
Figure 2.I: NIs composition in EP8

Legend (Figure 2.I):
- ■ Special Issue
- ■ Nationalist / RR / Conservative
- ■ Nationalist + ExR
- ■ Regional + RR + Nationalist
- ■ (post-)Communist / ExL / Socialist

II

Annex to Chapter 3

Table 3.A:

Selected Russia-related Plenary Events and Roll-Calls (chronological order, compiled by the author)

Case	Date	Title according to OEIL	Procedure File	Event	Subject according to OEIL
1	2009-09-17	Murder of human rights activists in Russia (debate) (Motion for a resolution) (vote)	2009/2677(RSP)	D + RC	Fundamental freedoms, human rights, democracy in general (GA: Russia)
2	2012-12-12	New EU-Russia agreement (debate) Report Hannes Swoboda	2011/2050(INI)	D + RC	Bilateral economic and trade agreements and relations (GA: Russia); Relations with Russian Federation
3	2014-03-13	Russia: sentencing of demonstrators involved in the Bolotnaya Square events	2014/2628(RSP)	D + RC	Fundamental freedoms, human rights, democracy in general (GA: Russia)
4	2014-04-16	Russian pressure on Eastern Partnership countries and in particular destabilisation of eastern Ukraine Statement by the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy	2014/2699(RSP)	D + RC + EXPV	Relations with Russian Federation; European neighbourhood policy
5	2014-07-15	Situation in Ukraine (debate) Statement by the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy	2014/2717(RSP)	D + RC	Third-country political situation, local and regional conflicts (GA: Ukraine)
6	2014-09-16	EU-Ukraine association agreement, as regards the treatment of third country nationals legally employed as workers in the territory of the other party	2013/0151A(NLE) 2013/0151B(NLE)	D + RC	Bilateral economic and trade agreements and relations (GA: Ukraine); European neighbourhood policy
7	2014-09-16	EU-Ukraine association agreement, with the exception of the treatment of third country nationals legally employed as workers in the territory of the other party - EU-Ukraine association agreement, as regards the treatment of third country nationals legally employed as workers in the territory of the other party (debate) AFET and LIBE	2013/0151A(NLE) 2013/0151B(NLE)	(J)D + RC + EXPV	Bilateral economic and trade agreements and relations (GA: Ukraine); European neighbourhood policy

Table continues on the following page

Case	Date	Title according to OEIL	Procedure File	Event	Subject according to OEIL
8	2014-09-18 / 2014-09-16	Situation in Ukraine and state of play of EU-Russia relations (debate) Voting Time (Resolution on Ukraine)	2014/2841(RSP)	D + RC + EXPV	Third-country political situation, local and regional conflicts (GA: Ukraine); Relations with Russian Federation
9	2014-10-21	Customs duties on goods originating in Ukraine (debate) INTA: Rapporteur Landsbergis	2014/0279(COD)	D + RC	Bilateral economic and trade agreements and relations (GA: Ukraine); Union Customs Code, tariffs, preferential arrangements, rules of origin
10	2014-10-23	Closing down of Memorial (Sakharov Prize 2009) in Russia (debate)	2014/2903(RSP)	D + RC	Fundamental freedoms, human rights, democracy in general (GA: Russia)
11	2015-01-14	Resolution on the situation in Ukraine (debate)	2014/2965(RSP)	D + RC	Third-country political situation, local and regional conflicts (GA: Ukraine)
12	2015-02-10	Accession of Russia to the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction Report: Heidi Hautala (LEGAL)	2011/0447(NLE)	EXPV + RC	Family policy, family law, parental leave; Child protection, children's rights; Judicial cooperation in civil and commercial matters (GA: Russia)
13	2015-03-25	Macro-financial assistance to Ukraine (debate) INTA Rapporteur: Landsbergis	2015/0005(COD)	D + RC	Macro-financial assistance to third countries (GA: Ukraine)
14	2015-06-09	State of EU-Russia relations	2015/2001(INI)	D + RC + EXPV	Relations with Russian Federation
15	2015-06-10	Strategic military situation in the Black Sea Basin following the illegal annexation of Crimea by Russia	2015/2036(INI)	D + RC	Common security and defence policy, WEU, NATO; Third-country political situation, local and regional conflicts (GA: Ukraine); Peace preservation, humanitarian and rescue tasks, crisis management
16	2015-09-10	Russia, in particular the cases of Eston Kohver, Oleg Sentsov and Olexandr Kolchenko	2015/2838(RSP)	D + RC	Fundamental freedoms, human rights, democracy in general (GA: Russia)

Annex to Chapter 4

Table 4.A:

Russia-related legislative procedures and their voting system

Type of Procedure		Nr. of Procedures	No vote	SoH	RC
Non-legislative Procedures	Own-Initiative Procedure (INI)	4		1	3
	Resolutions on topical subjects (RSP)	36	7	21	10
	Non-legislative enactments (NLE)	3			1
Legislative Procedures	Ordinary legislative procedure (COD)	2			2
Total		*45*	*7*	*22*	*16*

Table 4.B:

Russia-related committee events 2009-2016

Committee	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Total
DROI (Subcomittee on Human Rights)	3	9	9	7	9	5	3		45
AFET (Committee on Foreign Affairs)	2	1	4	8	5	2	13		35
INTA (Trade)	1		8	5		2	1		17
SEDE (Subcommittee on Security and Defense)	2	2		1	2		9		16
PETI (Petitions)			2	1					3
BUDG (Budgets) + CONT (Budgetary Control)			2		1		1		4
JURI (Legal Affairs)			1	1			1		3
AGRI (Agriculture and Rural Development)			1	1					2
ITRE (Industry, Research and Energy)	1				1				2
LIBE (Civil Liberties, Justice and Home)		1			1				2
TRAN (Transport and Tourism)	1								1
PECH (Fisheries)		1							1
DEVE (Development)		1							1
All Committees	*10*	*15*	*27*	*24*	*19*	*9*	*28*		*132*

Table 4.C:

EP Think Tank research activities by geographical area. Source: EP Parliament website (12.01.2017); Citizen' s Enquiries Unit 2018 (compiled by the author)

Geographical Area (of all reports 1992-2017: 3475)	Period of Investigation (of 1603 reports)	% of Reports	Number of Countries
Central Asia (65)	36	2,24%	5
Latin America and Caribbean (208)	107	6,67%	34
Sub-Saharan Africa (219)	135	8,42%	48
Russia (232)	138	8,6%	1
Mediterranean and Middle East (345)	204	12,72%	21
Canada and United States (342)	221	13,78%	2
Asia and Pacific (381)	236	14,72%	42
Non-EU Europe and the North (446)	254	15,84%	23
EU Member States (1237)	272	16,96%	27

Annex to Chapter 5

Table 5.A:
Voting likeness in EP7, policy area external relations
(as in Raunio and Wagner 2017b, p. 32; compiled by the author)

	ALDE	ECR	EFDD	EPP	G/EFA	GUE/NGL	NI	S&D
ALDE		54 *(+37)*	52 *(+- 0)*	83 *(+15)*	64 *(+25)*	36 *(+12)*	n.a.	83 *(-9)*
ECR	54 *(+37)*		59 *(-9)*	60 *(+30)*	45 *(+45)*	36 *(+19)*	n.a.	48 *(+39)*
EFDD	52 *(+- 0)*	59 *(-9)*		59 *(-8)*	38 *(+16)*	32 *(+44)*	n.a.	50 *(+3)*
EPP	83 *(+15)*	60 *(+30)*	59 *(-8)*		53 *(+36)*	59 *(-12)*	n.a.	78 *(+14)*
G/EFA	64 *(+25)*	45 *(+45)*	38 *(+16)*	53 *(+36)*		89	n.a.	68 *(+18)*
GUE-NGL	36 *(+12)*	36 *(+19)*	32 *(+44)*	59 *(-12)*	89 *(-34)*		n.a.	41 *(+6)*
NI	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.		n.a.
S&D	83 *(+9)*	48 *(+39)*	50	78	68	41	n.a.	

Based on 754 votes, 2009-2014. Numbers in *(Italics)*: show the difference between the average VS in all External Relations votes and the VS in Russia-related RCs. The number in brackets should be added or subtracted in order to arrive at the "Russia"-averages.

Table 5.B:
All votes (n=15), average voting similarity percentage, pre-ENF (2009 – Jun 2015).

extremely high	very high	high	medium average	slightly below av.	fairly low

	ALDE	ECR	EFDD	EPP	G/EFA	GUE	NI	S&D
ALDE		91,03	52,08	98,62	89,75	48,22	47,63	92,44
ECR	91,03		50,35	90,97	90,68	53,83	48,31	87,65
EFDD	52,08	50,35		51,83	56,28	76,24	77,76	53,61
EPP	98,62	90,97	51,83		89,16	47,78	47,10	92,03
G/EFA	89,75	90,68	56,28	89,16		55,88	48,74	86,77
GUE-NGL	48,22	53,83	76,24	47,78	55,88		78,80	47,28
NI	47,63	48,31	77,76	47,10	48,74	78,80		48,60
S&D	92,44	87,65	53,61	92,03	86,77	47,28	48,60	

TABLE 5.C:

Voting similarity percentage, ENF and the other groups (n=1); no average (single-case calculation)

extremely high	very high	high	Fairly high	medium average	slightly below av.	fairly low

	ALDE	ECR	EFDD	EPP	G/EFA	GUE	NI	S&D
ALDE		99,94	41,65	97,87	97,70	49,06	34,48	55,11
ECR	99,94		41,60	97,85	97,74	49,00	34,46	55,05
EFDD	41,65	41,60		43,31	39,69	76,25	62,60	78,64
EPP	97,87	97,85	43,31		96,38	50,71	36,61	56,76
G/EFA	97,70	97,74	39,69	96,38		47,09	34,81	53,14
GUE-NGL	49,06	49,00	76,25	50,71	47,09		78,94	62,30
NI	34,48	34,46	62,60	36,61	34,81	78,94		41,25
S&D	55,11	55,05	78,64	56,76	53,14	62,30	41,25	
ENF	36,78	36,72	75,56	38,43	34,81	87,71	87,03	54,212

Network Graph 5.D:

Average voting similarity, 16 Russia-related votes 2009 – 2016 (NIs included)
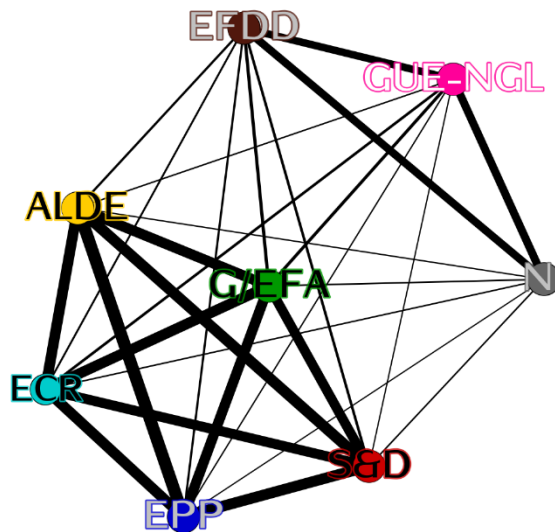
Figure 5.E:

Policy space in CFSP, as in Chryssogelos 2015, p. 16 (compiled by the author)
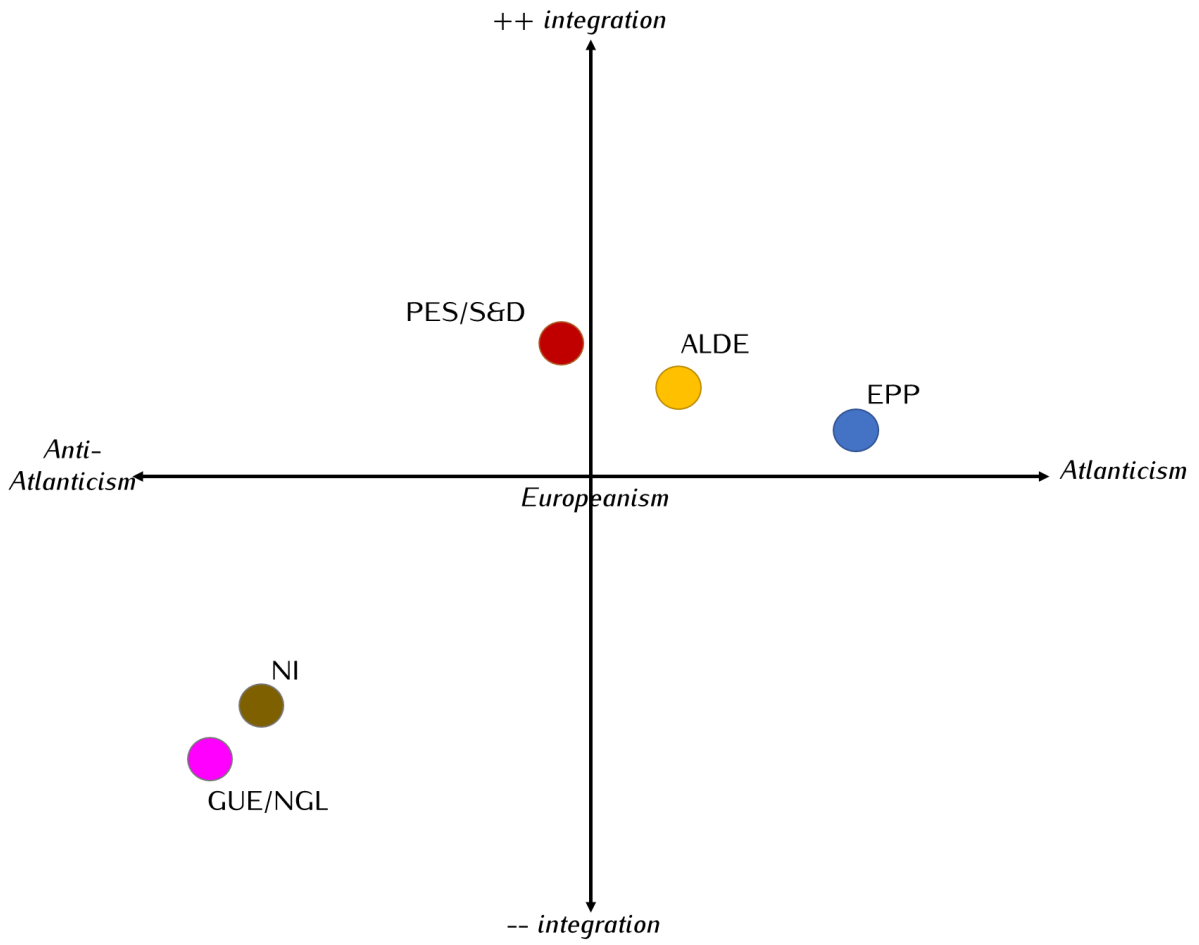
Annex to Chapter 6

Note on how to read the *Summary Table* and *Tables 6.A* to *6.S*

On the following pages, three tables provide the numerical data for the subsequent findings. Each of them displays one aspect of the content of speeches: Table 6.A ("Representations") shows the descriptions, characterisations, names given for various actors. Table 6.B ("Criticism") presents the variety of criticism of the EU. Table 6.C ("Conclusions") displays claims, suggestions, demands on the EU and how its relations to Russia and Ukraine should be designed. This format was chosen because it corresponds to the components of the speakers' argumentation structure. It also determines the structure of this chapter.

The tables A to C show how often the code has been found in the speeches of an EPG (frequency). To simplify orientation and visibility, the tables are subdivided according to the subjects in question ("what/ who" is described/ characterised, criticised, or suggested/ demanded). They are structured as follows: the columns contain the code as well as its meta category (e.g. code "Russia is a threat" – meta category "Russia negative"; the latter is used for the summary table on page XI). The other columns contain the EPGs. In order to know how the groups used the code in comparative perspective, refer to the rows. Refer to the column when being interested in one group. The colour shading represents the intensity within the subdivision, ranging from brighter yellow (lowest) to intense red (highest frequency). The last column to the right shows the total frequency of that code. Here, the top 3 are put in bold letters.

It is important to note that the amount of codings do not represent the absolute frequency of *speeches*. As explained in the Methodology chapter, debates are pre-determined in speaking time and order of speeches, which means that the small groups do not have significantly less speaking time than the large groups per se (left aside the NIs). The differences in total code frequencies of the EPGs have two backgrounds. First, EPGs may blur the speaking ratio through blue card questions, speeches during *Catch-the-eye procedures,* their voluntary contribution to written statements after the debate, and EXPVs. Moreover, the way the speeches have been coded does not represent the extent/ length of the speeches, but their manifold layers of content. The differences between the EPGs in terms of their coding frequencies are therefore to be understood as multifacetedness of speeches. In a nutshell, while speeches of the EPP often contained three or more codes (multiple negative representations of Russia, with EU-friendly critique and several claims), the Greens and EFDD put few messages into one speech, sparingly using metaphors etc. The combination of the use of "extra opportunities", "multiple messages in one" and "latent content" then, for instance, explains why GUE/NGL, a comparatively small group, has in total more coded segments than for instance the Greens, ALDE, and ECR. It is therefore vital to not just consider the rows, but also the columns in order to contextualise the numbers within the tables.

The ENF group was included in the voting analysis but does not appear in the debate analysis. There was only one plenary event in which the ENF participated after its foundation (RC16). However, the ENF did not participate in it (there were only very few MEPs present during the debate). Therefore, all findings exclude the ENF.

Summary Table

	EFDD	GUE/NGL	NIs	ALDE	EPP	G/EFA	S&D	ECR	Total
Representations of Actors									
EU (+)	1	2	0	2	44	5	15	5	74
EU (-)	19	67	45	1	2	2	7	2	**145**
EU (---): Anti-EU	7	1	4	0	0	0	0	0	12
RUS (+)	0	3	18	4	4	0	12	0	41
RUS (-)	20	25	11	65	247	33	101	91	**593**
Ukraine (+)	3	2	2	10	47	5	26	10	**105**
Ukraine (-)	3	31	6	3	11	0	11	3	68
EU-RUS rel. (+): EU-Rus relations positive, appreciated	3	5	5	3	6	0	7	4	33
EU-RUS rel. (-): EU-Rus relations negative, critical	2	1	4	10	33	3	19	7	79
Critique									
EU-friendly: pro-EU driven, EU-friendly critique; i.e. EU may weak, should be strong and united	10	5	6	6	57	11	19	22	136
EU towards RUS (-): critique on EU's strategies and behaviour towards Russia; i.e. policy inefficient/ counterproductive, provocative, wrong direction	17	45	43	7	18	6	17	7	**160**
Populist Appeals	18	9	29	1	6	0	7	9	79
Conclusions: Demands, Suggestions									
pro-EU demand: integrationist demands, further cooperation, EU as positive project	9	3	4	35	150	17	63	45	**326**
dialogue, empathy, pacifism, negotiations	11	17	13	12	29	4	45	3	**134**
sanctions (+): sanctions against RUS considered as positive	0	1	0	9	47	7	15	10	89
sanctions (-): sanctions against RUS considered as negative	2	8	19	1	5	1	8	1	45
EU-UKR rel. (+): Fostering EU-UKR relations positive	2	4	0	23	72	8	36	11	**156**
EU-UKR rel. (-): Fostering EU-UKR relations negative, hesitant	7	19	11	0	0	1	1	3	42
Total	*134*	*248*	*220*	*192*	*778*	*103*	*409*	*233*	*2317*

Table 6.A: Representations

			EFDD	GUE/ NGL	NIs	ALDE	EPP	G/EFA	S&D	ECR	Total
A.1	*Representations of the EU*										
EU (+)	A.1.1	EU: stands for a certain set of values	1	1	0	0	19	3	8	1	**33**
	A.1.2	pro-EU sentiment	0	1	0	1	8	0	4	0	14
	A.1.3	EU + RUS: don't share common values	0	0	0	1	11	2	0	4	18
	A.1.4	Metaphor: EU faces turning point in (its) history	0	0	0	0	6	0	3	0	9
EU (-)	A.1.5	EU: hypocrite	1	14	10	1	1	2	2	1	**32**
	A.1.6a	EU: slave of US policy	2	5	16	0	0	0	0	0	**23**
	A.1.6b	US and/or NATO: Anti-Americanism/ Anti-Antlanticism; imperialism, expansionist, agressive	2	15	5	0	0	0	0	0	22
	A.1.7	EU: belligerent, aggressive, expansive, provocative	6	8	5	0	0	0	1	1	21
	A.1.8	EU: arrogant	2	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	4
A.2	*Representations of other MEPs*										
other MEPs (-)	A.2.1	other MEPs: hypocrits / double standards	3	13	7	0	1	0	1	4	**29**
	A.2.2	other MEPs: Russiophobic	0	3	16	2	1	0	3	0	**25**
	A.2.3	other MEPs: Putin Fans / Apologists / positive bias for Russia	1	0	0	3	11	7	6	6	**34**
	A.2.4	"Querfront" / cooperation of the fringes	0	0	0	1	7	0	2	1	11
	A.2.5	self defence: "we are no admirer of Putin"	1	1	4	0	0	0	0	0	6
		Table continues on the following page									

			EFDD	GUE/ NGL	NIs	ALDE	EPP	G/EFA	S&D	ECR	Total
A.3	*Representations of Russia (political development, state of human rights, political rights and opposition)*										
RUS (+)	A.3.1	describes Putin: POSITIVE attributes, characterisation	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
	A.3.2	describes Putin: NEGATIVE attributes, characterisation	3	2	0	10	22	8	4	8	**57**
	A.3.3	RUS' deteriorating state of Rule of Law; Illiberalism	1	4	1	6	16	1	8	7	**44**
RUS (-)	A.3.4	RUS' deteriorating state of Human Rights/ Civil liberties	0	6	1	5	9	2	7	6	**36**
	A.3.5	RUS: judiciary not independent; criminal prosecution/ law enforcement = inefficient	0	4	0	3	7	3	1	6	24
	A.3.6	RUS: like Soviet Union	0	0	0	0	5	1	0	3	9
A.4	*Representations of Russia (foreign policy and military activities)*										
	A.4.1	RUS: aggressive / invader/ belligerent	1	0	2	3	42	1	8	12	**69**
	A.4.2	RUS: violates / disrespects law	3	0	1	7	26	4	6	5	**52**
	A.4.3	RUS: "wants to rebuild its empire", revanchist	2	0	0	1	14	1	6	12	36
	A.4.4	RUS' illegally/ illegitimately annexed Crimea; invaded/ involved in East UKR	3	1	3	6	17	1	13	7	**51**
RUS (-)	A.4.5	RUS: threat / dangerous	2	0	1	1	13	0	11	5	33
	A.4.6	RUS: destabilises the region / wants frozen conflict/ wants to keep conflicts going	1	0	0	7	15	4	8	6	41
	A.4.7 /A.8.2	RUS: to blame for UKR crisis / misery / war	2	2	0	2	13	2	4	2	27
	A.4.8	RUS plans/ conducts hybrid/ desinformation/ undeclared war	0	0	0	4	11	0	6	2	23
RUS (+)	A.4.9	Crimea Referendum = legitimate	0	0	13	0	0	0	0	0	13
A.5	*Representations of Russia in EU-Russia relations*										
RUS (+)	A.5.1	RUS: "inevitable geopolitical partner of the EU"	0	3	3	4	4	0	12	0	**26**

			EFDD	GUE/ NGL	NIs	ALDE	EPP	G/EFA	S&D	ECR	Total
RUS (-)	A.5.2	RUS: liar, words contradict action	0	0	0	3	7	2	3	4	19
	A.5.3	RUS: not to be trusted / reliable; difficult negotiation partner	0	0	0	4	11	1	7	2	**25**
	A.5.4	RUS: wants to hinder UKR in getting closer to EU; opposes EU-UKR relations	0	0	0	1	5	0	3	1	10
A.6		*Representations of EU-Russia relations*									
EU-RUS rel. (+)	A.6.1	Relations EU + RUS: beneficial / advantageous/ wanted; serious / relevant issue	1	3	1	3	4	0	4	3	**19**
	A.6.2	EU + RUS: strategic partners	1	0	4	0	2	0	2	1	10
	A.6.3	EU + RUS: interests similar/ share common interests and goals	1	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	4
EU-RUS rel. (-)	A.6.4	EU + RUS: interests diverge/ contradict/ compete	0	1	2	0	2	0	1	1	7
	A.6.5	EU + RUS: strategic partners NOT / ANY MORE	0	0	0	4	17	1	10	2	**34**
	A.6.6	Relations EU + RUS: deteriorate / stuck/ pessimistic outlook	0	0	2	2	11	1	6	3	**25**
	A.6.7	Metaphor: fight of systems / values; dystopian outlook	2	0	0	4	3	1	2	1	13
A.7		*Representations of Ukraine*									
UKR (+)	A.7.1	UKR: is European / shares European values / wants to be with EU	2	0	1	3	23	2	10	3	**44**
	A.7.2	Pro-Ukraine sentiment, personal feelings, connections, anecdotes	0	2	1	3	15	2	8	6	**37**
	A.7.3	UKR: right of self-determination; did an act of Liberation	1	0	0	4	9	1	8	1	24
UKR (-)	A.7.4	UKR has to change system / disempower oligarchs / modernise itself	0	1	0	3	11	0	11	3	29
	A.7.5	criticises UKR: coup d'ètat, neo-fascist elements, oligarchs	3	30	6	0	0	0	0	0	**39**
		Table continues on the following page									

			EFDD	GUE/NGL	NIs	ALDE	EPP	G/EFA	S&D	ECR	Total
A.8		*Representations of Ukraine's Crises*									
	A.8.1	Comparison / Link to: WWI or WWII	0	3	2	1	6	1	3	2	18
	A.8.2	UKR crises very serious for the security of Europe	2	0	0	3	13	0	4	4	**26**
EU (-), RUS (-)	A.8.3	EU, USA and RUS all to blame for crisis in UKR	0	4	2	0	1	0	2	0	9
RUS (-)	A.8.4 /A.4.7	RUS is to blame for UKR crisis / misery / war	2	2	0	2	13	2	4	3	**28**
EU (-)	A.8.5	EU is to blame for crisis in UKR	7	20	7	0	0	0	1	0	**35**
		Total codings per EPG	*59*	*152*	*118*	*108*	*432*	*56*	*215*	*139*	*1279*

Table 6.B: Criticism

			EFDD	GUE/ NGL	NIs	ALDE	EPP	G/EFA	S&D	ECR	Total
B.1		*Criticism of the EU: general behaviour/ actions/ directions*									
EU-friendly	B.1.1	criticises EU: inefficient; unspecified policies/ actions inefficient; soft power insufficient	1	1	2	0	4	0	3	1	12
EU towards RUS (-)	B.1.2	EU lacks self-criticism/ should look at itself first/ needs to admit mistakes	2	10	1	0	0	0	1	0	**14**
Populist Appeals	B.1.3	EU: does not care for/ solve "Real" problems	3	1	1	0	0	0	1	2	8
	B.1.4	Populism: in the name of the people	10	6	21	1	6	0	6	6	**56**
	B.1.5	Populism: We vs. You	5	2	7	0	0	0	0	1	**15**
EU (---)	B.1.6	unspecified ANTI-EU statements	7	1	4	0	0	0	0	0	12
B.2		*Criticism of the EU: in EU-Russia relations*									
EU-friendly	B.2.1	criticises EU: lack of coherence	0	0	0	0	8	4	4	2	18
	B.2.2	criticises EU: passiveness/ only words but no actions / lack of engagement	3	3	0	2	16	1	5	7	**37**
EU towards RUS (-)	B.2.3	criticises EU: ineffective/ insufficient towards RUS; RUS-policies inefficient/ failure	3	2	2	1	10	1	4	2	**25**
EU-friendly	B.2.4	criticises EU: uncoordinated, weak vis-a-vis RUS, clueless	5	0	2	1	7	1	3	6	**25**
	B.2.5	criticises EU: good faith, naive towards RUS	1	1	2	2	12	0	2	3	23
B.3		*Criticism of specific EU-related actors/ institutions/ procedures*									
EU-friendly	B.3.1	criticises EU Member States: arms exports, selling military equipment to RUS	0	0	0	0	4	4	2	0	10
	B.3.2	criticises other MEPs: must not criticise UKR	0	0	0	1	6	1	0	3	11
	B.3.7	criticises procedural deficitis in EP: lack of democracy / transparency	3	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	7
	B.3.3	criticises UKR-/ ENP policy as failure	0	7	4	0	2	2	6	2	**23**

			EFDD	GUE/ NGL	NIs	ALDE	EPP	G/EFA	S&D	ECR	Total
EU to- wards RUS (-)	B.3.4	criticises EU's enlargement / integration policies	4	2	2	0	0	0	0	2	10
	B.3.5	criticises other MEPs: using war rhethorics / propaganda	2	13	10	3	4	2	1	1	**36**
	B.3.6	criticises other MEPs: provo- cating RUS/ Russiophobia	3	8	23	3	2	1	5	0	**45**
	Total codings per EPG		*52*	*60*	*82*	*14*	*81*	*17*	*43*	*38*	*387*

XVII

Table 6.C: Conclusions

Notes:

- pro-EU demand: integrationist demands, further cooperation, EU as positive project ("Europeanism" for Chryssogelos 2015)
- sanctions (+): sanctions against RUS considered as positive
- sanctions (-): sanctions against RUS considered as negative
- EU-UKR rel. (+): Fostering EU-UKR relations positive
- EU-UKR rel. (-): Fostering EU-UKR relations negative, hesitant

			EFDD	GUE/ NGL	NIs	ALDE	EPP	G/ EFA	S&D	ECR	Total
C.1	*Conclusion: Specific Suggestions and Demands on the EU*										
pro-EU demand	C.1.1	EU: more integration, deepening of the Union	0	0	0	1	11	1	7	0	20
	C.1.2	more cooperation with NATO in general	0	0	0	0	11	0	2	4	17
	C.1.3	more EU military presence in Black Sea	0	0	0	1	2	0	2	2	7
	C.1.4	EU has to protect CEE Member States/ must "save" EaP countries from RUS	0	0	0	0	12	0	3	1	16
	C.1.5	EU has to emphasise democratic values vis-a-vis RUS	0	0	0	4	6	3	3	3	19
	C.1.6	EP must deal with HR violations in RUS; support RUS' civil society	1	1	0	0	11	4	8	2	**27**
	C.1.7	EU has to be strong/ stand firm vis a vis RUS	2	0	1	6	24	3	11	8	**55**
	C.1.8	EU/ EP must react decisively to the challenges posed by RUS	2	0	2	5	17	3	3	11	**43**
neutral demand	C.1.9	careful / better no NATO/ military presence in Black sea; Black Sea as puffer zone/ bridge	0	3	1	0	0	1	0	1	6
C.2	*Conclusion: Unspecific Suggestions and Demands on the EU*										
pro-EU demand	C.2.1	demands: EU has to stand united / common strategy	2	1	0	7	32	1	14	2	**59**
	C.2.2	demands: not words but actions	2	0	0	6	7	0	2	4	**21**
	C.2.3	demands: EU needs a new concrete strategy	0	1	1	2	9	0	6	1	**20**
	C.2.4	demands: EU has to "wake up", become active	0	0	0	1	3	0	0	4	8
	C.2.5	demands: EU should do more	0	0	0	2	5	2	2	3	14
C.3	*Conclusion: Designing EU-Russia relations*										
sanctions (-),	C.3.1	EU + RUS + UKR: consultation of ALL stakeholders; must not create FP tensions	1	0	2	0	0	0	7	0	10

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			EFDD	GUE/ NGL	NIs	ALDE	EPP	G/ EFA	S&D	ECR	Total
dia- logue em- pathy paci- fism	C.3.2	demands: EU has to continue dialogue with RUS	2	3	1	6	12	2	13	1	40
	C.3.3	demands appeasement, dees- calation, negotiations	4	3	6	4	11	2	16	1	**47**
	C.3.4	Pacifist / Anti-Militarist state- ments and critique	4	11	4	2	6	0	9	1	37
	C.3.5	criticises sanctions against RUS	2	8	19	1	5	1	8	1	**45**
sanc- tions (+)	C.3.6	demands or approves: uphold/ expand sanctions against RUS	0	1	0	9	47	7	15	10	**89**
C.4		*Conclusion: Designing EU-Ukraine relations*									
	C.4.1	Supports Macrofinancial assis- tance to UKR	0	0	0	5	6	1	4	3	19
	C.4.2	Appreciates PAA (positive)	0	0	0	5	20	2	11	4	**42**
EU- UKR rel. (+)	C.4.3	EU has to do more / spend more for UKR; has to "respond positively to their [pro EU-]as- pirations"	0	0	0	3	19	3	8	1	**34**
	C.4.4	EU should support UKR with manpower + finances	0	1	0	1	9	1	3	0	15
	C.4.5	EU should help UKR to re- form; send mission to UKR	2	3	0	9	18	1	10	3	**46**
EU- UKR rel. (-)	C.4.6	criticises EU's interference in UKR/ should stop "war games"/ stay neutral	3	11	6	0	0	1	1	2	24
	C.4.7	Disapproves PAA (negative)	4	8	5	0	0	0	0	1	18
	Total codings per EPG		*31*	*55*	*48*	*80*	*303*	*39*	*168*	*74*	*798*

Table 6.S: Storylines

		EFDD	GUE/ NGL	NIs	ALDE	EPP	G/EFA	S&D	ECR	Total
S.1	*"UKR-crisis is a litmus test for the EU"*									
S.1.1	Metaphor/ Literally "UKR-crisis is a litmus test for the EU"	1	0	0	1	11	1	6	0	20
Links and evolves from	A.14., A.8.2, A.8.4, A.8.1, A.1.2, A.4.8, A.3.2, A.4.6	8	8	2	28	94	15	36	24	215
	Embededness/ Groundedness Story-line 1	9	8	2	29	105	16	42	24	235
S.2	*"UKR-crisis decisive for the future of Europe; UKR' stability is vital to the EU"*									
S.2.1	Metaphor/ Literally "UKR-crisis decisive for the future of Europe"	0	0	0	6	12	0	5	2	25
Links and evolves from	A.1.4, A.6.7, A.1.2, A.8.2, A.7.2, A.7.1, A.4.1, A.4.5, A.8.4	11	5	5	20	136	8	54	33	272
	Embededness/ Groundedness Story-line 2	11	5	5	26	148	8	59	35	297
S.3	*"Whole Europe is under attack"*									
S.3.1	Metaphor/ Literally "Whole Europe is under attack"	2	0	0	0	11	1	1	1	16
Links and evolves from	A.1.1, A.1.2, A.1.3, A.6.7, A.4.8, A.6.4, A.3.2, A.4.1, A.8.4, A.2.4	9	7	4	26	138	17	39	32	272
	Embededness/ Groundedness Story-line 3	11	7	4	26	149	18	40	33	288
S.4	*"UKR was just the beginning/ test; other CIS/CEE states might fall soon"*									
S.4.1	Metaphor/ Literally "UKR was just the beginning / test; other CIS/CEE states might fall soon"	1	0	0	1	5	0	1	3	11
Links and evolves from	A.3.2, A.3.6, A.4.1, A.4.7, A.4.3, A.4.4, A.4.5, A.4.6, A.4.8, A.5.4, A.6.6	14	5	8	37	168	19	69	61	381
	Embededness/ Groundedness Story-line 4	15	5	8	38	173	19	70	64	392
S.5	*"Russia wants to weaken / split the EU"*									
S.5.1	Metaphor/ Literally "RUS wants to weaken / split EU"	0	0	0	1	11	0	6	0	18
Links and evolves from	A.3.2, A.4.1, A.4.3, A.4.5, A.4.6, A.1.2, A.1.3, A.2.4, A.4.8, A.5.3, A.6.4	9	4	5	33	156	17	57	53	334
	Embededness/ Groundedness Story-line 5	9	4	5	34	167	17	63	53	352
	Table continues on the next page									

			EFDD	GUE/ NGL	NIs	ALDE	EPP	G/EFA	S&D	ECR	Total
S.6		*"What happened in Ukraine was a Coup d'État"*									
	S.6.1	Metaphor/ Literally "Illegtimate coup against a legitimate president/government; no legal impeachment"	3	9	3	0	0	0	0	0	15
	S.6.2	Metaphor/ Literally "Coup by right-wing forces, paramilitary"	0	16	0	0	0	0	0	0	16
	S.6.3	Metaphor/ Literally "Coup initiated, orchestrated, supported, tolerated by the EU"	1	16	2	0	0	0	0	0	19
Co-occurent with		C.4.6, C.4.7, A.7.5, A.8.3, A.8.5, A.1.6.a, A.1.6.b, A.1.7									
		Embededness/ Groundedness Storyline 6	4	41	5	0	0	0	0	0	50

Debate Excerpt

Resolution on the situation in Ukraine (debate), 14 Jan 2015

Quotes 13:13 – 13:18

Helmut Scholz, *im Namen der GUE/NGL-Fraktion.* – Frau Präsidentin, Frau Hohe Vertreterin! Seit gestern steht definitiv fest, dass das angestrebte Treffen von Astana nicht stattfindet. Damit wurde ein weiteres Mal die Chance aus der Hand gegeben, miteinander zu sprechen. Angesichts der unschuldigen zehn Toten finde ich die Berufung auf Prinzipielles, auf das Fehlen von Voraussetzungen für ein Treffen, zynisch. Liebe Kollegen, wenn wir nicht nur verbal für einen unverzüglichen Frieden in der Ukraine und deren territoriale Integrität eintreten wollen, müssen wir endlich ritualisierte Rhetorik hinter uns lassen und Prozesse real einschätzen. Es wird keine militärische Lösung in der Ostukraine geben, und spätestens damit haben beide Seiten, die politisch und militärisch Verantwortlichen in Kiew sowie im Donbass, jeweils ihren Beitrag für einen Frieden zu leisten. Ob sie das tun und, wenn nicht, warum nicht, wäre konkret zu diskutieren.

Es wäre zu diskutieren, ob Herr Jazenjuk ungeachtet seiner per Wahlen erreichten Legitimität wirklich der natürliche Verbündete der EU ist. Sein politisches Credo, welches er dieser Tage auch in Berlin engagiert präsentierte, lautet: Es hat immer nur der andere Schuld, politisch Unbequemes und das eigene Agieren werden in der Mainstreamlexik schöngeredet. Was seine Regierung bis heute geleistet hat, sind massiv eingefrorene Sozialleistungen, es sind Massenentlassungen, drastische Preisanhebungen, es ist ein selbst nach ukrainischen Medien völlig regelloses Privatisierungsprogramm, das erneut nur Oligarchen wie Firtasch reicher und einflussreicher macht. Es sind drastisch gesteigerte Militärausgaben, von denen gleich mal 30 Prozent in korrupten Kanälen verschwunden sind. Für den angeblich zentralen Kampf gegen die Korruption sieht der Haushalt 2015 nicht eine Hrywnja vor.

Marek Jurek (ECR), Have you noticed that the Prime Minister Yatsenyuk is the head of a democratic government, which has received a mandate from his people because he won the election? He has a clear democratic mandate, is the head of the government, which wants to cooperate with us and works with us. I think we should be more respectful when talking about our friends and do not place them on the same level with the aggressor?

Helmut Scholz (GUE/NGL), *Antwort auf eine Frage nach dem Verfahren der „blauen Karte".* – Ich habe ja gesagt, dass Herr Jazenjuk demokratisch legitimiert ist durch die Wahlen. Die Frage ist allerdings: Ist er mit seiner Politik auch der einzige Ansprechpartner für die Europäische Union, wenn wir an die reale Situation in der Ukraine herangehen? Was passiert denn sozial? Ich war da, und dort wurde mir gesagt: Wenn sich nicht ganz schnell in dem sozialen, wirtschaftlichen Gefüge, in der Durchsetzung realer politischer Reformen etwas

Entscheidendes verändert, werden wir den nächsten Majdan erleben. Die Leute erhoffen sich in diesem Land Veränderungen. Das müssen wir als Europäische Union unterstützen.

Rebecca Harms, *im Namen der Verts/ALE-Fraktion.* – Sehr geehrte Frau Präsidentin, sehr geehrte Frau Mogherini, sehr geehrte Kollegen! Ich sage jetzt mal nicht „sehr geehrter Herr Scholz", weil ich finde, Sie diskutieren unter Niveau. Es gäbe überhaupt keinen Anlass, über eine humanitäre Notlage im Osten der Ukraine zu diskutieren, wenn nicht russische Strategen – ich weiß nicht genau zu welchem Zeitpunkt – beschlossen hätten, dass sie nicht bereit sind, die territoriale Integrität der Ukraine zu akzeptieren. Es passt Ihnen vielleicht nicht, aber das Problem hat mit der Annektierung der Krim angefangen, und es ist mit der systematischen Destabilisierung, unterstützt von Russland, im Osten der Ukraine fortgesetzt worden. Die Ursachen für den Krieg im Osten der Ukraine müssen leider heute in der russischen Regierung gesucht werden. Niemand, insbesondere kein Deutscher, würde heute wagen zu behaupten, Belgien habe angefangen zu schießen. Ich bitte Sie eigentlich nur darum, dass Sie in der Analyse dieses Konflikts bei den Ursachen des Problems bleiben.

[Later in the debate:] 13:28 – 13:30

Udo Voigt (NI). - Frau Präsidentin! Der Konflikt, so wie er hier beschrieben wird, ist immer dann verstärkt, wenn man einseitig Sanktionen durchführt, statt miteinander zu reden. Ich bin schon erschrocken, wie stark hier in diesem Haus die Rhetorik des Kalten Kriegs wieder zurückgekehrt ist. Haben Sie nicht gemerkt, dass durch die derzeitige Situation der Euro auf den niedrigsten Stand seit Beginn seiner Existenz gefallen ist? Der Rubel fällt ins Bodenlose. Die Inflation in Russland betrug im Dezember 11,5 %, in der Ukraine lag die Inflation bereits im Dezember bei 25 % – 50-mal höher als im Januar 2014. Die beschlossenen Sanktionen schwächen den Euro und vernichten Tausende von Arbeitsplätzen in der Landwirtschaft der EU. Die Sanktionen treffen aber auch die Länder der Eurasischen Wirtschaftsunion: Kasachstan, Weißrussland …

(Die Präsidentin entzieht dem Redner das Wort.)

Elmar Brok (PPE). - Frau Präsidentin, Frau Vizepräsidentin! Ich bin schon erstaunt, wie deckungsgleich die Argumentationen der Linken und der NPD aus Deutschland sind, wenn ich Herrn Scholz und Herrn Voigt hier höre. Es scheinen alle an der Krise schuld zu sein, nur Russland nicht. […]

Annex:

Codebook *(MEPs)*

Code	Comment
ALDE_Ansip	Andrus ANSIP, Estonia.
ALDE_Arthuis	Jean ARTHUIS, France.
ALDE_Austrevicius	Petras AUŠTREVIČIUS, Lithuania.
ALDE_Basterrechea	Beatriz BECERRA BASTERRECHEA, Spain.
ALDE_Bilbao-Barandica	Izaskun BILBAO BARANDICA, Spain.
ALDE_Charanzova	Dita CHARANZOVÁ, Czech Republic.
ALDE_Gerbrandy	Gerben-Jan GERBRANDY, Netherlands.
ALDE_Group:Austrevicius	Petras AUŠTREVIČIUS, Lithuania; on BEHALF OF ALDE GROUP.
ALDE_Group:Barandiaran	Fernando MAURA BARANDIARÁN, Spain; on BEHALF OF THE ALDE GROUP.
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ALDE_Jäätteenmäki	Anneli JÄÄTTEENMÄKI, Finland.
ALDE_Jakovcic	Ivan JAKOVČIĆ, Croatia.
ALDE_Kallas	Kaja KALLAS, Estonia.
ALDE_Kyuchyuk	Ilhan KYUCHYUK, Bulgaria.
ALDE_Lambsdorff	Alexander Graf LAMBSDORFF, Germany.

Code	Comment
ALDE_Michel	Louis MICHEL, Belgium.
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ALDE_Neyts-Uyttebroeck	Annemie NEYTS-UYTTEBROECK, Belgium.
ALDE_Nicolai	Norica NICOLAI, Romania.
ALDE_Ojuland	Kristiina OJULAND, Estonia.
ALDE_Paet	Urmas PAET, Estonia.
ALDE_Rochefort	Robert ROCHEFORT, France.
ALDE_Rohde	Jens ROHDE, Denmark.
ALDE_Sarnez	Marielle de SARNEZ, France.
ALDE_Schaake	Marietje SCHAAKE, Netherlands.
ALDE_Telicka	Pavel TELIČKA, Czech Republic.
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EFDD_Farage	Nigel FARAGE, UK.
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EFDD_Mazuronis	Valentinas MAZURONIS, Lithuania.
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EPP_Kelly	Seán KELLY, Ireland.
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EPP_Manescu	Ramona Nicole MĂNESCU, Romania.
EPP_Marinescu	Marian-Jean MARINESCU, Romania.
EPP_Martusciello	Fulvio MARTUSCIELLO, Italy.
EPP_Matera	Barbara MATERA, Italy.
EPP_McAllister	David McALLISTER, Germany.
EPP_Mikolasik	Miroslav MIKOLÁŠIK, Slovakia.
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EPP_Muresan	Siegfried MUREȘAN, Romania.
EPP_Muselier	Renaud MUSELIER, France.
EPP_Mussolini	Alessandra MUSSOLINI, Italy.
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EPP_Niedermayer	Luděk NIEDERMAYER, Czech Republic.
EPP_Oomen-Ruijten	Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN, Netherlands.
EPP_Pabriks	Artis PABRIKS, Latvia.
EPP_PaunovaMaydell	Eva PAUNOVA (Maydell), Bulgaria.
EPP_Peterle	Alojz PETERLE, Slovenia.
EPP_Pietikäinen	Sirpa PIETIKÄINEN, Finland.
EPP_Plenkovic	Andrej PLENKOVIĆ, Croatia.
EPP_Pogliese	Salvatore Domenico POGLIESE, Italy.
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EPP_Saudargas	Algirdas SAUDARGAS, Lithuania.
EPP_Silvestris	Sergio Paolo Francesco SILVESTRIS, Italy.
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EPP_Sojdrova	Michaela ŠOJDROVÁ, Czech Republic.
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EPP_Urutchev	Vladimir URUTCHEV, Bulgaria.
EPP_Vaidere	Inese VAIDERE, Latvia.
EPP_Valcarcel-Siso	Ramón Luis VALCÁRCEL SISO, Spain.
EPP_Walesa	Jarosław WAŁĘSA, Poland.
EPP_Winkler	Hermann WINKLER, Germany.
EPP_Zaborska	Anna ZÁBORSKÁ, Slovakia.
EPP_Zaleski	Zbigniew ZALESKI, Poland.
EPP_Zalewski	Paweł ZALEWSKI, Poland.
EPP_Zdrojewski	Bogdan Andrzej ZDROJEWSKI, Poland.
EPP_Zver	Milan ZVER, Slovenia.
Greens/EFA_Demesmaeker	Mark DEMESMAEKER, Belgium.
Greens/EFA_Group:Breyer	Hiltrud BREYER, Germany; on BEHALF OF THE GREENS/EFA GROUP.
Greens/EFA_Group:Harms	Rebecca HARMS, Germany; on BEHALF OF THE GREENS/EFA GROUP.

Code	Comment
Greens/EFA_Group:Hautala	Heidi HAUTALA, Finland; on BEHALF OF GREENS/EFA GROUP.
Greens/EFA_Group:Jadot	Yannick JADOT, France; on BEHALF OF THE GREENS/EFA GROUP.
Greens/EFA_Group:Rope	Bronis ROPĖ, Lithuania; on BEHALF OF THE GREENS/EFA GROUP.
Greens/EFA_Group:Schulz	Werner SCHULZ, Germany; on BEHALF OF THE GREENS/EFA GROUP.
Greens/EFA_Group:Tarand	Indrek TARAND, Estonia; on BEHALF OF THE GREENS/EFA GROUP.
Greens/EFA_Harms	Rebecca HARMS, Germany.
Greens/EFA_Hautala	Heidi HAUTALA, Finland.
Greens/EFA_Jadot	Yannick JADOT, France.
Greens/EFA_Lochbihler	Barbara LOCHBIHLER, Germany.
Greens/EFA_Lunacek	Ulrike LUNACEK, Austria.
Greens/EFA_Meszerics	Tamás MESZERICS, Hungary.
Greens/EFA_Schulz	Werner SCHULZ, Germany.
Greens/EFA_Smith	Alyn SMITH, UK.
Greens/EFA_Tarand	Indrek TARAND, Estonia.
Greens/EFA_Zdanoka	Tatjana ŽDANOKA, Latvia.
GUE/NGL_Anderson	Martina ANDERSON, UK.
GUE/NGL_Björk	Malin BJÖRK, Sweden.
GUE/NGL_Carthy	Matt CARTHY, Ireland.
GUE/NGL_Chrysogonos	Kostas CHRYSOGONOS, Greece.
GUE/NGL_CousoPermuy	Javier COUSO PERMUY, Spain.
GUE/NGL_Ernst	Cornelia ERNST, Germany.

Code	Comment
GUE/NGL_Ferreira	João FERREIRA, Portugal.
GUE/NGL_Flanagan	Luke Ming FLANAGAN, Ireland.
GUE/NGL_GonzalezPenas	Tania GONZÁLEZ PEÑAS, Spain.
GUE/NGL_Group:CousoPermuy	Javier COUSO PERMUY, Spain; on BEHALF OF THE GUE/NGL GROUP.
GUE/NGL_Group:Katrougkalos	Georgios KATROUGKALOS, Greece; on BEHALF OF THE GUE/NGL GROUP.
GUE/NGL_Group:Mastalka	Jiří MAŠTÁLKA, Czech Republic; on BEHALF OF THE GUE/NGL GROUP.
GUE/NGL_Group:Scholz	Helmut SCHOLZ, Germany; on BEHALF OF THE GUE/NGL GROUP.
GUE/NGL_Guzman	Marina ALBIOL GUZMÁN, Spain.
GUE/NGL_Hadjigeorgiou	Takis HADJIGEORGIOU, Cyprus.
GUE/NGL_Hazekamp	Anja HAZEKAMP, Netherlands.
GUE/NGL_Iglesias	Pablo IGLESIAS, Spain.
GUE/NGL_Kohlicek	Jaromír KOHLÍČEK, Czech Republic.
GUE/NGL_Konecna	Kateřina KONEČNÁ, Czech Republic.
GUE/NGL_Kyllönen	Merja KYLLÖNEN, Finland.
GUE/NGL_LeHyaric	Patrick LE HYARIC, France.
GUE/NGL_LopezBermejo	Paloma LÓPEZ BERMEJO, Spain.
GUE/NGL_Mastalka	Jiří MAŠTÁLKA, Czech Republic.
GUE/NGL_Matias	Marisa MATIAS, Portugal.
GUE/NGL_Melenchon	Jean-Luc MÉLENCHON, France.
GUE/NGL_Meyer	Willy MEYER, Spain.
GUE/NGL_NiRiada	Liadh NÍ RIADA, Ireland.

Code	Comment
GUE/NGL_Omarjee	Younous OMARJEE, France.
GUE/NGL_Ransdorf	Miloslav RANSDORF, Czech Republic.
GUE/NGL_Sakorafa	Sofia SAKORAFA, Greece.
GUE/NGL_SanchezCaldentey	Lola SÁNCHEZ CALDENTEY, Spain.
GUE/NGL_SenraRodriguez	Maria Lidia SENRA RODRÍGUEZ, Spain.
GUE/NGL_Spinelli	Barbara SPINELLI, Italy.
GUE/NGL_Tavares	Rui TAVARES, Portugal.
GUE/NGL_TorresMartinez	Estefanía TORRES MARTÍNEZ, Spain.
GUE/NGL_Toussas	Georgios TOUSSAS, Greece.
GUE/NGL_UrbanCrespo	Miguel URBÁN CRESPO, Spain.
GUE/NGL_Vallina	Ángela VALLINA, Spain.
GUE/NGL_Vergiat	Marie-Christine VERGIAT, France.
GUE/NGL_Viegas	Miguel VIEGAS, Portugal.
GUE/NGL_Vuljanic	Nikola VULJANIĆ, Croatia.
GUE/NGL_Zuber	Inês Cristina ZUBER, Portugal.
NI_Annemans	Gerolf ANNEMANS, Belgium.
NI_Arnautu	Marie-Christine ARNAUTU, France.
NI_Balczo	Zoltán BALCZÓ, Hungary.
NI_Bay	Nicolas BAY, France.
NI_Bilde	Dominique BILDE, France.
NI_Bizzotto	Mara BIZZOTTO, Italy.
NI_Borghezio	Mario BORGHEZIO, Italy.
NI_Briois	Steeve BRIOIS, France.
NI_Brons	Andrew Henry William BRONS, UK.
NI_Buonanno	Gianluca BUONANNO, Italy.
NI_Chauprade	Aymeric CHAUPRADE, France.

Code	Comment
NI_Dodds	Diane DODDS, UK.
NI_DOrnano	Mireille D'ORNANO, France.
NI_Epitideios	Georgios EPITIDEIOS, Greece.
NI_Ferrand	Edouard FERRAND, France.
NI_Fontana	Lorenzo FONTANA, Italy.
NI_Fountoulis	Lampros FOUNTOULIS, Greece.
NI_Goddyn	Sylvie GODDYN, France.
NI_Gollnisch	Bruno GOLLNISCH, France.
NI_Graaff	Marcel de GRAAFF, Netherlands.
NI_Jalkh	Jean-François JALKH, France.
NI_Kappel	Barbara KAPPEL, Austria.
NI_KorwinMikke	Janusz KORWIN-MIKKE, Poland.
NI_Kovacs	Béla KOVÁCS, Hungary.
NI_Lebreton	Gilles LEBRETON, France.
NI_Loiseau	Philippe LOISEAU, France.
NI_Martin	Hans-Peter MARTIN, Austria.
NI_Mayer	Georg MAYER, Austria.
NI_Melin	Joëlle MÉLIN, France.
NI_Mölzer	Andreas MÖLZER, Austria.
NI_Montel	Sophie MONTEL, France.
NI_Morvai	Krisztina MORVAI, Hungary.
NI_Obermayr	Franz OBERMAYR, Austria.
NI_Papadakis	Demetris PAPADAKIS, Cyprus.
NI_Philippot	Florian PHILIPPOT, France.
NI_Salvini	Matteo SALVINI, Italy.
NI_Schaffhauser	Jean-Luc SCHAFFHAUSER, France.
NI_Severin	Adrian SEVERIN, Romania.
NI_Synadinos	Eleftherios SYNADINOS, Greece.
NI_Troszczynski	Mylène TROSZCZYNSKI, France.
NI_Vilimsky	Harald VILIMSKY, Austria.
NI_Voigt	Udo VOIGT, Germany.
NI_Zarianopoulos	Sotirios ZARIANOPOULOS, Greece.
S&D_RevDAlBonnefoy	Christine REVAULT D'ALLONNES BONNEFOY, France.

Code	Comment
S&D_AbelaBaldacchino	Claudette ABELA BALDACCHINO, Malta.
S&D_Arlacchi	Pino ARLACCHI, Italy.
S&D_Assis	Francisco ASSIS, Portugal.
S&D_Balcytis	Zigmantas BALČYTIS, Lithuania.
S&D_Bayet	Hugues BAYET, Belgium.
S&D_Benifei	Brando BENIFEI, Italy.
S&D_Benova	Monika BEŇOVÁ, Slovakia.
S&D_Bettini	Goffredo Maria BETTINI, Italy.
S&D_Blinkeviciute	Vilija BLINKEVIČIŪTĖ, Lithuania.
S&D_Borzan	Biljana BORZAN, Croatia.
S&D_Bostinaru	Victor BOŞTINARU, Romania.
S&D_Bresso	Mercedes BRESSO, Italy.
S&D_Briano	Renata BRIANO, Italy.
S&D_Caputo	Nicola CAPUTO, Italy.
S&D_Cozzolino	Andrea COZZOLINO, Italy.
S&D_Cristea	Andi CRISTEA, Romania.
S&D_Cutas	George Sabin CUTAŞ, Romania.
S&D_Dalli	Miriam DALLI, Malta.
S&D_deKeyser	Véronique DE KEYSER, Belgium.
S&D_Denanot	Jean-Paul DENANOT, France.
S&D_Fajon	Tanja FAJON, Slovenia.
S&D_Fleckenstein	Knut FLECKENSTEIN, Germany.
S&D_Freund	Eugen FREUND, Austria.
S&D_Frunzulica	Doru-Claudian FRUNZULICĂ, Romania.
S&D_Gentile	Elena GENTILE, Italy.
S&D_Gierek	Adam GIEREK, Poland.
S&D_Gill	Neena GILL, UK.
S&D_Giuffrida	Michela GIUFFRIDA, Italy.
S&D_Gomes	Ana GOMES, Portugal.
S&D_Griffin	Theresa GRIFFIN, UK.
S&D_Group:Bostinaru	Victor BOŞTINARU, Romania; on BEHALF OF THE S&D GROUP.
S&D_Group:Fleckenstein	Knut FLECKENSTEIN, Germany; on BEHALF OF S&D GROUP.

Code	Comment
S&D_Group:GerOedenberg	Lidia Joanna GERINGER de OEDENBERG, Poland; on BEHALF OF THE S&D GROUP.
S&D_Group:Gomes	Ana GOMES, Portugal.
S&D_Group:Jaakonsaari	Liisa JAAKONSAARI, Finland; on BEHALF OF THE S&D GROUP.
S&D_Group:Lauristin	Marju LAURISTIN, Estonia; on BEHALF OF THE S&D GROUP.
S&D_Group:Paleckis	Justas Vincas PALECKIS, Lithuania; on BEHALF OF S&D GROUP.
S&D_Group:Pittella	Gianni PITTELLA, Italy; on BEHALF OF S&D GROUP.
S&D_Group:Roucek	Libor ROUČEK, Czech Republic; on BEHALF OF S&D GROUP.
S&D_Group:Szanyi	Tibor SZANYI, Hungary; on BEHALF OF S&D GROUP.
S&D_Guillaume	Sylvie GUILLAUME, France.
S&D_Howitt	Richard HOWITT, UK.
S&D_Jaakonsaari	Liisa JAAKONSAARI, Finland.
S&D_Kaili	Eva KAILI, Greece.
S&D_Khan	Afzal KHAN, UK.
S&D_Lauristin	Marju LAURISTIN, Estonia.
S&D_Liberadzki	Bogusław LIBERADZKI, Poland.
S&D_Lybacka	Krystyna ŁYBACKA, Poland.
S&D_Lyubchevka	Marusya LYUBCHEVA, Bulgaria.
S&D_Mamikins	Andrejs MAMIKINS, Latvia.
S&D_Manka	Vladimír MAŇKA, Slovakia.
S&D_Martin	David MARTIN, UK.
S&D_Molnar	Csaba MOLNÁR, Hungary.
S&D_Moody	Clare MOODY, UK.
S&D_Moraes	Claude MORAES, UK.
S&D_Mosca	Alessia Maria MOSCA, Italy.
S&D_Negrescu	Victor NEGRESCU, Romania.
S&D_Nekov	Momchil NEKOV, Bulgaria.
S&D_Panzeri	Pier Antonio PANZERI, Italy.
S&D_Papadakis	Demetris PAPADAKIS, Cyprus.

Code	Comment
S&D_Pascu	Ioan Mircea PAŞCU, Romania.
S&D_Picula	Tonino PICULA, Croatia.
S&D_Piri	Kati PIRI, Netherlands.
S&D_Pirinski	Georgi PIRINSKI, Bulgaria.
S&D_Poche	Miroslav POCHE, Czech Republic.
S&D_Rebega	Laurenţiu REBEGA, Romania.
S&D_Repo	Mitro REPO, Finland.
S&D_Sant	Alfred SANT, Malta.
S&D_Schulz	Martin SCHULZ, Germany.
S&D_Siwiec	Marek SIWIEC, Poland.
S&D_Smolkova	Monika SMOLKOVÁ, Slovakia.

Code	Comment
S&D_Swoboda	Hannes SWOBODA, Austria.
S&D_Szanyi	Tibor SZANYI, Hungary.
S&D_Tabajdi	Csaba Sándor TABAJDI, Hungary.
S&D_Tapardel	Claudia ŢAPARDEL, Romania.
S&D_Tarabella	Marc TARABELLA, Belgium.
S&D_Ticau	Silvia-Adriana ŢICĂU, Romania.
S&D_Vigenin	Kristian VIGENIN, Bulgaria.
S&D_Weidenholzer	Josef WEIDENHOLZER, Austria.
S&D_Zala	Boris ZALA, Slovakia.
S&D_Zemke	Janusz ZEMKE, Poland.

Codebook *(Content-related codes)*

Code	Comment
*Comparison / Link to: Secessions like Scotland, Kosovo; Cyprus	Speaker links the current situation/question to secessions prior in history, for instance Kosovo, or aims by Scotland. Speaker mentions Cyprus' "occupation" by Turkey and the EU's inability/ ignorance towards that issue.
*Comparison / Link to: WWI	Speaker compares or links current problem/ issue/ question to the first World War.
*Comparison / Link to: WWII	Speaker compares or links current problem/ issue/ question to the second World War.
*Comparison to: totalitarian/ authoritarian regimes + leaders	Speaker compares contemporary Russia (leadership, state authority, Putin, the Kremlin, or specific policies) to totalitarian or authoritarian regimes and leaders of the past, e.g. the GDR, Slobodan Milosevic, the 3rd Reich and Hitler Germany, German fascists, the CPSU, and Stalin.
*Interdiscourse: HR violations in other MS	Speaker refers to/ hints on human rights violations that take place within the EU, or a particular member state.
*Reference to: Polish Invasion / Polish History	Speaker implicitly or explicitly refers or compares current questions or occurences in the history of Poland (e.g. similar events, similar threats, similar "lessons learnd").
*Reference: Upcoming EP elections	Speaker refers to the upcoming EP elections, e.g. to the change in the distribution of seats in the EP, challenger parties, protest voters, etc.
@Anti-Capitalism	Statements contains classic anti-capitalist claims or accusations.
@Justification: Why abstain from vote	Speaker presents reasons and justifications for his/her/their abstention from the final vote.
@Justification: Why voting against	Speaker presents reasons and justifications why s/he or they vote(d) or will vote against the final text/ resolution/ proposal.
@Pacifism / Anti-Militarism	The statement contains anti-militaristic claims/ demands and is spoken from a pacifist viewpoint, thereby criticising any attempts to further increase military expenses, cooperation with NATO, or any other activities that lead to a worsening of the tensions between EU and RUS. Depending on the tone, the statement can sound emotional or populist or neutral/ "fact"-based. The speaker tries to sell him/herself as pacifist.
@pro-EU sentiment	MEP/EPG utters an emotional, irrational, romanticised, wordy, "cheesy" positive statement about the EU, being European, being an MEP. The statement characterises the EU, its benefits, its values, its necessity, its mission. The statement reveals that s/he has an emotional / irrational positive relationship/ attitude towards the EU; it is of subjective importance, and essential to the wellbeing of the citizens of Europe.
@Pro-Ukraine sentiment	MEP explains/demonstrates that s/he has an emotional/ irrational positive relationship with Ukraine, Ukrainians, or Ukrainian citizens. Ukraine is of subjective importance for the speaker.
apologises EU-ENP: does NOT conflict/contradict RUS policies or interests	MEP/EPG apologises the EU-ENP and the PAA with UKraine in the sense that s/he claims that those policies/activities not contradict, conflict with or provocate the Russian Federation. The speaker explains that such programmes are for the benefit of all parties involved and do not disadvantage Russia.
apologises RUS: behaviour	MEP/EPG deliberately explains and justifies Russia's standpoint and behaviour; while doing so, the sp. expresses understanding for Russia's activities and takes side with Russia. S/he sees Russia's activities as logical "reaction" to what someone else (the West, the EU, the US) did. Rus had reasonable grounds to act the way it did. The utterance is an overall forgiving assessment of the Kremlin's deeds, which are plausible to the MEP. In the statement, the speaker apologises specific behaviour (e.g. annexation of Crimea, the speech of Putin in context x).

Code	Comment
apologises RUS: CRIMEA referendum = legit	Contrary to the widespread opinion that the referendum and annexation of Crimea was a breach of international law, MEP/EPG considers the referendum in Crimea in March 2014 as legitimate.
apologises RUS: not worse than US	MEP/EPG expresses that at the end of the day, even though Russia has no clean hands, its activities/ behaviour/ policy is not worse than that of the US. Statement has links to Anti-US/Anti-NATO codes.
apologises UKR: nationalists, nationalism, right-wing organisations	MEP/EPG apologises the existence or behaviour of nationalist/ right-wing/ fascist parties and organisations in Ukraine through explanations in semantics of "revolutionary chaos", "different concepts of right and left", "they do not know what they are doing/saying", "lack of maturity", "do not overrate this". This apologism is also linked to the explanation/ justification why the EU or some European parties support those groups financially.
criticises EU: admit mistakes	MEP/EPG criticises (and demands) that the EU (official, institution, or EP) should admit bad decisions, wrong decisions, mistakes, misjudgements that occured in the process (e.g. with regard to the PAA, EU-Russia relations, ...).
criticises EU: already forgot about Crimea	MEP/EGP criticises that the EP or the EU already accepted that the Crimean peninsula and Sevastopol became subject of the Russian Federation; this illegal Annexation is already accepted an no one discusses it any more and it is already "forgotten".
criticises EU: arrogant	MEP/EPG describes the EU (officials or institutions) as being arrogant/ behaving arrogantly: e.g. in negotiations, in the way strategies and policies are designed, in public speeches, through absence in plenary sessions, through the way problems are presented and framed, or in concrete actions (such as joining Maidan protests).
criticises EU: belligerent, aggressive, expansive, provocative	MEP/EPG criticises or accuses the EU (either as a whole, or its CFSP/CFDP, or the PAA) of being "imperialistic", i.e. aggressive, expansive, provocative and either directly or indirectly war-mongering/ beligerent.
criticises EU: black and white attitude	MEP/EPG criticises that the EU only thinks or argues in a black/white scheme, with few shades, in boxes, good versus bad, them versus us. Criticism also points to the lack of self reflection on the own role in fostering tensions between EU and Russia.
criticises EU: COMMISSION / COUNCIL	MEP/EPG criticises the WORK (results, strategies, also statements) or behaviour/ performance/ attitude of the European COMMISSION and/or the COUNCIL and/or the INSTITUTION itself.
criticises EU: did not learn from the past	MEP/EPG criticises that the EU does not draw lessons from previous experiences made in similar situations; lack of reflectivity.
criticises EU: does not care for/ solve "real" problems	MEP/EPG criticises that the EU does not take care of substantial problems, real problems "at the ground". Subcode of category "Populism".
criticises EU: EP Presidency	MEP/EPG criticises the WORK (results, strategies, also statements) or behaviour/ performance/ attitude of the European Parliament Presidency and/or the INSTITUTION itself. Criticism targets for example the distribution of speeches, dealing with time limits, etc.
criticises EU: EU's enlargement / integration policies	Speaker criticises EU's ENLARGEMENT or INTEGRATION policies - NOT SPECIFIED; such as inviting new memberon its eastern and southern borders. This includes that the integration takes place at all, that further enlargement is planned; the way enlargement and integration towards the East is designed. Also refers to the plans for further Association Agreements. Speaker is against further deepening of the Union (military cooperation, ...). MEP/EPG demands that the EU Member States should NOT cooperate in more fields of action (e.g. European army, Frontex), should NOT delegate more competences to the European level. The enlargement process towards the East should stop (the inclusion of states like Moldova is seen with great hesitance).

Code	Comment
criticises EU: hypocrite	MEP says certain policies of the EU (NOT SPECIFIED) are hypocrite and/or incoherent or feature double standards; or the true motives remain blurry/ hidden. MEP says the EU's Human Rights Policies and Diplomacy vis-à-vis non-EU-states such as CHINA or RUSSIA are hypocrite.
criticises EU: ineffective/ insufficient towards RUS; RUS-policies inefficient/ failure	MEP/EPG criticises/ critically remarks that the decisions and strategies of the EU towards the Russian Federation failed, where inefficient and do/did not bring the wanted results; Actions lead to a deterioration/worsening instead of improvement; caused (more) damage and harm. Activities were insufficient or counterproductive. The EU, in the way their activities are designed, is ineffective towards Russia.
criticises EU: interference in UKRAINE	MEP/EPG criticises that the EU interfered in Ukraine's domestic problems, for instance through the provision of financial resources for those who impeached Yanukovich or certain Ukrainian "pro-European" organisations, by attending demonstrations, etc. Linked to the notion of that the EU's presence stirred some conflicts, or the Maidan protests where somehow "orchestrated" by the West (EU and/or the US).
criticises EU: lack of co-herence	MEP/EPG criticises that the EU (certain policies, or cooperation between member states) (yet) lack a coherent strategy; not really harmonized; inconsistent.
criticises EU: lack of en-gagement/ devotion	MEP/EPG criticises (and implicitly demands) that the EU (or a particular EU institution) does not engage enough, is not ambitious enough, devotes too little resources, participates too little, or puts too little effort into the solution of a particular problem or issue.
criticises EU: naive, gut-gläubig towards RUS	MEP/EGP criticises that the EU has been "a dreamer" when dealing and negotiating with Russia. It has been too faithful, naive, too optimistic and unrealistic when it conceptualised/ designed strategies, policies and formulated expectations.
criticises EU: nationalism in the EU	MEP/EPG criticises nationalist movements or attitudes in EU Member States.
criticises EU: only words, no actions	MEP/EPG criticises that the EU (institution or official) only talks about values, goals and programmes (or problems) instead of taking concrete steps or action.
criticises EU: passiveness	MEP/EPG criticises that the EU is or has been passive or indecisive (for too long), leading to a detereioation of the situation or a gridlock. The speaker also refers to the EU underestimating the current developments in their scope, which then caused a wait-and-see-approach.
criticises EU: poli-cies/strategies disrespect RUS	MEP argues that certain EU policies, for instance the European Union's Eastern Neighbourhood Policy, disrespect, contradict or ignore RUSSIA's (geopolitical) interests
criticises EU: pragmatic approach	MEP constitutes and criticises that the EU is taking a (too) PRAGMATIC APPROACH vis-à-vis RUSSIA, ignoring its ongoing HRs violations and lack of RoL
criticises EU: procedural deficitis in EP: lack of de-mocracy or transparency	The speaker criticises some procedural deficits in the EP, i.a. the lack of transparency in some procedures or decisions, rushing through things, but also "democratic deficits" in the EP (or the EU, tbc).
criticises EU: Russio-phobia	MEP/EPG criticises that the EU (or individual Member State) is too much driven/ influenced/ hindered in taking a "clear headed" perspective on the current challenges, because of their fear or any other negative attitude concerning Russia; this "russiophobic" stance influences their political decisions (too much). They are not neutral and pragmatic. MEP criticises EU's RUSSIA-policy by remarking that mistrusting RUSSIA is counterproductive for the development/improvement/intensification of a common partnership.
criticises EU: sanctions against RUS	MEP/EPG disagrees or is hesitant with the implementation, expansion, prolonging of economic and financial sanctions against the Russian Federation. S/he considers them to be the wrong path/ wrong strategy/ counterproductive. Speakers sees disadvantages of such measures outweighing the advantages and might present reasons for this attitude.

Code	Comment
criticises EU: slave of US policy	MEP/EPG criticises that the EU is blindly following/ uncritically adapting a US-dominated strategy towards Russia. The EU is not a strong independently thinking power, but dominated by what the USA or NATO is telling her to do/ what the best practice is. This practice is inherently targeting Russia's role in the world and aiming at establishing the US' supremacy in political/ economic terms.
criticises EU: soft power insufficient	MEP/EGP criticises that the EU's self-image of being a soft power did not succeed or help in dealing with the tensions between EU, Ukraine and Russia. The Soft Power is a nice concept, but the EU did not manage to perform strongly and convincingly that it has to be taken seriously.
criticises EU: to blame for crisis in UKR	MEP/EPG criticises that the EU played a major, or the major role in fueling or causing the current crises in Ukraine. The EU is to blame for the escalation and civil-war like unrests. This criticism is linked to its ignorance towards Russia when negotiating with Ukraine; notions of the EU having "orchestrated" the protest in November 2013; or to the "expansionist" nature of its Eastern Partnerships, Association Agreements and "heading East" approach. Those measures messed with the mutually exclusive "ownerships" in the Shared Neighbourhood with Russia.
criticises EU: Ukraine / ENP policy failure	MEP/EPG criticises/ critically remarks that the decisions and strategies of the EU towards Ukraine (or ENP states) failed and do/did not bring the wanted results; Actions lead to a deterioration/worsening instead of improvement; caused (more) damage and harm. Activities were insufficient or counterproductive.
criticises EU: uncoordinated, weak vis-a-vis RUS, clueless	MEP/EPG criticises that the EU, in its behaviour and policies towards Russia, is uncoordinated, often clueless and insufficiently informed/ prepared; leading to a weak position when dealing or negotiating with Russia.
criticises EU: unspecified ANTI-EU	MEP/EPG criticises the EU as institution/ supranational entity as a whole. The statement is clearly anti-EU, but not specified or diffuse.
criticises EU: unspecified policies/ actions/ EU inefficient	MEP/EPG remarks that the EU works inefficiently; that it does/did not achieve certain goals or objectives which it should have; and that the whole process is also very costly, i.e. both time consuming and expensive. In his/her criticism, the speaker is unspecific.
criticises EU: Waffenexporte	MEP/EPG criticises that the EU, some European companies, or some Member States continues to export weapons and armery to Russia, even though Russia engages in a military conflict and supports Donbass seperatists.
criticises other MEP: Text put to vote = insufficient, counterproductive, biased wording	MEP/EPG points out that s/he is not satisfied with the resolution text or report: the text (as a whole or parts of it) put to vote is insufficient, counterproductive, biased, or the wording is not supported by the speaker or his affiliated group.
criticises other MEPs/ EU: conditionality	MEP/EPG criticises that the EU (EU institution, EP, or report tabled) uses measures like conditionality in the partnership with Russia, Ukraine, ENP countries, or any other thrid state. The expectation "If you want this, you first have to do that..." or "If you do not this, we will not do that..." is criticised; probably the asymmetry in relations.
criticises other MEPs:	Unspecified collection of criticism targeting other MEPs or EPGs in the plenary, e.g. on what they said earlier, what they proposed, or how they behaved.
criticises other MEPs: behaviour: priorities	MEP/EGP criticises other MEPs regarding their priorities against the background of absence in the plenary.
criticises other MEPs: black and white attitude/ thinking in boxes	MEP/EPG criticises that the EP, EPGs or individual MEPS only think or argues in a black/white scheme, with few shades, in boxes, good versus bad, them versus us. Criticism also points to the lack of self reflection on the own role in fostering tensions between EU and Russia.
criticises other MEPs: hypocrisy / double standards	MEP/EGP criticises or accuses other MEP/s of being hypocrite, having double standards when dealing with or judging political questions, decisions, tasks, phenomena. Subcategories could be: the accusation of being blind on the right eye.

Code	Comment
criticises other MEPs: must not criticise UKR	MEP/EGP criticises that some other speaker/group criticises or speaks negatively about Ukraine (targeting current president, impeachment/coup, Majdan, ...) . The statement is linked to the claim that this criticism brought forward by the other speaker is illegitimate, untrue, blurred by desinformation/propaganda, or inappropriate.
criticises other MEPs: provocating RUS	MEP/EGP criticises or accuses other MEP/s of being provocative towards Russia (through their behaviour, activities, because of resolution texts, appearences in the media, or at demonstrations) rather than appeasing the situation, which is eventually counterproductive.
criticises other MEPs: Putin Fans / Apologists / positive bias for Russia	MEP/EPG criticises other MEP/EPG of having a positive bias for Russia or president/PM Putin. The utterance criticises their forgiving and empathetic assessment of "the Kremlin's" deeds. S/he got this impression through a previous statement in the plenary/ media or any other activity of the accused apologist, e.g. attendance at Crimea referendum. The speaker either accuses another MEP/EPG of being a "Putin Fan", apologising Russia's foreign policy or demonstrating understanding for Russia's actions. Through this, the speaker distances him/herself from the "naively biased" Putin-Fan. Using puns like "Putinista", "Useful Idiot", "pro-Putin bloc".
criticises other MEPs: Russiophobia	MEP/EPG criticises that some other MEP or group (1) is too much driven/ influenced/ hindered in taking a "clear headed" perspective on the current challenges, because of their fear or any other negative attitude concerning Russia; this "russiophobic" stance influences their political decisions (too much). They are not neutral and pragmatic. (2) is using "anti Russian-rhetoric".
criticises other MEPs: war rhethorics / propaganda	The speaker criticises that an EPG or MEPs is either using/ implementing war rhetorics and semantics similar to propaganda (mostly Russian propaganda); or that s/he is "victim" of propaganda without noticing that s/he is brainwashed by some "enemies" world view or perspective. Or that an MEP/EPG uses war rhetoric or belligerent language and metaphors ("Cold war rhetoric").
criticises RUS:	Random, yet unspecified collection of criticism targeting the Russian Federation.
criticises RUS: conservativism / LGBT	MEP/EPG criticises that the Russian state promotes, or parts of the Russian citizens feature conservative values and attitudes, thereby criticising the way people from the LGBTQ* community are treated by the Russian state and in public. Probably so subsume under the code "criticises RUS: State of Human Rights..:".
criticises RUS: criminal prosecution/ law enforcement inefficient	MEP/EPG criticises that the Russian judicial authorities and secret service lack competence (or ambition), work inefficiently when investigating crimes conducted against Russian citizens, or political murders.
criticises RUS: FP: Georgia	MEP/EPG criticises Russia's political strategies or policies related to Georgia, i.e. its role in the Russia-Georgian war, or its behaviour related to South Ossetia.
criticises RUS: FP: North Caucasus	MEP/EPG criticises Russia's political strategies or policies related to North Caucasus region, with Chechnya and Dagestan.
criticises RUS: illegal annexation of CRIMEA / East UKRAINE	MEP/EPG considers the annexation of the Crimean pensinsula and Sevastopol by Russia as illegal and a breach of international law and therefore criticises and condemns this action. Alternatively, the speaker criticises Russia's intransparent involvement in the support of East Ukrainian seperatists, its provision of military equipment, and its disrespect of the territorial borders and integrity of Ukraine.
criticises RUS: illegitimate invasion/ "activities" of eastern Ukraine	MEP/EPG explicitly mentions the illegitimate invasion of East Ukraine by Russia, with the Ukraine as victim whose integrity has been violated. Speaker criticises Russia's support for seperatists.
criticises RUS: opposes EU-UKR relations	MEP/EPG criticises that Russia opposes and/ or tries to hinder or sabotages the deepening of EU-Ukraine relations in form of the Partnership and Association Agreement. The speaker does not understand Russia's anti-attitude.

Code	Comment
criticises RUS: Rule of Law	MEP/EPG criticises the state of Rule of Law in Russia, e.g. the current situation as regards independence of the judiciary, media independence, corruption, investment insecurities.
criticises RUS: State of Human Rights/ Civil liberties	MEP/EPG criticises the state of human rights and civil liberties in the Russian Federation, i.e. human rights abuses or violations, ignorance of human rights treaties or non-compliance, arbitrary acts of HR violations, politically motivated crimes, politically motivated persecution, oppression/ hindrance of opposition.
criticises RUS: trade policies	MEP/EPG criticises Russia's trade policies or trade-related political strategies (design, goal), for example with the EU, third countries (China), but also former CIS and ENP states.
criticises RUS: uses "energy muscle"	MEP/EPG criticises that Russia uses its status as primary energy supplier of the EU and even more for some Member States as political tool to persuade governments of those Member States. Energy dependency to Russia turns into a mean of coercion, that Russia deploys deliberately to put pressure on certain governments.
criticises RUS: violates / disrespects law	MEP/EPG criticises that Russia, through its activities, violates international law, agreements, treaties and legislation.
criticises UKR: coup, neo-fascist elements, oligarchs	Code covers three aspects. (1) MEP/EPG criticises (or claims) that the Ukrainian president Yanukovich was overthrown in a coup. The mainstream- or broadly accepted version of the events is that the president was legally and officially "fired" in an impeachement procedure in the rada, however this interpretation considers the replacement highly doubtful and illegal, given the lack of such reglementations in the constitution and not reaching the parliamentary quorum for such a decision. (2) The speaker criticises the involvement of radical right, fascist forces or para-military groups either in the coup or the newly elected Ukrainian government, or their appearance on the political stage and around the Euromaidan protests. (3) The MEP/EPG criticises the ongoing/ increasing political influence of Ukrainian oligarchs, hinting at clientelism, the power of money to buy political influence, and democratic deficit.
criticises UKR: governm' cannot deal with internal challenges	According to the MEP/EPG, for several reasons, the current Ukrainian government/ president/ person in charge is not capable of solving the problems posed by Ukrainian reality.
criticises UKR: minority protection	MEP/EPG criticises the way how the Ukrainian authorities/ government/ institution handle the protection of minority rights.
criticises: EU, USA and RUS all to blame for crisis in UKRAINE	MEP/EPG critically remarks that the crises in Ukraine are not caused by one, but by several actors: the EU, USA and Russia all played their role in the crises and are therefore all "to blame".
criticises: US and/or NATO: Anti-Americanism; imperialism, expansionist, agressive	The code summarises traditional Anti-Americanism notions. MEP/EPG criticises the United States and/or Nato. They are characterised as being imperialists, expansionist (e.g. heading east) and aggressive.
demands EU + RUS + UKR: consultation of both UKR AND RUS	MEP notes that a cooperation requires two partners: BOTH RUSSIA and UKRAINE; it cannot be done by ignoring one of the two
demands EU: ENP must not create FP tensions	Speaker notices that EU's ENP strategies must NOT create foreign policy / diplomatic TENSION between other states (neither EU-RUS or ENP-states and RUS)
demands EU: more cooperation with NATO	MEP/EPG demands that the EU should intensify its cooperation or consultation with NATO.
demands EU: self-criticism/ should look at itself first	MEP/EPG demands that the EU (particular institution, official), before criticising or judging third states like Russia, take a look at itself first. This statement category is linked to the criticism of hypocrisy.

Code	Comment
demands Relations EU + RUS: pragmatism	MEP/EPG demands that bilateral relations between the EU and Russia should be guided by pragmatism, and not by emotions or sentiment. The speaker hints to the economic and strategic relevance of Russia for the EU.
demands Relations EU + RUS: remain realistic	MEP suggests or recommends that despite several improvements between RUSSIA and the EU and also WITHIN RUSSIA's POLITICAL SYSTEM, we should not become too naive or too optimistic about possible future developments
demands Relations EU + RUS: take CEE State's interests into account	MEP notes that when dealing or negotiating with RUSSIA, the EU has to consider and respect the INTERESTS and PERSPECTIVE especially of CEE states
demands: careful / better no NATO/ military presence in Black sea	MEP/EPGs demands or advises that in his/her perspective, the (increase in) presence of NATO in the Black Sea Basin is counterproductive, should be avoided, or the question should be handled carefully, because it is provocative/ counterproductive, or because having NATO as partner is not the best idea.
demands: EP must deal with HR violations in RUS	MEP/EPG demands that the EP deals with/ discusses/ tackles/ adresses human rights violations and disrespect for civil liberties in Russia.
demands: EP/MEPs must defend HR	MEP/EPG demands that the European Parliament and/ or MEPs must/ should defend human rights, or should engage in the protection of human rights.
demands: EU "stop playing war games in UKR"	MEP/EPG demands that the EU should, from a pacifist and anti-militaristic angle, stop interfering in Ukraine; the demand builds on the idea the Ukraine is victim of a chessgame between the "West" and Russia.
demands: EU has to "respond positively to their [pro EU-]aspirations"	MEP/EPG demands that the EU, whenever a like-minded "European" state in the Shared Neighbourhood aspires closer connections to the EU, it should respond positively to this pro-European future path. For instance engage in negotiations, consider the launch of Association Agreements.
demands: EU has to "wake up", become active	MEP/EPG demands that the EU, instead of remaining in a passive role and only react to developments, has to "wake up" and start acting or start shaping/ influencing situations and challenges.
demands: EU has to be strong/ stand firm vis a vis RUS	MEP/EPG demands that the EU presents itself as strong and firm vis-à-vis Russia. The EU should not appear as weak and internally divided, but "with one address in Brussels". Code probably to merge with "demands: EU has to stand united / common strategy".
demands: EU has to continue dialogue with RUS	MEP/EPG demands that the EU under any circumstances continues negotiations and diplomatic dialogue/ communication with the Russian Federation, or some of its political institutions (e.g. interparliamentary cooperation committees with the duma).
demands: EU has to do more / spend more for UKR	MEP/EPG demands that the EU invests more resources (time, finances, involvement, engagement) into Ukraine than it currently does or did so far. Speaker might mention that the EU/ Europe OWES Ukraine help/ support.
demands: EU has to emphasise democratic values vis-a-vis RUS	MEP/EPG demands that the EU, in negotiations and bilateral meetings, emphasises the relevance of democratic values; that they can be dealbreakers, that they are essential to the EU.
demands: EU has to protect CEE MS	MEP/EPG demands that the EU protects the Central and Eastern European member states (1) from the potential invasion of Russia - e.g. through increased military presence, or the commitment that the MS stand together. (2) Protection through independence: Speaker demands that the EU engages more into questions on energy independence from Russia, which would eventually lead to increased safety; especially for CEE countries who are frequently vulnerable in terms of their energy connections.
demands: EU has to revenge / retaliation	MEP/EPG demands that the EU has to take revenge for what Russia did or retiliate upon Russia for the violations of Ukraine's integrity and the human losses that came with it.

Code	Comment
demands: EU has to show empathy/ respect in EU-RUS-relations	MEP/EPG demands that the EU shows empathy and respect when dealing or negotiationg with Russia, or when designing strategies in the field of EU-Russia relations; the EU should anticipate (better) potential misunderstandings and Russia's perspective on issues.
demands: EU has to stand united / common strategy	MEP/EPG demands that the EU stands united, not as atomised and conflicting member states. The speaker demands that the Council needs to develop a common and/ or consistent approach or strategy in order to "deal" with Russia effectively. Speaker appreciates a common EU-strategy (no "bilateralism Member State - Russia"), and demands/ suggests solidarity.
demands: EU has to support RUS' civil society	MEP/EPG demands that the EU supports the civil society and NGOs in the Russian Federation with several unspecified means.
demands: EU must "save" EaP countries from RUS	MEP/EPG demands that the EU has the duty or should reinforce, foster, fasten the negotiations wie EaP countries in order to save them from the (expanding) Russian sphere of influence.
demands: EU needs a new concrete strategy	MEP/EPG demands that the EU has to reconsider its policies/ strategies, or given the absence of a strategy, develop a new strategy vis-à-vis Ukraine, Russia, or an unspecified other issue that needs to be addressed.
demands: EU should do more	MEP/EPG demands (and implicitly criticises) that the EU (or a particular EU institution) should engage more, devote more resources, participate more, or put more effort into the solution of a particular problem or issue.
demands: EU should help UKR to reform	MEP/EPG demands that the EU should support Ukraine in its reform processes (administration, anti-corruption, ...), e.g. through knowledge transfer and delegations of experts.
demands: EU should not involve (anymore) in UKR protests	MEP/EPG demands that the EU refrains from any involvement or support for Ukrainian ("pro-EU") protestors, and that any of this oversteps boundaries and etiquette of not getting involved into some other state's internal affairs.
demands: EU should not support right-wing Ukrainians	MEP/EPG demands that the EU should stop supporting right-wing or "fascist" organisations in Ukraine with resources and legitimacy, given that such organisations contradict what the EU stands for. Notion of shamefulness; being blind on the right eye.
demands: EU should send mission to UKR	MEP/EPG demands that the EU sends a peace keeping mission, or a mission of observers to Ukraine.
demands: EU should stay neutral	MEP/EPG demands that the EU, in the conflict between Ukraine and Russia, takes a neutral position and does not take a side.
demands: EU should support cultural exchange with RUS	MEP/EPG demands that the EU should support cultural exchanges (academia, schools) with Russia, given that this supports mutual understanding and learning how "European values" work; pupils and students as missionaries for "our" values.
demands: EU should support UKR with manpower + finances	MEP/EPG demands that the EU should support Ukraine with the provision of resources, manpower and financial support in particular.
demands: EU/ EP must react decisively	MEP/EPG demands that the European Parliament/ EU must react decisively to current developments and must not be too hesitant to take a stance, make decisions or statements.
demands: EU: more integration, deepening of the Union	MEP/EPG demands that the EU Member States should cooperate in more fields of action (e.g. European army, Frontex), should delegate more competences to the European level, or that the enlargement process towards the East should continue (or the inclusion of states like Moldova is welcomed).
demands: more EU military presence in Black Sea	MEP/EPG demands that the EU should extend its military presence in the Black Sea Area, or its cooperation with other military forces in the area.

Code	Comment
demands: not words but actions	MEP/EPG demands that the EU (institution, official) should not only talk about its values, goals and programmes but should also take action, concrete measures. Should simplify procedures, reduce costs of decision making to be able to react in real time.
demands: or approves: uphold / more / expand sanctions	MEP/EPG supports the implementation, expansion, prolonging of economic and financial sanctions against the Russian Federation. S/he considers them to be the right measure/ necessary/ advantegoeus. Speakers sees advantages of such measures outweighing the disadvantages and might present reasons for this attitude.
demands: pacifism, appeasement, deescalation, negotiations	MEP/EPG demands that the EU (as a whole, particular institution, or official) behaves appeasingly (?) towards Russia in order to de-escalate the bilateral tensions, and to enable/ facilitate the peace process in Ukraine. Speaker considers negotiations as the best mean to solve the conflict. Speaker builds on "pacifist" rhetorics, that war should be prevented by all means, and that sanctions might be fuel the conflict instead of pushing Russia to cooperation.
demands: RUS has to be (more) compliant	MEP/EPG demands that Russia should fulfill/ comply better to the standards, laws and rules agreed on in laws, international treaties or organisations like WTO, Council of Europe. Russia should comply to international law and not violate it. Russia should fulfill the rules laid down in the Minsk Agreement.
demands: RUS has to behave (as a partner)	MEP/EPG wants Russia to bear in mind that the relationship to the EU is not just any other relationship, but has a long tradition of being partners. This statement is build on the preposition that "a partner" is usually trustworthy, reliable and not contraproductive or sabotaging; and that the actor is not acting like an aggressive idiot, but as a mature negotiator. The statement signalises that the MEP demands Russia to behave according to this expectation, and not like a playground bully. It also communicates some sort of conditionality: cooperation will only work out if Russia behaves like a partner, not as an enemy.
demands: RUS has to comply to HR standards	MEP/EPG demands that Russia should fulfill/ comply to the standards of human rights protections and laws, as signed in international treaties or organisations like OSCE, Council of Europe.
demands: RUS has to respect integrity of its neighbours	MEP/EPG demands that Russia has to respect territorial and political integrity of its neighbours. These are former states of the Soviet Union, CIS states, or what Russia considers at its "near abroad" or "sphere of influence", or what is considered as EU-Russia "Shared Neighbourhood". Integrity refers to both its geographical and state boundaries, but also to respecting and accepting the political decisions taken by the state in question: e.g. Ukraine's aim to enter into a costum union with the EU; Moldova's contact to the EU etc.
demands: RUS has to take concrete steps / deliver	MEP/EPG demands that Russia must undertake concrete steps in order to improve/ change a situation and to prove willingness to contribute to the progress in a crisis/ situation/ conflict. MEP wants to see results.
demands: RUS must not threaten / put pressure on UKR	MEP/ EPGs demands that Russia should not threaten or put pressure on Ukraine; neither by military force, nor by economic sanctions, via the cut of energy supplies or any other tool related to its "energy muscle".
demands: UKR has to change system / oligarchs / modernise itself	MEP/EPG demands that Ukraine has to modernise itself, take concrete measures against corruption, invest in modernisation/reform of administration, reduce the political influence of oligarchs, foster the Rule of Law, etc.
describes EU: stands for a certain set of values	MEP/EPGs emphasises/ describes the EU as institution and community of like-minded members that stands for a certain set of values: respect for human rights, worth and integrity of individuals, rule of law, democracy. Those values are respected and protected.
describes Relations EU + RUS: beneficial / advantageous/ wanted	MEP/EPG appreciates the relations to Russia. S/he considers the relations to Russia as advantegous, beneficial.

Code	Comment
describes Relations EU + RUS: deteriorate / stuck/ pessimistic outlook	MEP/EPG presents a pessimistic/ neutral/ sobered perspective on EU-Russia relations. The speaker describes them as deteriorating or stuck.
describes Relations EU + RUS: don't share common values	MEP/EPG describes that Russia and the EU do not share the same values and are not like-minded.
describes Relations EU + RUS: EU helps RUS	MEP/EPG describes the EU as Russia's helping hand. The EU is Russia's (natural) partner in helping to reform, modernise or to improve in some unspecified way; the EU helps Russia with modernisation processes or to further develop.
describes Relations EU + RUS: improve / optimistic outlook	MEP/EPG presents an optimistic/ positiveperspective on EU-Russia relations. The speaker describes them as improving/ taking a positive direction. The speaker points out that they are still facing some problems, misunderstandings and miscommunications; however he/she tends to be positive / optimistic on future developments.
describes Relations EU + RUS: interests compete	MEP/EPG expresses that Russia and the EU have competing interest in an unspecified field/ issue area.
describes Relations EU + RUS: interests diverge/ contradict	MEP/EPG expresses that Russia and the EU have diverging or contradictory interest in an unspecified field/ issue area.
describes Relations EU + RUS: interests similar/ share common	MEP/EPG expresses that Russia and the EU have similar interests / share common goals in an unspecified field/ issue area.
describes Relations EU + RUS: mutually dependent	MEP/EPG points out that Russia and the EU are interdependent/ mutually dependent. They both need each other: One the one hand, Russia needs the EU and seeks cooperation ("EU is RUSSIA's most important partner and investor"). On the other hand, Russia is essential for the EU.
describes Relations EU + RUS: no real partnership / Erpressbarkeit	MEP/EPG describes the relation between the EU and Russia as no partnership, given that Russia has many leverages against the EU. The EU is erpressbar. Russia is using this leverage against the EU.
describes Relations EU + RUS: serious / relevant issue	MEP/EPG considers the relations to Russia as serious and relevant, essential topic/ issue for the EU.
describes Relations EU + RUS: strategic partners	MEP/EPGs says that EU and Russia are strategic partners, either unspecified, or in the field of economy, energy, or foreign policy (geopolitical questions).
describes Relations EU + RUS: strategic partners NOT / ANY MORE	MEP/EPGs says that in light of the current developments, the EU and Russia are not strategic partners any more, either unspecified, or in the field of economy, energy, or foreign policy (geopolitical questions). As less drastic version, the speaker claims that between Russia and the EU, there is no more "business as usual", given that Russia acts "against the spirit of good neighbourly relations".
describes RUS: "a bear", Großmacht	MEP/EPG describes the Russian Federation as super power (Großmacht), either explicitly, or through comparisons (like "a bear").
describes RUS: "fascism is coming from Moscow, not from Kiev"	MEP/EPG describes Russia as the actual "fascist" actor in the Ukraine crisis (not the Svoboda or any other radical right party in Ukraine). Strong expression to signalise the threatening character of Russia's foreign policy. Comparison/ interdiscursivity to totalitarian regimes.
describes RUS: "inevitable geopolitical partner of the EU"	MEP/EPG describes Russia as "inevitable (geo)political and/ or economic partner" of the EU. The Russia is of strategic importance to the EU.
describes RUS: "wants to rebuild its empire", revanchist	According to MEP/EPG, Russia is revanchist and wants to "swallow" former states of the Soviet Union; wants to expand its sphere of influence to the cost of neighbouring states; summarised in the notion of that Russia "wants to rebuilt its empire", "Neo-

Code	Comment
	Soviet expansionism", logic of "spheres of influence" from the cold war era. It creates this narrative of a"Kremlin strategy" or "Russia's geopolitical game" to take over the former SU states/ CIS/ CEE states.
describes RUS: aggressive / invader/ belligerent	MEP/EPG describes Russia as aggressive, invasive, not taking any borders seriously; similies like "Neo-Soviet expansionism".
describes RUS: armament / militarisation	MEP/EPG describes that Russia is currently improving/ heavily investing in military equipment, military presence, arms build-up.
describes RUS: crimes are usual	MEP/EPG comments that in Russia, crimes and criminal behaviour is normal and "common behaviour".
describes RUS: destabilises the region / wants frozen conflict	MEP/EPGs expresses that, because of its behaviour, Russia destabilises the region (Shared Neighbourhood, Eastern Europe). The speaker assumes/ claims that Russia pursues to turn Eastern Ukraine into another frozen conflict.
describes RUS: difficult (negotiation) partner	MEP/EPG describes Russia as challenging, difficult partner; in negotiations, but also in EU-Russia-relations in general. Dealing with Russia is a challenge. Russia is "not to be tamed", unpredictable.
describes RUS: does not care for HR violations	MEP/EPG claims that the Russian state authorities do not care whether human rights and political rights are violated or not (at least on Russian territory, and not if it related to activists or opposition). Human rights and their protection are not one of Russia's priorities.
describes RUS: does not want to have good relations with EU	MEP/EPG claims that Russia is not really interested in or does not aim at having good, fruitful bilateral relations with the EU.
describes RUS: HR / RoL deteriorates, illiberal	MEP/EPG describes the state of human rights and rule of law in Russia as deteriorating, giving the overall impression of (turning into) an illiberal state. Pessimistic outlook.
describes RUS: immature, no coming to terms with history	MEP/EPG describes Russia as immature in view of its own recent history and the way it deals with it; that is, first and foremost idealisation of the past or silencing crimes and totalitarianism.
describes RUS: liar, words contradict action	MEP/EPG expresses that Russia's actions do not match its commitments/ its word given in negotiation or public announcements contradict its eventual activities/ deeds. Speakers summarises it as Russia being a "liar".
describes RUS: not to be trusted / reliable	MEP/EPG describes Russia as state that cannot fully be trusted and is unreliable.
describes RUS: observes EU/EP	MEP/EPG expresses that Russia observes/ traces the EU, its decisions, its difficulties in finding a common position.
describes RUS: RUS like Soviet Union	MEP/EPG describes contemporary Russia as copy or being equal to the Soviet Union.
describes RUS: Russia's hybrid/ desinformation/ undeclared war	Speaker/EPG thinks/ argues that Russia conducts an undeclared and/or hybrid war against either Ukraine, or the EU. The war remains undeclared, however there are aggressive actions violating the territorial integrity of Ukraine (e.g. through sending soldiers without badges to Donbass). The war being hybrid means that there are not only military activities, but "the Kremlin" employs a blend of with irregular warfare and cyberwarfare. It makes use of desinformation strategies and fake-news (confusing the media with counter-information), and other influencing methods like foreign electoral intervention or financial support for political organisations that are potential speakers on Russia's behalf (e.g. radical right parties in the EU).
describes RUS: shares European values	MEP/EPG claims that Russia shares European values.
describes RUS: slowly modernises / improves	MEP/EPG describes that Russia slowly modernises, takes step into the direction of becoming more democratic, improves certain standards (e.g. level of human rights violations or political murders). The statement suggest an optimistic view.

Code	Comment
describes RUS: threat / dangerous	MEP/EPG describes Russia as dangerous, threating, or potentially posing a threat to others (i.e. neighbouring countries, CEE member states, "the security").
describes RUS: to blame for UKR crisis / misery / war	MEP/EPG expresses that Russia played a major, or the major role in fueling or causing the current crises in Ukraine. The Russian Federatioin is to blame for the escalation and civil-war like unrests.
describes RUS: unde-mocratic	MEP/EPG describes Russia as explicitly as undemocratic state, hybrid regime or au-thocracy. Alternatively, the speaker uses sentence contructions as "the lack of...".
describes RUS: wants to hinder UKR in getting closer to EU	MEP/EPG describes Russia as opponent to the deepening of EU-Ukaine relations, inter alia through the Partnership- and Association Agreement. According to the speaker, Russia takes different measures to hinder Ukraine from closer connections to the EU; or is still in denial that it is actually happening.
describes RUS: wants to keep conflicts going	MEP/EPG describes Russia's role as conflict party that does not de-escalate the conflicts but instead deliberately keeps them going.
describes UKR: "over-threw its king"/ president impeachment legit	MEP/EPG describes the change in government and the election of the new president as a legitimate process, in which the Ukrainian people "overthrew its unwanted king" in order to exchange him for a better/ pro-EU president. The speaker considers the im-peachment process in the Rada (Ukraine's parliament) as legitimate and legal. By doing so, the Ukrainians "wanted to break free", as they could not take any more the pro-RUS course of Yanukovich.
describes UKR: complex causality for crisis	MEP/EPG points out that a complex set of factors lead to the crises in Ukraine; it cannot be explained only by foreign influence, but there were also internal/ domestic factors causing the situation.
describes UKR: is Euro-pean / shares European values / wants to be with EU	MEP points out that (maybe not all, but a large majority of) citizens of Ukraine want to strengthen relations with EU and not with Russia. Ukraine is a European country that shares Europe's values and mindset.
describes UKR: Selbstbe-stimmungsrecht; did an act of Liberation	MEP/EPG describes/reads the events surrounding Euromaidan, change of president/ government, elections and the ratification of the PAA as an act of self-determination, and liberation.
describes UKR: situation very serious for the secu-rity of Europe	MEP/EPG expresses that the overall situation concerning Ukraine -- all bilateral or tri-lateral tensions between Russia, Ukraine, the EU and partly the US -- could, if handled wrongly, have serious negative consequences for the security of all European states. Together with the code "describes UKR: stability vital to the EU", both codes belong to storyline how "Ukraine must stand", "Ukraine-crisis decisive for the future of Europe".
describes UKR: slowly modernises / reforms / improves	MEP/EPG describes that Ukraine slowly modernises and puts reforms into practice; takes step into the direction of becoming more democratic, improves certain standards (e.g. level of human rights violations or corruption, minority rights protection). The statement suggest an optimistic view.
describes UKR: stability vital to the EU	MEP/EPG expresses that the political and/or economic stability of Ukraine and its terri-torial integrity is vital to the EU as a whole. Ukraine is considered as buffer state be-tween the EU and Russia. A "failed state" Ukraine or a frozen conflict would endanger Europe's security.
describes UKR: wants to be truly independent	MEP/EPG describes that Ukraine wants to gain "real" independence, which means be-ing independent from both Russia and the EU.
describes: Putin NEG	President (or PM) Vladimir Putin is mentioned explicitely or implictely in a negative way; he is described with negative attributes and similes.
describes: Putin POS	President (or PM) Vladimir Putin is mentioned explicitely or implictely in a positive way; he is described with positive attributes, competences and similes.

Code	Comment
describes: RUS: detere-oirating HR sit	MEP/EPG states that the human rights situation is worsening in Russia. More neutrally expressed and descriptive than code "criticises RUS: State of Human Rights/ Civil liberties".
describes: RUS: judiciary inefficient / not independent	MEP/EPG describes the Russian judiciary as inefficent, corrupted, intertwined with the Russian government and not independent from/ heavily influenced by political decisions.
empathy with RUS: behaviour	MEP/EPG expresses sympathy and empathy for Russia's behaviour, given that there are two sides to every story. S/he can understand Russia's perspective on the conflict, reads its reactions with view to Russia's current context, history, and world view. In the statement, the speaker sympathises with Russia in a diffuse way, more generally. It is the "small brother" code of the apologist, who is actively advertising Russia's position and apologising its activities.
EU-UKR-relations: appreciates: PAA	MEP/EPG appreciates/ supports the negotiation/ ratification of the Partnership and Association Agreement with Ukraine.
EU-UKR-relations: beneficial for both sides	MEP/EPG considers the negotiation/ ratification of the Partnership and Association Agreement with Ukraine as beneficial/ advantageous for both stakeholders.
EU-UKR-relations: disapproves: PAA	MEP/EPG disapproves/ does not support/ questions the negotiation/ ratification of the Partnership and Association Agreement with Ukraine.
EU-UKR-relations: supports Macrofinancial assistance	MEP/EPG supports the EU's plan to grant Ukraine Macrofinancial assistance in order to prevent state illiquidity or insolvency.
Narrative: "Querfront" / cooperation of the fringes	MEP/EPG is convinced that the fringe parties or groups in the EP, consisting of GUE/NGL, EFDD and NI, or ENF, somehow work together or cooperate. There is a left-right alliance between the radical left and right.
Narrative: "whole Europe is under attack"	Narrative builds on the creation of a threat scenario. The aggression against Ukraine and the disrespect of its territorial integrity and Russia's behaviour as invader is not only a threat and attack against Ukraine. It is an offense and aussalt against whole Europe ("one parts stands for the whole"); against its integrity as entity, but also against its values and what it symbolises.
Narrative: Black Sea as puffer zone / bridge	Speaker describes the Black Sea are as puffer zone between the EU and Russia, or as bridge.
Narrative: EU faces turning point in (its) history	Narrative includes two dimensions. (1), that the EU or the "West", in light of the challenges and threats posed by Russia, faces a turning point in history. The EU will either cope with the circumstances and come out of this crisis even stronger ("what doesn't kill you make you stronger"). Alternatively, the EU will not be able to deal with Russia's behaviour/ "expansion". Narrative also refers to the idea (2) that the crisis leads to the crucial question of "Quo vadis EU". Will the EU integrate further and delegates more competences to the supranational level (e.g. border control, military cooperation, EU army), will it invite more countries to membership (Moldova,...)? Or will this lead to a minimalisation of the EU or even a desintegration.
Narrative: fight of systems / values / dystopian outlook	Speaker constructs the current tensions and crises as representative/ symbolic for a fight of (value) systems, "a wider struggle": the West versus the East, illberalism versus democracy, conservativism versus modernism, rule of law versus "the right of the strong", etc. The speaker creates a dark and pessimistic vision: if "the law of the jungle" / "might is right" dogma continues (because it already started when the international law was broken without consequences), then the future of the continent/ society/ peaceful cooperation will be dystopic.
Narrative: RUS wants to weaken / split EU	MEP/EPG shares the opinion that the eventual aim/ strategy of Russia is to weaken and/ or split the European Union; notion of "divide and conquer".

Code	Comment
Narrative: Treatment of NGOs/ opposition symbolises RUS' overall state/ direction	Speaker explains that the way the Russian government treats NGOs or the political opposition (negative, according to the speaker) symbolises Russia's overall authoritarian turn (deterioration).
Narrative: UKR was just the beginning / test; other CIS/CEE states might fall soon	The unrightful annexation/ invasion of Ukraine by Russia was just the beginning in a series of similar unrightful events and a test balloon for the EU. "Putin" will continue to exceed/break the law and other CIS/ CEE/ Shared Neighbourhood states will be attacked/ invaded; or his revanchist plans stretch into taking over parts of the Black Sea. This is particularly the case if "he" realises that the EU/ international community does not react in the way the speaker proposes.
Narrative: Ukraine-crisis as litmus test for the EU	The crisis in Ukraine (or Russia's foreign, military policy activities in general) is a "litmus test" or one of the biggest challenges for the EU: for its problem-solving capacities, it unity, its ability to cooperate beyond individual interests of member states, the extent of its soft power, whether its values are only empty words or sound/ substantiated. Code also refers to the notion that Russia is testing the EU's nerves, the limits of tolerance.
Narrative: Ukraine-crisis decisive for the future of Europe	MEP/EPG expresses that the political and/or economic stability of Ukraine and its territorial integrity is vital to the EU as a whole. Ukraine is considered as buffer state between the EU and Russia. A "failed state" Ukraine or a frozen conflict would endanger Europe's security. MEP/EPG expresses that the overall situation concerning Ukraine -- all bilateral or trilateral tensions between Russia, Ukraine, the EU and partly the US -- could, if handled wrongly, have serious negative consequences for the security of all European states. Together with the code "describes UKR: stability vital to the EU", both codes belong to the narrative how "Ukraine must stand", "Ukraine-crisis decisive for the future of Europe".
Populism: in the name of the people	MEP positions him/herself as advocate of the people/ citizens of Europe/ or his/her member state of origin, or a particular interest group (farmers, businesses, sme's...) ("populists appeals, see Moffit). The speaker criticises "chessgames" of the majority of EU institutions/ MEPs whose victims are, eventually, are the citizens. Statements may include subtle or blunt messages that WE (the speaker or his affiliated group) are not the same as the other MEPs who play their part in the elitarian EU/ EP.
Populism: We vs. You	Unspecified statements of MEPs who refer either indirectly or explicitly classic populist concepts, i.e. to the antagonism between US (the people or people's advocates) and YOU, the evil (inefficient, stubborn, ignorant,...) elite or mainstream politicians. The speaker points out that he is not part of the mainstream, that s/he is not taking part of the decision ("You decided that..."); that the speaker considers decisions or text proposals as insane, counterproductive, against common sense, against the people's will.
Relations EU + RUS: appreciates: RUS' WTO accession	MEP/EPG states that s/he appreciates/ welcomes Russia's accession to the World Trade Organisation.
Relations EU + RUS: appreciates: Visa-free travel	MEP/EPG appreciates/ supports the policy plans/ implementation of visa-free travel between Russia and the EU.
Relations EU + RUS: disapproves: pragmatism outweighs values	MEP/EPG criticises that in EU-Russia relations, pragmatism and "Sachzwänge" outweigh value-based arguments, e.g. that trade with Russia should be minimised because of the way this state treats the opposition and human rights.
Relations EU + RUS: disapproves: Visa Lib'tion	MEP/EPG disapproves/ does not support the policy plans/ implementation of visa-free travel between Russia and the EU.
Self-Defence: "we are no admirer of Putin"	Speaker reacts critically to the accusation that s/he is apologising Russia's behaviour, empathising with Russia, or having a high affinity with Russia. They neglect the claim/ accusation to be "pro-Russian", or "Putin Fans".