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The European Union's Relations with Ukraine

An Analysis of the EU's Foreign Policy towards Ukraine and the Ongoing Conflict

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Abstract

This master thesis is concerned with the European Union's relationship with Ukraine by analysing the Union's foreign policy towards the former Soviet state and the ongoing crisis on its territory. According to the United Nations (2016), in May 2016, more than 9,300 people have been killed in the Ukraine conflict. This makes it one of the bloodiest current conflicts that are taking place at the EU's doorstep.

The crisis was triggered by the 'Euromaidan' movement, which started in Kiev in late 2013 as a response from the Ukrainian civil society to the cancellation of negotiation talks by the former Ukrainian President Yanukovych with the EU about an Association Agreement. This Association Agreement between the EU and Ukraine is of great significance as it provides an opportunity for the former Soviet state to move closer to the EU and thereby to the West. Since the agreement was broadly supported among Ukrainians, the suspension of the negotiation talks came as a surprise to the civil society and the public outcry was immense.

Consequently, it can be argued that the agreement and the EU itself represent important factors in the Ukraine conflict. In order to shed light on the EU's role in the crisis, the Union's foreign policy towards Ukraine and especially towards the ongoing conflict is investigated in this thesis. It is analysed what the foreign policy of the EU in particular consists of and why the Union conducts exactly this policy and no other.

For the purpose of addressing this issue adequately, the international relations theories of realism and liberalism constitute the theoretical framework. Due to the theories' contrasting claims and assumptions, it is highly interesting to see which theory accounts better for the EU's foreign policy in this specific case, or whether both of them possess a certain amount of explanatory power. Two hypotheses, which reflect the realist and liberal propositions respectively, are developed in this thesis and are used to carry out the analysis. In this way, a maintainable answer of the research question is given.

The conflict in Ukraine is as current as it is complex due to the historical, cultural, political, and social aspects of it. Moreover, a variety of actors is involved in it or became involved in the course of the crisis. This thesis focuses on the EU's role in the conflict, yet also makes the positions of Ukraine, Russia, and NATO and their different relationships to one another a subject of discussion. Thereby, the findings of this work contribute to the broad academic research already existing about the topic.

List of Abbreviations

AA	Association Agreement
CEECs	Central and Eastern European countries
CES	Common Economic Space
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CJEU	Court of Justice of the European Union
COM	European Commission
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
DCFTA	Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement
EEA	European Economic Area
EEAS	European External Action Service
EEU	Eurasian Economic Union
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy
EP	European Parliament
EU	European Union
FP	Foreign Policy
FTA	Free Trade Area
HR/VP	EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice President of the Commission
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPE	International Political Economy
IR	International Relations

MS	Member States
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NIS	Newly Independent States
NUC	NATO-Ukraine Commission
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PCA	Partnership and Cooperation Agreement
UN	United Nations
US	United States (of America)
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

1.0 Introduction

This master thesis analyses the European Union's (EU) foreign policy (FP) measures towards Ukraine and the ongoing crisis in the former Soviet state, which started with the 'Euromaidan' movement in November 2013. It is outlined what particular steps the EU initiated as a response to the conflict and how the Union dealt with Ukraine prior to the crisis in order to investigate why exactly this policy is conducted.

The Ukraine crisis is of great relevance to the academic field of international relations (IR), firstly because it is an ongoing conflict that, at the time of writing, started only roughly two and a half years ago and takes place right on the EU's doorstep. The conflict is as current as it is complex and, therefore, can be approached from a variety of angles. Given Ukraine's Soviet past, a historical perspective and a domestic perspective are two of these angles. Hence, an analysis of the current crisis can be carried out on the basis of Ukraine's political, social, and cultural history, as it has been done copiously in academic research. The involvement of the different actors in the conflict constitutes another approach. This very approach is taken up by this thesis as it deals with the EU's FP behaviour towards Ukraine. In this way, this work contributes to the research already existing about the current Ukraine crisis since the issue of the EU's FP towards Ukraine and the ongoing conflict has not been addressed as comprehensively as the historical and domestic aspects of the crisis.

An analysis of the EU's FP is highly interesting because it can be argued that the Union, in a sense, is one of the key factors that led to the outburst of the Euromaidan. By negotiating an Association Agreement (AA) with Ukraine, the EU provided an opportunity for the country to move closer to the EU. Riabchuk and Lushnycky (2015) argue that the Ukrainian civil society perceived the AA as "the last hope to fix the things peacefully, i.e. to make their rulers abide by laws and to gain the EU's support in attempts to re-establish the rule of law in the country" (p. 49). Snyder (2013) even describes the process of rapprochement with the EU for Ukrainians as the way to a "normal life in a normal country" (para. 3). Hence, when the negotiation talks about the AA were suspended by former Ukrainian President Yanukovych, the public outcry was immense and the Euromaidan movement was born. Consequently, the EU's response to the subsequent conflict in Ukraine and its behaviour prior to the crisis are very relevant for studies within the field of European politics. Therefore, this thesis seeks to answer the following question:

What is the European Union's foreign policy towards Ukraine and the ongoing conflict and why does the Union conduct exactly this foreign policy?

In order to approach the research question, it is made use of the main IR theories of liberalism and realism. It is shown whether the FP actions of the EU can be explained by means of these theories respectively. Thus, liberal and realist arguments in regard to this specific case of EU FP towards Ukraine and the ongoing conflict are put forward, leading to a discussion about which theory proves to be the more suitable one in this particular case.

As liberalism and realism stand in sharp contrast to one another, it is interesting to see which theory provides a better account of the matter investigated in this thesis. In this sense, the findings of the analysis contribute to the decade-long competition between these two IR theories. Nevertheless, it is acknowledged that other theories within the field of IR might offer interesting insights to the topic as well. Yet, liberalism and realism serve as the chosen theories for reasons presented later in the thesis.

As the chosen topic possesses such a great deal of complexity, it cannot be ruled out that in this thesis certain issues are merely touched upon and not explained in detail. However, it is made sure that matters, which are crucial for understanding the arguments and points made in this work, are described comprehensively. The research question of this thesis solely mentions the two actors Ukraine and EU, however, due to the Russian involvement in the conflict, an adequate answer to the research question can only be given by also shedding light on the Russian standpoint. Therefore, the intertwined relations between the different players are outlined in such a way that the focus of the thesis is not pushed into the background.

1.1 Word Explanation

Before turning to the methodology, it is important to clarify two terms used in the research question and throughout this thesis.

First of all, the term 'foreign policy' has to be defined. Carlsnaes' (2002) definition of FP is used as the understanding of the term in this thesis. According to him, FP is considered as

> those actions which, expressed in the form of explicitly stated goals, commitments and/or directives, and pursued by governmental representatives acting on behalf of their sovereign communities, are directed toward objectives, conditions and actors–both governmental and non-governmental–which they want to affect and which lie beyond their territorial legitimacy (Carlsnaes, 2002, p. 335)

The above definition is chosen since it suggests the involvement of not solely nation states but also other actors in FP. As the EU cannot readily be defined as a nation state in the traditional sense of the term, yet is engaged in FP making, Carlsnaes' (2002) definition is well suited for the scope of this thesis.

Furthermore, it needs to be clarified which time span is referred to when the terms 'Ukraine crisis' or 'Ukraine conflict' are used. If not indicated otherwise, the terms denote the period from the outbreak of the Euromaidan in November 2013 up until the present day. At the time of writing, the conflict is still ongoing and an end to it is not in sight.

2.0 Methodology

This chapter presents the methodological approach of the thesis by outlining the structure of the project, discussing the material, explaining the usage of the chosen theories, summarising the limitations, and by giving an overview of the literature used throughout this work.

2.1 Synopsis

For the sake of clarity and coherence, the following section explains the structure of this thesis.

The introduction acquaints the reader with the issue of the thesis by accounting for the relevance of the chosen topic, providing pertinent introductory information, and presenting the research question. After having clarified certain terminological aspects, it is turned to the methodology in which, first of all, the material of this thesis is thoroughly discussed. Thereafter, it is accounted for the usage of two diverging IR theories – realism and liberalism - which constitute the theoretical framework of this thesis. In order to outline how these theories are used in the analysis, it is explained that a hypothesis corresponding to each of two theories is developed. These hypotheses are presented and accounted for later in the thesis. The subsequent section summarises the limitations to this thesis.

The literature review introduces leading scholars and their respective works which are referred to throughout this thesis. The presented literature is incorporated as it sheds light on the issue of the EU FP towards Ukraine and reflects on the ongoing conflict from different angles, contributing to the validity of this work.

Next, the 'Theoretical Framework' chapter explains the chosen theories in detail. The different claims and concepts of the theories are presented here. Weaknesses of the theories as well as their well-known pioneers are outlined. The sections of realism and liberalism

conclude with a respective presentation of the theories' hypotheses which are used in the analysis of this thesis.

After having reflected on the theories, it is turned to the 'Background Information' chapter. This chapter is divided up into four sections which respectively are concerned with a historical overview of the topic, the outline of the FP making process in the EU, the actual EU FP regarding Ukraine and the ongoing conflict, and finally the relationship between Ukraine and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). These sections are relevant for this work as they provide information that are crucial for a thorough understanding of the issue that is dealt with.

In the subsequent chapter, the analysis and the discussion of this thesis are carried out. Firstly, the EU FP towards Ukraine and the ongoing conflict is analysed through realist lenses by making use of the realist hypothesis presented in the theoretical framework. Next, a discussion of the realist line of argumentation is provided before a partial conclusion of same is drawn. Thereby, it is shown whether realism possesses (a certain degree of) explanatory force for the EU FP towards Ukraine and the ongoing conflict. This procedure is repeated from a liberal standpoint, also concluding with an evaluation of the explanatory force of the theory regarding the EU FP in this specific case.

In the conclusion as the closing part of this thesis, the findings of the analysis and the discussion are summarised before an answer to the research question is given. Finally, suggestions for further research are outlined.

2.2 Discussion of Material

In this section, it is accounted for the material which serves as the backbone of the thesis. Moreover, an outline of the validity and reliability of the material is given.

2.2.1 Internal and Confidential Material

The scope of this thesis and its focus on the motivations of the EU to carry out a certain FP towards Ukraine (rather than the mere quantity of certain EU policies) demands for the usage of qualitative data as, according to David and Sutton (2004), qualitative research emphasises "words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data" (p. 35).

The arguably best approach to answer the research question of this thesis is to gather and analyse internal EU documents such as files, communications, minutes of meeting, email exchanges, etc. between the EU institutions, important individual actors like the President of the European Commission (COM) or different heads of state and government, and other

relevant stakeholders. This data, which is not generally available to the public, would provide a great deal of confidential information and intelligence that could be used to reveal the 'actual' motivations behind the EU FP towards Ukraine. These motivations and driving forces are highly likely to vary between the different players corresponding to their preferences, such as national interest, for instance. Therefore, an insight into internal and confidential data would disclose information that could be used for analysing the EU FP on a whole other level. It goes without saying that every actor involved in the EU FP making process pursues individual interests – which are sometimes in line with the other actors' interest and sometimes not –, is concerned with face saving, or seeks to uphold a certain image. Hence, the eventual outcome of internal EU bargaining processes, information sharing procedures or the like, which are made available to the public and declared as 'the EU response' or 'EU action', are subject of compromise and most likely altered to the extent that all players involved can publicly support the outcome. Consequently, confidential and internal data constitutes the most genuine and unaltered account of the motivations of the EU to adopt a certain FP (or not) and would, therefore, be the best material to answer the research question of this thesis.

Unfortunately, as an external with no special connections or resources, it is almost impossible to get a hold of internal and confidential material, unless these documents happen to be accessible through certain online platforms such as WikiLeaks. Thus, an alternative source of data must be found, even though any alternative might not be as convenient as the favoured data outlined above. One way of obtaining first-hand information on EU FP towards Ukraine is to conduct in-depth interviews with relevant individuals. Ideally, these individuals would be heads of state and government (or their representatives) and the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice President of the Commission (HR/VP) as these persons are the most powerful actors in the EU FP making process (see section 4.2). Furthermore, the President of the European Council would also make for an interesting interview partner as this position entails profound knowledge of the different national positions. The information from these primary sources could provide valuable insights, but are most probably not free of distortions as the interviewee is not obliged to tell the interviewer 'the truth' (in fact, the interviewee can even refuse to answer certain questions) but is free to choose a specific version of events, which suits his/her interests best. In this case, the interviewer could not immediately, if at all, tell if the interviewee is altering the information, holding anything back or even completely lying about matters. However, also the interviewer could distort the answers given by the interviewee, as the interviewer is likely to

be partial - or at least subjective – and, by asking certain questions in a certain way, could impose a specific world view on the interviewee. This statement is supported by Valentine (2005) who states that in-depth interviews are often criticised on the grounds that "interviewers bias the respondents' answer or that interviewers are not or cannot be objective or detached" (pp. 111/112).

Moreover, conducting in-depth interviews, which provide enough useful data with such high ranking politicians and EU officials, is not only hard to achieve (again, as an external) but also very time and resource consuming. Therefore, these primary sources are not chosen as the data of this thesis.

Eventually, it was decided to primarily draw upon a wide range of secondary data, and thereby applying the concept of triangulation[1], in order to carry out the analysis. The chosen secondary sources consist of official EU homepages such as the European External Action Service (EEAS) website, press releases and communications from the EU institutions, but also news reports, academic articles, research papers, and books from numerous scholars (see section 2.4). Furthermore, primary data, e.g. in the form of extracts from the EU-Ukraine AA and the EU common strategy on Ukraine are included. This diverse range of sources accounts for a broad angle from which the analysis is conducted. If the chosen data would exclusively originate from official EU sources, it could be argued for a certain degree of bias in the material. Therefore, the works of like-minded as well as conflicting scholars are incorporated into this work. Furthermore, the EU data as well as the other sources are critically considered and questioned throughout this thesis. As the analysis, carried out in this thesis, is of qualitative nature, questions about validity and reliability arise. These questions are addressed in the following section.

2.2.2 Validity and Reliability

In academic research, the concepts of validity and reliability are awarded much attention as they account for rigour, which ensures the utility and value of the research (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson & Spiers, 2002, p.2). As this thesis uses qualitative data, it is important to address the debate on whether the concepts of validity and reliability can be used to assess both quantitative and qualitative research. Scholars are split on this question with some

[1] The term 'triangulation' refers to researchers using "multiple methods or different sources to try and maximise their understanding of a research question" (Valentine, 2005, p. 112) and, in this way, aiming to give the most appropriate answer to the research question.

arguing that other criteria concepts[2] must be found in order to ensure the quality of qualitative work (cf. e.g. Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Whittemore, Chase & Mandle, 2001), and others claiming that the traditional concepts of validity and reliability are as appropriate for qualitative research as they are for quantitative methods (cf. e.g. Mays & Pope, 2000; Morse et al., 2002). This debate is primarily based on the claim that qualitative inquiry lacks "the certainty of hard numbers" which results from quantitative research (Morse et al., 2002, p.2).

However, since this thesis is not concerned with elaborating on or seeking to settle this epistemological debate, it is referred to the works of the respective scholars for in-depth discussions on the matter. Yet, it needs to be stated that this thesis follows Morse et al.'s (2002) line of argumentation that the concepts of validity and reliability still account for the quality of qualitative research. Morse et al. (2002) draw in the justification of their claim on Hammersley (1992), Yin (1994), and Kuzel and Engel (2001) by stating that "the broad and abstract concepts of reliability and validity can be applied to all research because the goal of finding plausible and credible outcome explanations is central to all research" (Morse et al., 2002, p. 3). Hence, in order to find a plausible and credible answer to the research question by means of a qualitative analysis, the concept of triangulation (see above) is applied in this work. The range of different sources constituting the data ensures quality by addressing the issue of the thesis from several angles and standpoints. Thereby, subjectivity and bias is supposed to be largely excluded, even though the origin of every single source has to be taken into consideration. This approach is underpinned by Mays and Pope (2000) who recommend the use of triangulation as one way to improve validity in qualitative research.

Naturally, official government or EU sources (like official websites, press releases, etc.) have a high degree of reliability as their content is approved by the publishing entity and, thus, provides reliable information. Yet, it has to be borne in mind that these contents are made available to the public in order to serve a specific purpose, which is determined by the respective source. Consequently, the information cannot be considered completely unbiased. Regarding the academic sources used in this thesis, it can be said that the respective scholars support their findings and argue for their claims by referring to empirical research and historical facts. Hence, these sources score high in validity, yet are also subject to a certain extent of subjectivity due to individual interpretations of their authors. Nonetheless, in the course of writing, it is reflected on these limiting aspects in order to try to satisfy the criteria of validity and reliability.

[2] Lincoln & Guba (1985), for instance, suggest the concept of 'trustworthiness', consisting of a credibility aspect, a transferability aspect, a dependability aspect, and a confirmability aspect.

2.3 Theories

In order to set the theoretical framework of this thesis, two main IR theories – realism and liberalism - are chosen as a means to carry out the analysis and to answer the research question. It is acknowledged that realism and liberalism are not the only two IR theories that might be relevant to this thesis, yet they are selected here. Among the broad range of IR theories are, inter alia, the theory of International Society and the theory of International Political Economy (IPE) – which are, according to Jackson and Sørensen (2003), the other two main IR traditions besides realism and liberalism. Moreover, it can be argued that the theory of constructivism could also be relevant to this thesis as it "certainly holds considerable potential as an applied framework for understanding foreign policy" (Flockhart, 2012, p. 80) [3]. However, in this thesis, merely the theories of realism and liberalism are used since the physical limitations of this work do not allow for an extensive discussion of all traditional and emerging IR theories. Moreover, realism and liberalism stand in sharp contrast to each other and, according to Jackson and Sørensen (2003), have been subject to several major debates since the end of the World War I, when IR arose as a new academic subject.

Comprehensive accounts of these two theories are given in the 'Theoretical Framework' chapter as well as further explanations for the choice of the theories. This section merely describes the way of how the two theories are used in this thesis.

In order to determine a starting point from which the analysis is carried out, a hypothesis for the theory of realism and for the theory of liberalism respectively is deduced. The hypotheses provide an approach to the question of how the EU 'should' behave towards Ukraine and the ongoing conflict – depending on whether the Union is seen through realist or liberalist lenses. Based on the two hypotheses, the actual development and the behaviour of the EU is examined in the analysis. In this way, it can be argued for either realism or liberalism being more suitable and convincing in terms of providing an answer to the research question (or the result that both theories have a certain deal of explanatory force or lack of same). The hypotheses are derived from realist and liberalist assumptions and claims respectively and are accounted for in the theoretical framework.

[3] For extensive discussions of constructivism, international society, and IPE see e.g. Flockhart (2012) and Barnett (2014) for constructivism and see e.g. Jackson & Sørensen (2003, 2013) for international society and IPE.

2.4 Limitations

As already stated above, the probably best-suited data for the purpose of this thesis is EU internal and confidential material. However, for the reasons outlined, it is not made use of this primary material but a wide range of secondary sources is chosen. Consequently, the findings of this thesis are limited to a certain extent. Nevertheless, applying the concept of triangulation, the most appropriate answer to the research question is given and the validity of this work is accounted for.

Furthermore, due to the physical limitations of this thesis, it is not possible to examine the entire range of foreign policies of the EU towards Ukraine in the course of time. Therefore, it is focused on the FP adopted by the Union in response to the ongoing crisis in Ukraine. Additionally, certain foreign policies already implemented before the conflict broke out, are incorporated in this thesis. It is accounted for their inclusion by referring to the literature used throughout this work. Assuming the relevance of certain policies on the basis of their literature coverage, these FP measures are dealt with in the analysis.

Consequently, the findings of the analysis cannot be automatically applied to every single EU FP ever adopted. This thesis simply aims to reveal the political motivations of the EU to decide on certain FP towards Ukraine and the ongoing conflict by showing which IR theory accounts best for the EU's behaviour.

2.5 Literature Review

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the topic of the EU-Ukraine relationship has been widely discussed in the field, and so has the issue of EU-Russia relations. Hence, the already existing literature is vast and still growing in modern times, undoubtedly stimulated by the outbreak of the recent Ukraine conflict. In this section, the literature used in the analysis of this thesis is presented. It is primarily focused on more recent literature, which covers the ongoing Ukraine crisis; however, older sources are also incorporated in order to draw a broad picture of the topic.

Firstly, several Ukrainian scholars and their respective works are included in this thesis as they provide social, political, and cultural aspects of the relationships between the EU, Ukraine, and Russia. Portnov and Portnova (2015), for example, provide an extensive chronology of the Maidan protests in 2013 and 2014 by pointing to the Yanukovych regime as well as to the Russian government as the main factors for the outburst of the conflict. The authors state that "significant parts of the Ukrainian people desire a principally new ('European') political and economic structure to their lives" and that Ukraine should be

striving for freedom and democracy by recognising its national diversity (Portnov & Portnova, 2015, p. 59). Glebov (2015) argues that the post-bipolar system which emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Union ceased to exist after the Russian invasion of Ukraine (p. 111). The author introduces a "post-post-bipolar period of IR" (Glebov, 2015, p. 111) which will be characterised by "real multipolarity" and the "post-Putin era" (Glebov, 2015, p. 112). Moreover, Glebov (2015) challenges the liberal idea of the democratic peace theory by claiming that this concept cannot hold in IR unless Russia becomes a democratic country.

Furthermore, claims made by Geoffrey Pridham are of importance for the analysis of this thesis. Pridham (2014) focuses, quite in line with this thesis, on the relationship between the EU and Ukraine and points to the significant fact that the EU-Ukraine AA does not contain a clear membership perspective for Ukraine. The scholar argues for the importance of offering Ukraine the prospect of accession in the wake of the conflict with Russia as "the EU [now] has a unique opportunity within its grasp to develop a positive strategy towards Ukraine" (Pridham, 2014, p. 59). This opportunity results from a pro-EU government in Kiev, "a [Ukrainian] civil society more motivated than before and driven in particular by a young generation hopeful of their country moving on from the Soviet past" , and "a country (apart from sectors of hard pro-Russia feeling in some eastern regions) increasingly alienated by Russia's aggressive policy towards Ukraine" (Pridham, 2014, p. 59). However, Pridham (2014) claims that the EU so far has been reluctant to adopt a clear strategy towards Ukraine at the end of which EU membership should be the declared goal. The author calls for an overarching broad political EU strategy that "has to act as a counter to Putin's 'Eurasian' strategy for Ukraine" (Pridham, 2014, p. 61).

Fyodor Lukyanov takes a different view in the matter than the scholars presented above. He justifies Russian intervention in Ukraine and the "reclamation" of Crimea by describing it as the Russian "response to the eu's and nato's persistent eastward expansion during the post-Cold War period" (Lukyanov, 2016, p. 4) and by pointing to Russia's aim to re-establish itself "as a major international player", which is Russia's "proper status" taken away from the country after the collapse of the bipolar world order by "a never-ending U.S. campaign to keep Russia down" (Lukyanov, 2016, p. 2). According to Lukyanov (2016), while "the West thought that Russia would forever going forward play a fundamentally diminished role in the world" (p. 2), Western dominance after the Cold War was neither intended nor approved by Russia. In fact, Russia's survival after the collapse of the Soviet Union was challenged as "in the midst of economic collapse and political disorder in the immediate post-Soviet era, Russia could do little in response to eu consolidation and nato expansion" (Lukyanov, 2016, p. 2).

Nevertheless, Lukyanov (2016) acknowledges that, even though Russia has boosted its international profile in the wake of the Ukraine conflict, its economic situation is in need of reform in order to close "the gap between Russian ambitions and Russian capacities" (p. 5). Russia's economic situation is also addressed by Guriev (2016) who claims that "Western sanctions imposed after the annexation of Crimea have isolated Russia from global markets, and Russia's countersanctions, the country's retaliatory embargo on Western agricultural imports and fish, have only compounded the problem" (p. 1). According to Guriev (2016), Russia needs to turn to liberal concepts such as strengthening the rule of law and integrating itself into the global economy in order to improve its economic position (p. 4). Additionally, the author claims that Russia is well advised to de-escalate the conflict in Ukraine and thereby achieve the lifting of the painful Western sanctions (Guriev, 2016, p. 2). Mearsheimer (2014) – pioneer of offensive realist international thinking - in his line of argumentation goes even further than Lukyanov (2016). In his article *Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault,* Mearsheimer (2014) claims that Russia's behaviour towards Ukraine in the wake of Yanukovych's ouster was entirely provoked by the Western World as Russia's strategic security was endangered by NATO and EU expansion into Eastern Europe. According to Mearsheimer (2014), annexing Crimea and destabilizing South-Eastern Ukraine was a mere reaction of Russian President Putin to American and European efforts "to turn Ukraine into a Western stronghold on Russia's border" (Mearsheimer, 2014, p. 1) by, for example, at the NATO summit in 2008 unofficially offering Ukraine and Georgia the prospect of NATO membership. Mearsheimer (2014) further states that the EU with its FP towards Eastern Europe is keen to establish an area of influence in the region which will eventually lead to a continuing eastward expansion of NATO since "[i]n the eyes of Russian leaders, eu expansion is a stalking horse for nato expansion" (p. 2). Finally, Mearsheimer (2014) calls on the West to transform Ukraine into a "prosperous but neutral" buffer zone by abandoning aspirations to westernise Ukraine so Russia does not have to feel threatened (p. 7). In terms of theoretical debates, Mearsheimer (2014) concludes that "Putin and his compatriots have been thinking and acting according to realist dictates, whereas their Western counterparts have been adhering to liberal ideas about international politics" (p. 4).

This literature review presents some of the scholars and their claims that are referred to in the analysis of this thesis. It is not intended to provide an inexhaustible overview of the range of existing literature about the topic; rather, this section shows multiple angles from which the issue of this thesis can be addressed in order to contribute to a broad understanding and to prevent one-sidedness.

3.0 Theoretical Framework

This chapter presents the IR theories used in this thesis to carry out the analysis. Firstly, the theory of realism is presented before it is turned to liberalism. The last section of this chapter discusses the choice of these two IR theories.

3.1 Realism

As the general understanding among IR scholars goes, realism is the foundational and dominating theory of international politics (Wohlforth, 2012; Dunne & Schmidt, 2014) which revolves around core concepts such as "groupism", "egoism", and "power-centrism" (Wohlforth, 2012, p. 363). Although realism is better understood as an IR theory comprising several different sub-theories and assumptions, the above-mentioned terms are – to a greater or lesser extent - incorporated in all of those. As Jackson and Sørensen (2013) suggest, realism is divided up into four main strands having their respective pioneers: classical realism (e.g. Thucydides and Machiavelli), strategic realism (Schelling), neorealism or structural realism (Waltz and Mearsheimer), and the recently established neoclassical realism (without a clear pioneer yet). Within the different strands diverging and at times contrasting claims exist, which add to the complexity of the grand theory of realism. To take but one example, Waltz (1979) as a structural realist argues that states strive to accumulate a sufficient amount of power in order to reach the overarching goal of ensuring their own security, whereas Mearsheimer (2001) – also a structural realist – claims that a state's most important national interest is to constantly seek for more power in order to become the global hegemon on the international stage. This fundamental difference between Waltz and Mearsheimer accounts for the categorisation into the subgroups of offensive realism (Mearsheimer) and defensive realism (Waltz) inside the strand of structural realism.

In defensive realism[4], nation states are perceived as 'security maximisers', since security – and not power - is the very factor to ensure their survival (Waltz, 1979). Power should rather be a means to insure security; therefore, nation states should merely accumulate a certain amount of power which guarantees their security (Waltz, 1979). In case nation states would seek to maximise their power, Waltz (1979) argues, the international system would not be

[4] For a comprehensive discussion of Waltz' defensive realism see Waltz, K. (1979), *Theory of International Politics*, Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

balanced. Nevertheless, both Mearsheimer (2001)[5] and Waltz (1979) acknowledge that states exist with the permanent threat of war caused by the anarchic world system.

Nevertheless, most strands in realism claim that nation states are the most important formations that humans can be part of, and thereby function as the main actors in the international system – responding to the core assumption of 'groupism' pointed out by Wohlforth (2012). Additionally, every state's priority is to ensure its own survival even though realists argue about how the ultimate survival of the state can be achieved (see above 'defensive realists' and 'offensive realists') (Wohlforth, 2012; Dunne & Schmidt, 2014). Furthermore, adherents of every realist sub-school acknowledge that 'egoism' is the driving force behind a state's behaviour (Wohlforth, 2012, p. 36). Self-interest is superior to anything and constitutes the basis for realist claims that international relations are conflictual and that, therefore, the state of war is the ultimate and naturally occurring solution (Jackson & Sørensen, 2013). Moreover, realists believe in an anarchic world order, referring to "the point that the international realm is distinguished by the lack of a central authority" which is superior to the individual nation states (Dunne & Schmidt, 2014, p. 101). Following from this as well as from a general political distrust of each other, states are on constant alert regarding a potential attack of another state (Dunne & Schmidt, 2014). This is where the assumption of 'power-centrism' enters the picture. In realism, "power is the fundamental feature of politics" (Wohlforth, 2012, p. 36) - or as Mearsheimer (2001) puts it "[p]ower is the currency of great-power politics and states compete for it among themselves" (p. 12) - with 'power' referring mainly to military and economic capacities of a state (Dunne & Schmidt, 2014). Consequently, as Jackson and Sørensen (2013) claim, it is crucial to states to gain power since powerful states or 'great powers' are more influential, more important, and more likely to survive than less powerful states. Inextricably linked to this is the realist concept 'balance of power', describing a mechanism that is supposed to prevent one single state from dominating all the others (Smith, Owens & Baylis, 2014). According to Dunne and Schmidt (2014, p. 101), the Cold War between the United States (US) together with its NATO allies and the Soviet Union together with its Warsaw Pact allies generally serves as a 20th century example of the balance of power mechanism (Jackson & Sørensen, 2013; Dunne & Schmidt, 2014).

In accordance with every other IR theory, realism has been and still is subject to a great deal of criticism. It is argued, inter alia, that realism fails to provide an explanation for the ever-growing importance of non-state actors such as NGOs or human beings in the international system, as realism first and foremost regards nation states as the main actors in IR (Jackson &

[5] A more detailed presentation of the sub-school of offensive realism is provided in the next section.

Sørensen, 2013; Dunne & Schmidt, 2014). Moreover, realism is highly flawed regarding its insufficient accounts for "regional integration, humanitarian intervention [and] the emergence of a security community in Western Europe […]" (Dunne & Schmidt, 2014, p. 102).

3.1.1 Mearsheimer's Offensive Realism

As stated above, the IR theory of realism is rather complex and comprises many different strands, which are at times even contradictory. Therefore, in order to formulate an adequate realist hypothesis which paves the way for a sustainable analysis, one of the numerous realist strands is chosen in this thesis. Having already been touched upon in the previous section, the realist sub-school of offensive realism, as introduced by Mearsheimer, provides the theoretical framework for the analysis of this thesis due the following reasons. Firstly, Mearsheimer is one of the main scholars whose claims are incorporated in this thesis (see chapter 2.4). Secondly, because of the physical and temporal limitations of this thesis, it is not possible to deal with every single strand of realism. Mearsheimer's offensive realism constitutes the probably sharpest contrast to liberalism and is therefore used in this thesis.

In order to account for the realist hypothesis which, alongside with the liberalist hypothesis introduced in the following chapter, serves as the foundation of the analysis, Mearsheimer's offensive realism is presented in greater detail in this section.

In his work *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* from 2001, Mearsheimer provides a comprehensive theoretical account of his understanding of offensive realism. As already outlined above, Mearsheimer (2001) claims that – unlike defensive realists - states limitlessly seek to maximise their power in order to ensure their security, which is a crucial necessity in the anarchic international system. As for nation states, blackmail and war are the main strategies to accumulate power (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 13). The scholar states that

> [o]ffensive realists […] believe that status quo powers are rarely found in world politics, because the international system creates powerful incentives for states to look for opportunities to gain power at the expense of rivals, and to take advantage of those situations when the benefits outweigh the costs. A state's ultimate goal is to be the hegemon in the system (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 21)

According to Mearsheimer (2001), regional hegemony is the only existing type of hegemony and even when a state succeeded in positioning itself as the regional hegemon, it will not be idle but try to prevent other great powers from accumulating more power. In this sense,

offensive realism attributes a high degree of aggressiveness to great powers - as Mearsheimer (2001) puts it: "[S]tates are disposed to think offensively toward other states even though their ultimate motive is simply to survive. In short, great powers have aggressive intentions" (p. 34). Mearsheimer (2001) further argues that states do not trust each other as they cannot be sure of the plans another state pursues.

Moreover, Mearsheimer (2001) places a great deal of importance on great power's behaviour in terms of territorial expansionism. In *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, he presents different historical cases of great powers (e.g. Germany from 1862 – 1945 and the Soviet Union from 1917 – 1991) and their expansionist behaviour proving his claim of great powers' constant search for opportunities to expand (Mearsheimer, 2001).

Mearsheimer (2001) claims further that states are not exclusively behaving in an offensive way – in case an aggressor state gets ready to increase its power at another state's expense, the threatened state can act defensively by either applying the strategy of balancing or buck-passing. 'Balancing' refers to the challenged state accepting "the burden of deterring its adversary" itself, whereas 'buck passing' describes the action of the threatened state to pass the mission of deterring the aggressor to another state (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 13). States that opt for buck-passing "attempt to get other states to assume the burden of checking a powerful opponent while they remain on the sidelines" (Mearsheimer, 2006, p. 76).

In terms of the international system and its connection to the causes of war, Mearsheimer (2001) notes that a bipolar system (two dominating great powers) is the most peaceful, whereas an unbalanced multipolar system (at least three great powers with one aspiring to be the hegemon) is most likely to face war and conflict, with a balanced multipolar system (no dominant state) positioned in between the other two systems in regards to war proneness.

As with all other theories or their sub-schools, Mearsheimer's offensive realism is subject to criticism which seems to centre on the scholar's incessant focal point on great powers' power-security struggle and his consequent neglect of other essential aspects of IR (Snyder, 2002). Snyder (2002) labels these aspects, inter alia, as the "nonsecurity interests of states", "transnational movements", "most kinds of interstate cooperation", and "domestic politics" (pp. 171/172). Moreover, Mearsheimer's offensive realism is challenged by Waltz' defensive realism (see above).

The hypothesis that follows from offensive realism and which is used in this thesis is the following:

The EU in its Ukraine FP is most concerned with preventing Russia from moving closer to Ukraine and thereby gaining more power in the region. In fact, (at times blackmailing) FP

measures are carried out which are aimed at binding Ukraine to the EU - and eventually integrating Ukraine in the EU – leading to an increase in the Union's power and to the weakening of Russia. The EU is eager to demonstrate its already existing power and acts offensively and aggressively in order to intimidate Russia and to deter the country from becoming a potential regional hegemon.

In this hypothesis, the offensive realist claim that states are power maximisers becomes evident, as the EU is keen to increase its own power at Russia's expense. Furthermore, the offensive realist concept of territorial expansion is manifested by the EU seeking to first bind Ukraine to itself and then ultimately drawing it into the Union. The EU tries to position itself as the regional hegemon by ensuring that Russia will not develop into a serious competitor. Therefore, the hypothesis suggests that the EU acts aggressively towards Russia. At this point, some might argue that the EU is not a state and its behaviour can therefore not be explained by the realist theory. However, as outlined in the following chapter, realism contributes to research on the EU, even though this liaison might seem unusual at first.

3.2 Liberalism

In IR, realism is mostly regarded as the prevailing theory, but "liberalism has a strong claim to being the historical alternative" (Dunne, 2014, p. 114). Liberal core ideas stand in sharp contrast to realist assumptions as liberalism takes its point of departure in "a positive view of human nature; […] a conviction that international relations can be cooperative rather than conflictual; […] [and] a belief in progress" (Jackson & Sørensen, 2013, p. 99). However, liberalism and realism agree on the assumption that "war is a recurring feature of the anarchic system" – the difference is that liberalists do not see the root for war in the anarchic order (Dunne, 2014, p.114). In fact, the convictions regarding the causes of war differ among liberalists, ranging from interventions by governments to the balance of a power system (Dunne, 2014, p. 115).

One of the earliest pioneers of classical liberalism is Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) who introduced the idea of 'perpetual peace' *(ewiger Frieden*), which is built on 'republics' possessing a constitution, adhering to international law, and expanding peacefully (Kant, 1796). From this very optimistic viewpoint of the international system, liberalism has gradually developed into an extensive theory providing for many different approaches and prioritisations within its scope. The utopian or idealist liberalism of the 1920s is deliberately excluded from this thesis as the focus is on the liberal theory following World War II.

Post-war liberalism can be divided up into different strands emphasising different traits in IR. Jackson and Sørensen (2013) distinguish between sociological liberalism, interdependence liberalism, institutional liberalism, and republican liberalism. Before it is turned to these four strands, certain key concepts of liberalism in FP are addressed. One of these main conceptions is the democratic peace theory dating back to Kant whose legacy has been taken up by Doyle (1986). The concept suggests that liberal states have created a liberal zone of peace which relies upon the main premise that liberal states do not wage war against their sort since they do not perceive each other as potential threats but rather as natural allies (Doyle, 1986; Doyle, 2012; Dunne, 2014). However, this does not imply that liberal states are thoroughly peaceful – quite the opposite in fact. As Doyle (2012) suggests, liberal states are prone to "imprudent aggression" (p.59) - or in Hume's words "imprudent vehemence" (Hume, 1963, pp. 346/347) - towards non-liberal states. Historical evidence shows that liberal states waged numerous wars against non-liberals (e.g. the colonial wars fought by France and Britain in the 19th century or the Iraq invasion by the US in 2003). The issue of how the liberal zone of peace functions is addressed in greater detail later in the chapter.

Another basic concept of liberalism in FP is 'supine complaisance' – a term coined by Hume (1963). In essence, supine complaisance refers to either "the failure to support allies [or] a failure to oppose enemies" (Doyle, 2012, p. 64). This idleness mainly results from liberal states' short-sightedness attempting to maintain the status quo in IR (Doyle, 2012).

Nevertheless, liberalism claims that liberal states have the duty to protect and to expand the amount of existing liberal states. This is done by defensive rather than offensive means in order to establish or strengthen conditions that support liberal norms and values to spread in a peaceful manner (Doyle, 2012). According to Doyle (2012), "[l]iberalism contributes to the understanding of foreign policy by highlighting how individuals and the ideas and ideals they espouse (such as human rights, liberty, and democracy), social forces (capitalism, markets), and political institutions (democracy, representation) can have direct effects on foreign relations" (p. 54). Liberal states decide on their FP by carrying out a cost-benefit analysis in which aims, resources, threats and allies are identified (Doyle, 2012). The ultimate goal is to create a balance between aims and resources, minimise threats and strengthen allies (Doyle, 2012).

As already stated above, one way of compartmentalising post-war liberalism is to divide it into four strands, with each strand placing the emphasis on a different aspect of international politics. Sociological liberals highlight the importance of the relations between non-state actors such as individual human beings, organisations, and groups ('transnational relations')

and neglect thereby the realist view that IR is solely (or mainly) concerned with state-state relations (Jackson & Sørensen, 2013). Sociological liberals regard tight transnational ties, that are based on overlapping interests and group membership between groups of people or other non-state actors, as a source for cooperation and thus as a mean to secure peace internationally (Burton, 1972). Karl Deutsch, pioneer of the study of transnational ties, argues that through a high degree of these transnational ties, a "security community" is created in which the people unanimously adhere to peaceful problem solutions "without resort to large-scale physical force" (Deutsch, Burrell, Kann & Lee, 1957, p. 5).

Interdependence liberals perceive economic interdependence between states evoked by modernisation processes as a vital factor in IR (Jackson & Sørensen, 2013). 'Complex interdependence', as introduced by Keohane and Nye (1977), is an important concept within interdependence liberalism. It entails the increasing importance of transnational actors, and leads to a growing usefulness of institutional and economic instruments, whereas military force is regarded less and less important (Keohane & Nye, 1977). Additionally, welfare instead of security is prioritised as the overarching aim of nation states (Keohane & Nye, 1977). Keohane and Nye (1989) argue that the deployment of military force and the resulting effects can prove to be costlier than other means, such as economic sanctions, and also cannot function as a guarantee for success (pp. 16, 28).

Institutional liberals focus on international institutions and their favourable effects of promoting collaboration between states (Jackson & Sørensen, 2013). According to Keohane (1989), institutions are important in three different ways. Firstly, they create a flow of information between states as well as a platform to negotiate (Keohane, 1989, p. 2). Secondly, they enable states to observe the other state's compliance in a friction free manner and thereby also enhance the implementation of commitments made by the states themselves (Keohane, 1989, p. 2). Thirdly, institutions foster the stability of international agreements (Keohane, 1989, p. 2). Nye (1993) adds that institutions support the creation of "a climate in which expectations of stable peace develop" (p. 39). Hence, through institutions, states do not have to fear each other so much anymore in the anarchic word system. It is important to mention that international institutions do not necessarily have to be international organisations but can also be a collection of rules, determining the behaviour of a state in certain fields (Keohane & Nye, 1989, p.5).

Finally, republican liberals underscore the liberal assumption introduced by Kant, that liberal democracies do not wage war against each other (Russett, Starr & Kinsella, 2006). This is due to their adherence to peaceful solutions of conflict upon which their domestic cultures are

based, their common moral ideals, and their mutually benefitting links of economic cooperation and interdependence (Doyle, 1986). However, as outlined above, liberal states are not pacifist; they are also prone to wage war. As Doyle (1986) states, "[l]iberal states have created a separate peace, as Kant argued they would, and have also discovered liberal reasons for aggression" (p. 1152). Moreover, republican liberals are keen to promote democracy on a global scale and expand the liberal zone of peace as this leads to a more peaceful world (Jackson & Sørensen, 2013).

Criticism of liberalism mainly originates from the realist camp. Hoffmann (1987) for instance states that "[t]he essence of liberalism [...] is self-restraint, moderation, compromise and peace [...] the essence of international politics is exactly the opposite: troubled peace, at best, or the state of war" (p. 396). Furthermore, it is argued that the underlying optimism of liberalism and the belief in progress fails to acknowledge the fact that the insecure anarchic world order prevails (Jackson & Sørensen, 2013) or, as Mearsheimer (1993) puts it, that "it is not possible for even liberal democracies to transcend anarchy" (p. 186). Therefore, it cannot be ruled out that liberal states one day stop adhering to the liberal peace concept and start acting aggressively against their liberal partners. The liberalists' counterargument explains that even in an anarchic world system, anarchy does not have to be 'raw'; rather "significant elements of legitimate and effective international authority" can be found in anarchy (Jackson & Sørensen, 2013, p. 123).

The hypothesis that follows from this outline of liberalism reads as follows:

The EU FP towards Ukraine and the ongoing conflict is primarily concerned with the stabilisation of the region in its East. Therefore, the EU focuses, also already before the outburst of the crisis, on promoting European norms and values (such as the rule of law, democracy, open market economy, human rights, etc.) in Ukraine so the country will eventually integrate in the liberal zone of peace. To reach this goal, the EU also supports institution-building as well as mutual economic development and interdependence in Ukraine, since welfare is the priority. The use of military forces is no real option as the focus is on the economic matters and the use of diplomacy. Transnational ties are also strengthened in order to create a security community which ensures stability and peace.

This hypothesis reflects the liberal assumptions outlined above by combining core liberal ideas as well as the specific claims of sociological liberalism, interdependence liberalism, institutional liberalism, and republican liberalism. Hereby, the stabilisation of its neighbourhood is the overarching aim for the EU as it is the foundation of economic development, welfare, and peace.

3.3 Choice of Theories

As stated above, the theories of offensive realism and liberalism are chosen to analyse the EU's FP towards Ukraine and the ongoing conflict. Liberalism is used as the two main actors, the EU member states (MS) and Ukraine (from 1991 onwards), are considered liberal states (Doyle, 2012, p. 70). According to Doyle (2012), from 1991 onwards, Russia was also classified as a liberal state – but lost this status again in 1999 (p. 70). Thus, liberalism might account for cooperation and support between the EU and Ukraine. Moreover, unlike realism in general, liberalism places a great deal of importance not solely on nation states but also on non-state actors and their influence on the international system. According to several scholars (Hix & Høyland, 2011; Pollack, Wallace & Young, 2015), the EU cannot be considered a state and is better described as an international organisation. Hence, liberalism might be a suitable theory regarding the EU's international influence. However, it is important to state that not all scholars agree on the assertion that the EU cannot be seen as a state. Dosenrode (2012) for instance claims that "the EU fulfils the stipulated characteristics [condensed by Dunleavy and O'Leary (1987) and complemented by Dosenrode (2012)] for being a state" (p. 37). Additionally, a fair bit of academic literature exists which brings the EU and the theory of realism together (cf. Lavenex, 2001; Zimmermann, 2007; García, 2013). Consequently, it is definitely possible to incorporate realism in the research about the EU.

Therefore, offensive realism might also prove useful in analysing the EU's FP. Moreover, offensive realism and its important power concept might provide explanations for potential geopolitical moves from both the EU's and Russia's side. As Pridham (2014) claims, in the course of events starting in late 2013, the EU became more and more aware of Ukraine's geopolitical meaning to Russia and was on the brink of a geopolitical conflict with Russia itself (p. 58). Thus, it is arguable that offensive realism might hold some explanations for the EU's behaviour in this matter.

Another reason for choosing the theories of offensive realism and liberalism in this thesis is the fact that both theories are very contradictory – maybe they are even the two most contradictory theories in IR. Therefore, it is worthwhile to compare their respective potentially explanatory force in regards to the research question of this thesis. As a consequence of this comparison, supportive claims for either the realist or liberal camp of IR might be deduced from the analysis. In this way, this thesis contributes to the long-lasting rivalry between realism and liberalism in the academic field of IR by either strengthening one theory, both of them, or none at all.

4.0 Background Information

4.1 Historical Overview

In order to provide a coherent illustration of the Ukraine crisis in this thesis, it is crucial to present an adequate historical overview of the political situation in Ukraine. This chapter highlights some of the most important political events of recent Ukrainian history, starting in 1991 when the country gained independence.

To begin with, a case made by D'Anieri (2015) is taken up. According to him, a far-reaching development in Ukrainian politics is the fact that after the country gained its independence in 1991, the absence of a political revolution led to a continuation of former Soviet political practices. Ukraine de facto still adhered to "Soviet institutions and forms of politics" as the "evolution has occurred not as a break from those institutions and forms, but as a modification of them" (D'Anieri, 2015, p. 75) and "power was still held almost entirely in the hands of the Soviet bureaucracy, and opposition groups were weak" (D'Anieri, 2015, p. 74). This circumstance manifested itself, inter alia, in the Soviet Ukrainian Constitution being valid until 1996 and the Ukrainian Parliament ('Verkhovna Rada') which was elected under Soviet rule remaining in office up until three years after independence (D'Anieri, 2015, p. 75).

The 2002 parliamentary elections marked one important impetus to a series of peaceful political protests in Ukraine – generally referred to as the 'Orange Revolution'. The parliamentary elections were characterised by corruption, biased media coverage and voter coercion primarily conducted by the wealthy and highly influential " 'party of power' " – 'For a United Ukraine' (D'Anieri, 2015, 94).

An even more important trigger for the outburst of the Orange Revolution was the presidential elections held in late 2004. Former Prime Minister Yushchenko, who has established himself as the opposition leader, and then Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovych, who was put forth by Kuchma, ran for office (together with other candidates who never succeeded in becoming real competition though) in an election which was marked by major shortcomings such as fraud, corruption and even a poison attack carried out on Yushchenko (D'Anieri, 2015). Since the 50% hurdle was not reached by any of the candidates in the first election round, a second election round was held (OSCE, 2005). Just like the first, the second election round was characterised by significant anomalies, insufficient transparency, as well as fraud (OSCE, 2005). As a protest movement against the unfair election procedures and as a result of long endured political frustration, thousands of people gathered on Kiev's Independence Square ('Maidan Nezalezhnosti') initiating the Orange Revolution (D'Anieri, 2015). The major

public protest against the fraudulent elections eventually led to a ruling by Ukraine's Supreme Court which provided for a revote as the initial run-off was declared null (D'Anieri, 2015). This time, Yushchenko won the elections with 51.99% of the votes (OSCE, 2005).

Despite this alleged victory for democracy and Ukraine's orientation towards the West, the spirit of the Orange Revolution collapsed already in 2005 when its leaders proved to be incapable of effectively reforming the country and to accomplish what the Orange Revolution has started. It did not take long before Russophile political parties such as Yanukovych's 'Party of the Regions' regained a foothold in the Ukrainian political landscape.

After a series of political events, Yushchenko made Yanukovych prime minister once again (D'Anieri, 2015). Due to constitutional changes, which were initiated by pro-Kuchma political parties already in May 2004 and adopted in late 2004 as a consequence of the Surpreme Court ruling, a great deal of powers initially laying with the president was shifted to the office of prime minister (D'Anieri, 2015). Consequently, Yanukovych's second term as prime minister enabled him to exercise far more powers than his first term under Kuchma allowed for. These developments further worsened the support for Yushchenko as his remaining proponents would have expected him allying with Yulia Tymoshenko and her pro-European "Fatherland" party (D'Anieri, 2015). However, this constellation did not come into existence as Yushchenko and Tymoshenko could not come to terms with one another. Against this backdrop, the Orange Revolution lost its breath of life.

Yushchenko served as president until 2010 when Yanukovych defeated Tymoshenko, who has replaced Yanukovych as prime minister in 2007, in the presidential race. Shortly after the elections, a whole series of highly controversial and quite likely politically motivated criminal cases against Tymoshenko was put forward eventually leading to her conviction to imprisonment.

In late 2013, the political situation in Ukraine led to yet another public outcry which internationally came to be known as the 'Euromaidan' or simply the 'Maidan' with peaceful protests starting once again on Kiev's Maidan Nezalezhnosti (Länder-Analysen/Ukraine-Analysen, 2016[6]). The probably most important trigger for the Maidan movement was Yanukovych's decision to discontinue further preparations for the new AA including a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA) with the EU. The AA has been initiated in 2012 by the Yanukovych administration and was anticipated to be signed at the Eastern

[6] If not stated otherwise, the source for the events presented from 2013 on is: Forschungsstelle Osteuropa (2016) *Länder-Analysen/Ukraine-Analysen* available online (only in German) at http://www.laender-analysen.de/ukraine/

Partnership Summit in Vilnius, provided that certain precondition set by the EU[7] would be fulfilled. The decision to suspend the AA with the EU was surprising not only to the world community but also to Ukrainians themselves (Zank, 2015). Soon after the announcement of the interrupted negotiations with the EU, first protests against this decision began to break out and gained speed rapidly. It might seem surprising that Russophile Yanukovych did not neglect the negotiations about an AA with the EU in the first place. As Zank (2015) argues, this is because Ukraine, unlike Russia, could not rely on oil resources to keep its economy stable but had to find other ways with a stake in the internal market of the EU being the best option.

As expected, Yanukovych signed neither the Ukraine-EU AA nor the declaration of intent at the Eastern Partnership Summit. EU representatives stated later that the conditions for the signing of the AA would stay the same and that 'the door of the EU' would remain open for Ukraine. One day after the Eastern Partnership Summit, the protests in Kiev escalated by police forces clearing the Maidan using violence against peaceful unarmed demonstrators. Yet, the following day several hundred thousand demonstrators returned to the Maidan. As Portnov and Portnova (2015) note, the protesters soon increased their claims as "the idealistic slogans of European integration were now joined by demands for the resignation of both the president and prime minister" (p. 60).

As police violence against unarmed protesters continued, then EU HR/VP Catherine Ashton condemned the use of violence to stop peaceful demonstrations.

In December, then Ukrainian Foreign Minister Kozhara, then EU Commissioner for Enlargement Füle, and then First Deputy Prime Minister Arbuzov announced that the EU and Ukraine resumed negotiations on the AA. Meanwhile, the protests on the Maidan have continued to grow stronger and have turned into "a movement against the Yanukovych regime" (Portnov & Portnova, 2015, p. 62). However, also protests in favour of the government – the so-called "Anti-Maidan" - were taking place (though of much smaller size than the Maidan movement). According to Portnov and Portnova (2015), "[t]he Anti-Maidan was clearly the government's attempt to show that it was not the people protesting against the government, but one part of the Ukraine against the other" (p. 62).

At the EU summit in Brussels on 21st Dec., German Chancellor Angela Merkel confirmed the non-existence of a time limit for the signing of the AA with Ukraine. Merkel further stated that Ukraine cannot be a member of the customs union with Russia while simultaneously being a member of the free trade area (FTA) with the EU.

[7] E.g. the release of Tymoshenko who was sentenced to seven years in prison

In mid-January ’14, the Ukrainian government coalition adopted new legislation which, inter alia, severely restricted the right to demonstrate. US and EU representatives heavily criticised these measures with then EU Commissioner for Enlargement Füle stating that the new legislation contradicts the European orientation of Ukraine, and then EU High Representative Ashton calling upon Yanukovych not to sign the remaining bills. Yet, Yanukovych did not follow the appeal and signed the bills which sparked further protests. Soon the media reported on multiple deaths at the demonstrations. Later, however, nine out of the eleven controversial laws have been rescinded by the Rada.

Nevertheless, the protests continued and were surpressed with unprecedented cruelty in mid-January when snipers shot at peaceful demonstrators in Kiev.

At the Munich Security Conference held in the beginning of February, then EU Enlargement Commissioner Füle stated that the EU would have to offer Ukraine a genuine prospect of accession in order to provide effective help to the country. At another occasion, then EU HR/VP Ashton announced financial support and investments to Ukraine along with the US. It was said that these measures are tied to extensive economic reforms in Ukraine.

On 21st February, following negotiations with Germany, Poland, France, and a Russian representative, Yanukovych announced early presidential elections set for December 2014 and promised to reintroduce the Constitution of 2004 – posthumously, a declaration was signed by the negotiation partners and the three opposition leaders. The Rada adopted the return to the Constitution of 2004 by a vast majority as well as a new criminal law, which allowed for Tymoshenko’s immediate release. Nevertheless, protesters on the Maidan rejected the compromise for not being sufficiently far-reaching, and issued an ultimatum on the President urging him to resign by the next morning. During the night of 22nd February, Yanukovych fled Ukraine after the political elite in Ukraine agreed to depose him (Portnov&Portnova, 2015).

The Rada – after Yanukovych’s fleeing the only legitimate governmental institution - voted for a new government and Yatsenyuk was appointed Prime Minister.

In March, the Pro-Russian government of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea enacted the joining of Russia with announcing a referendum on this matter, which was voided by the international community, including the EU. These developments took place against the backdrop of several preceding events including statements from Russia declaring the new Parliament in Kiev as not legitimate and expressing the need of protecting the rights of the Russian population in Ukraine. The deployment of Russian forces to Crimea triggered international criticism of Moscow and led to political escalations culminating in the

annexation of Crimea by Russia on 18th March. According to Portnov and Portnova (2015), by annexing Crimea and by deploying Russian troops in Eastern Ukraine, but never officially admitting it, Russia took advantage of the Ukrainian political crisis, which destabilised the country's sovereignty massively. As a counter measure against the political upheaval in the Donetsk region, initiated by separatists sieging official government buildings and proclaiming the 'Republic of Donetsk', the Ukrainian government launched an 'Anti-Terror Operation'.

On 25th May, presidential elections, which, according to the OSCE (2014), largely conformed to international commitments, were held. Presidential candidate Petro Poroshenko, an independent pro-opposition politician and businessman, received the absolute majority – also in Eastern Ukraine. In the regions of Donetsk and Luhansk, however, armed forces impeded the elections (OSCE, 2014). Russian Prime Minister Medvedev announced already in the run-up to the Ukrainian presidential elections that Russia would repudiate any outcome - the EU by contrast declared its recognition of the newly elected president.

In the meantime, clashes between separatist forces and the Ukrainian army in Eastern Ukraine intensified, leaving multiple people on both sides as well as civilians dead. Additionally, OSCE observers were kidnapped by separatists. By beginning of June, the Ukrainian-Russian border was not entirely under Ukrainian control anymore, but partly controlled by separatists and local police forces. As a reaction, the EU extended its entry bans and account blockings against specific Ukrainian and Russian citizens and adopted specifically targeted economic sanctions against Russia, alongside with the US. Ukraine also received a large loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and additional financial support from the EU.

On 27th June, the heads of state or government of the EU MS together with Poroshenko signed the economic part of the Ukraine-EU AA - after the political part has already been signed in March. The AA was finally ratified by the EU Parliament and the Rada in mid-September. The fighting continued and reached another dramatic peak with the crash of the 'Malaysian Airlines' passenger aircraft MH17 over the contested East-Ukrainian territory. Soon, separatist forces were suspected of shooting down the aircraft by means of Russian surface-to-air-missiles. After the downing of MH17, which left all passengers and crew members dead, the EU adopted broader economic sanctions against Russia. According to Pridham (2014), this was possible as certain EU MS previously reluctant to expand sanctions now realised the necessity of taking action against Russia.

Despite the efforts made to stop the violence, inter alia by a cease-fire agreement (Minsk I) signed by the contact groups of Ukrainian representatives and separatists in a meeting which was mediated by the OSCE, the fighting continued. However, not only the violence further

destabilised the country. A gas dispute between Ukraine and Russia threatened the supply of Russian gas to Ukraine. Thanks to so-called 'reverse flows' from Europe back into Ukraine and an EU-brokered arrangement between Russian 'Gazprom' and Ukrainian 'Naftogaz' prevented a catastrophe for Ukraine. Another political crisis in Ukraine manifested itself and early parliamentary elections were held in late October, in which several million Ukrainian citizens were not able to vote due to the occupation of territory. The official election result "brought an outright smashing victory for the parties supporting the pro-EU course, gaining 87 percent of the seats" (Zank, 2015, p. 19). Shortly after, elections by the separatists of the 'People's Republic of Donetsk' and the 'People's Republic of Luhansk' were also held, yet not being recognised and condemned by the Ukrainian government, the US, the EU, as well as by the United Nations (UN).

On 11th February '15, the Minsk II Peace Agreement was signed by Russia, Ukraine, France, and Germany. It includes: a comprehensive cease-fire; the monitoring of the implementation of the agreement by the OSCE; the withdrawal of heavy weaponry; initial dialogues on local elections after the withdrawal of weapons; a parliamentary decision on the local self-administration of the relevant regions in Eastern Ukraine; statutory amnesty for separatists; an exchange of prisoners; the restoration of the social and economic connections between Donetsk, Luhansk and Kiev including the payment of social benefits; the control over the state borders by the Ukrainian state after the completion of the local elections; the withdrawal of foreign forces; the disarming of illegal formations; and a constitutional reform on decentralisation. Later, the EU MS also agreed on the real implementation of Minsk II as a precondition for lifting the sanctions (Council of the EU, 2015). The negotiated cease-fire proved to be highly fragile, as it was violated several times. The OSCE criticised both separatists and Ukrainian government forces for the faltering withdrawal of heavy weapons. Also, OSCE personnel was partly denied access to terminal stations of the weapons. Thus, the conditions of the Minsk II Agreement were anything but satisfactorily met.

In mid-December, Russian President Putin instructed the Russian Parliament to unilaterally terminate the FTA with Ukraine, which was signed in 2011, and to impose further trade restrictions on Ukrainian products. This came as a response to the Ukraine-EU AA which entered into force on 1st January 2016. Prior to this, in September, the EU, Ukraine, and Russia agreed on the postponement of the entry into force of the Ukraine-EU AA until the end of 2015, as Russia demanded more time for the clarification of remaining questions. As a reaction to the Russian sanctions on Ukrainian products, Ukraine imposed import restrictions for Russian products becoming effective on 1st January '16.

The political situation in Ukraine continued failing to settle down and in the beginning of 2016, several ministers resigned, an open conflict between different government groups broke out, and the government coalition lost its majority.

To contribute to the continual unrest in Ukraine, EU COM president Juncker (2016*a*) announced that the country will neither become an EU MS nor a NATO MS in the next 20-25 years, dashing accession hopes of pro-European Ukrainians. Nevertheless, as the implementation of Minsk II was still not satisfactorily carried out by Russia, an official extension of the sanctions until September 2016 was agreed upon by the EU.

Another event that further complicated the situation was a not legally binding referendum in the Netherlands on the Ukraine-EU AA, which was initiated by Eurosceptic organisations. In the referendum, which was carried out in beginning of April, 64% of the participants voted against the AA (EurActiv, 2016). Even though the result is not binding on the government, Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte stated that the outcome could not be ignored and that the EU-Ukraine AA must be readjusted for the Netherlands to ratify the agreement (EurActiv, 2016). At the time of writing, it is not yet clear how these readjustments will look like.

Following a period of constant criticism of his person from both the civil society and the political sphere, on 10th April Prime Minister Yatsenyuk declared his resignation. He appointed Volodymyr Groysman as new Prime Minister. Shortly after, the Rada instituted a new government. It remains to be seen whether the new government is able to act and tackle the crisis in the country successfully. Meanwhile, the violations of the Minsk II cease-fire for the first time again reached dramatic levels in the Donbass area and fighting is likely to continue in the near future.

4.2 FP Making in the EU

This chapter outlines the policy making process of the common foreign and security policy (CFSP) in the EU. It is recalled that no special attention is paid to the common security and defence policy (CSDP) as a part of CFSP[8] due to the limited scope of this thesis.

First and foremost, the CFSP making procedure in the EU is decisively different from policy making procedures in other fields within the EU's legislative remits. Most of the EU legislation comes into being through the ordinary legislative procedure in which the COM has the right of initiative and the Council together with the European Parliament (EP) adopt the COM's proposal by codecision (Wallace&Reh, 2015). In the CFSP making process, however, the otherwise crucial role of the COM is very limited. Here, the right of initiative lies with the EU Member States (MS) and the EU HR/VP (see Figure 2.0). Nevertheless, the COM is entitled to initiate proposals – but exclusively in cooperation with the HR/VP as Article 22.1 of the TEU states:

> Any Member State, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, or the High Representative with the Commission's support, may refer any question relating to the common foreign and security policy to the Council and may submit to it, respectively, initiatives or proposals (Art. 22.1 TEU)

Thus, the EU MS are the key players in CFSP legislation and the degree of centralization is low (Wallace&Reh, 2015, table 4.3). Decisions are mainly unanimously taken by the European Council or the Council (Art. 24 TEU). Yet, exceptions to this rule exist as unanimity is not required to "implement pre-existing Common Strategies" (Thomas, 2011, p.10). However, these Common Strategies already adopted by the EU are small in number resulting in the fact that most of the EU FP remains subject to unanimity voting (Thomas, 2011). Moreover, in specific areas it is possible for EU MS to abstain and thereby to allow the decision to pass without having to implement it (University of Portsmouth, 2013). In the event of abstentions from one third of the EU MS the decision is not adopted (University of Portsmouth, 2013).

In a nutshell, the policy making process in CFSP can be illustrated as follows:

[8] For a comprehensive discussion about EU foreign policy it is referred to D.C. Thomas (2011), *Making EU Foreign Policy*, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

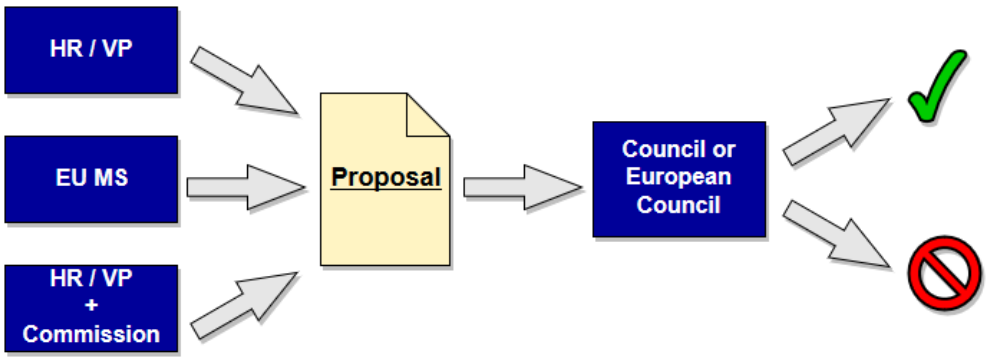

Figure 1.0

Giegerich (2015) argues that intensive transgovernmentalism[9] is the prevalent policy mode in CFSP as the EU MS hold the greatest deal of power in this field but efforts were also made to increase the coordination at the supranational level notably by means of the Treaty of Lisbon (ToL) which entered into force in 2009. The ToL, inter alia, modified the position of the High Representative by extending its responsibilities – for instance was the office of High Representative supplemented by the office of vice-president of the COM. Nevertheless, the EP and the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) still do not play significant roles in CFSP as the former can solely express its views on proposals and the latter is completely excluded from CFSP (Giegerich, 2015).

This policy making procedure poses certain challenges regarding an efficient and ambitious policy outcome (Allen, 1998). As generally all 28 EU MS must agree on CFSP, the decisions adopted are likely to be the lowest common denominator upon which the MS could agree. As Giegerich (2015) puts it, "[t]here is little agreement on what a common foreign policy should be about; national political cultures differ widely on appropriate international roles and national interests are only partially aligned" (p. 437). Nevertheless, Thomas (2011) stresses that, despite these issues in EU FP making and the predominance of unanimity voting in CFSP, the EU succeeded in adopting a good deal of common foreign policies ranging from the imposition of economic sanctions to military deployment (p. 11). It can therefore be concluded that consensus about the EU's (in)efficiency in FP making does not exist and that it

[9] Generally, legislation that affects delicate matters of state-sovereignty does not lie within the sphere of competence of the EU's supranational institutions but is decided upon by the national governments. The term 'intergovernmentalism' is commonly used to describe this mode of policy making; however, Wallace and Reh (2015) employ the term 'transgovernmental' in their work about the different policy modes applied in the EU. They argue that "the term 'transgovernmental' [connotes] the greater intensity and denser structuring of a mode where EU member governments – or their specific sub-units – have cumulatively committed themselves to rather extensive engagement and disciplines, but have judged full communitarization to be inappropriate, unacceptable, or premature" (Wallace&Reh, 2015, p.109).

can be argued for one side or the other depending on how the matter of EU CFSP is approached.

4.3 EU FP towards the Ukraine Conflict

In this section, an outline of the foreign policy measures carried out by the EU towards Ukraine in the past and especially towards the ongoing conflict is provided in order to set the framework for the analysis. It is important to state that this thesis seeks to examine a good deal of relevant foreign policies of the EU towards the Ukraine crisis in order to give a broad overview of the EU FP. Every single foreign policy conducted by the EU throughout the long-standing EU-Ukraine relations is not presented below as this would go beyond the scope of this work.

First of all, in 1994, the EU and Ukraine signed a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) constituting one of the first EU policies directly addressed to Ukraine after the country's independence in 1991 (Missiroli, 2004). The PCA, entering into force in 1998, provided the framework for political cooperation between the EU and Ukraine and was aimed at supporting the establishment of a democratic form of government in the post-Soviet state (PCA, 1994). Additionally, the PCA included economic cooperation measures – tied to Ukraine's transition into a market economy – which were especially in Ukraine's interest, yet the agreement did not mention the prospect of EU membership (Missiroli, 2004; Zagorski, 2004). Semeniy (2007) explains that the EU, on the other hand, had a special interest in Ukrainian nuclear disarmament as the country had a huge arsenal of nuclear weapons. In this context, the Budapest Memorandum was signed in 1994 by Russia, the US, the United Kingdom, and Ukraine. It guaranteed the respect and the protection of Ukraine's territorial integrity, independence, and sovereignty as a reaction to the country's commitment to abandon its nuclear weapons (Budapest Memorandum of Security Assurances, 1994).

The EU also concluded PCAs with other newly independent states (NIS) – among others Russia and Moldova – but realised soon that the NIS were on no account homogenous (Zagorski, 2004). Therefore, the PCA with Ukraine was complemented by a more specific and differentiated common strategy on Ukraine in 1999 in connection with the EU's CFSP (Missiroli, 2004; Zagorski, 2004). The strategic goals set out in the strategy were drafted in rather wide terms:

- to contribute to the emergence of a stable, open and pluralistic democracy in Ukraine, governed by the rule of law and underpinning a stable functioning market economy which will benefit all the people of Ukraine;
- to cooperate with Ukraine in the maintenance of stability and security in Europe and the wider world, and in finding effective responses to common challenges facing the continent;
- to increase economic, political and cultural cooperation with Ukraine as well as cooperation in the field of justice and home affairs

  (European Council, 1999, Part I, Art. 5)

From these strategic goals it becomes apparent that the common strategy also did not feature a clear EU membership perspective. Rather, the EU placed its focus on the development of the Ukrainian economy as well as on the successive approximation of EU and Ukrainian legislation (Zagorski, 2004). Moreover, the EU's priority of fostering "cooperation in the field of justice and home affairs (combating illegal migration and transnational organized crime […]) reflects the concerns of the EU and member states with regard to 'soft security' threats emerging from the forthcoming enlargement of the EU[10]" (Zagorski, 2004, p. 87). In the newly-independent Ukraine, on the other hand, priority was given to future EU-membership – at least at that time (Semeniy, 2007). As Semeniy (2007) states, Kiev was seeking association status by 2007 and anticipated "real pre-conditions for EU-membership by 2011" (p. 126). As a consequence, it came as no surprise that Ukraine's hopes for a genuine prospect of accession were not satisfied by the broadly defined common strategy of the EU. The strategy solely acknowledged "Ukraine's European aspirations" and welcomed "Ukraine's pro-European choice" (European Council, 1999, Part I, Art. 6).

In 2004, in the wake of the Eastern enlargement, the EU launched its European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) which is directed towards the EU's new direct neighbours in the East and in the South[11]. The declared goal of this foreign policy instrument is to establish close political links and to reach the highest possible degree of economic integration with the Union's neighbours (European External Action Service (EEAS), n.d.*a*) – meaning offering them a stake in the European Internal Market. This is done through common values and

[10] The 10+2 EU enlargement round in which ten states joined the EU in 2004 (Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia) and two in 2007 (Romania, Bulgaria). Ten of these twelve countries are CEECs with three of them being post-Soviet states (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania).

[11] In the South: Algeria, Morocco, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, the Palestinian Authority, Syria, and Tunisia; in the East: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine (European External Action Service (EEAS), n.d.*a*)

interests, such as democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights, and economic progress. The ENP is equipped with financial means which support the respective ENP countries in a variety of fields (EEAS, n.d.*a*).

In the communication by the COM (then Commission of the European Communities) on its 'new neighbourhood' from March 2003, the COM clearly stated that it is no immediate or direct aim of the ENP to offer an EU membership to participating countries:

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

By making this statement, the EU excluded a definite accession option for Ukraine in the medium-term. However, EU membership for ENP countries in the long term is neither anticipated nor excluded in this statement. Hence, the EU did not make any final comments on this matter, which could eventually pin the Union down, but it created its room for manoeuvre. Additionally, enhanced political and economic interdependence to foster "stability, security and sustainable development" continued to be encouraged (COM, 2003). The Ukrainian authorities criticised the ENP at the 8th EU-Ukraine Summit in The Hague in July 2004 as not matching Ukraine's interest in terms of EU membership prospect (The Ukrainian Week, 2013). In the Joint Press Release on the Summit, however, this criticism is not mentioned, instead it is stated that the EU and Ukraine "agreed on the importance of a further reinforced relationship between the EU and Ukraine and confirmed the need to work together to contribute to increased stability, security and prosperity on the European continent and to avoid the emergence of new dividing lines" (EEAS, 2004, para. 2).

According to some, by the time the Orange Revolution gathered pace – and even prior to this when then-President Kuchma led the country towards a semi-authoritarianist government style - the EU could have shown greater involvement in supporting the democratic forces in Ukraine (Solonenko, 2007; Youngs, 2011). Despite the efforts of the EU to strengthen democracy in Ukraine, democratic transition proved to be difficult due to the Kuchma regime (Youngs, 2011). However, after the fraudulent presidential elections in 2004, the EU unitarily rejected the election results and called for a re-run. In a resolution, the EP "[condemned] the

conditions under which the second round of the presidential elections in Ukraine have taken place, as regards both the final stage of the election campaign and the irregularities and apparent fraud during the counting of votes" (EP, 2004, art. 2), as well as "[called] on the Ukrainian authorities to annul the second round of the presidential elections and reorganise this second round before the end of this year with the participation of international observers" (EP, 2004, art. 4), and also "[expressed] its solidarity with the Ukrainian people, whose right freely to elect its president must be recognised and implemented, and not repressed" (EP, 2004, art. 1). According to Youngs (2011), this common response of the EU did not come into being without prior contestations among MS as "a group of 'maximalist' states (Poland, Lithuania, other new member states, with some backing from the Nordics and UK) fought for the EU to push harder for Ukrainian democratization against a group of 'minimalist' states (including France, Germany, Spain, and Italy)" (pp.34/35).

The Orange Revolution has proven the European aspirations of the Ukrainian people; however, for a number of reasons outlined in the Historical Overview chapter, the revolution's momentum did not lead to deep and far-reaching reforms in the country. Still, the Orange Revolution stimulated the question of potential Ukrainian membership in the EU among MS. As Youngs (2011) states, "[…] on the question of Ukraine's membership there has been no convergence of views within the EU; indeed, differences between the member states have, if anything, widened since the Orange Revolution" (p. 40).

In the framework of the ENP, Ukraine agreed to an Action Plan in which, inter alia, political and economic reforms necessary to reach the goals on democracy, human rights, rule of law, good governance, market economy principles, and sustainable development are defined (EEAS, n.d.*a*). As Semeniy (2007) notes, "the February 2005 'Action Plan EU-Ukraine' had more options than initially envisaged, but still did not contain clear provision for future Ukrainian membership" (p. 127).

In 2008 under Yushchenko, the EU and Ukraine started negotiations on an AA, which is to replace the PCA. Yanukovych continued negotiation talks on the AA after he came to power again. In 2012, the new AA between the EU and Ukraine was initated under Yanukovych's rule. The AA would mean a big step forward for Ukraine towards obtaining nearly European Economic Area (EEA) status as it includes a DCFTA. The DCFTA provides a framework for Ukraine to modernise its trade relations and to enhance its economic development by means of the gradual removal of customs tariffs and quotas with the EU, and the harmonisation of laws, regulations, and norms in several sectors which are related to trade (EEAS, 2015*a*). These measures entail the opening of Ukrainian markets and the establishment of conditions

which align main sectors of the Ukrainian economy to EU standards (EEAS, 2015*a*). The EU-Ukraine Action Plan expired in 2008, as it was only approved for a period of three years. In the Joint Evaluation Report on the Action Plan (2008), it is stated that "[g]ood progress has been achieved in the implementation of the EU-Ukraine Action Plan" and that at the "[e]nd of 2008/beginning of 2009 both sides will develop a new joint tool" to develop bilateral relations further and even "beyond the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement and the Joint Action Plan wherever possible" (EEAS, 2008, art. I). The aims of the AA are set as follows:

> a) to promote gradual rapprochement between the Parties based on common values and close and privileged links, and increasing Ukraine's association with EU policies and participation in programmes and agencies;
> (b) to provide an appropriate framework for enhanced political dialogue in all areas of mutual interest;
> (c) to promote, preserve and strengthen peace and stability in the regional and international dimensions in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter, and of the Helsinki Final Act of 1975 of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe and the objectives of the Charter of Paris for a New Europe of 1990;
> (d) to establish conditions for enhanced economic and trade relations leading towards Ukraine's gradual integration in the EU Internal Market, including by setting up a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area as stipulated in Title IV (Trade and Trade-related Matters) of this Agreement, and to support Ukrainian efforts to complete the transition into a functioning market economy by means of, inter alia, the progressive approximation of its legislation to that of the Union;
> (e) to enhance cooperation in the field of Justice, Freedom and Security with the aim of reinforcing the rule of law and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms;
> (f) to establish conditions for increasingly close cooperation in other areas of mutual interest.
> (Association Agreement, Art. 1.2)

Despite all these commitments to cooperation and harmonisation, a clear prospect of accession remained absent also in this EU policy towards Ukraine. As Youngs (2011) claims, the Ukrainian government criticised the AA on this ground, arguing that the measures laid out in the AA "were no substitute for an accession perspective" (p. 41). As mentioned in the

historical overview, the new AA was anticipated to be signed at the Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius in late 2013 – yet, this never happened since Yanukovych refused to continue the negotiations on the AA. According to Stepanenko and Pylynskyi (2015), Yanukovych never intended to sign the AA as he preferred to "play poker" with Russia and the EU in order to obtain the greatest advantage for himself as well as for his entourage (p. 13/14). At this point, further explanations regarding Ukraine's relationship with Russia at that time are in order – even though they are not directly linked to the EU's FP towards Ukraine. In 2003, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Russia agreed on the creation of a Common Economic Space (CES) in order to create a single market (Presidential Executive Office, 2016). In 2014, the CES got incorporated into the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) with Armenia and Kyrgyzstan joining in 2015. Since Ukraine's independence, Russia made efforts to "keep Ukraine within its sphere of influence as part of its broader desire to maintain great-power status after the collapse of the USSR" by seeking to incorporate Ukraine in its regional integration projects (Semeniy, 2007, p. 124). It is no secret that Putin perceives the EU as a threat to his Russian 'empire' and, therefore, does not approve any Ukrainian ties with the EU. Moreover, as former US Secretary of State (1973-1977) Henry Kissinger notes, "[…] to Russia, Ukraine can never be just a foreign country" (Kissinger, 2014, para. 4). Following this argument, Russia cannot accept Ukrainian EU membership which is anything but an option for Russia itself. Nevertheless, Ukraine conducted a FP which fluctuated between an eastward and a westward orientation (Semeniy, 2007). Yanukovych eventually tended eastwards by abandoning negotiations on the AA with the EU. Instead, he agreed on a loan amounting to 15 billion US dollar granted by Russia as well as on a substantial decrease in gas prices for Ukraine (Länder-Analysen/Ukraine-Analysen, 2016). Portnov and Portnova (2015) note that "[…] the gifts from Moscow were nothing if not serving self-interest, and certainly were not open-ended (for example, the gas deal was to be reviewed on a quarterly basis), and they were quite clearly dependent on Ukraine behaving 'correctly'" (p. 64).

In the wake of the ever worsening conflict in Ukraine starting with the Euromaidan in late 2013, the EU implemented a range of FP measures. Firstly, with regard to the AA which plays a key role in the conflict (see historical overview), it is important to state that the Agreement has been ratified by the EP and the Rada in September 2014 after the political and economic parts of the AA have been signed by the EU MS and Poroshenko. However, the AA did not yet enter into force as it has not yet been ratified by all the EU MS. In fact, due to the recent Dutch referendum, the content of the AA is highly likely to be subject to change before it will be ratified by the MS and thereby becomes effective (see historical overview).

Moreover, the EU imposed sanctions "against persons responsible for actions which undermine or threaten the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine as well as persons and entities associated with them" (EEAS, n.d.*b*, para. 5) by freezing assets and issuing entry bans. These sanctions – initially directed against Ukrainian high officials but then also against Russian public officials as a reaction to the illegal Russian annexation of Crimea - were expanded and prolonged over time as the conflict did not come to an end. Additionally, already before the annexation of Crimea, the EU "condemned the clear violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity by acts of aggression by the Russian armed forces […] on the territory of Ukraine" (EEAS, n.d.*b*, para. 3). However, it was not before the downing of 'Malaysian Airlines' Flight MH17 that the EU adopted efficient economic sanctions against Russia (Glebov, 2015). These economic sanctions have been extended several times – the so far last prolongation was agreed on by the EU in December 2015 leaving the sanctions in place until 31 July 2016 (Council of the EU, 2015). As Glebov (2015) claims,

> […] those sanctions on Russia that were introduced by August 2014 initiated only a long-term effect, with no immediate impact, which made the further escalation of the conflict possible and did not convince Vladimir Putin to refrain from direct military invasion of Ukraine […] (p.110)

Initially, the duration of the sanctions was limited to one year; however, in March 2015, the EU linked the lifting of the sanctions to the full implementation of the Minsk agreements (see historical overview) (Council of the EU, 2015). In general, according to the EU, the implementation of sanctions against Russia are a response to Russia's aggressive behaviour towards Ukraine by violating the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity, the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol, and the inflow of fighters and weapons from Russian territory into Ukraine (EEAS, 2015*c*).

The EU, despite Putin's repeated denials of a deployment of Russian troops in Ukraine, had no doubt that direct Russian intervention took place and therefore at first "urged Russia to stop the increasing flow of weapons, equipment and militants across the border and to withdraw its additional troops from the border area" (EEAS, n.d.*b*, para. 16) but then - at the European Council on 30 August 2014 - more strongly "condemned the increasing inflows of fighters and weapons from Russian territory into Eastern Ukraine as well as the aggression by Russian armed forces on Ukrainian soil" (EEAS, n.d.*b*, para. 20). However, the EU did and does not send troops or weapons to Ukraine in order to support Ukrainian forces. At an early stage, German Foreign Affairs Minister Steinmeier, for example, categorically excluded the

possibility for Germany of a military solution of the conflict in Ukraine (Steinmeier, 2014). Merely some non-lethal weaponry has been provided by a couple of EU MS (Zank, 2015). Also NATO does not intervene militarily in the conflict. The focus of NATO's support to Ukraine is merely on capacity building and capability development in the country (NATO, 2016) and, as a survey of the Pew Research Center shows, the support of sending arms to Ukraine is (still) low among NATO MS (Simmons, Stokes & Poushter, 2015).

Furthermore, the EU provides a good deal of financial assistance to Ukraine; however, most of the financial aid was given to the country by the IMF. According to the COM (2015), the overall amount of financial support for Ukraine set at 11€ billion from 2014 to 2020 is made available through the EU budget and international financial institutions. This sum consists of all measures taken towards Ukraine in order to support the country economically and financially. As Zank (2015) argues, to some extent the financial aid also protected Ukraine from "Russian economic blackmailing" (p. 18). In this regard, also the 'reverse flows' (see historical overview) are of importance.

It is has to be mentioned that the EU throughout the conflict condemned human rights violations, the use of violence, the breach of Ukrainian sovereign territory, and the impediment of the OSCE mission in Ukraine (EEAS, n.d.*b*). The EU reiterated that a political solution by means of diplomacy and continuing dialogue has to be reached (EEAS, n.d.*b*). However, the EU suspended bilateral talks with Russia on, for example, visa issues and the New EU-Russia Agreement (EEAS, n.d.*b*). Furthermore, promoting political process in Ukraine through the implementation of (constitutional) reforms is a declared goal of the EU in its response to the conflict (EEAS, n.d.*b*.). Nevertheless, until the present day, the EU has not offered a clear accession prospect to Ukraine. In fact, in the beginning of March 2016, COM President Juncker stated in round terms that "Ukraine will certainly not join the EU in the next 20 to 25 years. Nor will it join NATO" (Juncker, 2016*a*, para. 29). It can be argued that this statement was meant to reassure the Dutch and to encourage them to vote in favor of the EU-Ukraine AA in the then forthcoming referendum (Reuters, 2016).

4.4 Ukraine and NATO

Even though it is not the focus of this thesis to analyse Ukraine-NATO relations, a brief outline of the relationship is provided in the following for the sake of clarity.

Just like it is the case with the EU, Ukraine is not a member of NATO. Nevertheless, Ukraine and NATO are partners in a number of fields since Ukrainian independence in 1991. In 1994, for example, Ukraine joined the 'Partnership for Peace' with NATO and thereafter

cooperation has been gradually developed ranging from Ukrainian support in NATO missions to the establishment of the NATO-Ukraine Commission (NUC) (NATO, 2016). According to Maksymenko (2015), due to the country's systemic problems, Ukraine constitutes a destabilizing factor for NATO on its Eastern border and cooperation between the Alliance and the post-Soviet state is aimed at including Ukraine in "Europe's 'post-modern' security space, creating a network of partners capable of acting in line with democratic norms and values and guided by the rule of law and free market economy" (p. 118).

The issue of Ukrainian membership in the Alliance, however, is less straightforward than mere cooperative initiatives. In 2002, then Ukrainian President Kuchma announced the aim of Ukraine to join NATO for the first time, whereas in 2006, then Prime Minister Yanukovych backpedalled, and in 2010, in his function as President, even took Ukrainian NATO membership entirely off the agenda (NATO, 2016). This development made the non-binding statement from NATO leaders at the NATO summit in Bucharest in 2008 that Ukraine will become a member of the Alliance one day (NATO, 2016), even less relevant. It is important to state that NATO never offered Ukraine a clear and explicit membership prospect – according to Taylor (2014), it was pressure from the NATO MS Germany and France which resulted in the decision reached on the 2008 summit that Ukraine will not be offered a NATO Membership Action Plan which would eventually lead to accession.

In the wake of the Ukraine crisis the issue of membership was raised again but NATO and Ukraine have not entered into accession talks. In fact, as mentioned above, the possibility of Ukrainian NATO membership in the next decades was even excluded by COM-President Juncker (2016*a*). Nonetheless, NATO has intensified its support to Ukraine after the annexation of Crimea to the Russian Federation in terms of capability development and capacity building (NATO, 2016). It goes without saying that Article 5[12] of the North Atlantic Treaty (1949) does not apply in the case of the Ukraine conflict. Consequently, NATO involvement including the deployment of armed NATO troops in Ukraine in order to fight against Russian forces is out of the question. Regarding the well-known Russian aversion of NATO, Mearsheimer (2014) states that "[s]ince the mid-1990s, Russian leaders have adamantly opposed nato enlargement, and in recent years, they have made it clear that they

[12] Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty reads: "The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defence recognised by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area […]".

would not stand by while their strategically important neighbor [Ukraine] turned into a Western bastion" (p.1). As already mentioned in section 2.4, Mearsheimer (2014) justifies the Russian involvement in Ukraine by referring to NATO's eastwards expansion. However, according to Michael McFaul - the former U.S. Ambassador to Russia and a former Special Assistant to President Obama and Senior Director of Russian and Eurasian Affairs in the U.S. National Security Council – NATO's expansion did not seem to be a big issue for Russia as

> […] in the five years that I served in the Obama administration [2009-February 2014], I attended almost every meeting Obama held with Putin and Medvedev, and for three of those years, while working at the White House, I listened in on every phone conversation, and I cannot remember NATO expansion ever coming up. Even months before Putin's annexation of Crimea, I cannot recall a single major statement from a senior Russian official warning about the dangerous consequences of NATO expansion. The reason is simple: for the previous several years, NATO was not expanding eastward (McFaul, 2014, p. 2)

5.0 Analysis / Discussion

In this chapter, the analysis of the thesis is carried out, together with a discussion of the results of offensive realism and liberalism respectively. Additionally, a partial conclusion summarises the findings of each of the theories, their hypothesis, and their line of argumentation.

5.1 EU FP towards Ukraine and the Recent Conflict in Offensive Realism

As stated in the methodology chapter of this thesis, the analysis takes its starting point at a hypothesis for realism and liberalism respectively. The hypothesis for Mearsheimer's offensive realism reads as follows:

The EU in its Ukraine FP is most concerned with preventing Russia from moving closer to Ukraine and thereby gaining more power in the region. In fact, (at times blackmailing) FP measures are carried out which are aimed at binding Ukraine to the EU - and eventually integrating Ukraine in the EU – leading to an increase in the Union's power and to the weakening of Russia. The EU is eager to demonstrate its already existing power and acts offensively and aggressively in order to intimidate Russia and to deter the country from becoming a potential regional hegemon.

By means of this hypothesis, the actual development of EU FP towards Ukraine, as it is outlined in the background chapter, is analysed here.

Although it is arguable that the outburst of the ongoing Ukraine conflict was triggered by the AA between the EU and Ukraine (see section 1.0), in their line of argumentation, realists would also take EU FP measures into consideration which were implemented years before the AA was initiated. As mentioned earlier in this thesis, one of the first EU policies directly addressed to Ukraine, after the country's independence in 1991, was the PCA (Missiroli, 2004). Seen through offensive realist lenses, the PCA was the first attempt to bind the newly-independent Ukraine to the EU. This is because the market economy that Ukraine should be turned into by means of the PCA would lead to a certain dependence on the EU internal market. Additionally, already the mere fact of Ukraine signing an agreement with the EU established and strengthened links between the two actors. Ultimately, this resulted in Russia losing influence in Ukraine and the EU gaining a foothold in the post-Soviet state. Moreover, by means of the goals set out in the EU common strategy on Ukraine of 1999, the EU ensured Ukrainian support in its aim to maintain security and stability of the post-bipolar world order. The second of the strategic goals listed in the common strategy, for example, reads as follows:

- to cooperate with Ukraine in the maintenance of stability and security in Europe and the wider world, and in finding effective responses to common challenges facing the continent;
  (European Council, 1999, Part I, Art. 5)

By setting this goal, the EU was keen to make sure that Ukraine would work together with the Union in ensuring the retention of the post-Soviet world order, in which Russia does not play a big role anymore. What is more, the rather broad wording "common challenges facing the continent" leaves room for interpretation and, therefore, "a common challenge" could be posed by a reinvigorated Russia, which seeks to re-establish itself as a major international player. Consequently, by means of the PCA and the common strategy on Ukraine, the EU tried to bind Ukraine to itself not only in the ambition of accumulating more power but also in order to have another ally in a potential conflict with Russia.

Basically, the launch of the ENP in 2004 (in which Russia was not incorporated) is to be interpreted in the same way as the establishment of the PCA between the EU and Ukraine. As stated in section 4.3, the declared goal of this FP instrument is to establish close political links and to reach the highest possible degree of economic integration with the Union's neighbours (EEAS, n.d.*a*), or in other words - spoken from an offensive realist perspective – to make the ENP countries dependent on the EU in order to eventually bind them to the Union. The offer of granting them a stake in the EU's internal market is linked to the establishment of

democracy and the rule of law in the respective countries. Consequently, the EU exercises its power and forces its alleged liberal values onto these states by means of the ENP. Simultaneously, by excluding Russia from the ENP the position of the post-Soviet state is further weakened.

The AA between Ukraine and the EU far exceeds its predecessor - the PCA - in breadth and depth, as it is more comprehensive and far-reaching in its areas covered and its details of commitments than the PCA was. Finalising the AA would catapult Ukraine in close proximity of an EEA status as the agreement contains provisions of a DCFTA. Following the offensive realist line, the AA serves as an instrument to drag Ukraine even further away from Russia and Putin's regional integration project EEU, and thereby strengthens the EU's power and reinforces Russia's marginalised position in IR. It can be argued that the point made by German Chancellor Angela Merkel, that Ukraine can either belong to the European FTA or to the Russian customs union (see section 4.1), confirms this. Moreover, the fact that the AA was completely signed in 2014 (both, the political and the economic part) at a time when Russia has already made its disapproval of EU-Ukraine approximation clear, for instance through the annexation of Crimea, is through offensive realist lenses seen as the proof that the EU is ready to engage in a power-play with Russia.

The economic sanctions imposed on Russia by the EU, and the regular extension of those, are explained by referring to the Union's aggressive behaviour towards Russia and the aim to weaken Russia's economy and thereby the power of the entire country. Additionally, since the EU, in March 2015, linked the lifting of sanctions to the implementation of the Minsk Agreements, realists point to the usage of blackmail or coercion – according to Mearsheimer (2001) one of the main strategies for states to gain power - on the part of the EU towards Russia.

The financial aid provided to Ukraine by the EU is explained by offensive realism as another form of coercion. Ukraine was in desperate need of financial support so the EU helped out, but not without tying the financial aid to extensive economic reforms in Ukraine. In this way, the economic developments favoured by the EU were forced onto Ukraine by the Union, and Ukraine became even more dependent on the EU. Consequently, the EU gained more power and further undermined Russia's power and influence in Ukraine.

The fact that the EU does not send any weapons or troops to Ukraine in order to support local forces against Russian aggression is explained as follows: The peaceful political solution of the conflict, which the EU allegedly advocates, is nothing more but tactics. In fact, the EU only pretends to stick to liberal norms and values by not intervening militarily but actually

follows realist thinking. This 'sneaky' way of conducting IR politics might be the worst strand of realism. By tricking other (less powerful) countries into thinking that the EU pursues liberal politics, the Union strengthens its 'soft power'[13] and thereby integrates these countries into its sphere of influence to bind them to itself. In this way, the Union can compete with other more powerful countries. This argumentation also provides reasons for why the EU, throughout the conflict by different means and through different channels, condemned the violation of the rule of law and of human rights (which are important liberal values) and reiterated on numerous occasions that a political solution reached by diplomacy must be found. Offensive realism points out that, rather than continuing dialogue with the parties involved (as liberal norms would suggest), the EU in fact has suspended bilateral talks with Russia in 2014 on visa matters and on a New EU-Russia Agreement, which could support the claim of the EU conducting realist politics disguised as liberal ones.

Finally, the fact that the EU never offered Ukraine a genuine membership perspective is not explainable by the theory of offensive realism. As suggested by the offensive realist hypothesis the EU's eventual aim is to integrate Ukraine in the Union, as territorial expansionism increases power. However, as it becomes evident from the data of this thesis, the EU never intended - and is also not planning – to integrate Ukraine in the Union. Consequently, Mearsheimer's important concept of territorial expansionism is not maintainable in terms of this aspect of EU FP towards Ukraine.

5.1.1 Discussion Offensive Realist Argumentation

The argumentation that the EU intended to bind Ukraine to the Union by means of the PCA and the ENP, in order to increase its own power and to considerably weaken Russia, does not quite hold considering certain aspects. Firstly, the EU also concluded a PCA with Russia in 1994, accounting for the EU's effort to not solely support Ukraine but also Russia. Thus, it was not the EU's aim to uplift Ukraine and thereby weaken Russia, since Russia, as set forth in the EU-Russia PCA[14], - just like Ukraine[15] - was offered trade and investment promotion, sustainable development, support in the transition to a market economy, etc. Moreover, linked to the PCA, the EU also adopted a Common Strategy on Russia in 1999, in order to specify

[13] 'soft power' is a term coined by Joseph S. Nye that describes a country's ability to persuade others to do what it wants without making use of force, payments or coercion but by attraction (Nye, 2004).

[14] Please see Article 1 in the *Agreement on Partnership and Cooperation establishing a partnership between the European Communities and their Member States, of one part, and the Russian Federation, of the other part*, 1994.

[15] Please see Article 1 in *Partnership and Co-Operation Agreement establishing a partnership between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and Ukraine, of the other part*, 1994.

the cooperation between the two players (Zagorski, 2004). This development corresponds to the initial relations the EU established with Ukraine, showing the Union's attempts to equally support the two former Soviet-states. Hence, the argument that the EU already from the beginning of the post-bipolar world order wanted to undermine Russia is not convincing.

In fact, it can even be argued that Russia decreased the extent of cooperation offered by the EU. In a Medium-Term Strategy Paper on the development of relations with the EU (2000-2010), published in 1999 by Russia, it is stated that the country does not approve "special relations" of the EU "with individual countries of the Commonwealth [Commonwealth of Independent States[16]] to the detriment of Russia's interests" (Moscow State Academy of Law, 2007, Art.1.6).

This demonstrates Russia's opposition of further EU cooperation and approximation in the former Soviet Space, as Putin probably feared the undermining of his authoritarian regime[17] through the democratic and liberal values promoted by the EU through cooperation. Following this thought, the argument outlined above, stating that the EU weakens Russia even more by excluding it from the ENP, is also contested. While Russia is not incorporated in the ENP this can be explained by Russia's deliberate decision not to be associated with the EU, as it is stated in the Medium-Term Strategy Paper on Russia-EU relations (2000-2010) (Moscow State Academy of Law, 2007). In the Strategy Paper it reads that

> "[a]s a world power situated on two continents, Russia should retain its freedom to determine and implement its domestic and foreign policies, its status and advantages of an Euro-Asian state and the largest country of the CIS, independence of its position and activities at international organizations"
> (Moscow State Academy of Law, 2007, Art. 1.1)

Hence, Russia-EU relations are limited. Furthermore, as Zank (2015) notes, Russia was indeed not incorporated in the ENP, yet received basically the same offer from the EU as the

[16] The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), created in 1991, is a regional integration project consisting of nine former Soviet countries, including Russia (International Business Publications USA, 2011). Even though Ukraine is a founding country, it is not a full member as it chose not to ratify the CIS Charter (International Business Publications USA, 2011).

[17] Freedom House (2016*a*) in the framework of an estimation of freedom and democracy in different countries around the globe ranked Russia in 2001 - after Putin's first nomination as President of the Russian Federation in 1999 – as "partially free" with the factors "civil liberties" and "political rights" only scoring 5 respectively (a rating of 7 denoting the worst situation and 1 the best). In 2012 – after Putin's return to the office of Russian president – the country's ranking plummeted to "not free" with a 5 in "civil liberties" and a 6 in "political rights" (Freedom House, 2016*b*). In 2016, Russia's ranking of "civil liberties" also dropped to 6 (Freedom House, 2016*c*).

ENP countries did. However, the offer has been rejected by Moscow (Zank, 2015). It can thus not be argued that the EU intended to weaken Russia by providing support solely to the other former Soviet countries. In this regard, Russia rather took itself out of the game.

In terms of the EU-Ukraine AA, it cannot be questioned that the EU increases its own power if the AA is concluded, as Ukraine would in that case almost have obtained an EEA status. Thereby, the former Soviet state would have substantial economic ties with the EU which makes an approximation with Russia more unlikely, and simultaneously increases the Union's influence in Ukraine. Hence, the economic expansionism entailed by the conclusion of the AA strengthens the power of the EU and the offensive realist argumentation is reasonable. Furthermore, the statement by German Chancellor Merkel that Ukraine has to choose between a membership either in the EU FTA or in the Russian customs union, can be interpreted as a sign that cooperation with the EU indeed means limiting cooperation with other countries. It has to be taken into account though that free trade with the EU is not easily feasible when other customs and tariffs - entailed by a membership in Russia's customs union - constitute new barriers towards non-members like the EU. Therefore, the exclusion of both memberships for Ukraine does not explicitly prove that the EU arbitrarily forces its cooperation partners to burn bridges with other partners. Nevertheless, Russia would not be able to strengthen its power in case Ukraine opts for the AA with the EU. The signing of the political and economic parts of the AA by the EU MS and Poroshenko in 2014 is a step towards the conclusion of the AA and came at a time when the conflict was already well underway. Thus, it can be concluded that in this troubled period the EU was eager to ensure progress in the AA negotiations in order not to lose the prospect of stronger influence in Ukraine.

Nevertheless, when discussing this aspect it is worthwhile to include a certain aspect: The AA was as much valued by Ukraine as it was by the EU. Hence, Ukraine welcomed the negotiation talks. Firstly, Yanukovych saw the AA negotiations as a means to increase his leverage towards Russia and in turn also towards the EU since he gambled "to bargain for the highest possible stakes for himself" (Stepanenko & Pylynskyi, 2015, p. 14). Secondly, Ukraine's economy needed opportunities to grow as the country does not have – unlike Russia - vast oil and gas resources at its disposal. Consequently, obtaining nearly an EEA status is a worthwhile destination for Ukraine. Thirdly, the Ukrainian people, representing not the elite but the civil society, were deeply in favour of the AA – not just of negotiation talks but also in favour of an actual ratification and implementation of the AA (see chapter 1.0). Fourthly, the AA was even criticised by the Ukrainian government for not being far-reaching

enough as it lacks – just like the PCA and the ENP measures – a clear prospect of EU membership (see section 4.3).

Regarding the imposition of economic sanctions by the EU against Russia, which is explained above by the aggressive behaviour on the side of the EU towards Russia and the Union's aim to cause harm to Russia, the moment in which these sanctions were adopted is crucial. As stated in chapter 4.0, efficient economic sanctions against Russia were only implemented after the downing of Flight MH17. Even though there was no strong evidence at the time that Russia was responsible for the shooting of the aircraft, considerable conviction of Russia's direct or indirect involvement in the tragedy prevailed. Firstly, this was because the aircraft was shot down over Eastern Ukrainian territory where pro-Russian separatists had their stronghold. Secondly, it was found that the separatists themselves did not have the necessary military equipment at their disposal to shoot down an aircraft at these heights. Russia, however, is equipped with such weaponry. Following from this, EU leaders agreed on considerable extensions of the already implemented – but relatively soft – sanctions against Russia. As Glebov (2015) notes, only these broader economic sanctions started to have a real impact on the Russian economy. Hence, the aggressive behaviour of the EU was more of a response to previous aggressive behaviour on the side of Russia.

Moreover, to describe the link between the cancellation of sanctions to the implementation of the Minsk Agreements as coercion or blackmail is too far-fetched. After all, the Russian government agreed on the terms and conditions laid down in Minsk so it could have been expected that Russia fulfils its part of the agreement. After learning that this did not happen (see chapter 4.0), the EU needed to do something in order to remind Russia of its commitments. Linking the lifting of sanctions to the implementation of the Minsk agreements, therefore, does not prove EU blackmailing but rather Russian reluctance to comply with pledges made.

The financial aid provided by the EU to Ukraine is described above as another form of coercion. It is clear that the financial support cannot be seen as a mere act of selflessness on the side of the EU, especially not because the Union linked the financial aid to economic reforms in Ukraine. However, the reasons for the macrofinancial support do not necessarily have to be the alleged aim of the EU to drag Ukraine into its sphere of influence. It can be argued that the EU by means of financial aid as well as economic reforms intends to stabilise Ukraine so it becomes a solid neighbour less prone to upheaval and conflict. Nevertheless, the EU's financial support to Ukraine poses a certain degree of leverage.

Furthermore, the argumentation regarding the EU's alleged 'sneaky' way of adhering to realist thinking but performing a liberal FP is hard to prove or disprove. This is because the underlying intentions - and maybe even 'back room' motivations - of the EU to conduct certain policies are not publicly available, as discussed in chapter 2.0. Therefore, one can only analyse the 'visible' actions of the EU in this field. The repeated condemnations of the violations of human rights and the rule of law by EU officials, the use of diplomacy, and the decision not to support Ukraine with troops or weaponry, account for a liberal way of making FP. If this is the case because the EU only disguises its actual realist intentions or because the Union firmly believes in liberal norms and values is, in the scope of this thesis, impossible to evaluate. It is important to mention that, despite the sanctions against Russia, the suspended talks on visa matters and on a New EU-Russia Agreement, etc., the EU pursues diplomatic means by not completely cutting ties with Russia. Cooperation programmes with Russia, which are concerned with cross-border cooperation, people-to-people contacts, and civil society, are maintained (EEAS, 2015*b*). Moreover, only recently, at the 20th Saint Petersburg International Economic Forum 2016 in June, COM President Juncker said the following:

> I have always believed in the power of dialogue. When our relations are tense, we must keep talking. Even when economic sanctions are in place, we must keep the door open. And if I am here with you today, it is because I want to build a bridge
> (Juncker, 2016*b*, para. 2)

Finally, as already stated above, the offensive realist argumentation cannot account for the absence of a clear membership perspective for Ukraine. If, however, one would be willing to make a bold attempt to search for an explanation in another direction of the theory of realism, the claims of defensive realism could be put forward. Even though defensive realism is not used in this thesis in order to carry out the analysis, its assumptions, as touched upon in chapter 3.0, could provide the following explanation:

Defensive realism might argue that the EU simply is not reliant on Ukraine as a MS since the power the Union already accumulated through other foreign policies towards the Ukraine conflict is sufficient to ensure its survival. Moreover, the EU internal discrepancies about a potential Ukrainian membership would harm the EU and ultimately, the Union could be weakened. Therefore, a membership prospect for Ukraine is not on the table.

Nevertheless, this explanation is of no further importance to this thesis since defensive realism is excluded as a theory to analyse the EU FP. However, it is instanced here to show to

what great extent the individual strands of realism differ from each other. Where one sub-school cannot provide an explanation for the absence of an accession perspective to Ukraine, another one does possess explanatory power.

5.1.2 Partial Conclusion Offensive Realism

As discussed above, it is not completely convincing that the EU FP related to the conclusion of the PCAs and the launch of the ENP is a means to considerably weaken Russia and to incontrovertibly bind Ukraine to the Union. The EU's open market economy is promoted by the Union as the EU benefits from an increase in trading countries. The degree of promotion of and support for a transition to an open market economy in the former Soviet states varies from country to country due to several factors, but it is not limited to Ukraine only in order to weaken Russia. Moreover, if the EU's aim was to ultimately drag Ukraine in its sphere of influence, an accession prospect would have already been offered to Ukraine. It is important to bear in mind that the approximation of Ukraine to the EU, which is feared by Russia, does not originate to an insignificant extent from Ukraine itself. Ukraine, as every other country, is dependent on a well-functioning economy and therefore, perceives a stake in the internal EU market as its best bet. Additionally, the Ukrainian civil society has more than once shown – through the Orange Revolution and the Maidan movement – that it wishes for a future closer to and also possibly inside the EU. From the discussion above it can be derived that, rather than the EU, Russia is the player actually adhering to realist thinking. The country's aggressive behaviour towards Ukraine, outlined throughout this thesis, gives rise to the idea that Moscow does not regard Ukraine as a sovereign state but seeks to use it in order to increase Russia's power. A wide range of empirical material exists which takes up this point and argues for Russia's power ambitions in the sense of realist thinking[18]. As Maksymenko (2015) for instance notes, "Moscow is clearly seeking to dominate the entire post-Soviet area and positions itself as a new global center of power, geopolitical speaking" (p. 119). Also Semeniy (2007) states that "[t]he Russian intention since 1991 has been to keep Ukraine within its sphere of influence as part of its broader desire to maintain great-power status after the collapse of the USSR" (p.124).

The argumentation put forward by Mearsheimer (section 2.4) that Russia was provoked by the West to such an extent that the country could not help but making its point by annexing Crimea and de-stabilising Ukraine, should be regarded on a differentiated basis. Mearsheimer

[18] See for instance *Ukraine after the Euromaidan – Challenges and Hopes* (2015), edited by Viktor Stepanenko and Yaroslav Pylynskyi, Bern, Switzerland: Peter Lang.

(2014) mainly refers to NATO expansion in his article and, while Ukraine's accession to NATO was and is not even ripe for discussion (see McFaul, 2014), another important point is to be made here: NATO is not EU. Thus, EU-Ukraine approximation (through AA negotiation talks for instance) is not to be confused with Ukraine-NATO relations. However, Russia lumps the EU and NATO together in one category and thereby justifies its actions in Ukraine.
Nevertheless, the offensive realist line of argumentation regarding the initiation of the AA between the EU and Ukraine does hold as the EU considerably strengthens its power once the AA is concluded. Furthermore, the AA acts an assurance against stronger Ukraine-Russia economic ties since Ukraine could not become a member of Russia's customs union once having opted for the AA with the EU. Thereby, a gain in power for Russia would be prevented.
Moreover, the offensive realist argumentation regarding the financial aid provided by the EU and the EU's alleged 'sneaky' way of acting in a realist way cannot be easily rebutted, yet lacks strong power of persuasion. In this regard, insight into internal and confidential EU material could provide strong evidence for this point as well as prove it wrong.
In conclusion, offensive realism does possess explanatory power regarding the initiation of the AA between the EU and Ukraine. In terms of the financial aid and the EU's alleged 'sneaky' way of making FP, the offensive realist argumentation cannot entirely be disproven and, therefore, needs to be taken into account. However, concerning the launch of the PCA and the ENP, the imposition and extensions of sanctions, and the lack of a membership perspective for Ukraine, offensive realism does not prove to be a satisfactory or well-suited theory.

5.2 EU FP towards Ukraine and the Recent Conflict in Liberalism

After having dealt with the realist stance, this chapter approaches the EU FP from a liberal perspective, outlined in the same structure as the previous chapter. The liberal hypothesis developed in the theoretical framework is the following:
The EU FP towards Ukraine and the ongoing conflict is primarily concerned with the stabilisation of the region in its East. Therefore, the EU focuses, also already before the outburst of the crisis, on promoting European norms and values (such as the rule of law, democracy, open market economy, human rights, etc.) in Ukraine so the country will eventually integrate in the liberal zone of peace. To reach this goal, the EU also supports institution-building as well as mutual economic development and interdependence in Ukraine, since welfare is the priority. The use of military forces is no real option as the focus is on the

economic matters and the use of diplomacy. Transnational ties are also strengthened in order to create a security community which ensures stability and peace.

The first aspect of EU FP towards Ukraine and the recent conflict considered here is, just like in the previous chapter, the conclusion of the PCA between Ukraine and the EU. As propounded in chapter 4.3, the PCA provided the framework for political cooperation between the EU and Ukraine and was aimed at supporting the establishment of a democratic form of government in the former Soviet state (PCA, 1994). Additionally, the PCA included economic cooperation measures which were tied to Ukraine's transition into a market economy (Missiroli, 2004; Zagorski, 2004). Seen through liberal lenses, the PCA served the purpose of initiating economic cooperation and, in the course of time, economic interdependence between Ukraine and the EU. The goal was to pave the way for Ukraine transforming into a market economy so mutual trade would become possible. Furthermore, the PCA was designed to simultaneously promote liberal values, like an open market and the rule of law, in Ukraine in order to lay the foundation for the country's transition into a liberal state. As it is stated in the common strategy on Ukraine, one of the strategic goals of the partnership is:

- to contribute to the emergence of a stable, open and pluralistic democracy in Ukraine, governed by the rule of law and underpinning a stable functioning market economy which will benefit all the people of Ukraine;
  (European Council, 1999, Part I, Art. 5)

Following this line of thought, a liberal Ukraine would over time quite naturally adhere to liberal values itself and would, thus, eventually be integrated into the liberal zone of peace ensuring stability in the region – the EU's overarching goal.

In terms of the ENP, liberals see the broadened cooperation between the EU and Ukraine as a step forward towards strengthened mutually benefitting economic cooperation. As mentioned before, the ENP is aimed at establishing close political links and to reach the highest possible degree of economic integration with the Union's neighbours (EEAS, n.d.*a*). Hence, the ENP is also an instrument to promote liberal values in the EU's new neighbouring countries after the big enlargement of 2004. By offering the ENP countries a stake in the European Internal Market, the EU promotes the establishment of democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights, and economic progress in the respective countries, as a lack of progress in these areas would result in the discontinuation of financial and economic support through the ENP.

Consequently, the transition of Ukraine into a liberal partner state trough these peaceful economic incentives would fulfil the EU's main goal of extending the liberal zone of peace, and thereby achieving a stable and conflict-free neighbourhood.

The AA between the EU and Ukraine is even more far-reaching in these respects. Liberalism argues that the harmonisation of laws and regulations, which is part of the agreement, foster the development of common sets of rules between the EU and Ukraine in different areas such as trade. This common set of rules which, according to Keohane and Nye (1989), is a form of an international institution, corresponds to the liberal claim that the EU is eager to support international institution-building in Ukraine. Naturally, the AA also deepens the mutually beneficial economic cooperation and interdependence between the EU and Ukraine as it promotes an open market economy and would bring the former Soviet state close to an EEA status (see chapter 4.3). Furthermore, the promotion of liberal values is carried out by means of the AA as it incorporates "the aim of reinforcing the rule of law and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms" (Association Agreement, Art. 1.2). The goal of strengthening peace and stability is also explicitly stated in the AA and thereby shows the EU's aspiration to create a stable and conflict-free area. The signing of the political and economic parts of the AA in 2014 shows that the EU is also concerned with supporting the civil society because the signing came "as a gesture of support for that country [Ukraine] in its conflict with Russia following the annexation of Crimea" (Pridham, 2014, p. 53).

The sanctions imposed by the EU against Russia were adopted after Russia had illegally annexed Crimea and the more targeted economic sanctions only entered into force after Flight MH17 had been shot down over the contested Eastern Ukrainian territory (see chapter 4.3). Therefore, liberalism accounts for the imposition of sanctions by sticking to the liberal claim that welfare is more important than military force. This assumption, in turn, means that a country will be hit harder if its economy is weakened than if its military capacity is challenged.

So, as a reaction to Russia's aggressive behaviour, the EU targeted Russia's economy rather than responding by military means. The economic sanctions were aimed at entailing hurtful repercussions for the Russian economy, so – the EU hoped - Putin would eventually refrain from de-stabilising Ukraine. The constant extension of the sanctions against Russia is explained by pointing to the unfulfilled obligations on the side of Russia regarding the Minsk agreements. As liberals adhere to norms and values such as the rule of law and international law, it is expected that agreements are complied with. After it turned out that Russia until the present day did not do its part, the EU continues to extend the sanctions.

The financial aid, provided by the EU, served as a means to strengthen the Ukrainian economy further, as the envisaged aim of the EU, to achieve economic interdependence with Ukraine, can only be reached if Ukraine actually has a working economy and does not need to fear bankruptcy. Moreover, Russia threatened to turn off the gas tap so Ukraine would have faced an enormous problem (see chapter 4.1). The EU helped out by supporting Ukraine financially and by carrying out 'reverse flows' (see chapter 4.0), so a catastrophe could be prevented and economic development was back on the agenda. In this sense, the liberal assumption of the EU's focus on economic development and interdependence provides an explanation for the financial aid provided by the Union.

The fact that the EU throughout the conflict in Ukraine condemned the violation of human rights and the rule of law, the use of force against peaceful protesters, and fraudulent elections even before the conflict, etc. is no puzzle for liberals – quite the contrary. The EU does not only promote these liberal norms and values, but they constitute the Union's underlying principles, so it does not come as a surprise that violations of those liberal norms are condemned by the EU. It is important to mention that the EU does not make a difference between the origins of the violations of these liberal principles, whether they are carried out by Kiev or Moscow - both countries are rebuked by the Union. The lack of military involvement on the side of the EU is also explained by the Union's adherence to liberal thinking. Military force is not considered an option as – in the sense of Kant – peaceful solutions to conflicts are applied by liberal states. The Union rather implements economic sanctions in order to reach a solution in the conflict. Military force is no promising strategy for liberals and is therefore only the last resort.

In regards to the suspension of bilateral talks between the EU and Russia, it is important to state that this measure also came as the EU's response to Russia's aggressive behaviour towards Ukraine by violating the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity, the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol, and the inflow of fighters and weapons from Russian territory into Ukraine (EEAS, 2015*c*). Liberalism argues once more with the uselessness of military force and points to the fact that the EU maintains cooperation programmes with Russia which are, according to the EEAS (2015*b*), concerned with cross-border cooperation, people-to-people contacts, and civil society. Here, the liberal aspect of the importance of transnational ties and the use of diplomacy becomes apparent as the EU is still open for talks with Russia and people-to-people contacts are still supported.

The fact that an accession prospect for Ukraine is not on the agenda contradicts partly with the liberal idea of supporting transnational ties and establishing international institutions. It

goes without saying that the most effective way to build an international institution with Ukraine would be to include the country into the EU. However, this has not happened yet and also is not going to happen in the next decade, according to COM president Juncker (2016*a*), even though demands from other EU officials were voiced to offer Ukraine a membership perspective (see chapter 4.1). Liberalism yet holds an explanation for this as the overarching goal of the EU is to stabilise its neighbouring region. Knowing that Russia strongly condemns Ukrainian EU membership, the Union is concerned with turning Ukraine into a liberal state but not including it in the EU, as this would provoke Russia to the highest extent.

5.2.1 Discussion Liberal Argumentation

The argumentation for the conclusion of the PCA between the EU and Ukraine is reasonable, as the declared goals of the PCA correspond to the Union's attempts to foster economic development and cooperation and thereby peacefully turn Ukraine into a liberal democratic state. As noted in the previous chapter as well as in section 4.3, the EU also initiated PCAs, and specified those by means of common strategies, with other NIS – including Russia. Thus, Russia was basically made the same offer by the EU as Ukraine. This shows that the EU initially did not make any differences between the countries of the former Soviet Union but treated them equally aiming at transforming these countries into liberal democracies with open market economies, so stability in the region would be achieved. However, as stated above, Russia did not become receptive to this offer to the same extent as Ukraine did, so EU-Russia cooperation is limited and potential Russian membership in the Union never came on the agenda. Instead, both parties agreed on cooperation in specific areas, yet Russia made clear from the start that the country "pursues a policy of non-integration into the EU in order to maintain freedom of action" (Zagorski, 2004, p. 84). This Russian stance becomes apparent in the Medium-Term Strategy Paper on Russia-EU relations (2000-2010) (see above). Following this, the legitimate question arises why Moscow, until the present day, is so reluctant to cooperate with the EU. Although it is not the focus of this thesis, it is arguable that Putin fears the undermining of his authoritarian regime through approximation with the EU. By adhering to liberal thinking and promoting liberal norms and values, the EU embodies everything what authoritarian leaders seek to prevent in their respective countries, as these liberal principles would seriously threaten their rule. This argument is underpinned by Pridham (2014) who states that Putin sees democratic movements such as the Orange Revolution in 2004 "as a systemic threat to his own authoritarian preferences" (p. 57). Also Zank (2015) claims that any influx of liberal Western principles into Russia or other former

Soviet states would impair Putin's authoritarian regime (p. 16). There is no doubt that Putin's rule has brought Russia ever further away from a democratic form of government (see Freedom House, 2016*a*, 2016*b*, 2016*c*; Doyle, 2012).

This line of thought corresponds to the launch of the ENP as well. As stated above, Russia does not belong to the ENP countries, yet was offered support from the EU in different fields. Hence, the EU's focus on economic development in its neighbourhood and its aim to peacefully transform the region into democratic countries with open market economies, is evident. Furthermore, the EU also pays attention to democratic aspirations of the civil society, as seen in the wake of the Maidan movement (see chapter 4.1). It can be argued that the Euromaidan was triggered by Yanukovych's decision to suspend negotiation talks on the AA between the EU and Ukraine. Consequently, the signing of the political and economic parts of the AA in 2014 can indeed be interpreted "as a gesture", like Pridham (2014, p. 53) puts it - a gesture from the EU towards the Ukrainian civil society, which fought in the Maidan movement in order to push through genuine democratisation and EU approximation. However, the EU's gesture towards the Ukrainian people could have been stronger and more powerful, as it will be argued later in this section. Indeed, the signing of the political and economic parts of the AA is a necessary step in the process, but the AA only becomes fully effective once it is ratified by all the EU MS. Due to the recent Dutch referendum, the ratification is not likely to be finalised in the near future.

Nevertheless, it is obvious that the AA is another instrument of the EU aiming to bring Ukraine one step closer to a liberal democracy, which adheres to the rule of law, possesses an open market economy, becomes interdependent with the EU MS, obeys human rights and fundamental freedoms, and by doing so quite automatically ensures stability in the Eastern neighbourhood.

In terms of the imposition of economic sanctions against Russia, the EU's liberal thinking once again becomes apparent. By putting pressure on Russia's economy, the EU believed to peacefully create an incentive for Russia to stop de-stabilising Ukraine and implementing the Minsk agreements – just like the liberal theory suggests. However, a radical rethink in Moscow is not achieved by this strategy, even though the sanctions are partly responsible for the recession that hits Russia's economy for several years now[19]. As Guriev (2016) argues, putting an end to the conflict in Ukraine would certainly help Russia's economy getting back on track as in that case EU sanctions would be lifted. Yet, Putin does not change his FP

[19] For detailed economic reports on Russia, The World Bank's publications on Russia's economic situations throughout the past years can be consulted (see bibliography).

towards Ukraine and his increasing popularity among Russians[20] (despite the economic crisis), since the outburst of the conflict and the annexation of Crimea, is likely to strengthen him on his course. Consequently, the liberal argumentation for the imposition of sanctions does hold; however, the strategy does not quite work as initially anticipated by the EU.

The financial aid to Ukraine provided by the EU is the liberal response to the failing Ukrainian economy, due to the conflict in the country. In the argumentation for why the liberal explanation is reasonable, it is important to reiterate that the financial aid was not just given to Ukraine, but it is actually tied to extensive economic reforms in the country (see chapter 4.1). Hence, the former Soviet state needs to implement economic reforms, which lay the foundation for an open market economy in Ukraine, in order to receive financial help from the EU. Furthermore, the biggest share of the financial support to Ukraine actually does not come from the EU but from the IMF (see chapter 4.3).

The fact that the EU condemned the use of force and the violations of human rights and the rule of law, etc. throughout the conflict, proves the adherence of the Union to liberal thinking. As these actions do not correspond to liberal behaviour in the international system, the EU needs to make clear that these methods are not accepted by it. The lack of military involvement on the side of the EU further proves this point. However, it is argued by some that the response of the EU towards the Ukrainian conflict is (too) weak. Glebov (2015) for instance states that "the EU showed no willingness to fight for the 'post-Soviet' part of Europe by any means other than diplomacy" (p. 107). Also Pridham (2014) claims that "[s]o far EU policy has been twin-tracked with diplomacy at one level combined with rather wearisome efforts over sanctions at another; but there is clearly a compelling need for a broader political initiative" (p. 60). Despite the clear point of the scholars, what also follows from their claims is that the EU obviously sticks to liberal values of peaceful conflict resolutions. Nevertheless, it can be argued that the EU can act more radical even within the liberal scope, yet this is a different kettle of fish. The continuation of dialogue between the EU and Russia, despite the sanctions, also accounts for the EU's liberal thinking. COM president Juncker's statements at the 20th Saint Petersburg International Economic Forum 2016 in June (see above) are another example for this point.

[20] According to VCIOM (2015), Putin's approval ratings among respondents to the surveys increased steadily from 60,6% in November 2013 to 86,7% in November 2014 and to 89,9% in October 2015 (see bibliography - VCIOM (2015), "Рейтинг Путина – на новой рекордной высоте", *Пресс-выпуск №2958* (22/10/2015) - source in Russian). These numbers originate from the Russian Public Opinion Research Center which is state-owned so the impartiality of survey results is questionable.

As stated above, liberalist claims can provide an explanation for why the EU should offer Ukraine a membership perspective, but also for the lack of same. In liberalism, it is reasonable to perceive stability and peace in the region as a priority. Granting Ukraine a clear membership prospect would probably trigger even more aggressive behaviour on the side of Russia – with war not being a completely unlikely consequence. Thus, the EU sticks to its aim of transforming Ukraine into a liberal democratic state, in order to incorporate the former Soviet country into the liberal zone of peace, but the EU does that without including Ukraine into the Union. Even though it was Ukraine who traditionally pushed for EU membership (see chapter 4.0), the EU tried to avoid the matter and recently even took a clear stand against Ukrainian membership. It is arguable that this is also partly the case as EU MS are highly split on the question of Ukraine EU membership. As already stated in chapter 4.3, "[…] on the question of Ukraine's membership there has been no convergence of views within the EU; indeed, differences between the member states have, if anything, widened since the Orange Revolution" (Youngs, 2011, p. 40). Nevertheless, both academic and political voices have been raised, stimulated by the ongoing conflict, that call for the need of a clear accession perspective for Ukraine. Pridham (2014) claims it is essential to offer Ukraine a genuine membership perspective now as this would boost the country's pro-Western orientation which is reborn in Ukraine due to the Maidan movement, Poroshenko's election and Russia's aggressive behaviour. Already in 2013, former EU Enlargement Commissioner Füle stated that the EU would have to grant Ukraine a prospect of accession in order to effectively help the former Soviet state (see chapter 4.1) and also Poroshenko said that a commentary from the EU offering his country the prospect of membership once Ukraine is "ready" for this "would mean 'the world'" to Ukrainians and "cost the EU 'nothing'" (EurActiv, 2014, para. 1).

5.2.2 Partial Conclusion Liberalism

Following the analysis and discussion above, it can be concluded that liberalism holds a great deal of explanatory power for the EU FP towards Ukraine and the recent conflict. The fact that the EU concluded the PCA with Ukraine, incorporated the country in the ENP, and negotiates the EU-Ukraine AA, suggests that the Union places a great deal of importance on economic development and interdependence, as this leads to a stable and peaceful IR system. Thus, the liberal democratic peace theory plays a big role in the EU's political mind-set and it is believed that this theory holds the key to stability and peace. Therefore, the Union is eager to transform its neighbouring countries into liberal democratic states. In the case of Ukraine, this undertaking is throughout history more or less appreciated and welcomed by the country

as cooperation with the EU means mutual economic benefits. In recent years, starting with the Orange Revolution and being reinforced once again through the Maidan movement, the pro-Western and pro-EU orientation of a large part of the Ukrainian civil society could not be missed. Also, with the current pro-EU government in Kiev, the country clearly shows its European aspirations. In the case of Russia, however, the attempts of the EU to create a solid foundation for the rule of law, economic interdependence, and liberal norms and values failed. It can be argued that this is mainly due to the authoritarian regime of the government in Moscow. Nevertheless, the EU continued promoting liberal political thinking and economic cooperation in Ukraine in order to one day count the former Soviet country to the liberal zone of peace of liberal democracies in Europe. In the wake of the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, the EU continued adhering to its liberal thinking and acted in a way that the liberal theory suggests. The use of diplomacy, the refusal of military involvement, the continued support of economic development, the condemnation of violations of the rule of law and human rights, the imposition of economic sanctions against Russia – all these FP measures are very well explainable with the liberal theory of IR. The fact that the Union never offered Ukraine a genuine membership prospect is, seen through liberal lenses, the only relatively controversial aspect as including Ukraine in the Union would be the ultimate way of expanding the liberal zone of peace. This controversy is reflected in numerous calls for an accession perspective for Ukraine on the one side, and clear statements and actions accounting for the rejection of same on the other side. Nevertheless, liberalism does hold an explanation for this EU strategy as it can be argued that stability is more likely to crack once Ukraine receives an accession offer than it is to be strengthened. This is due to Russia's firm rejection of EU expansionism.

In conclusion, liberalism proves to be a well-suited theory underlying EU FP towards Ukraine and the ongoing conflict even though the lack of a membership offer for Ukraine is up for discussion within the liberal camp. The finding that the EU is a liberal rather than a realist actor is underpinned by Dannreuther (2004) who finds that the EU in general has a liberal political system based on "the commitment to human rights, the rule of law, the free market and liberal democracy" (p. 216). Also Wyles (2014) finds in his work that the West, and thereby also the EU, adheres to liberal political thinking.

6.0 Conclusion

In this chapter, the findings of the analysis and the discussion are summarised and the applicability of the theories used in this thesis is evaluated. Thereby, the research question is answered. As the final part of this thesis, a suggestion for further research regarding the topic that is dealt with is given.

As it becomes apparent from the preceding chapters, the EU FP towards Ukraine and the ongoing conflict is characterised by financial and economic aid, the promotion of liberal norms and values, military non-intervention, the implementation of sanctions, and the absence of an EU accession perspective for Ukraine. By summarising this, the first part of the research question of this thesis, which reads '*what is the EU's FP towards Ukraine and the ongoing conflict?'* is answered. Regarding the second part of the research question, *'why does the Union conduct exactly this FP?',* an elaboration of the findings of the analysis and the discussion is in order.

Firstly, it is important to state that the theory of liberalism has greater explanatory power than the theory of offensive realism concerning the FP of the EU towards Ukraine and the ongoing conflict. Especially the economic and cooperation policies like the PCA and the ENP are very well explainable by the liberal theory. Also the abstinence of military involvement in the conflict on the side of the EU and the consistent condemnations of the use of force and the violations of human rights and the rule of law strongly suggest the adherence to liberal political thinking of the Union. Additionally, the imposition of economic sanctions against Russia is reasonable and justifiable through liberal lenses as is the financial aid to Ukraine. However, the liberal explanation of the lack of an EU membership perspective to the former Soviet state can be challenged. In offensive realism, this particular issue is not explainable. Moreover, the offensive realist line of argumentation regarding the financial aid of the EU appears to be plausible for a moment, yet proves to be less convincing once it is put in perspective. In terms of the initiation of the AA between the EU and Ukraine, offensive realism does provide a reasonable explanation. Additionally, the offensive realist argument that the EU acts in a 'sneaky' way by pretending to stick to liberal thinking but actually making offensive realist FP can neither be proven nor disproven, as the internal and confidential material and data necessary to investigate this claim is not subject to this thesis, due to its difficulty of accessibility.

Thus, this thesis finds that both theories possess explanatory power in certain aspects of the EU FP towards Ukraine and the recent conflict, with liberalism having the upper hand.

Consequently, the second part of the research question cannot be answered by stating that the EU solely adheres to either liberal political thinking or to realist political thinking. Viewing the EU FP in such a black and white manner would miss the point that both theories possess explanatory force for certain aspects of the EU FP towards Ukraine and the ongoing conflict. It can be stated, however, that, in this specific case, the liberal political thinking of the EU clearly has the upper hand. This is due to the fact that the few aspects of EU FP, which are explainable by offensive realism, can also be accounted for by liberalism. Additionally, the liberal theory provides explanations for EU FP measures that offensive realism does not have solid justifications for.

Therefore, it is claimed that the EU conducts exactly this FP towards Ukraine and the ongoing conflict as the Union, by and large, acts in a way that the liberal theory of IR suggests. Yet, realist tendencies in the EU's FP towards this particular case cannot be entirely excluded.

A potentially subsequent question of why the EU adheres to liberalism might be – although constituting a different matter than the one addressed here – incipiently answered by Doyle (2012) who states that all EU MS are liberal states. Conversely, it can obviously be argued that all EU MS are liberal states as they would have not been accepted as members if they not had a liberal political system.

Another interesting point mentioned in the analysis is the claim that Russia, rather than the EU, acts in a realist way towards Ukraine. This assertion bears an explanation for the difficult EU-Russia relationship, which became even more tensed in the wake of the conflict in Ukraine. The claim of a rather realist Russia and a rather liberal EU is quite in line with Mearsheimer's (2004) conclusion that "Putin and his compatriots have been thinking and acting according to realist dictates, whereas their Western counterparts have been adhering to liberal ideas about international politics" (p. 4). In line with this is Wyles (2014) who claims that the West, including the EU, adheres to liberal values by, for instance, respecting internal law, but that Russia takes an opposite approach to FP. These contradictory political orientations pose a serious challenge to the international system, due to their great conflict potential. As it becomes apparent from the Minsk agreements, Russia is not willing to comply with the conditions it signed, which leads to continuously extensions of the Western sanctions. Russia demonstrates that it does not observe international agreements, which makes Moscow an unpredictable negotiation partner for the EU and other liberal states and international organisations. Even though the Western sanctions are detrimental to Russia's economy, the country neither refrains from de-stabilising Ukraine nor is it expected to implement the Minsk agreements any time soon. Stepanenko and Pylynskyi provide an

explanation for this by claiming that "[f]or Russians, symbolic trophies like having countries bow to their imperial might are much more important than any economic advantages or losses" (p. 14).

Mearsheimer (2014) argues that the crisis in Ukraine could have been prevented if the West, and thereby also the EU, would have treated Ukraine as a neutral buffer state between Russia and the West. The EU, however, regards Ukraine as a sovereign state entitled to make its own FP. As stated throughout this thesis, Ukraine has a history of turning either east- or westwards, but most recently, the former Soviet country follows a course of EU-approximation, strongly supported and even initiated by the Ukrainian civil society. Therefore, the EU supports Ukraine economically and financially, even before the conflict broke out, seizing the opportunity to transform the country into a liberal democracy and thereby strengthening and securing the peace and stability in its Eastern neighbourhood. The lack of an accession perspective for Ukraine can be understood as a concession to Moscow, since European leaders are well aware of Russia's aversion to the West. However, other reasons for this are internal discrepancies between EU MS, with Germany and France being mainly responsible for the absence of a membership prospect for Ukraine, as these countries have important economic ties with Russia (Youngs, 2011). It remains to be seen how - and if - the conflict and the issues connected with it will be solved. An interesting consideration is to investigate as to how a potential Ukrainian membership in the EU can be realised and contribute to a de-escalation of the conflict if the former Soviet country, in return, refrains from potential NATO membership. This diplomatic option would take the aspect, outlined in this thesis, into account that Russia has bigger resentments towards NATO than towards the EU. However, this is just one of several diplomatic considerations that would have to be thoroughly assessed.

In conclusion, this thesis shows that the EU adopts a rather liberal approach towards Ukraine and the ongoing conflict in its FP trying the secure and expand peace and stability, which result from the establishment of a liberal zone of peace in Europe. Even though realist aspirations on the side of the EU cannot be completely disproven, it becomes apparent in this thesis that liberal political thinking in the EU regarding the specific case of Ukraine and the ongoing conflict predominates clearly.

6.1 Further Research

This thesis suggests potential avenues for further research since the FP making of the EU can further be analysed by investigating the different national positions and interests of the individual EU MS in detail. In this work, it is only touched upon this topic, due to the physical limitations of this thesis, but it is acknowledged that the internal bargaining processes between EU MS bear valuable insights into the development of EU FP in the specific case of Ukraine and the recent conflict. As mentioned in this thesis, the standpoints of the individual EU MS differ greatly on the subject of how the case of Ukraine should be treated. Therefore, it would be worthwhile to analyse the different positions of the EU MS in greater detail. The concept of 'two-level games', introduced by Putnam (1988)[21], would provide a relevant methodological basis for such an analysis. Moreover, a deeper analysis of Ukraine's position regarding EU involvement in the conflict and the relationship with the Union in general would be worthwhile.

Furthermore, moving away from the focus on the EU, further analyses of the historical aspect of the Ukraine crisis in general can be carried out, e.g. in terms of the country's Soviet history. The intertwined relationships between different actors like the US, Russia, Ukraine, and NATO also provide ample material for further research. Finally, a careful assessment of possible resolution strategies to the conflict would definitely add to the research on this issue.

In terms of theoretical considerations, other IR theories can be chosen to carry out an analysis of the EU FP towards Ukraine and the ongoing conflict. As already mentioned earlier in this thesis, the theories of constructivism, IPE, international society, but also defensive realism might account for valuable and relevant findings. In connection with this, different hypotheses have to be constructed in order to use the respective theories to carry out an analysis.

[21] Putnam's two-level games can be applied to a great deal of negotiations in an international context. Putnam (1988) states that, in international negotiations every national political negotiator has to operate on two different levels, namely on the national and on the international level, with many different factors determining the outcome of the negotiations. For further reading see Putnam, R. (1988), *Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games*.

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