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**Normative or Pragmatic? The Estonian Perspective on European Union Foreign Policy -
Cases of Conflict in North Macedonia, Ukraine and Nagorno-Karabakh**

MA thesis

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Tartu 2022

The author's declaration

I have written this Master's thesis independently. All viewpoints of other authors, literary sources and data from elsewhere used for writing this paper have been referenced.

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Abstract

The European Union's (EU) foreign policymaking has been known as value-based and therefore normative but in the document of European Union Global Strategy introduced 2016, the EU proposed a new way of dealing with foreign policy issues that put the emphasis on being pragmatic, interest-based and dealing with foreign policy crises with a more principled case-by-case method. This thesis aims to describe through a qualitative study how this proposed shift in the EU's foreign policy is perceived from the viewpoint of the EU's smaller Member States, in this case focusing on Estonia. As smaller Member States are usually considered more as "policy-takers" than "policy-makers" and the EU foreign policy decisions are predominantly made with a unanimous decision, the discourse of smaller Member States of the EU could actually be contrasting from the official foreign policy positions of the EU. To understand the Smaller Member State's discourse regarding conflicts in Europe and in the proximity of Europe, the Estonian viewpoint is described through Estonian foreign policy experts' opinions on the crises. The crises in North Macedonia in 2001, Ukraine in 2014 and Nagorno-Karabakh in 2020 are therefore analysed in-depth to understand the EU's evolution of foreign policymaking. The thesis uses Manner's (2002) Normative Power Europe and Ladrech's (1994) theoretical literature on Europeanization to understand the EU's foreign policy and Estonian positions regarding crises of conflict are analysed through Regional Security Complex Theory by Buzan and Wæver (2003).

The qualitative study conducted using comparative analysis, document analysis and semi-structured expert interviews shed light on the Estonian perspective, which was found to be more value-based than the EU's official position on foreign policy crises in Ukraine and Nagorno-Karabakh, with similar perspectives towards North Macedonian crisis in 2001. Contrasting most with the EU's perspectives was the case of Ukraine, where Estonia's perceived threat to national security was identified as one of the main factors of the illustrated difference. The EU's discourse shift is mapped and in the cases of conflict chosen for this thesis the study identifies a steady shift from more value-based to more interests-based foreign policy making.

Keywords: Normative Power Europe, EU foreign policy pragmatism, small EU Member States, Estonia foreign policy experts perspective, Ohrid Framework Agreement, Minsk Agreements, Nagorno-Karabakh, EUGS.

List of abbreviations

EU - European Union

EUGS - European Union Global Strategy

CFSP - Common Foreign and Security Policy

OSCE - Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe

FYROM - Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia

NATO - North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

NPE - Normative Power Europe

ENP - European Neighbourhood Policy

US - United States of America

ODIHR - Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

DCFTA - Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement

OFA - Ohrid Framework Agreement

RSCT - Regional Security Complex Theory

FAC - Foreign Affairs Council

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Introduction

The European Union (hereinafter the EU) has become much more than an economic power in the world, with the Treaties of Maastricht and Lisbon also focusing more on the Member States' foreign policy integration since the 1990-s. The EU's foreign policy relies on the values first presented in the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 and progressively reinforced by the Lisbon treaty in 2007 which established the Common Foreign and Security Policy (hereinafter CFSP) (Keukeleire & Delreux, 2014). The foreign policy values of the EU presented in the CFSP are mainly and most importantly the following: to safeguard the common values and fundamental interests of the Union while strengthening its security and maintaining peace internationally. Also, to help develop democracy and the rule of law while respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms of the people (Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union, 2012). These ideas of the CFSP can be considered as norms that the EU is promoting internationally through policy-making decisions.

The EU has been described as a Normative Power (Manners, 2002) and seeks to be the mediator of conflicts in foreign policy areas in and around the EU. But in recent years, the EU's perspective on dealing with foreign policy matters has gradually changed - an important development being the conceptualisation of the European Union Global Strategy (EUGS) document in 2016. One of the objectives of the EUGS was the shifting of the discourse from projecting liberal norms to dealing with foreign policy issues on a case-by-case basis with principled pragmatism. The purpose of principled pragmatism is that the EU should act by liberal values but should also be pragmatic and view every situation on a case-by-case basis while implementing foreign policy in the EU and the neighbourhood of the EU (Juncos, 2016: 2).

The thesis will focus on three cases of foreign policy implementation to compare, analyse and make conclusions on different ways of EU-s involvement. To understand the influence of the EU foreign policy and how different policy instruments have been implicated in different circumstances, it is important to compare cases of conflict in Europe and the neighbouring states of Europe. In some cases, for example at the start of the 2000-s in North Macedonia (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), the EU mediated the conflict between North Macedonia and Albanian minorities with diplomatic measures, alongside OSCE, US and NATO and helped to end

the violence for that period as the result of the Ohrid Framework Agreement in 2001 (Andonovski, 2018). In the case of the Ukraine and Minsk Agreements, the EU was slow to react to the conflict but managed to influence the situation with humanitarian aid and sanctions on Russia (European Parliament, 2020). The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, which happened farthest away from the EU borders, also had the least influence on the EU, despite the EU trying to help the situation with humanitarian aid (European Commission, 2021).

The EU has traditionally portrayed its foreign policy as based on normative values, but the shift in EU foreign policy has become more visible as the EU's foreign policy has become more consolidated. From the Maastricht Treaty to the Lisbon Treaty, as years have gone by, so has the EU's foreign policy become more integrated and the peak of the EU's foreign policy consolidation could be seen from the EUGS document mentioned earlier. As the cases of crisis chosen in this study ranged from the early 2000s to 2020, we can analyse the evolution of EU foreign policymaking. Therefore, to briefly map the variation, it can be assumed that the EU's foreign policy in the cases of conflict in North Macedonia, Ukraine and South Caucasus broadly ranges in the category of more normative (in the case of the Ohrid Framework Agreement in 2001), to mixed discourse in Ukraine 2014-2015 (in the case of the Minsk Agreements) to more pragmatic in terms of Nagorno-Karabakh in 2020.

The EU's response to crises has therefore been greatly different in contrasting cases of conflict and shows that the CFSP values of maintaining peace and security internationally have many conditionalities for the EU's disparate involvement. Furthermore, most of the CFSP decisions require the European Council's unanimous vote and generally the consensus on the EU foreign policy decisions is in line with the larger Member States' perspectives (Wivel, 2005: 393-394). Therefore, it will be useful to understand the perspective of smaller Member States to distinguish how unanimous the degree of interest is within the EU Member States in different cases of CFSP application in contrasting cases of conflict.

Why should the thesis focus on a perspective of a tiny Member State like Estonia at the EU's external border? Small Member States that are located at the external border of the EU are fascinating examples of EU policymaking. On the one hand, their "smallness" is accentuated by

structural disadvantages, implying that they are mere "policy takers." On the other hand, their geographic location on the EU's "frontline" - its external boundary - indicates that they have unique interests in their immediate surroundings. This means they can't afford to let the EU's "special relationship with neighbours" specifically in the East develop without them, and they'll have to work hard to influence EU policies that are most aligned with their foreign and security interests (Pastore, 2013: 67). Estonia as a small Member State of the EU could also act as a mediator in the decision making of the EU, as small states are considered to be more effective as mediators because they can never expect to be as successful as large ones in pressing their national interests (Bjurulf 2001). Mirroring EU's Foreign Policy contrasting normative or pragmatic perspectives with smaller Member States' experts' discourse in cases of conflict in the EU and the proximity of the EU is not extensively studied and therefore this thesis could help to fill the gap in academic literature.

The thesis will use the theoretical literature of Manners (2002, 2006 and 2008), Diez (2005), Diez and Manners (2007) Haukkala (2008 and 2011) and others, while also including Ladrech (1994), Schimmelfennig (2012), Checkel (2001) and other authors' literature on Europeanization theories. The small Member State in EU foreign policymaking is theorised by authors Wivel, (2005) and Buzan & Wæver (2003). This thesis aims to analyse and compare three cases of EU foreign policy within conflicts in Europe (cases of North Macedonia in 2001 and Ukraine in 2014-2015) and the South Caucasus (Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in 2020). The cases are selected from different periods and different parts of the world. In all cases, the parties in conflict are not members of the EU but have economic or cooperation ties with the EU. The cases are selected to highlight the EU's foreign policy-making decisions from 2001 to 2020.

Acting normatively can in this case be considered as acting firstly and most importantly on a value basis. This means that the goal of the intervention or mediation by the EU is to project normative values on the subject in question. Acting pragmatically in the case of the EU foreign policy can be seen as acting with only the specific interests of the EU Member States in mind, with norms being secondary or of no significance. Acting with mixed discourse is also identified when displaying both normative and pragmatic discourses throughout the foreign policy crisis. These aforementioned descriptions of normative and pragmatic discourses are pivotal in recognising and

differentiating EU foreign policymaking in the analysis of the thesis. In these three cases, the research question would be the following:

Q: How does Estonia, as a Small EU Member state, perceive the normative or pragmatic EU foreign policy regarding cases of conflict in North Macedonia, Ukraine and South Caucasus?

In the first part of the thesis, the theoretical framework of the study is introduced. After the theoretical part, to gain meaning and understand the EU's interference so far in the crises, the historical background is presented in the second chapter. For empirical analysis and methodology, the thesis will draw on document analysis featuring process tracing and interviews with Estonian Foreign policy experts. The qualitative analytical part of the study focuses on to what extent is the Estonian foreign policy experts' perspective on the EU's normative and/or pragmatic foreign policy in line with the EU's perspective on the selected cases. The research also conducts a small-n comparative study to compare the crises and finally makes conclusions and further suggestions on the research topic based on the analysis.

1. Theoretical Framework

To address this disparity in outcomes of foreign policy decisions and to understand the complexity of the situations in the three aforementioned cases, research into the subject is needed for two reasons. Firstly, to make sense of how the rationale shift from projecting norms to a more pragmatic way has influenced the conflicts in the EU and the proximity of the EU. And secondly, to understand how Estonia, as a small EU Member State, perspectives on these cases of conflict differ from the EU's outlook.

The EU Foreign policy faces challenges to unite 27 sovereign member states into having common interests in resolving complex conflicts in Europe and internationally due to historical backgrounds and differences in foreign policy aims. Still, the EU has step-by-step become a conflict mediator in the EU and the outskirts of the EU. The discourse of dealing with different types of crises has changed dramatically from the EU being - as Manners (2002) called it - a Normative Power, to a more pragmatic and case by case way of dealing with the issues faced.

In the discourse of the EU, we find a contradiction between the two perspectives. From one perspective the EU wants to protect their liberal values and be the international norm maker, but from the other perspective faces many challenges to making a difference in situations of conflict by only concentrating on the values they represent. To contemplate how the EU acted in the selected cases of conflict, the concepts of Normative Power and Europeanization will be analysed. The theoretical literature on the EU's smaller Member States' influence on EU politics is discussed in the final part of the theoretical framework to understand Estonia's foreign policy perspectives and their role in the EU foreign policymaking.

1.1 Normative Power Europe

The master's thesis will use the theory of Normative Power Europe (hereinafter NPE) described by Manners (2002) as a relevant concept for this thesis. NPE refers to the theory which describes the EU as an ideological power with the ability to shape conceptions of "normal" internationally (Manners, 2002: 239). This concept of NPE inclines the EU to act by the liberal values that all of the EU member states should act by. By connecting the existing knowledge of theoretical

background with the reality of EU foreign policy-making it can be seen how the concept of NPE has worked in different crises in which the EU foreign policy has been implemented in the aforementioned conflicts in Ukraine, Nagorno-Karabakh and North Macedonia. The predisposition is that the EU should act to extend its norms into the international system (Manners, 2002: 252).

When the EU's foreign policy is defined in normative terms, the EU's power cannot be reduced to either military or solely economic ones. It “functions through ideas, opinions, and conscience.” (Diez and Manners, 2007: 175). This illustrates that in the case of ENP, it is crucial to study in terms of methodology, intentions, and discourses, whether the EU acts as a normative power (Lenz, 2013: 212). Therefore, considering the external features of the EU, the EU's actorness as a definition could be a valuable addition to the study. Actorness is well defined by Sjöstedt (1977: 16) as the “capacity to behave actively and deliberately in relation to other actors in the international system.”

Haukkala (2008: 1605) further complements Manners' (2002) NPE theory by highlighting that the EU is not passive in its quest to be the normative hegemon in Europe and uses the EU enlargement, specifically the accession process as an instrument of its normative power. The EU uses its economic and normative power to create relationships between candidate countries and itself, where the projection of norms is only one-sided; the candidate countries have to assimilate to the ideals of the values that are one of the prerequisites for full accession.

The EU also wants to have economic and diplomatic ties with its neighbours. Therefore the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) was introduced in the early 2000s. The function of the ENP was to have an alternative to further enlargements of the Union and to include the EU's normative agenda into economic and diplomatic relations with conditionality to non-candidate countries (Haukkala, 2008: 1611).

Thomas Diez (2005) reconsiders the definition of NPE by identifying three aspects of Manners (2002) that would need elaborating. Diez (2005: 615-616) argues that not only is the EU equal as an international actor and as a ‘great power’, but Normative Power also refers to the characteristics

of a relationship between the EU and other international actors. The EU has a form of a hegemonic power in Europe, shaping the values of others, additionally making the norms achieve what otherwise is done by military or economic incentives. The normative power, therefore, is distinctively close to a social constructivist idea, which in this case: “focuses on the independent power of norms to influence actors’ behaviour” (Diez, 2005: 616). To clarify, the importance of normative power cannot be without some extent of military and economic forms of power. As one of the forms cannot exist to some extent without the other, an example would be that the EU is most likely to be a greater normative power toward countries with accession possibilities as it is an economic power in Europe and therefore can be a normative power (Diez, 2005: 616).

The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) has a distinct impact on the Normative Power that the EU wants to project towards pre-accession and third countries (Celata & Coletti, 2016: 18). ENP is an example of external governance, where the normative power relies on specific policy transfers between the EU and the third country and the ultimate aim of the policy is the Europeanization of the neighbourhood (Lavenex 2004, 2008).

Normative power does not only include the projection of liberal norms by the EU. One of the main goals of the EU's commitment to its projection of norms is to sustain peace in the EU and the neighbourhood of the EU. Some of the early examples of the NPE working as a peace-oriented process can be seen in the conflict management of North Macedonia and Bosnia in the 1990s (Manners, 2006: 186). Peace in Europe is one of the main goals, but to achieve it, the EU has to have an impact as a conflict mediator. The construction of the EU as a normative power in conflict mediating can have different outcomes as Diez and Pace (2007: 4-5) described:

1. The EU is not accepted as a normative power by conflict parties, which means that the EU has no power over the conflict parties or even creates negative effects if the EU is ridiculed or challenged.
2. The EU is accepted as a normative power, but the norms projected are not accepted. This means that the EU has no power over the conflict parties or even creates negative effects if the EU is ridiculed or challenged.

3. The EU is accepted as a normative power and the conflict party accepts the norms projected by the EU. The EU is most likely accepted as a conflict mediator and the conflict parties are inclined to follow EU advice and/or want to integrate into European norms.
4. The EU is accepted at least by some conflicting parties as a normative power, thus meaning that the EU can have a positive influence over the behaviour of that party.
5. The EU is accepted at least by some conflict parties and they use the EU to their advantage, to strengthen their position by reinforcing rather than transforming the conflict.
6. The EU is accepted at least by some conflict parties, but there is some aspect of the EU norms that makes the normative power over the conflict party less effective.

Criticism of the NPE concept by Manners (2002) was pointed out by Forsberg (2011: 1187). The main issue of the NPE concept is that it is more conceived as a political rather than analytical approach. This is due to the concepts of 'normative' and 'power' being understood and used differently and more often politically than analytically. To counter this criticism, Forsberg (2011: 1200) suggests that for using NPE as an analytical tool, the focus should be on the mechanisms of the EU used in concrete episodes of power. This way it is possible to define on a case-by-case basis how the normative power is projected on third countries and how normative power has worked. Manners (2008: 46) defines the EU's normative power in world politics as a series of principles that are not only in the viewpoint of the EU normative but are generally acknowledged within the United Nations system.

Therefore, this chapter illustrates that the EU has historically relied on soft power to enforce its foreign policy - often using normative power to shape the EU's and its neighbours' views on what is accepted as normal. It is crucial to know the different facets of the NPE described in this chapter and to consider that the theory of NPE is not without its faults. Therefore, NPE is integrated into the analytical part of the thesis with the focus being on the mechanisms used by the EU in concrete cases of foreign policymaking.

1.1.1 Pragmatism in the EU foreign policy

To define what can be considered not normative, the thesis uses “pragmatic” as a keyword to describe the EU’s foreign policy as different from value-based foreign policy. “Principled pragmatism” as it is referred to in the EUGS foreign policy document represents the EU’s shift in foreign policymaking, marking a return to Realpolitik in the original sense of the term (Biscop, 2016: 91). As John Bew (2016: 28) reminds us, Realpolitik, as defined by the German liberal Ludwig von Rochau in 1853, implied a rejection of liberal utopianism but not of liberal ideas themselves. Pragmatism in the EU’s sense is therefore no longer prioritising democratisation, but the security of the Union first and foremost (Biscop, 2016: 92).

In practice, this pragmatist foreign policy shift embodies that the EU should engage in the external context based on what it can really achieve rather than what it would like to achieve. This implies flexible external activism that does not set false expectations while not ignoring beliefs and principles and viewing them as tools for dealing with reality (Colombo, 2021: 5). Another way of describing the EU’s pragmatic foreign policy is through the idea of resilience. When applied to societies and organisations, resilience recognizes the current state of uncertainty and complexity but emphasises internal resources and capabilities rather than external intervention as a means of dealing with these issues (Juncos, 2016: 4). The discourse and actions of foreign policy that can be considered pragmatic in this sense are the ones in which the EU's main priority is not to convey liberal norms, but to prioritise the Union’s self-interest and safety first, while assessing their foreign policy-related capabilities on a case-by-case status.

1.2 Europeanization

Europeanization can be seen as the: “process of reorienting the direction and shape of politics to the degree that the EU political and economic dynamics become part of the organisational logic of national politics and policy-making” (Ladrech, 1994: 69). This can be viewed as how the EU frames politics and how much they influence the countries in which EU policy-making is connected. Europeanization processes can be associated with certain conflicts and the outcome of EU policies regarding those conflicts. The thesis studies three different crises that have arisen in

the EU or the proximity of the EU and will use the theoretical framework of Europeanization studies for analytical purposes.

The framework for Europeanization in the neighbouring states of Europe can be seen as the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). ENP was launched in 2003, is based on the liberal values and norms of the EU and uses political conditionality for the promotion of the EU norms. ENP focuses on the stabilisation of a region, in political, economic and security related issues. (European Commission, 2022). Another, recent policy framework focusing on the global spectrum of foreign policy is the European Union Global Strategy (EUGS), which was presented in 2016. In the document, the EU's external action principles are described to take a more integrated approach to conflicts and crises than in the years before. The latest approach is described in the following way: "The EU will engage in a practical and principled way in peacebuilding, concentrating our efforts in surrounding regions to the east and south, while considering engagement further afield on a case-by-case basis. The EU will foster human security through an integrated approach." (European Union, 2016).

The core of Europeanization and the third countries concerning the EU is the *acquis communautaire*, meaning "That which has been acquired of the community" which is the body of common rights and obligations that is binding to all EU members as well probable accession countries. The relation in which Europeanization is involved with possible accession to countries in Central and Eastern Europe can be viewed through two dimensions. Firstly, Europeanization as a process can be initiated by the EU or initiated domestically (Schimmelfennig, 2012: 12). Secondly, Europeanization can be driven by institutional logic like the "logic of appropriateness" and the "logic of consequences" (March & Olsen, 1989: 160-162). The logic of consequences expects actors to choose an option that maximises their utility under the circumstances and the logic of appropriateness assumes that actors choose behaviours that are appropriate to their social role and norms in a given situation (Schimmelfennig, 2012: 6-7). The logic of consequences thus directly supports the aspect of conditionality towards third countries, whereas the logic of appropriateness promotes the socialisation mechanism of EU impact on third countries (Schimmelfennig, 2012: 8).

Conditionality is an EU mechanism toward third countries that provides non-member third countries with different incentives like financial aid, market access or institutional ties to the condition that the third country respects the EU's demands. Conditionality is tied with the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) as the framework for the relationship between the EU and third countries. The effectiveness of the conditionality policy method depends on the credibility of the EU, as the EU needs to be less dependent on the third country and the third country in question needs to be certain that it will get the rewards that the EU is offering only when meeting the conditions set by the EU (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005: 12-16). Conditionality, therefore, works best when the EU is in a position in which the third country needs the EU more than the EU needs the third country.

The authors Checkel (2001 562-563), and Risse (2000: 19) put the spotlight on another EU foreign policy instrument. Socialisation is a mechanism that focuses on how to teach the ideas and norms of the EU to third countries, selling the idea of the EU's policies as the most appropriate and therefore motivating them to adopt the same policies. Socialisation happens to be more likely when the external actors (third countries in the view of the EU) are in an uncertain political environment and aspire to belong to the EU. This illustrates that the Socialisation part of the EU norm projection works best when third countries aspire to join the EU, even if the local norms are different from the ones that the EU conveys.

Europeanization as a theory, therefore, complements the Manners (2002) NPE concept with a bigger spectrum of meanings of why the EU acts as it does in foreign policymaking. Europeanization adds another facet to the theoretical framework of the thesis and is helpful in concluding where and when the EU acts pragmatically or normatively.

1.3 the Small Member States and the EU foreign policy

As the upcoming analytical part of the thesis mainly focuses on the Estonian perspective on the EU foreign policy-making decisions, it is crucial to understand how Member States of the EU operate in terms of strategies. Smaller Member States will often use the logic of appropriateness, described previously in the Europeanization theory, incorporating the EU foreign policy norms

into their discourse (Moumoutzis, 2011: 624). To understand smaller EU Member States' positions in foreign policy decision making it is useful to consider the tactic of using their position as marginal actors. Small Member States like Estonia might want to influence selected issues specific issues that are important to them rather than continuously oppose the great powers (Wivel, 2005: 409). As foreign policy decision making in the European Council is often decided by a unanimous vote, the smaller member states could often side with the majority and not express their degrees of interest in foreign policy questions comprehensively.

Estonia can be considered a small Member State in many ways. Thorhallsson (2006: 8-14) proposed a method of determining the size and influence through six categories: 1. Fixed size 2. Sovereignty size, 3. Political size, 4. Economic size, 5. Perceptual size, 6. Preference size. Almost in all of the categories, Estonia, in comparison to the other EU Member States, can be considered as one of the smaller Member States. The possible problem that small states, in general, could face is the challenge to stay sovereign with possibly aggressive neighbouring countries (Lamoreaux and Galbreath, 2008: 4). This conveys a traditional realist argument of how a small state should ally with a larger state (or with a political and economic union like the EU) to retain a majority of their sovereignty, although losing some part of it to the larger state, in the case of Estonia, the EU. Looking at the case of small Member States through the realist argument, we can distinguish that in the case of the Baltics and in this case Estonia, the small EU Member States still follow the same kind of logic in their security situation (Lamoreaux and Galbreath, 2008: 5). While being a part of the EU and NATO, the biggest threat to Estonian sovereignty is still seen from the East of the EU external border - the Russian Federation.

This leads us to the theory behind Estonia's perspectives which could also be evident in foreign policymaking. The issues most close to heart could therefore be explained through Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT), which looks at security at different levels: local, between states, between regions (complexes) and in the global arena (Buzan and Wæver, 2003: 51). Because most threats move more quickly across short distances than over long ones, security interdependence is typically organised into regionally based clusters, according to RSCT (Buzan and Wæver, 2003: 4). Estonia is an interesting case geopolitically, being directly between the East and the West, as a small state of the EU. The Baltic states in general have managed to move out

of the Russian sphere of the Regional Security Complex after the 1990s but are seen as insulators between the post-soviet countries RSC and European RSC (Buzan and Wæver, 2003: 414). The main security issue of Estonia and the Baltic states could still be seen as the perceived military threat from the Russian Federation (Buzan and Wæver, 2003: 366). This means that one of the important factors in the Estonian foreign policy discourse and foreign policy, in general, could be related to the perceived threat to sovereignty from the East of the EU border.

Lamoreaux and Galbreath (2008: 11) argue that Estonia is not just a policy-taker in international organisations but has an incentive to take a stance on foreign policy issues. Using the incentives as full members of EU and NATO to influence issues related to the security threat to sovereignty. This means that in theory, Estonia should be mainly an advocate for EU foreign policy issues concerning Russia's sphere of influence and Russia's aggression against democratic states.

In order for small states like Estonia to effectively pursue their national interests in foreign policymaking, they must depict themselves as honest custodians of all member states' common interests. Small states are usually unable to make a big influence on most matters and equally unable to pressure the other Member States to choose certain policy alternatives over others. As a result, for the small Member States pursuing their national interests, discussions to reach a consensus are frequently the best option (Wivel, 2010). Therefore, the small states are more effective as mediators because they can never expect to be as successful as large ones in pressing their national interests (Bjurulf, 2001). The possible role of a mediator is discussed in the analysis part of the thesis, through the opinions of the Estonian foreign policy experts interviewed for this study.

Estonian foreign policy discourse as a small EU Member State at the border as an “insulator” between the RSC of Europe and Russia is therefore an important area to research. This means that Estonia, based on its geographical location could face a threat from the East, as has happened in near history. It can be assumed, that the Estonian perspective is to stay a sovereign democratic state and therefore has a major interest in their security and other countries security that could face the same kind of state security issues that could potentially spill over to Estonia. Estonia as a small EU Member State therefore could potentially be very vocal in addressing concerns of conflict in

the EU and in the proximity of the EU, which makes Estonia potentially different from much larger Western or the Central EU Member States.

2. Historical Background

To gain meaning from the theoretical part of the thesis, it is necessary to understand the cases of study. Before analysing the EU's involvement, it is crucial to understand the similarities and differences in the historical processes that lead to the crises in North Macedonia, Ukraine and South Caucasus. A retrospective of the cases is needed considering that it may contain information that can explain the EU's involvement in the crisis. The following paragraph will describe the cases in chronological order from the oldest case under study to the most recent.

2.1 Ohrid Framework Agreement and the EU's involvement

The violent conflict in the Balkan region of Europe between Macedonian security forces and Albanian extremists ended on the 8th of August in 2001. The conflict started in February 2001 and half a year of fighting resulted in more than 200 casualties. Furthermore, over 100,000 people were exiled due to the conflict (Brunnbauer, 2001: 2). One of the main problems between Macedonia and Albanian minorities that led to the violence in 2001 lies in the nation-building process of Macedonia that started in 1991 with the Constitution of the Macedonian state. The new Macedonian constitution denied minorities of Macedonia, who were mainly and most importantly Albanian, equal status both *de jure* and *de facto*. This led to discrimination against the Albanian minority in the 1990s and eventually led to the Albanian minorities' uprising in 2001. (Reka, 2008: 55-56).

The relations between the Macedonian majority and Albanian minorities in Macedonia were hugely problematic and the country was on the brink of a civil war. To prevent further casualties, the Macedonian Prime Minister Georgievski gathered the party leaders of Macedonia, which included Albanian minority parties, to prevent more casualties and find a solution to the conflict. The ethnic clash in Macedonia also alerted the international community, which prompted the EU and the US to send their mediators to help with the process of peacekeeping and negotiations to end the conflict. On the 8th of August, the agreement was signed and by the 13th of August, the Ohrid Agreement was ratified (Brunnbauer, 2001: 2). The signed framework consisted of three main parts: the first one making amendments to the Macedonian constitution; the second, changes

to the current legislation; and finally, a framework to end the conflict with a specific timetable put in place for its implementation (Brunnbauer, 2002: 4).

The EU's role in mediating the process has been seen as a rare example of success in the history of EU's foreign policy intervention. During the conflict in April 2001, the EU deployed its first policy instrument to advance the situation with the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA). The SAA most importantly meant that the EU would establish bilateral free trade with North Macedonia and would gradually reduce and remove custom tariffs and quotas on goods from both sides. For that to happen, North Macedonia had to respect democratic principles and human rights and foster cooperation with neighbours including Albania (Council of the EU, 2004). The SAA was therefore part of a policy method to enhance the peace process alongside the Ohrid Framework Agreement (Ilievski & Taleski, 2009: 355-357).

The Ohrid Agreement's main principle was to stabilize the country in turmoil and change the discriminatory nature of the Macedonian 1991 constitution toward the Albanian minority. The main focus point of the Ohrid Agreement was to end the use of violence for political means and state fund university-level education for languages spoken by at least 20% of the population, which was not the case before the agreement and was one of the discriminatory factors that led to the uprising in 2001 (Ilievski & Taleski, 2009: 357-358). The international mediators also had to tackle and provide solutions to the problem with the Macedonian police force being known for their police brutality towards Albanians (Brunnbauer, 2002: 4). As an example - between the time of signing and ratifying the Ohrid Agreement in August, ten Albanian civilians were killed in the small Albanian village of Ljuboten by the police and more than a hundred were arrested and abused before being released due to being suspected of having ties to the Albanian UCK - "terrorists" (Human Rights Watch, 2001). To combat the issue, the EU, the USA and Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) pledged to implement a policy method providing financial and technical support to integrate 500 new policemen from minorities to be employed annually to represent the ethnic composition of the country (Brunnbauer, 2002: 6).

The EU was not only diplomatically invested in the developments in the Balkan region and has also given millions of Euros of financial aid over the years to Macedonia. The financial aid that

was made to help the new Republic of Macedonia in 1991 after the fall of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was quite substantial. In ten years, between 1991-and 2001, different EU financial aid programmes supported Macedonia with almost 400 million Euros. What is more, the amount of financial aid after the 2001 crisis was only increasing. Since the conflict with Albanian minorities even more funds were directed to Macedonia through the EU's Rapid Response Mechanism to achieve goals related to protecting ethnic minorities, civilians, reconstruction of infrastructure etc (Ilievski & Taleski, 2009: 361).

EU involvement is also highlighted in the cooperation with NATO to organise the decentralisation provisions in the Ohrid Agreement. The provisions reduced the municipalities in Macedonia from 120 to 84, which meant that more municipalities would be with an ethnic Albanian majority. A large number of Macedonians were against the provisions, calling it 'ethnic gerrymandering' and a movement called Citizens' Movement for Macedonia rallied to call up a referendum to vote against the decentralisation of provisions. The government of Macedonia and the international community, including the EU, urged people not to go voting to make the referendum invalid. In the end, the referendum failed due to a low turnout of 26.58% and Javier Solana, the High Representative for CFSP declared that the failure of the referendum was an important part of the Macedonian road to EU accession (Ilievski & Taleski, 2009: 361).

After the failed referendum, Macedonia's aspirations to become an EU member were getting stronger. The possible accession to the EU can be seen as a factor in why the Ohrid Framework Agreement in 2001 was well implemented. This illustrates how a country in ethnic conflict made the right decisions in mediating the conflict and therefore was on the road to EU membership. The role of the EU should not be understated, as the EU used its conditionality to great effect, with many reforms made in Macedonia to seek equality between the ethnic majority and minority of Macedonia. Many of these reforms were implemented in the following years after the agreements as can be seen from table 1. below.

Table 1. The state of implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement (Joshi et al., 2015).

Points	State of implementation
Ceasefire	Full implementation
Disarmament	Full implementation
Legislative Branch Reform	Partially implemented
Constitutional Reform	Full implementation
Boundary Demarcation	Full implementation (in 2004)
Electoral/Political Party Reform	Full implementation (in 2002)
Decentralisation/Federalism	Full implementation (in 2004)
Civil Administration Reform	Partially implemented
Judiciary Reform	Partially implemented
Military/Police Reform	Partially implemented
Refugee reparation	Full implementation (in 2004)
Education Reform	Full implementation (in 2003)

Table 1. Perfectly illustrates the success of the Ohrid Framework Agreement. Ceasefire and all the reforms were partially or fully implemented in the coming years after the ratification of the peace agreement. The EU's and other international actors' intervention in the conflict could therefore be seen as a success.

2.2 The Minsk Agreements and the EU's Involvement

This paragraph will give a summary of the events in Ukraine that led to the Minsk Agreements in 2014-2015. The complexity of the events that preceded the Agreements are both historically and geopolitically rigorous and go beyond the scope of this thesis. To make a synopsis of the events, the cue that led to the events that ensued would be Ukraine's President Viktor Yanukovich refusal to sign the Association Agreement and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement with the EU in 2013-2014 after multiple years of negotiation. The "Euromaidan" protests that occurred gathered wide support against the leader Yanukovich and for Ukraine's path to EU accession. This

eventually led to pro-Russian President Yanukovich fleeing to Russia (Kostanyan & Meister, 2016: 1).

A new government was formed in February 2014 and Ukraine looked to be back on the roadmap to the EU. The Kremlin responded with a series of events that led to the annexation of Crimea by masked and unmarked Russian troops (Biersack & O'Lear, 2015: 249). The following crisis can be seen as a Russian reaction to the EU's eastward expansion (Mearsheimer, 2014). The annexation of Crimea was followed by a referendum in March 2014, in which there were voting irregularities. The referendum, therefore, ended with an unavoidable result of Russia being 'reunified' with Crimea (Biersack & O'Lear, 2015: 251).

Furthermore, having annexed Crimea Russia helped separatists in East Ukraine with armed conflicts that led to two separatist republics - the Donetsk People's Republic and the Luhansk People's Republic. The US and the EU started to gradually act more forcefully in June 2014 with the primary policy methods being sanctions on Russia. These sanctions were mainly related to restrictive measures to trade between the West and Russia, including financial, energy and defence sectors (Kostanyan & Meister, 2016: 1-2). In July 2014 the downing of an MH17 Malaysian Airlines plane on Ukrainian soil sparked further cause for a stronger reaction from the West (Hellquist, 2016: 997). At the end of July 2014, the EU made the shift in sanctions, from sanctioning powerful individuals close to Putin to sanctioning key sectors in the economy and restricting Russia's access to EU markets (Haukkala, 2015: 35).

The Minsk Agreements were policy methods put in place to end the armed conflicts and avoid more casualties. A Trilateral Contact Group, consisting of Ukraine, Russia and the OSCE agreed on a protocol called Minsk I in Autumn 2014, which was signed by the parties involved. Minsk I was not successful due to a breach of ceasefire in East Ukraine with separatist republics of Luhansk and Donetsk attacking Ukraine's regions of tactical importance like Debaltsevo. Due to the failure of Minsk I, Germany and France's leaders were included in the negotiations for a new protocol. The Minsk Agreement II was therefore agreed upon in February 2015, in which top leaders of Ukraine, Russia, Germany and France were present to give the new framework more diplomatic authority. Minsk Agreement II was more straightforward and had more chances of succeeding, but

in the end, it only de-escalated the fighting process (Kostanyan & Meyer, 2016: 1-3). To understand the implementation of the Minsk II agreements, the following table 2. from the study of Kostanyan & Meyer (2016) is shown below.

Table 2. State of implementation of Minsk II Agreement by 2016 (Kostanyan & Meyer, 2016: 3)

Points	State of implementation
1. Ceasefire	Not implemented
2. Withdrawal of all heavy weapons and establishment of security zone	Partially implemented
3. Monitoring and verification of ceasefire and withdrawal of heavy weapons by the OSCE	Partially implemented
4. Modalities of local elections under Ukrainian legislation and the law of Ukraine “ on interim local self-government”	Partially implemented
5. Amnesty	Not implemented
6. Exchange of prisoners	Partially implemented
7. Humanitarian assistance	Not implemented
8. Determination of the procedure for the full restoration of socioeconomic relations	Partially implemented
9. Handover of control over the Russia-Ukraine border from the Ukrainian side to Kyiv	Not implemented
10. Withdrawal of all foreign armed forces, military equipment, and mercenaries and disarmament of all illegal groups	Not implemented
11. Constitutional reform including decentralisation and special status for separatist-held regions	Partially implemented

12. Holding elections under OCSE standards and monitored by ODIHR	Not implemented
13. Trilateral working groups	Implemented, but with limited results

The limited implementation of Minsk Agreements as shown in table 2. Therefore portray the Russian Federations mentality towards international law and could foreshadow the future foreign policy behaviour of the Russian Federation regarding Ukraine.

2.3 Nagorno Karabakh Conflict 2020 and the EU’s Involvement

Armenia and Azerbaijan’s conflict over the mountainous region in the South Caucasus called Nagorno Karabakh is the longest ongoing conflict in the OSCE area, restricting economic development and constraining regional relations. The multi-faceted complexity of the geopolitical conflict stems from ethno-territorial issues after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Nagorno Karabakh is mostly populated by Armenians but is located inside Azerbaijan territory as an enclave dependent on Armenia for military, political and financial assistance (Simao, 2010).

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, in the 1990s Armenia successfully exploited the power vacuum in the governance of Azerbaijan and occupied Nagorno-Karabakh. In 1992 due to the growing violence and number of casualties, the international community responded by gathering the newly founded OSCE Minsk Group, consisting of representatives from Russia, France and the US. In 1994 a ceasefire was agreed upon and a step-by-step roadmap to peace in the region was constructed. Though the ceasefire was agreed upon, the roadmap to peace was not, which also led to the ceasefire not being a long-term solution and the conflict continued through the 1990s to the 21st century with the worst breach of the ceasefire coming in 2016 with the Four-Day war that ended with over 200 casualties (Mustafayev, 2021).

War started again over the enclave’s territory in Nagorno-Karabakh in September 2020 and lasted for six weeks and over 7,000 people lost their lives. The war ended with another ceasefire on the 10th of November 2020, mediated mainly by the Russian Federation. The control over territories

shifted due to the 2020 war, with Azerbaijan claiming most of the territory (International Crisis Group, 2022).

The EU's involvement in the crisis through the years has been limited. Before the ENP, the EU focused on the region of the Caucasus with Partnership and Cooperation Agreements, which were intended to enhance cooperation between EU-Armenia and EU-Azerbaijan (Simao, 2010: 10). The ENP involvement in South Caucasus was met with pessimism in Russia, as the EU wanted to politically enter into territories that have historically been a space of Russian interests. After the ENP and their Eastern Partnership dimension were launched in 2009, the aim was to further strengthen the political and economic relationship with the partner countries, including Armenia and Azerbaijan. The EU plan was to use Europeanization as a conflict resolution method in the South Caucasus (Coppieters et al., 2004). The idea was to use the consolidation of political reforms as a policy method to enhance the respect for human rights, promote democracy and act as a stabilisation force in the region (Simao, 2012: 196).

According to Thomas de Waal (2010: 174), the absence of the EU in the conflict resolution between Armenia and Azerbaijan is recognizable. The EU has the resources and expertise to advance the situation in the Caucasus, as the EU has demonstrated by the successful stabilisation and reconstruction efforts in the Balkan region. One of the problems has been the EU's way of delegating the issue to France. By doing so, the EU has subsequently let the conflict of Nagorno-Karabakh be seen as the problem of France and not the EU. By doing so the EU has let the conflict go on for years without making any remarkable progress.

The EU's main policy tool was to contribute humanitarian aid, which amounted to €17 million, since the start of the conflict in 2020 (European Commission, 2021). The EU Commission's official press release states that the EU is a partner of both parties involved in the conflict and is supporting them in their political reforms and socio-economic recovery. Moreover, the EU describes its role in the Caucasus with the following sentence: "...shaping a durable and comprehensive settlement, including through support for stabilisation, conflict transformation, and confidence-building and reconciliation measures." (European Commission, 2021). Taking into account the historical background of the conflict and the EU's press release, the EU seems to be taking the moral high

ground without taking any meaningful action in the region. The evidence presented so far would therefore suggest that the EU is far away from being a viable international actor in the case of the crisis in the South Caucasus in 2020.

Table 3. The state of implementation of the Armenia-Azerbaijan 2020 ceasefire (Columbia University’s Program on Peacebuilding and Rights, 2021)

Points	State of implementation
Ceasefire	Not implemented
Territorial rearrangement	Partially implemented
Peacekeeping by Russian Federation	Partially implemented
Withdrawal of Armenian armed forces	Partially implemented
Ceasefire monitoring centre	Not implemented
Construction of new route in the Lachin corridor	Partially implemented
Azerbaijan guarantee for safety along the Lachin corridor	Not implemented
Internally displaced persons returning to Nagorno-Karabakh	Not implemented
Exchange of POWs, hostages and bodies of the dead	Not implemented
Unblocking of all economic and transport links in the region	Not implemented

To conclude this chapter - the EU has failed to mediate the conflict that has gone on for decades. The EU has not intervened meaningfully in the Caucasus and has thus let the conflict be mediated by Russia, in which case Russia's sphere of interests will only broaden in the region. The mediation of Russian Federation peacekeepers has had some positive effects on the conflict, but as table 3. shows, the ceasefire article points that were brokered with the help of the Russian Federation, have not been successfully implemented and the conflict has resumed. The delegation of France by the EU to mediate the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan in the Nagorno-Karabakh region was not enough to convince any of the involved parties of the EU’s aspirations to be an important

player in the region and the peacekeeping process. With the Russian Federation taking control of the situation, the EU has swept aside from the drawing up of the ceasefire points and any meaningful influence in the region.

The historical background described in the 2nd chapter of the thesis illustrates the differences between the cases and also describes various approaches to different conflicts. These cases show how drastically different the EU's involvement in cases of conflict in Europe and in the proximity of Europe has been. Moreover, this historical perspective on the cases shows the evolution of EU foreign policymaking over two decades and in three conflicts that all have ties with the EU but are not members of the EU as of writing this thesis.

3. Methodology

The research for the master's thesis will be a qualitative analysis featuring document analysis, comparative analysis, and expert interviews. This methodology aims to support the finding of the answer to the research question *Q: How does Estonia, as a Small EU Member state, perceive the normative or pragmatic EU foreign policy regarding cases of conflict in North Macedonia, Ukraine and South Caucasus?*

3.1 Document Analysis Method

The qualitative research incorporates finding, selecting, and appraising data contained in EU foreign policy documents (Labuschagne, 2003). The criteria for documents used in the research are the following: documents that convey the EU's perspective on the different crises in different periods. The Estonian perspective on the EU foreign policy decisions can be derived from interviews with Estonian foreign policy experts. Furthermore, to complement and view the outcomes of the crises from different scholarly perspectives, the study will take into account the historical background research about the development of the conflicts in our selected research cases, featuring Ilievski & Taleski (2009), Konstantyan & Meister (2016) and Mustafayev (2021).

The system of document analysis is created so that every case would have comparable documents to analyse. Firstly, the search of the documents is conducted in the European Council document register. Secondly, the search is limited by the case that is searched (North Macedonia, Ukraine or Nagorno-Karabakh), the time of the event milestones (described in detail later in the Data Collection chapter) and the press releases and Council Conclusions of the European Council presidency or Foreign Affairs Council (Council of the European Union). Press releases and Council Conclusions are chosen due to the documents having compressed and declaration information about concrete conclusions made by the European Council or the FAC. These declarations should feature the official position of the EU about the aforementioned crises at different milestones in the constructed timelines. Should the press releases or conclusions have no or limited information about the cases in question, the search in the document register shall include CFSP reports to find the EU's objectives and priorities on the foreign policy crises. The

shortcoming of the document analysis is that the declarations and reports released by the EU are very laconic and do not feature the discussions that led to the outcome of the reports. The author recognises that the EU's foreign policy is unanimous and though the declarations by the EU are of few words and even fewer explanations, their discourse of them can be identified and described as needed for the study.

By systematically reviewing the documents and evaluating the real-life outcome of the foreign policy actions taken by the EU it is possible to elicit meaning and gain an understanding of the motives that lead to the decisions taken by the EU (Bowen, 2009: 27). To further understand the facets of decision making and implementation of policy instruments by the EU in the selected cases, the research will construct a timeline of events dating from the start of the crisis until the thesis aims - this will be done by the method of process tracing. Process tracing will be used for drawing descriptive and causal inferences from pieces of evidence that are part of a temporal sequence of events. (Collier, 2011: 824).

Process tracing has many advantages, as George and Bennett (2005) and Hall (2003) point out: firstly, it allows for the investigation of complex causal relationships with multiple causalities, feedback loops, path dependencies, tipping points, and complex interaction effects. Second, it has the potential to lead to the development of new ideas about the causal mechanisms that link correlated occurrences (Falleti, 2006: 7). The process-tracing method will support the qualitative study by complementing the document analysis with a structure. The structure allows the thesis to make conclusions on not only how, but when in the timeline of the crisis the policy instruments were used and how they affected the outcome of the cases.

3.2 Comparative Study Design

To find answers, the research conducts a small-n comparative study. The comparative analysis aims to describe the differences and use factors of importance in the EU foreign policy actions regarding crises in North Macedonia, Ukraine and Nagorno-Karabakh and to make conclusions on the actions of the EU. As the cases of conflict are vastly different, the aim of the comparison is to analyse the EU's possible shift of discourse, having the data collected about EU's discourse

in the document analysis through the process tracing method. Secondly, to find factors which could help to explain the EU's varying foreign policy discourse. The small-n comparative study will therefore draw from the theoretical framework and document analysis to illustrate and compare the different cases of conflict under study.

3.3 Interview Design

The thesis will therefore use a technique of triangulation, which means using multiple methods of investigation to minimise the effect of causal factors as proposed by Denzin (2009). So, in addition to document analysis and process tracing, the thesis will aim to use semi-structured interviews with Estonian leading foreign policy experts, to examine information through different qualitative methods, which corroborates findings across data sets and reduces the impact of potential biases of a single method, source or expert (Bowen, 2009: 28).

The semi-structured interview was constructed systematically by firstly, determining the requirements for employing semi-structured interviews; secondly, retrieving and using prior knowledge; thirdly, developing a preliminary semi-structured interview guide; fourthly validating the interview guide with my supervisor; and finally presenting the entire semi-structured interview guide through my thesis (Kallio et al., 2016: 2961)

The Estonian foreign policy experts are selected by the author in light of their achievements in foreign policymaking and their expertise concerning the EU. The interviews could result in valuable insight into determining the role of the EU in the cases researched and explanations regarding the EU's shift in discourse from a normative power to a more pragmatic approach in foreign policy matters. Furthermore, the goal is to seek answers to the interview questions that would help to answer my research question. The interview is constructed with open-ended questions to gather as much important information from foreign policy experts as possible. The interviews aim to link the questions to my proposed analytical approach. The questions are based on learnings from the historical background of the events and data collected from the document analysis from the EU's official conclusions, declarations and CFSP reports. The interview questions are specific and aim to be as closely linked to the research question and focus on the

Estonian perspective on the events. The interviews were conducted in Estonian and transcribed through an online transcription tool “Advanced Rich Transcription System for Estonian Speech” (Alumäe, et al, 2018). The transcription was later translated into English by the author for this study. The duration of the interviews was approximately 45 minutes per interview. The interviews were conducted in April and May of 2022.

4. Data collection

The thesis aims to gather data about the cases of conflict to answer the research question. Data collection starts with document analysis, specifically process tracing. Only after data collection through process tracing is done, the study can move on to comparative analysis as the comparative analysis uses specific factors of importance learned through the document analysis and historical background of the study. The data collection finishes with expert interviews to gather data which could help answer the research question formulated in the introduction.

4.1 Document analysis featuring process tracing

For document analysis, the thesis uses process tracing as a qualitative analysis tool. Process tracing was originally used for providing theoretical explanations of historical events (Falleti, 2006). As for original use and this thesis are concerned, the implementation of process tracing shall be similar. For process tracing to be systematic, a timeline shall be constructed for each of the crises in question (North Macedonia, Ukraine, and Nagorno-Karabakh). For each of the cases, the chronology of the research shall be as similar as possible. For each crisis, the researcher shall conduct a document analysis of the EU official documents from the EU Council, Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) and CFSP documents.

The aim is to analyse documents that mention a specific report on the start of the crises when the armed conflict has begun, the peace agreement or ceasefire that has been agreed and if possible then approximately a year after the peace agreement or ceasefire was signed. These milestones of each timeline have been chosen to include main events that should trigger a response from the EU like the start of an armed conflict and a resolution in the form of a peace agreement or ceasefire. To add to these two main junctures in the milestones, and aftermath of these main events shall be analysed with the EU's response to the ongoing conflict and the EU's response after the peace agreement or ceasefire is agreed upon. This means that a timeline of events through the lens of the EU shall be constructed with four main milestones to assess the normative or pragmatic discourse of the EU in each of these. Due to the different nature and periods of the conflict, the latest of them (Nagorno-Karabakh 2020) will feature only three milestones in the timeline, on the grounds that

the EU's position in the long term after the ceasefire is not found in the EU official documents at the time of writing this thesis.

4.1.1 Case of North Macedonia (Ohrid Framework Agreement)

In the case of North Macedonia and the events that led to the Albanian minority uprising which caused the epitome of the crisis, it is important to firstly look at what the EU's stance was according to the official documents of the EU.

the First milestone in the timeline - the EU's position at the start of the conflict

28th of February 2001, a declaration from the EU Council Presidency was issued. The statement expressed great concern about the escalation in the Former Republic of Yugoslavia/Kosovo (FYR) and the Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia (FYROM). The declaration featured a paragraph of normative discourse: *"The European Union strongly condemns the rising number of violent incidents in this area, and calls on all involved to isolate the extremist."* (European Council, 2001a). The short declaration ends with another paragraph of normative discourse, including conditionality for being supported: *"A peaceful and stable FYROM - within internationally recognised borders - is an important condition for furthering the integration of FYROM within the European Union, soon through the signing of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement."* (European Council, 2001a). The EU, in the first phase of the crisis, uses mainly value-based perspectives, with condemnation of violence and peace and integration into the EU being the main talking points.

the Second milestone in the timeline - The EU position during the conflict

15th-16th of June 2001 - 4 months into the conflict, the Council presidency in Göteborg concluded that a political solution was needed, and the cooperation with NATO and USA was welcomed. The EU affirmed their position that a political solution was needed. To enhance diplomatic presence in the region, the EU appointed a representative of the EU in Skopje to work under the authority of the High Representative Javier Solana. Conditionality, being closely tied to

Europeanization, NPE and therefore normative discourse is also again mentioned, with the EU declaring: *“We announce that an agreement in the political dialogue on substantial reforms will create the conditions for the EU to provide further assistance to FYROM.”* (European Council, 2001b). The EU took a diplomatic stronghold in FYROM and alongside US and NATO wanted to take responsibility for the region's stability and democratic development. Conditionality was used to influence FYROM to continuously reform its policies.

the Third milestone in the timeline - The EU position shortly after OFA

14th-16th of December 2001 - 4 months after the signing of the OFA, the Council presidency further advocates the conditionality of the EU as a short statement about the Western Balkans is issued as follows: *“The Union will continue to contribute to the recovery and stability of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, particularly by insisting on the full implementation of the Ohrid Agreement.”* (European Council, 2001c). The EU is continuously normative in its pursuit of the implementation of OFA and expects the framework to be implemented fully by the Western Balkan country. Conditionality is also present with every EU declaration on FYROM since the start of the conflict.

the Fourth milestone in the timeline - The EU position a year after the OFA

On the 17th of September 2002, a year and one month had passed since the signing of the OFA. The parliamentary elections in FYROM have just been held. The EU Council presidency declared as follows: *“These elections demonstrated the will of the citizens of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to continue moving towards reconciliation, moderation, stability and democracy as demonstrated by the relatively high turnout.”* (European Council, 2002). The EU repeated its democratic values and encouraged the new parliament to start with the reform process and followed up by declaring that: *“...These elections are a milestone in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia’s process towards further integration into the European structure.”* (European Council, 2002). Providing the FYROM with the belief that the possible accession process and integration to the EU are closest to it has ever been through normative discourse. Political socialisation can be also identified, as a third country aspiring to become a member of the EU is

more inclined to follow the norms laid out by the EU as Checkel (2001 562-563) and Risse (2000: 19) described in the theoretical framework of the thesis.

4.1.2 Case of Ukraine (Minsk Agreements)

The timeline configuration in the case of Ukraine and specifically the events that led to the signings of the Minsk Agreement shall also feature 4 checkpoints in the timeline to be comparable to the two other cases under study. The starting point of the Crisis in Ukraine (during the period under the study of 2014-2015) is highly debatable, due to political crises that led to the Euro Maidan protests and different uprests that led to violence between the pro-Russian government and the protesters. For this study, the starting point of the crisis that led to the Minsk Agreements shall be the annexation of Crimea, which was followed up with the separation of the breakaway states of Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics. This is due to the fact that in configuring the timeline in this way the study is following the pathway to the Minsk Agreements and is therefore comparable to other cases of study.

the First milestone in the timeline - The start of the annexation of Crimea and the response from the EU

The military operation of the Russian Federation started in late February 2014 and Crimea was annexed from Ukraine on the 18th of March 2014. On the 3rd of March 2014, The President of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy called for an extraordinary meeting of EU Heads of State or governments to discuss the threat of the Russian Federation to Ukraine's sovereignty. On the 6th of March 2014 in Brussels the remarks of Herman Van Rompuy were the following: *First, we strongly condemn Russia's unprovoked violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity. We call on Russia to immediately withdraw its armed forces and allow immediate access to international monitors. We consider the decision by Crimea's Supreme Council to hold a referendum as contrary to the Ukrainian constitution and therefore illegal.*" (European Council, 2014a). Furthermore, the European Council promised many economic sanctions, travel bans, asset freezes and other measures to hurt the Russian economy and emphasised that dialogue between conflict parties is the only solution to the problems arising from the Russian aggression. The

paragraph that featured the most normative discourse in the declaration by the President of the European Council was the following: *“Let me conclude by saying that today all leaders affirmed that as (the) European Union, we have a special responsibility for peace, stability and prosperity on our continent, and we are ready to take that responsibility. Acts of aggression cannot be without consequences.”* (European Council, 2014a). This statement underlines the EU’s quest to be the normative actor in Europe, with having a “special responsibility” given to the EU to themselves to project norms.

The first checkpoint in the timeline correlates with the theoretical framework of NPE. The EU uses its economic and normative strength to establish connections with candidate nations in which norm projection is only one-sided; candidate countries must conform to the ideals of the values that are one of the requirements for full membership (Haukkala, 2008: 1605).

the Second milestone in the timeline - The EU’s position during the crisis in 2014

On the 17th of March, after the referendum in Crimea, in which it was decided that Crimea was to be “unified” with the Russian Federation, The FAC made the following statements: *“The European Union remains ready to support facilitating dialogue between Ukraine and Russia.”* (Council of the European Union, 2014a). This portrays that the EU was actively trying to be a part of the mediation process between Ukraine and the Russian Federation. Interestingly the EU did not want to cut ties with the Russian Federation in this case of aggression and the annexation of Crimea, with the Foreign Affairs Council concluding that: *“The EU remains committed to the objective of developing the EU-Russia relationship, based on mutual interest and respect for international law. The Council regrets that Russia’s actions contradict these objectives. The Council urges the Russian Federation not to take steps to annex Crimea in violation of international law.”* adding that *“The European Union calls on Russia to return to developing a strategic partnership with the EU instead of isolating itself further diplomatically and economically.”* (Council of the European Union, 2014a).

These paragraphs are the first ones in this study that feature the EU’s position on a crisis as more pragmatic in interest or economically based than value-based and normative. The EU certainly had

something to lose with the economic sanctions towards the Russian Federation also impacting the EU's economy. This means that pragmatism is on one hand understandable, but it is unusual for the EU to express this kind of pragmatism in regard to a European country and a possible EU candidate country like Ukraine.

On the 21st of March, another milestone in Ukraine-EU relations was cast, as the EU and Ukraine signed the political provisions of the Association Agreement. European Council President Van Rompuy hoped that the agreement would serve as a compass along the road of Ukraine's economic and social reform (European Council 2014b). In this case, the mechanism of socialisation and conditionality are both used as the theory of Europeanization correlates well with Ukraine's position as a third country aspiring to become a member of the EU while the EU has the upper hand as an international actor to project norms that the possible accession country, which in this case is Ukraine.

the Third milestone in the timeline - Minsk Agreement I and Minsk Agreement II

Two months after the Minsk Agreement I was signed on the 5th of November, 2014 a declaration was made by the High Representative on behalf of the EU in regards to the elections in the two break-away states of Luhansk and Donetsk. The EU considered the elections held in the so-called People's Republics illegal and illegitimate. The EU emphasised the need for a political solution and: *"...urges all parties to fully implement the Minsk Protocol and Memorandum swiftly and without further delay."* (Council of the European Union, 2014b). In this case, after several missed opportunities for the Russian Federation to take a step back from the aggression and threat to Ukraine's sovereignty, the normative discourse of the EU in the press releases continued. The FAC made the following conclusion on the Minsk Agreement I on the 17th of November 2014 after the ceasefire, that was agreed upon in the agreement, was not implemented: *"The Council calls in particular for a halt to the continuous violations of the ceasefire, a withdrawal of all illegal and foreign forces, mercenaries and military equipment, as well as for securing the Ukrainian-Russian border with permanent monitoring by the OSCE."* (Council of the European Union, 2014c).

In March, a month after the Minsk Agreement II was signed, the EU continued condemning the Russian Federation and called for another Macro-Financial Assistance package for Ukraine.

(European Council, 2015). The documents on the aftermath of the Minsk Agreements mostly follows a neutral tone, encouraging actors in the crisis to find peace as soon as possible and also condemning the actions of the Russian Federation. The EU is usually more normative in declarations than pragmatic, though not much can be deduced from the documents of late 2014 about the Ukraine crisis. The most prominent theme in this checkpoint of the timeline of Ukraine's crisis is the EU's hope for a peaceful solution. NPE in theory and as this checkpoint illustrates in practice is therefore working as a peace-oriented process (Manners, 2006: 186).

the Fourth milestone in the timeline - EU's position after the Minsk Agreements

The EU's position a year after the Minsk Agreements were signed was not found in the usual press releases of the European Council or the Council of the European Union declarations. So to understand the EU's position I analysed the "CFSP Report - Our priorities in 2016" endorsed by the Council on the 17th of October 2016, more than a year after the Minsk II agreement was signed. This CFSP report highlights also the fact that the EUGS of Foreign and Security Policy was signed in June 2016, which was mentioned in the introduction and theoretical framework of the thesis. In terms of discourse, the EUGS shifted the EU's views from the usual normative to a so-called principled pragmatism. Not much in ways of discourse convey this pragmatism in the case of Ukraine and the CFSP report. The CFSP report highlighted the following: *"The EU will continue to foster institutional change, modernisation and stabilisation in Ukraine through regular high-level political dialogue and the timely implementation of European Neighbourhood Instrument programmes."* (Council of the European Union, 2016).

Also focuses on supporting the full implementation of the Minsk Agreements and financially supporting Ukraine. The only comment that was not value based and may have been financially motivated was the EU's tone towards Russia. On one hand, condemning the Russian Federation, but on the other hand concludes as follows: *"The EU remain(s) open to all contacts aimed at the constructive resolution of trade problems (including retaliation measures taken by Russia against Ukraine), even though the trilateral EU-Ukraine-Russia talks on deep and comprehensive free trade agreement (DCFTA) implementation concluded unsuccessfully in December 2015."* (Council of the European Union, 2016). This illustrates how the EU at the end of 2016 still believed

in ways to overcome the crisis and find solutions to trading with the Russian Federation on conditions that were not found in 2015 and were the only fragment of pragmatism demonstrated in the report in the case of Ukraine.

4.1.3 Case of Armenia and Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh 2020)

As was described in the historical background chapter of this thesis, the ethno-territorial issues of this geopolitical conflict remain complex and thus it is important to construct a timeline that follows the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan in the events that led to the construction of the Nagorno-Karabakh ceasefire agreement in 2020. The timeline, as done in the other cases of interest, is constructed of three milestones that provide insight into the EU's position toward the crisis.

the First milestone in the timeline - The EU's position at the start of the conflict

A special meeting of the European Council was held on the 1st and 2nd October of 2020, less than a week after the armed conflict started. In the conclusion of the meeting, only a single paragraph was dedicated to the armed conflict in the South Caucasus. The Council concluded as follows: *“The European Council calls for an immediate cessation of hostilities and urges parties to recommit to a lasting ceasefire and the peaceful settlement of the conflict. The loss of life and the toll on the civilian population are unacceptable.”* also adding that: *“The European Council expresses its support for the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs and asks the High Representative to examine further EU support for the settlement process.”* (European Council, 2020). This means that the EU delegated the responsibility to mediate the conflict to France, The United States and Russian Federation. The EU is highly pragmatic in the case of Nagorno-Karabakh and the start of the armed conflict in 2020. The EU's normative nature is unrecognisable and the only thing that can be derived from the paragraph of conclusions is that the EU is still expressing that finding peace is the most important thing, without doing much itself to achieve it.

the Second milestone in the timeline - the EU's position during the conflict

27th of October 2020, a week before the ceasefire was agreed the High Representative of the Union reported about the CFSP priorities of 2020. As was the case at the start of the conflict, there was only a single paragraph about the conflict in the CFSP report document. The document illustrated the EU's position as follows: *“The EU continues to closely follow the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict settlement process and support the efforts of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs, including through the EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia.”* (Council of the European Union, 2020).

This depicts the EU's involvement in the crisis quite well - pragmatism in discourse as the EU distances itself from the conflict and is also far away from doing anything meaningful to achieve the peace that they are supposedly wanting in the region. In this case and at this checkpoint in the timeline, the EU acts in accordance with its principled pragmatism perspective - assessing each circumstance on an individual basis while pursuing its foreign policy, as described by Juncos (2016: 2).

the Third milestone in the timeline - the EU's position after the ceasefire agreement

The EU's discourse regarding the conflict in the territory of Armenia and Azerbaijan is continuously pragmatic and hectic in regard to any official statements or conclusions. On the 28th of June 2021, almost 8 months after the ceasefire was brokered, another report from the High Representative of the Union regarding the CFSP priorities of 2021. The EU's position after the conflict was the following: *“During and after the 44-day Nagorno Karabakh conflict, the EU has been actively engaged, calling the sides to cease hostilities and return to the negotiations table. Following the conflict, the EU mobilised EUR 17 million for humanitarian aid for all affected populations and post-conflict recovery to enable restoring people's lives and strengthening their resilience. The EU is ready to contribute to shaping a durable and comprehensive settlement of the conflict.”* (Council of the European Union, 2021).

In this report, the EU pointed out its main contribution to the crisis - the 17 million Euros of humanitarian aid. This is a substantial amount, but it seems to be the only main policy tool in use to affect the crisis. Armenia and Azerbaijan are both in the EU's ENP scope and therefore it is

concerning to see how the only soft power tool used is humanitarian aid to influence the outcome of the crisis and stop the violence that has cost many civilian lives in the past.

4.2 Comparative study

To look at how the EU foreign policy is implemented in different cases of conflict in the EU and the neighbouring states of the EU, firstly, the comparative analysis focuses on findings from the document analysis. Secondly, the comparative study identifies two different factors derived from the theoretical framework and historical background that could explain the different approaches of the EU in conflicts and finally uses the theoretical framework of Diaz and Pace (2007), which described the EU as an NPE's intervention in the crises, to compare the differences in EU conflict mediation.

The historical background and document analysis illustrate the many differences between the cases of study. The cases represent different facets of EU foreign policymaking with differences varying from historical context to EU's foreign policy perspective changes. The cases are also different due to their past spheres of influence, as North Macedonia used to be a part of the Yugoslavian Republic, but Ukraine, Armenia and Azerbaijan were part of the USSR. Furthermore, North Macedonia and Ukraine can be considered potential candidate countries of the EU, making their ties with the EU potentially stronger. Armenia and Azerbaijan are a part of the ENP, having bilateral and cooperation ties with the EU but as of writing this thesis cannot be considered likely candidate countries. From the many differences this study highlights two of the main factors that could explain EU's discourse regarding the crises in question. These factors are the EU's actorness and conditionality towards the cases of conflict that shall be compared and analysed in the following analysis chapter.

4.3 Interviews with Estonian Foreign Policy Experts

Before the interview, a selection of Estonian foreign policy experts was identified, with their experience and connections to high-level decision making or academic achievements taken into consideration. All the experts had the option to remain anonymous, and for those experts who redeemed the option, anonymity was granted. Two of the interviews were conducted in person and three of the interviews through Zoom online video meeting. The interview guide was semi-structured and featured up to three open-ended questions from each case under research. The interview duration was expected to be around 45 minutes, depending on the length of the answers by the experts. The interviews were recorded with a dictaphone and transcribed. After the transcription, the online qualitative research tool QCA Map was used to encode and analyse the transcription content and to highlight parts of the interview connected to the research question, therefore conducting a qualitative content analysis. These highlighted parts of the interview shall be used in the analysis part of the thesis to help answer the research question while complementing the document analysis with the Estonian perspective.

5. Analysis and Research Results

5.1 Is the EU's foreign policy normative or pragmatic?

From the document analysis, we can diffuse the EU's discourse regarding the conflicts in North Macedonia, Ukraine and Nagorno-Karabakh. Regarding all of the conflicts, it is possible to construct a table to highlight the findings from the document analysis about the EU's official position through the discourse of their declarations concerning the causes of conflict.

Table 4. Analysing the findings from the document analysis (the EU's position)

Cases of conflict	<i>Start of the conflict</i>	<i>During the conflict</i>	<i>After The peace/ceasefire agreement</i>
Case A - North Macedonia (OFA 2001)	EU's position = Normative	EU's position = Normative	EU's position = Normative
Case B - Ukraine (Minsk Agreements 2014-2015)	EU's position = Normative	EU's position = Pragmatic	EU's position = Normative
Case C - Nagorno Karabakh (Ceasefire agreement 2020)	EU's position = Pragmatic	EU's position = Pragmatic	EU's position = Pragmatic

Source: Author's analysis of the EU official declarations discourse.

From table 4. a pattern can be clearly distinguished. In the case of North Macedonia, the EU's position was normative from start to finish of the conflict, while in the case of Ukraine from 2014 to 2015, the discourse was mixed. Based on the analysis of the discourse in the declarations from the EU commission, the EU's normative discourse changed to pragmatic in spring 2014 and back to normative once the Minsk Agreement II was signed. Armenia and Azerbaijan's conflict over the

mountainous territory of Nagorno-Karabakh portrayed the EU's distance from the conflict, as the EU did not actively try to influence the outcome of the crisis as a Union in the region and displayed pragmatism in their declarations and CFSP documents. The description could be made that the EU was “more pragmatic than normative” in the case of Nagorno-Karabakh because the EU still emphasised peace-building in the region in their discourse, therefore displaying some form of normative values. This means that the assumed shift from normative to pragmatic has not drastically shifted after the EUGS document in 2016, but instead, the EU already in this selection of conflicts has shown pragmatism in discourse before the official turn to “principled pragmatism” already in 2014 as shown in the case of Ukraine.

The explanation of these discourses can be derived from the EU's foreign policy factors that could be considered important to understanding where the EU acts more normative or pragmatic. EU actorness can be seen as one of the factors that could highlight the differences between the conflicts, as it explains how much the EU got involved in the crisis and could therefore indicate the EU's interest in the outcome of the crisis. Conditionality is the second factor that could highlight the differences between the conflicts, as learned through the historical background and theoretical framework, conditionality is one of the main policy tools used by the EU to influence the countries in crisis. Veebel (2018) argues that the normative role of the EU is closely tied with the external governance and conditionality of EU actions. Meaning that the EU will have more Normative Power in cases where the third country in question has an incentive to implement the norms the EU is trying to project, this is also illustrated in table 5. below.

Table 5. Comparison of the EU’s foreign policy in the cases of conflict

<i>Factors that highlight differences</i>	Case A: North Macedonia conflict 2001 (OFA)	Case B: Ukraine-Russia conflict (Minsk Agreements)	Case C: Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict (Nagorno-Karabakh 2020)
Actorness	EU level of actorness is high - The EU is the main international actor in peace mediation alongside NATO and the US	EU level of actorness is at a medium level - The EU is a secondary actor in peace mediation.	EU actorness is low - The EU is not actively involved in peace mediation.
Conditionality	High level of conditionality - The EU uses conditionality throughout the crisis to influence the decision making of the parties in conflict.	Medium level of conditionality - The EU uses conditionality mainly during the crisis but less before and after the crisis to influence the decision making of the parties in conflict.	Low level of conditionality - The EU does not use conditionality to influence the decision making of the parties in conflict.

Source: Author’s analysis from historical background and process tracing.

The EU’s foreign policy-making differences in the cases of conflict chosen for this study also vary in form of EU’s involvement. As was highlighted in the theoretical framework, in the NPE paragraph, the involvement can also differ depending on the countries in conflict approval of EU’s mediation efforts. Upcoming table 6. analyses the differences through the theory of Diez and Pace (2007), emphasising the differences of how the EU was accepted into the conflict by the conflict parties as an international mediator.

Table 6. The EU as a potentially normative power in conflict mediation

North Macedonia (Ohrid Framework Agreement 2001)	“The EU is accepted as a normative power and the conflict party accepts the norms projected by the EU. The EU is most likely accepted as a conflict mediator and the conflict parties are inclined to follow EU advice and/or want to integrate into European norms.” (Diez and Pace, 2007: 4-5)
Ukraine (2014-2015 Minsk Agreements)	“The EU is accepted at least by some conflicting parties as a normative power, thus meaning that the EU can have a positive influence over the behaviour of that party.”(Diez and Pace, 2007: 4-5)
Armenia - Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh Ceasefire agreement 2020)	“The EU is not accepted as a normative power by conflict parties, which means that the EU has no power over the conflict parties or even creates negative effects if the EU is ridiculed or challenged.”(Diez and Pace, 2007: 4-5)

Source: Author’s analysis of crises through Diez and Pace (2007) NPE as conflict mediator.

From table 6. we can also identify that when the EU’s inverse relationship between pragmatic and normative foreign policy approaches in the conflicts. When the EU is accepted as a normative actor, the EU acts normatively and is anticipated to be involved in the crisis by the conflict parties as was in the case of North Macedonia in 2001. Being accepted into the conflict as a mediator also affects the levels of actorness and conditionality that were described as differentiating factors before in table 5.

The case of Ukraine is special, as the EU’s foreign policy-making there can be described in different phases of the conflict as normative and pragmatic as learned through document analysis. As Ukraine was leaning more towards Europe and showed it through the Euromaidan protests in

2013-2014, Ukraine accepted the EU as one of the conflict mediators, but the EU was not accepted by the Russian Federation as a normative power. Also, the EU's foreign policy was not always as assertive and normative in the case of Russian aggression against Ukraine in 2014, and could be described as pragmatic before the Minsk Agreement II as shown in table 4. Even though the EU's discourse and foreign policy sent mixed signals toward the crisis in Ukraine, it can be argued that the EU still had positive effects to briefly closing one chapter of the ongoing crisis in Ukraine through the Minsk Agreements.

The Nagorno-Karabakh crisis and its relation to the EU's foreign policy were assumed to be pragmatic, not only because the South Caucasus is a region in the case of conflict that is farthest away from the EU's borders, but also because the EU has to compete with the Russian influence in the region. This assumption was correct, as the EU displayed pragmatic foreign policy behaviour in the conflict as shown in table 4, in reference to the authors document analysis. The main problem could be identified as the lack of acceptance as a mediator by the conflict parties of Armenia and Azerbaijan, which did not give EU diplomatic measures to act in the region even if they showed their intent to do so. The EU's role, therefore, was sidelined and its reputation as an international mediator could be seen as weakened, while the Russian Federation took the place as a main mediator in the conflict, as described in table 6. above.

Analysing the EU's foreign policy making in different time periods we can also connect the foreign policy discourses of pragmatic and normative discussion discussed above, with the institutional logic of the EU. The thematics of normative and pragmatic EU foreign policy discourse relate to the Europeanization theory. As introduced in the theoretical framework, the "logic of consequences" can be linked to the pragmatic approach, with actors choosing options that maximise their utility under the circumstances (March & Olsen, 1989: 160-162). For example in the case of North Macedonia, when the EU used conditionality toward North Macedonia to influence the crisis outcome. Whereas the logic of appropriateness is mainly seen as the logic behind the EU's discourse regarding third countries potentially aspiring to become a part of the EU through Socialisation (Schimmelfennig, 2012: 8). An example, in this case, would be Ukraine and their aspiration to become a member of the EU. The author recognises that the Europeanization logic and processes could not be identified in the case of the Nagorno-Karabakh crisis, as Armenia

and Azerbaijan are not directly affected by a high degree of conditionality or actorness regarding the EU.

Relying on the analysis of the EU's different foreign policy approaches described above and making distinctions based on the three crises in focus, the EU's foreign policy approach can not be identified as always normative or always pragmatic. As the EU has become more integrated, the EU's approach to foreign policy crises could be seen as shifting from utopian liberal normative discourses and foreign policy to more pragmatic, but depending on the magnitude of the crisis, the geopolitical location of the crisis, the acceptance of the countries in crises of the EU as a mediator and many more factors, the EU's position could shift in the scale from normative to pragmatic.

5.2 Estonian foreign policy experts' positions on the cases of crisis

The quotations and general opinions in the following chapters were gathered through semi-structured personal interviews conducted specifically for this thesis. Direct quotes were reviewed by the authors of the quotes before the submission of this thesis.

5.2.1 Estonian foreign policy positions regarding North Macedonia

Estonian foreign policy position on North Macedonia can be considered independent of other international actors, as Estonia was not yet a full member and did not take part in the EU foreign policy at the time when the conflict with the Albanian minorities in North-Macedonia emerged in 2001. As learned through the interviews, Estonia identifies itself as similar to North Macedonia with the possible inter-ethnic problems related to the minorities being one of the possible causes of conflict in Estonia and in North Macedonia. The Estonian position was described by the Anonymous University of Tartu (UT) foreign policy expert as “careful” and “low-profile” (Anonymous UT foreign policy expert interview, 2022)

Estonia's interest and influence in the region at the time of the conflict could be seen as very modest. Though it has to be mentioned that from Estonia's foreign policy point-of-view the successful intervention of the EU that led to the implementation of the Ohrid Framework

Agreement gave Estonia reassurance that the decision to join the EU could provide useful if and when the same kinds of inter-ethnic conflicts appeared in Estonia.

Also, the EU's intervention in the Balkan region in the early 2000s and the conflicts like in the case of North Macedonia were dealt with through intervention and avoided at that time in North Macedonia an outright civil war. This means that the EU avoided the escalation of a larger conflict in North Macedonia in the early 2000s, which could be related to the Estonian accession progress going according to plans in 2004. Because if there were a larger outbreak of conflict in the area, the 2004 enlargement maybe would not have gone as smoothly (Urmas Paet interview, 2022).

“One of the main foreign policy interests of Estonia in the Balkan region in the early 2000s was that no more violence and war would break out in the region” (Urmas Paet interview, 2022)

The Estonian foreign policy consensus was that the EU's normative approach was much appreciated and the value-based normative foreign policy-making of the EU was generally in line with the Estonian discourse in the Balkan region. Estonia's discourse can be considered more normative than pragmatic, due to Estonian main foreign policy discourses having an emphasis on peacebuilding and democratic values. Estonian foreign policymaking actions or influence in the region was ultimately limited or non-existent. The conclusion on the Estonian foreign policy discourse on the scale from pragmatic to normative would be more tilted towards normative discourse.

5.2.2 Estonian foreign policy positions regarding Ukraine in 2014

Estonian foreign policy position on the Ukraine conflict related to the Russian Federation's aggression in 2014 was different, because in this case, Estonia as a Member State of the EU, had been in the decision-making processes in the EU foreign policymaking for ten years. The anonymous UT Estonian foreign policy expert (2022) interviewed emphasised that in this case, the Baltics and Poland had a very similar discourse regarding the conflict in Ukraine in 2014. Kristi Raik, the director of Estonian Foreign Policy Institute described the Estonian perspective as value-

based and pointed out the disappointment towards the EU's hesitant approach towards the Russian aggression towards Ukraine in the spring of 2014 as follows:

“From the Estonian point-of-view, the EU’s reaction to the annexation of Crimea was weak. This reaction is seen as problematic to this day. The sanctions that were implemented in spring 2014 were too weak and could be considered as symbolic and not condemning enough towards Russia” (Kristi Raik interview, 2022).

The discourse amongst Estonian experts was that Russian aggression should be highly sanctioned to hurt the Russian economy as much as possible and through this method make Russia relieve the aggression on Ukraine. Not only was Estonia’s approach value-based, but Estonia was also very vocal in criticising Russian aggression and at the same time highly supportive of Ukraine’s bid to be closer to the EU. There was a unanimous agreement in the interviews conducted for this thesis in the Estonian foreign policy experts' discourse, that Estonia would have expected more strict sanctions from the EU after the annexation of Crimea and the creation of the Luhansk and Donetsk People’s Republics.

“The first discussions among the EU’s foreign ministers after the annexation of Crimea were to Estonia’s and other Eastern-European countries' surprise very lenient towards the Russian aggression in 2014” (Urmas Paet interview, 2022).

The Estonian representatives in the European Parliament, and former Foreign Ministers of Estonia, Marina Kaljurand and Urmas Paet were in agreement that Estonian foreign policy discourse regarding Russian aggression was already normative and value-based and discussions were held with other EU’ Member States representatives after the Russian-Georgian war in 2008 with not only on the topic of the Russian aggression in the year 2008 but to show this as an illustration of what could happen again in the future and what should be the repercussions of the Russian invasion of a democratic state in the proximity of the EU.

“In the Estonian perspective, we have always wanted the EU to be more strict, more decisive, more effective and faster [in the case of Ukraine]” (Marina Kaljurand interview, 2022).

From the interviews, the explanation of the mixed discourse of the EU regarding Ukraine could also be identified. From the document analysis, we identified in table 4. that the EU’s position shifted from normative at the start of the conflict in Ukraine, to pragmatic during the conflict and back to normative discourse parallel to the peace agreement. One event that was highlighted by the foreign policy experts interviewed and was also mentioned in the historical background of this thesis, was the downing of the plane Malaysia MH17 by the Russian aggressors in Ukraine, which killed many international passengers, also amongst them EU citizens. Estonian foreign policy experts argued that before that incident, the discourse regarding the incident was lenient, but identified the MH17 plane shot down by the pro-Russian rebels as the turning point back to normative discourse, as the EU felt the reality of the conflict through the deaths of their own citizens.

Estonian perspective in this case of conflict in Ukraine after the Russian aggression has been highly value-based. Estonian foreign policy experts have continuously conveyed this value-based position of Estonia and it reflects through the interviews conducted for this study. Estonian strong position against the aggression could be explained by the perceived threat to sovereignty. This correlates with the theoretical position of Buzan and Wæver (2003) in which the Baltic states’ main security concern is Russia. Also, Lamoreaux and Galbreath (2008: 11), as Estonian was most vocal in addressing this case of crisis as opposed to the other cases, where Estonian security was not directly affected.

5.2.3 Estonian foreign policy positions regarding Nagorno-Karabakh

The Estonian foreign policy experts' positions on the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan are not as firm. According to the Anonymous UT Estonian foreign policy expert, there are times that the Estonian position overall could be seen as value-based in regard to the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh territory but this normative discourse is also quickly dismissed when the

conflict is not in the centre of the news or clashes with the opinions of fellow EU or NATO member states. Overall, the Estonian position remains supportive of democratic values and peace in the region.

“Estonia sees itself as a big brother to the countries formerly part of the Soviet Union, trying to help these countries with technological and governmental “know-how”, as Estonia has already made these steps before them” (Jane Õispuu interview, 2022).

Kristi Raik, the director of the Estonian Foreign Policy institute adds the same tonality from the Estonian perspective to the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh.

“The EU’s Eastern Partnership has been a priority for Estonia, more of a priority than for an average Member State of the EU. Estonia sees it as crucial to help countries who aim to be part of the EU” (Kristi Raik interview, 2022).

Talking about Estonian perspectives in the region of the South Caucasus, Urmas Paet emphasised as following:

“For Estonia, as a country that respects human rights, it is obviously against our interest that conflicts are dealt with through violence. Especially when the region of conflict is geopolitically close to Estonia. So in the perspective of Estonian foreign policy, it would be important to alleviate the tensions in the region of South Caucasus” (Urmas Paet interview, 2022)

Urmas Paet also explains the EU’s unassertive pragmatic position on Nagorno Karabakh and identifies the EU’s CFSP main problem - lack of physical power (Urmas Paet interview, 2022)

“One of the aims of the Eastern Partnership is to have as many democratic countries that follow human rights and international law, but when there is a long-lasting conflict of varying intensity, then the proposed goals of democracy human rights and international law won't be fulfilled” (Urmas Paet interview, 2022)

Estonian foreign policy experts' discourse, in this case, is more value-based and normative in general than the EU's declarations regarding Nagorno-Karabakh in 2020. It has to be said, that as there is not too much at stake for Estonia in the South-Caucasus region and while condemning violence and messages for peace were common in the discursive space of Estonian Foreign policy experts at the time of the conflict, the interests in the region for Estonia are modest and the possibilities of making a difference even more limited for Estonia. There was consensus amongst the foreign policy experts of Estonia, that Estonian foreign policy interests in the region are similar to the other eastern countries formerly part of the Soviet regime. Mainly to support countries that aim to be democratic and cooperate with the EU.

5.2.4 Small state as a mediator in the decision making of the EU foreign policy

As learned through personal interviews with Estonia's foreign policy experts, Estonia's approach to foreign policy in the EU has so far been to address and influence mainly issues regarding Estonia's immediate security concerns. As a small Member State, the implications of a veto in an important EU foreign policy case would have more possible negative consequences than becoming a mediator in the cases of conflict where Estonia's interest is the highest (Jane Õispuu interview, 2022). There is some debate on how Estonia's foreign policy interests should be conducted in the future, related to the EU's foreign policy. As some experts express that not only should Estonia become a more active mediator and generally more vocal in times when a threat is perceived, but Estonia's foreign policy in the EU should be conducted in a way where Estonia shows that it is capable of comprehending, understanding and discussing crises that do not have as much of direct critical foreign policy concern to Estonia (Marina Kaljurand and Urmas Paet interviews, 2022).

Estonia's ambition in terms of operating in the EU foreign policy as a smaller Member State is as Marina Kaljurand describes:

“We have to listen carefully to the discussions of our allies and partners and recognize where they need our support. And if it is in accordance with our values then support it.

Only then we can be sure that we will be supported when we need it” (Marina Kaljurand interview, 2022).

This correlates well with Wivel's (2010) argument that a small state should act as an honest custodian of all member states' common interests to become a stronger foreign policy actor as a small state. Furthermore, as illustrated by the RSCT, security interdependence is typically organised into regionally based clusters. Estonia, belonging to the EU and being interdependent on other EU Members, should therefore be vocal advocates of all Member States, especially on the security issues of the Union.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

The aim of this thesis was to find answers to the *Q: How does Estonia, as a Small EU Member state, perceive the normative or pragmatic EU foreign policy regarding cases of conflict in North Macedonia, Ukraine and South Caucasus?*

Firstly, the study identified based on the theoretical framework, the EU's actions regarding the crises and through process tracing the discourses regarding the EU's official views on these cases of conflict. Secondly, and most importantly the thesis described and analysed the Estonian perception of these crises and compared a Small Member States perception with the collective EU discourse on foreign policy crises in Europe and in the proximity of Europe.

Estonia's foreign policy experts' perceptions of the conflicts in North Macedonia, Ukraine and Nagorno-Karabakh were generally as normative or more normative than the EU's perception. In the cases of conflict between North Macedonia, Ukraine and Nagorno-Karabakh Estonia's perspective was most similar to the EUs in the case of North Macedonia. A difference in discourse is found in the case of Nagorno-Karabakh. Though Estonia's interests in the region are described as more modest, the Estonian experts still emphasise the importance of peace-building and helping the South Caucasus countries with technological and governmental "know-how". Estonian foreign policy also puts emphasis on the functioning and cooperative ENP as an important part of foreign policymaking. Estonian discourse could therefore be seen as value-based towards Armenia and Azerbaijan. The main difference in perspectives is in the case of Ukraine, where Estonia's foreign policy experts emphasised that Estonia's reaction to the annexation of Crimea and the successive aggression toward Ukraine called for stronger sanctions against Russia's aggression than the EU's official foreign policy conclusions would have suggested. Estonia's norm-based stance toward Ukraine in 2014 could be explained through a possible spill-over security threat to Estonian sovereignty. Estonian foreign policy experts interviewed are united in their opinions concerning Estonian value-based positions in the case of Ukraine.

Looking at the proposed evolution of the EU's foreign policy discourse based on the consolidation of the Union, the EU's own discourse shift has been steadily toward being more interests-based

and pragmatic than value-based and normative in the cases of study. These cases reflect only a handful of conflicts in Europe and in the proximity of Europe and the EU, but still to a degree, show the EU's paradigm shift as the EUGS document suggested. This does not mean that the EU will always be pragmatic or has set aside its normative values, but instead means that the EU's focus and approach have changed in the ways of dealing with crises, especially in the cases where the EU's actions are not called-upon by the countries in crisis. European Union foreign policy, therefore, has steadily made a shift to having different discourses regarding contrasting conflicts, based more on the EU's interests than the EU's values.

This research suggests, that while the EU's shift of discourse from normative in the case of North-Macedonia, mixed discourse regarding Ukraine and pragmatic approach regarding Nagorno-Karabakh is notable, Estonian foreign policy experts' perceptions have not followed the EU's shifting discourse and have stayed strongly value-based and normative. Estonia as a small Member State of the EU, bordering the Russian Federation in the East, has notable foreign policy interests in their immediate surroundings as confirmed by the Estonian experts in the conducted interviews. Estonian perspective is to be vocal and influence EU policies that concern their security issues. As a small Member State geopolitically situated between the East and the West it is not possible to rely on physical power or financial power - Estonia relies on democratic values and supports countries in crisis which also fosters the same kind of norms. Estonia, therefore, has a unique position regarding foreign policy incentives. As a small Member state Estonia's perspectives are to act as an honest custodian of all member states' common interests to become a stronger foreign policy actor as a small state (Wivel, 2010)

There are also several areas for further development for the work undertaken in this thesis. Future research should investigate the EU's discourse using a large number of cases to comprehensively draw conclusions on the proposed EU's discourse shift from normative to pragmatic foreign policy making. Secondly, more research should be conducted on how the opinions of Smaller Member states' policy experts correlate with the EU's official position to determine if the EU's proposed turn to pragmatic foreign policy has affected the discourse of the small Member States. Based on the research conducted, my recommendation is that Estonian representatives in EU foreign policy-making should continue to advocate for value-based decisions in the EU. Furthermore, Estonian

representatives should act as supervisors of all EU Member States' rights, advising larger EU Member States in specific matters where Estonia adds a different perspective to the EU, therefore, supporting the security of the EU and Estonia.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Interview questions in English

North-Macedonia - Albanian minority conflict (Ohrid Framework Agreement 2001)

How would you describe the Estonian foreign policy approach to the crises in Western Balkan, specifically in the case of North Macedonia (without being a full member of the EU at the time) countries in the early 2000's? To what degree was the Estonian perspective in line with the EU's perspective?

What kind of approach does the EU use in the cases where the country in crisis is a possible EU candidate country (for example North Macedonia in the early 2000s)?

What were the main foreign policy related interests in the Western Balkan for Estonia, specifically regarding the North-Macedonia and Albanian minority conflict in the early 2000's? How would you describe Estonian foreign policy discourse on the scale from pragmatic to normative?

Ukraine-Russia Conflict in 2014-2015 (Minsk Agreements)

The EU-Ukraine association agreement's political provisions were signed in March 2014. In the same month, Russia annexed the Crimean peninsula from Ukraine. The Foreign Affairs Council of the EU, while condemning the annexation and violence stated on March 17th as follows: "The EU remains committed to the objective of developing the EU-Russia relationship, based on mutual interest and respect for international law." How well was the declaration in line with the Estonian perspective and how would you describe the preferable approach from the Estonian perspective?

How would you describe the Estonian foreign policy approach to the Russian aggression in Ukraine (2013-2015)?- More normative or more pragmatic?

How does Estonia as a small EU Member State perceive the conflict? Does this perception differ from the big Member States like Germany, France and others? How?

Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict (Nagorno-Karabakh 2020)

The conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh is the longest ongoing conflict in the OSCE area. The EU has cooperation through the European Neighbourhood Policy with both Armenia and Azerbaijan but has not yet meaningfully diplomatically intervened in the conflict. From the Estonian perspective - is the pragmatism of the EU concerning Nagorno-Karabakh justified? Why?

The EU's main policy tool to influence the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has been humanitarian aid for affected populations in the region. What kind of policy tools should the EU use in the region of South Caucasus?

The Armenia-Azerbaijan 2020 ceasefire agreement was not well implemented and the ceasefire was broken only a month after the agreement was signed. The ceasefire was brokered mainly by the Russian Federation, allowing the Russian sphere of influence to grow in the region. From the Estonian perspective - What should be the EU's role with regard to the relations with Russia in Ukraine? From an Estonian perspective, should the EU continue to accept Russia's influence in the region, or should the EU do more politically to challenge Russia's role as the main mediator in the South-Caucasus region? How? Why?

Appendix 2. Interview questions in Estonian

Põhja-Makedoonia – Albaania vähemuste konflikt (Ohridi raamleping 2001)

Kuidas kirjeldaksite Eesti välispoliitilist lähenemist Lääne-Balkani kriisidele, täpsemalt Põhja Makedoonia kriisi puhul aastal 2001 (kui Eesti polnud veel EL liikmesriik)? Mil määral oli Eesti perspektiiv kooskõlas EL-i perspektiiviga?

Millist lähenemist kasutab EL juhtudel, kui kriisis olev riik on võimalik EL-i kandidaatriik (näiteks antud juhul aastal 2001 Põhja-Makedoonia)?

Millised olid Eesti peamised välispoliitilised huvid Lääne-Balkanil, eriti seoses Põhja-Makedoonia ja Albaania vähemuste konfliktiga 2000ndate aastate alguses? Kuidas kirjeldaksite Eesti välispoliitilist diskursust skaalal pragmaatilisest normatiivseni?

Ukraina-Venemaa konflikt aastatel 2014-2015 (Minski kokkulepped)

EL-Ukraina assotsiatsioonilepingu poliitilised sätted allkirjastati märtsis 2014. Samal kuul annekteeris Venemaa Ukrainalt Krimmi poolsaare. EL-i välisasjade nõukogu, mõistis hukka anneksiooni ja vägivalla, teatas 17. märtsil järgmiselt: "EL on jätkuvalt pühendunud eesmärgile arendada ELi ja Venemaa suhteid, mis põhinevad vastastikusel huvil ja rahvusvahelise õiguse austamisel." Kui hästi oli deklaratsioon Eesti vaatenurgaga kooskõlas ja kuidas kirjeldaksite eelistatud lähenemist Eesti vaatenurgast?

Kuidas kirjeldaksite Eesti välispoliitilist lähenemist Venemaa agressioonile Ukrainas (2013-2015)?- Normatiivne või pragmaatiline?

Kuidas Eesti väikese EL-i liikmesriigina konflikti tajub? Kas see arusaam erineb suurtest liikmesriikidest, nagu Saksamaa, Prantsusmaa ja teised? Kuidas?

Armeenia-Aserbaidžani konflikt (Mägi-Karabahh 2020)

Mägi-Karabahhi konflikt on OSCE piirkonnas pikim kestnud konflikt. EL teeb Euroopa naabruspoliitika kaudu koostööd nii Armeenia kui ka Aserbaidžaaniga, kuid ei ole veel sisuliselt diplomaatiliselt konflikti sekkunud. Eesti vaatenurgast - kas EL-i pragmatism Mägi-Karabahhi osas on õigustatud? Miks?

ELi peamine poliitiline vahend Mägi-Karabahhi konfliktis mõjutamiseks on olnud humanitaarabi piirkonna mõjutatud elanikkonnale. Milliseid poliitilisi vahendeid peaks EL veel kasutama Lõuna-Kaukaasia piirkonnas?

Armeenia-Aserbaidžani 2020. aasta relvarahu lepingut ei rakendatud hästi ning relvarahu rikuti juba umbes kuu aega pärast lepingu allkirjastamist. Relvarahu vahendas peamiselt Venemaa Föderatsioon, mis võimaldas Venemaa mõjusfääril piirkonnas kasvada. Eesti vaatenurgast – milline peaks olema EL roll suhetes Venemaaga Ukrainas? Kas Eesti vaatenurgast peaks EL jätkuvalt aktsepteerima Venemaa mõju selles piirkonnas või peaks EL rohkem poliitiliselt vaidlustama Venemaa rolli peamise vahendajana Lõuna-Kaukaasia piirkonnas? Kuidas? Miks?

Appendix 3. Interview participants and the detailed timetable

Anonymous University of Tartu foreign policy expert. Interview conducted in person, 25.04.2022, 14:00.

Jane Õispuu, Head of Political Team of the Estonian representation in the European Commission. Interview conducted through video meeting 04.05.2022, 17:00.

Kristi Raik, director of the Estonian Foreign Policy Institute. Interview conducted through video meeting 06.05.2022, 16:00.

Urmas Paet, Member of the European Parliament, former Foreign minister of Estonia. Interview conducted through video meeting 07.05.2022, 14:45.

Marina Kaljurand, Member of the European Parliament, former Foreign minister of Estonia. Interview conducted in person, 09.05.2022, 16:00

Summary in Estonian

Normatiivne või pragmaatiline? Eesti perspektiiv Euroopa Liidu välispoliitikale - konfliktid Põhja Makedoonias, Ukrainas ja Mägi-Karabahhis

Karl Johan Pechter

Resümees

Euroopa Liidu (EL) välispoliitika kujundamine on olnud tuntud kui väärtuspõhine ja seega normatiivne, kuid 2016. aasta dokumendis "Euroopa Liidu globaalne strateegia" pakkus EL välja uutmoodi välispoliitiliste küsimuste käsitlemise viisi, mis paneb rõhku rohkem pragmaatilisusele, huvipõhisusele ja välispoliitiliste kriiside lahendamisele juhtumipõhise meetodi abil. Magistritöö eesmärk on kirjeldada kvalitatiivse uuringu kaudu, kuidas tajutakse Eesti kui väiksema liikmesriigi seisukohast kavandatud muutust ELi välispoliitikas

Kuna väiksemate liikmesriikide mõju EL välispoliitiliste otsuste kujundamisel peetakse üldjuhul tagasihoidlikuks ja otsused tehakse suures osas ühehäälselt otsusega, võib väiksemate liikmesriikide ja nende ekspertide diskursus tegelikult olla vastuolus ELi ametlike välispoliitiliste seisukohtadega. Selleks, et mõista väiksema liikmesriigi Euroopas ja Euroopa läheduses toimuvate konfliktide diskursust, kirjeldatakse Eesti seisukohta meie välispoliitika ekspertide arvamuste abil. Töös analüüsin põhjalikult Põhja-Makedoonia kriisi 2001. aastal, Ukraina kriisi 2014. aastal ja Mägi-Karabahi kriisi 2020. aastal, et mõista ELi välispoliitika arengut. Töös kasutatakse Manners'i (2002) *Normative Power Europe* ja Ladrechi (1994) teoreetilist kirjandust euroopastumise kohta, et mõista ELi välispoliitikat. Eesti seisukohti valitud kriiside suhtes analüüsitakse piirkondliku julgeoleku kompleksi teooria (*Regional Security Complex Theory*) abil.

Võrdleva analüüsi, dokumendianalüüsi ja poolstruktureeritud ekspertintervjuude tulemused näitavad, et Eesti vaatenurk on üldiselt väärtuspõhisem kui ELi ametlik seisukoht välispoliitiliste kriiside suhtes Põhja-Makedoonias, Ukrainas ja Mägi-Karabahhis. Kõige rohkem vastandub diskursus Ukraina puhul, kus Eesti tajutud oht riiklikule julgeolekule esitati ühe peamise erinevuse

tegurina. Valitud konfliktide puhul on ELi diskursuse kaardistamise käigus tuvastatud aeglane üleminek väärtuspõhisemalt välispoliitikalt rohkem huvidel põhinevale välispoliitikale.

Märksõnad: *Normative Power Europe*, ELi välispoliitiline pragmatism, väikesed ELi liikmesriigid, Eesti välispoliitika ekspertide vaatenurk, Ohridi raamleping, Minski lepingud, Mägi-Karabahh, EUGS.

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