



Jagiellonian University in Kraków
Faculty of International and Political Studies
Institute of European Studies

Soso Chachanidze

student ID number: 00317283

Field of study: European Studies

The European Parliament's framing of the Russian invasions
in the shared neighbourhood in 2008, 2014 and 2022

Magister (MA) Thesis

Thesis written under the supervision of

Dr. Marcin Zubek

Dr. Stefano Braghioli

August 2024

Krakow, Poland

Field of Study: European Studies

Magister (mgr) of European Studies (specialty: Central and East European, Russian and Eurasian Studies), Jagiellonian University in Kraków, Poland

International Master's (IntM) in Central and East European, Russian and Eurasian Studies: University of Glasgow, UK

Master of Arts in Social Sciences (MA) in Central and East European, Russian and Eurasian Studies: University of Tartu, Estonia

Word count of the thesis: 24910

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.

Soso Chachanidze

**Non-exclusive licence for making the thesis public through the University
of Tartu's electronic library**

I, Soso Chachanidze, (UJ identification code: 00317283)

1. herewith grant the University of Tartu a free permit (non-exclusive licence) to reproduce, for the purpose of preservation and making the thesis public, including for adding to the DSpace digital archives until the expiry of the term of copyright, my thesis entitled: **“The European Parliament’s framing of the Russian invasions in the shared neighbourhood in 2008, 2014 and 2022”**, supervised by Dr. Marcin Zubek (Jagiellonian University) and Dr. Stefano Braghioli (University of Tartu)

2. I grant the University of Tartu a permit to make the work specified in p. 1 available to the public via the web environment of the University of Tartu, including via the DSpace digital archives, until the expiry of the term of copyright.

3. I am aware of the fact that the author retains the rights specified in pp. 1 and 2.

4. I certify that granting the non-exclusive licence does not infringe other persons' intellectual property rights or rights arising from the personal data protection legislation.

Soso Chachanidze

August 2024

Abstract

This thesis discusses the evolution of the European Parliament's framing of the Russian military aggressions in the shared neighbourhood – in Georgia in 2008 and in Ukraine in 2014 and 2022. The research analyses the similarities and changes in the way the Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) framed Russia's role in the military conflicts in these three occasions. Additionally, the thesis aims to understand how the European Union's (EU) role and its policies towards Russia were perceived by the MEPs in the light of these invasions. The dissertation employs framing theory, specifically from the scope of agenda setting, to address the European Parliament's (EP) role in the EU foreign policy creation and better understand the process and reasons of frame formation. As primary sources of data, the thesis investigates the first plenary debates that preceded the EP's motions for resolution for each of these three conflicts.

The research finds that during the analysed debates, the processes of framing Russia and the EU's policies were taking place simultaneously. Framing process involved both, rational and value-based arguments. Framing of Russia in a certain way generally resulted in proposing specific policy options for the EU. The research concludes that while Moscow was framed as an aggressor in each case, the degree to which it was pictured as a sole initiator of the conflict was different. On the other hand, the thesis argues that the EP had more clarity on its policy preferences towards Kremlin in 2014 than in 2008 and 2022. In these two cases, more effort was directed towards discussing the development of adequate policies than using existing tools. The thesis contributes to the discussion on framing of Russia in the EU and specifically in the EP, as well as the EP's role in the EU foreign policy making.

Streszczenie

W niniejszej pracy magisterskiej omówiono ewolucję sposobu, w jaki Parlament Europejski postrzega rosyjską agresję militarną we wspólnym sąsiedztwie – w Gruzji w 2008 r. oraz na Ukrainie w 2014 i 2022 r. W badaniu analizowano podobieństwa i zmiany w sposobie, w jaki członkowie Parlamentu Europejskiego przedstawiali rolę Rosji w konfliktach zbrojnych w tych trzech przypadkach. Ponadto niniejsza praca ma na celu zrozumienie, jak rola Unii Europejskiej (UE) i jej polityka wobec Rosji były postrzegane przez eurodeputowanych w świetle tych inwazji. W rozprawie wykorzystano teorię ram, szczególnie z zakresu ustalania agendy, aby omówić rolę Parlamentu Europejskiego (PE) w tworzeniu polityki zagranicznej

UE oraz lepiej zrozumieć proces i przyczyny tworzenia ram. Jako podstawowe źródła danych w niniejszej pracy zbadano pierwsze debaty plenarne, które poprzedziły przedstawienie przez PE projektów rozwiązania każdego z tych trzech konfliktów.

Z badania wynika, że w trakcie analizowanych debat procesy ramowania polityki Rosji i UE toczyły się jednocześnie. Proces formułowania ram obejmował zarówno argumenty racjonalne, jak i oparte na wartościach. Ramowanie Rosji w określony sposób skutkowało generalnie zaproponowaniem konkretnych opcji politycznych dla UE. Z badania wynika, że choć w każdym przypadku Moskwę przedstawiano jako agresora, różny był stopień przedstawiania jej jako jedynego inicjatora konfliktu. Z drugiej strony, można wykazać, że PE miał większą jasność co do swoich preferencji politycznych wobec Kremla w 2014 r. niż w 2008 i 2022 r. W tych dwóch przypadkach większy wysiłek włożono w dyskusję nad opracowaniem adekwatnej polityki niż w wykorzystanie istniejących narzędzi. Praca ta stanowi wkład w dyskusję na temat rozumienia Rosji w UE, a konkretnie w PE, a także roli PE w kształtowaniu polityki zagranicznej UE.

Table of contents

List of acronyms	7
1. Introduction.....	8
2. Literature review	9
2.1 Framing theory and its applicability to the research	9
2.2 EP’s role in the EU foreign policy	12
2.3 EP’s agenda setting and framing of the EU foreign policy and the neighbourhood	16
2.4 Framing of the neighbourhood and its conflicts at the European level.....	21
2.5 Position taking and opinion expression at the European Parliament plenary sessions ..	24
3. Evolution of geopolitical context and importance of Ukraine and Georgia for the EU	28
4. Methodology	31
4.1 Framing through agenda setting	31
4.2 Research design and methods	37
4.3 Limitations	38
5. Analysis.....	39
6. Empirical findings.....	44
6.1. 2008 Debate.....	44
6.1.1 Findings from the debate.....	44
6.1.2 ‘Arousing interest’ frames in the 2008 debate	45
6.1.3 ‘Claiming authority’ frames in the 2008 debate.....	48
6.2 2014 debate	51
6.2.1 Findings from the debate.....	51
6.2.2 ‘Arousing interest’ frames in the 2014 debate	52
6.2.3 ‘Claiming authority’ frames in the 2014 debate.....	54
6.3 2022 debate	56
6.3.1 Findings from the debate.....	56
6.3.2 ‘Arousing interest’ frames in the 2022 debate	57
6.3.3 ‘Claiming authority’ frames in the 2022 debate.....	60
7. Discussion.....	61
7.1 General trends in framing and agenda setting in the EP	61
7.2 Frame evolutions between debates.....	64
8. Conclusion	66
Bibliography	68

List of acronyms

AFET – The Committee on Foreign Affairs of the European Parliament

CFSP – Common Foreign and Security Policy

CSDP – Common Security and Defence Policy

EaP – Eastern Partnership

ENP – European Neighbourhood Policy

EP – European Parliament

EU – European Union

HR – High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

MEP – Member of the European Parliament

MS – Member State of the European Union

Table of the EP parties by terms and their acronyms in the official EP transcripts of the debates

2004-2009 term	2009-2014 term	2019-2024 term
Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) and European Democrats – PPE-DE	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) - PPE	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) - PPE
Socialist Group in the European Parliament - PSE	Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament – S&D	Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament – S&D
Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe - ALDE	Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe - ALDE	Renew Europe Group - Renew
Union for Europe of the Nations Group - UEN	European Conservatives and Reformists Group - ECR	European Conservatives and Reformists Group - ECR
Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance – Verts/ALE	Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance – Verts/ALE	Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance - Verts/ALE
Confederal Group of the European United Left - Nordic Green Left – GUE/NGL	Confederal Group of the European United Left - Nordic Green Left - GUE/NGL	The Left group in the European Parliament - GUE/NGL – The Left
Independence/Democracy Group – IND/DEM	Europe of freedom and democracy Group - EFD	Identity and Democracy Group - ID
Non-attached Members - NI	Non-attached Members - NI	Non-attached Members - NI

1. Introduction

Since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the European Union (EU) has imposed unprecedented number of sanction packages against Russian individuals, businesses, and state-owned companies. As of July 2024, 14 packages of sanctions have been adopted by the Council of the EU (the Council) (European Commission, 2024). Moreover, the European Parliament (EP) even declared Russia a state sponsor of terrorism (European Parliament, 2022). These indicate that the EU now pictures Russia as an imperialist aggressor which should be stopped through common international efforts (European Commission, 2023). However, this is not the first time Russia has resorted to military action in its neighbourhood. Kremlin's previous endeavours involve the annexation of Crimea and supporting separatists in Eastern Ukraine since 2014, as well as launching the so-called August War against Georgia in 2008. The EU was involved as a mediator of a peace agreement in the latter, and introduced first packages of sanctions towards Russia in the case of the 2014 invasion of Ukraine.

This thesis aims to explore the EP's attitudes towards Russia in the immediate aftermath of the three invasions in the shared neighbourhood. For this purpose, the research will analyse the plenary sessions preceding the EP's resolutions on these conflicts. The debates will be analysed through the scope of framing theory. This theory "refers to the process by which people develop a particular conceptualization of an issue or reorient their thinking about an issue (Chong and Druckman, 2007a: 104). This will allow for understanding the attitudes towards Russia and towards the EU's policies on Kremlin. For a better conceptualisation of framing process in these debates, frames will be analysed from agenda setting perspective. This approach will help the research by analysing what type of understanding of Russia was promoted by the EP. Subsequently, it will demonstrate how the EP framed the EU as a venue for addressing issues of Russian invasions. All these perspectives and findings will contribute towards answering the main research questions of this thesis:

How was Russia framed by the EP after its invasions in the neighbourhood in 2008, 2014 and 2022?

How were the EU policies towards Russia framed by the EP in the context of the Kremlin's invasions in the shared neighbourhood?

How have the EP's attitudes towards Russia evolved from 2008 to 2022?

The research contributes towards better understanding the process of framing in the EP. More specifically, it will address the gap in the literature on the EP's activities as a framing actor in the EU foreign policy. The thesis will contribute to the conversations on evolution of attitudes on Russia in the EU and the role the EU institutions have in creating the EU's understanding of Russia and aggressions in the shared neighbourhood.

2. Literature review

2.1 Framing theory and its applicability to the research

Framing theory analyses the “process by which people develop a particular conceptualization of an issue or reorient their thinking about an issue” (Chong and Druckman, 2007a: 104). It aims to study how politicians, political bodies and media present the issue to the wider public. The process of framing has been studied from variety of perspectives and academic fields, such as political science, sociology, media studies or psychology (Borah, 2011; Chong and Druckman, 2007b; Riebling and von der Wense, 2019; Matthes, 2012). This study will use the definition of frames as “strategic issue positions, constructed by active framing processes”, and framing as “process that shapes, redefines, and links different frames, actors and events” (Matthes 2012: 249-251, cited in Gamkrelidze and Vaisanen, 2022: 7).

Chong and Druckman (2007b) highlight two types of frames: ‘frame in communication’, referring to “words, images, phrases, and presentation styles that a speaker (e.g., a politician, a media outlet) uses when relaying information about an issue or event to an audience” (p. 100) and ‘frame in thought’, or an ‘individual frame’, which “refers to an individual’s cognitive understanding of a given situation” (p. 101). Borah (2011) argues that framing derives from two broad foundations: sociological and psychological. Studies that analyse frames in communication grow out of sociological foundations, as they look into construction of stories. How the offered frames are perceived and settle into individuals’ minds are generally analysed from the psychological perspective. This research will primarily analyse frames in communication, as it puts emphasis on the process of framing by public figures, in this cases Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), with citizens as the target audience. This perspective reflects well the EP’s function as the ‘voice of the people’ and the role in EU foreign policy to communicate their decisions and positions directly to citizens (Fonck, 2019a).

Furthermore, the debates during the plenaries are public and streamed online. In this way, the parliament has its own mean of media coverage. This is important as big portion of research on framing is dedicated to understanding framing in media (Shah et al, 2002; Riebling and von der Wense, 2019).

Shah et al (2002: 343) suggest that frames in communication can “foster changes in public opinion by promoting particular definitions and interpretations of political issues”. Entman (1993) highlights that frames serve to make a certain issue stand out in the range of events that take place at the same time. “to frame is to select some aspects of perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described” (Entman, 1993: 52). In other words, frames allow politicians to attempt providing a meaning to selected events that take place in a given moment. Public figures or media go through the process of reviewing existing or potential alternative frames and shaping them based on different factors, such as political affiliation, public image etc. (Shah et al, 2002; Matthes, 2012). Naturally, frames are not permanent and they can be redefined, based on different factors and events occurring (Chong and Druckman, 2007a; Matthes, 2012). This is an important factor in research similar to this project, focusing on evolution of framing of a certain actor or issue.

Benford and Snow (1988) present three types of frames: diagnostic, prognostic and motivational. Diagnostic frames identify issues and present them as problematic, while attributing responsibility or blame to certain actors. Prognostic frames suggest solutions to the problems that were diagnosed. In addition, they “identify strategies, tactics and targets” (p. 201). In this sense, they go ‘one step further’ than diagnostic frames, as they are more solution-oriented and specific. Motivational frames go beyond the other two types as they provide rationale and call for action to solve the issue. As visible, the three types of frames are interconnected and in most cases the process of framing should be expected to follow the sequence of providing diagnostic, prognostic and motivational frames (Benford and Snow, 1988: 199-203).

One of the most fundamental assumptions of framing theory, applicable to this research as well, is that small changes in the presentation of the issue can cause large changes in the public opinion (Chong and Druckman, 2007a; Matthes, 2012; Shah et al, 2002; Benford and Snow, 2000). For instance, Benford and Snow (2000) discuss the process of ‘frame alignment’ as a

way of repurposing and reshaping existing frames based on new realities. This indicates that no changes in speeches or written texts are incidental. This allows for exploring reorientation in thinking over time, even on issues with smaller range of differentiation in politician's opinion or presented alternative solutions. Exploring these differences, apart from discovering the original frames, is principally the aim of this research.

Apart from researching individual frames and their development, a significant proportion of studies are dedicated to exploring framing as discursive interactions that create collective meaning (Gamson et al, 1992; Benford and Snow, 2000). This does not only include interactions between politicians or media as 'producers' and population as 'receivers' of frame, but between different frame 'producers' as well. Chong and Druckman (2007b) specifically focus on framing and opinion formation in competitive elite environments. This model analyses how competing frames are presented and communicated to the audience. It assumes that "repetition of frames should have a greater impact on less knowledgeable individuals who also are more attentive to peripheral cues, whereas more knowledgeable individuals are more likely to engage in systematic information processing by comparing the relative strength of alternative frames in competitive situations" (Chong and Druckman 2007b: 112). In the European context, Daviter (2007: 656) further points out that "frame manipulation rarely goes uncontested and the study of systematic framing effects on political choices continues to constitute a theoretical puzzle... disadvantaged political actors in democratic politics are prone to challenge the dominant issue definitions". EP can be perceived as competitive elite environment in two ways. Firstly, the Parliament itself accommodates politicians representing a big range of political ideologies and Member States. Secondly, EP as a whole can be considered to be in a competition with the Council and the Commission over framing issues a certain way. In this case, it is important to note the EP's advantage as an agenda setter and often having the first say, as Chong and Druckman (2007b) note that being first to present a certain way of framing an issue is an advantage in a competitive elite environment.

Various studies use framing with other theories, such as securitisation. Rychnovska (2014) looks at the process of threat construction in "narrow and discursively oriented environment", such as United Nations Security Council. She argues that such environment is "strategically negotiated" and "highly context dependent", therefore it is beneficial to analyse different discursive interpretations of security (p. 9-10). This allows for analysing how the understanding of threats is negotiated between actors of different perspectives and their audience (Rychnovska, 2014). Similar to these perspectives, Stepka (2022) employs critical

understanding of securitisation, one which does not only look at the content of the speech, but the policy making environment and dialogical processes. He specifically employs this logic to analysing the process of securitisation in EU and specifically in the EP, which was the key promoter of the humanitarian features of so-called ‘migration crisis’ in 2015. Additionally, Stepka (2022) looks at securitisation as dialogical rather than linear process, with audience-actor interaction in which both parties communicate and respond to each other. This understanding applies particularly well to the EP as a directly elected representative entity. Even though securitisation is not an exclusive focus of the research, it should be expected that the analysis will involve framing Russia as a security threat for the EU. Therefore, these perspectives on discursive negotiations of security and threat perception in the debates will be beneficial for the study.

2.2 EP’s role in the EU foreign policy

The evolution of the EP’s role in EU policymaking has been following the growth pattern of the Union itself. From a merely consultative body, the EP has evolved into a directly elected institution with legislative, budgetary and oversight power. EP’s decision-making powers and sphere of involvement have particularly grown after the Lisbon Treaty came into force in 2009, strengthening the Parliament’s co-legislator role through Ordinary Legislative Procedure for instance. Over the past decades, EP’s formal role has grown in Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) as well. These include changes such as necessity for the parliamentary approval of EU’s international trade or aid agreements, Association Agreements and Partnership and Cooperation Agreements with non-member states (Raunio and Wagner, 2020; Gora, 2019; Goinard, 2020). Despite these changes, increase of the EP’s formal power in foreign policymaking has been lesser than in internal matters and CFSP is still considered to be dominated by intergovernmental approaches between the MSs at the European Council. However, this does not mean that the Parliament does not make efforts to participate in these processes, or that EP’s activities and the positions that its members produce do not affect EU’s foreign policymaking in various ways (Braghiroli, 2015; Raunio and Wagner, 2020; Fonck, 2019a; Fonck and Raube, 2019; Gora, 2019; Kreppel and Webb, 2019).

There are several ways through which the EP is formally involved in different aspects of EU’s foreign policy. Apart from the above-mentioned consent powers for the external agreements of

different kind, the Parliament is engaged in a dialogue with the High Representative (HR) for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, who in parallel holds the role of the Vice President of the Commission. HR is obliged by the EU law to not only inform the Parliament about the development and priorities in CFSP and CSDP, but also to “ensure that the views of the European Parliament are duly taken into consideration” (Art. 36 TEU, cited in Fonck, 2019a: 46). Additionally, EP has the right to make recommendations or inquiries with the Council, including in the form of twice-a-year debates on “progress in implementing the common foreign and security policy, including the common security and defence policy” (Art. 36 TEU, cited in Fonck, 2019a: 46). Raunio and Wagner (2020: 549) and Goinard (2020: 109) remark, that these open debates in the Parliament, including with the HR and the Council, bring “much needed transparency” to CFSP/CSDP.

Another way the EP impacts EU’s foreign policy is through its budgetary function. Different aspects of EU’s external relations, such as neighbourhood, development or humanitarian policies are connected to various budgetary tools. As the EU’s budget is subject to the Parliament’s approval, MEPs can influence foreign policy priorities and actions (Raunio and Wagner 2020; Fonck, 2019a). Goinard (2020: 110) highlights that one of the main ways of transforming EP’s preferences into policies is by pushing for their inclusion into EU budget, where the Parliament has a legally binding say. One such example she brings is resolution calls for adequate responses to Kremlin-spread disinformation being translated into ‘StratCom Plus’ pilot project in the 2018 EU budget.

EP enjoys institutional capacities of engaging rather independently in external relations as well. This is primarily done through parliamentary diplomacy efforts, such as participating in international or regional parliamentary assemblies, or establishing Parliamentary Association Committees after signing Association Agreements with non-member states. These are important tools for sharing views and promoting values with other states, while asserting own role as an actor in EU’s foreign policy (Goinard, 2020; Raunio and Wagner 2020; Fonck, 2019a; Gora, 2019). Overall, through parliamentary diplomacy EP serves as EU’s foreign policy representative on transnational stage, where it creates “contacts, coalitions, and interactions across state boundaries that are not controlled by the central foreign policy organs of governments” (Nye and Keohane 1971: 331, cited in Fonck and Raube, 2019: 54).

Perhaps the most visible efforts for the EP’s involvement in the EU’s foreign policymaking (and certainly the most important to analyse for this research) are its resolutions. Even though

they have relatively little formal influence, as they merely represent recommendations to decisionmakers in EU's foreign policy, they are tools for MEPs to openly and unlimitedly express opinions and preferences (Kreppel and Webb, 2019). Goinard (2020: 110) remarks that out of 517 resolutions adopted in 2014-2019 term by the Parliament, 105 were prepared by the Committee on Foreign Affairs AFET and its subcommittees alone. This highlights the importance of foreign policy matters in EP, as well as active usage of resolutions as tools and AFET as an instrument for influencing EU foreign policy.

Positions expressed in the debates often range highly and resolutions often cover the given issues from multiple perspectives. Braghiroli (2015) argues that it is exactly the limited formal power that equips the EP with *liberté de manoeuvre*, allowing the Parliament to take more value-oriented stances and request more decisive actions vis-à-vis foreign states or institutions. Based on this argument, Braghiroli (2015) and Fonck (2019a) assume that EP has an autonomous foreign policy identity, which is often divergent from the Council: "the identity of the European Parliament that seems to emerge is one that is less concerned with the utility of foreign policy for the Member States and more attentive to promoting the values specific to the European Union" (Zanon, 2005: 47, cited in Braghiroli, 2015: 60). However, these differences and limited formal competences does not mean that the EP's position is worthless at least for the reasons of legitimising and strengthening the overall EU position, as "chances for successful negotiations with third parties increase when government policies are supported by a broad coalition in parliament, whether or not it possesses any formal decision-making competencies" (Raunio and Wagner, 2020: 548).

Fonck (2019a) explains the relative freedom of positioning of the EP (compared to the other European institutions) by the specificity of power dynamics between the actors in the EU foreign policy. He claims that relations between the EU's policymaking bodies is governed based on separation of powers system, where clear hierarchy between the institutions is not in place and the degree of interdependence is higher. EP and the members of the Council are elected independently and for different periods of time. They are not directly 'responsible' for the other, in a way that they cannot remove or dissolve them. Fonck claims that this system is substantially different from 'classical', fused power system, which prevails in legislative-executive relations of the MSs and which is characterised by inter-institutional dependency and a degree of loyalty. This makes the parliament freer to express itself in comparison not only to other EU institutions, but the MS parliaments as well: "Unlike in national parliaments of EU Member States but like in the US Congress, however, the parliamentary majority in the EP is

not “the prolonged arm” of the other “state-like” branch. (...) The absence in the European Parliament of such a rather “restrictive” institutional set up provides the opportunity for MEPs to take foreign policy positions and views freely without being politically obliged to support the position of the Council, the HR/VP and the Commission, which together are the executive organs of EU foreign policy” (Bajtay, 2015: 7-8, cited in Fonck, 2019a: 50) However, unlike in the MSs, the EP cannot formally ‘punish’ the Council in case the latter’s foreign policy decisions go too far, creating the need for other ways of putting checks on the Council’s work. This makes the development of the Parliament’s independent and proactive foreign policy position important for the reasons of democracy as well (Fonck, 2019a).

Riddervold and Rosen (2016) claim that despite limited formal competences, the EP and the Commission still manage to influence the development of CFSP. They develop five strategies through which they think the two institutions might overcome the resistance from the MSs, who naturally have a strong preference for decision-making to fall under the strictly intergovernmental framework of CFSP. These strategies are strategic coalition building, bargaining, community framing, circumvention and normative argumentation.

Community framing is the most interesting of Riddervold and Rosen’s (2016) methods for this research. It builds on the power of framing to define an issue as cross-sectoral, opening a door for the EP and the Commission’s involvement. For this reason, the authors conclude that framing matters highly for the European institutions while discussing CFSP matters, as it is a tool to secure their role in policymaking. Last strategy offered by the authors is normative argumentation, or “presenting claims or demands supported by arguments that are accepted as legitimate or valid by the member states” (Riddervold and Rosen, 2016: 691). The key pattern of the EP’s normative argumentation has been based on the need for democratic legitimacy. The authors do not explicitly highlight this, but it can be argued that this strategy is highly dependent on the success of framing an issue or the Council’s proposed policies the way that it argues to lack legitimacy. Therefore, it can be argued that this method is at least somewhat connected to framing and its relation with community framing strategy could further be discussed.

EP enjoys more formal competences in later stages of the EU’s foreign policy cycle, i.e. in policy implementation or evaluation phases, where it exercises oversight functions and can invite the Council and Commission representatives for discussion, or issue its independent evaluation of the policy in question (Goïnard, 2020). Therefore, in the crucial stage of agenda

setting, where its formal functions are reduced, the EP has to ‘resort’ to indirect ways of trying to shape the EU’s understanding of the issue and later on, policies towards it (Gora, 2019; Kreppel and Webb, 2019; Princen, 2011). Even though they might seem like ‘whistling into the wind’ due to the limited formal influence in foreign policy, EP’s resolutions, along with preceding debates and committee work play a crucial role in the Parliament’s efforts of influencing the EU’s agenda, including external issues (Kreppel and Webb, 2019; Gora, 2019; Goinard, 2020).

In simple terms, “agenda setting is about having an issue considered by policy-makers” (Princen, 2011: 927). This process determines “why and how certain issues emerge on the governmental agenda and others do not” (Gora, 2019: 292). Guiding logic in agenda setting is that certain issues are picked up for high-level discussion as the result of efforts of actors to raise concerns about the issue, not because they were simple ‘meant to be’ up for discussion. Therefore, agenda setting refers to the process of raising saliency of an issue and gaining sufficient public and political attention to inspire political action (Kreppel and Webb, 2019: 384; Princen 2007; 2009; Gora, 2019). As Princen (2007: 22) puts it, “the process of determining which issues are up for discussion is as much political as the process of deciding on those issues once they have come on to the agenda”.

2.3 EP’s agenda setting and framing of the EU foreign policy and the neighbourhood

When analysing the EP’s resolutions and other agenda setting efforts, a common guiding logic in majority of research is the Parliament’s bid for increasing its role in the EU foreign policy. The expanded foreign policy powers discussed earlier result to a big part from the EP’s own activities, initiatives and calls for gaining more competences. EP has continuously been employing formal and informal tools for this purpose. As Kreppel and Webb (2019: 386) put it, “in many ways the evolution of the EP has been a story of the effective use of informal powers to achieve tangible, often formalized, political influence”. Therefore, starting point of the analysis on the EP’s agenda setting should be that the issues and solutions are highly likely to be framed in a way that they would advocate for increased practical involvement and formal say in decision-making for the Parliament (Gora, 2019; Kreppel and Webb, 2019; Goinard, 2020; Riddervold and Rosen, 2016; Nitoiu, 2017). Kohler-Koch (2000) concludes that the EP has continuously supported moving further towards the parliamentary system and framed this process as equal to increasing democratisation of the EU as a whole: “EP established a causal

link between strengthening the democratic nature of the EU and the effectiveness of its institutions, and equated democratic legitimacy with full parliamentarization of the Union” Kohler-Koch (2000: 519).

Another guiding principle while discussing the EP’s activities concerns its role as the ‘voice of the people’. EP repeatedly builds its claims for more foreign policy influence on being the only directly elected EU institution. As Gora (2019) highlights, EP regularly played its ‘legitimacy card’ to demand increased role in policymaking towards the neighbourhood. This fact was also emphasized while setting up parliamentary relations with neighbouring states and talking to their citizens on behalf of the European people. With regards to Russia, Braghiroli (2015: 60) remarks that “as the EP is the only directly elected supranational institution of the EU its positions are more likely to reflect the vox populi—including on a range of controversial issues in EU – Russia relationships”.

When discussing the EP’s efforts of agenda setting in the EU’s neighbourhood policy, Gora (2019: 293) suggests that there are four functions of the Parliament that can be used for agenda setting in formal and informal ways. First of these is the consultative role, which, although formally limited, allows the EP to put pressure on decision-makers and draw attention to preferred issues. Here she specifically highlights the importance of AFET, as its main function is to assist the Commission in its legislative competences, making it possible to impact the agenda. Other three tools include budgetary competence, formal powers (such as ratifying agreements with third parties) and the means of parliamentary diplomacy.

Resolutions and plenary debates are EP’s primary sources for framing and agenda setting. Gora (2019: 298) dubs the plenary debates “an EU agora aimed at directing the policy in its preferred way”. She argues that the possibility to address the citizens directly helps the EP in enforcing its position in agenda setting process, including in policy towards the neighbourhood. Furthermore, they allow for communication with citizens on national and European level simultaneously, while opening doors for interinstitutional dialogue as well. Kreppel and Webb (2019) highlight the importance of resolutions for attracting media and public attention to specific aspects of certain issues. They conclude that the EP has been actively and successfully using the privilege of unilaterally issuing resolutions to affect policy outcomes. Additionally, they found that as expected, the EP’s agenda setting efforts are more successful in areas where it has directly influence on policy. However, they underline that this does not mean that the Parliament has no influence in other policy areas. Moreover, it does not mean that less formal

power ‘discourages’ EP from issuing resolutions on foreign policy matters: “The absence of an ability to legislate directly on an issue does not mean that the EP has refrained from expressing preferences and attempting to influence outcomes through own initiative resolutions” (Kreppel and Webb, 2019: 388). They even highlight that it might be the case that the EP members issue a resolution without a specific legislative goal in mind and rather with the aim of raising awareness or attention towards the issue. The above-mentioned statistics of one fifth of 2014-2019 term resolutions being prepared by AFET and its subcommittees alone further prove this fact (Goïnard, 2020: 110).

Nitoiu (2017: 90) remarks that EP resolutions “highlight the way in which MEPs seek to strategically shape the Union’s foreign policy agenda. Looking in more detail at the parliamentary debates that precede resolutions would provide an in-depth image of the range of positions that MEPs hold... resolutions highlight the message of the EP as a unitary actor and the way it strategically frames EU foreign policy.” He adds that media often refers to the resolutions and plenary debates as the EU’s official discourse. This further justifies using EP resolutions as primary source of data.

Nitoiu (2017: 93) highlights the usefulness of framing analysis for understanding the “strategies used by the EP to define its role in shaping the EU’s foreign policy, and its relations with the member states, other EU institutions or non-EU actors.” He further underlines the importance of framing for influencing policymaking through discourse, as strategic framing allows political actors to articulate their discourse or policies, getting them across to various actors (Nitoiu, 2017: 93).

When discussing the framing of the neighbourhood by the seventh (2009-2014) EP, Nitoiu (2017) distinguishes two continuums of EU foreign policy, along which the parliament framed its discourse: value/interest based and transnational/intergovernmental. While analysing 165 resolutions which referred to the EU’s neighbourhood policies, Nitoiu (2017) finds that democracy promotion, rule of law and human rights frames had the highest level of occurrence in the seventh EP. All three of these frames are value based and MEPs framed their promotion in the neighbourhood as the EU’s inherent duty. Based on this, the overall message was that the EU should place human rights promotion above economic means in its neighbourhood policy. EP promoted the three value-based frames as having transnational decision-making mechanisms. When it comes to economic cooperation, EP urged the Council to work in cooperation with the Commission, in order to come up with strategies of creating a system that

would be “characterized by a mix of intergovernmentalism and transnationalism, where the economic interests of the members and the broader overall normative agenda of the EU played an equal role” (Nitoiu, 2017: 96).

Similar to Gora (2019), Kreppel and Webb (2019), Goinard (2020), Riddervold and Rosen (2016) and Braghiroli (2015), Nitoiu (2017) highlights the EP’s strong efforts of advocating for more active EU engagement in the neighbourhood, with enhanced role of the parliament in the process. This applies to both, value and interest-based frames. The author mentions the neighbourhood policy as the most salient area of the EU’s foreign policy. Thus, it is logical that EP’s efforts were especially strong towards ENP, including its eastern dimension. Nitoiu underlines that at times EP did not shy away from open criticism of the Commission and the Council, as well as from demands of regular reporting from other institutions on key issue areas in the neighbourhood. These approaches concerned the topic of reviewing the ENP framework as well, where MEPs criticised the vagueness of the policy and unwillingness of the MSs to make clear long-term commitments. EP framed ENP as a transnational policy area. Therefore, the parliament promoted reinforcing this approach and giving itself an increased say in setting the ENP agenda. EP’s efforts involved regularly urging the Council to sign the Association Agreements with Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine (Nitoiu, 2017). On one hand such active efforts of involvement in shaping the relations with the neighbourhood and on the other hand frequent divergence (or at least encouragement for speeding up processes) from the positions of the MSs or other EU institutions, once again proves the importance of analysing EP’s agenda setting frames and their reasoning.

Looking at the EP’s framing of the neighbourhood, Gora (2019: 290) highlights that ENP is “a composite policy, as it connects a variety of instruments that belong institutionally to different modes of policy making within the EU.” This institutional setup allows the parliament to better affect the policy through its framing. Similarly to Nitoiu (2017), she also claims that ENP has been the main priority of the EP in external relations. In her research, Gora finds that the EP has been actively attempting to build its own capacity as a foreign policy actor through ways such as strengthening parliamentary diplomacy and building expertise.

EP has actively pursued ways of claiming authority for policymaking in the neighbourhood, including Georgia, Ukraine and Russia. A direct example of this is an MEP’s claim that “the fact that Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia are part of this neighbourhood policy is thanks to us in the European Parliament and not to the Commission and the Council” (Isler Beguin, 2006,

cited in Gora, 2019: 297). Gora (2019) highlights the importance of plenary debates for claiming authority, as she remarks that they have been used as an arena to make references to gathered expertise from interparliamentary, committee and personal work, while also often playing the legitimacy card of being the only directly elected EU institution: “addressing EU citizens directly and through plenary debates the EP can enforce its position in agenda setting” (Gora, 2019: 301). This once again underlines the importance of analysing the EP plenary debates from the scope of agenda setting.

Nitoiu (2017) remarks that in the areas of security and conflict resolution in the neighbourhood EP has had the least formal influence. However, this did not stop the parliament for actively advocating for more enhanced EU engagement in the security issues and specifically in solving conflicts in the neighbourhood. This approach was backed by both, value and interest-based frames. Author highlights that special attention was paid to frozen conflicts, such as those in the Caucasus. The parliament promoted mixed approach of intergovernmentalism and transnationalism for creating a coherent policy that would use the EU’s soft and hard power tools for playing more substantial role in resolving those conflicts. Again, the EP was openly critical to the Council and the Commission for their little willingness to engage more deeply in security issues in the neighbourhood. This analysis once again highlights that lack of formal influence traditionally does not stop the EP from expressing opinions, producing frames and setting agenda for policies. On the contrary, these actions serve as “a clear articulation of its [EP’s] aims to play a more salient role in the EU foreign policy” (Nitoiu, 2017: 93), once again highlighting the importance of studying the EP’s framing of the neighbours, including in the context of security issues and military conflicts.

Nitoiu (2017) specifically discusses the EP’s framing of Russia and its actions in the shared neighbourhood. He concludes that Kremlin’s activities in the post-Soviet space were framed as security issues and tackling Russia’s negative influence in those states was viewed as mandatory for defending the EU’s interests. Moscow’s use of trade and especially energy as political tools was openly criticised in both, domestic and neighbourhood contexts. However, the author finds that the seventh EP advocated for keeping an open door for cooperating with Russia, as it “underlined Russia’s role in assuring peace and stability in the neighbourhood, while also noting that the development of a sustainable strategic partnership with Moscow was of utmost importance for the EU” (Nitoiu, 2017: 98). In this context, creating a better mutual understanding and maintaining functional relations with Moscow was framed as a way of promoting the EU’s interests in the neighbourhood. This approach follows the pattern of not

necessarily seeing Kremlin as a competitor and not looking at the neighbourhood as a ‘zero-sum’ game.

Contrary to the ENP (transnational) and security in the neighbourhood (mix of transnational and intergovernmental), Nitoiu (2017) concludes that the EP viewed relations with Russia as an exclusively intergovernmental area. Nevertheless, he remarks the efforts of the parliament to position itself as an autonomous actor during the Ukraine crisis in 2014, with a deeply critical framing of Kremlin’s actions. This thesis will be able to complement this research on framing of the shared neighbourhood, conflict resolution and Russia in the context of three different parliaments and military conflicts, by looking at how the EP framed these issues, their solutions and who they attributed these solutions to. It will also show if military conflicts as crisis events caused some deviation from general patterns that Nitoiu (2017) drew from analysing resolutions from the whole parliamentary term. Furthermore, the author himself notes that his research can be used as a model for analysing strategic framing efforts of national and transnational parliaments.

Braghiroli (2013) analyses MEP’s framing of Türkiye and its European integration perspectives. He distinguishes between functional/interest-based and ideal/ideological stances in the parliament. The study concludes that “the pragmatic stance appears more frequent among the mainstream parties, while the identitarian approach characterizes more extreme and protest parties” (Braghiroli, 2013: 5). In terms of voting, Braghiroli (2013) finds that ‘Turkey’s supporters’ were more likely to act pragmatically in favour of their parliamentary group or national interest, while ‘opponents of Turkey’ typically voted firmly along their beliefs. He adds that MEP’s declared opinions appeared more moderate and less polarised than expressed votes.

2.4 Framing of the neighbourhood and its conflicts at the European level

Several studies have looked at the EU’s external framing efforts and abilities from different perspectives, such as media, MSs or the official EU rhetoric, including in the neighbourhood and specifically in Ukraine. Looking at them will help understand framing process at the European level and will inform on previous efforts of framing developments in Ukraine.

Kratochvil et al (2011) consider the ability to frame debates in the MSs on external issues as a criterion for the EU’s actorness. They point that whether the EU can shape foreign policy related debates in the MSs should be one of the indicator for actorness. They define this as the

“ability to convince the national governments and societies that a policy or a relationship with a country is primarily a task for the EU, or – at least – a task in which the EU should be involved” (Kratochvil et al, 2011: 397). This logic is useful for the research as it looks at how the MEPs argued for foreign policy matters to be discussed as common issues and not only the MSs’ competence.

Kratochvil et al (2011) analysed media outlets’ coverage of Ukraine between 2002-2007 in three of the most influential EU MSs: Germany, France and the UK (two outlets from each country). They found that around 75% of all analysed articles referred primarily to EU-Ukraine relations, rather than EU-MS on a bilateral level. Even during the period of the Orange Revolution, increase in bilateral frames was marginal compared to the EU frames. This trend only changed during the visits of the state leaders to Ukraine or vice versa. Based on these findings Kratochvil et al (2011) assume that the EU has a strong presence in public and media discourse on foreign policy in the MSs. This trend prevails even when the MSs claim to have strong national interests in the third state, in this case in Ukraine. Such framing ability is particularly important given the intergovernmental nature of the EU’s foreign policy. By shaping the public debate, it becomes possible for the EU to affect the external relations without taking policy actions, but rather by limiting ‘legitimate’ options for the MS. In this regard, Kratochvil et al (2011: 397) highlight the Commission's ability to limit the choices of the MS governments by presenting its general position on the issue or by attempting to convince the public of the benefits of handling the issue on the EU level. However, the discussion on role of the EP in this process is missing from the article. It can be argued that the parliament can exercise (or at least attempt to) same informal powers through resolutions, as discussed earlier. This process can be analysed for the EP alone or in the context of strategic cooperation between the parliament, the Commission and like-minded MSs, as discussed by Riddervold and Rosen (2016).

Ojala and Pantti (2017) focus on the role the European media and their news framing played in legitimising the EU’s foreign policy vis-à-vis the crisis in Ukraine in 2014-2015. They highlight the role of news media in shaping popular perceptions on global issues. This especially applies to modern conflicts, which are reported globally in almost real-time and produce a massive amount of visual content. The authors analyse how four leading national newspapers throughout the EU covered four key events that took place in Ukraine from February 2014 to February 2015, thus covering the period of the 2014 resolution debates discussed in this thesis.

Ojala and Pantti (2017) conclude that pro-Maidan Ukrainians that were pictured as ‘pro-European’ were mostly framed positively, while ‘pro-Russian’ actors were seen as aggressive and dangerous. The authors also found that throughout all these processes, Russia was clearly identified as the main party to blame for the conflict and Kremlin’s initial denial of supporting the separatists in Donbas did not distort this view. All this played part in creating favourable public opinion for the EU’s sanctions against Russia and taking the pro-Ukrainian stance. Thus, the authors conclude that news media framing has legitimised the EU’s stance in the conflict. They pay special attention to the framing of the conflict as the ‘new cold war’, which “provided the journalists with a simple and highly suggestive prism through which to report and explain the events and what the conflict is about” (Ojala and Pantti, 2017: 52). They highlight that ‘new cold war’ frame has originally emerged from the 2008 Russian invasion of Georgia and came back stronger during the Ukraine crisis. Furthermore, the authors suggest that the news framing might have had influence on policies as well, by restricting the available policy options due to strong public attitudes.

Gamkrelidze and Vaisanen (2022) look at how the EU has framed the ENP since its conception in 2003, along the changing global and regional contexts and based on the evolution of the EU itself and its understanding of the neighbourhood. They analyse official documents from the Commission, the European Council, the Council of the EU and the High Representative to find frames that were distributed between three categories: rational-utilitarian, moral-universal and identity-based. They find that the ‘shock events’ such as Russian aggression in Georgia in 2008 and in Ukraine in 2014 “did not alter the ENP’s underlying discourse. After all, it was only the renewed Russian aggression towards Ukraine in 2022 which generated significant change in the EU’s engagement towards Ukraine and Moldova as it led in June 2022 to the replacement of a “neighbour” frame by a “candidate” frame” (Gamkrelidze and Vaisanen. 2022: 16). They conclude that these events resulted in increased diversity rather than cohesion between the policies covered by the three frames. The analysis in the paper shows that rational-utilitarian frames were dominating the EU’s official discourse towards the neighbourhood, with clear securitisation taking place, demonstrated in security related sub-frame appearing twice as many times as the second most used economy sub-frame. The paper also concludes that unlike rational-utilitarian, moral-universal frame did not go under a substantial change of meaning. As Gamkrelidze and Vaisanen’s paper concludes that the 2008 and 2014 conflicts did not change other institutions’ discourse on the neighbourhood, this research will be able to discover

if the EP's framing followed this trend. This will allow for comparison between understanding and framing of Russian military aggressions between different EU institutions.

Ozoflu and Arato (2023) look at the framing of the EU's external actions by the MSs, on the example of Hungarian government's framing of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. They find that Orbán's cabinet has been active in promoting a certain understanding of the conflict and the EU's response to it, in order to justify Budapest's deviation from other MSs and the common European policy. Two logics that were continuously used by the Hungarian government for justifying its policies were national security concerns and national economic interests. They depicted both as legitimate concerns for a sovereign state and its government. From the national security perspective, special resistance came against sending lethal weapons to Ukraine. It even went as far as repeatedly saying that Ukrainians could shoot at Hungarian minorities living in Transcarpathia with the weapons sent from the EU. In terms of economic considerations, Orbán's office framed the EU sanctions as more hurtful for the Union itself than for Kremlin, thus being against Hungarian (and not only) national economic interests.

Kratochvíl et al (2011) highlight that vast majority of the research on framing in the EU is centred around the Union's internal policies and legislative processes. Several of such analyses came up during the research for this thesis as well (for instance, Eising et al (2015) and Garcia et al (2018)). However, similar to the EP's role in the EU foreign policy discussed earlier, framing of the external policies is an area which is not as globally studied as it proves to be present. As seen from the articles discussed in this subchapter, from media, to MSs, to EU itself and its institutions, a big number of actors utilise framing to affect the EU foreign policy or public opinion around it. Moreover, to frame (or at least attempt so) does not require having formal decision-making powers. Therefore, it is necessary to systematically study framing from different perspectives, including in the areas where certain institutions have the most limited formal powers, but as evidence suggests, still actively pursue framing strategies to make their voice heard. One of the biggest such cases is the EP's framing of foreign policy and specifically conflicts in the neighbourhood.

2.5 Position taking and opinion expression at the European Parliament plenary sessions

The EP plenaries can be considered as an arena where the politicians from every MS, representing different national and European parties, economic and political ideologies and working for different committees interact. They try to promote their own, or party point of

view, while at the same time realising that having a strong common position is important for increasing chances of the parliament's position being considered in the decision-making process. Therefore, it is important for this research to look at the literature on established patterns and guiding principles of opinion expression in the European parliamentary debates. On the other hand, in order to better comprehend the context of the plenary sessions, it is crucial to understand along which lines (national, national party, European party) the MEPs take position in the debates and subsequent voting.

Van Eemeren and Garssen (2009: 1) claim that parliamentary debates are inherently argumentative communicative activities, where participants manoeuvre strategically to promote their opinions. Therefore, EP debates represent a distinct argumentative activity types, "defined as conventionalized argumentative practices in which the possibilities for strategic manoeuvring are predetermined" (Van Eemeren and Garssen 2009: 1). They claim that the special characteristics of the EP and its debates set out the limitations for strategic manoeuvring. The main reason why the debates have been conventionalised is the institutional setup and the purposes of the parliament, which predetermine the institutional mission of the MEPs. Other restraining factor is the structure of the debates themselves, with time restraints and no possibility to ask questions to other MEPs as a follow-up of their positions. Outside of the structure of the debates, two key preconditioning factors are the division between the political groups and the dualistic positions the MEPs hold as Europeans politicians and their country nationals (Van Eemeren and Garssen, 2009; Garssen, 2017). With reference to the latter, they come up with the concept of the 'European predicament', meaning "the fact that Members of Parliaments have to reconcile the promotion of national and European interests" (Garssen, 2017: 153).

Van Eemeren and Garssen (2009) and Garssen (2017) highlight two main methods which the MEPs combine to build their arguments: pragmatic argumentation and argumentation by example. They find that it is a common practice to present a general issue and then back it up by an example. Key point here is to argue that an issue is not only local and the MEPs protect the interests of the whole union rather than their own countries. The research suggests that another mode of strategic manoeuvring in the EP is emphasising the need for coherence and thus underlining the negative consequences of incoherence through pragmatic argumentation and argumentation by example. The authors consider the need for coherence as a common point of agreement between the MEPs. Finally, they find the pattern of using pragmatic argumentation for highlighting negative consequences of making exceptions in applying

established rules to certain individuals or groups (Van Eemeren and Garssen, 2009; Garssen, 2017).

As mentioned earlier, major part of the EP's legitimacy claims stem from the argument that as the only directly elected EU institution, it represents the European people and their points of view. However, Lord (2013) remarks that these claims of representation need to be justified to both, the population itself and to other institutions as well. Considering that representation is more a claim than a fact, as one group can never fully represent a much bigger and diverse group, "representation should be analysed as a process in which the claims of some actors to represent others are 'accepted, rejected or ignored' by various audiences" (Lord, 2013: 246). The author argues that as representation holds strong argumentative and justificatory roles, the parliamentary debates are a good tool for the MEPs to discursively display how they 'speak up' on behalf of, or 'represent the opinions' of citizens far away from Brussels. He explicitly highlights that even if some assumptions suggest that the matters are decided in committees and through behind-the-curtain dialogues of party groups, plenaries are crucial for providing justification for the position of the parliament and at times for the entire decision-making process of the EU.

Voting can be considered as the most direct form of taking a position and expressing attitudes in every parliament, including the EP. Although this research does not analyse voting, literature on voting (especially on Russia) can be useful for establishing the patterns of opinion expression in the EP, which could potentially be valid for plenary speeches before voting as well.

Based on the analysis of the EP's voting in 2004-2006, Hix and Noury (2009) established that majority of voting takes place along transnational party lines. From this evidence they conclude that the left-right ideological division represents the main dimension of competition in the EP. Therefore, the EP is dominated by party and left-right politics and voting along national lines is marginalised in the process. Importantly for this research, Hix and Noury (2009) found that the 2004 eastwards enlargement did not affect this pattern of position taking. Growing in size in fact increased rather than decreased the transnational party cohesion.

Raunio and Wagner (2020) test Hix and Noury's (2009) and similar assumptions on the cases of roll-call votes in the EP on external matters. Through the analysis of voting between 1979 and 2014 they find that group cohesion levels and coalition patterns in external relations votes have been very stable and are identical to overall voting tendencies, thus dominated by

supranational party politics. Voting cohesion, especially in the biggest EP parties has been around 90% on external matters, while ideologically neighbouring parties have often voted similarly on CFSP/CSDP. These conclusions could come contrary to the expectation that there could be ‘rally around the flag’ effect or voting in national blocs taking place. The authors claim that this further confirms the true supranational power of the EP as compared to national parliaments.

Braghiroli (2015) analyses roll-call voting patterns specifically on Russia-related resolutions. He also concludes that the main determinant of the MEPs’ voting is their partisan affiliations rather than their nationality, which remains a relatively marginal factor. This conclusion comes in the face of the fact that traditionally national views on Russia have varied significantly across the EU MSs. However, the author remarks that nationality was a significant factor for the MEPs whose voting patterns deviated from the average voting stance of the rest of the EP, such as of Baltic States and Poland. Furthermore, Braghiroli (2015: 75) expected that the 2014 Russian invasion of Ukraine and annexation of Crimea were “very likely to negatively affect and structurally alter the EP’s stance towards Moscow.” Moreover, on the example of the resolution on ‘Situation in Ukraine’ (15/2014) the author expected the EP to be more uncompromising and united on matters concerning Russian military aggression.

While the research on voting tendencies in the EP gives important insights on position taking in the parliament, it must be noted that the authors themselves remark that voting patterns do not automatically translate into another form of opinion expression – MEPs’ speeches. Some papers specifically touch upon the possible difference between the two forms of attitude expression. For instance, while analysing voting behaviours on Türkiye, Braghiroli (2013) finds a certain degree of mismatch between declared opinions and votes of some MEPs. He explains this by existence of pragmatic behaviours, meaning supporting along their EP party stance in spite of different personal views expressed in discourse. Regarding specifically Russia, Braghiroli (2015) highlights that the views expressed in speeches by the individual MEPs vary highly. Furthermore, “debate on Russia seems to highlight consistent national and party group’s patterns, but also to cut across traditional alignments in the EP... the way in which the EU’s stance on Russia is framed reflects a wide variety of positions and implies the juxtaposition of at least two factors: MEPs’ nationality and their party group affiliation” (Braghiroli, 2015: 62). This once again highlights the relevance and importance of analysing EP plenary debates in order to grasp the full range of frames produced and locate them along

national and party lines. This research will further contribute to the efforts of finding and systematising the patterns of opinion expression in general and specifically on Russia.

Contrary to the conclusions derived from voting analyses, Proksch and Slapin (2010) suggest that MEPs' speeches in fact reflect national and EU integration related divisions rather than left-right ideological divisions. They claim that roll-call voting only accounts for a small amount of votes, which are potentially biased. Therefore, analyses derived from speeches give more in-depth information on position taking in the EU, as they are less constrained than yes/no voting. The paper found that foreign affairs, CFSP and defence was the third most debated topical category in the fifth EP (1999-2004), once again underlining the relevance of analysing this topic. Their final data analysis suggests that "the primary dimension of speech in the EP is best explained by national divisions and parties' positions towards deeper EU integration. In contrast, national parties do not appear to position themselves primarily according to their left-right ideology" (Proksch and Slapin, 2010: 588). Based on this logic, this thesis will contribute to studying MEP speeches as a separate form of opinion expression.

3. Evolution of geopolitical context and importance of Ukraine and Georgia for the EU

Apart from the nature and scale of the conflicts, one of the main factors that could explain potential changes in the EP's attitudes towards Russia and demands towards the EU is the evolution of geopolitical contexts and bilateral relations with Kremlin and with Georgia and Ukraine. Although it is hard to measure the exact extent to which the status of Georgia and Ukraine affected changes, it is certain that how these states were perceived by the MEPs and their declared importance for the EU would affect their framing of the conflict. Certainly, there has been a change in importance of these states for the EU, given that they have come a long path from being mere participants of the ENP to having a clear EU membership perspective.

Institutionalised and regular relations with Ukraine and Georgia started in the wake of the 2004 'Big Bang' enlargement of the EU, which brought new states to the immediate neighbourhood of the Union and increased the rational interest in stabilising and developing these states. It must be noted however, that initially Georgia, along with Armenia and Azerbaijan, was not thought to be included in the Wider Europe initiative of 2003, which was renamed to ENP in

2004 (Cameron, 2007). ENP brought together neighbouring states inside and outside of Europe, with the goal of stabilising relations with the participant states. It used the same tools that proved to be effective with the 'Big Bang' countries, however without the membership perspectives. In these circumstances, original EU commitment was to share 'everything but the institutions' with ENP. However, these strong commitments were quickly scaled down (Casier, 2012). Therefore, despite stepping up the efforts from both sides after the Rose Revolution, expressed in more ambitious action plans for Georgia (Rabinovych, 2021), by the 2008 Russian invasion the EU did not have clear commitments or big investments in Georgia outside of general ENP framework. Thus, it should be expected that the Union's private concerns with the invasion would not be much more than avoiding war and destabilisation in the neighbourhood, resulting in a potential spillover of conflict.

The next stage of developing institutionalised relations with the eastern neighbours was the creation of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) initiative in 2009. Partially, it was a reaction to the Russian aggression in Georgia, which showed the need for more substantial EU engagement in the east for ensuring peace and stability through spreading European values. However, Brussels tried to make clear to Moscow and the EaP states that the initiative was not created with the intention of competing with Russia, even less in hard power terms (Sieg, 2016).

Apart from being reaction to the Russian aggression in Georgia, EaP was a tool for meeting Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine's desire for closer ties with the EU. More importantly, it was a goal of the 'Big Bang' MSs to enhance EU involvement in the eastern neighbourhood. EaP's creation was proposed by Poland and Sweden, and it was officially launched during the Czech presidency of the Council (Legucka and Wlodkowska, 2021). However, the eastern neighbours were not as high of a priority for the western European MSs as it was for the new members. This resulted in reduced ambitions in the final format of the EaP compared to the original proposal. Most prominently, Polish suggestion was to include the membership prospects in the initiative. However, not all the MSs were ready to make such commitments (Sydoruk and Tyshchenko, 2018). Despite this 'downgrading', final version of the EaP was still a significant step forward for the partner countries, as it was a separate policy with those states and provided for rewards such as Association Agreements, with Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area Agreements as part of them (Casier, 2012).

The main external factor for 'not going a step further' with the EaP was again reservations that some MSs had regarding Moscow's potential reaction, especially bearing in mind the war that

happened a year ago. Eventually, the EaP ended up more as a development policy than a geopolitical tool of the EU. Subsequently, Brussels believed the EaP could not harm Russian interests and spark a conflict (Sieg, 2016). Soon enough, these assumptions proved to be faulty. In response to the EU starting negotiations with Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine on Association Agreements, Kremlin created Commonwealth of Independent States' free trade area, followed by the Eurasian Economic Union. In the process, Armenia was pressured to abandon the negotiations with the EU and join the Kremlin's initiatives. Ukrainian President Yanukovich's intention to not sign the Association Agreement led to the Revolution of Dignity, later followed by Russian annexation of Crimea and occupation of eastern Ukraine (Gretskiy et al. 2014).

Overall, by the time of Euromaidan protests and the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2014, EU's policy towards its eastern neighbourhood and specifically Ukraine was clearer than in was in 2008 with Georgia for example. However, it was still very much seen from the prism of a general neighbourhood policy, with more clarity on what was off limits than what new commitments to put on the table. Brussels also miscalculated Moscow's reaction to this modest, yet increased commitment in Kremlin's intended 'sphere of influence', leaving the EU unprepared for the military escalation that followed. For this reason, the EU's reaction to the Russian invasion of Ukraine turned out to be much rather reactive than proactive.

Eventually, after the 2014-2015 events, EU could not anymore deny that Ukraine and the EaP region in general became an area of contestation with Russia, where Brussels found itself competing with its soft power against Kremlin's hard power (Legucka and Wlodkowska, 2021). That is why it was expected by many that post-2015 EaP would be clearer and more ambitious in its goals and strategies, to reflect the reality of the ongoing struggle with Moscow (Sieg, 2016; Rabinovych, 2021; Sydoruk and Tyshchenko, 2018). However, the development of the policy went contrary to these expectations. For instance, the postponement of starting date of Ukraine's Association Agreement's chapter on free trade was widely perceived as Russia's direct interference in the EU's relations with the EaP states (Sydoruk and Tyshchenko, 2018). The MSs again could not come up with a common position on taking a decisive stance on next steps for the EaP. The western MSs preferred to be cautious with Russia in fear of more and bigger escalations, which would harm the partner states, as well as the MSs' bilateral relations with Moscow. It should be noted that while agreeing on sanctioning Russia was an important decision, it should be discussed separately from the conversation on commitments towards Ukraine and Georgia and their importance for the EU (Rabinovych, 2021).

EaP summits in Riga 2015, Vilnius 2017 and Brussels 2019 followed the pattern of cautious strategy chosen by the EU. They repeatedly focused on ‘making the best of’ the Association Agreements. The EU’s focus switched to less politically sensitive cooperation from 2017 onwards. Additionally, Russian influence on the EU’s energy sector increased by committing to projects such as Nord Stream 2 (Corman and Balutel, 2018). As the result, EU abstained from formally recognising differences in commitments and perspectives of the three associated states from the other three states of the EaP (Armenia, Azerbaijan and Belarus). The EP supported the idea of ‘EaP+’ for the most committed partner states, that would provide additional tools of assistance for swifter completion of the Association Agreements. However, the MSs did not back this proposal (Corman and Balutel, 2018; Sydoruk and Tyshchenko, 2018). After its creation, the EU welcomed the self-organised ‘Associated Trio’ between Tbilisi, Kyiv and Chisinau, however without assisting in launching the initiative and still without offering additional tools for integration from its side (Euractiv, 2021).

Based on the above-mentioned developments, it should be assumed that the EU’s strategic vision for Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova had not changed radically from the initial Russian invasion of Ukraine until the start of the full-scale invasion in February 2022. Therefore, the open doors policy of enlargement that emerged after Ukraine’s application for membership (followed by Moldova and Georgia’s) was rather a policy U-turn than logical continuation of relations. Based on this, it can be assumed that the EU was again in a reactive rather than proactive position at the start of the conflict. Moreover, rejecting advancements with these states with the fear of ‘poking the Russian bear’ and still seeing the full-scale invasion of Ukraine happen should have caused a further frustration of the MEPs with Kremlin on one hand, and feeling of the EU’s innocence on the other.

4. Methodology

4.1 Framing through agenda setting

Agenda setting is one of the main areas where framing theory is employed in research on the EU and beyond (Daviter, 2007; Princen, 2007; 2011; Gora, 2019; Vanhoonacker and Pomorska, 2013; Nitoiu, 2017). This is logical, considering that formulation of common understanding of an issue and assignation of adequate venues takes place at this stage (Princen, 2007; 2011). Framing helps idea entrepreneurs provide their definition of the nature of the issue, which is

the first stage of creating a policy: “Before states can agree on whether and how to deal collectively with a specific problem, they must reach consensus about the nature and the scope of the problem” (Haas, 1992: 29, cited in Kohler-Koch, 2000: 514). Moreover, agenda setting and framing are ‘compatible’ as they often have a common general aim in mind. Namely, they both aim to promote one of many possible understandings of a given issue. Consequently, research on them tries to understand what were these options and why certain position was taken: “Research on framing is interested in discovering why among a vast array of possibilities a particular concept is considered to be convincing” (Kohler-Koch, 2000: 516).

Key factor in the agenda setting process is that different actors try to influence not only what issues are taken up for policy discussions, but also how they are interpreted and who they are attributed to. In this process actors present different ways of framing the same issue, leading to different potential outcomes (Princen, 2007; 2011; Nitoiu, 2017). Therefore, framing is crucial at the stage of agenda setting, as it will “not only affect the venue where the issue will be discussed, it will also have important implications for the instruments used to address the problem” (Vanhoonacker and Pomorska, 2013: 1318). For this reason, “issue framing is at the core of agenda setting” (Princen, 2011: 929) and “the importance of framing in construction of new agenda issues is well known” (Vanhoonacker and Pomorska, 2013: 1318).

In the European context, Princen (2007) remarks that due its nature, agenda setting in the EU is never confined merely to the formal agenda setter (in internal matters the Commission and for foreign policy – the Council) and several players inside and outside the Union always try to affect the process. As Daviter (2007: 655) remarks, “Because of its vertical and horizontal fragmentation, the EU is said to offer an unusually large number of access points for agenda-setters”. Princen (2007) highlights that European institutions do not always have identical priorities, which leads to formal and informal efforts of promoting these different perceptions. Considering this, it is necessary to analyse agenda setting efforts beyond the formal decisionmaker, especially in case of such active and openly ‘ambitious’ player as the parliament. The relevance of analysing the agenda setting efforts of the EP is especially high in this research, considering that the parliament has been very active in its efforts of shaping the foreign policy towards the neighbourhood, including through active and repeated efforts of framing (Gora, 2019; Nitoiu, 2017). The relevance of researching the EP’s agenda setting is further increased considering the parliament’s efforts of involving itself as a mediator in different political processes in the neighbourhood. Most remarkable of these efforts, and the

most relevant for this research as well is setting up the Cox-Kwasniewski monitoring mission (Fonck, 2019b).

Another reason that makes it logical to apply agenda setting scope to this research on framing is that as open military conflicts, the Russian interventions in the neighbouring states represented crisis events. Blumenau and Lauderdale (2018) highlight the relevance of studying agenda setting efforts during crises, as they represent windows of opportunity for political action. They argue that “exogenous shocks make status quo policies less attractive” and “one way that crises can facilitate political action is by weakening impediments that constrain agenda setting actors” (Blumenau and Lauderdale, 2018: 462). Therefore, position of agenda setters is strengthened, and it should be expected that they become more active. Specifically in the case of EP, the authors suggest that crises change voting patterns in the parliament from left-right to pro-anti integration division in the policy areas related to the crises. Furthermore, they find that pro-integration MEPs have been able to introduce policies for further European integration and they would not be able to do so without the crises, as they made MEPs more perceptive to the positions that they previously considered ‘radical’. This perspective will help the research better conceptualise position-taking in the debates, as well as the frames that called for EU policy changes. Moreover, considering Kohler-Koch’s (2000) argument that institutional developments and changes in the EU are results of framing process, it will be possible to better understand how the frames calling for institutional changes are ‘intensified’ in the agenda setting process during the analysed crises.

Further regarding crises, Princen (2007) argues, that apart from the interests and activities of political actors, another factor that may put an issue on an agenda is international environment. For events such as military conflicts in the neighbourhood discussed in this thesis, it may sound that the EU institutions should have put these events up for consideration no matter their preferences. However, by whom the issues were picked up, how they were framed and communicated, or most importantly how the EU or specific institutions’ roles were seen in this process are important points to analyse. Moreover, as Vanhoonaeker and Pomorska (2013) remark, in majority of cases foreign policy agendas tend to be set by crisis events, also called ‘focusing events’. However, this should not lead to dismissing the role of the actors (in this case the EP) in framing the issue a certain way and later in affecting the policy outcomes.

Analysing frames from the scope of agenda setting is particularly applicable for this research as it analyses plenary debates, which are considered one of the main and frequently used

sources of the EP's frame 'production' and agenda setting efforts in internal and external policies (Kreppel and Webb, 2019; Gora, 2019; Goinard, 2020). Kreppel and Webb (2019) even highlight that at times EP resolutions do not necessarily present a policy proposal or a legislative goal, but aim specifically to raise a certain understanding of an issue on EU's agenda. It is important to highlight that unlike the Council and the Commission meetings, parliamentary debates provide an open source for analysing agenda setting efforts and frames as they are public and on the record. Furthermore, framing through agenda setting will help capture and conceptualise the EP's 'guiding logics' in the debates. Along with the rest, it will allow to better identify the frames that call for more communitarian actions and specifically for increase of the parliament's influence and competences, based on EP's legitimacy as the 'voice of the people'. More specifically, apart from analysing how the parliament portrayed Russia, this perspective will help in understanding how the EP consequently imagined the future of the common European policy towards Russia and its own role in the process.

Overall, this theoretical framework will allow to better understand the usage of framing by the EP for agenda setting, while not limiting the opportunity to explore the range of presented frames themselves. In other words, if the frames show what positions were present and how Russia and the EU were portrayed in them, agenda setting will help answer why these frames were voiced and with what outcomes in mind.

For the purpose of analysing the EP's framing of Russia through its agenda setting efforts in the plenary debates, this research uses Princen's (2011) framework for agenda setting in the EU.

Princen (2011) suggests that agenda setting in the EU in general consists of two challenges and two key factors that actors can affect. The challenges are gaining attention and building credibility, while venues and frames are defined as the factors to affect. Gaining attention is a common challenge for agenda setters at any level and anywhere. It aims at raising interest and support for an issue. It tries not only to involve supporters in the process, but also to exclude participants who could oppose the claim. Same issue can have different interpretations depending on who is involved in discussing it. In the case of the EU, it matters highly which committee of the EP or Directorate-General of the Commission takes up the topic for consideration. For this reason, controlling participation strives to direct an issue to a specific venue perceived as the most favourable. 'Landing' the issue in determined venue highly

depends on framing efforts. How the issue is defined is crucial for both, mobilising supporters and taking the discussion to desired venues.

Building credibility is a rather unique agenda setting challenge for the EU. It implies that proponents of the idea of the EU taking up the issue for consideration need to convince policymakers that the Union is the best venue for solving the issue. In some cases, it is more evident than in others that EU-level solutions could be better than policies by separate MSs or other international organisations. For instance, less convincing would be needed in case an issue falls within the exclusive competences of the EU, defined by the treaties. In less obvious cases, such as military conflicts in the neighbourhood, apart from legal basis, it also needs to be argued that the EU has organisational capabilities and expertise to deal with the issue. Building on these challenges, Princen (2011) suggests that the process of building credibility also relates to the factors of venues and frames. Framing is used to construct an argument about why the EU, or specific institutions should be concerned with the issue and then create policies to address it.

By combining two challenges with two factors, Princen (2011) comes up with four strategies that agenda setters might employ in the EU and which are not mutually exclusive. Strategies related to venues are ‘mobilizing support’ and ‘building capacity’. The former covers the strategies of venue shopping and venue modification, dedicated to seeking the venues which would fit their cause the most, or even attempting to create a new one if the existing venues do not meet the needs of policy entrepreneurs. As the name suggests, main goal of building capacity is to develop sufficient organisational capacities to take up the given issue. This process takes place both, within and outside the EU. This strategy is particularly important and complicated given the competition and general unwillingness of the EU institutions to increase competences of others.

This research will primarily focus on the agenda setting strategies connected to framing. Princen (2011) calls gaining attention through framing ‘arousing interest’ and building credibility using framing – ‘claiming authority’. The author offers two methods of arousing interest: ‘big words’ and ‘small steps’. Former consists of attempts of tying the issue with central values of the EU. He brings the example of Swedish government managing to put conflict prevention on EU’s foreign policy agenda through framing it as humanitarian issue affecting the common EU values of human rights, democracy and rule of law (Princen, 2011: 933). For the issues which might not have clear moral or symbolic component, ‘small steps’

strategy is commonly used. This means gradually gaining policymakers’ attention by smaller scale activities such as doing a thematic study or organising a conference.

Methods of claiming authority include framing an issue the way that it is linked to the existing policies and competences of the EU. When this cannot be done Princen (2011) suggests that agenda setters will try to identify ‘common challenges’, rationale of which is that if the issue is common for all the MSs, then it can be beneficial to deal with them on the EU level. Finally, the author concludes that in areas where the EU is a newcomer or has limited competences building credibility is an important step. On the other hand, in areas with established role of the EU gaining attention will be a bigger focus.

Table 1: Four strategies in EU agenda setting (source: Princen, 2011: 931)

	<i>Venues</i>	<i>Frames</i>
Gaining attention	Mobilizing supporters	Arousing interest
Building credibility	Capacity-building	Claiming authority

Vanhoonacker and Pomorska (2013: 1319) further explain the two strategies. They describe arousing interest the following way: “The success in mobilizing supporters often depends on the way a problem is defined and framed. Interest in the issue can be aroused either by using ‘big words’ or by a small-step approach. In the first case, agenda-setters may try to link a foreign issue to a big moral cause or to the EU’s long tradition as a soft power, strong in the promotion of human rights and multilateral solutions. The small-step approach is more time-consuming and tends to focus on the more detailed and technical aspects of a dossier. It makes use of a variety of instruments such as the presentation of studies, the organization of conferences and field trips (e.g., for Political and Security Committee [PSC] Ambassadors) to draw the attention to a particular issue.” For claiming authority they argue that “building credibility may involve framing an issue in EU terms, i.e., justifying why it should be dealt with at the EU level. Important sources of authority are not only the legal competencies of an actor but also their expertise in a particular issue. In a complex institutional arena such as the EU, it is not only important to possess content expertise but also to have staff with a good understanding of the relevant procedures and developed negotiation skills” (Vanhoonacker and Pomorska, 2013: 1319).

This framework is useful for this research, as the arousing interest strategy is not only concerned with getting an issue on the agenda, but rather providing certain understanding of it.

Therefore, this strategy offers the possibility to explore the EP's frames that tie Russian military aggressions and their consequences to the central EU values. Claiming authority will help identify how and to what extent the EP connected Russian aggression in the shared neighbourhood to EU policies and competences, rather than delegating them exclusively to the MSs or the Council. Furthermore, this approach will make it possible to identify how the EP saw EU's role in conflict prevention and mediation and which of two framing methods (arousing interest and claiming authority) have dominated each of the three debates. Analysing this will help understand whether there has been a perceived growth in EU's policies and competences in dealing with military conflicts in the neighbourhood or in all cases bigger attention was paid to showing why these were EU level issues at first.

4.2 Research design and methods

The EP was chosen as the unit of analysis as this research is focused on attitudes and efforts of framing of Russia rather than specific policy outcomes. Therefore, it is beneficial to pick an institution, which is less institutionally constrained in its opinion expression, therefore, often more direct and value-driven in the speeches of its members (Braghiroli, 2015). Additionally, this freedom of expression of the MEPs makes it possible to explore the full range of different opinions that were expressed, not only the attitudes that prevailed in the final document or policy. Furthermore, the publicity of its debates (unlike the Commission and the Council) makes the EP an ideal fit for being studied from a discourse-related perspective, such as framing. Therefore, analysing plenary debates of the resolutions of Russian invasions will allow to explore the attitudes and frames that circulated around the EP and the EU.

Three debates will be analysed as part of this research, one for each conflict: September 1st, 2008 debate on 'Situation in Georgia'; March 12th, 2014 debate on 'Invasion of Ukraine by Russia'; and March 1st, 2022 on 'Russian aggression against Ukraine'. All three debates are non-legislative, as they concern foreign policy matters. They preceded the voting on subsequent motions for resolution. The main corpus of the debates, as well as statements in written forms have been analysed. General principle of selection was to analyse the first debate that took place after the start of the conflict, as it allows for exploring original framing of the conflict and how these attitudes attempted to set the EU's agenda. In the case of 2008 and 2022 the selection is rather obvious, as they were first debates after the invasion. In the case of 2014, picking the 'first' debate is harder, as the continuous process involved several stages, starting

from internal protests in Ukraine against pro-Russian President, to annexation of Crimea, to supporting separatists in the Donbas region. Consequently, there are several EP resolutions and preceding debates in the span of 2014-2015. The March 12th debate was chosen since it is the first one which is named ‘invasion of Ukraine’, as it came several days before the formal annexation of Crimea and after the announcement of the ‘referendum’ on joining Russia. This annexation was the biggest and most blatant violation of Ukraine’s sovereignty by Moscow, making it logical to study the resolution connected to that. Furthermore, the statements of the MEPs during the debates and of the heads of the MSs in that period confirm that there was clarity in the EU that the seizure of government buildings and airports, as well as the ‘referendum’ on joining Russia in Crimea was fully orchestrated from Moscow.

The study represents qualitative data analysis. The data has been taken from the European Parliament’s plenary debates of the selected resolutions from 2008, 2014 and 2022. At the first stage of research, the plenary speeches and written submissions had been transcribed. Speeches that were not made in English were transcribed from synchronous translation into English provided by the EP. Overall, more than 100 pages of text was collected from the three plenaries. The debate texts were processed on NVivo platform for manual coding. During this process, original frames were identified and assigned inductively by the author.

The data analysis stage took place in two steps. In both steps, the process was conducted deductively. First, all the frames from the debate speeches had been gathered and analysed. The analysis found two distinct types of produced frames: ones aiming to frame Russia and ones directed towards the EU. On the next stage, the adequate frames were attributed to ‘arousing interest’ and ‘claiming authority’ categories, based on the content of the frames and Princen’s (2011) definitions of the agenda setting strategies. This has made possible to analyse what frames came up in the debates, how often they were used and which actor they were directed to, as well as how they were distributed between the EP parties and the MSs that the MEPs represent. On the other hand, it allowed for analysing the division of frames between the two agenda setting categories, revealing the nature and content of agenda setting processes during the given debates.

4.3 Limitations

The biggest limitation that could affect such research on framing is that part of the MEPs speeches are originally made in their native language and require translation into English. For

ensuring the accuracy of the translation, the EP's official synchronous interpretation was used and transcribed from videos of the plenaries with Word transcription tool. The texts were double checked and run through Google translate for any occurring inaccuracies. The written statements were translated in Google and double checked against errors.

As the research uses qualitative data analysis, it is possible that inconsistencies or confirmation bias will occur, especially considering that the analysis is conducted by one person. To avoid these possible errors, frames and their criteria were defined and coded, and it was consulted with third persons. Furthermore, analysis was conducted in NVivo software to ensure the consistency and several references were double checked through auto coding (although this was merely done for the purpose of checking and the full data analysed below was manually coded).

The research aims to understand the efforts of framing in the given debates, in the context of invasions of neighbouring states. It should be acknowledged that the processes of framing and agenda setting are broader concepts that take place outside of these debates as well. This thesis therefore does not claim to give a full picture of all efforts of the EP's, or even less the EU's framing of Russia.

5. Analysis

In total, 20 frames were discovered – 11 Russia-related and 9 EU-related. Majority of them cover all three debates. However, there are frames that emerged in the 2014 or 2022 debates. For instance, 'propaganda machine' came up in the second debate, while systematic criticism or praising of the EU was visible in 2022. Similarly, several frames (such as 'pragmatic') were not visible in the resolutions after 2008. Overall, explored frames offer wide range of different options for looking at Russia and the EU's role in the conflicts, and they stem from different arguments. Some of the areas these arguments cover are past and present actions of Moscow, violation of international laws and central EU values, EU's energy and foreign policy instruments. For creating detailed definition of the frames, as well as ensuring the consistency of frame and category assignation, the codebook shown in Table 1 and Table 2 was created with definitions of all the frames from the plenaries and quotes that represent their example.

Table 1: Russia-related frames (Source: original)

Frame	Description	Example quote
Aggressor, but...	Frames that recognise Russian guilt in the conflict, but in parallel blame the other side of the conflict, 'the West' or both for allegedly provoking Moscow or setting precedents with previous actions	“By recognising Kosovo, the US and most of the European countries set a precedent which was bound to destabilise the Caucasus region. Owing to the expansion of NATO right up to Russia’s borders, the US is politically, even more than militarily, responsible for having encouraged Georgia to mount its surprise attack during the night of 7 to 8 August” (Lydie Polfer, ALDE/FR, 2008)
Clash of values	Statements that frame Russia as disrespectful towards European values and frame the conflict as a conflict of European and Russian values	“This conflict is not between Georgians or Ossetians, this conflict did not begin on 8 August, it is not only Russia and Georgia’s conflict, it is a conflict of values and it involves us all” (Katrin Saks, PSE/ET, 2008)
Historical evil	Frames that refer to previous Russian aggressions from history, its wrongdoings in Soviet and imperial times, including in the MSs	“Georgia has become the first target for attack in the course of contemporary Russia’s pursuit of the imperialist tendencies that it inherited from the Soviet Union” (Miroslaw Mariusz Piotrowski, UEN/PL, 2008)
Humanitarian threat	Statements that highlight the humanitarian consequences of the conflict, framing Russia as a threat to human rights in the region and beyond	“We are extremely concerned about the fate of the Georgian populations in South Ossetia who have been displaced by force, even after the signature of the ceasefire agreement” (Joseph Daul, PPE-DE/FR, 2008)
International law violator	Statements that explicitly or indirectly frame Russia as a violator of international law in the conflicts	“The Russian military forces have violated international law and invaded the territory of a sovereign state” (Arpad Duka-Zolyomi, PPE-DE/HU, 2008)
Occupier	Frames that directly refer to Russia as an occupier of another state’s territory	“I disapprove of Russia’s disproportionate aggression and continued occupation of the country” (Charles Tannock, PPE-DE/UK, 2008)
Weaponiser of energy	Statements that accuse Russia of politicising its energy relations with the MSs and in this context criticise the EU’s energy dependency on Moscow, demanding finding alternatives to the Russian energy	“I do not wish to be blackmailed by Russia over gas or oil, and I am sure the same is true of everyone else in this Chamber” (Dariusz Rosati, PSE/PL, 2008)
Tomorrow could be us	Statements that frame Russian actions as a threat to the MSs’ security in a potential chain reaction of Kremlin aggression	“If nothing concrete is done, Russia will not only never release Georgia from its hold, but will also follow the same pattern elsewhere” (Tunne Kelam, PPE-DE/ET, 2008)

Unreliable partner	Frames that refer to Russia's violation of bilateral and multilateral agreements, as well as violations of previous commitments with the EU	“Russia has placed itself in the category of unstable, unpredictable states. It can no longer be seen as a reliable partner” (Tunne Kelam, PPE-DE/ET, 2008)
Propaganda Machine	Statements that frame Russia as spreader of lies and propaganda, picturing Kremlin as a source of disinformation spread in the EU and beyond	“One of the important roles of this debate is to expose the propaganda lies coming from the Kremlin. And it is indeed a lie that the Russian invasion of Crimea was for the protection of minorities” (Davor Ivo Stier, PPE/CR, 2014)
Putin's war	Statements that lay blame for Russian invasion exclusively on Vladimir Putin and Kremlin elites and not on the Russian population in general	“Chancellor Scholz is right – this is Putin's war. Our resistance and our protest are aimed at him and his government, not at the Russian people” (Jens Geier, S&D/DE, 2022)

Table 2: EU-related frames (Source: original)

Frame	Description	Example quote
General calls for action	Relatively abstract calls for EU action, often based on moral arguments, which frame the conflict as relevant for the EU and highlight the need for a Union-level response	“What else must happen so that the European Union can properly assess Russia's role in events and take action to ensure that nothing of the kind is ever repeated?” (Inese Vaidere, UEN/LV, 2008)
Non-Russia policy proposals	Statements that call for creation of new EU policies, or for revision of existing policies which concern the EU itself or the invaded state (not Russia), framing the EU as an adequate venue for European reaction on the conflict	“The EU must increase its aid to Georgia for reconstruction, fast-track an EU free trade agreement and press ahead with visa facilitation” (Charles Tannock, PPE-DE/UK, 2008)
Pressure Russia	Frames that demand that the EU uses the political and economic tools at its disposal to stop Russian aggression or make it respect its commitments	“...flouting international rules and law and violating the territorial integrity of a sovereign State will have a cost in terms of relations with the European Union. This is important as there must be consequences” (José Ignacio Salafranca Sánchez-Neyra, PPE-DE/ES, 2008)
Dialogue, not isolation	Frames that claim that maintaining dialogue and open doors policy (in case Moscow reverts its actions) is the solution for containing Russia, rather than isolating it	“However, those – such as Italian Prime Minister Berlusconi – who kept open a channel of dialogue with Moscow also did the right thing, so as to explain Europe's way of thinking and to warn of the risk of re-entering a climate of Cold War” (Mario Borghezio, UEN/IT, 2008)
Pragmatic	Frames that call for the EU to act pragmatically based on economic and energy relations and not risk these relations	“The European Union needs Russia as much as it needs Georgia, if not more. Therefore, it is imperative that the European Union should not be a party to this conflict or take sides with either Russia or Georgia...Russia is the EU's third-

	with Russia over its actions in the neighbourhood	biggest trading partner, accounting for half a trillion dollars in European goods. Can we afford to risk that kind of relationship?" (Bernard Wojciechowski, IND-DEM/PL, 2008)
Intergovernmental	Frames that call for, or support already taken efforts of the EU's involvement in the conflict resolution in intergovernmental capacity	"The Council is right to agree a crisis-management and reconstruction fund and the rapid deployment of humanitarian assistance. Now it must designate an EU representative who will make both sides listen" (Graham Watson, ALDE/UK, 2008)
Mix of intergovernmental and transnational	Frames that claim that the EU's position on Russia should not only be based on the Council's decision, but rather on consensus of all EU bodies	"I believe that what the Council has decided and what has been done is basically what was possible, although we could always quibble about whether an Extraordinary European Council of the Heads of State or Government should not have been held straightaway to show our cohesion, but so be it" (Daniel Cohn-Bendit, Verts-ALE/FR, 2008)
Criticising EU	Statements that criticise past actions of tying the EU closer to Russia, or inactions of stopping Russian interventions earlier, framing conflicts as partial responsibility of the EU due to these decisions	"I myself must apologise to Ukrainians and to all others that I was too weak to convince my friends in the West in time that Putin is a major threat and that the biggest provocation is not NATO or EU membership, but not being invited to join NATO and the EU" (Rasa Jukneviene, PPE/LT, 2022)
Praising EU unity	Statements that claim that the EU had shown unity in its response to the Russian aggression, framing the undertaken actions as successful and praising the common response	"In recent days, Europe has shown that it is the best ally of the Ukrainian people. Europe has also demonstrated that it is the shield that protects democracy and our freedoms for each people of the Union" Stephane Sejourne (Renew/FR, 2022)

Further details and variations of these frames by each plenary will be discussed during the case-by-case analysis of the debates. Given frames have been assigned to Princen's (2011) agenda setting categories as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: division of discovered frames by agenda setting categories: (Source: original)

Arousing interest	Claiming authority
Aggressor, but...	Weaponiser of energy
Clash of values	Unreliable partner
Humanitarian threat	Non-Russia policy proposals
Historical evil	Pressure Russia!
International law violator	Dialogue, not isolation

Occupier	‘Pragmatic’
Tomorrow could be us	Intergovernmental
General calls for action	Mix of intergovernmental and transnational
Criticising EU	Praising EU unity
Putin’s war	Propaganda machine

‘Clash of values’, ‘humanitarian threat’, ‘international law violator’ and ‘occupier’ were assigned to arousing interest as they intend to raise concerns in the EU by tying the conflicts to the central EU values using the ‘big words’ strategy. ‘Historical evil’ and ‘tomorrow could be us’ try to raise interest through appealing on security of the MSs, based on history and presented future ‘prospects’ of the Russian aggression. ‘Criticising EU’ tries to create moral obligation for not repeating suggested mistakes and serve as a ‘wake up call’. It was not categorised with the rest of the EU-related frames, as it uses ‘big words’ to point at the cases when the EU values were neglected. Similarly, ‘general calls for action’ use moral arguments to claim that the EU should take action to resolve the conflict. They fall short of being categorised in claiming authority as the actions they propose are rather abstract and they focus more on ‘big words’ for creating moral obligations, while often highlighting the need for the EU to build better expertise for being able to claim authority in future. ‘Putin’s war’ also tries to create a duty of freeing not only the rest of Europe from the Russian government, but Russians themselves as well. ‘Aggressor, but...’ serves to arouse interest as well, however on the actions of other actors than Russia.

In the case of claiming authority strategies, ‘weaponiser of energy’, ‘unreliable partner’ and ‘propaganda machine’ frames have been placed here as they are pictured as common challenges at the EU level. Energy issues are always discussed on EU level. Even when it is a specific MS whose energy dependence on Russia is criticised, this dependence is always seen as an European issue, not a MS one. Subsequently, suggested solutions take place on the EU level as well. Kremlin’s propaganda is also framed as danger to all of Europe (and beyond), not for a single MS population. Moscow becoming an unreliable partner is as much of an issue of the EU as it is for the MSs in their bilateral relations. In the context of the EP, naturally, more attention is paid to the Union level implications of the problem. ‘Praising EU unity’ directly promotes and calls for more common action by the European institutions, arguing that it is a justified and adequate strategy. For the rest of the EU-related frames, they almost always involve policy proposals targeting either the Union, the invaded state or Russia. Therefore, they

argue that the EU as a whole or its institutions are adequate venues for addressing if not the conflict in its entirety, at least certain aspects of it.

6. Empirical findings

This chapter will discuss empirical findings of data analysis from the plenary debates on the resolutions of 2008, 2014 and 2022.

6.1. 2008 Debate

The debate on the EP's resolution on 'Situation in Georgia' took place on September 1st, 2008. By this point, France, then rotating President of the European Council had negotiated a six-point ceasefire agreement between Moscow and Tbilisi. The agreement, consented by both sides on August 12th, called for immediate end of hostilities by all sides (including separatists backed by Moscow). Even though it foresaw suspension of military activities and return of the Russian troops to the positions held before the escalation, the agreement still allowed the Russian peacekeepers to patrol in Tskhinvali region "until an international monitoring mechanism is in place" (Reliefweb, 2008). It must be noted that the final version of the agreement was different from the original proposal that the French President Sarkozy made on behalf of the Council. It called for "full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia" and requested deployment of a EU or UN peacekeeping force in the breakaway regions (Reliefweb, 2008). The changes from the original to the final version were what made the Georgian President Saakashvili only "reluctantly sign" the agreement (The Guardian, 2008). The US officials have also shared that the American side had reservations about the agreement that Sarkozy brought back from Moscow, including the suggested map of Russian peacekeepers' control areas, practically bisecting Georgia (Radio Free Europe, 2022). Nevertheless, ceasefire had been reached through the EU mediation and by the time of the debate active hostilities were suspended. However, by September (and beyond), Russia had not fully complied to the six-point commitments and therefore, full execution of the agreement remained an open issue (Reliefweb, 2008).

6.1.1 Findings from the debate

Total of 16 frames were present in this debate, eight for each category, with 219 total references made. Interestingly, MEPs from only 15 MSs have produced frames in this debate. French

MEPs were the most active, accounting for 42 references. Polish MEPs made 38 references, while German total was 25. Party numbers were mostly proportional to their sizes, as PPE-DE (77) and PSE (51) were most active, followed by UEN (25) and ALDE (23). The most recurring frames from the 2008 debate were ‘non-Russia policy proposals’ (34 references), ‘general calls for action’ (31 references), ‘aggressor, but...’ (24 references), and ‘intergovernmental’ (21 references). ‘International law violator’ (16), ‘weaponiser of energy’ (14), ‘pressure Russia!’ (14) and ‘tomorrow could be us’ (11) displayed strong presence as well. Full list of identified frames grouped in two agenda setting categories, with total number of references, as well as distributions by MS and EP parties is shown in Table 4 and Table 5 below.

6.1.2 ‘Arousing interest’ frames in the 2008 debate

Table 4: Distribution of ‘arousing interest’ frames in the 2008 debate. (Source: original)

MS/Frame	General calls for action	International law violator	Occupier	Humanitarian threat	Tomorrow could be us	Aggressor, but...	Historical evil	Clash of Values
FR	2 (PPE-DE) 3 (Verts) 2 (PSE)	2 (PPE-DE)	2 (PPE-DE) 1 (GUE)	1 (PPE-DE) 1 (GUE)	1 (PPE-DE)	1 (Verts) 2 (GUE) 1 (ALDE) 2 (NI)		1 (PPE-DE)
DE	1 (PSE) 1 (PPE-DE)	1 (PPE-DE) 1 (GUE)		1 (PSE) 1 (GUE)		2 (PSE) 2 (GUE)	1 (PSE)	
UK	2 (ALDE) 1 (NI)		1 (PPE-DE)		1 (NI)	2 (ALDE)		
PL	3 (UEN) 1 (PPE-DE) 1 (PSE)	1 (PPE-DE) 1 (UEN) 1 (PSE)	1 (UEN)		2 (UEN)	1 (NI) 1 (PSE)	1 (PSE) 1 (UEN)	1 (ALDE)
NL	2 (PSE)	1 (PSE) 1 (IND)				1 (PSE) 1 (GUE)	1 (IND)	
IT	1 (ALDE)					1 (ALDE) 1 (GUE) 1 (PSE)	1 (UEN)	
LV	1 (UEN)	1 (UEN)			1 (UEN)			
ES	1 (PPE-DE)	1 (PPE-DE)	1 (PPE-DE)			1 (PSE)		
RO	1 (PSE) 2 (PPE-DE)	1 (PSE) 1 (PPE-DE)		1 (PSE) 1 (PPE-DE)	1 (PSE) 1 (PPE-DE)			
ET	1 (PPE-DE)	1 (ALDE)		1 (PSE) 1 (ALDE)	1 (PPE-DE)			1 (PSE) 1 (PPE-DE)
CZ	2 (PSE)					1 (GUE)		
HU	2 (PPE-DE)	1 (PPE-DE) 1 (PSE)		1 (PPE-DE)	2 (PPE-DE)	1 (PSE) 1 (PPE-DE)	2 (PPE-DE)	
LT			1 (PPE-DE)					
SK	1 (PPE-DE)				1 (PPE-DE)		1 (PPE-DE)	
FI						1 (GUE)		
TOTAL	31	16	7	9	11	24	8	4

‘General calls for action’ was the most commonly referenced ‘arousing interest’ frame (and second most used overall). These statements demanded EU action, explaining why the EU should take active stance in resolving the conflict and ensuring stability in the neighbourhood in general. However, they do not present specific policy proposal as a solution. These claims represent a combination of moral and rational arguments. General idea of moral arguments was that the EU cannot stay silent when a military conflict is happening in the neighbourhood and a country is being invaded: “the situation that has developed in Georgia since this summer is

unacceptable and intolerable and merits a firm and determined response from the European Union” (Joseph Daul, PPE-DE/FR, 2008). Rational arguments mostly repeated such rhetoric, additionally highlighting that it was necessary for the EU to show unity and strength in order to protect its interests and be respected by other actors, especially Russia: “If we fail to draw these long-term conclusions, we run the risk of being sidelined and becoming a laughing stock” (Konrad Szymanski, UEN/PL).

‘Aggressor, but...’ frame was used 24 times in the debate. It also appeared in two main forms. First was criticising Georgian nationalism, Georgian government and specifically President Saakashvili for supposedly falling for a provocation by the Ossetian separatists and triggering the invasion by the Russian regular army by launching offensive on Tskhinvali region on August 8th: “While we agree that Russia’s action was unacceptable, it was also unacceptable for a Georgian President to bomb a town, for whatever reason” (Daniel Cohn-Bendit, Verts/ALE/FR, 2008). It must be remarked that by September 2008 details of the conflict were still disputed in the EU, as reflected in these frames. Years later, then Prime-Minister Putin and then-President Medvedev both openly admitted that the invasion was planned in 2006 and authorised by Putin in early 2007, with the goal of preventing Georgia’s advancement towards NATO membership (Jamestown Foundation, 2012). Furthermore, particularly after the full-scale invasion of Ukraine the idea of Saakashvili falling for the provocation and otherwise Russia would not have carried out the invasion grew rather unpopular (Radio Free Europe, 2022). However, in the immediate aftermath of the conflict ‘aggressor, but...’ approach was visible not only between the MEPs, but in the heads of the MSs as well. German Chancellor Angela Merkel stated after meeting with Medvedev in Russia that “some of Russia’s actions were not proportionate”, but “it is rare that all the blame is on one side. In fact, both sides are probably to blame. That is very important to understand” (The Guardian, 2008). This approach was ‘convenient’ for national governments and some of the MEPs as well, as it implied less moral obligation for strict actions.

Second type of ‘aggressor, but...’ frames paid attention to previous actions of the US, NATO and several MSs, arguing that those actions set precedent for Russia to invade Georgia. Kosovo was an actively used reference, as its recognition by some of the western states (including in the EU) was relatively recent event. Seven MEPs made a direct reference to Kosovo in their speeches, suggesting that “there is a strong link between the outbreak of fighting in the Caucasus and the issue of Kosovo” (Sylwester Chruszcz, NI/PL, 2008). NATO and the US were actively blamed as well, for supposedly ‘irritating’ Russia by expanding in eastern Europe

and supporting Georgia's aspirations of joining the alliance. Four different MEPs that used this frame mentioned NATO directly, while one more mentioned the West in a separate speech.

'International law violator' is a rather self-explanatory frame, that aimed to expose Russia's violation of international law. This frame is especially relevant in the EU context, as it directly appeals to one of the core EU values and the Union's desire for rules based international order. With this, it pictured Moscow as a danger for the EU and its aspirations as well. Therefore, it should not be surprising that it was referenced 16 times.

'Humanitarian threat' is another frame that tried to tie Russian actions with central values of the EU, creating the moral and rational obligations for action. Moreover, as Stepka (2022) remarks, the EP is known for its role in the EU as an advocate for humanitarian approach and voicing concerns on the humanitarian side of events. It is logical that this frame appeared, considering the humanitarian consequences of the military operation and displacement of estimated 133 000 Georgians from territories occupied by Russia in the war (Council of Europe, 2009). 'Clash of values' is another frame that appealed to the EU values. It was only used four times. However, instead of specific ones, they tried to show systemic difference between Russian and EU values, depicting this gap bigger than the question of separate issues. They directly framed the conflict as a conflict of civilisations, thus indicating a higher degree of the EU's involvement as well.

'Tomorrow could be us' was present as a security and rationality-based frame in the debate, as expected. In the uncertainties caused by what is often referred as the first interstate war of the 21st century, it is logical that such security concerns were raised. Thus, by deploying this frame, its authors called for preventive actions of the EU, by containing the conflict and drawing red line to Russia. It should be highlighted that as seen from Table 4, nine out of 11 references were made by the eastern members of the EU, which is certainly logical.

Even though it was referred to only eight times, Russia was framed as 'historical evil' in several ways. MEP statements made references to Kremlin's original occupation of two Georgian regions in the 1990s, as well as imperial and Soviet past and conflicts Moscow caused in the neighbourhood during these times. Two Hungarian and one Czech MEPs drew parallel between the 2008 war and the Russian army's brutal violence against peaceful protests in their states in 1956 and 1968. Apart from historical parallels, seven MEP statements mentioned Russia directly as an 'occupier' of Georgian territory. They particularly highlighted that the process of occupation was ongoing despite signing of ceasefire agreement and action was still needed on the EU's behalf.

6.1.3 ‘Claiming authority’ frames in the 2008 debate

Table 5: Distribution of ‘claiming authority’ frames in the 2008 debate. (Source: original)

MS/Frame	Non-Rus Policy proposal	Intergovernmental	Pressure Russia	Unreliable partner	Mix of int/tra	Weaponiser of energy	Dialogue not isolation	Pragmatic
FR	2 (PPE-DE) 2 (Verts) 1 (GUE) 1 (PSE) 1 (ALDE)	3 (PPE-DE) 1 (Verts) 1 (PSE)	3 (PPE-DE)	1 (PPE-DE)	2 (PPE-DE) 1 (Verts)	2 (PPE-DE)	2 (PSE)	
DE	2 (PSE) 4 (PPE-DE)	1 (PSE) 1 (PPE-DE) 1 (GUE)	1 (PPE-DE)	1 (PSE)	1 (PSE)	1 (PSE)	1 (PSE) 1 (PPE-DE)	
UK	2 (ALDE) 1 (NI) 1 (PPE-DE)	3 (ALDE)	1 (ALDE)	1 (ALDE)		1 (NI) 1 (PPE-DE)	1 (ALDE)	
PL	2 (PSE)	1 (UEN) 1 (PPE-DE)	1 (UEN) 1 (PPE-DE) 1 (ALDE)	2 (UEN) 1 (ALDE) 1 (PPE-DE)	1 (IND) 1 (UEN) 1 (PPE-DE)	3 (UEN) 1 (PSE) 1 (ALDE) 1 (PPE-DE)		1 (IND)
NL	1 (IND)	1 (PSE) 1 (IND)	1 (PSE)					
IT	1 (ALDE) 1 (GUE)	1 (UEN) 1 (PPE-DE)			1 (ALDE)	1 (GUE)	1 (UEN) 1 (PSE)	
LV	1 (UEN)		1 (UEN)					
ES	1 (PPE-DE)	1 (PSE)	1 (PPE-DE)	1 (PPE-DE)				
RO	4 (PSE) 3 (PPE-DE)	1 (PPE-DE)	1 (PSE)			1 (PSE) 1 (PPE-DE)		
ET	1 (PPE-DE)		1 (PPE-DE)	1 (PPE-DE)				
CZ		1 (PSE)					1 (GUE)	
HU	2 (PPE-DE)	1 (PPE-DE)						
LT			1 (PPE-DE)					
SK								
FI								
TOTAL	34	21	14	9	8	14	8	1

‘Non-Russia policy proposals’ occur in two main forms: first, calls for strengthening the EU itself institutionally. Further developing the CFSP and CSDP has been the most active request in this regard: “it seems obvious that the role of the European Union could be much greater in the management of this crisis if the European Security and Defence Policy were reinforced” (Joseph Daul, PPE-DE/FR, 2008). Such calls are not surprising, considering that at that point the EU was in the process of ‘transitioning’ towards the Lisbon Treaty (signed in 2007, in force since 2009), which saw the EU and specifically the EP’s competences grow on foreign policy matters (Nitoiu, 2017). There were seven total mentions of the Lisbon Treaty in the debate by the MEPs representing PPE-DE, PSE and ALDE. They called for swift implementation of the treaty and using its full potential for being better equipped for tackling similar crises.

Second type of ‘non-Russia policy proposals’ called for creation or modification of policies on Georgia in the context of the conflict and beyond. Proposed policies covered areas such as visa liberalization, assistance for reconstruction, or working towards a form of privileged partnership. It must be noted that these policies were often discussed not only for Georgia, but in a regional context as well: “The second type of action is strategic in nature and amounts to making an offer to states that were formerly part of the Soviet Union. Not only should Georgia be involved but also, and most especially, Ukraine, along with other countries. What we have on offer is definitely more attractive than what Russia is proposing” (Dariusz Rosati, PSE/PL,

2008). Significant part of these proposals concerned enhancing partnership and creating a common policy for the Black Sea states, with total of six such references made by the MEPs.

‘Intergovernmental’ frame emerged in two main forms as well. In the 2008 debates it was mostly used for congratulating and praising the French presidency of the Council and personally President Sarkozy for brokering the ceasefire agreement: “I therefore thank the Presidency for the efforts that were made to act very quickly in Georgia” (Marie Anne Isler Beguin, Verts/ALE/FR, 2008). As discussed above, the ceasefire agreement did result in suspension of active military actions from both sides. However, it was not fully complied with by Russia at the time of the debate and the final version of the agreement had been modified on Kremlin’s demands. In the speeches that talk about the success of Sarkozy, there is no mention of these issues. Therefore, the issues with the agreement were not discussed thoroughly and it was directly framed as a success, at least by these MEPs. Relatively few MEPs praised the actions that the Council took (such as reconstruction fund and humanitarian assistance) on behalf of the EU between the start of the war and the debate.

Another type of ‘intergovernmental’ framing was calling for action from the Council or the MSs in their national capacities. In total seven such statements were placed under ‘intergovernmental’ category. It varied from asking the Council to agree on a policy to urging member states to review their energy policies and investments: “the Member States should put an end to their involvement in the construction of the northern and southern pipelines at the earliest opportunity” (Konrad Szymanski, EUN/PL, 2008). These calls are certainly more ‘daring’, it is clearly visible that the MEPs were openly trying to affect the Council’s agenda by their calls.

Part of the ‘mix of intergovernmental and transnational’ frames consisted of commenting on the actions and decisions of the Council, including direct criticism for taking decisions without consulting the Parliament. According to these MEPs, the Council representatives attended the debate for the mere purpose of reporting already made decisions instead of considering the EP’s position: “we in fact find ourselves commenting on the decisions already taken” (Marco Cappato, ALDE/IT, 2008). Other statements suggested that next steps that the EU takes should be taken in an interinstitutional capacity, including active involvement of the EP: “an extraordinary meeting of the Committees on Foreign Affairs of the European Parliament and of the national parliaments of the Member States should be envisaged because it is we parliamentarians who represent the people” (Jean-Pierre Audy, PPE-DE/FR, 2008).

Interestingly, and even surprisingly, this was the only quote in all three debates that directly appealed to the ‘voice of the people’ character of the EP.

‘Weaponiser of energy’ was an actively used frame for warning the EU about Kremlin’s ability to use Europe’s dependence on Russian energy as a weapon. In this regard, the MEPs questioned the rightness of letting Moscow dominate the European energy market. Naturally, they criticised plans for building North Stream and South Stream pipelines that would result in importing even more Russian gas and oil. It was already known at least for this part of the EP that such actions would reduce the EU’s ability to act strategically against Kremlin. Subsequently, the MEPs deploying this frame called for revising the energy policy on EU level and looking for ways for diversifying the market.

‘Pressure Russia’ was referenced the same number of times as ‘weaponiser of energy’ (14). At this debate, it took a form of comparatively vague calls for using economic and political means for pressuring Russia into respecting its commitments and international law. It can be observed that at this point specific mechanisms were missing from suggestions. This can be proved by the fact that in the statements producing this frame, there is no mention of word ‘sanction’. In the whole debate there is only one mention of the word by an MEP, but in a different context. Mostly referred specific action is suspending the ongoing negotiations on a new partnership agreement with Russia, until it did not respect all the commitments of the ceasefire agreement. This measure was mentioned five times in ‘pressure Russia’ statements. Similar attitudes can be observed in ‘unreliable partner’ frame as in ‘Pressure Russia’, in terms of how it questions the rightfulness of working on a deeper partnership with Moscow.

‘Dialogue, not isolation’ was used in the 2008 debate to argue that isolation and punishment is a way of returning to the Cold war and it is not beneficial for any side of the conflict, nor for the EU. Instead, the strategy should have been of diplomacy and dialogue, which would also leave the door open for Russia to cooperate with the EU. Overall, it seems to promote strict position against Russia verbally, but not so much in terms of policy: “It is important that we make it clear that certain things will not be accepted, but it is also important – so that we do not slip into an escalation spiral – to make it clear that lines of communication must remain open” (Elmar Brok, PPE-DE/DE, 2008).

‘Pragmatic’ was the most radical of all the presented frames, and at the same time – least popular. It was only used once by Polish MEP Bernard Wojciechowski from IND/DEM group. He claimed that the EU had a ‘mindless’ attitude and did not have its ideas clear about Russia.

Therefore, rather than empty promises it was better to guide the Union's actions by utilitarianist logic.

6.2 2014 debate

The debate on 'invasion of Ukraine by Russia' took place on March 12th, 2014, four days before the much-criticised referendum in Crimea on joining Russia and six days before President Putin signed a bill of annexing the peninsula into Russia (Walker, 2023). The EU was more active in mediating the conflict in the internal Ukrainian political context. A very prominent example of this was the EP's Cox-Kwasniewski monitoring mission of 2012-2013, which observed the issues of selective justice in Ukraine, particularly the court proceedings of the former Prime-Minister Yulia Timoshenko. Main aim of the mission was to facilitate a dialogue between Ukraine and the EU. It sought for a solution from a political deadlock regarding signing the Association Agreement in the wake of judicial and political issues under Yanukovich's rule. In the 18-month span of its existence, the mission engaged in regular conversation with both, the Ukrainian government and their opposition, negotiating on releasing the former office holders as a condition for signing the agreement on the EU's side (Fonck, 2019b). Yanukovich's unexpected rejection of signing the Association Agreement with the EU ahead of the November 2013 EaP summit resulted in the months-long Euromaidan protests. The EU, in this case at the level of the Council managed to find an on-paper solution to the political crisis. At the final stages of the protests, on February 21st 2014, the peace agreement was signed by Yanukovich and the opposition leaders. However, the next day the President was impeached by the parliament and the events leading first to the annexation of Crimea and later occupation of Donbas region were followed (Walker, 2023).

6.2.1 Findings from the debate

In total, 17 frames were present in the debate, nine for 'arousing interest' and eight for 'claiming authority' categories. In total, 143 references were made. Contrary to the 2008 debate, French MEPs only made four references. This could be connected to the fact that France did not hold the Council presidency and did not negotiate the ceasefire agreement in this case. In 2014 most references belonged to the German MEPs (15), with Lithuanian and Polish ones having 13 each. From the EP parties, unsurprisingly, PPE (53) and S&D (34) dominated the debate, with ALDE (13) being the third. Most actively used frames were 'pressure Russia' (27

references), ‘international law violator’ (16) and ‘general calls for action’ (14). ‘Non-Russia policy proposals’ and ‘Aggressor, but...’ both appeared 11 times. Country and party distribution by each frame is shown in details in the tables below.

6.2.2 ‘Arousing interest’ frames in the 2014 debate

Table 6: Distribution of the ‘arousing interest’ frames in the 2014 debate. (Source: original)

MS	General calls for action	International law violator	Occupier	Humanitarian threat	Tomorrow could be us	Aggressor, but...	Criticising EU	Historical evil	Clash of values
FR	1 (PPE)								
DE		1 (Verts) 1 (PPE) 1 (ALDE)			1 (ALDE)			1 (Verts)	
UK	1 (ECR) 1 (ALDE)	1 (ECR)		1 (ECR)		1 (ALDE) 1 (NI)		1 (ECR)	
PL					1 (PPE)		2 (ECR) 1 (PPE)	1 (EFD)	1 (PPE)
NL		1 (ALDE) 1 (PPE)		1 (S&D)	1 (S&D)				
IT									
LV					2 (PPE)	1 (Verts)			
ES	1 (PPE) 1 (S&D)	2 (PPE)						1 (PPE) 1 (S&D)	1 (PPE)
RO	1 (NI)				1 (PPE)				
ET	1 (PPE)								
CZ	1 (S&D)	1 (S&D)						1 (S&D)	1 (S&D)
HU						1 (PPE) 1 (S&D)			
LT	1 (S&D)	1 (S&D) 2 (PPE)							
SK	1 (PPE) 1 (S&D)	1 (PPE)	1 (S&D)		1 (S&D)	1 (S&D)		1 (PPE)	
FI									
AT		1 (S&D)				1 (NI)			
BE				1 (Verts)					
PT	1 (S&D)	1 (S&D)				1 (GUE)			
CR	1 (PPE) 1 (S&D)	1 (PPE)				1 (GUE)			
BG									
IE						1 (GUE)			
SL					1 (PPE)		1 (PPE)		
GR						1 (GUE)			
TOTAL	14	16	1	3	8	11	4	7	3

‘General calls for action’ followed the same moral and rational logic patterns as in the 2008 debate. However, number of this frame’s occurrences was significantly reduced compared to the previous occasion (from 31 to 14). This can be explained by several factors. First, it might be perceived decreased need for convincing the parliament and all of EU to take actions in the ongoing processes. The fact that the number of ‘arousing interest’ frames decreased from 110 in 2008 to 67 in 2014 further supports this argument. Second, significant increase in the number of ‘pressure Russia’ frames naturally required more time. As the speaking time for each MEP is very limited, paying more attention to a specific argument will have to come at an expense of another.

‘International law violator’ became the most used ‘arousing interest’ frame in 2014, appearing the same number of times as in 2008. This proves that Russia’s violation of international law and rules based international order remained a strong argument for demanding EU-level action. It is not surprising that this frame was active, given that the EP was discussing such blatant

international law violation as annexation of territory of a sovereign state. Another value-based frame, 'humanitarian threat' was, however, reduced from nine references to three. On one hand, this is logical considering that the active military phase of the conflict was not yet started by the time of the debate. On the other hand however, it is unexpected that there are no mentions of humanitarian implications of then-upcoming annexation, including for Crimean Tatar minority. 'Clash of values' was referenced three times, showing that overall, the EP still abstained from 'globalising' the conflict to the level of European values against Russian. Instead of taking it to a systematic level, it preferred discussing violations of specific values.

'Historical evil' appeared only once less than in 2008. It should be noted that this time four out of seven references were made by MEPs from the states which were not part of the Eastern Bloc. The trend of the eastern MSs being the main 'promoters' of a frame remained in the case of 'tomorrow could be us', which went from eleven to eight references in 2014. It is logical that 'occupier' only occurred once, considering that Crimea was annexed, and occupation of the eastern Ukraine had not yet started.

In the 2014 debates 'aggressor, but...' frame still had a significant presence. However, unlike with the Georgian government in 2008, there were much less accusations towards the Ukrainian government. This also explains why references to this frame less than halved. The only statements that questioned Ukrainian actions in this regard were three statements questioning Kyiv's policy towards minorities. Rest of the statements accused the EU and US for supposedly steering up this conflict with their actions, including NATO expansion.

'Criticising EU' for its inactions is a new frame that appeared in this debate. Although only referred four times, open criticism of the previous policies marked a significant difference from the 2008 debate. Two of these statements accuse the EU institutions (including the EP itself) of in fact being pro-Russian with their actions. Third statement claims that by that point the EU and NATO were losing a battle with Russia due to their soft actions. The fourth statement, by Polish MEP from PPE, Krzysztof Lisek argued that all of EU had to "beat our chests", as "when Russian tanks invaded Georgia in 2008, we did not react strongly enough". He adds that not enough was being done against continued occupation of Georgia and Moldova. It must be remarked that Georgia was mentioned five times in the entire debate. The 2008 invasion was only referred to three times in in different context. The other two mentions were made in the context of policy proposals with Moldova, as countries that were in danger of further Russian aggression.

6.2.3 ‘Claiming authority’ frames in the 2014 debate

Table 7: Distribution of the ‘claiming authority’ frames in the 2014 debate. (Source: original)

MS	Non-Russia policy proposals	Intergovernmental	Pressure Russia	Unreliable partner	Mix of int/tra	Weaponiser of energy	Dialogue, not isolation	Propaganda machine
FR			1 (PPE)		1 (PPE)			1 (PPE)
DE			1 (Verts) 2 (PPE) 1 (ALDE) 1 (S&D)	1 (Verts) 1 (ALDE)	1 (PPE)	1 (ALDE)	1 (S&D)	1 (Verts)
UK			1 (ECR) 2 (ALDE)					1 (ECR)
PL	2 (PPE) 1 (ECR)	3 (ECR)	1 (ECR) 1 (PPE)			1 (EFD) 1 (PPE)		1 (ECR)
NL			2 (ALDE) 1 (PPE)		1 (ALDE) 1 (PPE)			
IT								
LV			1 (PPE)			1 (PPE)		
ES	1 (PPE)		1 (PPE)		1 (PPE)			
RO	1 (NI) 1 (S&D)	1 (PPE)		1 (PPE) 1 (S&D)				
ET			1 (PPE)	1 (PPE)				
CZ			1 (S&D)		1 (S&D)			
HU								
LT	1 (PPE)	1 (EFD) 1 (PPE)	1 (S&D) 2 (PPE)	1 (PPE)		1 (S&D) 1 (PPE)		1 (PPE)
SK			1 (PPE)	1 (S&D)				
FI			1 (Verts)					
AT	1 (S&D)		1 (S&D)			1 (S&D)	1 (NI)	
BE	1 (Verts)		1 (Verts)		1 (Verts)			
PT		1 (S&D)	1 (S&D)					1 (S&D)
CR								1 (PPE)
BG	1 (S&D)						1 (S&D)	
IE								
SL	1 (S&D)		1 (PPE)					
GR								
TOTAL	11	7	27	7	7	7	3	7

Biggest change in ‘claiming authority’ frames from 2008 is the decrease of ‘non-Russia policy proposals’ from 34 to 11. Out of these 11, eight statements brought up policies related to aiding Ukraine and only three related to the EU foreign and defence policies. Bearing in mind that in parallel to this, ‘pressure Russia’ was the most used frame, it can be concluded that the MEPs saw a bigger need for putting already existing tools in use than for developing new foreign policy instruments. ‘Pressure Russia’ has practically become ‘sanction Russia’ in this context, as the MEPs demanded imposing sanctions in a stricter and more direct manner than in 2008: “The EU must hit Russia hard with tough economic sanctions. Putin must understand that these sorts of aggressive actions have no place in modern Europe and will not go unpunished” (Charles Tannock, ECR/UK, 2014). Therefore, bigger accent in this debate was on creating policies directed towards punishing Russia for its actions. It must be recognised that total of 76 ‘claiming authority’ frames were observed in the 2014 debate, compared to 109 in 2008. Therefore, decline in absolute numbers is expected. However, only this cannot explain the

drastic change in ‘non-Russia policy proposals’ numbers. On the other hand, such increase of ‘pressure Russia’ is even more notable under these circumstances.

Another big decline is observed in the number of ‘intergovernmental’ references. This can be explained by the fact that in 2008 most of the references to this frame was made in the context of discussing the ceasefire agreement negotiated by the French presidency of the Council. Therefore, the amount in this debate is more ‘normal’ than in the previous one. In 2014 ‘intergovernmental’ was dominated by urging the MS governments to act either in national or the Council’s capacity: “Ukraine is on the brink of a real war and its security must be a priority for all of us, so today we need quick and tough decisions at the level of the heads of state” (Algirdas Saudargas, PPE/LT, 2014). On the other hand, ‘mix of intergovernmental and transnational’ frame has maintained similar presence to the 2008 level. In this case, these statements mostly emphasised the importance of cooperation between the Commission and the Council: “I'd like to thank the Commission and the Council because the Association Agreement being signed is very important and I think that we've got the support package that's been agreed on together with the IMF and will be built on further” (Elmar Brok, PPE/DE, 2014). It is worth noting that with the Commission’s involvement in the process of proposing sanctions on Russia and aid to Ukraine, the criticism for the Council’s autonomous actions had decreased in this debate.

Same concerns and criticism were heard in 2014 about the energy dependence on Russia as in 2008. This again included criticising Nord Stream and South Stream projects and warning about tied hands while facing Kremlin. On the other hand, not the numbers, but the overall tone of ‘unreliable partner’ became more notable. It showed even more pessimism for the possibility of restoring full partnership, while statements also expressed the MEPs’ frustration with Kremlin’s unwillingness to find a diplomatic solution: “Diplomacy, yes, but so far, the Russian side has been refusing to sit down at the table. The OSCE is going to be sent to observe on Crimea. There's never been such a solid no to all diplomatic efforts from the Russian side in the past” (Rebecca Harms, Verts/ALE/DE, 2014). Subsequently to these attitudes, only three frames were present for ‘dialogue, not isolation’.

‘Pragmatic’ was not anymore present in this debate. Even in 2008 it was only mentioned once by one MEP. Thus, although some might argue that actual EU policy was somewhat close to ‘pragmatic’ approach, especially in 2008, such ideas were not popular at least in open discussions in the EP. A new frame that emerged from this debate was ‘propaganda machine’. As the name suggests, it accused Putin of spreading lies about Euromaidan and treatment of

minorities in Ukraine in the buildup of annexation of Crimea: “one of the important roles of this debate is to expose the propaganda lies coming from the Kremlin. And it is indeed a lie that the Russian invasion of Crimea was for the protection of minorities” (Davor Ivo Stier, PPE/CR, 2014). This frame was not present at the 2008 debate. From later revealed facts discussed earlier, it could be argued that there is a strong possibility that intensive ‘information campaign’ of a kind took place on Kremlin’s side, most prominently in the form of accusations on treatment of Russian citizens as the pretext for military action.

6.3 2022 debate

From April 2021, Russia amassed its army near the Ukrainian border on several occasions, formally for nothing more than military drills. High point of these tensions came in November, when Kyiv reported about nearly 100 000 Russian troops near Ukraine. EU and its member states expressed their concerns about the situation. On December 17th Putin announced his demands towards the West, asking for de-facto recognition of Eastern Europe as the area of exclusive Russian influence. In the following months, in the background of ongoing military manoeuvres, several EU leaders, most notably French President Macron tried to resolve the tensions through diplomacy. However, these efforts did not stop Putin first from recognising independence of Donetsk and Luhansk ‘People’s Republics’ (both annexed in September 2022), then launching the full-scale invasion (Walker, 2023). Overall, it was clear that there was a little room for diplomacy and it was not realistic to change Kremlin’s mind. In his pre-invasion televised speech, Putin directly framed the conflict as fault of the West and as a clash between Russia and the Western powers, who he accused of harming Russian sovereignty and endangering its citizens by bringing Nazi government in Ukraine (Bloomberg, 2022).

6.3.1 Findings from the debate

The 2022 debate was the most active of the three debates, with 264 total frames observed – 147 for ‘arousing interest’ and 117 for ‘claiming authority’. MEPs from 25 MSs took part in the debate, with the Polish members producing the most frames (29), followed by the French (23) and German (21) MEPs. Interestingly, S&D’s framing was more active than PPE’s with 47 and 42 accordingly. Renew was the third most active party with 38 frames, while ECR accounted for 22 references. This debate was special for its participants as well. The Presidents of the

Council and the Commission, and the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy all attended and gave opening remarks at the debate. Furthermore, President Zelenskyy and the Speaker of the Verkhovna Rada Ruslan Stefanchuk both addressed the Parliament from Kyiv. Although these speeches are not analysed in this research, these facts reflect the circumstances under which the plenary proceeded. Taking place on March 1st, only five days after the start of the full-scale invasion, the debate was the first opportunity for highest-ranking officials from all the EU institutions to discuss the invasion together publicly. Therefore, it should be assumed that significantly more public and media attention was paid to this plenary than the other two analysed. For this reason, it should be expected that the MEPs perceived this debate as a true dialogue with the population rather than only with other EU institutions. One fact proves this well: this was the only one of the analysed debates where the EP President made a full opening speech outside of technical introduction of the subject and speakers. Roberta Metsola’s speech accounted for 11 total frames, as shown in the Table 8 and Table 9. The analysis will thus attempt to capture the effects of these factors in the framing of Russia and the EU in the debate.

6.3.2 ‘Arousing interest’ frames in the 2022 debate

Table 8: Distribution of the ‘arousing interest’ frames in the 2022 debates (source: original)

MS	General calls for action	International law violator	Humanitarian threat	Tomorrow could be us	Aggressor, but...	Historical evil	Putin's war	Criticising EU	Clash of values
FR	2 (Renew) 1 (PPE)		1 (Left)				3 (Renew) 2 (Left) 1 (ID) 1 (PPE)	1 (Renew)	2 (Renew)
DE	2 (PPE) 2 (Verts) 1 (S&D)	1 (Verts) 1 (S&D) 1 (PPE)	1 (Verts) 1 (S&D)				2 (PPE) 1 (Verts) 1 (S&D)	2 (PPE)	2 (PPE)
PL	2 (ECR)	1 (ECR)	2 (PPE) 3 (ECR)			1 (PPE) 2 (ECR)	1 (ECR) 1 (PPE)	3 (ECR)	1 (PPE) 1 (S&D)
NL									
IT	1 (ID) 1 (NI) 1 (S&D)	1 (ECR) 1 (NI)	1 (ECR) 1 (S&D) 1 (PPE)				2 (NI) 1 (S&D)	1 (ID) 1 (ECR)	1 (NI) 1 (S&D) 1 (PPE)
LV							1 (S&D)		
ES	2 (S&D)		1 (S&D) 2 (Left)				2 (S&D) 1 (Left)	1 (Left)	1 (S&D)
RO	1 (PPE) 1 (Renew)	1 (Renew)	1 (S&D) 1 (Renew)						1 (Renew)
ET		1 (Renew)	1 (Renew)				1 (Renew)	1 (S&D)	
CZ									
HU	2 (NI)	1 (NI)	2 (NI) 1 (PPE)						
LT	1 (PPE)		1 (Renew)	1 (Renew)			3 (PPE) 1 (Renew)	2 (PPE)	1 (Renew)
SK		1 (PPE)			1 (NI)				
FI									
President		1	1	1			2		1
BE	1 (Verts)		2 (Verts)				2 (Verts) 1 (Renew)		2 (Verts) 1 (Renew) 1 (S&D)
PT	2 (S&D)	1 (S&D)	1 (S&D)			1 (S&D)	1 (S&D)		
DK	2 (ID)		1 (ID)	1 (ID)			1 (DK)		
SE	1 (S&D)		1 (S&D)				1 (S&D)		
BG							1 (Renew)		1 (Renew)
GR					1 (NI)				
MT							1 (S&D)		
SL			1 (S&D)	1 (S&D)					1 (S&D)
AT	2 (S&D)	1 (S&D)							
CR			1 (S&D)				1 (S&D)		
TOTAL	28	13	29	4	2	4	36	12	19

The most used ‘arousing interest’ frame in the 2022 debate was ‘Putin’s war’. It is a new frame, accusing exclusively Putin and his government for the invasion and subsequent crisis in Europe. In the 2022 debate, there were total of 110 mentions of ‘Putin’ by the MEPs, while in 2014 this number was 32 and in 2008, merely 3, with only one mention of then-President Medvedev. As the numbers confirm, ‘Putin’s war’ had a very strong presence in the debate and was one of the most popular approaches. By accusing Putin, this frame implies that the EU, Ukraine or any other actor should not be blamed for the ongoing catastrophe: “ it is the fault and exclusive responsibility of a cynical, constantly lying and inhumane Russian dictator, who wants to end Ukraine's existence as a democratic, independent state and bring it home to the Reich against the will of the people” (Michael Gahler, PPE/DE). Second pattern of these statements claimed that it is not whole Russian population who are responsible for the invasion. Several direct addresses to Russian citizens and protesters can be observed in the debate: “This is not the war of all the Russians. This is a crime perpetrated by a tyrant and his accomplices. Thousands of citizens are bravely taking to the streets to shout their clear ‘no’, risking their lives to oppose his imperialistic ravings. They deserve our full support” (Fabio Massimo Castaldo, NI/IT). These statements can be considered as efforts of taking advantage of high public attention and encouraging Russians to stand up against Putin. In the whole debate, there was only one statement that touched upon the responsibility of ordinary Russians: “Yes, sanctions hit ordinary Russians too, and they are not enemies, but let’s admit it, it is primarily the responsibility of the Russian people to make sure that their mad Tsar cannot kill innocent people abroad. We should fully expect and, when possible, encourage the Russian people to take that responsibility seriously” (Sven Mikser, S&D/ET). Such overwhelmingly positive depiction of the Russian population can either be honest attitudes of the MEPs, or again a ‘strategic’ decision of using the publicity for framing the EU as having the same interests as ordinary Russians and caring for them.

‘Humanitarian threat’ saw a big increase compared to the previous debates, particularly from 2014. This is not surprising, considering that mass movement of refugees had already started and big amount of visual content had emerged, showing the humanitarian side of the conflict. Subsequently, refugees and living conditions during the war were main concerns expressed by the MEPs, along with lives that the conflict already took since 2014 and was going to take: “Tanks rumble, bullets rain and civilians try to find shelter, fear in their stomachs, sometimes in the metro, sometimes on the roads of exile. It’s them that I want to think about first” (Manon Aubry, Left/FR). ‘International law violator’ maintained its significant presence but was not

between the most occurring frames. Rather than simply not paying attention, this should be explained by the assumption that the MEPs did not see big need for arguing to convince the colleges and population in Kremlin's violation of international norms. Value-based frame whose presence was increased significantly was 'clash of values'. This shows that more MEPs assumed that the issue was not a single value, but full incompatibility of Russian and Western principles. On the other hand, Putin's invasion speech (Bloomberg, 2022) did not leave much room for interpretation on this topic and logically caused a strong response from the MEPs.

'Tomorrow could be us' was only used four times in the 'traditional' form. However, this fact should not be misleading about threat perceptions of the invasion. Instead of warnings about the future, the narrative shifted towards saying that the war is already there for Europe and strong action is needed to stop it. In this regard, 'Ukraine's war is our common war' sentiment was very popular. This narrative was often used to justify demands for common action, causing a revival of 'general calls for action'. This correlation is well visible in Ryszard Antoni Legutko's (ECR/PL) quote from the debate: "the war has created an entirely new situation, and we have to do everything we can to win this war because it's our war, the war of all European nations." Furthermore, increased number of 'general calls for action' indicates that the MEPs saw a potential gap between the EU policies and challenges it faced.

'Historical evil' was only used four times, as more attention was paid to arguing on the basis of ongoing developments. It must be remarked that similar to 2014, the war in Georgia was not referenced actively. There were only two mentions of the 2008 war and one mention of Russia's invasions in the neighbourhood in general, all in the context of 'historical evil'. Additionally, there were two mentions of Georgia and Moldova together with Ukraine while discussing the EU membership prospects. It must be added that Crimea and 2014-2015 events were not actively referred to either.

It is no surprise that 'aggressor, but...' frame almost disappeared. Both statements that still appeared in this debate denounced the invasion. However, they argued that along with criticising Kremlin, the US, NATO and western European states should be condemned for their previous actions in Yugoslavia, Syria, Libya and other states.

'Criticising EU' appeared in two forms in this debate. One was 'I told you so' narrative, authors of which claimed that the rest of the EU did not listen to their reasonable warnings on Russia: "We have been calling for this for a long time, but our voice has been ignored to say the least" (Joachim Stanislaw Brudzinski, ECR/PL). The other type of statements talked more about

common guilt of the EU and its past inactions or misunderstandings, such as picturing NATO membership as an issue, not a solution.

6.3.3 ‘Claiming authority’ frames in the 2022 debate

Table 9: Distribution of the ‘claiming authority’ frames in the 2022 debates (source: original)

MS	Non-Russia policy proposals	Intergovernmental	Pressure Russia	Mix of int/tra	Weaponiser of energy	Praising EU unity	Dialogue, not isolation	Propaganda machine
FR	2 (Renew) 1 (Left) 1 (Verts)		1 (Renew) 1 (Left) 1 (Verts)	2 (Renew) 1 (Left)		2 (Renew)	1 (Left) 1 (ID)	
DE	4 (PPE) 1 (Verts)		1 (PPE)		1 (PPE)	1 (S&D) 1 (PPE)		1 (PPE)
PL	5 (ECR) 2 (PPE) 1 (S&D)	2 (ECR)	1 (ECR)		2 (PPE) 3 (ECR)			
NL	1 (Renew)		1 (Renew)			1 (Renew)		
IT	1 (ID) 1 (NI) 2 (PPE)	1 (ECR)	1 (ECR)	1 (ID) 1 (S&D)	1 (ID) 1 (PPE)	1 (ID)		1 (NI)
LV	1 (S&D)							
ES	2 (S&D)		1 (S&D)	1 (S&D)	1 (S&D)	2 (S&D)	1 (Left)	1 (S&D)
RO	2 (PPE) 3 (Renew)		1 (Renew)	1 (PPE) 1 (Renew)				
ET	1 (S&D)		1 (S&D) 1 (Renew)		1 (Renew)			
CZ								
HU	1 (NI)						1 (NI)	1 (NI)
LT	2 (Renew) 2 (PPE)		1 (Renew)		1 (PPE)			
SK			1 (PPE)					
FI	2 (Verts)					1 (Verts)		
President	1		1		1	1		2
BE	1 (Verts) 1 (Renew)	1 (Verts)	1 (Verts)		1 (Verts) 1 (S&D)	1 (Renew) 1 (S&D)		1 (Verts)
PT				2 (S&D)		1 (S&D)		1 (S&D)
DK	1 (ID)		1 (ID)					
SE						1 (S&D)		
BG	1 (Renew)			1 (PPE)				1 (PPE)
GR								
MT						1 (S&D)		
SL								
AT			1 (S&D)					
CR								
TOTAL	43	4	17	11	14	15	4	9

More than half of ‘claiming authority’ frames in the 2022 debate came in the form of ‘non-Russia policy proposals’ and ‘pressure Russia’. This reflects two parallel processes that took place in demanding actions for aiding Ukraine and punishing Kremlin. In this debate, ‘non-Russia policy proposals’ were dominated by demands for helping Ukraine and advancing its EU membership path. Other proposals called for strengthening the European defence policy and CFSP. For ‘pressure Russia’, while sanctions were actively demanded, the MEPs often noted that they understood punishing Moscow this way would have negative consequences for the EU citizens as well. In this regard they frequently asked for ‘mix of intergovernmental and transnational’ type common actions for ensuring the hardships would be as little as possible: “These measures have a cost for our economies. We therefore invite Europe to pool these costs at the European level for the most exposed countries and companies” (Stephane Sejourne, Renew/FR). On the other hand, the MEPs argued that this was the cost the EU had to take for defending its future. Many of these statements specifically mentioned Russian elites and oligarchs as a legitimate target of sanctions as well.

All four of ‘intergovernmental’ frames promoted specific actions for the MSs to take, for instance negotiating on joint energy security strategy in the Council. Meanwhile, ‘mix of intergovernmental and transnational’ appeared more often, mostly in the form of calling for joint national and European actions for ensuring decisive action and common voice.

‘Weaponiser of energy’ had a significant presence in this debate as well, once again asking to end the EU’s energy dependence on Russia and diversify the field. In this debate renewable energy appeared as an alternative. This is logical, since the European Green Deal was in force and the EU had made its ambition to be a global leader in green transition. Similar to 2014, ‘propaganda machine’ was present in this debate as well. It denounced Kremlin’s disinformation campaign in Ukraine and globally, and this time offered a solution as well, in the form of banning Russian pro-government media in the EU: “banning of the Kremlin’s media machine represents a qualitative leap for our capacity of response” (Iratxe Garcia Perez, S&D/ES).

Systematic praises to EU unity appeared for the first time in this debate (this should not be confused with praising the French Presidency of the Council in an intergovernmental capacity in 2008). These statements talk positively and often express pride for the united response that they claim the EU showed with actions in helping Ukraine and punishing Russia. This frame could be at least partially connected to the high publicity of the plenary session, with the desire of showing the success of the EU to the European and Ukrainian citizens, while showing Moscow that it failed in breaking the unity of the Union: “Today, we as a European Parliament are sending a strong and a united message to the Kremlin that we stand with Ukraine in full solidarity” (David McAllister, PPE/DE).

7. Discussion

7.1 General trends in framing and agenda setting in the EP

From the analysis of the debates, several conclusions can be drawn on different topics. First, that active framing process has taken place during all the analysed plenary sessions. The MEPs simultaneously framed Russia and the EU policies towards Russia. It should be remarked that additionally, framing of the neighbouring state in question and the neighbourhood in general

took place. However, these efforts of framing were not analysed in detail, as it was not within the scope of this research, and this topic could be studied in separate research.

As seen from the analysis, Russia was framed along value-based and rational logics. Subsequently, it was displayed through framing how on one hand Kremlin's actions went against core EU values of human rights, international law and democracy. On the other hand, it was shown how these actions could endanger European security in different terms, starting from the sovereignty of the MSs, to energy or information security. Overall, two-pronged approach was brought forward for understanding the Russian interventions in the neighbourhood: that they were morally wrong and that they jeopardised the security and stability of the EU. In both cases it was argued that such actions of Moscow required a response from the EU. Meanwhile, EU policies were framed vis-à-vis the invaded state (or the eastern neighbourhood in general) and Russia. Part of the arguments framed EU policies on Russia and the neighbourhood as insufficient and thus demanded new policies. Other claims paid more attention to using existing policies. Proposed actions framed the EP's role in the process differently, depending on whether the authors framed the policies as intergovernmental or transnational. Division between Russia and EU-related frames is strikingly equal (101-118 in 2008; 70-73 in 2014 and 130-134 in 2022). This proves that at the debates on Russia, the EU policies are as actively framed as Russia itself. This fact confirms the relevance of analysing agenda setting through framing at the EP plenaries on Russian foreign invasions.

When it comes to agenda setting efforts through produced frames, the process of 'arousing interest' and 'claiming authority' took place simultaneously, rather than separately. General modus operandi was using 'arousing interesting' frames for making claims for why the EU should have been concerned with the issue, and then bringing up specific policies to 'claim authority' on why EU-level solutions were adequate. Part of the 'arousing interest' frames, such as 'general calls for action' and 'criticising EU' served to highlight why the EU needed to develop its policies for being able to 'claim authority' for such common challenges. Therefore, as theorised by Princen (2011) as well, these strategies were not competing, but rather complementing. This is further confirmed by the fact that in all three debates, total amount of frames produced in each category were close to each other. This was true even in the case of the 2008 debate (109-110 division), where it could have been expected that 'arousing interest' frames would be dominant, since the CFSP, as well as the EP's role was significantly underdeveloped than at the time of the other two plenaries.

Methods of ‘claiming authority’ included active framing of other actors and organisations as inadequate venues for addressing the conflict. This was especially the case for the US and NATO, who were often directly framed as partially blame for the conflict, or other conflicts globally. This led to arguments that they could not offer a tangible peaceful solution, and it was only the EU who could: “It is right that we take the lead in the search for solutions. There is no alternative: NATO cannot do it, the OSCE is too weak, America is not in the position that we are in, and the UN cannot play a mediating role due to the blockades in the Security Council” (Jan Marinus Wiersma, PSE/NL, 2008). It must be noted however, that such tone towards NATO and the US was softened in the 2022 debate, in the face of existential threats to the MSs.

From the analysis of the number of references made by national delegations, it can be observed that the Central and Eastern European MSs were particularly active in the debates (having in mind absolute numbers and delegation sizes). Polish MEPs were the most active in this sense, being between three most active national delegations on all three occasions, most notably producing the highest number of frames between national delegations in 2022. Moreover, for example Lithuanian MEPs accounted for 13 references in 2014, while Spanish MEPs had only 10 references and French had four. MEPs from the eastern flank also made most national interest-driven comments than other. For instance, Romanian MEPs often brought up Black Sea security in 2008, while Hungarians actively talked about Transcarpathian Hungarian-language minority in the context of Ukraine. Polish MEPs often spoke on behalf of their country or even government. It is of course logical that these national delegations showed higher interest in the issues in the eastern neighbourhood.

Overall activity in terms of the numbers and range of frames and policy proposals produced confirm Blumenau and Lauderdale’s (2018) suggestion that crisis events are characterised with particularly high activity in terms of agenda setting efforts. The perceived extent of the crisis is best visible for the 2022 debates, which saw many MEPs deviating from their expected positions. Best illustration of this is the right-wing members openly criticising Russia, supporting EU enlargement by advocating for Ukraine’s candidate status, welcoming Ukrainian refugees and supporting EU-level actions, including sending military aid to Kyiv: “We must send weapons to Ukraine. We have to send money. We must send emergency aid and we must welcome the poor people who are forced to flee Ukraine and come to our homes, which are their neighbourhoods” (Peter Kofod, ID/DK, 2022). The support was even bigger from ECR, especially from its Polish members from Law and Justice party.

Regarding framing of issues in intergovernmental or transnational terms, it should be kept in mind that this discussion should not be confined merely to the corresponding frames in the research. ‘Intergovernmental’ and ‘mix of intergovernmental and transnational’ frames only account for the statements where it is explicitly mentioned who the MEPs ask the actions from. Apart from this, there are many issues of different natures that they touch upon. For instance, when they ask for sanctions from the EU, in practice this means urging the Council to approve sanctions policy. With this in mind, a bigger scale research would be needed, dedicated to this topic to give more exact answer on the EP’s framing on venues inside the EU. What can be concluded from this research is that on one hand the EP attempted to ‘transnationalise’ these topics and policies by referring to them as the EU actions and not exclusively as the MSs’ competences. Moreover, at times the MEPs advocated for tools that are familiar to the EP, for instance organising international conferences for discussing peaceful solutions to the conflicts: “I believe that the European Union should also promote an international donor conference to alleviate this situation” (Jose Ignacio Salafranca, PPE/ES, 2014). It was visible from the debates that the EP was happier with the Commission’s involvement in policymaking process, indicating that the Commission and the EP’s interests align in contesting the Council’s unanimity in foreign policy (Riddervold and Rosen, 2016). Most significant finding for this research is that the EP did not confine its agenda setting efforts to the areas and policies where it had competences. MEPs did not ‘shy away’ from urging or even demanding for specific actions from the MSs. This is well expressed in the ‘intergovernmental’ frames discussed for each debate. To what extent these calls affected the policies of the Council is a topic for another research. What is a valuable insight from the point of view of this thesis is that the efforts were in place and therefore they are worth analysing.

7.2 Frame evolutions between debates

Comparison of observed trends between debates and evolution of specific frames give important insights for the research. For instance, comparing the proportions of ‘general calls for action’, ‘non-Russia policy proposals’ and ‘pressure Russia’ in the three debates, it can be assumed that in 2014 there was bigger confidence that existing tools were sufficient to adequately address Kremlin’s actions. That is why ‘pressure Russia’ dominated in this debate and the other two frames did not demand new Ukraine and EU-related policies as actively as in other cases. Meanwhile, in 2008 much bigger attention was paid to developing foreign policy

tools, including specific policies on Georgia and the eastern neighbourhood. At the same time, there was less clarity on how the EU could punish Russia. In 2022 the EP ‘went back to the drawing board’ for new policies. It is logical that the full-scale war caused bigger sense of insecurity and need for meeting the unprecedented challenge with renewed policies both towards Ukraine and internally in the Union. It can be assumed that lowest number of total frames being produced in 2014 is another proof that there was overall understanding that existing policies and foreign policy tools could be used for making Moscow accountable for annexing Crimea. In this regard it should be noted that the 2009-2014 Parliament was the first one after the Lisbon Treaty came into force. Thus, it is likely that the MEPs were still in the process of fully exploring new privileges and foreign policy instruments.

Difference is visible in terms of clarity of the nature of conflicts as well. ‘Aggressor, but...’ indicates that in 2008 many MEPs did not see Russia as the only side blame for the war. This was not the case in 2014 and 2022. However, the 2014 conflict, similar to 2008, was not actively depicted as the conflict of values. In contrast, in 2022 Kremlin was more widely understood as the systematic threat to European values. Saying that the conflict is a ‘clash of values’ between Russia and the West merits bigger responsibility on the EU’s part. In this sense it can be understood why active usage of this frame was ‘delayed’ until 2022. It must be noted as well that in 2008 only 15 MSs were represented in the analysis, indicating potential lack of information or interest compared to other debates.

Overall, value-based arguments certainly had a strong presence in each debate. It should not be surprising that following the crisis events of military nature, ‘big words’ strategy was actively used for arousing interest. However, contrary to the expectations based on the EP’s reputation as an advocate for humanitarian approach, ‘humanitarian threat’ was not always the most referred value-based frame, except for 2022. On the other hand, ‘international law violator’ had a stable presence in all three cases. This can be explained by the situations on the ground at the time of the debates on one hand. On the other hand, EP’s strong reaction to international law violations should not be surprising, given its transnational nature and preferences for rules-based approaches to foreign policy (Fonck and Raube, 2019).

Appearance of new frames on Russia (‘propaganda machine’ and ‘Putin’s war’) and disappearance of others, (such as ‘unreliable partner’ in 2022) indicated new ways of understanding Russia and the danger coming from it on different levels. This shows continuity of the process of understanding Kremlin and its actions. However, what was unexpected is that in all cases, especially in 2014 and 2022, there were no active efforts of establishing continuity

between Russian aggressions by referring to the previous conflicts. This does not only include referring to history, but also only very few cases of referring to the 2008 invasion and 2014 annexation in the debates, even if these processes were still very much ongoing.

8. Conclusion

This thesis has studied the process of using framing for agenda setting purposes at the EP debates preceding the resolutions of Russia's invasions in the shared neighbourhood. The research has achieved its aims of understanding the attitudes towards Kremlin's aggressions and towards broader EU-Russia relations in the Parliament.

The research has demonstrated that at the plenary sessions, parallel processes of framing Russia and framing the EU's policies towards Moscow was taking place. These frames were actively used for agenda setting purposes, with majority of Russia-related frames used for 'arousing interest' and most of the EU-related frames for 'claiming authority'. These two strategies of agenda setting were deployed simultaneously. General framework of argumentation took the form of first discussing why the EU should have been concerned with the issue and later referencing the policy options, usage of which would make the EU adequate venue for mediating the conflict or responding to Russian actions.

Regarding the research question on framing of Russia after the three invasions, the analysis has shown that Russia was framed along both, value-based and rationalist arguments. Although overall Moscow was pictured as the main cause of conflicts in all cases, difference can be observed in both, placing blames and assessing the needs for fundamentally reviewing the EU's relations with Kremlin. In 2008 and to a lesser extent in 2014, blames were placed partially outside of Russia as well, and the ways for normalising relations were still sought by at least some MEPs, although Moscow's guilt was widely recognised. 2022 saw personally Putin and his regime being exclusively accused of starting the full-scale invasion. Subsequently, vis-à-vis the research question on the evolution of the EP's attitudes towards Russia in the time span, if in 2008 the parliament sought for ways of maintaining cooperation with Kremlin, in 2022 Putin's regime was seen as a fundamental threat to the stability and security in Europe. No foreseeable prospects of good neighbourly relations or separation of energy from other policies could be observed in the last debate.

Regarding the research question on the MEPs' framing of the EU policies towards Moscow, analysis has demonstrated that in 2014, in the wake of the Russian annexation of Crimea, the EP was clearer in its preferences on Russia and more confident about the sufficiency of existing policy tools than in 2008 and 2022. The 2008 conflict marked more ambiguity in placing blames and in having the ability to respond adequately to Russia in pre-Lisbon Treaty era. Meanwhile, the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 heightened the feelings of insecurity and unreadiness for war in Europe, triggering discussions on new policies for Ukraine and for the EU itself. As a crisis event, this involved significant shift of previous positions by the MEPs and supporting solutions which they would oppose under normal circumstances. It can be argued that overall, these tendencies are similar to the actual policies of the EU regarding Russia and the discussed invasions. Therefore, it could be a topic for future research to conceptualise how much the EP's agenda setting efforts affected the policies agreed by the MSs in the Council.

In terms of the factor of nationality of the MEPs, Central and East European MEPs, most prominently the Polish ones, have shown particular interest and high activity in agenda setting efforts through framing. Occasionally, they used the opportunities for promoting national concerns and preferences, trying to elevate them to the common European level. This indicates that the factor of nationality has affected the statements when the matter was perceived to have a high importance for the home country of the MEPs. However, as discussed in the literature review, it should not be assumed that the sentiments and positions expressed in these statements will always be identical to the voting patterns, as the latter has higher significance for the EP parties.

This thesis has contributed to the discussions on framing and agenda setting in the European Parliament and to a lesser extent, the EP's role in the EU foreign policy. Particular contribution was made on the topic of framing Russia in the EP and studying attitudes and perceptions towards Kremlin in the EU in general. This research could serve as a foundation for exploring the EU's attitudes and policies towards Russia, as well as the effects and importance of framing and agenda setting in the EU and in the EP in particular.

Bibliography

Primary sources (the plenary debates):

European Parliament, 'Situation in Georgia (debate)', https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-6-2008-09-01-ITM-020_EN.html, consulted on 29.06.2024.

European Parliament, 'Invasion of Ukraine by Russia (debate)', https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-7-2014-03-12-ITM-006_EN.html, consulted on 29.06.2024.

European Parliament, 'Russian aggression against Ukraine (debate)', https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-9-2022-03-01-ITM-009_EN.html, consulted on 29.06.2024.

European Parliament, 'Russian aggression against Ukraine (continuation of debate)', https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-9-2022-03-01-ITM-011_EN.html, consulted on 29.06.2024.

Benford, R.D and Snow, D.A. (1988) 'Ideology, Frame Resonance and Participant Mobilization', International Social Movement Research, Volume 1, 197-217.

Benford, R.D and Snow, D.A. (2000) 'Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment', Annual Review of Sociology, Volume 26, 611-639.

Blumenau, J. and Lauderdale, B.E. (2018) 'Never Let a Good Crisis Go to Waste: Agenda Setting and Legislative Voting in Response to the EU Crisis', The Journal of Politics, Volume 80, Number 2, 462-478.

Borah, P. (2011) 'Conceptual Issues in Framing Theory: A Systematic Examination of a Decade's Literature', Journal of Communication, Volume 61, Issue 2, April, 246-263.

Braghiroli, S. (2013) 'Looking at Ankara from Strasbourg: An Empirical Assessment of MEPs' Voting on and Framing of Turkey', International Journal of Euro-Mediterranean Studies, Volume 6, Issue 1, 3-22.

Braghiroli, S. (2015) 'Voting on Russia in the European Parliament: The Role of National and Party Group Affiliations', Journal of Contemporary European Studies, Volume 23, Number 1, 58-81.

Cameron, F. (2007) An introduction to European Foreign Policy, Routledge, USA and Canada.

Cassier, T. (2012) 'European Neighbourhood Policy: Living Up to Regional Ambitions?', in F. Bindi and I. Angelescu (eds) The Foreign Policy of the European Union: Assessing Europe's Role in the World, Brookings Institution Press, Washington D.C.

Chong, D. and Druckman, J.N. (2007a) 'Framing Theory', Annual Review of Political Science, Volume 10, June, 103-126.

Chong, D. and Druckman, J.N. (2007b) 'A Theory of Framing and Opinion Formation in Competitive Elite Environments', Journal of Communication, Volume 71, Issue 1, March, 99-118.

Corman, M-R. and Balutel, A. (2018) 'Between a rock and a hard place: the EU and the Eastern Partnership after the 2017 Brussels Summit', College of Europe Policy Brief, Vol. 5, No. 18, April.

Daviter, F. (2007) 'Policy Framing in the European Union', Journal of European Public Policy, Volume 14, Issue 4, 654-666.

Eising, R. Rasch, D. and Rozbicka, P. (2015) 'Institutions, policies, and arguments: context and strategy in EU policy framing', Journal of European Public Policy, Volume 22, Issue 4, 516-533.

Entman, R.M. (1993) 'Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm', Journal of Communication, Volume 43, Issue 4, December, 51-58.

Euractiv (2021) 'Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine formalize their higher EU ambition', <https://www.euractiv.com/section/eastern-europe/news/georgia-moldova-ukraine-formalise-their-higher-eu-ambition/>, consulted on 28.06.2024.

European Commission, https://x.com/EU_Commission/status/1615640007745716224, 18 January 2023, consulted on 28.06.2024.

European Commission, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_24_3423, 24 June 2024, consulted on 28.06.2024.

European Parliament, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20221118IPR55707/european-parliament-declares-russia-to-be-a-state-sponsor-of-terrorism>, 23 November 2022, consulted on 28.06.2024.

Fonck, D. (2019) 'Servants or rivals? Uncovering the drivers and logics of the European Parliament's diplomacy during the Ukrainian crisis', in K. Raube, M. Muftulec-Bac and J. Wouters (eds.) Parliamentary Cooperation and Diplomacy in EU External Relations, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.

Fonck, D. (2019a) The Emergence of the European Parliament as a Diplomatic Mediator: Conceptualising, Exploring and Explaining Parliamentary Diplomacy in EU Foreign Policy, KU Leuven, Leuven.

Fonck, D. and Raube, K. (2019) 'Bringing transnationalism (once again) back in: insights for the parliamentary dimension of European foreign policy', in K. Raube, M. Muftuler-Bac and J. Woueters (eds) Parliamentary Cooperation and Diplomacy in EU External Relations, Edward Elgar Publishing.

Gamkrelidze, T. and Vaisanen, A. (2022) 'Securitisation of the Neighbourhood: EU-Driven Frame Alignment and Projection on Southern and Eastern Neighbourhood Partner Countries', ENGAGE Working Paper Series, No. 15, December.

Gamson, W.A., Croteau, D., Hoynes, W. and Sasson, T. (1992) 'Media Images and the Social Construction of Reality', Annual Review of Sociology, Volume 18, Issue 1, 373-393.

Garcia, B. de Wolff, M. and Yilmaz, S. (2018) 'Issue Framing and Institutional Constraints in EU Agenda-Setting: An Analysis of European Union Sport Policy', Journal of Contemporary European Research, Volume 14, Issue 1, 23-39.

Garssen, B. (2017) 'Strategic manoeuvring in European Parliamentary debate', in van Eemeren, F. H. and Peng, W. (eds.) Contextualizing pragma-dialectics, John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Goinard, M. (2020) 'The growing role of the European Parliament as an EU foreign policy actor', in M. Westlake (ed.) The European Union's New Foreign Policy, Palgrave Macmillan.

Gora, M. (2019) 'The European Parliament as an agenda setter of EU policy toward its neighbourhood', in K. Raube, M. Muftulec-Bac and J. Wouters (eds.) Parliamentary Cooperation and Diplomacy in EU External Relations, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.

- Gretskiy, I., Treshchenkov, E. and Golubev, K. (2014) 'Russia's perceptions and misperceptions of the EU Eastern Partnership', Communist and Post-Communist Studies, Volume 47, Issue 3/4, September/December.
- Hix, S. and Noury, A. (2009) 'After Enlargement: Voting Patterns in the Sixth European Parliament', Legislative Studies Quarterly, Volume 34, Issue 2, May, 159-174.
- Kohler-Koch, B. (2000) 'Framing: the bottleneck of constructing legitimate institutions', Journal of European Public Policy, Volume 7, Issue 4, 513-531.
- Kratochvil, P., Cibulkova, P. and Benik, M. (2011) 'The EU as a 'Framing Actor': Reflections on Media Debates about EU Foreign Policy', Journal of Common Market Studies, Volume 49, Number 2, 391-412.
- Kreppel, A. and Webb, M. (2019) 'European Parliament resolutions – effective agenda setting or whistling into the wind?', Journal of European Integration, Volume 41, Issue 3, 383-404.
- Legucka, A. and Wlodkowska, A. (2021) 'The Eastern Partnership as a Contested Neighbourhood: The Role of External Actors – The EU and Russia', Studia Europejskie – Studies in European Affairs, Volume 4.
- Lord, C. (2013) 'No representation without justification? Appraising standards of justification in European Parliament debates', Journal of European Public Policy, Volume 20, Issue 2, 243-259.
- Matthes, J. (2012) 'Framing Politics: An Integrative Approach', American Behavioral Scientist, Volume 56, Issue 3, 247-259.
- Nitoiu, C. (2017) 'Framing the EU's policy towards the neighbourhood: the strategic approach of the Seventh European Parliament (2009–2014)', Cambridge Review of International Affairs, Volume 30, Issue 1, 87-104.
- Ojala, M. and Pantti, M. (2017) 'Naturalising the new cold war: The geopolitics of framing the Ukrainian conflict in four European newspapers', Global Media and Communication, Volume 13, Issue 1, 41-56.
- Ozoflu, M.A. and Arato, K. (2023) 'The populist framing of the Russia-Ukraine war by the Hungarian government: convergence or contestation in the EU', Southeast European and Black Sea Studies, Volume 23, Issue 4, 717-735.

- Princen, S. (2007) 'Agenda-setting in the European Union: A Theoretical exploration and agenda for research', Journal of European Public Policy, Volume 14, Issue 1, January, 21-38.
- Princen, S. (2011) 'Agenda-setting strategies in EU policy', Journal of European Public Policy, Volume 18, Issue 7, August, 927-943.
- Proksch, S-O. and Slapin, J.B. (2010) 'Position Taking in European Parliament Speeches', British Journal of Political Science, Volume 40, Issue 3, July, 587-611.
- Rabinovych, M. (2021) 'Failing forward and the EU foreign policy: the dynamics of 'integration without membership' in the Eastern Neighbourhood', Journal of European Public Policy, Volume 28, Issue 10.
- Radio Free Europe (2022) 'Interview: With The 2008 Georgia War, 'We Knew What Was Coming, But We Were Slow To Believe It'', <https://www.rferl.org/a/georgia-russia-war-fried/31987472.html>, consulted on 28.06.2024.
- Raunio, T. and Wagner, W. (2020) 'Party Politics or (Supra-)National Interest? External Relations Votes in the European Parliament', Foreign Policy Analysis, Volume 16, Issue 4, October, 547-564.
- Reliefweb (2008) 'Background: Six-point peace plan for the Georgia-Russia conflict' <https://reliefweb.int/report/georgia/background-six-point-peace-plan-georgia-russia-conflict>, consulted on 28.06.2024.
- Riddervold, M. and Rosen, G. (2016) 'Trick and treat: how the Commission and the European Parliament exert influence in EU foreign and security policies', Journal of European Integration, Volume 38, Issue 6, 687-702.
- Riebling, J.R. and von der Wense, I. (2019) 'Framing the mass media: Exploring 'fake news' as a frame embedded in political discourse', Journal of Alternative and Community Media, Volume 4, April, 57-76.
- Rychnovska, D. (2014) 'Securitization and the Power of Threat Framing', Perspectives, Volume 22, Issue 2, 9-31.
- Shah, D.V., Watts, M.D., Domke, D. and Fan, D.P. (2002) 'News Framing and Cueing of Issue Regimes: Explaining Clinton's Public Approval in spite of Scandal', Public Opinion Quarterly, Volume 66, Issue 3, September, 339-370.

Sieg, H. M. (2016) 'Between Geopolitics and Transformation: Challenges and Perspectives for the Eastern Partnership', DGAP-Analyse, German Council on Foreign Relations, Berlin, 2016, No. 10.

Stepka, M. (2022) Identifying Security Logics in the EU Policy Discourse The "Migration Crisis" and the EU, Springer.

Sydoruk, T. and Tyshchenko, D. (2018) 'A Review of the Eastern Partnership after Ten Years: the Need to Reconsider its Efficacy', Studia Politica: Romanian Political Science Review, Volume 18, Issue 2.

The Guardian (2008) 'Georgia and Russia declare ceasefire' <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/aug/16/georgia.russia2>, consulted on 28.06.2024.

Van Eemeren, F. H. and Garssen, B. (2009) 'In Varietate Concordia—United in Diversity: European Parliamentary debate as an argumentative activity type' OSSA Conference Archive.

Vanhoonacker, S. and Pomorska, K. (2013) 'The European External Action Service and Agenda-Setting in European Foreign Policy', Journal of European Public Policy, Volume 20, Issue 9, 1316–1331.