

Russia's War on Ukraine: Unbottled Emotions and the Conditioning of the EU's Russia Policy

INTRODUCTION

In this article, we consider EU emotions in the context of Russia's war on Ukraine, with a view to asking what this might mean for the EU's Russia policy moving forward, arguing that we have witnessed an unbottling of emotions in the EU, particularly in relation to the differences among the member states. We concentrate on two major negative emotions that were unbottled towards Russia: fear and anger; and two positive emotions towards Ukraine: sympathy and solidarity, that were clearly expressed and converted into actions on the part of the EU.

In speaking to the question raised by the editors of this Special Issue, "when and how do emotions matter in EU foreign policy in times of crisis" and most particularly to answer the first of their sub-questions, "whose emotions are at play in taking and implementing the EU's crisis response decisions?" , we argue for the need to consider the EU both in respect of Brussels *and* the national capitals. In considering the member states, we are essentially arguing for some regard for differentiation among the member states and therefore, potentially, within the Brussels institutions. In other words, it is the emotions of the member states that are at play, though that is obviously not inconsequential for the EU institutions themselves. Part of that consideration of member state relations relates to their histories and so we reflect on two or three different time periods, so connecting the past with the present in order to think about the future. In straying somewhat from the institutional focus spoken of in the Introduction to the Special Issue, we are speaking to the "multi-layered" aspect of the EU also referred to in the Introduction and explicitly contesting the idea that you can treat the EU member states (and therefore the EU) as sharing a single history. Histories of the immediate post-Cold War period for European states are both revealing of this and vital for understanding how the nature and or depth of certain emotions among member states might differ. Relatedly, we remember that the war in Ukraine has been going on for over 9 years, with some member states more viscerally aware of that than others. This is important in the context of the war in 2022 seen as constituting a crisis for the EU, in a way that was not the case in 2014. That has implications for how we think of crisis in temporal terms. In line with the ethos of the issue, we treat Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine as a critical juncture for the EU, both in terms of the development of its CFSP/CSDP, and its relations with Russia but do not regard crisis as necessarily a short term

condition, which has implications too for how we think about the durability of emotions – and where we might diverge from the thinking set out in the Introduction to this Special Issue.

The fact of a focus on the EU as a foreign policy actor, combined with our own research backgrounds means that some time is spent examining Russia itself – interaction being fundamental to any understanding of foreign policy. This is also necessary in order to deliver on the final part of the article where we consider possibilities for the future of the EU-Russia relationship, arguing that very different possibilities will stand, depending on *whose* ideas about that future dominate, those ideas not separate, of course, from each actor's feelings about the other. Although our main focus is EU feelings and actions towards Russia, emotions for Ukraine also matter as they impact perspectives of the EU policies in regard to its further enlargement and its security arrangements.

The war also presented the EU with multiple crises simultaneously, or exacerbated existing problems: the war itself; an energy crisis; an economic crisis; and the so-called refugee crisis. We consider the possibility here that another crisis is around the corner for the EU, in that in the unbottling of emotions in the EU that we have seen, a rebottling of those same emotions will be more difficult, even impossible, for some EU member states to achieve than others. How should we think then not only about the circumstances in which it is “alright” to *unbottle emotions* but about when actors will be required to *rebottle their emotions*. What, in other words, happens when the crisis is over, and who decides? This will have ramifications for relations among the member states and for EU foreign policy decision making. We refrain from speculation about what kind of Russia that might be in terms of leadership and territorial integrity, but do consider the conditions under which the EU and its member states will be able or willing to rebottle their emotions. What scope will there be for a return to business as normal when it comes to Russia, or EU foreign policy more generally? Is a return to “principled pragmatism”, as in the EU's Global Strategy of 2016 (European Union External Action Service 2016), possible? Having been justified in their long years of telling their neighbours to the west and south that Russia constituted a serious threat to European security, and with an insistence now on the need to think in ethical, value-driven, even moralistic terms, will the states of northern and central eastern Europe (NCEEs) be able to forget – and forgive – their past experiences with Russia such that a return to a level playing field for principles and pragmatism would be possible? This latter question will become particularly pertinent as Ukraine progresses towards EU accession and will rest on the success of any eventual conflict resolution process. Emotions are an important aspect in studies of conflicts, conflict resolution, post-conflict reconciliation and transitional justice, thus we need to take this into account while considering the possible future. We hear already voices talking about preparing for future relations with Russia, a recognition the war will

end and will require communication with Russia. Will this mean the channelling of emotions or, in the absence (as some will see it) of the crisis that enabled their unbottling, the repression of them? The answer to this question will say as much about the future of the EU as about its relations with Russia.

UNDERSTANDING CRISIS AND EMOTIONS

Crisis

Understanding what is meant by “crisis” is vital if we are to understand emotions in respect of them. Where the temporal aspect of crisis is spoken of in definitional terms, it is most often in terms of “moments”, as in the Introduction to the Special Issue or see, for example, Freedman (2014). At the same time, and somewhat paradoxically, inherent to much of the focus on crisis is a treatment of crisis as being enduring, to the extent it has been spoken of in respect of Europe as “the new normal” (Witney and Dennison 2015). Additionally, we see literature focused on a particular crisis – eurocrisis, integration crisis, (so-called) migration crisis – that is studied over a longer period of time (Klingemann and Weldon 2013; Lucarelli 2018; Vollaard 2014), again suggesting a crisis can be long-lasting. It is for this reason that we agree that a crisis can refer to ““a testing time” or an “emergency event”” (Goniewicz et al. 2020: 2) but we treat it as a “testing time” that can last for years, even decades. Often spoken of but rarely defined, we also agree that,

A crisis is any event that is going to lead to an unstable and dangerous situation affecting an individual, group, community, or the whole society. Crises are deemed to be negative changes in security, economic, political, societal, or environmental affairs, mainly when they occur abruptly, with little or no warning (Goniewicz et al. 2020: 2).

Fundamental to such a definition is the recognition that there is a *decision* to see an event or series of events as a crisis. Indeed, we concur with Manners and Rosamond when they say, “that ‘crises’ are never phenomena that are exogenously given. Rather crises are constituted discursively by both policy actors and academics” (2018: 28). Further, the *nature* of the crisis is decided subjectively too, as is the scale of one, as clearly seen with the way that the EU responded to the annexation of Crimea and the occupation of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine in 2014 versus the way it responded to the full scale invasion in 2022. Indeed, we could argue too about whether the EU’s response in 2014 would have been even as robust as it was without the terrible loss of life as a result of the downing of flight MH17 that same year – and the response of the Kremlin to the downing then and since. This suggests not only that crisis is subjectively decided, but that some events are tipping points in terms of that decision – just too terrible to ignore or treat as negligible.

This has enormous implications for emotions in respect of crisis since it suggests that where multiple state and organisational actors are involved, as in our case, there is a good deal of scope for the actors involved to view a crisis differently, even if there is agreement that an event constitutes a crisis. The understanding of the particular crisis that is the context for us, Russia's war on Ukraine, has to be built on an understanding of the socio-historical factors at play. For some of the member states of the EU, especially those joining after the collapse of the USSR, the war is a symptom of a far longer history of aggression on Russia's part that was also experienced by them. For those unschooled in the different experiences of and opinions about Russia, Gorbachev's death in 2022 offered a moment to remember it. Compare the words of the Lithuanian Foreign Minister, "Lithuanians will not glorify Gorbachev. We will never forget the simple fact that his army murdered civilians to prolong his regime's occupation of our country. His soldiers fired on our unarmed protestors and crushed them under his tanks. That is how we will remember him" (Landsbergis 2022); with the remembrances of the German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, "We will not forget that Perestroika made it possible to attempt to establish democracy in Russia and that democracy and freedom became possible in Europe, that Germany could be united, and the Iron Curtain disappeared" (Scholz 2022).

These comments are both typical and illustrative of the very different starting positions for these two countries, with the anger expressed on behalf of Lithuania sharp and unapologetic. The comments go some way too to explaining why the responses of these two EU member states could be so different in both the 2014 and 2022 periods. They suggest that the crisis for Lithuania has been ongoing since at least 1991 and, actually, as far as the Baltic States are concerned, one would have to go back to 1940 and the Soviet occupation and then annexation of their territories to understand that anger and fear inevitably underpin their relations with Russia. For some of the NCEES too, their memories of the WWII and post WWII period are of abandonment by western European states, with 1939, 1956 and 1968 standing as evidence of that abandonment. The idea of a history shared by all member states is therefore a mythical one, useful in projecting a single identity to others but dangerous if it comes to be believed by those who created it.

If crisis is more than momentary, there is little cause to think an emotion held in respect of it is not as well. This may be more the case in relation to a short-lived and contained crisis since it suggests that the emotions are felt in respect of the particular crisis and they will settle once the crisis is over. But little is said about what happens if the crisis is an enduring one nor about what happens when the crisis is an enduring one for some and not others.

Emotions

As is now well-established in the literature, it is uncontroversial to proceed from the notion that we do here: of “emotion and reason” as “inextricably linked” (Sasley 2008: 118). In treating emotions as compatible with rationality, we do not, however, suggest that emotions are only used in a conscious, even instrumental fashion. Implicit, sometimes explicit, in many analyses of emotions in world politics is the idea that emotions are *wielded*. While there is certainly merit in Hall’s theory of ‘emotional diplomacy’ (Hall), we are concerned about a conceptualisation of emotions in international politics that sees them being used *only* deliberately as instruments of diplomatic power. In his theorisation, Hall speaks of diplomacy in relation to three emotions: anger, sympathy, and guilt and speaks of them too as having “pre-determined strategic objectives”. We acknowledge the emotions, since 2022, we have clearly seen the expression of at least the first two and then actions taken that respond to them, but we shy away from any impression of suggesting they cannot be genuine and deeply felt. Indeed, in the case of EU-Russia relations where until now the largest obstacle to the EU’s attempts to build a unified Russia policy have been divergences among the EU member states, we would argue that the EU is now having to grapple with understanding the depth of emotions felt by some of its members. We reject also the idea that emotions and the expression of them are unprofessional. This is an additional trap into which actors and analysts can fall. They can certainly be expressed in unhelpful ways, but given what we say about the emotions of the group, we also conclude that any attempt to exclude them would be to betray the group of whom they are representative.

Questions of professionalism relate to rationality, particularly whether there is such a thing as an objective state of rationality. The war has had one benefit, we would posit, in reminding people that irrationality is only that (i.e. irrational) if one fails to understand the decision-making process of others. We are thinking, of course, of Putin’s decision to escalate the invasion in the way he did. In the first months of the war there were many comments that Putin’s decision to escalate was not rational. By May or June 2022 the development of events inside and outside of Russia demonstrated that Putin’s decision could be regarded as rational, having clear objectives in political terms even without success on the battle field. The decision to escalate the war served the political goal of keeping the regime in power, having reached a point when any political change toward democracy and dialogue with opposition and civil society would lead to its collapse. The war allowed those Russians who benefited directly from the current economic, political and social arrangements to mobilise ‘around the flag’. It facilitated the isolation of oppositional and liberal forces in Russia through repression and the threat

of prosecution, the repressive apparatus and military machinery having unlimited power to act against any opposition to war. The war also cut any possible support from the liberal West toward oppositional forces inside Russia by denouncing them as traitors and foreign agents.

Thus, context matters and in this sense, rationality has to be understood in a subjective, not objective fashion. While all diplomats are trained, it is vital to remember that they are trained within their particular cultural contexts first, albeit that training is also about equipping them for communications and relations with others. This might indeed include the instrumental expression of emotions, emotional diplomacy (Hall 2015) to express or to demonstrate certain feelings, for as Sasley says, there is a “capacity for emotions to structure relationships” (Sasley, 2011: 472). In the multilateral, norm-claiming EU context, this may, for the most part, be both necessary and performed in a positive fashion. But we must consider also whether, even amid this emotional turn in theorising international politics, we are *over-rationalising*, failing to account for the way that certain emotions, especially those that emerge from sustained historical traumas inform behaviour in a less aware and calculated fashion than a reflexive and subconscious one, not least because “emotion is not merely a tool of rationality but instead is necessary to rationality” (Mercer 2005: 93). This thinking is somewhat captured in Renshon and Lerner’s (2012) idea of “incidental emotions [that] arise from past situations or from chronic personality characteristics that [...] are normatively irrelevant to the judgments and decisions at hand”.

This will have implications throughout the crisis at hand and especially for its resolution. Fisher and Ury have suggested a formula for successful agreement where a problem that needs to be solved (the objective of the negotiation) should be treated separately from personal attitudes (the subjective aspects). Their problem-solving approach is based on recognition of the dual nature of humans - being rational and irrational (reacting impulsively) and being subjective (having different visions of the conflict and possible solutions for it). This was an attempt to take into account emotions and spontaneous reactions caused by anger and frustration (Fisher and Ury, 1991:160), but also this approach suggested that rationality and emotions are antonyms. In our vision of the relationship between emotions and rationality, this perspective is highly problematic for it suggests a rebottling of deep and long-held emotions is not only desirable but necessary. Rather, we bear in mind Schellenberg’s warning of the ‘danger of a peace-at-any-price philosophy’, and that ‘attempts to resolve conflict do not always work; and when they do, they can sometimes lead to undesirable consequences’ (Schellenberg 1996: 9-10).

Fred Charles Ikle, who had a long career in US defence and international affairs, specifically discussed the role of emotions in international negotiations as a practitioner. Differently to current studies of emotions, he stressed that an 'international organisation does not have emotions, only people do', although it is very common in international relations when a country (Germany, US etc) expresses 'fear' or 'anger' (Ikle 1999: 335). Similarly to Fisher and Ury he suggested that negotiators should acknowledge the personal aspects of negotiators and their feelings. Ikle also made a distinction that might be important for our case, when he wrote that emotions are tied to the past and future, and thus they shape the negotiation (ibidem: 336). He gave several examples on how in 'complex international organisations' hope and *fear*, 'the emotions of yearning for some future success or of worrying about some future failure' that are 'images about future outcomes and their follow-on consequences consist of many variables' (ibidem: 337). He gave specific examples of NATO and the EU as organisations to which "diplomats involved often become emotionally attached to the institutional edifice they are creating" (ibidem: 340). He wrote that:

In the evolution of NATO - surely, one of the most successful alliances in history - the satisfaction with the negotiating progress nourished such attachment among many NATO diplomats. American and British officials were the principle promoters of the integrated military core of NATO, which greatly enhanced the alliance's military strength and helped build emotional links among staff (ibidem).

Ikle believed that the EU presents a similar case when European diplomats and officials involved in the negotiation process become emotionally attached to the very idea of a "united Europe" and they "keep alive a sentimental attachment to this vision" which helped to overcome the free-trade pragmatism. Discussing how emotions of the past might impact the negotiation, Ikle referred to "anger, resentment and hatred" and specifically focused on "emotional attachment to pieces of national territory" (ibidem: 342) and issues of trust and loyalty as being an important part of the negotiation process.

In the introduction to this issue, the special issue editors speak of how: "The emotion that is to emerge and its subsequent action depends on which 'concern' is at stake at a certain moment" and that, "In an institutionalized political context, the concerns at stake would be the interests that the institutional stakeholders would uphold". We raise questions about what the longer term consequences are when over a period of time the concerns of some (the NCEEs) within the group have been dismissed (by the remaining EU MSs), such that at the point when their concerns are validated and there is a convergence of emotions, still the memories of past injustices mean that other emotions intervene, in the form of feelings of assuagement and satisfaction for the NCEEs and regret for the others. In the circumstances of both such complicating factors and extreme crisis, we argue the "similar action tendencies" (ibid) may reflect more the wishes of the NCEES than the others. This has implications for the sustainability

of the solidarity that dominates the EU's narrative and may indicate too that feelings of solidarity are still very much in the process of being constructed, such that solidarity functions less as a deep-felt emotion than a strategic narrative, that is a "means for political actors to construct a shared meaning of the past, present and future of international politics to shape the behaviour of domestic and international actors" (Miskimmon, O'Loughlin and Roselle: 2013: 2). In this situation, we can discern too the purely instrumental use of emotion to aid in shared identity building.

In the context of EU-Russia relations, we would argue too that we need to be very wary of suggesting equivalence and this is the biggest conundrum presented for us by the literature on emotions. How do we distinguish between genuinely felt emotions and emotions used only instrumentally when the near consensus is that all emotions are used instrumentally?

A good deal of the literature on emotions suggests a long process, albeit the limits of that process are not well (or at all) defined. In much of the literature that deals with historical trauma and memory, the arguments are that emotions are used to construct narratives, those narratives reinforced in various ways over a long period of time, such that they are transformed from individual to collective memories, eventually forming part of the group identity. The variance in EU member state responses to Russian actions in the 2014-22 period gives rise to questions about not just the circumstances under which emotions matter but whether they can only matter after a period of time. That this is the case is indicated among those who emphasise commemoration and memorialisation in relation to solidarity, with solidarity built up over time through the use of symbol and ritual. This relates to questions about the *internalisation* of this narrative of solidarity. Is Scholz's *Zeitenwende* an internalisation, a deep empathic response to what has been done in Ukraine in the last year or a more pragmatic realisation that Germany will have to bow to the emotions of others – for the time being at least? While Von der Leyen's messaging on solidarity is consistent with Hall's economic diplomacy, it looks to be as much internally-directed as Ukraine-directed, grounded in an understanding that the EU is embarked on a process and different member states at different places in that process.

We are asking, in other words, questions about what is needed for *solidarity* to be enduring. Here, we emphasise empathy as an underpinning feature of solidarity. This link is well established, in the work of Kerri Woods, for instance. In fact, Woods also talks about "storytelling as a practice of solidarity" (Woods 2020: 2), a way of assuring that "empathy is engaged". Remembering Ahmed's powerful point that: "Emotions in their very intensity involve miscommunication, such that even when we feel we have the same feeling, we don't necessarily have the same relationship to the

feeling”, this empathy is vital if the inherent tensions in groups when it comes to emotions is to be overcome.

The war has also highlighted, however, the importance of reflexivity between the internal and external planes of the EU. Much of what we have heard from the EU and its member states about the war has comprised implicit or explicit moralising. Despite being investigated for war crimes and accusations of genocide being levelled at Russia; however, the EU has not been successful in persuading many other states outside Europe to condemn and sanction Russia. Here, we might think of an emotions-credibility gap. In order to achieve its foreign policy objectives, the EU will need to learn to be a credible international actor and that credibility will only come if it can first understand that others mistrust it and why. First and foremost, the EU needs to reckon with its own, that "own" meaning past histories and actions, the perceptions of others, as well as the levels of trust among and within the member states. This requires an ability to reflect, which is equally dependent on an ability to empathise. That reflexivity will only be acquired over time, and language - communication - are fundamental parts of the process, and we see a good deal of recognition of that in the discourse of the European Commission, especially von der Leyen, albeit undermined by comments of others that compare the EU to a garden, those outside it, the jungle.

This returns us to notions of professionalism, we can see from past relations between what was once termed (both inaccurately and unhelpfully) ‘Old’ and ‘New’ Europe, that prioritising a certain vision of what constitutes professionalism can also lead to the suppression of certain voices (even when that is achieved in a wholly unprofessional way, raising questions about *who* is allowed to be unprofessional). Few who were around at the time could forget France’s then-President Jacques Chirac’s bark at the central and eastern European states that they had missed a good opportunity to shut up (CNN 2003). This came in the background of 9/11 two years before and argument among the states of the West about the legality and wisdom of what would be the 2003 Iraq War, in which certain EU states (largely ‘Old’ Europe) fell on different sides of the argument to the then candidate CEECs (‘New Europe’). Few agreed with the manner or words Chirac employed but, as we illustrate further below, few disagreed either with the sentiment that some had the right to speak up and dissent ... while others did not. Fast forward to 2023 and the NCEEs have finally had their right to be heard acknowledged. In May, President Macron of France expressed regret that the words of warning about Russia that had issued from the NCEEs had not been heeded, “Some said you had missed an opportunity to stay quiet. I think we also lost an opportunity to listen to you. This time is over” (Macron in Rose 2023).

Anger, Fear, Sympathy and Solidarity

Before proceeding to the analysis, some words about the emotions explored are called for. We focus on fear particularly. This is uncontroversial, in fact, it seems rather self-evident that fear has been the underpinning emotion for many, if not all, member states in the months leading up to and also following Russia's full scale invasion of Russia in February 2022. We have seen that fear expressed through actions by many of those states most geographically close to Russia, whether through the application of Finland and Sweden for NATO membership, the huge increase in the Polish Defence budget, reportedly now reaching 4% of GDP, double that of the NATO required (and often unmet) baseline, or the Baltic states' request in 2022 for a stronger NATO presence on their territories (O'Leary 2022), this after the 2017 rotating deployment of battlegroups to the Baltics and Poland.

In speaking about fear, Robin says, "It quickens our perceptions as no other emotion can, forcing us to see and to act in the world in new and more interesting ways, with greater moral discrimination and a more acute consciousness of our surroundings and ourselves" (2004: 928). In this discussion, Robin demonstrates how in the long history of political theorising, fear is seen as a galvanising emotion, an antidote to those aspects of democratic political traditions that foster apathy and complacency. This is an argument in some ways pertinent for our purposes, in other ways less so. In terms of a contextualising point, it has thrust, as we have seen with those who argue that Russia's war on Ukraine is the fault of the EU (and NATO) for not realising – for being complacent – about the risks of large scale conflict in Europe and so being incautious in its dealings with Russia. More meaningfully, for those seeking deeper and more extensive foreign policy integration, fear is a motivating emotion, worth keeping alive in order to keep attention focused on the necessity for that further integration. Most relevant are the specifics of what causes that fear and so might motivate in terms of policy attention. If the fear emanates from Russia, that fear will not necessarily be felt by all and if it is might be felt to different degrees and therefore to different effects. For fear can emanate from more than one direction or actor. The longer history of the European Neighbourhood Policy tells us this, with some tension existing in terms of where the greater threat lay: to the east or to the south of the EU. In understanding the differing responses to the annexation of Crimea and the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the so-called immigration crisis holds some weight. For the southern, Mediterranean EU member states, Russia felt like far less than a threat than that caused by a flow of refugees as a result of conflicts to the south of the EU, not least Syria.

We treat anger as indicative of a judgment that the action prompting the anger was bad (Spelman in Ahmed 2004) and therefore calling for an opposing response. Anger expressed but not followed up

on would be indicative of incapacity, or unwillingness, or, in the case of a multilateral organisation, a failure to reach consensus on the nature of response called for, all of these a fit with the emotion-action gap identified by Smith (2021). The ephemeral nature of emotions is perhaps best understood in relation to anger, portrayed so often as an emotion felt in the heat of a moment. Here, we see anger expressed in relation to particular time-constrained events but we see that anger portrayed too in relation to a pattern of events. In that sense, it too has a sustained character. This, we would suggest, has significance for questions about how easily this emotion, like fear, can be set aside. Friedrich's (2022) work on how anger is managed in cases of historical injustice is highly relevant here, emphasising the role of apology, recognition and reconciliation, and how these seemingly established and widely approved actions could reinforce and preserve victimhood and power hierarchy.

In respect of the more positive emotions identified, sympathy and its corollary of solidarity, we do not depart from understanding these in the manner set out in the Introduction to this SI. We look, however, for solidarity as expressed and acted upon in respect of the in-group (the EU), Ukraine and other third countries. Here we see most evidence of expressions of emotions as being both genuinely felt and rationally directed – an attempt to reassure and/or to persuade. These emotions are revealing of how attempts are made to ensure that those not within the in-group are brought into the group and therefore of how emotions can be used to extend the identity of the in-group to others.

Exploring Emotions

Much has been said by scholars in relation to *how* one can determine whether and what emotions are in play in the minds and hearts of any actor. Emotions became more a focus for analysis as persuasive arguments were made about discourse as a viable and valuable analytical source. We also see the value of a focus on discourse, even while seeing something of a paradox, for, where the expression of emotions is considered to be a rational choice, and particularly where they are used instrumentally, it follows that actors will understand the appropriateness of the expression of emotions and the limits to those. They will understand too how arguments can be dismissed on the basis of being emotive rather than factual. To illustrate the point, in April 2022 in relation to draft resolution A/ES-11/L.4 put forward to suspend Russia's rights of membership of the United National Human Rights Council, Mr Kuzmin, speaking for the Russian Federation said, "This is not the right time or place for being theatrically pathetic in the manner of the Ukrainian representative. I will

therefore speak to the point” (UN General Assembly 7 April 2022). Whatever the accuracy or inaccuracy of Kuzmin’s words, it is not unrealistic to think that actors will curb their language in order to appeal to and persuade others. In other words, the absence of a particular expression of emotions is not evidence of the lack of such emotions being held, it may be nothing more than evidence of an actor understanding what may or may not persuade those they seek to persuade. This is not to say that discourse analysis is not a potentially fruitful endeavour, we simply say that in the absence of such evidence, we should also look to actions to see if we can find evidence of deeply held emotions in them. We therefore proceed by examining both discourse and actions in order to determine the extent to which a particular emotion is held. Actions outside the framework can also be used as indicators of where EU member states stand when all or the vast majority of EU member states belong to a particular organisation. We consider discourse and actions within organisations such as the UN but also NATO. All but four of the EU member states are now (in the case of Sweden very soon to be) members of NATO and all four of those maintain close ties with the Organisation. When considering an emotion such as fear, it is sensible too to look at actions taken in relation to security and defence, which are obviously closely connected to foreign policy.

Whose Emotions Matter and When?

In answering the question about whose emotions are at play, as already suggested, we argue that there is a pre-existing tension that was at one point, around the time of the Big Bang enlargement, captured by discourses about the division of Europe into New and Old. This designation is problematic, of course, but serves to connect us back to an understanding of a time when despite their “return to Europe”, the states of central and eastern Europe (better extended and conceptualised now as North, Central and Eastern European states (NCEEs)) were rule-takers, including in respect of the EU’s relations with others, not least Russia. This was not, in many ways, a reconcilable position for the Baltic States, Czechia, Finland, (Hungary), Poland, Romania and Slovakia, for which the prevailing emotion towards Russia, shaped by their historical relations, was *fear*. In turn, this inevitably narrowed perceptions of what was possible, in sharp contrast to western European EU member states (MSs).

In the early 1990s the then EU-12 treated those eastwards of them in Europe in a one-size fits all fashion by providing guidance and aid to those former socialist bloc countries, including the former USSR republics and Russia, that they regarded as turning towards democracy and the rule of law. At this time, the EU-12 had positive emotions toward Russia as a possible partner, as captured in the

Common Europe idea. Putin's 2007 Munich Speech is largely seen now as the point when the EU-Russia relationship began to deteriorate. That deterioration was not unrelated to the NATO-Russia relationship, especially as a result of the enlargement of NATO. Russia's dissatisfaction and anger was evident with its invasion of Georgia in 2008, a time that divided the EU member states but which was ultimately seen as reflecting mistakes on all sides. A line would later be drawn from Georgia in 2008 to Ukraine in 2014. And there were domestic developments in Russia too that signalled a near full retreat from democracy. Still, outwardly, pragmatism in the EU policy toward Russia prevailed with hopes for liberal forces and civil society in Russia working effectively to prevent authoritative slip of the country.

Until most recently, few would dispute the idea that certain member states in the EU mattered more when it came to the bigger policy decisions. Notwithstanding the intergovernmentalism that still prevails in relation to the CFSP and CSDP, the UK and France dominated these policy areas, Germany EMU, while the Franco-German axis was one around which other member states largely revolved, a pattern in EU relations set in motion from its earliest days. With the exit of the UK, the full scale invasion of Ukraine and the highly discredited response of Germany to that invasion, some room was made for other states to step into the breach when it came to foreign relations, especially those with Russia. With the war also having an impact on the economic and energy sectors, on food production and refugee, this offered scope for the NCEES and others to have their voice be heard in relation to a wide range of policy areas. As a result, there has been a good deal of speculation about whether the centre of gravity in EU foreign policy decision-making is shifting eastwards.

As for the question of when emotions matter; of when we see - and feel - it is alright to unbottle emotions, two factors matter for politicians and diplomats. The first is when their publics are themselves outraged by certain actions or behaviours. We saw this very visibly in 2014 with the downing of Flight MH17 and the response, particularly of the Netherlands, who suffered most casualties, but extended to others as well, partly in solidarity with all victims. The other condition, however, is when an empathetic response is evoked. This was an incident which everyone could relate to - it was a short step to imagining ourselves being directly affected. Under such conditions, it is difficult for state actors *not* to feel emotions and to respond in respect of them. Indeed, such things provide justification for actions and enable any actor to respond and overcome existing constraints.

The EU and Its Member States: Emotions of the Past and Present towards Russia

Since 24 February 2022, a host of negative emotions towards Russia has been unbottled. By this we mean the full scale war started by Russia that released all actors from those mechanisms that usually constrain them, amid news on the horrendous nature of the war wreaked by Russia on Ukraine, as well the loss of hope for any prospects within Russia of mass protests that could effect a change of policy from within. The dominant emotions in the EU towards Russia are anger and fear, negative emotions that were clearly and decisively converted into actions that took the Russian leadership by surprise. Anger with Russia's full scale aggression against Ukraine and the massive violations of international norms and in particular International Humanitarian Law (war crimes) that followed led to the most comprehensive sanctions against Russia taken in a very contracted period of time with little disagreement among EU member states as to their necessity and appropriateness. (It must be remembered that the CFSP requires unanimity among the European Council for such decisions.) To underline further the seriousness with which they approached the sanctions, the European Commission created a special EU Sanctions Whistleblower Tool, that allows anonymous reporting on any EU sanctions violations by EU MSs (European Commission n/d).

Eleven packages of EU sanctions against Russia are very different from the personal and sectoral sanctions of 2014 and some sanctions that the EU introduced before 2022, an indication of the depth of the anger (and repulsion) felt towards Russia after February 2022. Between 21/03/2014 and 23/06/2023, the European Council took 74 decisions "concerning restrictive measures in respect of actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine" toward Russia. The decisions reflect the dynamics of the Russia-Ukraine conflict and its major developments and deterioration of the situation. The major restrictions were taken during 2014 and then they were routinely renewed each six months. In 2022, the sanctions became the most comprehensive and exceeded any previous level - 22 decisions (Council of the European Union 2023). According to the information provided, the European Commission sanctions toward Russia covered all the main types of restrictions under multiple categories - chemical weapons, cyber-attacks, human rights and terrorism.

The most concern and anger that the EU expressed toward Russia before 2022 was connected to violations of human rights norms and the drift in the Russian political system from principles of democracy and rule of law. Yet, this anger was not always easily channelled into united action by the

EU. We can recall several cases when human rights violations by Russia led to coordinated actions by the EU. For example, the so-called European Magnitsky Act was discussed in 2016, but only finally approved by the European Council in December 2020 following the poisoning of Alexey Navalny in August 2020 in Russia, saying something about what kind of violation of international norms was needed to forge a consensus on creating such a human rights regime within the EU (European Parliament 2023). The decision and regulation (concerning restrictive measures against serious human rights violations and abuses) established a global EU sanctions regime for serious human rights violations and abuses (Council of the European Union 2020) but took almost four years and there were several occasions when the EP suggested that the Council should take a decision based on qualified majority in cases of human rights violation, rather than unanimity (European Parliament 2023).

Fear of Russian actions has been felt unevenly through the EU, both in geographical and temporal terms. Fear was most notably expressed via expressions of insecurity due to a perception of a continued Russian threat to its former allies in the Eastern bloc that led those countries to join NATO before they became EU MSs in 2000s. That same fear drove both the Finnish and Swedish requests for NATO membership as well as the swift decision of nearly all EU member states¹ of NATO to support their applications. Fear came for many reasons: of possible escalation of the conflict to other parts of Europe, of nuclear war, of accidental nuclear accident, driving the EU member states to provide massive humanitarian and military aid to Ukraine to make it able to fight against a stronger foe. At the same time, the EU maintains communication with Russia in regard to a possible ceasefire, information on nuclear safety, the 'grain deal', and humanitarian issues such as prisoners of war exchange or establishing humanitarian corridors for civilians to leave fighting areas. Thus, even in the direst of times with negative emotions predominating, that fear and anger has been *acknowledged* and *managed*. Looking back to the period of the 1990s and 2000s, we can identify a clear division of labour between the EU and NATO in respect of enlargement eastwards: the EU for political and economic development and integration; NATO to provide security guarantees. In 2016, the EU and NATO announced a "new era of interaction", including, capacity-building for partners to the south and east (EU-NATO 2020) and in the present day, we are witnessing an extended level of cooperation between the EU and NATO, as set out in the January 2023 Joint Declaration and the launch of a new task force (NATO 2023). Developments in the relationship and in the EU towards more strategic autonomy bear watching since for the NCEEs, NATO remains the key security actor and any perceived attempt to build the EU's CSDP will be carefully watched to ensure it does not come at the cost of NATO. This feeling is exemplified by the words of Estonian Prime Minister Kaja Kallas,

¹ Hungary was the exception here but eventually offered its support.

I'm really confident that any gray zone in Europe is a source of conflict and war and, actually, the only security guarantee that really works is NATO. And I can tell this by my own country's history: The reason we are not living through some really dark times right now is because we are in NATO, and that is important. (NATO Newsroom 28 Jun 2023.)

It is supported too by Pew surveys on Poland, which show a correlation between fear of Russia and support for stronger relations with the US, suggesting a relationship between group emotions and their foreign policy and security preferences. In 2017 and 2018, 65% of Poles considered that Russia constituted a “major threat” to Poland, by June 2022, that had risen to 94%.

A major feature in the discourse of the EU since February 2022 has been “solidarity”, closely connected to the sympathy expressed by EU citizens for Ukrainians. That solidarity extends across the citizenship of EU states, among political elites and to Brussels itself. The Eurobarometer survey of spring 2022 showed that the majority of EU citizens felt sympathy towards Ukrainians (around 90%, ranging from 73% in Bulgaria to 95% in Finland and Malta (Eurobarometer 2022), and also that they approved the actions of the EU institutions. The European Commission’s web page that sets out the details of the support given to Ukraine and Ukrainians to date is entitled “EU Solidarity with Ukraine. The EU Stands with Ukraine”. From there, you can find factsheets on EU solidarity with Ukraine and key documents: EU solidarity with Ukraine. In short, we are bombarded with the solidarity narrative. Solidarity has been expressed in many ways by many member states, through both discourse and action. It is talked about in relation to solidarity within the EU (European Parliament 4 May 2022). There have also been visible attempts to ensure that messages of solidarity extend to other states affected by the conflict. At the July 2023 meeting, for instance, Mr De Rivière for France spoke of Russia’s “murderous strikes” on the Odesa region in Ukraine and of France’s commitment “to provide food aid to the populations affected by this food blackmail, through its deliveries of grain and fertilizers and through the European Union’s solidarity corridors” (UNSC 26 July 2023). De Rivière referred also to UNESCO and the “Ukrainian heritage” as “the universal heritage of humanity” (ibid). In such discourse, we see recognition of the need to address others in terms of making the war feel more personally connected to them, and by talking in global commons terms about how the loss of any country’s heritage is a loss to us all. Without wanting to suggest Mr De Rivière spoke in a purely instrumental way, the EU member states have been given plenty of reason within the UN to know that not all third countries consider Russia to be solely responsible for the war.

Other European states have also been the target of messaging designed to reassure them they are not forgotten. On 31 May 2023, Ursula von der Leyen announced that the EU should demonstrate real

solidarity towards Western Balkan countries, as the example of Ukraine teaches the EU not to have a long waiting period for candidate countries, and that EU enlargement should again be on the EU agenda (von der Leyen 2023). This statement demonstrates that the war is pushing the EU to look at the candidate and potential candidate states more decisively, a clear turning point from the nature of the Eastern Partnership, now making a clear claim for further EU enlargement that is grounded in a sense of *responsibility* for the countries of the region – and fear that they may otherwise be lost to Russian interference and influence, with security implications for the EU. This is consistent with a closing of the emotions-action gap (Smith 2021) and goes a little way towards addressing the inadequacy of the EU's response in 2014 until 2022, a period in which we saw the clear limits of solidarity and the failure of Brussels and western EU member states to listen to those NCEE voices when they spoke about Russia – its nature and intentions. This is of some consolation to the Baltic states, who might be forgiven for asking why it took so long for that solidarity to emerge. Nevertheless, achieving solidarity inside the EU has been far less problematic since the full-scale invasion.

This has been remarked upon by some state representatives from the NCEES. At the second of the Lithuanian-Dutch Foreign Affairs and Security Conferences, Mr Žygimantas Pavilionis, Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee in the Parliament of Lithuania opened his remarks by talking about what an emotional moment this was for him. He referred to having been in Clingendael 29 years ago, of his life as being largely 30 years of struggle, as having being brought physically to Brussels in 1994 by the Clingendael team, to NATO, to the European Commission. He spoke too of being of the "so-called School of January 13", of standing next to his friends as Soviet tanks rolled in, of losing friends and of remembering the feeling of hopelessness. But then of being inspired, of dreaming of that never happening again and of integrating into NATO and the EU to ensure that. He then compared Munich 1939 to Munich 2007 – Putin's Munich speech and of it being clear that Putin was not instilled with the same Clingendael spirit. He went on to talk about how the West appeased Russia (and China), even while they were poisoning people and killing Chechens. He spoke of how the Poles and the Lithuanians warned of what would happen, of how he was laughed at. Pavilionis stopped barely short of saying "I told you so".

Others from the Baltics have had no such compunction. The former Estonian President, Toomas Ilves speaks of how Estonia employs a "we told you so narrative" (in McLaughlin, 2022) towards other EU (and western) states. At the same time, this is not to say that Estonian emotions are not deeply felt. Ilves went on to speak of the response of Estonia to Ukraine as an empathetic one, "We know what it's about" (ibid). This bears out the arguments in the SI introduction as concerns institutional

memories, whereby a sense of a shared history prescribes the perception of other actors towards those suffering a conflict or crisis. In this case, we see Estonia (and Czechia, Finland, Lithuania and Poland) expressing not only solidarity with Ukraine but anger, sometimes hatred, towards Russia. The “I told you so” narrative is suggestive too of resentment towards those EU MSs and Brussels for not having listened. That resentment extends further back than the EU’s 2014-2022 actions, to 2008 and the invasion of Georgia. Those differing responses are easily attributable to the differing institutional memories: the dividing line resting on those who suffered trauma at the hands of Russia compared to those western European countries that did not and so adopted cooperative modes based on the pursuit of (posited) rational and pragmatic interests (France, Germany, Italy +). These different institutional memories have produced quite different expectations and forecasts towards Russia over the last three decades.

The Baltic states have also come out very strongly in support of Ukraine’s EU membership. In March 2022, less than a month after the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the Lithuanian Minister of Foreign Affairs Gabrielius Landsbergis, argued that no time should be lost in ensuring Ukraine’s accession to the EU, saying that Ukraine

and Europe are at a special, incomparable moment - one of the major turning points in history. Ukraine is fighting for its own and for European security, and is defending European values. We have to bear this in mind when assessing prospects for Ukraine’s EU membership. This extraordinary situation requires extraordinary measures and solutions” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania 2022).

In this short statement, Landsbergis sought to situate Ukraine as part of the EU in-group, evoking the security and values not only of Ukraine but of all Europe - and the history and future of all Europe.

For western European countries, values and pragmatism had combined at one point to assist them in overcoming their own violent and conflictual histories. Belgium, France, the Netherlands had suffered enormously at the hands of Germany in two devastating world wars. Their vision of a relationship with Russia that brought it into close cooperation with the rest of Europe was founded in their own experiences of overcoming their past and working together for shared benefits. Such thinking was, of course, entirely consistent with the EU identity constructed from the very first days of the European Coal and Steel Community. But, tellingly, this also speaks to the pitfalls of those incidental emotions where actors may rely on their experiences even when wholly unapplicable to the situation at hand. Seen from the NCEE point of view, such policies either forced or were indicative of a certain amnesia or emotionlessness towards Russia.

This was particularly confounding in the context of a general and deep understanding that they sought membership of these organisations in order to ensure both their hard and soft security (from Russia). In a paradoxical turn, the NCEEs were admitted to both the EU and NATO but were also expected to embrace the “end of history”. In their project working with a group of scholars mapping the EU member states’ relation with Russia, it was not for nothing that David, Gower and Haukkala (2012: 8) spoke of “Poland’s growing realization that its place in the EU and indeed the wider Euro–Atlantic context [was] largely predicated on Warsaw’s ability to normalize its relations with Russia”. Poland was not alone in being disappointed at coming up against expectations of relations with Russia that did not tally with their experiences and fears. In summarizing Micu’s findings on Romania, David, Gower and Haukkala concluded that, “To a large extent, Romanian antipathy to Russia has been overcome both by the need to co-operate and the realization that it was failing to upload its concerns to the EU successfully because of a perception that it was not a constructive player”. At the same time, Micu had noted Romania’s preference for conducting relations with Russia through relevant multilateral fora, arguing this was especially so where they might result in losses for Russia.

The NCEEs dealt with Russia in myriad ways, Finland’s neutrality the price it paid to prevent occupation. While the Finns prior to 2014 did treat with Russia on a pragmatic basis, it was also a clear-eyed pragmatism. One of the striking own goals of Russia’s 2022 invasion has been “more NATO” of course. This was not the moment that Finland saw Russia as an untrustworthy neighbour but it was the moment it felt simultaneously endangered enough to want NATO protection (see Table 1 below) and safe enough to pursue it. In short, it was the moment it felt it could close its emotions-action gap when it came to relations with Russia.

“Even though Russia has its own problems, Finns have no reason to take a negative attitude to this big neighbour” (%)

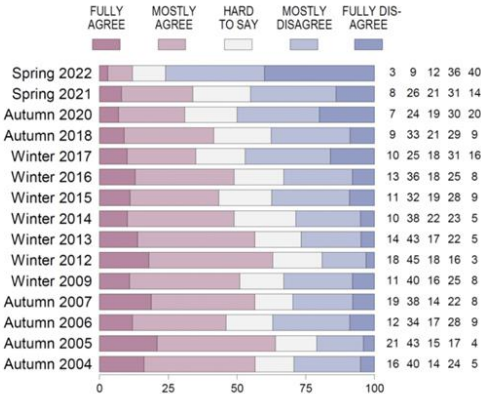


Table 1 Finnish Public Opinion towards Russia
Source:

Nevertheless, we underline the fact of this risk for the EU, that in reckoning with the force of now unbottled emotions within it will not reckon with the force of unbottled emotions without. Given our intention to think about the future relationship, we would emphasise the need to think about who will form the government of a Russia that the EU will once again be able to do business with, even to rebuild a strategic partnership. While we understand the voices of those who call for Russia - and by extension Russians - to spend a century in the wilderness, we ask too about the limits of our emotional response and argue that we will need to turn some of the research questions set out in this special issue to the Russian space too, to ask whose emotions matter and who decides.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

As we near our conclusions, we return to thinking about the nature of foreign policy itself. Hermann speaks of 'the essence of foreign policy as a sequence of exchanges' (1995: 256). Snyder, Bruck and Sapin's (1954) work on action-reaction-interaction modelling emphasised the importance of understanding the way the actor defines their situation, so making definition of situation crucial to an analysis of decision-making. It has become clear even for those not focused on the EU-Russia relationship that that definition of situation has, especially for most of the former Soviet or Warsaw Pact EU member states, been impossible to separate from their memories of past trauma in their relations with Russia, whether in its tsarist, Soviet or contemporary Russian form. In the time since February 2022, we have seen not only an acknowledgement of this in many other national capitals but a response to it. Within the EU, those states who have been dealing with the emotions instilled by their long histories of dealing with Russia have found themselves in a state of better emotional readiness than their counterparts elsewhere in the EU who spent (and continue to spend) many months reeling from their shock and dismay at what Russia was doing to Ukraine and what this meant for greater European security. This *has* been instrumentalised to an extent, as we saw with Ilves above.

We have essentially questioned too the extent to which emotions arising in respect of a crisis are shared among actors even within an in-group. We do not contest the idea that at some level feelings are shared when actors are faced with terrible events like those of the downing of MH17 or the massacre at Bucha, but this does not necessarily mean precisely the same emotions are triggered, felt as deeply or connected to prior thinking and emotions about the perpetrator of the act that is reviled. Membership of the EU does not erase those emotions that exist as a result of past histories and each member state's history is not precisely shared with all others. This is true for the NCEEs but

can be seen too in the comparative histories of others, Greece, Portugal and Spain, for example, compared to the Benelux countries. Any claim to EU member states having a shared history must have clear limits, which has implications for their shared reaction to crisis and emotions in respect of it. While a desire to become part of the group may result in the suppression of emotions, or at least the expression of them, when a crisis occurs that results in the enabling – the unbottling - of long-held and deeply-felt emotions, such as fear, we should not assume that all actors will agree whether and when a crisis is over, or that they will be able to return to the status quo ante, emotions-wise, and therefore not policy-wise.

At the same time, the depth of the crisis the intensified war has engendered means that even as Russia continues to weaponise emotions, an unintended consequence is that we are witnessing a reconciliation *with* and *of* emotions within the EU itself, even as we are witnessing a widening gap of emotions between the EU and Russia. In other words, we say there are benefits from the emotional turn, it brings greater understanding, more empathic relations within the EU, finally that unity that had always had a Holy Grail quality to it. Will the EU and its member states persist in this emotional turn, channelling emotions and letting them inform policy choices that might be less about the pursuit of interests and more the pursuit of values? Or will we see a return to a pre-2014, or even pre-2022 state where emotions were something to be put aside, as obstacles to the pursuit of a certain conception of the future, of a certain, preferred, conception of Russia, to the pursuit of economic interests. The rules of negotiation and conflict resolution teach that emotions should be taken into consideration during the negotiation process, mistrust and negative emotions managed sensitively when the time comes. That sensitivity must extend to the emotions of the Russian people too, in order to avoid a ‘forever war’.

Looking beyond EU-Russia relations alone, we are seeing signs already that some EU member states are cleaving to the idea of the EU as a values-driven actor and, drawing on this, as well as their own past history of having their sovereignty denied, to enact a foreign policy that defends the rights of others against those who seek to breach them. Lithuania’s actions towards Taiwan in the face of Chinese ire are a sign that it at least is willing to make connections and to build a foreign policy that is consistent in its promotion and protection of values. Whether Lithuania will persuade others to such a path is a matter for speculation but this state at least is demonstrating what conclusions it has drawn about what the EU should feel about threats to the sovereignty of others and what it feels the EU should do in such circumstances too. At the same time, we have seen Poland, another state with a deeply complicated and antagonistic relationship with Russia, has directed its emotions towards building its security and defence budget, to intensified militarisation and to achieving deterrence

through a show of strength and determination. As in its treatment of refugees, there is no evidence that Poland's empathy extends to any outside Europe.

To date, Brussels has managed competing ideas about best responses to Russia's war on Ukraine to good effect, not least because after February 24th 2022, it was all but impossible to argue that Russia was still an actor the EU could reason with, as Germany quickly found. But if faced simultaneously with a competing crisis of a similar magnitude, a crisis that is similarly emotive for another subset of member states, we should not assume that the solidarity and unity largely seen in response to Russia will hold. This is particularly the case if the war is continuing but Ukraine making little progress. It is not impossible either, especially given the connections between emotions and rationality, that a new crisis event may give rise to new emotions that necessitate the putting aside of some feelings because there is a more apparent and immediate danger to overcome. This was seen, for instance, in the eventual accommodation made between the West and Russia during WWII (although that same event reminds us that once the crisis is over, the old feelings and responses can re-emerge). The larger point is that under this type of condition the NCEEs might find themselves in a minority in terms of what should prevail, under pressure to rebottle their emotions in order to facilitate a peace process that will in turn allow the EU to shift its attention to another crisis. But if emotions are a "driver of behaviour", as stated in the Introduction to this SI, it follows that a forced retreat from that behaviour that reflects those emotions has capacity to cause resentment and dissension in future foreign policy terms.

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