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Russia's war on Ukraine: unbottled emotions and the conditioning of the EU's Russia policy

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ABSTRACT

This article explores those emotions conditioning the EU's response to Russia's 24 February 2022 invasion of Ukraine. We argue that the invasion resulted in an unbottling of some member states' previously pent-up emotions, impacting the range of policy responses available to the EU in its Russia relations. We examine this unbottling to understand what this means for EU foreign policy, generally, and the EU's Russia policy. We focus on anger and fear as identifiable emotions in the EU response to Russia's norm violations in Ukraine; and on sympathy and solidarity as corresponding emotions directed towards Ukraine. Exploration of Eurobarometer surveys and European Parliamentary debates in the 2022–2024 period allows us to identify different intensity of feelings towards Russia, resulting from unequal exposure to Russia's past and present aggression. Managing these competing emotions offers a complex challenge for the EU when decisions are made regarding its potential constitutional and institutional transformation.

KEYWORDS

Ukraine; war; EU; Russia; emotions; EU foreign policy

Introduction

Russia's war on Ukraine constitutes a major inter-state war on European territory that has brought an estimated 30, 457 civilian casualties, including 10, 582 dead in the period from February 24 (O'Leary 2022) to February 15 2024 (Statista 2024). Appalling massacres, such as that in Bucha in April 2022 have captured global headlines (see, for example, Mirovalev 2022), while an arrest warrant for war crimes against President Putin was issued by the International Criminal Court in 2023 (ICC 2023). For many of the EU member states, this has invoked references to historical traumas, especially in the period from 1939–1991 (Wawrzyński 2012). We argue that, as a result, we have witnessed an unbottling (a release of previously pent-up) of emotions in the EU, particularly among those member states located in North, Central and Eastern Europe (NCEE) but also in the EU more widely. In the opening article to this special issue (SI), Gürkan and Terzi (2024) posed a primary research question: what is the role of emotions in the EU's response to norm violations? Further, they asked two sub-questions: what are the conditions by which emotions enable or constrain the EU?; which member states' emotions matter? To answer the editors'

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questions, we consider EU emotions in the context of the Russo-Ukrainian war, as an example of a violation of norms. We identify a range of EU responses, arguing they constitute clear expressions of four emotions that were then converted into EU actions. Through an examination of European Parliamentary discourse and public opinion as expressed in Eurobarometer surveys, we observe two major negative emotions unbottled towards Russia: anger and fear; and two positive emotions towards Ukraine: sympathy and solidarity. By focusing on the EU, we examine group emotions, but our analysis identifies also a qualitative difference in the intensity and likely endurance of emotion felt by some of the NCEEs that has implications for future EU foreign policy generally and its Russia policy in particular.

In line with the introductory article to this special issue, we focus on 'norm violations as breaches of normatively desirable behaviour' (Gürkan and Terzi 2024), in what constitutes an 'emotional period' in the EU. The impact of the war on the EU is felt already in changes to the EU 'peace project' identity curated so carefully after World War II (Koschut 2024). European Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen, addressing the European Parliament, has spoken of how 'many European illusions have been shattered. The illusion that peace is permanent. [. . .] The illusion that Europe on its own was doing enough on security . . . it is clear there is no room for any more illusions' (European Parliament 2024b). For some member states, notably Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland, their historical experiences were of such a traumatic nature that for decades, even centuries, they had long held no illusions about Russia (Wawrzyński 2012). We explore the idea that the emotions held by member states may be so qualitatively different as to result in incompatible ideas about the very identity of the EU, as we reveal in our exploration of debates about the militarisation of the EU (see also European Parliament 2024b; Hofer 2023), its future enlargement and related constitutional and institutional changes. Already, however, 'Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine has fundamentally changed the EU enlargement policy's context and the Union's functioning' (Kaeding, Pollak and Schmidt 2024: xi).

Cementing these fundamental changes will require member states' consent, meaning some insight into what Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) and the publics they represent is needed if we are to understand where the EU is more enabled or more constrained in its policy preferences. A focus on MEPs and public opinion also allows us to identify differences in the nature and intensity of group emotions across a range of member states. In determining the reasons for different support for certain responses, we concur with the editors when they say member states appraise both the situation and suitable response according to their own 'pre-existing emotions and cultural norms, values and beliefs' (Gürkan and Terzi 2024). Our identification of the emotions at play is prompted by both what is said and by the EU's response to Russia's unprovoked aggression against Ukraine. That response, as articulated by German Green MEP Sergey Lagodinsky (in McMahon 2024), falls into three parts: i) greater EU unity; ii) an acknowledgement of the threat posed by Russia to the EU; iii) and a revival of the EU's enlargement policy. When these are referred to in those debates and surveys that we examine, we observe tensions over the EU's policy responses: enlargement; the provision of military support for Ukraine; the mooted transformation of the EU's identity to military actor (see also Della Sala 2023): tensions that have implications for EU decision-making.

In the concluding section, we consider possibilities for the future of EU-Russia relations, arguing that very different possibilities will stand, depending on *whose* ideas about that future dominate. The war in Ukraine simultaneously exacerbated existing problems for the EU on security, energy, the economy and migration – all having uneven effects on the member states. Parliamentary debates and surveys confirm some member states are concerned about crises other than the war, creating pressure to make room already for others' emotions as they relate to other ongoing crises or fears of future crises. Current expressions of emotions felt in respect of other crises offer scope to consider ramifications for relations among the member states and for EU foreign policy decision-making in a post-war rebuilding – or not – of relations with Russia. We ask also, therefore, what would be the conditions under which the member states will be able and willing to rebottle their emotions amid the possibility of 'a return to business as usual' with Russia?

Before proceeding to the analysis, in the next section, we set out our interpretations of those key concepts or aspects thereof that are not discussed in the introduction to the SI and the methods used to identify the four emotions outlined above, namely, fear, anger, sympathy, solidarity, and to determine their significance for the EU's foreign policy, particularly its Russia policy.

Concepts, method and data

Trauma

Gürkan and Terzi (2024) ask what explains the difference between the EU's response to the 2014 Crimean annexation and the war of 2022. Where they connect norms-norms violations-emotions/indifference-actions/inaction, we treat the response in 2014 as just *relatively* indifferent compared to 2022 but in both cases, there was action in response to norm violations. In 2014, the Kremlin attempted to maintain plausible deniability by denying accusations that the 'little green men' in Crimea were Russian military troops (Galeotti 2015). In 2022, there was no attempt to disguise the insignia of the Russian troops, albeit further attempts at obfuscation came with the language of 'special military operation' rather than war. Beyond these examples of what are better considered *im*plausible denial, we would argue three things explain the difference: i) the extent of the norm violations; ii) the nature of the norm violations; iii) the proximity of the norm violations to EU borders. In 2022, the full-scale invasion of Ukraine was more extensive and its brutal nature would see Russia accused of war crimes. This invasion moved Russian military closer to EU borders, including incursions into NATO air space (NATO 2024). The issues at stake remained the same, 2022 a continuation of the war begun in 2014, which had for too long been treated by many in the EU as a Ukrainian crisis but was now accepted as threatening security stability in Europe.

For Latvia, Lithuania and Poland, the 2014 invasion immediately roused the traumatic collective memory related to historical aggressions committed by Russia/the USSR, a history that had driven them to join NATO in the first place. In March 2014, they failed in their attempt to trigger NATO's Article 4 (Brzozowski 2021) but their fears were nevertheless recognised by NATO deploying battlegroups to their territories. Estonian Prime Minister Kaja Kallas reaffirmed NATO's importance, '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' (NATO Newsroom 2023). That sense of trauma derived from past totalitarian experiences (Wawrzyński 2012 18) was fully illustrated on the occasion of Gorbachev's death in 2022 when the Lithuanian Foreign Minister said,

> 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)

This contrasted sharply with western European eulogies of Gorbachev, for example, 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).

Researchers recognise the detrimental effects of seeing trauma as something situated in the past, seeing trauma instead as ongoing in situations where there is 'an enduringly violent context' (Stevens et al. 2013, 76). This is understood too by historians, Trouillot (1995, 15), saying: 'The past – or, more accurately, pastness – is a position. Thus in no way can we identify the past as *past*'. The continuous traumatic stress frame facilitates understandings of trauma as being 'deeply psychopolitical in nature' (Stevens et al. 2013, 78), as affecting individuals *and* communities and as having potential to result in 'potentially pathological responses' to 'current and future contextual threats to well-being' (Stevens et al. 2013, 78). Shared traumas do not automatically result in shared appraisals of what constitutes an appropriate response to any wrongs committed, such that what might look pathological would be better regarded as 'adaptive and normative' (Diamond, Lipsitz, and Hoffman 2013). Insights from the continuous traumatic stress literature are important for understanding the differing impulses for certain actions or inactions among member states as the war continues (Friedrich 2022).

Emotions

Regarding emotions, we agree with the well-established notion that 'emotion and reason' are 'inextricably linked' (Sasley 2011, 118). But, connecting emotions with rationality does not mean emotions are only wielded in a conscious, even instrumental fashion, as is implicit, sometimes explicit, in some analyses. We are concerned about a conceptualisation of emotions in international politics that sees them being used deliberately *only* as instruments of diplomatic power. In his theorisation of 'emotional diplomacy' (Hall 2015), where he focuses on three emotions: anger, sympathy, and guilt, Hall does not deny such emotions can be sincerely felt. Rather, he distinguishes between the emotions of individuals, including individual policymakers, and then official, strategic 'displays of emotional behavior' (Hall 2015, 29). This distinction is an important one for our purposes. Since 2022, we have clearly seen the expression of anger and sympathy and responses to them, but we shy away from any impression of suggesting those emotions cannot be genuine and deeply felt. In the case of EU-Russia relations, the largest obstacle to the EU's attempts to build a unified Russia policy have been divergences among the member states, only now is the EU grappling with understanding the depth of emotions felt by *some* states.

Rationality has to be understood in a subjective, not objective fashion. Political actors might employ the means of emotional diplomacy (Hall 2015) to demonstrate certain feelings; in the multilateral, norm-claiming EU context, this may be both necessary and performed in a positive fashion. But we must consider whether, especially amid major norm violations, we are *over*-rationalising, failing to realise how certain emotions, especially those that emerge from sustained historical traumas, inform behaviour in less an aware and calculated fashion than a reflexive and subconscious one. This is not least because 'emotion is not merely a tool of rationality but instead is necessary to rationality' (Mercer 2005, 93), captured in the idea that 'incidental emotions arise from past situations' (Renshon and Lerner 2012). Ikle discussed emotions as tied to the past and future, shaping international negotiations, referring to 'anger, resentment and hatred' (Ikle 1999). In debates about whether and when Ukraine should begin peace negotiations with Russia, we see already varying levels of patience among member states with the continuance of the war, foretelling a conflict of emotions.

The SI editors speak of how, 'the emotion that is to emerge and the subsequent action [. . .] depend on the interest at stake at a certain moment' (Gürkan and Terzi 2024) But for those experiencing lasting trauma, the interest at stake has been and will continue to be protection from Russia. Under combined circumstances of continuous traumatic stress for some and extreme norm violations, the 'action tendencies' (Gürkan and Terzi 2024) may for now reflect more the wishes of the NCEES – but for how long? There may have been a convergence of concerns since February 2022 but any later divergence that leaves the NCEEs alone again with their 'concern' will have longer term consequences for unity in the EU, indicating a need for an ongoing process of solidarity-building. Thus, solidarity functions less as a deep-felt emotion than a strategic narrative, 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' (see Roselle, Miskimmon and O'Loughlin 2014: 2). In this situation, we *can* discern the purely instrumental use of emotion to aid in shared identity-building but it stems from an undeniable recognition of deeply-held emotions. Solidarity may rest, therefore, on a durable image of Russia as the enemy.

Research on emotions and historical trauma suggests a long process of identity-building, emotions used to construct and reinforce narratives and to achieve transformation from individual to collective memories. Time and language – and communication that speaks to the group identity – are fundamental parts of the process, something visibly recognised in von der Leyen's discourse at least.

Anger, fear, sympathy and solidarity

Fear has been the underpinning emotion for all of the member states since February 2022. That fear was expressed most clearly by some of the NCEEs, with: Finland's and Sweden's accession to NATO; the huge increase in the Polish Defence budget; the Baltic states' 2022 request for a stronger NATO presence on their territories (O'Leary 2022). Fear is seen as a galvanising emotion, an antidote to those aspects of democratic political traditions that foster apathy and complacency (Robin 2004): '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' (Robin 2004, 928). For those seeking deeper and more extensive foreign policy integration, fear is a motivating emotion, worth instrumentalising 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.

We treat anger as indicative of a judgment that the action (for example a norm violation) prompting the anger was bad (Spelman in Ahmed 2004) and therefore calling for an opposing response. Anger expressed but not resolved would be indicative of incapacity, or unwillingness, or a failure to reach consensus on the nature of response called for, all of these a fit with an emotion-action gap (Smith 2021). The ephemeral nature of emotions is perhaps best understood in relation to anger, often portrayed as an emotion felt in a heated moment. But for those affected by continuous traumatic stress, it is more enduring; more fleeting for those unaffected. This 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, emphasising the role of apology, recognition, reconciliation. Currently, for the NCEEs at least, the longer historical pattern of Russia not engaging in such reconciliation processes hints at reasons to think of anger as a sustained emotion.

As for sympathy and its corollary of solidarity, they depend on how another person's feelings or actions are appraised or considered (Gürkan and Terzi 2024), and underline the EU's collective nature where shared values and norms constitute a manifested unity among member states. We look for solidarity as expressed and acted upon in respect of those *not* within the in-group (e.g. Ukraine). Unlike Gürkan (2024), we treat sympathy and solidarity as separate emotions, with sympathy expressed consistently in our data, while solidarity manifests itself differently. Solidarity needs to be considered in terms of support for unified EU action, as a proactive emotion, but also as expressed in the sense of belonging – whether Ukraine is considered to be part of the European family and its EU accession welcomed.

We are concerned too about the conditions for solidarity to be enduring and question the *internalisation* of solidarity. Is Scholz's Zeitenwende an internalisation of emotions, an empathic response towards Ukraine or a more pragmatic – and temporary – bending to the emotions of others? This supposes asymmetry in member states' ability to rebottle their emotions. While Von der Leyen's messaging on solidarity (European Parliament 2024b) 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. Remembering Ahmed's (2004) 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', empathy is vital if the inherent tensions in groups when it comes to emotions is to be overcome and constitutes one of the factors constraining or enabling the EU to act collectively.

Methods and data

Deriving from the analytical framework suggested in the editors' introduction that models the travel from norm violation to appraisal process to (absence of) emotions to (in)action, we identify any variation in the emotional response and appraisal process in EU member

states over the two years of war since 2022. We look for evidence of any enabling mechanisms rooted in coherent and consistent emotions (fig. 3 in Gürkan and Terzi 2024) or constraining mechanisms attributable to incoherent and inconsistent emotions (fig. 4 in Gürkan and Terzi 2024).

We examine public opinion within EU member states and the opinions of MEPs via key debates related to the war and EU responses. The connection between foreign policy decision-making and public opinion is disputed, even in democratic states. However, with a crisis such as this war that has a significant financial burden for publics (energy, military aid, for example), the opinion of the public can itself serve as an enabling or constraining mechanism. In accordance with the theory of 'constraining dissensus' (Hooghe and Marks, 2009), 'voters hold politicians accountable for their decisions regarding the European Union, which is translated by the politicians into a considerable electoral hazard' (Best 2012, 218). The constitutional duty of some member states to hold a referendum to ratify any decision to enlarge the EU or to amend the treaties also warrants an understanding of public opinion. Finally, a focus on member states is appropriate when talking about group traumas since they allow us to identify a presence or absence of such trauma.

The European Commission's Directorate General Communication's Public Opinion Monitoring Unit has been monitoring surveys of public opinion in relation to the war since March 2022 (European Parliament n/d). There are therefore several Eurobarometer surveys that allow us to track EU member states' emotions about the war and opinions on EU responses to it. We employ Flash Eurobarometer 506, April 2022; Standard Eurobarometer 97, Summer 2022; Standard Eurobarometer 100, November 2023. Eurobarometer is occasionally used by the EP to legitimise their decisions, for instance in the January 2024 Report as evidence of 'the majority of the EU's population [being] in favour of the future enlargement of the EU' (European Parliament 2024a).

In our two-step analytical framework, we look for emotions and attitudes expressed in respect of: i) Russia's aggression towards Ukraine and EU responses; ii) EU actions to support Ukraine in humanitarian, economic and military aspects; iii) EU enlargement towards Ukraine; iv) militarisation of the EU. The Eurobarometer data help us to draw conclusions about when and how collective emotions expressed in cases of norm violations lead to EU actions, and about the (un)sustained nature of those emotions and their existence across all member states. Secondly, we examine key European parliamentary debates and resolutions in relation to the war and policy responses to it. These comprise: the June 2022 debate over security in the Eastern Partnership (EaP) area and the role of the CSDP (European Parliament 2022a) and the text adopted in respect of it (European Parliament 2022b); January 2024 Report from the Committees on Foreign Affairs and Constitutional Affairs on deepening EU integration in view of future enlargement; February 2024 debate on 'strengthening European Defence' and implementation of the (European Parliament 2024a) Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) (European Parliament 2024b). These are selected on the basis of covering the most consequential changes for the EU in respect of its relations with its eastern neighbours, including enlargement, with implications for EU institutions and processes. The data offer insights into attitudes and emotions towards the CFSP and CSDP considering their significance for the remaining neutral states and the very identity of the EU. The data cover the two year period, the January 2024 report being the outcome of investigations in 2023 in view of the possibility of enlargement to the east. Beyond the

search for the four emotions in question, we seek to determine the intensity of emotion and to leave room for identification of other concerns that suggest a juxtaposition of concerns and perhaps emotions.

In the EP debates, the nationality of the MEP is taken as the primary indicator, their belonging to a political group less so, and we then look for (in)consistency across country responses by national publics in Eurobarometer surveys versus MEPs in debates. This helps us to draw conclusions about consensus and divergence that could impact decision-making at both national and EU levels.

EU member states and Russia: some feel more deeply than others

In thinking about whose emotions are at play in this war, historical relations with Russia matter. Putin's colonialist claim that the 'true sovereignty of Ukraine is possible only in partnership with Russia' (Putin n/d), means that what is history for some is a continued threat for others. In the early 1990s, the then EU-12 treated those eastwards of them – including Russia – in a one-size fits all fashion, captured in the Common Europe idea. This was not, in many ways, a reconcilable position for the NCEEs, for which the prevailing emotion towards Russia, shaped by their historical relations, was fear. In turn, this inevitably narrowed their perceptions of what was possible, in sharp contrast to western European EU member states. Despite their 'return to Europe', the CEECs were rule-takers both before and after their EU accession, including in respect of foreign policy. Putin's 2007 Munich Speech marks the point when the EU-Russia relationship began to deteriorate, confirmed with Russia's 2008 invasion of Georgia. EU member states were divided on the appropriate response, the French plan winning through, amid much criticism then and later, as a line was drawn from Georgia 2008 to Ukraine 2014 – and 2022. Despite Russia's descent into autocracy and troubled relations between Russia and some of those NCEEs who joined the EU in 2004, notably the Baltics and Poland, a pragmatic EU attitude toward Russia prevailed. This changed in 2014, the strategic partnership declared dead and sanctions levied against Russia. The Weimar Triangle Foreign Ministers were influential in European diplomacy actions undertaken following Crimea's annexation but a clear dividing line emerged between them (and others) with Germany's continued insistence on pursuing the Nordstream II gas pipeline and Poland condemning it.

Since 24 February 2022, a host of negative emotions towards Russia was unbottled by member states, actors released from those mechanisms that usually constrain their emotions. EU anger and fear were clearly and decisively converted into actions that took the Russian leadership by surprise. Anger led to the most comprehensive sanctions against Russia taken in a contracted period of time with little disagreement among EU member states as to their necessity and appropriateness. Of the 13 (at the time of writing) packages of sanctions levied against Russia, nearly one third were introduced from 25 February 2022. Sanctions cover all the main types of restrictions under multiple categories – chemical weapons, cyber-attacks, human rights and terrorism. That it took a full-scale invasion and accusations of war crimes to have the scales fall from all member states' eyes led President Macron of France to express regret that the NCEEs' words of warning about Russia had not been heeded. Referring to a moment when then-President of France, Jacques Chirac told the CEECs that they had missed a good opportunity to shut up (CNN 2003), Macron said, '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).

In February 2024, his visit to central Europe led commentators to ponder whether French ideas on European security were finally converging with those of the CEECs (Cadier 2024). Nevertheless, in understanding what might constrain solidarity moving forward, CEECs' past relations with Russia are not separate from past abandonment by western European EU member states, whether in 1939, 1956, 1968 or even 1991. 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 and the justifiable resentment felt by others left unacknowledged.

This has been remarked upon by some from the NCEEs. Žygimantas Pavilionis (2023), Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee in the Lithuanian Parliament, has spoken of being of the 'so-called School of January 13', of standing next to his friends as Soviet tanks rolled in in 1991, of losing friends and hope. He spoke too of integration into NATO and the EU as insurance against that happening again, and compared Munich 1939 to Munich 2007. Crucially, he spoke of how the West appeased Russia, even while Russians were poisoning people and killing Chechens, and of Poles and Lithuanians warning what would happen. The former Estonian President, Toomas Ilves, has acknowledged Estonia employs a 'we told you so narrative' (in McLaughlin 2022) towards other EU states and referred to Estonia's response to Ukraine as an empathetic one, 'We know what it's about' (in McLaughlin 2022), confirming the idea that a sense of a shared history prescribes the perception of other actors towards those suffering similarly. In this case, we see Estonia (Finland, Lithuania and Poland) expressing not only solidarity with Ukraine but anger towards Russia. The 'I told you so' narrative is suggestive too of resentment towards those EU member states and Brussels for not having listened. It has implications too for support of Ukraine's EU membership, reflected in the analysis below.

For western European countries, their violent and conflictual histories with each other had been overcome through integrative processes combining both values and pragmatism, their vision of a cooperative relationship with Russia that brought it into the European family founded in these experiences. But this speaks precisely 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 when a key motivating factor for EU membership was to ensure their security (against 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'.

Public opinion and the European parliament

We see through the European Parliament and Eurobarometer surveys the range of opinion that exists within and across member states that is revealing of a range of different feelings about the issues discussed. The variations in opinion that we see do not necessarily track only along state lines. MEPs from the same countries sometimes have different opinions, views that are consistent within their ideological positions, saying something more about the caution needed when talking about emotions as shared in the EU and reminding us too that any in-group contains variance, understood and proclaimed by the EU, of course, with its United in Diversity slogan. While we are

ultimately cautious about the idea that Ukraine will receive justice in the face of Russia's aggression, the fact of differing intensity of emotion felt today in member states says something about the capacity for the EU to embrace the further diversity that Ukraine (and Georgia and Moldova) represents and bring them fully into the in-group. Some of the conclusions we draw from the data here, therefore, do not constitute insurmountable obstacles to unity but we do underline the need of the Brussels institutions to understand those emotions if they are to ensure the emotions do not constrain them, and to be able to build, alongside the national capitals, the social and political will necessary to achieve those goals pursued since 2022 in respect of the CFSP, CSDP and enlargement.

A June 2022 EP Resolution on Security in the EaP and the role of the CFSP outlined the ways in which Russia was deemed to have betrayed trust in the region, including the UN Charter, Helsinki Final Act, Charter of Paris, Budapest Memorandum, to name just a few (European Parliament 2022b). The Resolution lays out the extent of the Russian threat in respect of geography and nature of threat, referring to 'serious violations of international law' and to a 'significant global threat and a threat to the peace, stability and security of the EaP countries and the European continent'. Underlining the extent of the threat and Russia's responsibility, this document also spoke of how, except for Belarus, 'every country in the EaP has a territorial conflict on its soil, orchestrated by or involving Russia' (European Parliament 2022b). In April 2022, 78% of respondents agreed the Russian authorities are primarily responsible for the war in Ukraine (Table 1) (Eurobarometer 2022a). This is further indicated by discernible evidence that historical experience with Russia matters in terms of high levels of condemnation of Russia, threat perception and support for EU responses to combat the Russian threat, including the bolstering of the CSFP and CSDP. In European parliamentary debates, MEPs from the Baltic states, Finland and Poland were mostly consistent in wanting increased defence structures in the EU (European Parliament 2024b), NATO often also emphasised. This tracks with Eurobarometer data too, where for the Baltic states, the biggest fear was of 'the war spreading to our own country' and nuclear war. By contrast, for many of the countries further from Russia, economic consequences were more important (Table 2) (Eurobarometer 2022b) (See also Table 3 (Eurobarometer 2022a) for data on which countries expressed most and least worry about the war for themselves personally).

While we take the responses of the EU as a proxy for anger when looking at the MEP debates and texts, it is not so possible to discern anger as a motivating emotion from

Table 1. Sentiments towards Russia, April 2022.

How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?	EU level (%) Overall agreement/ disagreement	Member states with highest agreement (%) Overall agreement/ disagreement	Member states with lowest agreement (%) Overall agreement/ disagreement
Russian authorities are responsible first and foremost for the current situation	78/17	FI (90/6), PL (91/7), NL (88/7) SE (88/9), PT (88/9) EE (87/10), DK (87/9) IE (87/12)	CY (45/51), BG (46/46) EL (51/45), SK (55/36) SL (55/39), HU (57/34) CZ (61/26)
A distinction should be made between the Russian leadership and Russian people	82/14	PL (90/8), MT (89/8) FR (87/10), ES (87/11) SE (85/12), LU (86/11)	LT (61/35), EE (61/34) LV (65/39), EL (66/27) PL (66/39), CY (69/26)

Source of information: FEB 506, April 2022.

Table 2. Main fears incited by the war in Ukraine in EU member states, July 2022.

Q: Which possible consequences of the war in Ukraine do you personally fear the most (max. 2 answers)	EU level (%)	Member states with highest level (%)	Member states with lowest level (%)
Inflation/rising prices	36	PT (45), AT (43), PL (42) BE (42) FR (41), LU (40) MT (40)	SE (16), DK (221), LV (25) LT (26)
A major economic crisis	36	CY (53), EL (53), IT (47) PT (45), ES (42)	LT (15), IE (23)
The war spreading to more countries in Europe	33	SE (55), DK (51), FI (47)	RO (21), IT (22), EL (23) BG (24), EE (25)
A nuclear war	25	LT (46), LV (39), SE (37)	EL (13), BG (16), HU (17) FI (18)
Problems in supply of energy or goods	24	EL (39), SK (31), HU (31) CZ (30)	LT (5), LV (10), FI (15)
The war spreading to our own country	20	LT (49), LV (47), EE (44) PL (33)	NL (7), LU (8), DK (12) BE (12)

Source of information: EB 97, July 2022

Table 3. Concerns and fears about the war in Ukraine in EU member states, April 2022.

How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?	EU level (%) Overall agreement/ disagreement	Member states with highest agreement (%) Overall agreement/ disagreement	Member states with lowest agreement (%) Overall agreement/ disagreement
Q: I am personally worried about the war in Ukraine	81/17	PL (96/4), MT (91/7) IT (90/10), EE (90/9) LT (88/12), LV (87/11) PO (87/11), IE (87/13) DE (83/15)	SK (67/26), AT (73/24) FR (75/22), ES (75/22) SE (76/23), BE (76/22) HU (76/21), BG (77/21) SL (78/20), EL (78/20)

Source of information: FEB 506, April 2022

Eurobarometer data. Fear is more discernible. Eurobarometer surveys show a high level of threat perception, 83% of respondents in July 2022 (Table 4) (Eurobarometer 2022b), saying the invasion 'is a threat to the security of the EU', though this number shows a slight decline to 78% by October/November 2023 (Table 4) (Eurobarometer 2023). In the February 2024 debates, the threat posed by Russia was referred to by MEPs whether close (Finland), or far (Spain), from Russia, although Cyprus, Greece and Malta were conspicuously absent in this. Support for the EU increasing its defence structures is treated as a sign of fear. When asked about whether the EU should increase defence cooperation, 84% of respondents in July 2022 agreed (Table 4) (Eurobarometer 2022b), reduced to 79% by December 2023 (Table 4) (Eurobarometer 2023). This decrease was seen even with Poland and Latvia, although none of the Baltic states, Finland or Poland fell into the list of those member states with the lowest level of disagreement.

In the verbatim report of proceedings from February 2024 on strengthening European defence, there is much variance in opinion about what the appropriate response to Russia's aggressions should be. A common strand of argumentation was about an awakening, to which the EU's prior failures were attributed, February 2022 constituting 'a wake-up call for

Table 4. Perception of Russia's invasion of Ukraine as a threat to the security of the EU, 2022–2023.

Q: How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?	EU level (%) Overall agreement/ disagreement		Member states with highest agreement (%) Overall agreement/disagreement		Member states with lowest agreement (%) Overall agreement/disagreement	
	Jul 2022	**Nov 2023**	**Jul 2022**	**Nov 2023**	**Jul 2022**	**Nov 2023**
Russia's invasion of Ukraine is a threat to the security of the EU	83/13	78/18	SE (94/4) PT (93/2) MT (92/6) PL (91/9) FI (90/7)	SE (94/5) FI (90/6) DK (89/8) PL (88/11)	EL (74/24) AT (75/22) SK (75/23) FR (76/15) EE (81/16)	CY (50/43) BG (56/33) EL (62/35)
Russia's invasion of Ukraine is a threat to the security of (our country)	76/20	73/23	PL (92/6) PT (89/5) LT (86/10) SE (86/14) HR (82/15) DE (81/15)	PL (90/9) SE (88/12) FI (85/12) LT (84/11) DK (82/15) PT (82/14)	LU (57/38) CY (60/36) NL (63/35) BG (64/29) FR (65/27) AT (65/31)	CY (36/58) BG (56/35) EL (58/40)
By standing against Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the EU is defending European values	79/15	75/19	SE (93/7) PL (93/6) FI (92/4) PT (91/3) DK (90/8) IE (90/5)	SE (93/4) FI (92/3) PL (91/8) NL (89/10) DK (89/8)	RO (69/24) AT (69/27) EL (70/26) CZ (70/24) FR (73/14)	CY (51/38) BG (54/34) EL (60/35) HU (62/35) SL (61/34) SK (62/30)
Co-operation in defence matters at EU level should be increased	84/10	79/14	PL (95/5), MT (93/5) LT (90/8) HU (90/8) PT (90/2) NL (89/10)	PT (90/4) NL (89/8) SE (88/9) PL (88/11) FI (88/5) LT (88/5)	RO (71/23) BG (72/14) SL (73/23) AT (75/18) DK (77/21)	SK (65/27) BG (66/21) RO (67/27) AT (69/22)
More money should be sent on defence in the EU	70/23	65/26	PL (95/5) HU (86/11) MT (84/13) LT (82/17) IE (82/10)	PL (88/10) LT (78/15) HU (76/20)	SL (55/40) BG (59/26) SK (60/34) DK (62/35) ES (63/26)	SL (47/50) SK (48/43) BG (53/31) EL (54/40) AT (56/32) RO (58/34)

Source of information: EB 97, July 2022; EB 100, Nov, 2023.

European defence' and 'an end of innocence for Europe' (European Parliament 2024b). Some MEPs acknowledged that some states *had* been alive to the threat, a recurring pattern across all EP data, referring to the Baltic states and Poland most often and Finland to a lesser but still noticeable extent. The German MEP Bűtikofer, for example, speaks of 'some leadership' in the north and east, and of Estonia in particular with '0.25% of [its] GDP going to defence'. A Lithuanian MEP Juknevičienė speaks of Finland as a state that is serious about security (European Parliament 2024b). MEPs made special mention of the Baltic states, Poland and the EaP states as facing a 'serious threat' from Russia, before adding 'the whole of Europe' as well (European Parliament 2022b). The Baltics and Poland were again referenced separately as being the first to provision Ukraine with military equipment (European Parliament 2022b). The spectre of the past clearly conditioned some of the responses of MEPs from these states, Brejza, for example, speaking of how 'we Poles have experienced the effects of Russian imperialism' (European Parliament 2024b).

Some finger-pointing was also evident. This extended to member states generally for their 'limited responses or calls to action' over 'flagrant violations' of the 2008 Ceasefire Agreement (European Parliament 2022b) or towards specific member states, especially France and Germany, but also Spain and Italy. Italy was criticised as 'Europe's historical mother, barely visible' (European Parliament 2024b), France and Spain were berated for spending insufficiently on defence (European Parliament 2024b), Spain for being insufficiently committed (López-Istúriz White, Spain in European Parliament 2024b) or invisible (Bűtikofer, Germany in European Parliament 2024b). Two German MEPs spoke of appeasement in relation to the Social Democratic Party (Bűtikofer, Germany in European Parliament 2024b), and NordStream 2 (Weber, Germany in European Parliament 2024b). But criticism came also for doing or suggesting too much, the more vociferous critics coming from MEPs belonging to Far Right domestic parties, talking of 'sabre-rattling' in the EU (Vilimsky, Austria in European Parliament 2024b) or of the 'EU defense union' as 'a dead end of escalation and warmongering' (De Graaf, Netherlands in European Parliament 2024b), while Macron's plans to send troops to Ukraine, 'would undoubtedly trigger an escalation of war' (Donato, Italy in European Parliament 2024b). Others trod the middle ground, arguing defence was necessary but that peace had to be fought for too (Grapini, Romania in European Parliament 2024b). Where there was broad support for the EU doing more, concerns were expressed about the need to work with and within NATO, to use existing minilateral arrangements (European Parliament 2022b, 2024b) and newer, larger multilateral ones, notably the European Political Community (European Parliament 2022b). Public assessment of the EU's response to the war was not wholly positive either, performing below the level of that of their fellow citizens or their own state authorities (see Table 5) (Eurobarometer 2022a).

In its attempts to undertake the Treaty reform required to implement the institutional changes necessary for enlargement and transforming the CFSP and CSDP, the EU is likely to meet most obstacles, rendering EP remarks about the possible use of passerelle clauses unrealistic given the differing views (European Parliament 2024a). Although the January 2024 report on deepening integration was passed, the result of the final vote tells a tale of 56 voting for it, 20 against, 6 abstaining. It is true that the majority of those against came from the Eurosceptics and the Far Left or Right of the political spectrum but they spanned a range of member states too. Most notable was that none came from the Baltic states or Finland and the 2 Polish MEPs who did so were both Law and Justice. Nevertheless, such opposition cannot be dismissed and the intensity of the Minority

Table 5. Level of satisfaction with response to the war in Ukraine (citizens, national authorities, EU, NATO, USA, UN), April 2022.

How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way the following have reacted to the war in Ukraine?	EU level (%) Overall satisfied/dissatisfied	EU Member states with highest agreement (%) Overall satisfied	EU Member states with lowest agreement (%) Overall satisfied
Citizens in (our country)	69/23	PL (87/10), EE (85/12), FI (83/12) RO (82/13), LT (81/15), IE (81/15) DK (81/11)	SK (45/47), BG (50/42) EL (52/43)
National authorities	54/39	FI (80/14), EE (76/18), DK (75/18) IE (6729)	BG (28/65), EL (31/66) CY (39/54), SK (39/55) SL (39/49)
The EU	51/43	DK (67/25), FI (66/28) RO (63/32), NL (61/32) FR (58/38)	EL (29/69), BG (32/60) CY (34/63), CZ (41/53)
NATO	49/43	DK (69/23), RO (62/30) PL (61/33), NL (60/31)	CY (18/72), EL (24/74) BG (30/61)
USA	47/44	PL (73/20), DK (65/23), FI (61/26) LT (61/30)	CY (18/74), EL (24/73) BG (25/66), SL (27/62) SK (31/62), IT (32/63)
UN	40/49	DK (56/28), RO (54/35) NL (49/37), DE (47/42), PI (47/42)	CY (18/73), EL (19/77) BG (26/57), HR (27/61)

Source of information: FEB 506, April 2022.

Position of a French Far Right MEP hinted at a good deal of difference of emotions in respect of enlargement (European Parliament 2024b). A sense of urgency pervaded all the EP debates and texts, 'a new impetus, commitments and vision are urgently needed to re-energise the enlargement process' (European Parliament 2024b), while Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Italian, Polish and Spanish MEPs' interventions underlined the urgency of the situation (European Parliament 2024b). However, it is difficult to see the types of transformational changes such urgency calls for being instituted given the competences held by member states and the resistance of a significant minority to them. The EU has not managed either to convince the European population that it has responded in a united fashion to the war, only 62% of overall respondents agreeing and a full 30% disagreeing (Table 6) (Eurobarometer 2022a).

The views of the public are vital here too and there is a clear example of sympathy for Ukraine not necessarily translating into solidarity in the form of support for its accession to the EU. 89% of overall respondents in April 2022 expressed sympathy towards Ukrainians as victims of aggression. The lowest level of sympathy was expressed in Bulgaria, 73%, and two states that had experience of Soviet invasion too, Hungary, 77% and Slovakia, 80%. Malta had the highest level of agreement at 96%, with Finland and Lithuania among a few others following closely at 94%. Solidarity in the form of Ukraine's belonging to Europe is less distinctly felt, 71% overall saying it belongs to the European family, down to 66% when asked about its accession to the EU. The NCEECs were again divided with Estonia, Finland, Lithuania and Poland demonstrating more solidarity than those to the south of them (Table 8) (Eurobarometer 2022a). There is certainly a powerful story to be told about Ukrainian suffering, suffering felt by many other member states in their experiences of conflict. We have said nothing about shame so far but it is an emotion that could credibly be harnessed in the future, an intimation of that coming with Irish MEP, Billy Kelleher's words:

> I have seen first-hand the devastation in Bucha, in Irpin and other parts of the [sic] Ukraine, and it will be shameful for us to turn our backs and not to give clear messages of support and solidarity to the Ukrainian people as they are dying defending the values that we hold dear (European Parliament 2022a).

This returns us to our starting argument about *over*-rationalising emotions and marginalising any idea of emotions as genuine and deeply felt. Combine the insights from the

Table 6. General opinion on the EU's response, April 2022.

How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?	EU level (%) Overall agree/ disagree	EU Member states with highest agreement (%) Overall agree/disagree	EU Member states with lowest agreement (%) Overall agree/disagree
Since the war started, the EU has shown solidarity with Ukraine	78/16	PT (90/9), IT (86/12) DK (85/11), MT (86/10) FI (85/9)	EL (66/30), BG (71/23) PL (72/23), CY (71/23)
Since the war in Ukraine started, the EU has been united in responding to the war	62/30	DK (80/14), PT (77/19) FI (77/13)	CZ (47/43), EL (47/49) LT (49/48), SL (50/40) HU (50/41)
I feel more European since the war in Ukraine	43/46	LT (67/22), LV (60/26) PL (60/28), FI (57/27) EE (55/27)	CY (19/76), EL (25/72) BE (31/56), BG (31/60) LU (32/58), NL (34/53) AT (35/54), SL (35/56) HU (36/51)

Source of information: FEB 506, April 2022

Table 7. Evaluation of actions by the EU as a response to Russia's invasion.

Q: The EU has taken a series of actions as a response to Russia's invasion. To what extent you agree or disagree with each of these actions taken.	EU level (%) Overall agree/ disagree		Member states with highest agreement (%) Overall agree/disagree		Member states with lowest agreement (%) Overall agree/disagree	
	Jul 2022	**Nov 2023**	**Jul 2022**	**Nov 2023**	**Jul 2022**	**Nov 2023**
Providing humanitarian support to the people affected by the war	92/6	89/8	PT (98/2) SE (96/3) FI (96/2) DK (96/3) NL (96/3)	FI (98/1) NL (98/2) SE (97/2) LU (96/2) ES (96/2)	RO (75/21) BG (73/12) AT (85/13) IT (87/9)	RO (70/25) BG (76/17) AT (83/15)
Welcoming into the EU people fleeing the war	90/8	84/13	SE (98/1) PT (97/1) FI (96/2) DK (96/3) CY (95/3) LU (95/4)	SE (97/2) NL (97/2) FI (96/2) PT (96/2) LU (94/4) ES (94/4)	RO (75/21) CZ (75/23) BG (78/15) AT (80/19) SK (82/16)	CZ (63/31) BG (66/25) RO (71/25)
Providing financial support to Ukraine	81/15	72/24	SE (95/5) FI (95/4) IE (94/4) DK (93/6) PT (93/5) PL (92/7)	SE (96/2) FI (93/4) DK (91/6) PT (89/7) NL (88/11)	BG (58/35) CZ (64/32) SK (64/34) RO (70/24) FR (62/20)	CZ (48/48) SK (50/45) BG (52/40) RO (56/39)
Imposing economic sanctions on Russian government, companies and individuals (%)	78/17	72/21	PT (94/3) DK (93/6) SE (93/6) PL (93/6) IE (90/7) FI (88/8), NL (88/11)	SE (96/3) PT (93/3) FI (89/5) PL (89/9) NL (88/10) DK (88/9)	BG (46/42) CY (49/44) SK (59/38) EL (50/35) SL (53/33) AT (64/32)	CY (31/59) BG (44/40) SK (50/41) HU (55/41) EL (56/37)
Financing and the purchase and supply of military equipment to Ukraine	68/26	60/34	SE (92/7) DK (91/8) PL (91/7) FI (89/9) IE (86/9) PT (82/10)	SE (91/7) FI (90/5) NL (85/14 PL (85/12) DK (83/13) LT (83/13)	BG (35/58) EL (41/55) CY (44/49) AT (50/46) SK (50/48) SL (54/43) CZ (56/41)	BG (31/59) CY (31/61) SK (34/60) EL (37/59) CZ (42/54) AT (43/53) HU (43/54)
Granting candidate status as a potential Member of the EU to Ukraine	64/32	61/30	SE (85/8) PT (90/3) LT (84/10) HR (83/14) DK (79/17)	SE (82/13) PT (82/10) LT (79/13) HR (76/18) DK (76/18)	CZ (43/46) HU (49/45) BG (42/37) CY (47/39) SK (45/45)	CZ (37/52) HU (45/49) BG (46/36) CY (46/42) SK (46/44)

Source of information: EB 97, July 2022; EB 100, Nov, 2023

'rhetorical entrapment' (Schimmelfennig 2001) argument about why the EU expanded to the CEECs in 2004, emotional diplomacy (Hall 2015) through the building of a strategic narrative (Roselle, Miskimmon and O'Loughlin 2014), the undoubtedly very deep emotions of the Ukrainian people in respect of their belonging to the European family and some member states' regret implicit in the 'awakening' comments, and the constraining effects of the variance in solidarity towards Ukraine described here begin to look surmountable. Thus, the ability of Ukraine, Brussels and enough national capitals to tell this emotional story may well be the necessary enabling mechanism.

There are still other challenges – and emotions ahead. An interesting statistic in terms of what it might mean for future unity in ideas of how best to handle Russia is the high percentage (82%) of respondents agreeing that a distinction should be made between the Russian leadership and the people (Table 1) (Eurobarometer 2022a). The member states with lower levels of agreement included states with more traumatic relations with Russia – the Baltics and Poland. This raises vital questions about whether even in a case of regime change in Russia, at the societal level, some of the EU populations might be more resistant to the rebuilding of relations with Russia. Where those feelings are shared by their leadership – and currently for the Baltic states, Finland and Poland, there is no reason to think there is not consistency of attitude – this has implications for EU foreign policy eastwards at least, constituting a potential constraining mechanism. Thinking too of what was said earlier about solidarity-building resting on a durable image of Russia as the enemy, the EU's determination to distinguish the Russian people from the state builds complexity into the image of Russia as the enemy, complicating any future attempts to deliver a clear narrative about Russia.

Two further points are worth making from the sources we have looked at. The first is important for the very identity that so many of the MEPs and national leaders, for that matter, have spoken of Ukraine as fighting for. Some MEPs (European Parliament 2024b) raised concerns about double standards, the EU failing to respond to serious norm violations in other territories. Gaza was most referenced, but the Sahel, Central Africans, Kurds in Syria and Armenians were also spoken of, while a Cypriot MEP (Mavrides) reminded his colleagues that Cyprus was still occupied. Therefore, while we have been largely focused here on the EU's in-group and the possible extension of that to Ukraine and other candidates, there is a larger out-group that is judging the sincerity of the EU's morality and emotional responses. This was referred to compellingly by an Estonian MEP, Mikser, who spoke of the EU's 'moral obligation' and the need to convince others that the EU is 'really committed to maintaining and strengthening the rules-based international order' (European Parliament 2024b).

The final point is the most constraining factor for the EU and it is the simple fact that the war is not the only crisis that either the EU public or its MEPs feel Europe is facing. When asked to say which consequences of the war they feared most, inflation/rising prices and a major economic crisis were the top two answers (Table 2) (Eurobarometer 2022b). 70% of respondents in July 2022 agreed that more money should be spent on defence in the EU, reduced by 5% to 65% by November 2023 (Table 4) (Eurobarometer 2022b, 2023). The percentage of respondents agreeing overall about the provision of financial support to Ukraine reduced by 9% in the period from July 2022, November 2023 and by 8% in the same period in respect of financing and purchasing military equipment for Ukraine (Table 7) (Eurobarometer 2022b, 2023). MEPs expressed concern that social

policies and Green policies should not be lost to the financing of the war effort (European Parliament 2024b).

Conclusions: a "crossroads of fears"

EU foreign policy towards Russia (and Ukraine) is, according to Lithuanian MEP Kubilius 'lost in the crossroads of our fears' (European Parliament 2024b). Those fears fall into four major types: i) escalation towards a bigger European war, possibly nuclear war; ii) EU overstretch and failure to resolve domestic crises; iii) the effect on the European identity, both from enlargement and peace project to (imperialistic) warmongering; iv) what happens if Russia wins. These contradictions inevitably have constraining effects: in the short term, there is agreement on the need to resist Russia but fears result in different ideas regarding the appropriateness of and risks associated with each policy response.

The slightly dwindling support for Ukraine seen in public opinion suggests enabling levels of sympathy and solidarity may be time-limited. Additionally, even with high levels of sympathy with Ukraine there is disagreement about what appropriate support looks like, with high levels of agreement for humanitarian support, lower levels when it comes to the financing and provision of military support and also for enlargement. Thus, sympathy for Ukraine does not necessarily function as an enabling mechanism for all of the EU's policies moving forward, this is especially in view of concern about neglect of other crises. Equally, the EU's attempts to construct solidarity in security matters are not supported by all MEPS, with some emphasising NATO as the forum for their defence and Austria at least of the remaining neutral countries, not wanting to militarise the EU. For many MEPs, implications for budgets, proposed policies and institutional changes, such as the extension of QMV to CFSP and CSDP, and new Commissioners were opposed.

Ahmed's point about shared feelings not inevitably resulting in the 'same relationship to the feeling' is borne out in that crossroads of fears, where the fears manifest themselves differently for different member states. So, the war as an existential crisis for the EU results in both enablement and constraints for the EU. The EU is much more enabled when it comes to sanctioning and isolating Russia and supporting Ukraine at a humanitarian level. It is much more constrained when certain responses call into question the identity of the EU, especially when it comes to normative versus military power and/or require major constitutional change.

In seeking to identify whose emotions matter in the responses, we observed the role of history and geography in determining priorities and the limits of sympathy and solidarity. There is some variance among the NCEECs in respect of the anger and fear felt towards Russia and sympathy and solidarity towards Ukraine. Finland, Lithuania and Sweden are consistent in Eurobarometer surveys in feeling sympathy towards Ukraine, and in solidarity, seeing Ukraine as part of the European family (Table 7) (Eurobarometer, 2022a). Finnish and Swedish fears are most evident in seeking NATO membership and along with Denmark, they expressed the highest levels of fear about the war spreading further into Europe. Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland expressed the highest levels of fear in relation to the war spreading to their own territories. However, this does not mean they see the EU as the best guarantor of their security. Thus a constraint on the EU's militarisation is whether this comes at the expense of NATO or whether it is a distraction from the need to build up the European pillar within NATO. Therefore, the EU's foreign policy is

Table 8. Sentiments toward Ukraine, April 2022.

How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?	EU level (%) Overall agreement/ disagreement	Member states with highest agreement (%) Overall agreement/ disagreement	Member states with lowest agreement (%) Overall agreement/ disagreement
I feel sympathy towards Ukrainians	89/9	MT (96/3), FI (94/4), IE (94/4) LT (94/5), PT (94/5), SE (94/5)	BG (73/25), HU (77/ 19) SK (80/16), CY (82/15)
Ukraine is part of the European family	71/22	FI (87/7), PL (86/10) PO (85/11), SE (84/9) LT (83/13)	BG (48/42), CY (48/43) HU (55/34), SK (57/33) EL (57/38), LU (58/33), BE (61/25)
Ukraine should join the EU when it is ready	66/22	PL (87/9), EE (83/11) LT (82/11), PO (81/11) IE (79/14), MT (77/13) FI (77/9), HR (77/15) ES (75/14)	HU (48/37), BG (51/ 35) LU (52/40), AT (54/ 36), EI (54/37) SK (54/34), FR (56/28) CZ (57/30), CY (56/34)

Source of information: FEB 506, April 2022.

very likely to be much more closely interlinked with its relations to NATO and NATO a constraint or enabler of the EU's CSDP especially.

In parliamentary debates/texts, we saw heated conversations about the need (or not) for constitutional and institutional change in the EU, including the extension of QMV to foreign policy. These internal dimensions have major implications for identity, not only in respect of militarisation (with a reformed CFSP and CSDP) and enlargement but also for relations between and among the member states, with some capacity to lay to rest the New and Old Europe divide – or to exacerbate it. We cannot dismiss either those states who talked about the need for increased national, rather than EU, reliance. We have seen Poland, another state with a deeply complicated and antagonistic relationship with Russia, direct its emotions towards building its security and defence budget, to intensified militarisation and to achieving deterrence through a show of strength and determination. This does not necessarily have to preclude values but the concerns raised by many that war, not peace, is being prioritised is indicative of a potential challenge ahead. As in its treatment of refugees, there is no evidence that Poland's empathy extends to any outside Europe either, another division that might be the cause of a fracturing of unity in the future.

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 that does not exclude military power 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. The Baltic states, Finland and Poland have historically been the states raising most concerns about Russian intentions, reflecting their memories of past trauma with Russia, and have found themselves in a state of better emotional readiness than their counterparts elsewhere in the EU. The question of whose voice will prevail in the longer term is unclear and will depend on whose and which emotions dominate. In the far longer term, if Georgia, Moldova and particularly Ukraine accede to the EU, we can expect to see a very hawkish policy towards Russia. With likely unresolved territorial issues with Russia, we can expect to see a heavy emphasis on defence spending, given the hybridity of threats emanating from Russia. The extension

of borders with Russia will, however, also necessitate more, rather than less, engagement with Russia. How this will play out in terms of emotions is a matter of speculation but given the insights from the continuous traumatic stress literature, coupled with past policy that elevated pragmatism over defence of values, it is reasonable to expect a clash of emotions that will result in an even more complex foreign policymaking environment for the EU.

Membership of the EU does not erase those continuous traumatic emotions, no member state's history 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 such serious norm violations as we have seen in Ukraine – and emotions in respect of them. While a desire to become part of the group may result in the suppression of emotions, or at least the expression of them, a new crisis might enable 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.

Transitional justice and reconciliation could be seen as important in any debates about the war in Ukraine, especially with enlargement on the table. However, we saw very little talk about this, maybe because the war is nowhere close to peace negotiations, and the transitional justice agenda even more distant. However, we would expect that this will become an important item on the EU's foreign policy agenda and would expect to see very different emotions – and expectations. Relatedly, however, talk of convergence on security matters between western European states and the NCEEs (Cadier 2024) is perhaps better framed as reconciliation of past experiences and marginalisation and extended beyond merely east and west to include the north and south too. Speaking of reconciliation rather than convergence allows us to see that emotions still very much colour relations among states in the EU. We see little evidence, however, of *this* being recognised.

To date, Brussels has managed competing ideas about best responses to Russia's war on Ukraine to good effect, not least because after 24 February 2022, it was all but impossible to argue that Russia was still an actor the EU could reason with, as Germany quickly found. But we have revealed differences in those emotions, especially in what they mean for policy decisions. In the data, we see concern that Brussels is letting Ukraine dominate to such an extent that other crises are being ignored. Given the connections between emotions and rationality spoken of above, and the differences in intensity of emotions and views about what they mean for policymaking, it is reasonable to expect a reprioritisation of crises where Russia's norm violations begin to constitute a new normal. If the war continues, we can expect that public opinion will turn further away from Ukraine and that the national capitals will have to react to this. This forecast is supported by the synergy across parliamentary debates and Eurobarometer surveys. The objections expressed by Far Right MEPs, the fact of EP elections in June 2024 and worrying Far Right electoral successes in EU member states suggest that domestic member states concerns will begin to rise on the Brussels agenda too.

As Russia's norm violations become less the focus of attention than the effects of its war on Ukraine, this new normal – moving from existential threat to survivalist mode – may well exert pressure to put aside some emotions as obstructive to achieving the

resolution of crises felt closer to home. This happened, for instance, 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 condition, the NCEECs might find themselves in a minority in terms of what should prevail, under pressure to rebottle their emotions to facilitate processes that will allow the EU to shift its attention to another crisis. But if emotions are a 'driver of behaviour' (Gürkan and Terzi 2024), a forced retreat from that behaviour that reflects those emotions has capacity to cause resentment and dissension in future foreign policy terms.

The EU has, 'more by force than by conviction' started a long process of 'rethinking' (Jordi Solé in European Parliament 2024b) who it is and what it prioritises. A final, pessimistic note, therefore, must be sounded in respect of the conditions under which certain actors' emotions matter and when those emotions enable or constrain the EU. For as long as Russia is perceived to continue to represent an undeniable threat to *wider* European security, the NCEECs' emotions, especially coupled with those of Ukraine, are likely to compose the enabling mechanism that will drive through many of the changes to the CFSP and CSDP that these states support. In other circumstances, constraining mechanisms are more likely to come into force and the NCEECs to feel pressure to rebottle their emotions, and with that, their memories of the past.

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Appendix

Abbreviations for the EU Member States as used in Eurobarometer publications

AT Austria	ES Spain	LU Luxembourg
BE Belgium	FI Finland	MT Malta
BG Bulgaria	FR France	NL Netherlands
CY Rep. of Cyprus	HR Croatia	PL Poland
CZ Czechia	HU Hungary	PT Portugal
DE Germany	IE Ireland	RO Romania
DK Denmark	IT Italy	SE Sweden
EE Estonia	LT Lithuania	SI Slovenia
EL Greece	LV Latvia	SK Slovakia