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THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL

STUDY GUIDE

TOPIC A: ADDRESSING NATIONALISM AND ANTI-EU SENTIMENT WITHIN EU MEMBER STATES

TOPIC B: THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP AND THE ROLE OF THE EU IN THE CAUCASUS

Written by Bennett Nightingale, Freddie Mallinson, Vaneska Mollard

Letter from the Chairs

Most esteemed SGMUN delegates,

Welcome to SGMUN 2018, we would like to congratulate on being chosen to participate at this conference and look forward to meeting you in the coming weeks. The secretariat has planned a fantastic conference in Saint Gallen, which will truly stand out as an MUN conference to remember. This study guide will serve as a vital tool for you as delegates, please make use of it to familiarise yourself with the committee's debates. Ultimately this guide should act as a foundation for your future research on the topic. The guide will also ask you to reflect on potential discussion points, as well as possible solutions to the issue at hand.

One fantastic quality of MUN is the ability to meet people from around the world. This being said, we would like to introduce ourselves as chairs, and officially welcome you to the EC:

Bennett Nightingale – Head Chair

Bennett is a third year Politics student at the University of York, who is on a yearlong exchange at the University of Konstanz. He currently serves as the Secretary General of YorkMUN and has attended a number of conferences in the UK and European circuit. He is excited to be your chair for the European Council at SGMUN, and looks forward to working with Freddie and Vaneska, as well as the rest of his committee.

Vaneska Mollard: Co-Chair

Vaneska is law student at the University of Zurich, after having studied economics for 2 years at the University of St. Gallen. Being a "Child of Globalism" and having three nationalities including Swiss, Brazilian and German, she realized that politics and diplomacy were her calling. After discovering MUN in her first year at University, she fell in love with the world of debating, discussing, yelling and plotting. Bein g a firm believer in European values, she is

excited to Chair at the European Council and see what you will accomplish during SGMUN 2018!

Freddie Mallinson: Co-Chair

Freddie Mallinson is a 2nd year Politics and International Relations student at the University of Kent. As well as numerous conference positions since beginning MUN at 16, he has served as Director of the IMF at OXIMUN 2018 and was the Secretary General of KentMUN, held in March. Outside of MUN, Freddie loves live music, liberal politics and reading books on philosophy of mind. Having attended SGMUN in its inaugural year as a delegate in the Brexit committee, he looks forward to returning to beautiful Saint Gallen this year and building on the great success of the SGMUN conference.

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Introduction to the Committee

The European Council, along with the Commission, is the primary executive body of the European Union. It comprises the 28 heads of government of each EU member and is responsible for discussing the overall agenda of the European Union. Commonly referred to as "The Council", it is formed not only by the 28 representatives of the member states, but also by the President of the Council, the President of the Commission, as well as the High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy.

The European Council eithers votes by unanimity, or by qualified majority vote (QMV). QMV is as follows, a proposal has 55% of member states vote in favour - in practice this means 16 out of 28. The proposal is also supported by member states representing at least 65% of the total EU population. The votes of member states are weighted according to their population size, e.g. Germany has more votes than Malta. The second requirement of QMV therefore means larger states can exercise greater influence. A full breakdown on which topics are either unanimity or QMV votes can be found on the European Council website.

The European Council was not fully formalised as an institution of the EU until 2009 with the Lisbon Treaty. However, the Council has existed informally since 1975, and has been a growing force in the politics of the EU since then. Scholars such as Carammia show how over the years the Council has increasingly encroached on the powers of its twin-executive body, the Commission[1]. As an intergovernmental body, the growth of Council power may reflect a hesitancy of member-states to give up power to a supranational body, the European Commission. In short, as integration between EU members deepens, the European Council has grown in power as certain member states fear a loss of sovereignty. Today, the European Council is not only an important force in the EU itself, but also a unique insight into how states behave in the international system.

It is important to remember that the Council has no formal legislative power, since the power to initiate legislation lies with the Commission. Instead, the Council not only sets the overall agenda for the European Union but is responsible for holding summits and resolving immediate

[1] Carammia, M., (2016), From Summitry to EU Government: An Agenda Formation Perspective on the European Council, Journal of Common Market Studies, 54(4), pp.809-825

crises. The Council has therefore been described as a motor of European integration, as it sets the direction followed by all other EU bodies. The Council has also been described as the 'constitutional heart of the EU'[2], as over the years it has become the sole responsible for the shape and format of the EU. In particular, the Council has the power to decide by unanimous vote the relative powers of the European Parliament, as well as discuss topics relating to European Citizenship.

[2] Puetter, U., (2014), *European Council and the Council*, Oxford: Oxford University Press

Topic A: Addressing Nationalism and Anti-EU Sentiment within EU member states

INTRODUCTION

Euroscepticism, or the "principled opposition to the EU and/or European integration"[3] has been a pervasive threat to the power and scope of EU institutions since the original founding of the European project. Contrary to the popular belief of the UK being the rogue outlier – neglecting to join the union until 1974 – Charles De Gaulle came to be the 'original Eurosceptic' when introducing and advocating for alternatives to common-market style integration in the 1960s. Even in the 1960s, De Gaulle's arguments about the loss of state sovereignty foreshadows future debates on the European Union today[4].

Europe saw gradual evolution beginning with the European Coal and Steel Community, through the European Economic Community and then the European Union. Complete with Common Market, Freedom of Movement and a full constitutional structure with executive, judiciary and legislature, the EU has developed as both a complex and powerful institution. The complexity of the EU as a political actor has most controversially has given it the explicit ability to overrule the wishes of members states in certain policy areas[5].

Today, with the convergence of wage stagnation following the 2008 financial crash, a refugee crisis, terrorism and the recent accession of both economically and culturally diverse countries into the Union, we have for a decade been experiencing some of the highest levels of Euroscepticism ever. In this session, the European Council will have to assess the causes of rising anti-EU sentiment and propose suitable measures and reforms to address them. The rest of this guide will use case studies to outline some of these causes in greater detail.
Delegates should not expect to gain all necessary information from these cases and should use the references and further reading at the end of this section as a basis for further research.

[3] Gülmez, S. B. (2013). EU-Scepticism vs. Euro-scepticism: Re-assessing the party positions in the candidate countries towards EU membership. EU Enlargement: Current Challenges and Strategic Choices. Brussels: Peter Lang.
[4] De Gaulle, C. (1994). A concert of European States. In The European Union (pp. 25-41). Palgrave, London.
[5] EU treaties - European Union - European Commission. (2018). Retrieved from https://europa.eu/european-union/law/treaties_en

NATIONALISM – A SYSTEMIC THREAT TO THE EUROPEAN UNION

Beginning to define nationalism proves to show just how murky and intangible the issue has become. The University of Stanford's Encyclopedia begins as such –

"The term "nationalism" is generally used to describe two phenomena: (1) the attitude that the members of a nation have when they care about their national identity, and (2) the actions that the members of a nation take when seeking to achieve (or sustain) self-determination. (1) raises questions about the concept of a nation (or national identity), which is often defined in terms of common origin, ethnicity, or cultural ties, and specifically about whether an individual's membership in a nation should be regarded as non-voluntary or voluntary. (2) raises questions about whether self-determination must be understood as involving having full statehood with complete authority over domestic and international affairs, or whether something less is required."[6]

THE SOURCES OF NATIONALISM

Academic literature has undeniably produced a variety of sources for nationalist sentiment. Whether rightly or wrongly, some point to class, conflict or culture as influencers for nationalism within countries. In order to enhance the clarity and structure of the guide however, it may be worthwhile to introduce a distinction between two sources of nationalism. On the one hand, we have nationalism which exists within the general population of a country, and then nationalism on an elite level, amongst the political actors and leaders of a given country. Undeniably this discussion should not be taken as perfect, but rather as an interpretive device for analysing both the form and motivations of nationalism discussed throughout this guide.

[6] Nationalism - Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2014). Retrieved from https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/nationalism/

ISSUES AND ASPECTS OF THE TOPIC

Case Study 1: Hungary - Nationalism from the Governmental Level

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, leading his ruling Fidesz party, has been one of the EU's most vocal critics over the last decade. He has found his main point of conflict with Brussels over immigration[7], the issue which he and his party have made the centrepiece of their campaign[8].

Orbán's sweeping parliamentary victory this April has been followed by a set of so-called 'STOP Soros' laws, including criminalising NGOs who attempt to aid migrants plead their asylum cases and amending the constitution to include a refusal to settle "alien populations" on Hungarian land[9][10]. Orbán's clearly owes his success in part to his bold assertions of his country's national sovereignty in the face of an EU-wide immigration policy. This opens up several questions for the European Council – should a shared quota-based system be adopted involuntarily in the face of such opposition? Should Hungary and other defiant nations be permitted to continue to renege on their obligations under EU law (even after an ECJ ruling dismissing their concerns)? This draws directly into the concepts of nationalism and national sovereignty and into fundamental questions about the nature and powers of the EU in relation to its member states.

Case Study 2: Brexit - Nationalism from the Populace

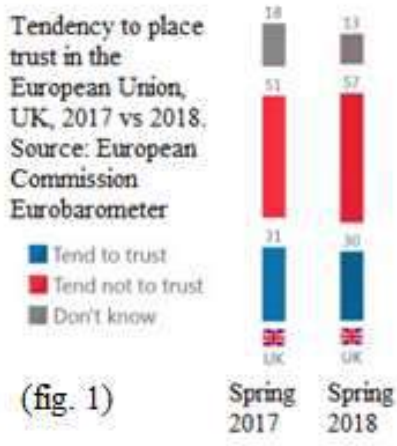
The UK population's vote to leave the European Union in 2016 proved to be just the start of over two years of deepening divisions and increased tensions between the UK and the EU. A

[7] Hungary PM defiant as EU debates action. (2018). Retrieved from https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-45477025

[8] ibid

[9] Hungary pursued by EU over migrant law. (2018, July). Retrieved from https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-44887638

[10] Hungary approves 'STOP Soros' law, defying EU, rights groups. (2018, June). Retrieved from https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-hungary-soros/hungary-approves-stop-soros-law-defying-eu-rights-groups-idUKKBN1JG1V1



(fig. 1)

deal for the full terms of exit has yet to be reached, and as the news cycle of the negotiations continues, British people continue to become more and more divided over the issue.

Though the movement clearly has well-known political figures at its head, such as Nigel Farage, Boris Johnson and Michael Gove, the Brexit movement can be seen as a nationalist movement more so born from the grassroots than from leading political figures. As Conservative party membership activity since the vote shows[11], there is a clear divide in opinion between the political class, or those charged with carrying out the Brexit vote, and the grassroots campaigners and voters who were crucial to securing a Leave victory in the referendum.

Nevertheless, although the nationalism of Brexit can be interpreted as a popular movement, there are equally a number of sources within the British political elite. The heads of the Brexit movement, for example, cite the ongoing difficulties in Brexit negotiations as further evidence that the EU is a 'mafia-style'[12] organisation of which Britain should want no part; regretful "remainers" predictably see the threat of a 'no-deal' exit as a cliff edge exposing the contradictions of the pro-Brexit charge[13]. As a result, the EU has confirmed this polarisation in its own data (shown in fig 1.). The political and both popular divide over Brexit is not only highly dangerous for the EU, but a useful case for interpreting anti-EU sentiment.

The increase in distrust, during the most prolific back-and-forth between the UK government and European Union at the height of negotiations, presents another issue for the European Council to address. When dealing with eurosceptic national governments, such as that currently negotiating its exit from the EU, should the EU be worried about the message sent to others across the continent? Clearly, whether real or fabricated, the perception of the EU as a 'bully'

[11] Brexit: Are Tory Grassroots Members 'taking Back Control'?
Georgia Roberts - https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-45251559

[12] David Maddox Political Correspondent. (2018). 'EU MAFIA!? Rees-Mogg CONDEMNS Brussels as Chequers plan SNUBBED - 'We're RIGHT to leave'. Retrieved from https://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/992097/brexit-news-theresa-may-chequers-white-paper-jacob-rees-mogg-eu

[13] Blair: UK is rushing over cliff edge. (2017, February 17). Retrieved from https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-politics-39004474/tony-blair-on-brexit-uk-is-rushing-over-a-cliff-s-edge

has the potential to further fuel anti-EU sentiment across Europe. For instance, Nigel Farage in speeches at the European Parliament continually invites the states of Poland and Hungary to leave the EU, as he argues that "Britain will not be the last to leave". The Council must work to assess the issue and, if it deems necessary, create workable solutions and alter the current course of EU policy in order to alleviate it.

What do these cases illustrate?

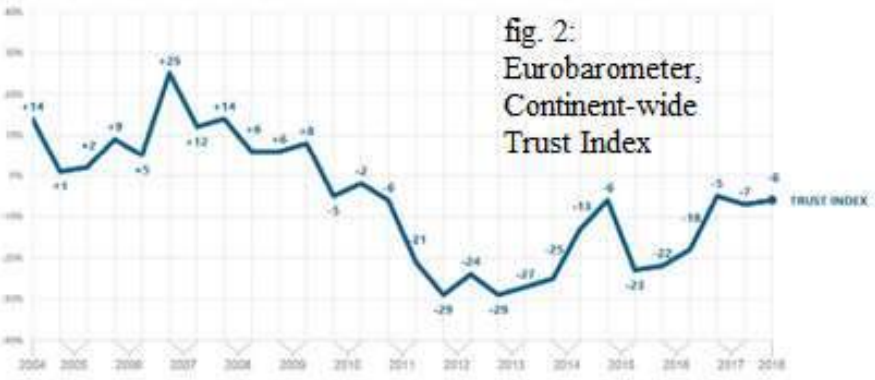


fig. 2: Eurobarometer, Continent-wide Trust Index

The two case studies show that the EU finds itself in conflict with some specific relevant stakeholders. However, the problem illustrated is a systemic one; the EU's data shows a net-negative level of trust which has persisted from the 2008 financial crash to today (fig.2), suggesting an endemic problem across the population of the EU. With negative trust persisting despite reinvigorated growth and employment, there remains ground which needs to be made up if the long-term legitimacy of the EU is to be guaranteed in the face of an unprecedentedly high period of anti-EU nationalist sentiment. Delegates should note with care the reasons for each and every case of an increase in Euroscepticism in order to begin to ascertain and address its root causes. No member state has been excluded from the issue of nationalism. As an EU-wide issue, the European Council must step up ready to meet it. Without nation-hood to hold the European state together, it must prove to its citizens that it truly works for them in a responsive and democratic way. The council must additionally carefully consider the subtle distinctions between government-driven and populace-driven nationalism. Nationalist tendencies amongst populations will clearly not be disposed towards mitigation by the same measures as those sourced from within the ranks of government.

HOW NATIONALISM AFFECTS EU INSTITUTIONS

As of the last European Parliament elections, over 30% of MEPs can be described to some extent as Eurosceptic[14]. Although this does not give them the ability to outright block EU proposals, such a dramatic increase in the space of one election sent alarm bells ringing. The next test for the EU will come in the form of the 2019 Parliament elections, when the progress touted by Juncker may materialise, significantly weakening Eurosceptics power and mouthpiece; or, if Euroscepticism has in fact increased further, the EU may find its agenda entirely frustrated by an increasingly powerful bloc in its parliament, many of whose constituents revile the EU's very existence. Similarly, an increasing number of Eurosceptic governments with seats at the Council may further frustrate the EU agenda.

Nationalism not only affects the composition of EU institutions, but also their legitimacy. Turnout to European Parliamentary elections has decreased every year since their first set of elections in 1979, falling to a lower level than even that of national parliament elections.[15] European Parliamentary elections generally gain little media coverage, and fail to capture the voter's attention. In 2014, turnout stood at only 42.6%[16]. Reiff and Schmitt were the first to describe Parliamentary elections as "Second-order elections' in 1980[17], and with turnout falling every electoral cycle, their judgement still holds true.

Turnout also remains unequal across Europe, with the lowest turnout being in Eastern Europe. Turnout in Slovakia at the 2014 elections was the lowest in the EU at 13%, with some arguing that nationalist sentiment reduces the incentive to vote. Even harder to address is the spread scepticism towards democracy in Eastern European countries. Karp and Milazzo found that voters in Croatia and Slovenia had a high level of dissatisfaction with democratic performance, and over 10% of voters being sceptical about democracy itself[18]. Researchers commented that

[14] How Eurosceptic is European Parliament? (2014). Retrieved from https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-28107633

[15] Statista (2018), *Voter turnout in the European Parliament Elections in the European Union (EU) from 1979 to 2014; https://www.statista.com/statistics/300427/eu-parlament-turnout-for-the-european-elections/*

[16] UK Political Info, (2017), *European Parliament Election Turnout 1979-2014*; http://www.ukpolitical.info/european-parliament-election-turnout.htm

[17] Reiff, K. & Schmitt, H., (1980), Nine Second-Order National Elections – A Conceptual Framework for The Analysis of European Election Results, *European Journal of Political Research*, 8(1), pp.3-44

[18] Karp, J., & Milazzo, C., (2015), Democratic Scepticism and Political Participation in Europe, Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties, 25(1), pp.97-110

European integration for some voters in Croatia called back memories of Yugoslavian control[19]. Citizens who are uninterested and disenchanted with the European democratic process ultimately weaken the legitimacy of EU institutions. Given that Article 10 of the Treaty of the European Union states that the EU will be founded on "representative democracy", thoughts need to be given on how to integrate groups reluctant towards democracy itself.

The low turnout weakens the legitimacy of the EU, leading many to criticise the EU for its "democratic deficit". Although nationalism is certainly not the only cause of low turnout in the European democratic process, as delegates you must consider how nationalism influences both the composition, legitimacy and perception of the European Union.

OTHER CAUSES OF NATIONALISM: EU OPACITY

Earlier this year, the European Ombudsman, Emily O'Reilly, released a special report[20] in response to rising levels of anti-EU sentiment in order to form recommendations on how, in particular, the legislative procedure of the Council of the EU might be reformed to create a more accountable, transparent and ultimately more popular legislative process. The Ombudsman's scathing report decries the culture of secrecy surrounding Council procedures; the lack of disclosure about members' positions during proceedings, creating a lack of knowledge of each member state's true position on policy. Additionally, the usage of the so-called 'LIMITE' procedure - when councils restrict access to documents during 'on-going' decision making processes - is seen as a method of lowering accountability for the council's decisions. The Ombudsman recommended the following changes to the way in which the council operates:

1) Systematically record the identity of Member State governments when they express positions in Council preparatory bodies.
2) Develop clear and publicly-available criteria for how it designates documents as 'LIMITE', in line with EU law.

[19] Filsage, F., (2015), cited in; Karp, J., & Milazzo, C., (2015), Democratic Scepticism and Political Participation in Europe, Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties, 25(1), pp.97-110

[20] European Ombudsman Special Reports (2018); https://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/en/special-reports

3) Systematically review the 'LIMITE' status of documents at an early stage, before the final adoption of a legislative act, including before informal negotiations in 'trilogues', at which point the Council will have reached an initial position on the proposal.

The adoption of these policies may indeed go a long way in the longer term to increasing the accountability of the EU legislative process, currently decried by nationalists across the EU for being unaccountable and bureaucratic. It may also serve to prevent member states from 'blaming Brussels' for policies which they themselves may have supported in meetings of the Council. This example is just one of many potential institutional failings of which the EU has been accused, contributing to accusations of as undemocratic, opaque in its decision-making, deeply bureaucratic and unresponsive to the needs of its citizens.

PAST ACTION: EUROPE'S RESPONSE

The Carrot Approach

Debate about how to address nationalism has been rife among academics and policy groups.[21] There is the economic model which argues for ambitious economic projects, such as the European Commission's Investment Plan for Europe, more commonly known as the Juncker Plan. This succeeded in its goal of implementing €315bn over the period of 2015-2017.[22] As Commission President Juncker argued, the plan helped facilitate the rise in growth and employment which, it is also argued, in turn helped ameliorate the especially low levels of trust in the EU, shown in the Commission's data (fig. 2).

If we return to the distinction between popular and elite level nationalism, "carrots" although also provided to governments, are largely aimed at EU citizens. As we will discuss, it is believed that by offering "perks" to being an EU citizen, there is a greater interest on behalf of citizens to not only support the EU, but identify as European.

[21] Buti, M., & Pichelmann, K. (2017). European integration and populism: addressing Dahrendorf's quandary. LUISS School of European Political Economy Policy Brief, 30.

[22] Juncker Plan exceeds original €315 billion investment target. (2018). Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/commission/news/juncker-plan-exceeds-original-eu315-billion-investment-target-2018-jul-18-0_en

The success of Juncker's approach has its limits too, however, with an OECD report finding that real investment has been just a fraction of what the plan intended originally.[23] Still, with appropriate implementation, there remains a strong argument that economic stimulus could be what is necessary to make up for the lack of public investment since the 2008 financial crisis and thereby increase public affection for the EU as an effective institution.

Other than one project of questionable success, there has been very little EU policy specifically intended to deal the rise in nationalist unrest. Public Relations projects, such as videos on the history and importance of the EU have shown little efficacy. This underscores the importance of innovative solutions during this session. As it relates to our earlier case studies, however, the way in which the EU has responded so far seems to be of questionable efficacy.

Rather than deal with nationalism directly per se, the European Union has attempted to deal with nationalism and anti-EU sentiment by offering incentives for supporting the EU, and also identifying as European. Indeed, schemes like Erasmus+, easing mobile roaming tariffs or civil society projects all aim to incentivise a shared European identity. Offering perks and benefits to European citizenship

Furthermore, in order to increase political engagement with the European Union's democratic process, reforms have been made to Parliamentary elections as well as the power of the Parliament vis-a-vis other EU legislative bodies. Consider for example the introduction of the Spitzenkandidaten process in 2015, which allows the largest party after a European Parliamentary election to elect their nominee for Commission President. Whereas formerly the Commission President was elected by the European Council, it is believed that by placing power in the hands of European citizens engagement with the democratic process will increase, EU legitimacy will be strengthened, and nationalist sentiment reduced.

The Stick Approach

Thus far, the EU's approach towards the governmental side of nationalism - as opposed to the more grassroots, population-based kind - can only be characterised as the 'stick', rather than the carrot. On September 12th the European Parliament voted 448-197 in favour of disciplinary

[23] Stronger growth remains elusive: Urgent policy response is needed. (2016). Retrieved from https://www.oecd.org/eco/outlook/OECD-Interim-Economic-Outlook-February-2016.pdf

sanctions against Hungary for violations of the EU's Article 7[24] on requirements for democratic, rule of law and corruption standards. One day earlier, Commission President Juncker issued a warning that stated his intention to crack down on countries which do not adhere to article 7, citing "[concerning] developments in some our member states".[25]

The success of the 'stick' approach is yet to be seen. Sanctions and penalties, when applied from an EU-institutional level, such as the much-talked-about suspension of voting rights, requires a unanimous vote[26] – one which Hungary and Poland are certain to veto in the eventuality of a vote on the status of the other. With the additional development of Poland appearing to go ahead with its ECJ-condemned judiciary reforms,[27] there is little indication that the actions of the European Commission or the European Parliament have accomplished anything other than further entrenching the nationalist position.

Given the level of consensus required for the passing of a resolution within the Council, delegates must keep their conduct diplomatic in order to forge a sufficient degree of consensus on this most divisive of issues. Clearly, dialogue such as that shown in the recent exchanges between Poland, Hungary and the EU is far from that required to truly solve the deeper issue; delegates in the Council must strive to make up for where other institutions have fallen short.

BLOC POSITIONS

Western Balkans

Slovenia and Croatia, some of the newest members to join the EU, are generally positive to further EU integration. Studies have shown that in Slovenia, people are generally positive to the EU. Slovenians compared to other EU members also show some of the highest levels of

[24] EU parliament pushes Hungary sanctions over Orban policies. (2018, September 13). Retrieved from https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-eu-hungary/eu-parliament-pushes-hungary-sanctions-over-orban-policies-idUKKCN1LS1RM

[25] EU executive will get tough with countries breaking rule of law - (2018, September 12). Retrieved from https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-eu-juncker-ruleoflaw/eu-executive-will-get-tough-with-countries-breaking-rule-of-law-juncker-idUKKCN1LS15N

[26] EU parliament pushes Hungary sanctions over Orban policies. (2018, September 13). Retrieved from https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-eu-hungary/eu-parliament-pushes-hungary-sanctions-over-orban-policies-idUKKCN1LS1RM

[27] Poland - Factors to Watch Sept 12. (2018, September 12). Retrieved from https://uk.reuters.com/article/poland-factors/poland-factors-to-watch-sept-12-idUKL5N1VX4G6

European identity[28]. Croatia too has shown positive signs of EU identification. In particular, Andrej Plenković has stressed that the EU should strengthen its democratic legitimacy by providing direct benefits to EU citizens[29]. Greece, although having a troubled relationship with the EU in recent years, has made commitments to democratise the EU's political institutions. President Pavlopoulos has stated that the EU needs to meet its commitment to representative democracy as envisioned in the Treaty of Paris over 50 years ago[30].

Eastern Balkans

Romania and Bulgaria compared to Western Europe tend to have lower rates of "European Identity". Eurobarometer surveys found that most people in both countries do not identify as citizens of the EU, with respondents in Bulgaria identifying very highly as Bulgarian citizens[31]. Scepticism in Bulgaria and Romania towards the EU remains somewhat high. Some have argued this largely stems from the dysfunctional nature of the Bulgarian government. To combat this, Bulgaria advocates for European support in tackling corruption and insecurity in order to foster a European sense of identity[32]. Given that large parts of rural Romania and Bulgaria remain underdeveloped compared to the rest of Europe, if rural communities in both countries began to feel the benefits of the EU, a European identity may begin to emerge.

Visegrad Group

An institutionalised coalition consisting of Slovakia, Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary, the Visegrad Group has continually made demands for a less centralised Europe. Although many Eastern Europeans within these countries are pro-EU, many would prefer the EU return to its form as an economic rather than political union[33]. In the past, the Visegrad countries have

[28] Eurobarometer, (2004), National Report, Executive Summary, Slovenia, European Commission; http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/archives/eb/eb61/exec_sl.pdf

[29] Hina, (2017), *Plenkovic: EU should strengthen democracy, serve its citizens, play global role, EBL News*; https://eblnews.com/news/croatia/plenkovic-eu-should-strengthen-democracy-serve-its-citizens-play-global-role-59766

[30] Economy Watch, (2017), President Pavlopoulos: EU must fulfill its founding mission, defending western values and democracy, europarltv; http://www.economywatch.gr/president-pavlopoulos-eu-must-fulfill-its-founding-mission-defending-western-values-and-democracy/

[31] Eurobarometer, (2017), Citizen of the EU; http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Chart/getChart/themeKy/50/groupKy/263Scepticism

[32] Dimova, T., (2016), Bulgaria still wears the shackles of the past. But slowly, our country is changing, The Guardian; https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/may/30/path-eu-integration-long-rocky-bulgaria

[33] Connolly, K., (2016), Eastern bloc countries make demands for less centralised Europe, The Guardian; https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jul/04/eastern-bloc-countries-demand-less-centralised-europe

strayed away from the EU line, with the migrant crisis being a case in point. In terms of democratic reform, Visegrad countries have made demands for a less centralised Europe, thus opposing the creation of a "European people". The departure of the United Kingdom from the EU has worried these countries, as they fear the Commission may now push for deeper political integration; the exact thing Visegrad countries oppose. Poland, Hungary, Czechia and Slovakia argue that in order to solve the EU's democratic deficit, power needs to return to national parliaments.

Benelux Countries

The countries of Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands generally show high levels of EU Identity and positive support for the EU. In 2015, for example, the PM of Luxembourg encouraged the consolidation of EU legitimacy through youth participation[34]. Having recently fended off nationalist Geert Wilders, Mark Rutte, Prime Minister of the Netherlands, has looked to reduce the likelihood of populist forms of democracy in other EU countries[35].

Baltic States

Estonia has through its Presidency of the Council of Ministers sought to establish a "digital Europe", illustrating that the government is pro rather than anti Europe. In particular, Estonia may look to utilize democracy through social media, as well as the promotion of online forms of citizenship[36]. Eurobarometer surveys show that in both Lithuania and Latvia, a majority of people identify as European citizens. Although 57% of respondents in both Latvia and Lithuania recorded satisfaction with EU democracy[37], increased discussion needs to be made on how to raise Parliamentary turnout in both countries.

[34] Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, (2015), *Xavier Bettel encourages young people to participate more in democratic life, at the opening of the European Youth Conference*; http://www.eu2015lu.eu/en/actualites/articles-actualite/2015/09/22-conf-jeunesse-ouverture/

[35] Cleppe, P., (2017), The EU could learn from Dutch PM Mark Rutte on how to stop the populist tide, Open Europe; https://openeurope.org.uk/today/blog/the-eu-could-learn-from-dutch-pm-mark-rutte-on-how-to-stop-the-populist-tide/

[36] Laja, J., (2017), *E-residency, the citizenship of the future*?, Open Democracy: https://www.opendemocracy.net/can-europe-make-it/jaak-erik-laja/e-residency-citizenship-of-future

[37] Eurobarometer, (2017), op cit.

Western Europe

The countries of Spain, France, Germany, Austria and Ireland, although suffering from the emergence of nationalism, are generally supportive of the EU. The leaders of these countries in order to tackle anti-EU sentiment often seek to reform EU institutions. Macron has pointed to a number of potential reforms, including the creation of a "pan-European" MEP list to replace British MEPs after Article 50 has been triggered, as well as the creation of a European Finance Minister accountable to the Parliament[38]. Spain and Germany back these measures, with Spain calling for more democratic control over the Eurogroup[39]. Austria too focuses on democratic reform through improving the content of citizenship, and the representative quality of decision making. As of such, Austria, along with the other aforementioned Western European countries, can be seen to approach reforms through basic tenants of liberal representative democracy[40]. These reforms, they argue, will put power back in the hands of citizens, further integration, and reduce nationalism.

Italy

Italy's current political climate is also demanding increasing attention from EU institutions due to the policies and rhetoric of its new government. A coalition between a right-wing and populist party, the League and the 5-Star Alliance, have been ratcheting up pressure and tensions in many policy areas concerning the EU. A deal was only recently struck over the issues of refugees and migration[41], over which the Italian government had decried its position as bearing the brunt of the load of migrant arrivals from North Africa and the Middle east through the Mediterranean. Since then, a proposed government deficit expansion has raised questions at the European Commission, which, since the Eurozone debt crisis, has implemented measures designed to stop any member of the Euro from destabilising the currency through

[38] Robert, A., (2017), *Macron to deliver vision for EU democracy in Athens*, Euractiv; https://www.euractiv.com/section/future-eu/news/macron-to-deliver-vision-for-eu-democracy-in-athens/

[39] Mowat, L., (2017), Now Spain demands major EU reforms as it rages at eurozone for causing 'huge unemployment, The Daily Express; http://www.express.co.uk/news/world/805073/European-Union-reform-Spain-demands-unemployment

[40] Melchior, J., (2004), *The Austrian understanding of democracy and the democratization of the EU*, Vienna: https://ecpr.eu/Filestore/PaperProposal/7688eafe-bdf8-4154-af25-e02ff50c1c03.pdf

[41] Nina dos Santos, Laura Smith-Spark and James Frater, CNN. (2018, June 29). EU summit deal reached after Italy demanded action on migrant crisis. Retrieved from https://edition.cnn.com/2018/06/28/europe/italy-eu-summit-migrant-crisis/index.html

frivolous fiscal expansion.[42] The ensuing rhetorical conflicts have put the Italian government at odds with the EU and devolved their public discourse into a shouting match, with a member of the Commission likening the Italian government to "little Mussolinis"[43]. Despite this at the governmental level, favourability towards the EU on a population level is considerable - with 75% of Italians in 2017 having at least a somewhat favourable view of the EU[44]. It is therefore hoped that although the Italian government has cause to resist integration and possess a healthy scepticism of EU policy, diplomacy may prevail to allow a more productive discourse than that seen over the last year.

The United Kingdom

Despite being embroiled in Brexit negotiations; the United Kingdom has remained critical of EU democracy. The Brexit vote was stimulated partly by fears over loss of national sovereignty to unelected supranational institutions. The U.K. will have to balance supporting calls for a decentralized EU, whilst also maintaining faith with EU leaders in order to secure the U.K. bargaining position during Brexit.

Scandinavia

Denmark, Finland and Sweden remain somewhat divided in terms of European identity. In all three countries, statistics show a relative split between attachment to both the EU and nation respectively[45]. The governments of all three countries are supportive of democratic reform to the EU, stressing that European citizens should have a greater part in decision making as well as encouraging increased interaction through different European communities to foster a regional identity. However, at the same time opposition to the EU still persists and Eurosceptic parties remain popular.

[42] Italy's PM defiant on budget, denies coalition rift. (2018, October 18). Retrieved from https://uk.reuters.com/article/us-italy-budget/italys-pm-defiant-on-budget-denies-coalition-rift-idUKKCN1MS1H3

[43] Italian government fumes at European Commissioner's 'little Mussolinis' jibe. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/09/13/italy-angered-european-commissioner-describing-populists-little/

[44] Attitude towards the European Union (EU) Italy 2017 | Survey. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://www.statista.com/statistics/691225/attitude-towards-the-european-union-eu-italy/

[45] Eurobarometer, (2017), op cit.

Malta and Cyprus

Although becoming President of the Council of Ministers last year, Malta remained largely quiet over European democracy. Malta has generally benefitted from the EU, however many on the islands feel they have little control over immigration flows[46]. Whilst Malta may call for increased citizen participation, the problem of identity and conflict persist in Cyprus. The legacy of conflict within the island may encourage the Cypriot government to encourage a regional identity to not only reinforce the democracy of European institutions, but also create an inclusive community with respect to human rights and liberal values[47].

QUESTIONS A RESOLUTION SHOULD ANSWER

- How should we define nationalism within EU countries?
- What do the cases of Hungary and Brexit tell us about nationalism in the EU?
- Is nationalism a good or a bad thing for the EU?
- What effect, if any, does nationalism have on EU institutions?
- What measures can be taken to address the effect of nationalism on EU institutions?
- How can the EU provide support and advice to deal with nationalism within countries?
- Should the EU follow the stick approach?

POSITION PAPERS

Position Papers will have to be sent to ec@sgmun.org by midnight (24:00) of the 8th of November 2018.

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Topic B: The Eastern Partnership and the Role of the EU in the Caucasus

INTRODUCTION

The Caucasus is a region steeped in a rich and complex history defined by cultural and religious diversity, turmoil and conflict. The Eastern Partnership, an initiative as part of the European Neighborhood Program, has allowed the EU to have a growing role in the Caucasus. Although the initiative aims to build closer economic, political and cultural ties between the two regions, a number of problems lie in the road ahead. Growing geopolitical tensions with Russia, economic problems, and a number of human rights breaches invites the EU to reflect on its role in the region.

Within the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP), we can focus on the Eastern Partnership – a Partnership set on shared democracy, prosperity and stability within the Southern Caucasus region. The goal of the partnership is to not only have increased economic cooperation with states in the region, but also allow the EU to project it's influence around the world. The ENP therefore, and the Eastern Partnership in particular, reflects the EU's global strategy as an international actor.

The following topic guide will reflect on a number of issues concerning the EU's role in the region. We will focus on three distinct issues. Firstly, the role of the EU as an economic actor in the region. Secondly, problems caused by Russia's role in the region. Finally, we will reflect on the EU's role as a humanitarian actor in the region, as well as problems caused by breaches of human rights by states within the Caucasus.

The following guide however should not be considered exhaustive, but only a foundation for your future research on the topic. We expect delegates to reflect on the EU's role in the region, and discuss potential changes to the Eastern Partnership to improve its effectiveness.

HISTORY OF THE ENP & EASTERN PARTNERSHIP

Launched at the Prague Summer in 2009, the Eastern Partnership (EaP) is a part of the European Council and of the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP)[48]. The aim of this Partnership is to strengthen political and economic ties with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine[49].

The European Neighborhood Policy fosters "stabilization, security, prosperity in line with the Global Strategy for the EU's Foreign and Security Policy" and expresses the Union's interest in building increased cohesive partnerships with neighbouring countries. Launched in 2004, the European Neighborhood Policy includes 16 countries. It includes various principles such as the promotion of democracy, rule of law, respect for Human Rights and social cohesion[50]. These goals are associated with the EU's normative influence, and its role as a "soft power". The promotion of norms and values allows the EU to project its influence beyond its borders and promote good governance and fair practice in neighbouring states.[51]

The Eastern Partnership in particular reflects real EU interests within the Caucasus region. As one author describes, the "promotion of values is only one of many tangible EU interests in the area" – others "including post-conflict stabilization, security and energy[52]". Increased Russian

[48] Commission, E. (2016, 12 06). *European Neighbourhood Policy And Enlargement Negotiations*. Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood enlargement/neighbourhood/eastern-partnership_en

[49] European Union External Action . (2016, 12 21). *European Neighborhood Policy* . Retrieved from https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/330/european neighbourhood-policy-enp_en

[50] European Union External Action. (2016, 10 19). *Eastern Partnership* . Retrieved from https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/419/eastern-partnership_en

[51] Whitman, R.G. & Juonos, A.E. (2012), The Arab Spring, the Eurozone Crisis and the Neighbourhood: A Region in Flux, *JCMS*, 50, pp.47-161

[52] Dworkin, A. and Wesslau F. (2015) 'Ten Talking Points from the New ENP'. European Council on Foreign

assertiveness in the region has however increased the salience of strategic considerations for the EU as a normative actor. The limited foreign policy capacity of the EU in comparison to the Russian Federation calls into question the effectiveness of the EU in the region as a "soft power"[53].

The Eastern Partnership is more than just integration on a governmental level; society too is an inherent part of the project. For example, many events are being held like the Conference of Local & Regional Authorities or Youth Events (CORLEAP). This event in particular aims to foster cooperation between private companies, government and young people. This aims as the promotion of a civic and political culture within Caucasus states[54].

ISSUES AND ASPECTS OF THE TOPIC

Humanitarian Problems

One key problem facing EaP effectiveness are continual human rights breaches within Caucasus states. In order to make this issue clear, we will use the case study of LGBT rights in the region. Sexual minorities are often demonized and discriminated against by both politicians and civil society. Routine government crackdowns means that those who identify as homosexual, bisexual, transsexual, among others, live in a constant state of fear. The willingness of governments in the region to attack the human rights of citizens for their sexual identity raises questions about the EU's role as a norm/standard setter for partner countries.

Following the purge in Chechnya orchestrated by Ramzan Kadyrov, in September 2017 Azerbaijan quickly followed suit. Whereas in the case of Chechnya government officials denied all charges, Azerbaijani officials openly admitting the arrest and imprisonment of homosexuals. One Baku official justified the arrests on the grounds that LGBT persons were a threat to public order and could spread sexual diseases[55].

Whilst the EU voiced strong criticism of the attacks in Chechnya, EU officials have remained

Relations commentary, 20 November 2015.

[53] Chryssogelos, A. (2017), Transnational European Party Federations as EU Foreign Policy: The Activities of Europarties in Eastern Partnership States, JCMS, 55(2), pp.257-274

[54] European Union External Action. (2016, 10 19), op cit.

[55] Human Rights Watch, 2017, Azerbaijan: Anti-Gay Crackdown, accessed 28 October 2017, https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/10/03/azerbaijan-anti-gay-crackdown

relatively quiet in regards to the situation in Azerbaijan. Although one EU official stated they "were aware of the events in Azerbaijan", the EU is still yet to decide a firm stance on the issue[56]. Given that the Eastern Partnership aims to promote human rights within the region, the EU's lack of comment on humanitarian breaches could either reflect the EU's desire to encourage economic integration with Azerbaijan. A potential disagreement over rights between the EU and partner countries could sacrifice economic alignment and cooperation. This ultimately raises questions about the EU's priorities in the region, as well as the effectiveness of the EaP.

Economic Integration

The second key priority of the Eastern Partnership is to facilitate economic integration between the Caucasus region and EU. Similar to the EU transferal of democratic norms, the EU encourages free markets and liberalization within the Caucasus. This process of "standard setting" furthers the relationship between the EU and Caucasus and sets the foundation for European integration. The main propeller for integration is the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI), which between 2014-2017 has provided EaP states with over 280bn euros in funds[57].

Aside from the ENI, a number of initiatives have been started to promote economic growth and market liberalization. For example, the "EU4Business" project aims to fund and support small-to-medium sized enterprises (SMEs). SME's represent 83-99% of all firms in EaP states and around 50% of jobs. Although this generally lags behind European countries, the high number of SMEs indicate that they may be vital to promoting growth in the future. To that end, the EU4Business project helps business owners gain access to grants and financing in order to start their business, as well as training to boost technical skills amongst EaP businesses[58]. Since 2009 the project has raised nearly 2bn euros in grants, and could provide helpful for promoting further economic growth in the future.

[56] Rettman, A. (2017), EU disturbed by Azerbaijan anti-gay raids, euobserver: https://euobserver.com/foreign/139227

[57] European External Action Service, (2016), op cit.

[58] EU4Business, (2018), About EU4Business: http://www.eu4business.eu/about

Russian Assertiveness

Against the backdrop of economic and political integration is an increasingly assertive Russian Federation. From the perspective of Russia, the Eastern Partnership threatens to weaken Russia's position in the Caucasus. If a number of states on Russia's southern border were to become liberal pro-market democracies, or even worse, EU members, Russia's influence in the region would be significantly weakened. The development of the Eastern Partnership has often seen friction from Russian officials, and even attempts to oppose the process.

Consider how in 2013 when the EU negotiated the Association Agreements and Deep Comprehensive Free Trade Area Agreement (DCFTAA) with the EaP members, Russia backfired by threatening to remove Russian troops from Azerbaijan. For neighboring Armenia, this was enough to momentarily abandon the Association Agreements and DCFTAA and join the Russian-led *Eurasian Customs Union*. The potential removal of Russian troops from the Nagorno Karabakh region of Azerbaijan, an area mainly populated by ethnic Armenians, acted as a threat to Armenia in order to stop them joining the EU's free trade agreement[59].

Although Armenia did eventually join the DCFTAA, this case reveals how difficult it is for the EU as a soft power actor to compete against the hard military presence of the Russian Federation.

A controversial case would be Georgia's relationship with Russia. From tampered elections to an imbalance amongst the population, Georgia shows how Russia tries to maintain control over its former territory. Georgia accuses Russia of land grabbing and is suffering from the effects of military intervention in its country. Georgia is a country that longs for good governance and a more democratic system, which could, when aligned to European standards, enable a potential opportunity for accession to the Union and NATO. Despite this, there is tough opposition from Russia. Georgia's main party today, called "Georgian Dream", qualifies itself as pro-western but with strong ties to Russian Federation. They have been accused in the last elections to have resorted to massive vote rigging and a display of violence against its own population[60].

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[59] Gylfason, T., Martínez-Zarzoso, I., Wijkman, M (2015), Free Trade Agreements, Institutions and the Exports of Eastern Partnership Countries, *JCMS*, 53(6), pp.1214-1229

[60] Berekashvili, B. (2017, 04 07). *Georgian politics - all circuses, without the bread [Opinion]*. Retrieved from http://oc-media.org/georgian-politics-all-circuses-without-the bread/

PAST ACTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

May 2009 –The EaP is established at the Prague Summit. Within this, the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum is also established. The Forum aims to protect civil society groups within EaP states as well as promote democratic freedom and good governance.

December 2010 – The European Investment Bank establishes the Eastern Partnership Technical Assistance Fund (EPATF). Not only does the Fund aim to increase investment projects within the Caucasus, but also includes the "Eastern Partnership Internship Programme" for young students in Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Moldova or Ukraine[61].

2014 - The Association Agreements and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (AA/ DCFTAs) are concluded. The agreements aim to encourage greater economic integration with Georgia, as well as Ukraine and Moldova. The agreements focus on aligning EU/state legislation, as well as reducing barriers for citizens with the Caucasus region. One example of this are the Visa liberalizations than came into force in Georgia in 2017[62].

April 2014 – The Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum publishes it's Media Freedom Index[63]. The Index is used as a way to track press and civil society freedom in EaP countries.

November 2015 – The Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy stresses the need for tailored policies to partner states[64]. For the Eastern Partnership, this has encouraged the EU to tailor its policies to the needs of each particular Caucasus state.

June 2016 – In order to improve security sector reform within the Caucasus, EU agencies such as Europol, the European Agency for Law Enforcement Training and Eurojust have helped in

[61] European Investment Bank, (2018), Eastern Partnership Technical Assistance Fund: http://www.eib.org/en/projects/regions/eastern-neighbours/instruments/technical-assistance/index.htm

[62] European Commission . (2017, 09 01). *EU - Ukraine Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area* . Retrieved from https://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2013/april/tradoc_150981.pdf

[63] See: EaP Media Freedom Watch, (2014), EaP Media Freedom Watch Index: http://mediafreedomwatch.org/ukraine-has-improved-its-position-in-media-freedom-index-georgia-in-the-lead/

[64] European Commission, (2015), Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy: http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/enp/documents/2015/151118_joint-communication_review-of-the-enp_en.pdf

terms of capacity building in the region. They try to train and help EaP states combat organized crime, terrorism and money laundering[65].

July 2016 – The Georgian Association Agreement is one example of the more "tailored" approach of the EU in light of the November 2015 ENP report. The agreement refers to the "common values" of the EU and Georgia, and the eventual inclusion of Georgia into the EU Internal Market[66]

October 2017 – The Civil Society Forum's second flagship project, the EaP Integration Index publishes its results. The index publishes a variety of reports on the level of European integration in Caucasus states. In this October report, a review of cyber security and online infrastructure reveals that both Ukraine and Georgia have the highest levels of online security amongst EaP states[67].

DANGERS AND CONTROVERSIES: MOVING AWAY FROM THE UNITED STATES

The Eastern Partnership also raises questions about the potential independence of the EU from US trade. This sentiment arises while facing a "trade war" declared earlier this year by the American President Donald Trump. The fact that trade relations are tense would be a motivates the EU to look at new trade opportunities, potentially the Caucasus. Naturally, the solution that comes to mind is that the EU should focus on its own trade opportunities[68]. This sentiment is nothing new though.

The EU's desire to be independent of its transatlantic partner, the US, is reflected in many EU policy developments over the past twenty years. For example, in security and defence, the introduction of the Common Security and Defence Policy enables the prevention and in the

[65] European Commission, (2017), ENP Report 2015-2017; https://cdn3-eeas.fpfis.tech.ec.europa.eu/cdn/farfuture/rc5uH45vfEAs93ppn1u8JfKHHCICKxQz1mYvs5jMbrU/mtime:1495101217/sites/eeas/files/2_en_act_part1_v9_3.pdf

[66] Official Journal of the European Union, (2014), International Agreements, L261, Vol. 57: https://cdn1-eeas.fpfis.tech.ec.europa.eu/cdn/farfuture/VjycjKJ-ii28659I8FYZ8Phir2Qqs0f2jZUoh4un5IE/mtime:1473773763/sites/eeas/files/association_agreement.pdf

[67] See: Eastern Partnership Index, (2017), Eastern Partnership E-Democracy and Cyberspace Situation Review: http://www.eap-index.eu/node/425

[68] Serhan, Y. (2018, 05 02). *The Atlantic*. Retrieved from https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/05/trump-tariffs-europe-trade war/559430/

strengthening of the international security. It is an integral part of the EU's comprehensive approach towards crisis management, drawing on civilian and military assets[69]. Most importantly for EU leaders however, this allows a security agenda which is independent of NATO. This has also been reflected in the establishment of a Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) launched in December 2017. The projects have started in March 2018 and have been coordinating 25 EU Member States – taking political relations to a new level.

The desire for the EU to be an independent global actor therefore leads us to the Eastern Partnership. The desire to move away from the US is exacerbated by a President with rash tendencies, willing to jeopardize established contracts in order to make "a better deal out of it". Trump's threats to pull out of NATO and the reluctance of the US to stay on its course makes it difficult for diplomats to reassure the global populace that everything is under control – but with a loose cannon such as Trump, no reassurance can be found – so we reiterate the statement: "we can't count on the US anymore".

The Caucasus as a new trade opportunity

Now if you look at global trade – you will see that an eventual takeover for the EaP would be problematic, since the differences between markets would be too vast. The main trade partners of the EU in 2015 were the USA, China, Switzerland, Russia and Turkey. Even though Trump has threatened a trade war with Europe, both the US and Europe are each other's biggest partners. Any sudden shift in trade between the two countries, would, it seems, be hugely harmful. Looking at 2017, one can see that the EU exported 20% of its capacity to the US, while only exporting 10.5% to China[70]. Given this huge percentage difference, one could say that if the EU was to choose on an ideal future trading partner, that the smartest course of action would be to continue its trading relationship with its strongest partner, the US.

The EU became China's biggest trading partner in 2005, despite political differences[71]. With rising animosity against the US; the EU is courting new deals. For example, inJuly 2018 Japan

[69] European External Action Service, (2016), Common Security and Defence Policy, https://eeas.europa.eu/topics/common-security-and-defence-policy-csdp_en

[70] Commission, E. (2018, 04 16). *Client and Supplier Countries of the EU28 in Merchandise Trade (value %) (2017, excluding intra-EU trade).* Retrieved from http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2006/september/tradoc_122530.04.2018.pdf

[71] Carter, R. (2005, 01 10). *EU Observer* . Retrieved from https://euobserver.com/economic/18088

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe met Donald Tusk and Juncker to open potential discussions about future trade deals[72]. Nevertheless, if the EU did decide to move away from the US, it would be incredibly difficult for the EU to find a partner that could cover the gap left by the US.

There may be some opportunity in the Caucasus however. Looking into the region of the southern Caucasus, there is significant economic and trade potential. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) pegs 2018 GDP growth for Georgia to be at 4.2%, Armenia 2.9% and Azerbaijan 1.3% - figures that are currently higher than some EU Member States[73]. Georgia is an especially interesting case within the region: counting on the fact that is a business hub. It is a key trade partner of China, which is ahead of Russia and South Korea. Alternatively, another interesting case is that Azerbaijan is very rich in Gaz and could grow its exports – this could present an alternative for the EU to Russian Gaz[74].

BLOC POSITIONS

The European Union

Given that this topic concerns EU foreign policy, EU leaders although having small differences tend to present a EU front when dealing with external partners. In the last Eastern Partnership Summit in 2017, the EU welcomed the increased cooperation with EaP countries. Donald Tusk, President of the European Council, invited further cooperation with EaP states on areas of visa liberalisation, digital economy, support to SME's and potential collaboration on the Erasmus+ program. Nevertheless, EU leaders remained concerned about Russia's role in the region and the illegal annexation of Crimea. They blamed the long and protracted conflicts for breaking down progress in the EaP area, and opposed Russian activity in the region[75].

[72] Ewing, J. (2018 , 07 17). *New York Times* . Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/17/business/trade-europe-japan-china.html

[73] Keay, J. (2018, 03 12). *Global Finance* . Retrieved from https://www.gfmag.com/magazine/march-2018/caucasus-gas-and-gold-drive-growth

[74] Key, J. (2018), ibid.

[75] European Council, (2017), Eastern Partnership Summit, 24/11/17; https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/international-summit/2017/11/24/

The Russian Federation

Russia's opposition and distrust to the Eastern Partnership many believe is informed by the legacy of Cold War politics, namely, a fear of isolation in the international community and Russia's treatment of the post-Soviet space as its exclusive sphere of influence[76]. Indeed, the enlargement of both NATO and the EU in the early 2000s into post-Soviet territory raised alarm in Moscow, as it weakened Russia's influence and international position. Integration with Caucasian states equally has caused alarm in Russia, as shown by the threat to remove troops from Nagorno-Karakbakh in 2013, and Russia's recognition of the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

Although this perspective is helpful in explaining Russia's position, it is somewhat of a caricature. For the most part, Russia's refusal to join the ENP in 2003/04 was because of Russia's growing international power after its post-Cold War slump. A rise in oil and gas prices allowed Russia to exert a greater influence on international politics and reduced the need to join an EU-led bloc. Developing this argument further, the EU tends to treat its partners from a position of *normative hegemony*[77] . As illustrated by the EU's role in the Caucasus, partner states are encouraged to follow "European standards" and align their national policies to that of the EU. For an emerging Russia, Moscow wanted to be treated on equal footing to the EU, not as a junior partner. Turning to the modern day, the competition between both Russia and Western/EU states in both the Caucasus and the wider international area still resembles a battle for normative hegemony. Russia aligns itself as a normative alternative to the US/EU order, supporting ideas of sovereignty and national integrity against the free market liberalism of western states.

QUESTIONS A RESOLUTION SHOULD ANSWER

- What direction should the Eastern Partnership take in the future? Should a priority be given to economic or political integration?
- What stance, if any, should the EU take on human rights breaches within EaP countries?
- How can the Eastern Partnership facilitate economic growth within EaP states?

[76] Gretskiy, I., Treshchenkov, E., Golubev, K. (2014), Russia's perceptions and misperceptions of the EU Eastern Partnership, Communist and Post-Communist Studies, 47, pp.375-383

[77] Haukkala, H., (2008), Russian reactions to the European neighbourhood policy. Communist and Post-Communist Studies, 55(5), pp.40-48

- Can, and should, the EU take a firmer stance on Russian aggression in the region?
- What work can the Civil Society Forum do to increase integration?

POSITION PAPERS

Position Papers will have to be sent to ec@sgmun.org by midnight (24:00) of the 8th of November 2018.

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