

# **From the 2014 Annexation of Crimea to the 2022 Russia-Ukraine War: Association, Resilience and Socialization in the EU-Ukraine Relations between the Critical Junctures**

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# Introduction

- West's relatively weak reaction to Russia's 2008 war against Georgia and its 2014 annexation of Crimea and aggression in Donbas as a factor, underlying Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine in 2022
- **2022 war as a critical juncture for EU foreign policy:**
  - Rethinking the logic of previous action (using geoeconomics to achieve geopolitical objectives)
  - Unprecedented sanctions against Russia
  - Strong solidarity with Ukraine (membership perspective discussions, collective protection for Ukrainians, financial and humanitarian assistance)
  - The deployment of the EU Peace Facility to fund weapons for Ukraine.
  - Strong symbolic support (Tweets, officials' visits to Kyiv amid the war, #StandforUkraine campaign)



Source: Boston Global Forum

Source: Twitter of Ursula von der Leyen



## Research puzzle (1)

- How can we explain such a strong EU response (compared to 2014)?
  - Scale of the attack and cynicism of the war
  - The pre-war U.S. intelligence leaks and the U.S-led transatlantic unity
  - Public opinion in Western countries (demonstrations, petitions, grassroots action)
- BUT! Analysis shall go beyond the 2014 and 2022 junctures to **account of the path dependent dynamics in the EU-Ukraine relations**, specifically between 2014 and 2022
- Two key axes of path dependency:
  - Association
  - Resilience
- Association- and resilience-building-related networks as sites of **socialization** for EU



## Research puzzle (2)

### Key concepts

- Critical junctures
- Path dependency
- 'Positive feedback'
- Association
- Resilience
- Socialization

### Methodology

- Textual analysis of primary sources
- Insight into secondary sources
- Interviews with the EU and Ukrainian officials and civil society actors who were/are involved in the AA implementation and reform support in Ukraine since 2014

# Policy change and critical junctures

- Centrality of the policy change topic in the post-Cold War era due to the multi-aspect change in world affairs
- Scholars' temptation to study 'change as replacement' following 'great events' – critical junctures (Holsti, 1998)
- **Critical juncture** signifies “a period of significant change, which typically occurs in distinct ways in different countries (or other units of analysis) and which is hypothesized to produce distinct legacies” (Collier and Collier, 2007, p.29)
- Critical juncture is close to 'crisis' or challenging turbulent times (Capocchia, 2016)
- Dupont (2020):
  - Critical juncture shall result in the creation of new norms and structures
  - These norms and structures



## Path dependency and ‘positive feedback’

- **Path dependency** understood as “a specific type of sequence in which early contingent events set into motion event chains or sequences that have highly predictable features, culminating in outcomes of sequence that could not have been explained in light of an initial set of conditions” (Mahoney, 2006)
- Path dependencies may survive several critical junctures, influencing the substance of EU crisis response and undergoing evolutionary change
- **‘Positive feedback’** as a key (self-reinforcing) mechanism that drives path dependency (Pierson, 2004)
- Institutions and policies make people invest into assets, build relationships and move forward
  - *Asset specificity*
  - *Site specificity (HQs, travels and contacts, expertise and reputation)*
  - *Physical specificity (organizational structures and infrastructure)*
  - *Human specificity*

# Substance of path dependency in EU-Ukraine relations

- **Association relations**, comprising foundational norms about political relations between the EU and a partner country (countries); trade liberalization, sectoral cooperation provisions, as well as the multilevel institutional structure and dispute settlement (Van Elsuwege and Chamon, 2019).



- **State-building** focuses on macroeconomic and financial stabilization, provision of basic social services, and democracy and the rule of law

**Resilience** is a more expansive concept, compared to state-building, focusing on strengthening states' but also societies', communities' and individuals' adaptability to a broad range of pressures, and state's capacity "to build, maintain or restore its core functions, and basic political and social cohesion" (European Commission, 2017).

# Networks and socialization

- Association and resilience-building activities result in the formation of networks that become sites of EU-Ukraine socialization.
- We understand “socialization” as a **“a set of processes whereby actors acquire new beliefs and interests”** (Chelotti, et al., 2022)
- Exists at both the individual and a larger bureaucratic level (Beyers, 2005)
- Results of socialization:
  - Role playing
  - Adoption of interests and even identity of the community, wherein agents are socialized (Checkel, 2007)
- Freyburg (2015) : cognitive vs affective socialization
- As a result of association- and resilience-building, EU officials socialized with Ukraine:
  - Cognitively (realizing Russian threat and Ukrainian counterstrategy)
  - Affectively
  - In both ways

# Comparison of EU Response to the 2014 Annexation of Crimea and 2022 War

## Key Aspects

- ✓ Political reaction
- ✓ Sanctions against Russia
- ✓ Support to Ukraine
- ✓ Impact on EU internal and external policies



## Association relations

- Ukraine's significant commitments under the AA, especially when it comes to legislative approximation
- Commitment capacity-gap (Wolczuk, 2019)
- **Sector approach to reforms** as a response to the commitment-capacity gap, going beyond traditional development cooperation projects and advancing various aspects of specificity
  - Support Group for Ukraine
  - Association4U umbrella project (2016-2019, 2019-ongoing)
  - Public procurement reform support (later on in the broader context of the public finance management reform)
- **Network-building**
  - Formalized networks under the AA
  - Informal networks, functioning amid the AA implementation (Ukrainian officials, MPs, technical assistance projects' representatives, EU Delegation)



## State- and resilience-building



- Tightly interlinked with the AA implementation
- Path-dependent developments with gradual deepening of projects' specialization/creation of reform hubs
  - Decentralization support/U-LEAD/House of Decentralization
  - Rule of law promotion
  - Direct funding of 'reform support' positions
- 'Cross-dimensional democracy support networks' (Samokhvalov/Strelkov, 2021)

# Socialization



Ukraine's membership application is an expression of their will and their right to choose their own destiny.

Today we have opened the pathway towards us for Ukraine.

They are part of the European family.



## Conclusion

- Unprecedented EU response to war linked, *inter alia*, to path-dependent dynamics of EU-Ukraine relations in 2014-2022 driven by various aspects of positive feedback.
- **Association relations (integration), state- and resilience-building and socialization axes** are likely to determine the substance of EU-Ukraine relations if Ukraine gets a membership perspective
- The case is illustrative of:
  - The EU's ability to develop and implement multi-aspect support actions for third countries fostering positive feedback and socialization
  - The role of path dependencies in response at critical juncture
  - Potential of path dependencies to survive critical junctures



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