The Politics of Response: 
Narratives of Diplomacy, Burden Sharing, and Europe’s “Collective Security” 
in the wake of Russia’s 21st century land invasions

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1. Introduction: What’s Going On?

The world has been turned towards Ukraine for over a year. The Russian military launched their invasion of Ukraine on the morning of February 24, 2022 with over 100 short-range ballistic missiles and air and sea cruise missiles launched, followed by a land invasion by the Russian Armed Forces (RAF) north from occupied Crimea, limited movement westward from the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, southwest from Kursk and Belgorod, and south towards Kyiv from Belarus.\(^1\)

This was the third instance of Russian Armed Forces invading another country in the last 15 years; they did so in Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine previously in 2014. Conflict has not been resolved in either of these two instances. Despite the considerable efforts of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the European Union (EU), and their individual member-states, the ceasefires they so meticulous negotiated and renegotiated, rehashed and publicly called for their enforcements haven’t held. Committees have been formed, crisis coalitions managed and maintained by delegated powers, and supplies and training manuals have been sent, but conflict has not truly ceased to exist in Georgia and Ukraine, even prior to the most recent invasion.

The current surge in the Russo-Ukrainian War is the deadliest conflict in Europe since the end of World War II. The Associated Press reported on February 24, 2023 that since the 2022 invasion, at least 8,006 civilians had been killed, 200,000 Russian troops were wounded or killed, 100,000 Ukrainian troops were wounded or killed, 8.1 million refugees had fled the country, and 5.4 million are internally displaced.\(^2\) The war is causing a humanitarian crisis in Ukraine, a migration emergency in Europe, and a grain catastrophe in the Middle East, while also contributing to heightened tensions between Russia and the rest of the world. It is also part of an energy crisis

in Europe beyond the infrastructure damaged in missile strikes in Ukraine. Russia and Ukraine together make up the sixth largest world exporters of grain, which are primarily sent to Egypt, Lebanon, the United Arab Emirates, Yemen, and Tunisia; this importation makes up between 40-85% of all wheat supplies for the countries.\(^3\) With uncertainty in international agreements for exportation in the short term and understandable disrupted planting in Ukraine, an international grain shortage is imminent in the coming years. The true gravity of the conflict should not be undermined and to not underscore this is unethical. Beyond rising military capacities, magnified tensions, and what-if scenarios constantly being made, real people are being harmed.

The focus of my honors thesis is on how \textit{NATO, the European Union, and in particular their member states France and Germany responded to Russia’s land invasions prior to the current crisis}. My case studies are the invasions of the Republic of Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014 as moments in which NATO and EU policies dramatically or not-so intensely shifted the narratives surrounding diplomacy, burden sharing, and maintaining Europe’s “collective security” as a result of German and French proposals. By highlighting the \textit{responses} of my specific actors, I can understand the influences behind why approaches and narratives were chosen over others in reactions to Russia invading its neighbors.

Even prior to the most recent invasion, these cases were part of a larger narrative in international relations of growing regionality for a long-term decreased or lessened needed reliance on exterior powers. While the United States is a part of NATO, the larger organization has been increasing its cooperation with the EU, which in turn has increased the number of joint agreements between their shared members; they are collaborating in this intricate web of multilateral...
organizations in order to bolster the collective security of Europe. They’re developing, manufacturing and purchasing new planes, tanks, and ships together with the support of EU programs. There was escalating level of regional cooperation in the context of a potential war breaking out in their backyard even prior to 2022 which has the capacity for their own direct involvement if one NATO member is attacked. Compounded with a multitude of crises, Europe grand large is looking to only rely on itself to remain “secure.” To put it bluntly, Europe is preparing for what to do once the U.S. is not there to support them. But still, to this day, there has not been any military intervention in either Georgia or Ukraine; the narrative of collective security is therefore directly reserved for protecting its own members.

What is incredibly evident is that the invasion of Georgia made my actors worried and concerned, but not scared; Ukraine did. The 2014 invasion and annexation of Crimea, the Russian-backed secessionist movements of the Luhansk and Donetsk People’s Republics and subsequent invasion there, alongside a willingness to perpetuate a war of attrition lit a match under NATO and the EU. Collective defense and security rose to the forefront of NATO’s Wales Summit in September 2014 and has stayed there. NATO, the EU, Germany, and France have felt an obligation to do something to maintain both regional security and preventing further harm when something bad happens, and one of the most significant methods of response was to promote their own leadership over the negotiations of the ceasefire agreements. Whether it be because of pressure from their domestic populations or fellow allies criticizing them for doing nothing, they feel that obligation and, depending on the case, German or French officials took the reins. They jumped into action. Direct military aggression was not the method of response chosen by NATO and the EU in the face of Georgia and Ukraine’s right to sovereignty being violated largely in part due to German and French-led narratives of cooperation and diplomacy. They responded with their “civic” tools in their toolbox and not the use of force.
I postulate that the more severe the crisis is perceived by my actors, the more important it was deemed to them, and therefore more emphasis is put on maintaining “collective security” in the wake of the conflicts. Within the narrative of all three components lay the scale of the ceasefires’ breakdowns; all of them were violated, but the degree of violation was much higher in Ukraine. Conflict in Ukraine considered was more “severe” than in Georgia. The problem with Europe’s perception of maintaining and reinforcing collective security is that it is done via “sharing the burden” initiatives that prioritize looking inward on the continent and priority is not placed on mitigating outward-facing conflicts beyond those directly affecting them. While collective security was made priority, it was because war persisted at a lower simmer.

In the midst of the Georgian crisis, France and by de facto the European Union, played a critical role in the ceasefire negotiation, while NATO and Germany took a backseat. Yet both France and Germany were critical to the maintenance and promotion of diplomatic cooperation continuing with Russia, as they believed that would be the best way to move forward. During the Ukraine crisis, the opposite happened: NATO began a narrative of the need for collective security while Germany led the ceasefire dialogues via the Normandy Format while France took a backseat. The European Union continued the narrative of NATO and threw its support behind the formation of multilateral initiatives and joint research, development, and procurement of equipment between its members. But France and Germany did not give up their message of diplomacy, and continued efforts and dialogues with the Russians while limiting the scope of NATO and EU militarization against policy hawks.

I am not a proponent of violent, physical conflict. It’s a bit ridiculous to state this, and I have been told that I haven’t ever been truly when saying this to other people, but writing this honors thesis has made me a complete pacifist. A few months ago I declared that I was a conditional pacifist who understood like many good international political scientists that conflict
can sometimes come about through rationalized threat perceptions and first-strike theory. Violence is used to perpetuate structures of hierarchy and so how can some people continuously not fight physically back when faced with such tragedies? This I am still grappling with. But the moral dilemma of when to fight fire with fire, how much is enough money to invest in military capacities, when is it proportional to cause physical harm to your oppressors, and when does teleological thinking begin to outweigh deontological, has existed for millennia. And my honors thesis is not going to solve that at all. I may be a bit self-righteous sometimes, but I try to adhere to a much lesser level of hubris than that. Just know that I am constantly having an internal dialogue of how deontologically ethical is war and combat at all times.

I think the dilemma I have is a reason as to why NATO members did not contribute to either wars’ physical fighting: only sending humanitarian and diplomatic assistance. Violence only begets violence, and it is not strategic to engage in a war against one of the world’s largest military forces that is supposed to be their partner in peace. One of the sticking points of the Russo-Georgian War was that while Russia had backtracked on its commitments to maintaining peace in the region, other signatories would not; it would be worse for them too to violate their agreements. But NATO and its member states in Europe did conduct military operations in Afghanistan, Libya, and Iraq; these also included Russia at times. So was it just the fact that Russia had invaded the countries that they decided to not meet with physical force, or was it because those countries were not consistent with the idea of “Europe”? Were these conflicts more precarious to navigate and therefore rationalized as not needing direct military intervention because they were European states? I think so. What differentiates these conflicts in the minds of the four actors I follow is distinctly their proximity to one another. Georgia and Ukraine are in dialogue with NATO and the EU to become members at some point in the distant future.
NATO-Russia & EU-Russia Partnerships Backgrounder:

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization was founded in 1949 through the Washington Treaty and currently has 30 member-states\(^4\) from North America and Europe. Based in the principles of collective defense of its member-states, all actions must be taken unanimously.\(^5\) Periodically, NATO will hold “summits” for heads of member-states separate from their regular ministerial meetings; these occur whenever new policies or initiatives are to be introduced, new members invited to join, and partnerships with non-NATO members created. In the past decades the trend has been to hold them annually or biannually.\(^6\) Every ten years or so since the end of the Cold War NATO has released a “Strategic Concept,” being in 1991, 1999, 2010, and the most recently in 2022 after the invasion of Ukraine.

Russia, Georgia, and Ukraine are notably not members of NATO or the European Union. But both organizations have networks of communication and policies that go beyond the pure defense of their member-states. Many of these networks were formed right before and in the aftermath of the dissolution of the USSR. That also being said, both Georgia and Ukraine—two former Soviet Union members—have been in communication with NATO and the EU about becoming members in the future, but those plans had not been formally declared in the case of Ukraine until October 2022.

In 1997 NATO Secretary-General Javier Solana and Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov released the “Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between

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\(^4\) In chronological order of membership status, here is a complete list of NATO states (Nov. 2022): Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the United Kingdom, the United States, Greece, Turkey, Germany (West: 1955, united: 1990), Spain, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Albania, Croatia, Montenegro, and North Macedonia. Finland was added to the Alliance in Spring 2023. Those in italics became members after 1998. States with NATO aspirations are Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sweden, Georgia, and Ukraine.


NATO and the Russian Federation,” better known as the NATO-Russia Founding Act after the Helsinki Summit. The act directly states that they are not adversaries, establishes the NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council (NRC), and constructs joint-cooperative operations for arms control, counter-terrorism, and missile defense. The Act and the resulting Permanent Joint Council was an insurance mechanism for NATO to ensure that Russia did not feel undercut by NATO’s inclusion of new states. In particular, the Act stipulated that “substantial combat force” would not be permanently deployed to regions around Russia. Like with NATO, the European Union and Russia outlined their ties to one another in the 1997 Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) between them.

The Permanent Joint Council worked quite effectively until the Russian invasion of Georgia, in which formal meetings were permanently suspended. After the Rome Declaration—“NATO-Russia Relations: a New Quality”—within a post-9/11 context, Russia and NATO cooperated on counter-terrorism, crisis management, and arms control missions. This period was also the first and only time in which Article 5 of the Washington Treaty was invoked; the United States did so in response to the attack on the World Trade center. Russia collaborated with the organization in their military and counter-narcotics operations in Afghanistan, greater Central Asia, and Pakistan. They were integral in their support for the Afghan army’s helicopter fleet. And through their alliance against the “War on Terror,” Presidents Vladimir Putin and George W. Bush were able to begin discussions on dramatic decreases in strategic nuclear weapons arsenals.

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10 “NATO-Russia Relations: The Background.”
The first Strategic Concept (1991) declared that based on the realities of the post-USSR security environment of the region, “The threat of a simultaneous, full-scale attack on all of NATO’s European fronts has effectively been removed and thus no longer provides the focus for Allied strategy.” While reinforcing Article V’s stipulation that an attack on one is an attack on all, the Strategic Concept committed member-states to open communication and cooperation with those outside of the alliance with the greater goal of maintaining peace on the European continent. The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)’s 1990 Charter of Paris for a New Europe resulting from their Paris Summit included then-USSR states avowed that “With the ending of the division of Europe, we will strive for a new quality in our security relations while fully respecting each other’s freedom of choice in that respect. … We therefore pledge to cooperate in strengthening confidence and security among us and in promoting arms control and disarmament.” NATO and former USSR/Warsaw Pact members said they were no longer opponents; they wanted cooperation and sustained peace on the continent.

At their 1994 Brussels Summit, NATO announced the Partnership for Peace (PfP) to establish an open-door policy between former USSR members and NATO. Its goals were to expand and intensify political and military cooperation in the face of potential external threats. PfP allowed for a regional dialogue without enlarging NATO membership to former USSR states, which was the deliberate intention of Supreme Allied Commander-Europe (SACEUR) John

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14 Members of PfP currently include Finland, Sweden, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Austria, Ireland, Malta, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Switzerland, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. Aspirational members include Cyprus and Kosovo.
Shalikashvili in proposing it.\textsuperscript{16} Enlargement of the alliance debates were widely contentious within both the US and UK governments; Russian President Boris Yeltsin was too trying to propose a separate, non-NATO, pan-Europe security apparatus, much to the dismay of Central and Eastern Europe, who wanted expansion.\textsuperscript{17} PfP membership does not limit states from joining NATO and there have been many that moved from PfP to NATO ally status,\textsuperscript{18} but it was used as a tool to prolong the contentious expansion debate.

\textbf{The Cases: Georgia and Ukraine}

Based on my analysis of the two cases, I argue that the observed severity of the crisis increased its importance, which led to an increased amount of pressure on the capacity of NATO states to “share the burden” and take part in bolstering the defenses and cooperation amongst themselves in the long term. I chose my actors, NATO, the European Union, Germany, and France because of the integral role they each played, to different degrees, in both the Russo-Georgian and Russo-Ukrainian Wars. This was also a way to analyze what other countries were doing other than the United States during these two, as I often find rather than not that everything becomes more of a question of the degree of their involvement in issues, which then just contributes to a larger conversation about a renewed “Cold War.” I think that this narrative is quite distracting and moves political scientists and the rest of the field of war studies to chalk everything happening up to a proxy war and calling it a day. By de-centering the United States, I was able to see how integral a part German and French diplomats were in persuading the two organizations with their policy responses beyond postulations on culture wars and clashes of civilizations. But in order to decenter


\textsuperscript{17} Asmus, 48.

\textsuperscript{18} Former members of PfP that are now in NATO are Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Romania, Lithuania, Estonia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Latvia, Bulgaria, Albania, Croatia, Montenegro, and North Macedonia.
non-conflict actors, I must first give background information on both Georgia and Ukraine before I move further.

The link between Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014 is a strand easily identified by political scientists and world leaders. They were both former Soviet states with desires to join NATO and the EU—guaranteed to a certain extent of accession in Bucharest and Association Agreements’ negotiation with the EU—that were invaded by Russia with only a six-year gap. Georgia is oft lauded therefore as a “precursor,” an early warning sign that Russian aggression would not just be stopped by increasing diplomatic and economic cooperation between NATO, the European Union, and its member states in Europe. In a perfect world, the two cases would be entirely separate and therefore would not influence the way the other is discussed for a perfect bow on the political scientist’s head. But we live in a society and that society is filled with existential tragedies like war. And so the alliances and individual states’ reactions and responses to the 2014 invasion are heavily influenced by the “lessons now learned” from promoting diplomacy above all else.

Like Georgia to 2014 Ukraine, Ukraine in 2022 is always mentioned in relation to the previous moments of high escalation of conflict in the country. They are both put into conversation as signs to what was eventually to come: a larger, more severe, geopolitically straining conflict perpetrated by Russia’s aggression. The “allowance” of the international community for Russia to annex Crimea is perceived as granting Russia permission to successfully take over more and more of Ukraine without pushback by the international community. And thus the policy lessons and their efficacy post-2014 are once again under the microscope and influence the actions taken by NATO and EU members in 2022 and today. The conflicts cannot be untied. To focus instead on what occurred before, during, and after the 2014 invasion of Ukraine is incredibly important to understand in light of the current conflict is important for our understanding today of the current
war, yes, but also because of what came about as a result of it in both international organizations and individual states’ treatment of their relations with Russia and “playing their part” in the security apparatus of the continent. How did these actors respond to the invasions, and how did that shift the narratives and policy implementations that bolstered an insular, inward-looking Europe? In assessing the wars’ perceived severity and importance in this thesis, I must introduce the two countries first.

The Republic of Georgia had a population of 3.8 million, a gross domestic product (GDP) of $11.7 billion (USD 2015), and a per capita income of $2,980.30 in 2008. In 2015 it was moved from a lower-middle to a middle-income economy. The population has since decreased while the number of internally displaced persons has increased. Its terrain is primarily mountainous, as the country is framed by the northern Great Caucasus Mountains and Lesser in the south, and is located on the Black Sea. Georgia is abundant in iron ore, copper, coal, and oil deposits and has one of the richest manganese deposits—critical for steelmaking—in the world. As evident by Figure 1, the country neighbors Turkey, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Russia. Georgia was at the time, quite notably, one of the top recipients of U.S. foreign aid and an almost-member of NATO.

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The Russian Armed Forces invaded the Republic of Georgia on August 8, 2008.\textsuperscript{24} The invasion was preceded by the Georgian air raid of South Ossetia’s capital Tskhinvali the day prior, which alongside Abkhazia faced escalating tensions with the Georgian government and aligned themselves with Russia. The Russo-Georgian War only lasted five days before Russian President Dmitry Medvedev and French President Nicolas Sarkozy—acting as the leader of the European Union Council—announced the Six-Point Plan, the ceasefire agreement for the war. On August 14, both the presidents of South Ossetia and Abkhazia endorsed the agreement; Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili signed it a day later and then subsequently did Medvedev. Russian troops were largely withdrawn from Georgian territory on August 22, but some remained in Abkhazia and South Ossetia as border control officials. While the ceasefire has mostly held and the Russian Armed Forces have remained in their same position, tensions remained high in the Caucasus. Four days after the August 22 withdrawal, President Medvedev publicly recognized the sovereignty of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states from Georgia, thus further entrenching the discomfort of their relationship.

The implications of the invasion and subsequent sovereignty recognitions were at the forefront of NATO, regional organizations, and their member states’ minds. The Georgia case of often lauded the first exterior military intervention by the Russian Armed Forces since the fall of the Soviet Union and came after NATO debated whether to initiate the process of Georgia’s initiation into the alliance.\textsuperscript{25} NATO’s foreign ministers on August 19 “declared that Russia’s military action has been disproportionate and inconsistent with its peacekeeping role… and with


the cooperation agreements with the Alliance.” 26 They suspended formal meetings of the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) until Russia removed all armed forces from Georgia. Russia responded by stopping ongoing military operations as partners of NATO and within the PfP program except for in Afghanistan. NATO formed the NATO-Georgia Commission in September 2008, but still did not issue a Membership Action Plan (MAP), the process that begins a potential members’ membership process into the organization. NATO-Russia Council meetings were unsuspended in summer 2009 even with the lack of conditionally-tied to troop removal in Georgia.

The response of the European Union, largely guided by Germany and France, was to maintain diplomatic relations with Russia following the singing of the ceasefire agreement. While all condemned the invasion by Russia and recognized how it had violated international treaties, their actual response to the Georgia crisis was minimal. France had led the ceasefire effort and Germany was arguing for an increase in relations, launching the Modernization Partnership and failed Meseberg Initiative to bolster transatlantic cooperation. The Russo-Georgia War was a “blip on the radar” of a larger transatlantic partnership between Russia. France and Germany, who had both effectively argued at the NATO Bucharest Summit that Georgia and Ukraine should not receive MAPs, both called for increased cooperation and not lesser; their arguments won out above Poland and the Baltic States that argued that Russia had overstepped and proportionate military intervention was needed. Germany and France were proponents of diplomacy being needed now more than ever. These states were also facing an international financial crisis and the beginnings of the Eurozone Crisis. Military budgets were being cut substantially, which was already the trend in post-Cold War Europe. Diplomacy, not militarization, was chosen as the response.

26 Marcel de Haas, “NATO-Russia Relations after the Georgian Conflict,” Clingendael Institute, no. 7 (January 2009): 5, 6.
Six years later Russia invaded Ukraine. Following a series of domestic political events, the Russian Armed Forces invaded the Crimean Peninsula of Ukraine on February 20, 2014 and annexed it on March 18. Separatist groups in the Donbas region of Ukraine, the Luhansk People’s Republic (LPR) and Donetsk People’s Republic (DPR), subsequently proclaimed their independence from Ukraine with Russian support, but to this day are still internationally recognized as within Ukraine’s sovereign territory. Following months of debate and several different proposals by non-conflict parties, the Package of Measures for the Implementation of the Minsk Agreements, or Minsk II, was agreed to in Minsk, Belarus on February 15, 2015. Minsk II was a ceasefire agreement negotiated by French President François Hollande, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Russian President Vladimir Putin, Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko, DPR leader Alexander Zakharchenko, and LPR leader Igor Plotnitsky via the Normandy Format and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) via the Trilateral Contact Group on Ukraine. It was preceded by a first Minsk Agreement negotiated by the same actors that was unsuccessful.

Ukraine had a population of 45.5 million people, a gross domestic product of $112.3 billion, and a per capita income of 2,446.50 in 2013. Ukraine is a lower-middle income economy with a steep and consistent population decline since its peak in 1993 at over 52 million. Labelled “the breadbasket of Europe,” the country’s largest and most significant exports are

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agricultural products.\textsuperscript{32} That being said, much of its GDP derives from the metallurgy, chemical, machine building, and construction industries, alongside timber and oil.\textsuperscript{33} The largest driving force behind its GDP growth was agriculture, not industry. Ukraine’s mountainous regions are located only in the western portion, the Carpathians, and the Yayla (or Crimean) Mountains on the peninsula, meaning the further east into the country the flatter the terrain becomes. Ukraine is quite unique in its proximity to numerous states, many of which are NATO members such as Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, and Romania; Belarus, where Minsk II was negotiated, also borders Ukraine along with Moldova. Its land border with Russia—both on the eastern front and the Strait of Kerch between the Sea of Azov and Black Sea—is instrumental to this case. As evident in \textit{Figure 2}, the Dnieper River bisects the country, flowing from Belarus in the north and ending in the Black Sea.\textsuperscript{34}

What we view as Ukraine today was cemented in 1922 when the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, another constituent republic of the USSR was established.\textsuperscript{35} The region was the home of the Kyivan Rus people and portions of it were a part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth alongside the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The Crimean Peninsula was annexed by the Russian

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{ukraine_map.png}
\caption{Map of Ukraine, Courtesy of National Geographic Kids. Made by Martin Walz.}
\end{figure}

Empire in the late 18th century and then joined the Ukrainian SSR in 1954. The Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the Federal City of Sevastopol, the two areas annexed by Russia in 2014, narrowly voted in favor of Ukrainian independence from the USSR in 1991.\textsuperscript{36} Under Ukraine’s constitution, Crimea is an autonomous republic within the country with its own prime minister and 100-member parliament.\textsuperscript{37} While they have autonomy over most decisions, the Ukrainian Rada can veto any of their actions and Sevastopol is not actually a part of the autonomous zone. Sevastopol, like Kyiv, is one of Ukraine’s regions and the Ukrainian president appoints the head of city administration. Another key portion of the conflict in Ukraine was the separatist movements of the Donetsk and Luhansk People’s Republics in the Donbas region, an explanation for will emerge when I delve into the cases later in this thesis.

The international community responded much more swiftly and forcibly than they did in comparison to the Russo-Georgia War. Russia was removed from the Group of Eight (G8)—now the Group of Seven (G7)—formal meetings of the NATO-Russia Council were once again suspended but remain that way today, and the European Union became a force through which its members economically sanctioned Russia as punishment. Many agreements made between states such as France and Russia’s Mistral deal were cancelled. But, as just about everyone always points out in the Russo-Ukraine War of 2014-2015, the world let Russia annex Crimea and basically take over. No troops were sent, barely any foreign assistance or arms transfers occurred during the war, and Germany entered the Nord Stream II pipeline agreement with Russia.

Yet the security environment and the narrative around it dramatically changed as conflict continued in the Donbas region. 2021 marked the seventh consecutive growth year in defense

\textsuperscript{36} Gerard Toal, \textit{Near Abroad: Putin, the West, and the Contest over Ukraine and the Caucasus} (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 202.

spending in Europe. States started investing more in their defense apparatuses and changed their internal priorities in large part because of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. Diplomatic cooperation with Russia was under such a large international lens following the annexation of Crimea and the implications that potentially had on the rest of the region, especially former Soviet states or allies that were not part of NATO or the European Union.

Roadmap of where we’re going next:

The plan for this thesis is simple in nature to deal with the complexity of this topic. The following chapter, “Theories of International Relations & My Methods,” grounds my thesis in the other theoretical work of political scientists and historians that are the very people looked to when defining sovereignty, burden sharing, collective security, and crises as they have spent their lifetimes analyzing conflict resolution and mitigation strategies. It also serves the purpose of explaining the methods behind my gathering of information why my structure is the way that it is.

Each of my three core chapters include both cases at different stages and a comparative analysis. The first of these chapters, “A World in (dis)Harmony” looks at each through a series of severity indicators developed by Michael Brecher and Patrick James for their book Crisis and Change in World Politics but modified by me: 1) the parties’ proximity to NATO; 2) the crises’ geopolitical salience; 3) major power presence; 4) the range of issues at hand; 5) number of military actors; and 6) level of violence. These indicators are used to understand the cases independently from one another and then comparatively, especially as they are chronological to one another. The second content chapter, “In the midst of the Conflicts,” takes a deep dive into the press statements, policy proposals, diplomatic visits, and ceasefire negotiations made, or not, by my four parties:

NATO, the European Union, and their member states France and Germany. It aims to answer the question of what were they doing, and what was the winning messaging campaign in light of Russia’s land invasions? This chapter is limited in scope by the signing of the most “successful” ceasefires for both conflicts: The Six Point Plan for Georgia and Minsk II for Ukraine. My third content chapter, “After the Storm, When the Flowers (Don’t) Bloom” begins with the durable changes also from the Brecher and James format: 1) the distribution of power (i.e., the hierarchical differentiation of conflict and negotiating parties); 2) actors present (i.e., newly independent states as a result of the conflict); 3) alliance configuration; and 4) rules of the game. It then, like “In the Midst,” looks at press statements, forums formed, policies enacted, as well as the continued calls for the ceasefires to be followed to no avail.

What is abundantly evident, and a pretty understandable thing to conclude, is that the Ukraine case had a much larger impact on the policies enacted by my four actors and their approach to relations with Georgia, Ukraine, and Russia. I denote this as adhering to my hypothesis that the more severe the crisis, the more important its durable changes are, and therefore more emphasis is put on maintaining Europe’s “collective security” via burden sharing strategies in the wake of the continued conflicts and posturing of Russia. This conclusion is important because it both provides the context of the European security environment prior to the 2022 invasion of Ukraine, but also creates a sense of compounded threats that have chronologically compounded the perception that more must be done by European countries in order to “protect themselves” from the “threat” of Russia.

40 Brecher and James, 40-3.
2. Theories of International Relations & My Methods:

Interstate, physical conflict has become a rare phenomenon in world politics since the mid-twentieth century and when it does happen, it occurs at lower intensities than previously.\textsuperscript{41} Intrastate war, on the other hand, has increased but relatively declined since the 1990s. The emergence of international institutions is oft accredited with the rise and perpetuation of norms on sovereignty, conflict negotiation strategies, and reciprocity circles that have promoted the idea of peace and security between recognized states.\textsuperscript{42} Conflict therefore tends to emerge when non-state actors attack states or other non-state actors due to countless rationalities that I will not outline. Nevertheless, the point I am trying to make is that one state invading another state has become incredibly infrequent and a rarity, which is why it is fascinating and deeply concerning that the Russian Federation has done it \textit{thrice} in the past fifteen years to varying degrees in different countries in what is consistently defined as geographically “Europe.”

Critically, my cases of the first two instances of these invasions are moments in which the Russian Armed Forces were deemed by the international community as violating the norm of state sovereignty. The encroachment and actual infringement of sovereignty of the nation-state is the rationale behind why NATO, the European Union, Germany, and France responded in the manners in which they did; Russia had not only violated the numerous United Nations Charters that denoted the territorial integrity of Georgia and Ukraine, the norms of respecting borders outside of legal proceedings, but killed, wounded, injured, and displaced people by doing this. Russia had undermined and gone against the notions set out by the Treaty of Westphalia that denoted states as being sovereign territories that recognized one another as having control within their own

\textsuperscript{42} Szayna et al, 4.
territory without fear of others’ encroachment.43 This is, as Max Weber notes, the monopolization over the legitimate use of physical force within a state’s borders.44 Political territoriality, relatedly, is the physical delineation of boundaries within which the state can operate and organize a structure of governance; it is the ruling of a specific space.45 Russia’s actions went against said monopolization and territoriality when it invaded both Georgia and Ukraine, and in the case of the latter, outright annexed it.

The two main ways that Germany and France responded, or chose to not actively participate in, was through the lens of de-escalation: negotiating ceasefire agreements while limiting the perceivable threat of bolstering collective cooperation measures. The degree to which each approach is taken is determined by each conflict’s severity and durable changes, an idea that will be fleshed out more throughout this honors thesis but the basing of which will be in this chapter. Much of my findings rests on theories on alliance burden sharing, interdependence, and nonviolent forms of conflict intervention.

One of the key ways that sovereign, recognized states with a monopoly over the legitimate use of physical force within their territories interact with one another is through establishing ties with others states that they trust. Legitimacy on the international stage does not always derive from domestic populations’ recognition that you are a legitimate governing body; having the backing of multiple, highly-powerful states stating matter of factly “yes, I do see you as a state like myself” is highly impactful. To a certain degree domestic recognition is not necessary because, as the argument goes, dictators that isolate their populations to the point where neighbors do not know their own neighbors’ dissatisfaction with the current regime means they are kept in power. But

45 Caporaso, “Changes in the Westphalian Order,” 10,11.
nonetheless, states tend to need to recognize other states in order to gain their own recognition. They reinforce these relationships through establishing bilateral and multilateral cooperative agreements, participating in international forums and organizations together, and by making promises to one another that they will continue to voice their support in maintaining these agreements and relations.

Michael Barnett and Jack Levy in define an alliance “in its broadest sense to refer to a formal or informal relationship of security cooperation between two or more states and involving mutual expectations of some degree of policy coordination on security issues under certain conditions in the future.”46 But, the creation of said alliance or any formation of an agreement between states requires a degree of understanding: trust, if you will. As Brian Rathburn argues in *Trust in International Cooperation*, “multilateralism is the expression of trust. In the context of strategic interdependence, trust is the belief that cooperation will be reciprocated.”47 He goes further to say that trust originates in the idea that other people or states have the same goals and intentions as you, and the establishment of organizations permit for that information to be spread and maintained in a positive way. These organizations are formed in a way to maximize the likelihood of trust not being broken and therefore align with other states that share the same “values” as them.48

This notion brings me back to the idea of how interdependence and cooperation in organizations lead to more peaceful outcomes. As Michiel S. de Vries notes in “Interdependence, Cooperation and Conflict,” the theory of interdependence promoting peace is based on the principle that linked states are more likely to take other states’ priorities into consideration when

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48 Rathburn, 3.
acting because of how intertwined their political, economic, and social spheres become.\textsuperscript{49} As states become more interconnected with one another, they will work with their own self-interest in mind, maintain connections, and therefore will settle conflicts through nonviolent means. But we know that my two case studies are not moments in which nonviolent means are used in order to settle issues between Russia, Georgia, and Ukraine, a rationale for which I am not focusing on in this thesis. But the interdependence theory of peace between states is what must be understood. Nevertheless, this principle of cooperation-induced peace is the groundwork for persisting ties between my actors and Russia at different moments.

My cases are also instances where organizations that none of the conflict actors were a part of directly involving themselves. They have relations with one Russia, Georgia, and Ukraine, but only were their Partners in Peace with cooperation agreements. And so an entire new dynamic must be understood and analyzed: intra-organizational musings about how the conflicts impact them as permanent member states. Within organizations, especially depending on their nature, fears of abandonment, entrapment, and free-riding are oft expressed; so, in exchange for trust and recognition by other states, a degree of sovereignty must be given up demonstrating their “stake.” Multilateral security organizations require for their members to have a security guarantee such as NATO’s own Article V:

\textit{The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defence recognized by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually, and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed forces, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area.}

\textit{Any such armed attack and all measures taken as a result thereof shall immediately be reported to the Security Council. Such measures shall be terminated when the}

Security Council has taken the measures necessary to restore and maintain international peace and security.\textsuperscript{50} In order for these security guarantees to take hold and be convincing enough for states to cooperate themselves, members and organizations must constantly prove to one another their own willingness to act on them.\textsuperscript{51} This applies in both the immediate aftermath of an attack, but also in preparation for one hypothetically. In the midst of security crises such as my two case studies, a greater guarantee was constantly being discussed in the news, press statements made by the security organization, and member-states’ own foreign ministers, defense secretaries, heads of state and government matter in assuring one another that if something were to occur, there is a certification of action. This is also independent of the population’s own ideas of the matter. But the \textit{threat} of potentially being the target of an invasion and threat of abandonment has proven cause enough for NATO, its members, and by extension the European Union to promote narratives of collective security and defense particularly with the Ukraine case.

With that in mind, burden sharing strategies come to the forefront of security guarantees. Jordan Becker and Edmund Malesky define burden sharing as “the distribution of costs and risks among members of a group in the process of accomplishing a goal”; everyone must play their part in order to guarantee the organization’s job is fulfilled: collective security.\textsuperscript{52} A narrative of collective security guarantees that that everyone plays their “part” and is not free-riding off of guarantees made by some of the most powerful militaries in the world to intervene on their behalf following their own failure to contain threats. Yet different members play different roles in maintaining peace and protection guarantees; not everyone has to be a strong military power. I

\textsuperscript{51} Rathburn, 20.
adhere to the same school of thought that Benjamin Zyla presents in *Sharing the Burden?: NATO and its Second-Tier Powers* and Alexander Lanoszka in *Military Alliances in the Twenty-First Century*, in that burden sharing is defined by states differently and the fear of being labelled a “free-rider” prevents members of collective security organizations from ever not playing their part. Entrapment becomes a self-denying prophecy because everyone takes burden sharing seriously. I, like these political scientists and other theorists, do not find much use other than a common threshold for members to meet, much value in a set 2% share of a country’s gross domestic product in determining if they are playing their part in the defense of the alliance. Not all burden sharing and collective security mechanisms are expressed as a share of GDP, particularly diplomacy. It paints a picture, but it is not the entire photo.

I find that narratives promoting collective security and defense against a common enemy emerged in response to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, while it was not as present during or after the invasion of Georgia. The Georgia crisis was not deemed severe nor important enough to be worth sacrificing the relationship NATO, the European Union, Germany, and France had built with Russia. The economic crisis was occurring in Georgia and was a blip on the sovereignty radar. In part, this is why certain actors became more prominent than others during this; NATO took a step back and the European Union under French leadership emerged as the ceasefire negotiator. The Ukraine crisis, on the other hand, created an environment in which states became more cautious of Russia, NATO and their members announced their willingness to be launched into action if one of them were attacked. This same language was adopted by the European Union; they issued economic sanctions on Russian industries and their leaders and instigated policies to

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promote joint research, development, and procurement of up-to-date weapons technologies for its members.

There are two theories accredited how regional orders and multilateral institutions have contributed growing cooperation amongst each other, which are important for me to note and then move on. The first is hegemonic stability theory, postulating that the efficacy and stability of the global world order is durable when a single state is in a seat of power. Whenever there are challenges to the hegemon’s place at the top, or powers begin to rise to try to meet them, conflict emerges and the system becomes unstable. But then that begs the question of who is the hegemon in this scenario? German and French political leaders have purposefully avoided declaring themselves the powerhouses of European politics that use their considerable influence to always get their way; they compromise, they don’t always get their way, and use their influence to instead ensure that diplomacy remains an open channel in the aftermath of both conflicts. Is it then the United States, a country that, which will become abundantly evident in my honors thesis, was purposefully not part of conflict negotiation and their officials were purposefully redirected to not have interactions with Russian officials? I’m not entirely convinced hegemonic stability theory applies here. The second comes from Europeanization Studies and the effect that the European Union has on its members: uploading and downloading policies from one another. Domestic policies will be brought to the European Union level, those policies are then adopted by the wider organization, and in order to fulfill them, they must be “downloaded” by other members. This has only perpetuated each other’s influence on other states within the union, as policies are adopted

55 Zyla, Sharing the Burden?, 25.
56 Fix, Germany’s Role in European Russia Policy: A New German Power?, 2-6.
57 Fix, 15.
by other members of the Union. This, in my opinion, is much more logical as it is an example of how certain norms have continuously been perpetuated and adopted via institutionalization.

But I must return to the other way in which Germany and France responded to the outbreak of conflict: by holding diplomacy higher than everything else in order to create ceasefire agreements. Despite all of their talk during and after Ukraine, no NATO member had sent troops and very few sent weapons or up-to-date technologies; they used “non-violent” means of intervention in order to promote negative peace. Negative peace is defined as the absence of direct violence and war, while positive peace is the absence of the structural and cultural violence that led to the violence in the first place.\(^5\) The method of addressing the conflict chosen was via ceasefire, which is noted by Kristine Höglund and Mimmi Söderberg Kovacs as the typical precondition to peace accords; it is a rarity for ceasefires to come as a result of peace plans.\(^6\) But those ceasefires have continued to break down and only contribute to the perpetuation “frozen” conflict like Georgia and wars of attrition in the case of Ukraine. It makes sense that with the growing distrust between all of my parties and Russia, especially in the light of the current escalation of war in Ukraine, that peace accords have not completely been on the table. A conversation about maintaining positive peace is considered therefore to be unrealistic at these very moments because of the needed fulfillment of the imminent goal of its negative counterpart. The general sentiments behind continued attempts for diplomacy and ceasefires though is the eventual culmination of achieving positive peace on the continent and globe in the face of other states that wish to infringe on that. No one wants war, but war is what is happening, and one of the ways to prevent war from continuing to occur is the negotiation of a ceasefire.

In the face of being unable to achieve negative peace, my four actors have worked towards maintaining the security and defense of the rest of the continent. The notion of peace transcends that of security alliances and international organizations; they are all ways in which negative peace is meant to be maintained and for physical violence to be contained and occur at a less frequent pace. Part of the response mechanism to the absence of peace is therefore to utilize the structures and bureaucracies in place to end conflict when identified. We in the political science field that study war and conflict can talk a big game about how we need to understand why war starts so that we can learn from those rationalities and not follow the same path; and they should be applauded for doing so. But simultaneously there needs to be a stronger emphasis put on the harm that is perpetuated once the fighting is happening and once it is supposedly supposed to stop now that a ceasefire agreement has been signed. It’s not just the fact that the principle of a state’s sovereignty was violated, but in that violation people were physically and mentally harmed, had to flee their homes, and live in a reality where they either lost their life or their life was permanently altered. These are cases in which the extension mechanisms of alliances—their established cooperation with Russia—did not dissuade their armed forces from invading Georgia and Ukraine. That cannot be misunderstood. This is about much more than just the response mechanisms put in place by NATO, the EU, Germany, and France.

**My Methods**

That being said, by focusing on my four actors, I am able to understand a fuller picture of the case and how they seized this moment to promote cooperation between each other via both ceasefire dialogues and collective defense strategies. Much of my work has been influenced by the writings of Liana Fix, Bence Nemeth’s *How to Achieve Defence Cooperation in Europe?*, and Lieutenant Colonel Jordan Becker’s publications. Fix’s most recent publication *A New German Power? Germany’s Role in European Russian Policy* was instrumental in my understanding of the
role that European Union, German, and French leaders in particular had in behind closed door negotiations of what to do in response to Russia’s invasions of Georgia and Ukraine. Nemeth’s work on the role of subregional defense organizations emerging in Europe alongside his own research model caused me to rethink and restructure my own hypothesis of using an intervening variable. And last, Lieutenant Colonel Becker and his collaborators’ research papers on NATO, burden sharing, and how different interpretations of commitment go beyond 2% of GDP should not go unacknowledged. Based on his methods that emphasize the importance of disaggregated defense data published by NATO, I too utilized the disaggregated data to detect what trends emerged following the respective conflicts in budgetary allocations.

The actual structure of my conflict analysis can be accredited to the research design put forth by Michael Brecher and Patrick James in *Crisis and Change in World Politics*. The two define global crises as “a situational change in an international system characterized by two individually necessary and collectively sufficient conditions: 1) distortion in the type and an increase in the intensity of disruptive interactions, with a high probability of military hostilities; and 2) a challenge to the existing structure of the system.”61 The Russo-Georgian and Russo-Ukrainian Wars are both *international crises* to varying degrees, and so I utilized the framework they set forth in their book. It had to be modified for my own purposes because it hinges notably on realities present during the Cold War during which it was published; all of their subsequent usages of this framework was used in analyzing conflicts during the Cold War as well, so I updated them. The two key components of the framework are the *severity indicators* reflecting the crisis’ intensity as well as *importance indicators* reflecting the durable changes resulting from it. My modified severity indicators are: 1) the parties’ proximity to an alliance (NATO), 2) the crisis’ geopolitical salience; 3) major power presence; 4) the range of issues at hand; 5) number of military

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61 Brecher and James, *Crisis and Change in World Politics*, 22.
actors; 6) level of violence. They will appear in the following chapter on both of the conflicts. The durable changes represented via the importance indicators are briefly summarized at the beginning of each conflict’s analysis in “After the Storm,” and they are: 1) the distribution of power (i.e., the hierarchical differentiation of conflict and negotiating parties); 2) actors present (i.e., newly independent states as a result of the conflict); 3) alliance configuration; and 4) rules of the game. The purpose of using these indicators is to provide a framework for cross-comparison of the broader trends in each case.

On the note of cross-comparison, one of the standardized ways in which I gathered both my understanding and information for this thesis were press releases issued by NATO, the European Union (EU, Council, Commission, Monitoring Missions, etcetera), and the foreign ministry offices of Germany and France. Their sites were at times difficult to navigate as much of their information on current relations with Georgia and Ukraine was flooded by up-to-date information on the current conflict, so I utilized the Way Back Machine via the Internet Archive quite frequently because of the French Foreign Ministry’s tendency to archive statements made prior to three months ago. I used the search functions of these sites to find press statements, joint declarations, and transcripts from various organizational summits to piece together what was said and by whom at what point in the chronology of the beginning of the conflict. The German Foreign Ministry would not let me chronologically sort statements—but I could limit the publication date range—so I had to painstakingly sort through quite a bit more documents than I thought I would need to. Almost all documents had been translated into English, but for those that had not, I read them for context in German and only quoted them once. Similar to my problem with their websites, I had to limit all of my Super, JSTOR, Taylor & Francis, and even Google searches to prior to

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62 Brecher and James, 34-40.
63 Brecher and James, 40-43.
2022 in order to properly sort through analysis that did not just briefly mention each in relation to the ongoing war. For Georgia, I frequently limited my search functions to prior to 2013 and for Ukraine to between 2014 and 2019, as if I did prior to 2014 it would populate information about their now nonexistent nuclear arsenal they traded away following their independence.

Beyond press statements and declarations, I had many sources for my timeline, content, and data. The primary think tank publications that I utilized were from Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (CEIP), Brookings Institution, Center for Strategic International Studies (CSIS), Chatham House, and the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS). A special note must be made for the reports issued by the Congressional Research Service (CRS), a vital Library of Congress organization that only continues to issue accurate, important reports on virtually everything. The news organizations looked at were primarily The New York Times, Reuters, The BBC, The Guardian, and Radio Free Europe primarily because those were the most reputable sources and they were published in English. I did look at some of the publications from Der Spiegel in Germany and Le Monde in France, but those were primarily for context in the original published languages like the press statements. My data on total military expenditures and their share of GDP comes from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), while the disaggregated data comes directly from NATO’s websites. Prior to 2013, the NATO data was only published in PDF documents and thus I had to individually copy and paste their own reports on the disaggregated data for Germany, France, and then the countries that did not end up in the final product. For the Ukraine case, all information was easily exportable to Excel. On the amount of casualties, internally displaced people, and refugees, my data came from Relief Web and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).
3. *A World in (dis)Harmony: The Severity Indicators*

In limiting my scope for the chapter and this larger work, I am not focusing on the rationale behind the 2008 invasion of Georgia or 2014 for Ukraine, nor will I examine the culpability of Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili in escalating tensions between Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Georgia beyond just mere commentary. My primary research intention is to hone in on the responses of NATO, the EU, and the particular member states of France and Germany in both crises.

This chapter serves the purpose of outlining the severity indicators via descriptions of both wars. To reiterate my indicators modeled after Michael Brecher and Patrick James’ *own*, they are, once again: 1) the parties’ proximity to a security alliance (NATO), 2) the crisis’ geopolitical salience; 3) major power presence; 4) the range of issues at hand; 5) number of military actors; 6) level of violence. By highlighting each indicator in this way, the context and background of each crisis response and outcome for my three levels of actors becomes evident and they become comparable. Because both Georgia and Ukraine have similar background in their proximity to NATO, that section will go first with my description of the 2008 Bucharest Summit.

*The Summit: Georgia and Ukraine’s Proximity to NATO*

Heads of state and government of NATO members and their Partners in Peace met in Bucharest, Romania in the first few days of April 2008. It was the final NATO Summit that U.S. President George Bush would attend while in office; the world economy was in the midst of a rapidly snowballing international financial crisis spurred on by American bankers; and North Atlantic Council (NAC) was contemplating whether to initiate a third wave of enlargement.

Membership Action Plans (MAPs)—the extension of which by NATO members signals the initiation process of new states to join—were up for debate for the Republics of Albania, Croatia, Georgia, as well as Ukraine. Each MAP, once approved by the NAC, includes a specific
Annual National Plan (ANP), which is a feedback mechanism between the recipient and current member states, security assistance coordination policies, and annual review processes.64 Essentially, it opens the door to transitioning from independent operations to more interlinked ones that the security organization requires. The issuance of a MAP is also stipulated on participating in the Partnership for Peace (PfP) Planning and Review Process (PARP), the biennial drafting and evaluation of the organization’s goals.65 But, in order to take part in PARP, they must be members first of PfP, and as such, all states that have been issued MAPs following this program’s establishment have too been members of PfP.

Georgia and Ukraine are participants in the Partnership for Peace and are active players in PARPs. What complicates the response of NATO, the European Union, and state actors is the Russo-Georgian War’s chronological proximity to the denial of Georgia’s MAP four months prior. A state that they were debating letting into the alliance—an alliance that has an “attack on one is an attack on all” mentality—was invaded shortly after. And in the Bucharest Declaration, the alliance codified in Section 23 that:

> We agreed today that these countries [Georgia and Ukraine] will become members of NATO. … MAP is the next step for Ukraine and Georgia on their direct way to membership. Today we make clear that we support these countries’ applications for MAP. Therefore we will now begin a period of intensive engagement with both at a high political level to address the questions still outstanding pertaining to their MAP applications. We have asked Foreign Ministers to make a first assessment of progress at their December 2008 meeting.66

NATO directly aligned itself with a country that was subsequently invaded by Russia. And the contentious relationship between the two states was directly cited by current member states, most

consequently Germany, as to why issuing a MAP could be politically fraught in the leadup to the August war.

Germany before the Bucharest Summit and Russo-Georgia War was the conflict prevention coordinator for Abkhazia within the United Nations Secretary-General’s Group of Friends on Georgia. Simultaneously, the country’s diplomatic representatives played a large role in the buildup to Georgia’s denial, a policy plan they publicly supported alongside the French going into the Summit. The French, while voicing their discomfort with Georgia and Ukraine joining the Alliance at present, indicated that they would not block its MAP issuance if the rest of the Alliance agreed to it. The Bush administration led the coalition of them, Poland, the Baltic States, as well as Romania and Bulgaria in support of Georgia’s accession all while “Then German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier warned against unnecessarily provoking Russia and Chancellor Angela Merkel declared NATO accession for Georgia and Ukraine as ‘too early.’” The Germans cited tensions that had been building between South Ossetia and Georgia internally and concerning reports on the leadership of President Saakashvili, who was diplomatically aligned with the Bush administration. The compromise of signaling a future Georgian and Ukrainian membership while denying it currently in the Bucharest Declaration was meant to satisfy both parties: no membership now but promised for the distant future.

Russia invaded a smaller country that was just promised an eventual NATO membership, and then that same fate was repeated six years later. Georgia and Ukraine’s proximities to NATO are what is pertinent to comprehend and understand but the debate on the fueled rivalry between Russia and NATO is a perceptual one. The Bucharest Summit kicked the bucket down the line as

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67 Fix, Germany’s Role in European Russia Policy, 35.
68 Fix, 37.
70 Fix, 36
to whether Georgia and Ukraine were to join that could just continue to be moved just further and further out of reach forever. The potential for an escalated conflict with the invocation of Article V was on their mind, but then it didn’t matter because Georgia was never issued a MAP. And neither was Ukraine because they too were not issued a MAP, nor have they since the 2014 or 2022 invasions, but more on that to come in the following chapter.

The Night the Lights Went Out in Georgia: The Conflict’s Severity Indicators

2) The Crisis’ Geopolitical Salience & 3) Major Power Presence:

Much of the war’s geopolitical salience has already been outlined in the introduction, but more must be contributed. The involvement of the Russian Federation—which had not invaded another sovereign country since the dissolution of the Soviet Union and now had diplomatic ties with NATO, the European Union, and the OSCE—certainly put the internal politics of Georgia on the map. And it mattered that it was Russia and not another state, such as the United States or another neighbor of Georgia that intervened in the ongoing conflict; it’s a country that has had a historic rocky past with the very entities it now found itself entangled with. The risk assessment of a conflict involving Russia that exterior countries did not condone is politically significant. The only country that outpaced Russia’s percentage of GDP spending on military was the United States in 2008. 71 Russia also had the fourth largest armed forces personnel in the world, resting at 1,476,000 only behind China, India, and the United States. 72

Georgia and Ukraine are the only Black Sea littoral states other than Russia that are not members of NATO. The Black Sea and the Dardanelles allow Russian industries to have access to the Mediterranean, which is critical the maintenance of Russian oil shipments; approximately 200

million tons of crude oil are shipped via the Black Sea. The maritime transportation of agricultural products to and from Russia is also significant. If Georgia was accepted into the alliance, the security apparatus of the Black Sea will be extended beyond its western and southern coastline and Russia would become even more reliant on NATO policies.

4) The Range of Issues at Hand & 5) Number of Military Actors:

A former constituent republic of the Soviet Union, Georgia became an independent state in 1991. Abkhazia and South Ossetia, two regions that previously existed within their own autonomous zone under the Soviet Union—the Socialist Soviet Republic of Abkhazia (SSR Abkhazia) and South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast (SOAO)—were classified as being within Georgia’s sovereign borders upon the state’s independence. Two violent secessionist movements were subsequently sparked between the Georgian government, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia. Tied closely to these emergent conflicts was a growing nationalistic sentiment of what and who was defined as “Georgian,” as opposed to an Abkhaz or Ossetian, in order to sure up the country’s sovereign borders.

Open hostilities between Georgia and South Ossetia began in 1989, but the armed conflict over independence lasted from January 1991 until summer 1992, during which between 1-4,000 people died. Approximately 100 villages were burned and 43,000 refugees flooded to North Ossetia, located in Russia’s sovereign territory; thousands became internally displaced. The Dagomys, or Sochi, Accords were signed on June 24, 1992 by Russian President Boris Yeltsin and

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Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze. The ceasefire agreement concluded that Russian peacekeepers would set up camp around Tskhinvali, monitors from the OSCE would stay in the region, and South Ossetia would remain within Georgia’s sovereign territory but be allowed to operate semi-autonomously.77

On August 14, 1992, the Georgian police and national guard formally entered Abkhazia and sparked another conflict after the Georgian Internal Affairs Minister was taken hostage. After almost two years of fighting and calls for ethnic cleansing, another ceasefire was agreed to that—similar to the one ending the conflict with South Ossetia—stationed internal observers while allowing them to operate semi-autonomously, and also returned the thousands of refugees that had fled the region over the war’s course.78 But just like in South Ossetia, this instance of fighting was not the first or only instance of conflict between Abkhazia and the Georgian government before 2008.

What must be emphasized is that there is a long history of conflict between Georgia, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia, one which the Russian government has been involved with prior to the 2008 crisis. Alongside this is the idea of a united country brought together by a shared, distinct Georgian nationality and identity has persisted since independence. The number of military actors in this case is three: the Russian Armed Forces, Defence Forces of Georgia, and the Armed Forces of South Ossetia. Abkhazian Armed Forces were not actively involved in the Russo-Georgian War, but Abkhazia had a spotlight on it before and after the conflict. At the end of both April and May 2008, Russia sent hundreds of unarmed troops to Abkhazia, which then led the Georgian government to accuse Russia of planning a military intervention.79 Once the ceasefire agreement

77 Markedonov, 112, 113.
was signed, Abkhazia was recognized by the Russian government as an independent state alongside South Ossetia.

After years of attempt by former president Saakashvili to reinforce Georgia’s hold over South Ossetia—an idea he had campaigned on during the Rose Revolution of 2003—tensions peaked on July 3, 2008, when an Ossetian village police chief was killed and Dmitriy Sanakoyev, the head of the Provisional Administration of South Ossetia, narrowly escaped death via landmine.\(^{80}\) That night both Georgian and South Ossetian forces launched military attacks on one another. Five days later four Russian military planes flew over South Ossetia and the Georgian government denounced it as violating their territorial integrity, recalling their ambassador to Russia.\(^{81}\) Over the course of the month, bombs and shelling of Ossetian villages and Georgian police officers.

The night that the Russo-Georgian War is accredited as its beginning, August 7, “South Ossetia accused Georgia of launching a ‘massive’ artillery barrage against Tskhinvali, while Georgia reported intense bombing of some Georgian villages in the conflict zone.”\(^{82}\) Saakashvili publicly called for a ceasefire, but Ossetian forces claimed the Georgian military did not stop using force, actually increased their frequency after the announcement, and thus the fighting continued. Georgian troops seized much of South Ossetia including Tskhinvali overnight and the Russian Armed Forces invaded the next day. A second front was opened in Abkhazia on August 10 alongside a naval blockade that destroyed much of the Georgian Navy.\(^{83}\)

Following the agreed-to ceasefire, President Medvedev recognized the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia on August 26. The international community did not approve and

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\(^{80}\) Nichol, “Russia-Georgia Conflict,” 4.

\(^{81}\) Nichol 4.

\(^{82}\) Nichol, 5.

certainly did not recognize the two regions as sovereign nations, as only a handful in the years since have done so as well.

6) Level of Violence:

Russian General Nikolai Pankov said 64 Russian troops were killed, 283 were wounded, and 3 were missing; the Georgian government said 169 Georgian troops and policemen were killed as well as 228 civilians, while 14 were missing; and the Investigative Committee of the Russian Prosecutor General’s Office says 165 South Ossetians died. But these statistics are up for debate as each conflict party argues a different count.

They also claimed that opposing forces were committing an ethnic cleansing against the other. Russian officials initially claimed that over 2,000 South Ossetians were killed and targeted by the Georgian forces because of their ethnicity, which was the rationale given as to why they invaded. This statistic was put under a microscope as no one—including the South Ossetian government—were touting such a large death count at the early stage of the war. And following an investigation conducted by the Human Rights Watch, they concluded that disproportionate and indiscriminate force was used by the Georgian forces in South Ossetia, but Russian Armed Forces “violated international humanitarian law by using aerial, artillery, and tank fire strikes that were indiscriminate, killing and wounding many civilians.” They also found that South Ossetian forces were ethnically cleansing Georgian villages and unlawfully detained Georgian civilians based on their identity. The Georgian government launched a lawsuit against the Russian Federation in the

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International Court of Justice during the war for supporting and conducting an ethnic cleansing against Georgians.\(^{87}\)

The level of violence present during and after the war is also evaluated in terms of the housing impact it had on civilians. According to the United Nations High Commission on Refugees, the Russo-Georgian War directly resulted in 127,000 more internally displaced people (IDP) in the country (including in South Ossetia, Abkhazia, and Upper Kodori), half of which returned to their homes in September.\(^{88}\) The rest increased the total number of IDPs in the country to 252,000 in 2009. In a country of 3.8 million in 2008, because of a five-day war, 3.3% of the population became internally displaced, even if only for a month.

Thus, the Russo-Georgian War’s severity was quite high by itself, as there had been accusations of genocides and a considerable portion of the population was incredibly affected by it. The war itself was relative short yet impactful, with high geopolitical salience and a range of issues that was responded to quickly by the French, as will become abundantly clear in the following chapter. But the Russo-Georgian War is often overshadowed by the higher relative severity of the Ukraine Case. As will too become abundantly clear going forward, the policy of NATO, EU, as well as France and Germany was one of increased diplomatic ties with Russia and themselves as well.

**Oh, the Red Viburnum in the Meadow: The Invasion and Annexation of Ukraine**

Like in my other case study, my focus will not be the rationale and political calculation of the Russian government to invade Ukraine during their ongoing political crisis, nor how said political instability contributed to a “suitable environment” that the Russian Armed Forces used to


\(^{88}\) “Georgia,” UNHCR Global Appeal 2009 Update (UNHCR, 2009), https://www.unhcr.org/4922d42e0.pdf.
their advantage. Yes, that is part of the severity indicators, but the vast majority of my assessment will be on the reactions of the world stage to the invasion and annexation of Crimea and why certain response mechanisms were used and not others by the powers.

2) The Crisis’ Geopolitical Salience & 3) Major Power Presence:

Sevastopol was also one of the major port cities for Russian ships and its inclusion in Ukraine’s independence movement was concerning for the Supreme Soviet (the Russian parliament’s name until 1993) following Ukrainian independence. The Supreme Soviet began questioning the value of Ukraine’s territorial claim of the peninsula, as Russia’s Black Sea Fleet was based out of the port. The settling of said dispute is linked to the role that Ukraine played in the Cold War arms race of the 20th century. Ukraine upon its independence was also the home of the world’s third-largest nuclear arsenal, as it was where much of the USSR’s stockpile was developed and harbored. In 1994 the Budapest Memorandum for short was signed by the Ukraine, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the U.S., in which Ukraine agreed to surrender all nuclear weapons and be declared Ukraine a non-proliferation state, in exchange for recognition of Ukraine’s territorial sovereignty and de facto control over the Crimean Peninsula. In 1995 the Ukrainian and Russian governments agreed that Russia’s sea fleet will still be based out of the peninsula and could purchase 82% of all of Ukraine’s “share” of the vessels. Ukraine in return

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would receive favorable trades over Russian energy supplies, a topic which will be discussed under \textit{Range of Issues at Hand}. Such agreement was expanded in April 2010 until 2042.\textsuperscript{92}

From this base the Russian Armed Forces launched their naval blockade against Georgia in 2008 during the war.\textsuperscript{93} The geopolitical implications of the Crimean peninsula’s annexation by the Russian government are simple: Russia was encroaching further into the Black Sea and wished to claim the fourth largest port city in the body of water. Alarm bells were set off for the other four powers located on the sea, most of which were NATO member states. What would this mean for trade with Ukraine, and how would the movement of goods in the sea, integral to larger Mediterranean Sea access, be affected? Particular responses by my specific select countries and alliance networks will be expanded upon later in the next chapter.

Beyond just its geographic location along the Black Sea, the Strait of Kerch, and site of contestation, Crimea was also a large economic hub for Ukrainian manufacturing. Major coal deposits were discovered on the peninsula in the late nineteenth century, and it then became a site of not only coal mining, but iron ore, steel, and machine manufacturing.\textsuperscript{94} According to SIRPI, Ukraine was the world’s fourth largest arms exporter in 2012; as Sevastopol was the country’s largest port city, much of its ship manufacturing was done on the peninsula.\textsuperscript{95}

Crimea had the largest Russian-identifying population in Ukraine before their annexation. The 2001 census of Crimea demonstrated that self-identifying Russians made up 58.3\%, 24.3\% Ukrainians, and 12\% Crimean Tartars.\textsuperscript{96} But Crimea was not the only site of fighting in response to Russia’s invasion of Crimea; secessionist movements broke out in the Donetsk and Luhansk

\textsuperscript{92} Özdal and Demydova, “Economic Structure of Ukraine,” 15.
\textsuperscript{93} “Crimea’s Strategic Value to Russia.”
\textsuperscript{94} Toal, \textit{Near Abroad: Putin, the West, and the Contest over Ukraine and the Caucasus}, 203.
regions in Eastern Ukraine, which made up the second and third largest Russian populations in Ukraine; in the same 2001 census, Russians made up 43.6% and 44.8% of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, respectively. The Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts, making up the larger Donbas region that is also where coal is prevalent alongside agriculture depicted in Figure 3, also voted in favor of Ukrainian independence in 1991. Prior to the 2014 invasion of Crimea and their independence movements, the Donbas formerly represented Ukraine’s largest industrial center, with their primary outputs being metals, chemicals, and mining production. It is these two republics, The Donetsk People’s Republic and Luhansk People’s Republic established following the 2014 invasion that are annexed by the Russian Federation in 2022.

The major power present is easily answered: Russia. The Russian Armed Forces invaded Crimea, annexed it, and did not face outside troops from surrounding powers other than the Ukrainian Armed Forces. Following the rejection of a deal to further Ukraine’s economic integration with the European Union, protests against such decision—now labelled the Euromaidan Protests—were met by forceful state-run crackdowns. Now Russian President Vladimir Putin

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100 “Donetsk People’s Republic.”
101 Center for Preventive Action, “War in Ukraine.”
used this moment as a public justification for the invasion of Crimea to “protect” the country’s largest ethnically Russian population. A local referendum was held by the Russian forces, the region was labelled as “Russian” territory, and subsequently two months later portions of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions held their own.\textsuperscript{102}

While other so-called “major powers” were active in other non-violent ways, Russia remained the sole largest army to fight in the conflict. No other country came to Ukraine’s aid, really, especially not in the commitment of troops or weapons distribution. The international community did not exactly approve of the annexation, they did not step in beyond resolutions condemning the action, such as the United Nations General Assembly’s Resolution 11493, “Calling upon States Not to Recognize Changes in Status of Crimea Region.”\textsuperscript{103}

\textbf{4) The Range of Issues at Hand & 5) Number of Military Actors:}

The Verkhovna Rada, Ukraine’s parliament, declared their independence first in July 1990, secondly in August 1991, and then finally received it in December 1991, after which Ukraine maintained diplomatic and economic ties with Russia.\textsuperscript{104} In December 1991 when Ukraine held its independence referendum, first autonomous elections, and voted for Leonid M. Kravchuk to serve as their first president, Russian President Boris Yeltsin expressed both his recognition of the country’s independence and democratic election.\textsuperscript{105} Yeltsin pronounced this with a desire to maintain good relations with Ukraine, but other political figures such as Mikhail Gorbachev still publicly called for the two countries’ continued unification. And as already demonstrated, the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{104} Becky Sullivan, “Russia’s at War with Ukraine. Here’s How We Got Here,” NPR, February 24, 2022, sec. World, https://www.npr.org/2022/02/12/1080205477/history-ukraine-russia.
\end{itemize}
territorial sovereignty of Ukraine was still up-for-debate in the Supreme Soviet and later Duma until Ukraine’s surrender of nuclear weapons and favorable compromises for Russia’s continued use of the Sevastopol Port. But Ukraine and its territorial integrity was not physically violated until February 2014.

I will first begin with the trade war that emerged between Ukraine and Russia in the years leading up to the annexation of Crimea, and follow that with an account of the Orange Revolution and the Revolution of Dignity, which play critical roles in both Ukraine’s relationship with a “Russia” versus the “Rest” narrative and the European Union. These events detail The Range of Issues at Hand and explain how in a vulnerable moment in Ukrainian political history Russia invaded and supported independence movements from Ukrainian territory. I will then state and explain the number of military actors during the conflict. I must note that it is impossible to delink the protesters of the Revolution of Dignity and the Russo-Ukrainian War of 2014-15, as they acted against the separatist movements, and so they too will be included.

There was a continued pattern of recognition or not being waged against Crimea and Ukraine overall, which was closely linked to favorable energy trade between Ukraine and Russia. In 2012 63% of Ukraine’s natural gas consumption was imported from Russia; approximately 75% of all oil in Ukraine originated in Russia.\(^{106}\) Ukraine’s government and private industries own and operate the gas lines in the country, the sale of which is deemed illegal as it is one of the few ways the country can continue to maintain control over energy distribution.\(^{107}\) It must be emphasized how reliant Ukraine was on Russian fuel and how that reliance was weaponized by the Russian government.


As noted previously under the conflict’s *Geopolitical Salience*, the agreement between Ukraine and Russia in regards to the expansion of Russia’s naval autonomy on the Crimean Peninsula was rehearsed, negotiated by Prime Minister Tymoschenko, and agreed to in June 2010. Russian gas was imported to Ukraine via a contract between the Russian Gazprom and Ukrainian Naftogaz Ukrainy to sell to Ukraine with 30% discounts of market prices and no export duties in exchange for expanded usage of the seaport.\(^{108}\) At the same time, Gazprom negotiated lower prices for other European countries in order to expand its foothold and refused to renegotiate with Ukraine, which had ceded much more it argued than Russia had.\(^{109}\) Russia imposed trade sanctions against Ukraine, slashing Ukrainian exports to the country by 70%, which was directly correlated to the country’s GDP decrease of 7%.\(^{110}\)

With the decline of the EU Association Agreement in 2013 by the Ukrainian president, Gazprom opened up and negotiated a 33% discount instead and an agreement signed between Presidents Putin and Yanukovych. When the Yanukovych government collapsed, Arseniy Yatseniuk took over as prime minister in Ukraine, new executives were appointed to Naftogaz Ukrainy, and when the Russian Armed Forces invaded Crimea Gazprom cancelled the discount. A new proposal was given to the politically-contentious Ukrainian government, which was rejected. On June 16, 2014, with no renegotiation in sight, Gazprom announced that it would be seeking payment by the Ukrainian government for $4.5 billion and that it would cease all deliveries to the country.\(^{111}\) A deal was negotiated by the European Union in October of that year.\(^{112}\)

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\(^{109}\) Pirani, 3.


\(^{111}\) Pirani, 4.

While Ukraine had indeed defaulted on its payments, the suspension of the deal came at a time when the Euromaidan protests had destabilized Ukrainian politics and Russia had invaded its sovereign territory and annexed it as their own. The Ukrainian and Russian Armed Forces were fighting each other, and the Russian government was leveraging its 50.01% stake in Gazprom—the largest provider of oil and gas to Ukraine—as another weapon during the 5-month period between suspension and resumption of operations. According to the Congressional Research Service, the seizure of the Crimean Peninsula by Russia was a direct capture of 4% of Ukraine’s GDP.\textsuperscript{113}

Ukraine is a democracy, but it’s relatively new and has only in recent years had international election monitors validate their elections. Political and economic corruption, largely tied to political figures’ own degrees of separation to Russian power, was a contested topic that led to civilian-led resistance movements. The Euromaidan Protests of 2013-14 that sparked the political unrest of Ukraine and establishment of a new government finds its roots in the 2004-05 Orange Revolution and the, to put it bluntly, flip-flopping of pro-Russian and pro-Western political figures in the former Soviet Republic. Leonid Kuchma had been the president of Ukraine for nearly a decade at this point. Kuchma was a pro-Russian leader who had been implicated in corruption scandals, the murders of journalists and political opponents.\textsuperscript{114} In December 2003 he successfully persuaded the Constitutional Court to run for a third term, despite the Ukrainian Constitution limiting presidents to only two, five-year terms; following strong domestic protests and criticisms from abroad, he decided not to run. His successor was named to be Viktor Yanukovych, another Russian-supported politician. The opposition was led by Viktor Yushchenko, whose campaign focused on maintaining a robust, distinctly Ukrainian democracy.\textsuperscript{115}

\textsuperscript{115} Kramer, 112.
The 2004 presidential election saw the Ukrainian government’s resources being funneled into Yanukovych’s campaign. In September it was revealed that Yushchenko was poisoned by dioxin; following the election, it was determined that this act was done deliberately. The first round of voting resulted in Yushchenko and Yanukovych as the top candidates, but reports soon emerged that Yanukovych’s campaign team hacked and manipulated the election results. A runoff election was scheduled and a second round of voting in November was shrouded in even more falsifications, as the Committee of Voters of Ukraine estimated that 2.8 million votes were added to Yanukovych’s overall results, making him the victor. This culminated in mass protests across the country in support of Yushchenko, the peaceful Orange Revolution, as national polling had also indicated a Yushchenko victory. At the Orange Revolution’s peak, over a million protesters voiced their position against the fraudulent election in Kyiv, many of which were students. On December 3, both the Ukrainian parliament and Supreme Court overturned the results of the November election. The third round, deemed the most democratic of the three by outside observers, was held on December 26 and resulted in Yushchenko’s political victory.

Yushchenko’s so-called “Orange Coalition,” the name granted to the government formed following the peaceful demonstrations that brought him to power, quickly went underwater and a power vacuum opened in the country. Yulia Tymoshenko, a prominent leader of the Orange Revolution, was appointed by him to be Ukraine’s prime minister, but Yushchenko and her clashed over policies. Several senior officials in the government resigned over these conflicts and accusations of corruption, furthering the divide and deepening the public’s discontent with the

117 Kramer, 112-3.
118 Kuzio, 29.
119 Kramer, 113.
government. The parliamentary elections of 2006 resulted in Yanukovych’s party, the Party of Regions, winning the largest share of the vote (32%), while Yushchenko’s, Our Ukraine, only got 14%. Yanukovych staged a comeback in the 2010 presidential election and won against Tymoshenko. She was then thrown in prison.

And so another pro-Russia politician was in the highest political position in Ukraine. Yet prior to Yanukovych’s ascension to power, the previous administration had further cemented the country’s ties to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the European Union, a point to be expanded on later. A Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) that results from an Association Agreement between the European Union and Ukraine had been under negotiation since 2008 and was supposed to be signed by the parties in 2013. Association Agreements allow for partner countries to conduct free trade with its members and have easier visa processes. After his own government had been negotiating such a deal, a consensus being made, and plans set for its signature at the Vilnius Summit, President Yanukovych announced its indefinite suspension in November 2013 after the Rada failed to pass EU-stipulated policies; Yanukovych’s party refused to vote on said policies. The suspension of the Association Agreement was dovetailed with the announcement of increased and intensified dialogues prioritizing economic cooperation with Russia.

Hours after the announcement thousands of students began to gather in Kyiv and continued to protest for months, launching the Revolution of Dignity, also known as the Euromaidan protests.

121 Kramer, 113.
122 Dickinson, “How Ukraine’s Orange Revolution Shaped Twenty-First Century Geopolitics.”
The protests were initially against the ending of the deal, and swiftly enveloped discontent with the Yanukovych presidency, its pro-Russian leanings, and his growing authoritarianist policies. It was formally announced on December 17 that Russia purchased $15 billion Ukrainian bonds and natural gas prices would be slashed.

On Christmas Eve later Tetyana Chornovol, a reporter who accused the president of corruption, was severely beaten allegedly by state forces beaten after publishing a piece about Ukraine’s interior minister. The day prior protest organizer Dmitri Pylypets in Kharkiv was beaten and stabbed four times. Their attacks intensified the vigor of the movement, with their photos being used by protesters after a lull between the Christmas and New Year holidays.

Demands of the protesters included their government’s signature of the European Union Association Agreement, Yanukovych’s resignation, and the end of pro-Russian politicians infringing on their growing relationship with both NATO and the EU. It was no longer about just the Agreement’s failure, but the pushback of Russia’s political power over the country. Much of his cabinet resigned as a result of the increased amount of state-mandated violence, as between January and February 20 more than 100 people were killed by Ukrainian police. At the end of the peak violence between February 18 and 20, protesters expanded their hold on Kyiv. A settlement was agreed to following negotiations hashed out by French, German, and Polish foreign ministers, Yanukovych, and opposition leaders in the middle of the night. Yanukovych fled the country to Russia on February 22 and protesters took hold of both Kyiv and the president’s

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129 Pifer, “Ukraine.”
office. Ukraine’s parliament unanimously voted to formally remove Yanukovych from power, installed an interim government, announced they would sign the EU agreement,\textsuperscript{131} freed former prime minister Tymoshenko from jail, and put a warrant out for Yanukovych’s arrest for the deaths of the Maidan protesters.\textsuperscript{132}

This moment of political instability and the overturn of the government was seized by the Russian government, which publicly condemned the removal of Yanukovych from power and the anti-Russian influence the parliament was endorsing. A few days later unidentified Russian armed men at the instruction of Russian President Putin appeared at the Crimean border.\textsuperscript{133} Claiming that Ukraine’s new government came to power under an “armed mutiny,” President Putin ordered major military exercises. Armed pro-Russian men, aided by Russian forces, seized the government buildings invaded government buildings on the Crimean Peninsula on February 27; the following day they seized the Crimean airports.\textsuperscript{134} On March 1, the Russian Duma approved of the deployment of the Russian Armed Forces to Ukraine.\textsuperscript{135} The request was initially made by the president “in connection with the extraordinary situation in Ukraine and the threat to the lives of Russian citizens,” yet claimed that the troops moving into the peninsula were not Russians.\textsuperscript{136} Essentially, the peninsula was being occupied by Russian soldiers without baring the Russian insignias beyond the raising of Russian flags over government buildings.

\textsuperscript{131}Which they did, on June 27 in the midst of the Russo-Ukrainian war. For more information, look at: https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2014/06/27/poroshenko-signs-eu-ukraine-association-agreement/
\textsuperscript{133}Sullivan, “Russia’s at War with Ukraine. Here’s How We Got Here.”
\textsuperscript{136}“Russian Parliament Approves Troop Deployment in Ukraine.”
By March 6, when it was announced that the Crimean parliament would hold a referendum vote to join Russia on March 16, the peninsula was under a complete Russian military blockade from Ukrainian forces and international observers.\textsuperscript{137} The OSCE sent unarmed, international observers into the region and were faced with warning shots when attempting to enter Crimea.\textsuperscript{138} Following essentially the seizure of the peninsula, the referendum resulted in 95% of the population voting in favor of Russian territorial incorporation.\textsuperscript{139} On March 21 the Russian government officially absorbed the Crimean Peninsula as their sovereign territory.\textsuperscript{140}

Continuing tensions emerge between Ukraine, Russia, and the rest of the world, as Russia had just claimed internationally recognized, sovereign Ukrainian territory and claimed it as their own. International condemnations were sent, economic sanctions were waged, and Russia reportedly amassed several thousand troops on the eastern border of Ukraine by March 28.\textsuperscript{141} Over a week later more pro-Russian protesters seize the government buildings in dozens of towns throughout the Donbas region, particularly in Donetsk and Luhansk.\textsuperscript{142} The Ukrainian government claimed that Russia orchestrated the attack and gave them supplies, as did NATO Supreme Allied Commander General Philip Breedlove.\textsuperscript{143} A referendum was held by the leaders of the armed separatist forces on May 11, with 89% of voters in the Donetsk and 96% in Luhansk regions region voting in favor of independence from Ukraine.\textsuperscript{144} With no outside observers to monitor the election, the Ukrainian government denounced the vote alongside the international community.

\textsuperscript{141} Walker, 14.
\textsuperscript{142} Walker, 14.
\textsuperscript{143} Morelli, 21.
\textsuperscript{144} Morelli, 22.
But the Donetsk People’s Republic (DPR) led by Alexandre Zakharchenko and Luhansk People’s Republic (LPR) led by Aleksandr Kharitonov were declared as independent states anyways, and the war officially branched towards the Donbas.

The war thus became a two-issue one: the annexation of Crimea and the Russian-backed independence movement in the Donbas. It had its roots in Black Sea security, the importation and exportation of oil, and a revolution unseating a president and parliament that was widely pro-Russia and anti-EU cooperation to their detriment. The moment of political instability was taken by Russia as a moment where invading Crimea could be done by the seizure of the entire peninsula’s movement. And that sparked the independence referendums of the DPK and LPK, two of the largest self-identifying Russian populations outside of the Crimean Peninsula in Ukraine. Those are the *Ranges of Issues* at hand in this case study of the Russo-Ukrainian War of 2014-15.

The number of conflict parties is technically six: the Ukrainian Armed Forces, the Donbas People’s Militia (split into the People’s Militia of the DPR and People’s Militia of the LPR in fall 2014), other pro-Russian separatist groups, the Russian Armed Forces, and the Euromaidan protesters. This war emerged at a time when there was massive social unrest and protests were occurring throughout the country, but most significantly in the country’s capital. But protests were happening everywhere, and when the DPR and LPR were beginning to emerge, the seizers of government buildings were met by Euromaidan protesters. The Russian Armed Forces initially were only officially on the Crimean Peninsula until August 2014, when over 1,000 troops invaded the Donetsk region. By June 2015 pro-Russian forces numbered at 40,000 combatants, while President Proroshenko said that there were 9,000 Russian Armed Forces present. He also stated

that the Ukrainian Armed Forces had 50,000 combatants in the Donbas region at that point, a stark increase from only 5,000 when the conflict began.

The range of issues at hand as well as the number of conflict parties and their intricate labelling as “Ukrainian” or “not” demonstrated that this conflict was “more severe” than what occurred in the Russo-Georgian War. Its length is also important to understand: in comparison to the five-day Georgian war, this conflict has lasted much longer. The Ukraine case is more complicated, more complex, and therefore more severe.

6) Level of Violence:

Despite instances of smaller, dubiously-state directed attacks against individual opposition leaders, the Euromaidan protests remained largely peaceful for the first few months. But then on January 22, 2014, the Ukrainian Day of Unity, three protesters were shot and killed by armed Ukrainian police officers in Kyiv.\(^{147}\) This came after Yanukovych signed pieces of legislation that made any anti-government protest movements illegal.\(^{148}\) The movement became violent as hundreds of activist stormed towards the Rada. Others were shot by rubber bullets, martial law was declared at 4 a.m., and riot police created a barricade. Fireworks were set off by protesters against the police. Following the increased violence between the conflict parties, protesters occupied government buildings. Violence subsided for a month until between February 18 and 20, 2014 when it peaked again and dozens died; on February 20 alone, 49 protesters and four police

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\(^{148}\) Walker, “Conflict in Ukraine: A Timeline (2014-Present),” 8
officers were killed. The total reported dead were 100 protesters, 13 police officers, and approximately 2,500 were injured as a result of the Revolution of Dignity.

But those casualties were only the beginning. The Russian Armed Forces numbered approximately 774,500 in total versus 139,00 for Ukraine at the start of the conflict, but approximately only 75,000 troops faced one another. By April 2014, it is reported that 40,000 Russian forces have gathered on Ukraine’s eastern border. In June 2014, peace plans were proposed by newly-elected President Petro Poroshenko, the Trilateral Contact Group on Ukraine was established, and a brief ceasefire by Ukrainian forces occurred. Armed fighting began shortly after and the Ukrainian Armed Forces moved against separatist forces throughout the Donbas. Malaysian Airlines Flight 17 was brought down by a surface-launched missile in July, and following investigations it was determined the missile was a Russian-supplied Buk fired by the separatist forces. In late August the United Nations’ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights said that between July 16 and August 17, 1,200 people (civilians and combatants) had been killed and 3,250 injured, not including the 298 dead from the Malaysia Airlines flight. The total killed since the beginning of the conflict was 2,220 at that time.

Another failed ceasefire came with the first Minsk Agreement and the casualty count was raised. By September 2015, the Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine accounted for approximately 7,883 Ukrainian Armed Forces, civilians, and DPR/LPR rebels dead and 17,610

152 Sullivan, “Russia’s at War with Ukraine. Here’s How We Got Here.”
injured. There had been an increased rate in the number of civilian casualties at this point in the conflict as well. And despite the agreements of the Minsk II Protocol, the same monitoring mission reported in 2017 that 10,000 people had been killed and more than 23,500 were injured, but that since the ceasefire the percentage of civilians being in the crossfire was less and less. Prior to the 2022 invasion of Ukraine, the death toll was 14,000.

Most of these casualties are attributed to the Russo-Ukraine War fought in the Donbas region, not in Crimea. Only six people were said to be killed as a result of the Russian annexation. Two people died and 35 were injured at a demonstration in Simferopol when armed gunmen were seizing government buildings. Another protester, a Crimean Tartar, was beaten to death in March. The other three were soldiers. The death and injury toll in the Donbas region was much higher, as already described. Beyond physical harm, the United States Institute for Peace reported in November 2015 that approximately 2.6 million Ukrainians had left their homes as a direct result of the conflict in the Donbas, 1.4 million of which were internally displaced. This count escalated from the 411,000 IDPs the year prior. These counts included people internally displaced from Crimea, which by 2019 had escalated to 50,000 people from October 2014’s count of only 19,000.

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157 Pifer, “Ukraine.”
Like the other indicators, the Russo-Georgian War paled in comparison to the Ukrainian conflict. The conflict lasted for much longer, thousands of more people perished, and millions more were internally displaced. The rationale was that in comparison to the previous conflict that the world had been witness to, Russia’s blatant annexation of Crimea and the violent backing of the Russian separatist groups was a cause for great concern.

In comparing the two cases’ severity to one another’s, Ukraine emerges on top. Georgia and Ukraine’s proximity to NATO were relatively similar. The two had been officially declared as becoming members in the future. They are both located on the Black Sea, yet Sevastopol and the broader Crimean Peninsula was the home of a considerable portion of Russia’s naval fleet and was annexed during this conflict. The same major power was present in both cases as a conflict party: The Russian Armed Forces. The range of issues at hand is more complex to compare, as Georgia was experiencing a continued issue that had been growing contentions for quite some time, had a “lesser invasion” in comparison to Ukraine, but still was incredibly significant. The war was also shorter in its duration, while Ukraine’s remained an ongoing war of attrition until February 2022, with more overall casualties and displaced persons. The number of military actors in Ukraine was also higher and the ceasefires were continuously not holding at a greater scale and level than Georgia’s own. Comparatively, then, Ukraine based on these indicators was deemed a “more severe crisis” than Georgia’s given its intensity. It was also the second case of Russia invading another sovereign nation and was the only two where a region of territory was annexed and claimed as its own by the Russian Federation.
4. In the Midst of the Conflicts

Both the Russo-Georgian and Russo-Ukrainian Wars, obviously, involved the invasion of the respective countries by the Russian Armed Forces. A non-NATO, non-EU member invaded another non-NATO, non-EU member; a Partner in Peace invaded another Partner in Peace. The conflicts were both also attempted to be settled via ceasefire agreements brokered by France, and in the case of Ukraine, by Germany as well; the EU and OSCE were involved, but really the star players were Germany and France’s leaders. The two ceasefires that I utilize as bookends for defining In the Midst of the Conflicts are incredibly arbitrary, but in order to emphasize the general sense of “giving up” or narrative of conflict resolution that my actors attempted to present to a certain degree a line must be drawn in the sand. The Six-Point Plan for Georgia was almost immediately broken, and the Russian Armed Forces did not leave the region, but is generally seen as being “more successful” compared to the Minsk Agreements and subsequent small ceasefires of the Ukrainian case. The second Minsk Agreement, deductively, serves as the end period of this portion of the case study’s analysis.

The period of In the Midst generally refers to generally heightened tensions between all conflict parties, and while the conflicts have arguably remained completely unsettled, the casualties attributed to the conflicts have not risen to the levels that it was during these times. The length of each “war” for both cases is important to underline, italicize, and bold. The Russo-Georgian War lasted for five days while the Ukrainian lasted much longer. But then the question of time and frequency of conflict comes into play, as Georgia has remained an issue for longer. I classify the Russo-Georgian War as a relatively more a frozen conflict, while the Ukraine case was more of a war of attrition that continued to perpetuate at a much larger scale. And this in part, alongside the inability for the international community (really Germany and France) to freeze the

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162 An obvious caveat to his being the 2022 invasion of Ukraine, but that is not one of my cases.
Ukraine case compared to the Georgian impacted heavily the actions taken by NATO and the EU, compounding other political and economic realities of other crises, responded in the way they did. The severity of the crisis informed the perceived importance of the conflict, and therefore the mechanisms through which the regional organizations and their member states France and Germany responded were through the lens of maintaining “collective security” via burden sharing. But before delving into the long-term trends and the durable change-based importance indicators, I must present how my four actors—NATO, the EU, and their members Germany and France responded during the conflicts’ peaked periods.

**Georgia on the Mind:**

No NATO troops nor other states’ armed forces were sent to Georgia to intervene; instead, a European Union delegation led by French President Sarkozy went, negotiated a ceasefire, and effectively called a quite effective end to the physical violence. I will now detail each party’s reaction and statements during the 5-day period and the gray area before the signing of the ceasefire on August 15.

As Hans Mourtizen and Anders Wivel illustrate in *Explaining Foreign Policy: International Diplomacy and the Russo-Georgian War*, there was not a united European—NATO and EU member states and the organizations themselves—conception and policy proposal in response to the invasion and five-day war. There were those that staunchly criticized the invasion the “hawks,” “doves” that were mildly critical and encouraged a less reactionary approach, and one Russian supporter. The hawks were proponents of Georgian MAP acquisition, viewed the invasion as an example of Russia’s constant aggression towards former USSR states, and connected Georgia’s denial as a green light for the invasion. Hawks primarily consisted of

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163 Mourtizen and Wivel, *Explaining Foreign Policy*, 113.
164 Mourtizen and Wivel, 116.
former USSR states, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Finland and Sweden. The doves wanted more level-headed responses by the organizations and their own national security apparatuses that did not completely sever the continuously-fostering diplomatic relationship between them and Russia. Mourtizen and Wivel classify Germany and France as doves.\textsuperscript{165}

\textit{NATO: Not their place, not their time}

On August 8, when Russia invaded, NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer issued a statement that he was “seriously concerned about the events that are taking place in the Georgian Region” and called “on all sides for an immediate end of the armed clashes and direct talks between the parties.”\textsuperscript{166} Four days later Georgian Minister of Foreign Affairs Eka Tkeshelashvili and Deputy Minister of the Interior visited the NATO Headquarters to address the North Atlantic Council’s emergency ambassador-level meeting.\textsuperscript{167} The ambassadors declared that Russia was using a disproportionate amount of force against the Defence Forces of Georgia and applauded the diplomatic efforts of the European Union and OSCE to end the conflict. Secretary-General de Hoop Scheffer called for an immediate ceasefire and the permittance of full humanitarian access to Georgia to address wounded and displaced populations.\textsuperscript{168}

Once again, the Russo-Georgian War was a non-NATO member attacking another non-NATO member, and unless the conflict escalated to the point that a NATO member was also attacked and invoked Article V, there was no obligation for them to become physically involved in the conflict. They publicly decried Russia’s actions and shifted their policies after the war’s conclusion, but they were not actively involved \textit{in the midst of the conflict}.

\textsuperscript{165} Mourtizen and Wivel, 121.
\textsuperscript{166} Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, “Statement by the NATO Secretary General on Events in South Ossetia,” NATO Press Office, August 8, 2008, https://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2008/p08-100e.html.
\textsuperscript{167} “Visit to NATO by Minister of Foreign Affairs and Deputy Minister of the Interior of Georgia,” NATO Press Office, August 11, 2008, https://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2008/p08-102e.html.
Reportedly, Sarkozy was concerned about the level of *hawkishness* that the North Atlantic Council could potentially take in regards to a Russia v. Georgian conflict and how that would infringe on anyone’s ability to negotiate the ceasefire agreement during his Moscow trip.\textsuperscript{169} France, while a member of NATO, did not have its armed forces or diplomats on certain committees in NATO Command, as French troops had not been integrated into the Alliance since 1966.\textsuperscript{170} They would not be reintegrated until a year after the war. But the United States at this point had successfully argued against using NATO as a tool to discuss the domestic politics of Georgia, and thus 1) the organization would not be used as a forum in the midst of the conflict to debate Abkhaz or Ossetian independence and 2) the European Union was given room to step in.\textsuperscript{171}

*The European Union & France’s Role: A Leader by “Chance”*

The culmination of the European Union, the French president, and French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner’s efforts was the Six-Point Agreement proposed on August 16, 2008. The Six-Point Plan was the document later agreed to by all conflict parties and signed by both the French and Georgian presidents, the fulfillment of which becomes controversial. The Union under French leadership coordinated the mediation, beginnings of the civilian monitoring system, as well as humanitarian and financial assistance in Georgia.\textsuperscript{172} The two’s position is hard to disentangle during this time because of their relationship with one another, which is why I have grouped them together in this portion.

France’s role in the end of the conflict is viewed as instrumental and bolstered the EU’s efficacy in their relationship with Georgia. Scholars such as Richard G. Whitman and Stefan Wolff\textsuperscript{173}

\textsuperscript{169} Mouritzen and Wivel, *Explaining Foreign Policy*, 120.
\textsuperscript{171} Mouritzen and Wivel, *Explaining Foreign Policy*, 140.
conclude that “the EU’s impact on the conflicts in Georgia and between Georgia and Russia was negligible until August 2008, at which point remarkably swift and decisive action resulted in a ceasefire agreement… it has now become the sole international actor on the ground in Georgia.”

Prior to the conflict, the EU’s relationship with Georgia primarily consisted of rehabilitation, infrastructure development, and humanitarian assistance primarily targeted at the high number of internally displaced people. And French foreign policy did not consider Georgia to be a top-line issue, with one official in June 2008 stating that “‘Georgia is not, has never been, and will never be a French national priority.’”

Under the French presidency of the European Union Council a decisive leadership grab was made, and the organization moved to the forefront of the Russo-Georgian War’s completion. When the conflict broke out President Sarkozy synchronized with OSCE operations in the region and to a lesser extent Germany, as they were the UN Friends of Georgia coordinator, and thus took a backseat to the European Union under French leadership. French diplomats took charge of negotiating mediation efforts on behalf of the Union, choosing to use their own officials instead. On the sidelines of the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics, which occurred during this period, Sarkozy approached then-Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin the day Russian invaded and asked for an immediate ceasefire in the war. All proposals were promptly refused and ignored.

In preparation for any form of end to the war, a commission was formed by the French and led by the EU’s Special Representative for South Caucasus Peter Semneby. A French spokesman confirmed that an emergency summit was scheduled for August 13 and that the delegation had arrived in Georgia alongside Minister Kouchner and Finnish Foreign Minister

\[173\] Whitman and Wolff, 88.
\[174\] Whitman and Wolff, 89.
\[175\] Mouritzen and Wivel, 140.
\[177\] Fix, 140.
\[178\] Mouritzen and Wivel, 141.
Alexander Stubb, who would represent the OSCE, on August 10. This was the start of the negotiation of the Six-Point Plan that was intensely monitored by President Sarkozy, whose national security advisor drafted it.\textsuperscript{179} Resulting from their discussions in Tbilisi with Saakashvili they were able to get him to sign a preliminary ceasefire on August 11.

On August 12 President Medvedev told High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Javier Solana that Russia would be ending its operations in Georgia.\textsuperscript{180} A subsequent press conference with Russian Defense Minister Anatoly Serdukov announced that military operations in Georgia had been paused, and so Sarkozy flew to Moscow. Interestingly enough, High Representative Solana received the notice during his vacation and decided to not attend—at the encouragement of the French president to not let them interrupt him—thus launching Sarkozy into the political spotlight as the highest-ranked diplomat in attendance.\textsuperscript{181}

Even though the announcement by Medvedev had stated that operations had been paused, the EU y had already received reports that Russian troops were still moving towards Tbilisi.\textsuperscript{182} Like the troop movements, negotiations were not paused, and after a few hours of mediation between Sarkozy, Putin, and Medvedev, they had come to an agreement. In its final form, the Six-Point Plan included, well, six principles:

1. “No recourse to use violence between the protagonists. …
2. The cessation of hostilities.
3. The granting of access to humanitarian aid.
4. The return of Georgian armed forces to their usual quarters.
5. Russian armed forces to withdraw to the positions held before hostilities began in South Ossetia. Russian peacekeepers to implement additional security measures until an international monitoring mechanism is in place. …

\textsuperscript{179} Mouritzen and Wivel, 142.
\textsuperscript{180} Fix, 40.
\textsuperscript{182} Mouritzen and Wivel, 142.
6. The opening of international discussions on the modalities of security and stability of South Ossetia and Abkhazia.”

The ceasefire agreement was signed by Saakashvili following Abkhazian President Sergei Uasyl-Bagapsh and South Ossetian President Eduard Kokoity’s endorsement and conversations with U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in Tbilisi, as the United States had endorsed the Six-Point Plan and wanted to “play their part” guaranteeing its success,” on August 15. A day later Medvedev signed it. Russia agreed to retreat its troops from Georgia and if they did not adhere to this, they would face repercussions.

Germany: A Follower by Choice

The month prior to the conflict German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier proposed a peace plan for Abkhazia that would allow for the region to foster cordial relations between them and Georgia. It included the return of Georgians to Abkhazia, installation of economic recovery programs, and finalizing the question of Georgian sovereignty in the region. The plan had been created in negotiation with European Union officials and was viewed as a step in the right direction by the Georgian and Abkhazian governments. Yet Georgian Foreign Minister Yekaterina Tkeshelashvili only cautiously endorsed it as “‘There are good elements in the plan… ‘But there are also certain issues viewed as important by Georgia,’” including the replacement of current Russian peacekeepers with a “Western” force. Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov viewed the plan as a non-starter, and it was dismissed from all realms of possibility.

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185 Mouritzen and Wivel, 139.
It is evident that the emergence of the Russo-Georgian War was not the first time German diplomats had engaged diplomatically with the question of Abkhaz sovereignty, Georgia’s relationship with it, and Russia’s disdain for anything but the independence of both Abkhazia and South Ossetia. But its diplomatic core did not emerge as the front man of the regional response mechanism—in either the European Union’s ceasefire negotiation or NATO’s tight-lipped stance. Germany in the midst of the conflict aligned their messaging with France and blended in with the core. They opposed the hawks’ messaging campaign—deliberately separate from the EU and France’s orchestrated one. The U.S., U.K., Poland, and the Baltic States argued and publicly said that Russia’s actions in the conflict are a reflection of their imperialist tendencies and desire to reestablish their former empire, comparing Georgia to Nazi Germany’s invasion of Czechoslovakia.

Two deliberate choices were made: 1) Germany would take a backseat and argued in favor of maintaining lines of communication between their officials and the conflict parties and 2) they, alongside the French government, would not designate an instigator of the conflict while it was ongoing. With French President Sarkozy serving as the president of the European Council, they instead would take the lead with Germany by its side. But this united front of Germany and France did not last long, as German officials reportedly did not think the French had as large of a conflict negotiation. Based on U.S. cable reports, Germany was waiting to act until it became evident that France could no longer serve as a diplomatic force to drive the end of the conflict, only then planning to step in.

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187 Fix, 39; Mouritzen and Wivel, 113-38.
189 Fix, 41.
On the international stage Steinmeier warned against too hasty of actions being taken against Russia such as the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Union and the NATO-Russia Council.\textsuperscript{190} He stated on August 13 at an EU meeting of foreign ministers “Do we want strongly worded statements to air our frustration and our sadness of so much human suffering at Europe’s doorstep? Or do we want Europe to remain capable of playing a constructive role in bringing lasting peace to the Caucasus?” to criticize those who favored maintaining a harsh, anti-Russia sentiment as it was unconstructive.\textsuperscript{191} In a less pragmatic statement, Chancellor Angela Merkel was quoted saying that “‘Some of Russia’s actions[were] disproportionate’ and ‘the presence of Russian troops in Georgia proper not sensible’” in the midst of the fighting. But after meeting with Russian President Medvedev on August 15 Chancellor Merkel stated that “Some of Russia’s actions were disproportionate (but) it is rare that all the blame is on one side. In fact, both sides are probably to blame. That is very important to understand.”\textsuperscript{192}

The general sentiment was that the German diplomatic core and leaders needed to maintain a level of pragmatism in part as a contingency to France’s potential failure to negotiate a ceasefire, which they calculated as a real possibility.\textsuperscript{193} As the country was the largest economy in Europe, had a greater diplomatic core than France, and had experience with leading the United Nations’ Group of Friends in Georgia for Abkhazia, if France didn’t perform up to par, they were prepared to step in as the mediator.

The positions of the Federal Republic of Germany and France were highly criticized by Poland and the other states creating their separate narrative from the European Union’s stance. “‘Aggression against a small country in Europe will not be passed over in silence or with

\textsuperscript{190} Mouritzen and Wivel, 118.
\textsuperscript{191} Mouritzen and Wivel, 118.
\textsuperscript{193} Fix, 41.
meaningless statements equating victims with the victimizers,’” and declared that other states should refrain from referring to Russia, the aggressor, as a “strategic partner.”194 Coupled with Germany’s own history on the continent, being proponents of diplomatic cooperation was compared to Neville Chamberlain’s Munich Agreement. But the war ended after five days and despite the arguments of the policy hawks, the doves outshined them. France utilized their position of the European Union Council presidency, pushed others to the side, and negotiated a controversial yet arguably successful ceasefire agreement between Russia, Georgia, Abkhazia, and South Ossetian officials. Germany, having relatively the same policy position as the French fell to the wayside but were prepared to immediately step in should they fail as they had more experience with Georgian politics.

The decision to approach conflict mediation via the European Union and not NATO is particularly interesting. An important factor was the French leadership of the European Union alongside Sarkozy and Kouchner’s desire to be the leaders of the agreement; had anyone else been at the helm, the Six-Point Plan would of course not have been executed in the same way. The world will never know what would have happened if the French had not been there, nor if the Russian government had not decided to announce it would cease fighting on August 12. But it was them who did it and were criticized in the press for it and years down the line blamed for its seemingly non-bindingness and perceived fanning of the flame.

The involvement of NATO also perceives that of an escalatory and distinctly militaristic response to a conflict, and because the “doves” wished to remain cautious in their relations with Russia, the European Union—which does not have a standing army—can be viewed as more sheepish. And the U.S. had successfully argued earlier in the year that the domestic politics of

194 Bennhold, “Differences Emerge in Europe of a Response to Georgia Conflict”; Fix, 44.
Georgia should not be up for debate within the Alliance.\textsuperscript{195} So what place was it for the Alliance to intervene in a conflict reserved within the sovereign borders of Georgia?

The EU was perceived primarily as an \textit{economic} institution and thus it was less politically polarizing for them in partnership with the OSCE to negotiate instead of NATO.\textsuperscript{196} But NATO had negotiated ceasefire agreements in the past, most notably in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in August 2001.\textsuperscript{197} This was done in conversation with the EU and OSCE, but NATO crisis managers were sent to the region and were the primary actor negotiating with the National Liberation Army (NLA). NATO’s Operation Essential Harvest led the NLA’s disarmament and oversaw their dissolution. Secretary-General Lord Robertson following requests of the Skopje government maintained a few hundred military personnel in the area until 2003, when operations were handed over to the EU.\textsuperscript{198}

NATO had also, once again, just declared in the Bucharest Summit that Georgia is on the path towards eventual membership, but not in paperwork; they were not given a MAP, but promised its eventual accession.\textsuperscript{199} Had they decided to become directly involved in the ceasefire negotiation or commit armed troops to the conflict, they would have set a precedent that \textit{any level of political involvement with NATO could be cited as a reason for their immediate involvement in a conflict}. This could have larger implications for other PfP members or MAP recipients despite the fact that the North Atlantic Treaty of 1949 only extends Article V invocation and an “attack on one is an attack on all” mentality to its current members.\textsuperscript{200}

\textsuperscript{195}Mouritzen and Wivel, 140.
\textsuperscript{198}“Bringing Peace and Stability to the Balkans,” 7.
\textsuperscript{199}Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council, “Bucharest Summit Declaration,” section 23.
\textsuperscript{200}“The North Atlantic Treaty,” Article V.
Speaking in hypotheticals and disregarding the existence of my second case study, if the conflict had lasted more than five days and escalated significantly, NATO could have played a larger role in its end either through diplomatic channels or military force. But they didn’t and didn’t completely backtrack on their growing relationship with Russia. Beyond calls for an immediate ceasefire and announcing that Russia was using a disproportionate amount of force, NATO did not change its policies or stances until after the ceasefire was signed.

**Certainly Ukraine on the Mind: Immediate responses from all parties**

This conflict was *more severe*, lasted longer, and therefore there was a stronger immediate and longer-term reaction to this invasion, especially in comparison to the Russo-Georgia War by NATO, the EU, and their member states Germany and France. For the purposes of continuity, I will only analyze the responses of each actor to the Russo-Ukrainian War and not solely the Revolution of Dignity, although they do go hand-in-hand; thus, when it is relevant, I will note it as such.

What becomes increasingly abundant and intense was the amount of outcry against the Russian invasion and annexation of Ukrainian territory in 2014. Committees were formed, coalitions were created, observing missions were sent with no actual access to the area. So what actual effect did their words of condemnation actually have, and what did the EU do in response to the conflict? They utilize their power of the purse strings to send waves of economic sanctions against Russia and development assistance to Ukraine, while continuing ceasefire negotiation efforts.

Another fascinating thing about the Russo-Ukrainian War is that it never really ended in the traditional sense, and this sentiment has only grown with time. There were ceasefire agreements, yes, but they were violated. The casualty count of the war only grew even as tensions deescalated in 2015, as it just became another unresolved conflict. So what does it mean to be *in*
the midst of conflict? The illusion of war being over and having been settled by the West via their amazing and perfect international organizations clouded the idea that these conflicts were never resolved. There was no resolution, real compromise, or following of international accords. But I am only human and therefore I have to draw limit my scope sometimes. In the Midst is defined by the ousting of Ukrainian president Yanukovych and ends with the signing of the Minsk II Protocol.

**NATO: Their time to shine**

Despite the return to a pro-Russian president in the 2010 election, Ukraine had been guaranteed an eventual MAP at the 2008 Bucharest Summit. NATO-Ukrainian cooperation escalated and became stronger following the Orange Revolution, as did EU-Ukraine ties to a certain extent. But on June 3, 2010, the Ukrainian Rada voted in favor of barring the country from joining NATO following Yanukovych’s ascent to power. The bill committed the country to a non-bloc policy, and so all potential movements towards joining the Alliance was blocked by the Ukrainian government. This policy came directly under question following Yanukovych’s removal from power following the revolution and the invasion of Russia and was repealed in 2015.

Following the Ukrainian Revolution, an emergency session of the North Atlantic Council convened when reports emerged that unmarked Russian soldiers had taken military action in Crimea. A press release came on February 26, 2014 from the NATO Defense Ministers stating that they were closely following what was occurring in Ukraine, but it is unclear as to whether they were referring to 1) the domestic political revolution or 2) reports that Russia was making a tactical move against the country. The Council made a public statement on March 2, 2014 stating that they recognized the territorial sovereignty of Ukraine, Russia’s actions breached said

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sovereignty and international laws, and broke the partnerships of the NRC and the larger Partnership for Peace Agreement.\(^{203}\) Two days later, the North Atlantic Council met again at the request of Poland under Article IV, as the developments occurring in Ukraine were viewed as potentially threatening their own territorial integrity.\(^{204}\) Afterwards the NATO-Russia Council met in Brussels. Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen announced the suspension of the inaugural NATO-Russia joint maritime mission, as well as all military or civilian meetings with Russia, and that the future of the Council would be under review.\(^{205}\) The same day an informal meeting was held between the North Atlantic Council and the European Union’s Political and Security Committee to discuss the severity of the issue and its security implications for the two organizations.

While the occupation of Crimea at this point was cause for much concern and was a serious violation of Ukraine’s sovereignty, NATO only continued to call for Russia to leave the Peninsula. Following the announcement of the Crimean referendum vote, Secretary General Rasmussen stated that it “would be a direct violation of the Ukrainian constitution and international law. If held, it would have no legal effect or political legitimacy.”\(^{206}\) Expectantly, after the results led to the formal annexation of the peninsula, he and the rest of the North Atlantic Council condemned it and called for Russia to remove its presence again. It was at this point in the narrative that following the suspension and then resumption of open lines of communication between military

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personnel in NATO and Russia, NATO satellites determined and reported that 40,000 Russian troops had been deployed near the Ukrainian border at more than 100 different sites.\textsuperscript{207}

But the true test of NATO’s relationship with Ukraine came with their summit in the midst of the conflict. The Wales Summit took place in September 2014, approximately seven months into the Russo-Ukrainian War. The agenda of the summit was to redirect the focus of the Alliance away from “out of area” operations and towards more “in their backyard,” especially after the NATO secretary general flew to Washington, D.C. to discuss the Summit’s agenda in late March 2014.\textsuperscript{208} Their efforts in Afghanistan and Kosovo were already being drawn down, European states had demonstrated a decrease in the amount they were willing to spend on defense following the 2008 financial crisis and the Eurozone crisis, and things seemed to be relatively handled in Georgia. But the idea of collective defense and how to achieve that rose to the forefront of members’ minds: how was this alliance going to protect themselves from a hypothetical Russian incursion, and how were they going to situate their longer-term policies to “ensure” their own sovereignty? They settled on prioritizing the need for more and escalated collective defense initiatives.

A few documents resulted from the Wales Summit. There was the scaling-down of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and overall NATO-presence in Afghanistan,\textsuperscript{209} but there was also poignant comments made about regional security and Russia’s encroachment in Ukraine. Within the first section of the Wales Summit Declaration, it was stated that “Russia’s aggressive actions against Ukraine have fundamentally challenged our vision of a Europe whole,

free, and at peace. Growing instability in our neighborhood… are also challenging our security."  

They then move towards strategic considerations of what to do now as an alliance to protect its own members and their “neighborhood.” They continue with:

The greatest responsibility of the Alliance is to protect and defend our territories and our populations against attack… we are committed to further strengthening the transatlantic bond and to providing the resources, capabilities, and political will required to ensure our Alliance remains ready to meet any challenge. … Today we reaffirm our commitment to fulfil all three core tasks set out in our Strategic Concept: collective defence, crisis management, and cooperative security. …

We condemn in the strongest terms Russia’s escalating and illegal military intervention in Ukraine[.] … We demand that Russia comply with international law and its international obligations and responsibilities; end its illegitimate occupation of Crimea; refrain from aggressive actions against Ukraine; withdraw its troops; halt the flow of weapons, equipment, people and money across the border to the separatists; and stop fomenting tension along and across the Ukrainian border. Russia must use its influence with the separatists to de-escalate the situation and take concrete steps to allow for a political and diplomatic solution which respects Ukraine’s sovereignty, territorial integrity, and internationally recognized borders. 

This is also the document that announced the formal, indefinite suspension of the NATO-Russia Council, as Russia had breached too many of its international commitments, “thus breaking the trust at the core of our cooperation.” While the Council would be suspended—and remain that way to today—political channels of communication are specified as remaining open between NATO and Russia. Simultaneously the Declaration endorsed the actions taken by the European Union (economic sanctions), the now-G7 (removal of Russia from the G8), the holding of free elections earlier in the year in Ukraine, and the signing of the Association Agreement with the European Union.

211 Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council, “Wales Summit Declaration,” sections 2 and 3.  
212 Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council, "Wales Summit Declaration," section 16.  
213 Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council, "Wales Summit Declaration, section 21."
But the end of the ISAF in Afghanistan, condemnation of Russia, and suspension of the NRC were not the only major moments and agreements highlighted by the Wales Summit Declaration: all member states pledged to meet a guideline of a minimum 2% of their respective GDPs being spent on defense, 20% of which must be on equipment, by 2024. This is an incredibly arbitrary and contested metric for determining an individual member’s contribution to the collective defense of Europe, and had been an informal, non-enforced rule since 2006. The true power of 2% is an easily-identifiable metric for states to point to demonstrate they are playing their part and can pressure other states to do so too. Since the original agreement was made at the 2006 Riga Summit, the Russian invasion of Georgia, the 2008 financial crisis and the subsequent Eurozone crisis, alongside the de-escalation of NATO’s out-of-operation initiatives had yet to provide the environment that NATO wanted to ensure its own security as a, well, collective security organization. The decline in defense spending was at its lowest point since 1991, as the numbers of NATO members had increased while the amount spent had declined following the Cold War’s end. Potential military capabilities were viewed as lesser than as less money was going towards innovation.

This moment was it; the Russo-Ukrainian War and the annexation of Crimea made increased defense spending and pressure on burden sharing plausible. In addition to the 2% rule, the Readiness Action Plan (RAP) was approved. RAP is a group of security measures meant to act as a rapid crisis response mechanism (assurance) and long-term challenges to strategy and capabilities (adaptation) with headquarters in Szczecin, Poland and Bucharest, Romania. It includes the NATO Response Force (NRF), which initially had a size of 13,000, but then increased

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to 40,000 in 2015. Within the NRF exists the quick-reacting Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) that could be deployed within 48 hours.\textsuperscript{217} The VJTF had approximately 5,000 ground troops and an overall size of 20,000. When the RAP was announced alongside these taskforces, it was specified that “It responds to the challenges posed by Russia and their strategic implications.”\textsuperscript{218} Following the Summit, NATO established the Five Trust Funds to support NATO’s security. These guarantees included plans to provide radios and satellite phones, establish a Regional Airspace Security Programme (RASP), hold cybersecurity training and advisory activities, and provide medical equipment for wounded Ukrainian soldiers.\textsuperscript{219} Each of these initiatives were led by different member states. Germany with other partners led the Command, Control, Communications and Computers (C4) Trust Fund, Romania led the Cyber Defence Trust Fund, and Bulgaria led the Medical Rehabilitation Trust Fund. Generally speaking, these initiatives held true and were operable.

NATO’s official channels detected a significant withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukraine following the Wales Summit.\textsuperscript{220} But then more Russian military equipment and troops were reported by NATO Commander General Breedlove as entering Ukraine in November 2014; he also stated that he believed nuclear-capable weapons were being deployed to Crimea.\textsuperscript{221} Now NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg continuously called for the implementation and

\textsuperscript{218} Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council, “Wales Summit Declaration,” section 5.
\textsuperscript{221} “Ukraine Crisis.”
adherence of the first Minsk Agreement. He met with Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov to again urge the removal of Russian Armed Forces from the Donbas and Crimean Peninsula to no avail.\textsuperscript{222}

What must be emphasized is that while NATO had a much more active role in this case study in comparison to the Russo-Georgian War, the largest and most significant outcome of their policy shifts was those outlined in the Wales Summit, particularly the agenda-setting of the importance of both collective security of the alliance and the 2% GDP minimum on defense spending. Many of the other initiatives that they did truly were not that significant, other than contributing to and maintaining a general sense of outrage against Russia’s annexation of Crimea and their continued support of the separatist movements of the Donetsk People’s Republic and the Luhansk People’s Republic in the Donbas region. The Trust Funds established provided aid, but that was quite minimal during the actual conflict. NATO’s “proximity” to NATO continued to grow closer and closer because of the policies enacted in the midst of the conflict.

\textit{The European Union: A condemnner, weaponizer of economics}

The European Union’s relationship with Ukraine had already been under a microscope in the months leading up to the invasion, as the backing-out of the Yanukovych administration’s signature of the Association Agreement, an action that spared the Revolution of Dignity. But ties were not completely severed between the two. In the days leading up to Ukrainian President Yanukovych’s fleeing the country, European Commission President José Manuel Barroso had a phone call with him.\textsuperscript{223} Barroso expressed his immediate concern on the escalating violence against protesters, called for its end, and stated that the European Union will have no choice but to


react strongly if the situation does not deescalate. The EU, at this point had continuously attempted and failed to act as a conflict mediator for months. In response to the invasion by Russia, the European Union acted as a conduit for directed sanctions against the invader for the first time. This initiative was led by the Germans, who had both argued against sanctions during the previous Russo-Georgian War alongside increased diplomatic cooperation with Russia as to not isolate them on the world stage.

In the last few weeks of February 2014, like NATO, it does not become clear as to whether or not the European Union was publicly acknowledging reports that unmarked Russian soldiers were making their way towards and were already in Crimea following the ousting of Yanukovych. EU High Representative Catherine Ashton in a speech on February 25 in Kyiv on the importance of unity after the Ukrainian Revolution said:

I want to also make an obvious point, which is the importance of the strong links between Ukraine and Russia and the importance that these are maintained. … I spoke recently with the Foreign Minister Lavrov. We know and understand the strong trade links that have existed with Russia and the strong links that need to exist with Russia in the future. And that message needs to be widely understood. We also think it’s very important to send a strong message about the territorial integrity and the unity and the independence of Ukraine. Everyone I’ve spoken to here recognizes the importance of this country sticking together.

The message was one of unity: everyone was working in favor of maintaining good ties with one another. With the High Commissioner, the Russian government was stating that it continued to uphold and recognize the sovereignty of Ukraine’s territory. And she wasn’t the only EU representative relaying the same message; Štefan Füle, who was the European Commissioner for

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225 Fix, Germany’s Role in European Russia Policy: A New German Power?, 120.
Enlargement and European Neighborhood Policy, stated during the European Parliament’s Plenary Debate on Ukraine that:

Ukraine needs Russia, and Russia needs Ukraine. Russia has a chance to become part of the efforts to bring stability and prosperity back to Ukraine… We are ready to work very closely with Russia, the neighbor of our neighbor, to ensure it plays a constructive role in Ukraine’s future—the future of a neighbor with whom Russia has traditional ties which we support.\textsuperscript{227}

Which is why it is a shock to the world when it was revealed that Russia already had a presence in Ukraine’s Crimean Peninsula \textit{days prior}.

It was reported on February 28, 2014 that Russian forces were in Ukraine. President Barroso had a phone call with Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseniy Yatseniuk and discussed both economic modernization policies between the country and the Union, alongside “the need to address the current tensions in Crimea through political dialogue in the framework of the country’s unity and territorial integrity” that same day.\textsuperscript{228} The official invasion took place on March 1.\textsuperscript{229} Heads of state and government of the European Union met two days later with the Foreign Affairs Council to discuss the rapidly escalating situation in Ukraine. Later that day a joint statement was released by the leadership of the European Commission, European Council, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the U.K., and the U.S.—all members of the Group of Eight except for Russia—condemning the clear violation of Ukraine in Crimea.\textsuperscript{230} They announced the suspension of their participation in event preparation for the upcoming G8 Summit in Sochi scheduled for

June alongside the call for Russia to not use physical force to dispute any issues it had with Ukraine and instead use diplomatic channels.

A tether between this crisis and the Russo-Georgian War was immediately made by Commissioner Füle, who was already scheduled to visit Tbilisi on March 4. His tone was this: the European Union stands behind Georgia. He stated that:

While the international community looks on with increasing concern at events in Crimea, let us remember that Russia’s behavior here in Georgia is also a matter of serious concern. Georgia’s territorial integrity continues to be challenged by Russia… We must not lose focus on this while our attention is grabbed by events further west. Here, too, Russia must abide by international law and respect the sovereignty of its neighbor, Georgia.231

Georgia was back on the mind of the European Union, and thus the EU made the correlation between both how they responded last time and how that did not prevent future conflict from occurring. It is not as if the connection between what occurred in Georgia and what was now happening in Ukraine was a framework applied after the fact, or a few weeks into the conflict. The European Union leaders themselves were drawing a connection between the two. And perhaps this would have not happened had there not been a scheduled visit for Füle to Georgia, but there was and thus that connecting thread was made by Europe’s diplomatic and economic core.

At this point, the European Union, while offering some assistance and signing the Association Agreement between them and Ukraine was nice, was not making progress. And unlike under the French presidency of Sarkozy in 2008, France was not leading the European delegation to become the conflict mediators. Their condemnations and strategy were not panning out in the way they wanted it to, just like the rest of the apparatuses. The OSCE did, much to the urging of the German government, establish a contact group.232 The Swiss government offered Geneva to

232 Fix, Germany’s Role, 126.
be the host of the resolution efforts between Russia, Ukraine, and the European Union. High Representative Ashton went to the first round of talks on April 17, which did not result in anything. A second round was never held as the Russians refused to be present for negotiations without the separatist representatives of Donetsk and Luhansk, which had begun their independence movement from Ukraine. The Russians also stated that they viewed the European Union to be an impartial conflict mitigator, as it was integrally tied to the origins of the Revolution of Dignity, which they staunchly condemned.

Russia was the European Union’s third largest trading partner. And so while they were not in the same conflict resolutory role that they had been in 2008, the EU responded with their other branch of power: economics. An emergency meeting was held between the EU heads of state and government to discuss the continuing invasion of Crimea on March 6, the same day that it was announced that a referendum would be held. It was following this meeting it was publicly declared that if the conflict could not be resolved within a reasonable window, representatives would seriously discuss travel bans to Russia, the cancellation of the upcoming EU-Russia Summit, and asset freezes. A total of €11 billion worth of loans would be sent to Ukraine through a combination of the EU budget, European Investment Bank, and European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. These funds were to be used to bolster the Ukrainian economy and not directly on fighting the Russian Armed Forces; they also were to be disbursed over the course of years in tranches. A week later, tariff cuts were announced on Ukrainian exports to European Union members, in a move aimed at increasing the incentive for EU states to purchase

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233 Fix, 127.
more goods from the country.\textsuperscript{236} In November an additional €32 million was announced, which was to be directed towards internally displaced people fleeing the Donetsk and Luhansk regions.\textsuperscript{237}

The European Commission met once again following the Crimean referendum and the declaration of their annexation from Ukraine. Statements of condemnation continued, as did debates as to what to exactly do now that the diplomatic condemnations and requests for mediation were falling through. They announced an additional €1 billion in medium-term loans and the final Association Agreement was signed;\textsuperscript{238} the Ukrainian government would not sign it until June 27 of that year.

On July 29, following escalating tensions and the downing of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17, the first package of economic sanctions and embargoes were released against Russian state-owned banks, arms and technology sales, as well as oil drilling equipment exports from the country.\textsuperscript{239} Russia had failed to meet the EU’s conditional standards set the week prior, which had requested for Russia remove their troops and stop armament supplies to the separatist movements in the Donbas region. The Union acted as they said they would. The principles of the sanctions were reportedly made before the plane’s crash, but it certainly contributed to the growing tumultuous relationship between them and Russia.\textsuperscript{240} This was coupled with major targets by the U.S. Obama administration, but the EU did significantly more trade with Russia than the U.S. I must clarify

that these were the first directly *economic* sanctions enacted by the EU in response to the conflict, but other forms of restrictions/sanctions were launched on March 17 and May 12 against Russian officials.\textsuperscript{241} A second wave of sanctions came on December 18 that banned the acquisition of property or any investments by European firms on the Crimean Peninsula and barred EU-based ships from being able to dock at the Sevastopol Port.\textsuperscript{242} In 2015 the European Union continued by issuing direct sanctions against the separatist actors in the Donbas, freezing the assets and a travel ban imposed against 19 people and 9 entities.\textsuperscript{243} And throughout the years since all forms of sanctions were extended again and again; the list of individuals and entities continued to grow overtime as well. Economic sanctions were never actually ended, as every few months they just continued to be extended to today.

Russia retaliated with its own embargo on European Union agricultural products on August 7 and expanded on it again two weeks later.\textsuperscript{244} And, like the EU sanctions against them, these food importation bans just kept being extended.\textsuperscript{245} Overall exports to Russia from the Union fell between 12.1-14.5\% in 2014 as a direct result of these sanctions. The Russian Central Bank ended up increasing interest rates in order to fight the depreciation of the ruble; the resulting inflation from the banning of agricultural products’ importation into Russia only heightened the situation. The first quarter of 2015 saw a negative GDP growth for Russia of 2.2\%, falling even more over the course of the year.\textsuperscript{246}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{243} “A Timeline of EU and US Sanctions and Russia Countersanctions,” 2.
\item \textsuperscript{245} “A Timeline of EU and US Sanctions and Russia Countersanctions,” 2-4.
\end{itemize}
Continuing their stake hold as an economic partner and waging that against Russia with the intention of preventing the continued Russo-Ukrainian War, the EU and Russia brokered an agreement between the two in order for Ukraine’s gas pipelines to no longer be shut off from Russian energy exports. This larger issue over the dependence of Ukraine on Gazprom (and Russian energy overall) was outlined previously under Range of Issues at Hand. The final agreement was reached on October 30, 2014. Ukraine agreed to pay $3.1 billion of their energy debts to Russia in two installments by the end of the year, and Russia must continue to provide Ukraine with gas until the following March at a higher rate than they paid previously ($378 initially and then $365 per 1,000 cubic meters). The amount paid per cubic meter of gas is still less than the market price, notably.

Thus, the power of the European Union laid in their capacity to collectively channel its members’ economic sanctions against Russia in response to their noncompliance with international law and violation of Ukraine’s sovereign borders. That was their role in the midst of the most active portions of the Russo-Ukrainian War, even extended into the day’s conflict. Sanctions never ended, negatively impacting the Russian economy. But what did that really accomplish on its own, and who was actually harmed by this decision? Yes, they targeted specific individuals high in the Russian government, but the response by the Russian government was to cut its food supply from Europe. It’s not the people in power that go hungry because of this. But anyway, they didn’t take a diplomatic role in the settling of the war, partially because Russia just outright said they didn’t think they could be impartial with their stakes in Ukraine. Their own member states Germany and France were keeping them up-to-date on their actions within the ceasefire negotiations.

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248 De Micco, 5.
So if the European Union was deemed partial and NATO once again made no indication of wanting to directly broker a ceasefire, who was left to do so willingly? Germany and France, well primarily Germany, were instrumental in the diplomatic formations that unfolded between Russia and Ukraine. As noted, the German government strongly supported the involvement of the OSCE and were proponents of economic sanctions against Russia—a policy shift between 2008 and 2014. And while the EU was not directly involved with the ceasefire negotiation, Germany took the helm of diplomacy “on their behalf,” via coalitions of other European Union members in order to advance EU-Ukraine cooperation.\textsuperscript{249} France aided Germany, and that was their role. This instance of conflict represented a flipped dynamic between France and Germany in contrast to 2008: Germany was in the lead while France followed.

What initiated this was the increased violence in Kyiv between February 19-20. The Weimar Triangle, a loose German-Franco-Polish crisis organization that formed after the Cold War, was asked to meet by German Foreign Minister Steinmeier.\textsuperscript{250} The Germans proposed for the group to travel to Kyiv on February 20 in consultation with the European Union; Polish Foreign Minister Radek Sikorski agreed, and the French did too, but French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius already had a trip planned to China, so he left Kyiv early. Germany and Poland therefore were the two continuous and strongest representatives from Europe in Kyiv. They negotiated an overnight settlement between Yanukovych and the main opposition leaders; the agreement was signed, Yanukovych fled Ukraine, and the Rada declared that they wanted to prioritize a strong relationship with the European Union.\textsuperscript{251}

\textsuperscript{249} Fix, 129.
\textsuperscript{250} Fix, 124.
\textsuperscript{251} Pifer, “Ukraine.”
It also must be noted that it does not plausibly seem like NATO was ever considered as a mediative body for the Russo-Ukrainian War. In his press statement on March 1, Foreign Minister Steinmeier concluded it with “It is in my view essential that we in Europe meet urgently to agree on a united stance for the European Union,” not NATO.252 A day later, when escalations continued and Russia did not seem to back off, they implored the OSCE to step in, as they “can play an important role here”—once again, not NATO.253 Perhaps it was too politically and militarily risky for NATO to engage in any other way other than the way they did: coalition-building, condemning, and containment. But perhaps that is just not the sort of organization that European members of both decided should be an option, especially the more powerful, Western European ones that prioritized diplomacy instead of isolation in 2008. NATO Secretary General Rasmussen, before leaving the position, thanked both the French and German governments for their leadership roles during the crisis while visiting the countries’ capitols. These statements were also lined with sentiments on the importance of collective defense strategies. Rasmussen stated while in Berlin “I am very grateful for Germany’s leading role… You have shown your commitment to your fellow Allies in reinforcing our collective defence in light of the Russia-Ukraine Crisis” following meetings with Chancellor Merkel and the Bundestag’s foreign policy and defense committees.254 And while in France he stated that “I thanked France for its commitment to NATO, its determination to acquire the necessary military capabilities and its political will to use them.”255

And so these two countries, actively working towards the de-escalation of the conflict, were also assuring NATO that they would act with force if needed.

Germany, like France in 2008, was willing to act with their diplomatic toolbox. And Poland, while not a direct actor that I am focusing on, was key in the initial joint coalition before and after Crimea’s annexation. Following the dissolution of the Yanukovych government, the German, French, and Polish foreign ministers made a joint declaration on February 28. In it, they commented on their assessed strength of the new Ukrainian government, their willingness to assist in reconstruction and reinforcement efforts, and their concern on the reports emerging from Crimea.256 And a month later, the Weimar Triangle reunited for another joint statement. They endorse the OSCE Monitoring Mission and implored the European Union to step up its efforts to de-escalate the conflict.257 This statement notably was before another meeting of NATO’s foreign ministers, and so they declared their threefold intentions for it: to 1) reassure ally security, 2) reassess the current relationship with Russia, and 3) reinforce relationships with non-NATO partners, most obviously Ukraine. They also called for the re-hashing of the EU’s Neighborhood Policy in this new security environment to not create a dynamic where the continent becomes divided on a Russia-versus-the rest dichotomy.258 The three countries’ chairs of foreign affairs committees traveled to Kyiv and met with Ukrainian Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs Andrii

Deshchytsia in mid-April. The trio was noted as having an “important role… in deepening the cooperation between Ukraine and the European Union.”

Thus, the coalition mechanisms were doing something to increase cooperation and diplomatic relations between Ukraine and the EU, but also a platform for the countries to criticize or at least implore the EU to do more than it was currently. It was also a less overt way for agreements to be hashed out and thus seemed more like just a coalition of independent states, irregardless of their other organizations they were a part of. But they too proved to not be enough of a platform for conflict mitigation, mediation, nor resolution, and that is where the Normandy Format begins to take shape and become the main bloc that Germany and France prioritize.

The Normandy Format was created on June 6, 2014 on the sidelines of a diplomatic visit to Normandy, France for the 70th anniversary of the D-Day landings during World War II. 18 heads of state and government, including Russian President Vladimir Putin, French President François Hollande, Germany’s Chancellor Angela Merkel, and Ukrainian President-Elect Petro Poroshenko, were in attendance; this was the first gathering of these leaders since Russia’s invasion and annexation of Crimea. The formation of this group was tacitly woven by Hollande and his staff, who as the host leader of the D-Day remembrance was organizing the meal planning; he also extended the invitation to both Putin and Poroshenko personally. Interestingly enough, while Putin had expressed a willingness to have a joint dinner with Hollande and U.S. President Obama, also in attendance, Hollande instead had an early dinner with Obama and a separate, late

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supper with Putin. French officials deliberately kept Obama and Putin separated throughout the trip, but they did interact for about 10-15 minutes following a luncheon at the Château de Benouville. Thus, it was Merkel and Hollande that met informally with Putin and Poroshenko on the peripheries of the anniversary trip, resulting in the formation of the Normandy Format.

The four met and discussed with one another over the course of the heightened moments of the war, and this group was from which the Minsk II agreement—often lauded as the more successful of the ceasefires—emerged. Russia seemed much more willing to debate and speak frequently with Germany and France alone—not through official multilateral organizations, so the Normandy Format was what was used. The “minilateral” format seemed to be more promising for a permanent conflict resolution. Political analysts perceived the Normandy Format as “eclips[ing] the EU, sidelin[ing] Poland, and exclud[ing] the United States, something that Putin surely wanted.” Of course, these dialogues and meetings were not done without the knowledge or informing of other European Union members and even the organizations within; the EU endorsed the group following its formation. And so while this organization was operating outside of the direct supervision of the EU, Russian officials still knew realistically what Germany alongside France were up to, but by not directly involving the Union, they grew the reciprocal trust that they had for one another. Germany and France did not try to isolate Russia following Georgia, having only increased their diplomatic relationship, and were the states that convinced NATO and the EU to do the same. What the Normandy Format, just like all other efforts made by NATO, the

265 Fix, 129.
European Union, the OSCE, and their member states, was prevent Russia from continuing to escalate the conflict in the short-term.\textsuperscript{266}

Coupled with the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG), a coalition consisting of Ukrainian, Russian, and OSCE representatives that also had its first informal meeting during that fateful trip to Normandy, negotiations between Ukraine and Russia were opening. The contact group met often and prior to the first Format, but once the TCG formally was established it reported to both the OSCE’s Permanent Council \textit{and} the Normandy Format.\textsuperscript{267} They met in early June in Kyiv for the first time formally on the ambassadorial level to discuss the peace plan created by Poroshenko, which was publicly announced on June 20. Culminating from this meeting was the first ceasefire; Putin adhered to it for the sake of the debate.\textsuperscript{268} Three days later the TCG met with the separatist leaders of the Donetsk and Luhansk People’s Republic for the first time. The Ukrainian Armed Forces launched an offensive against the separatist groups and a few days later the Normandy Format met at the beginning of July in Berlin to begin preliminary debate on potential methods for the conflict to be mitigated, at best end peacefully.\textsuperscript{269} Now that did not happen, but Steinmeier stated that:

These were difficult tasks, but I believe and hope that we have indeed made progress on individual issues. Now we will—as agreed—report back to our heads of state and government in our capitals first of all and then... agree on a format to resume our talks. Our aim remains to contribute, within the scope of our possibilities, to bring about an end to the fighting in Ukraine and to avoiding further bloodshed in [the] future where at all possible.\textsuperscript{270}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[268] Hopmann, 109.
\end{footnotes}
A counter-offensive was launched by the separatist forces in the Donbas, supported by Russian troops and military equipment, but dialogues were still open and were held with the Contact Group and the Normandy Format.271

On Friday, September 5, 2014, the first major ceasefire agreement, the Minsk Protocol, was signed by OSCE General Secretary Heidi Tagliavini, former Ukrainian president Leonid Kuchma, the Russian Ambassador to Ukraine Mikhail Zurabov, alongside DPR leader Zakharchenko and LPR leader Plotnitsky.272 This was also, notably, the final day of NATO’s Wales Summit, during which the 2% of GDP defense spending was codified for all members. It was negotiated in Minsk, Belarus for weeks leading up to September 5 by the members of the Contact Group and also Germany and France, most prominently Angela Merkel and François Hollande. The Protocol consisted of 12 points, the most notable of which included an immediate ceasefire for both sides of the conflict, the deployment of OSCE monitors for the ceasefire’s verification, the immediate release of hostages and prisoners of war, permanent monitoring of the Russo-Ukrainian border by the OSCE, the holding of Ukrainian elections in the Donbas region, begin the economic recovery of the Donbas region, and amnesty for combatants on both side.273

This ceasefire almost immediately had reports of violations, as fighting resumed near Mariupol within 24 hours of its signing.274 The OSCE was unable to establish a robust monitoring system, or even fully access the region, similar to Georgia; they had a very limited budget, were

273 Hopmann, “Negotiating the Ukraine-Crimea Crisis,” 110.
understaffed, and did not have the necessary technology to even properly assess current realities.\textsuperscript{275} And when personnel were able to be in the Donbas region, they had to be escorted by and with the cooperation of the separatists. It was abundantly evident that the ceasefire was unsuccessful.

Despite the ceasefire’s immediate undermining, the negotiating parties continued to call for its adherence. In an interview with the Passauer Neue Presse on September 12, Foreign Minister Steinmeier said that “It is up to Kyiv, but especially to Moscow, to ensure that the Minsk agreement is respected and that peace becomes possible” and that “we remain ready to help where we can with the implementation of the Minsk agreement.”\textsuperscript{276} But Minsk did not result in a quelling of violence and had an adverse reaction amongst the independence movement of the Donetsk and Luhansk People’s Republics. Their leaders’ signature of the agreement led them to be faced with threats of potential coups by their volunteer battalion and militia commanders.\textsuperscript{277} They were labelled as “sell-outs” that were adhering to the political will of the Ukrainian government in Kyiv, as they basically signed away their independence. And so the DPR and LPR leaders decided, as there was no ramifications for doing so, to violate the ceasefire beyond scuffles with soldiers; between September 6 and December 18, another approximate 1,000 people died.\textsuperscript{278} Reactions to the ceasefire in Kyiv were not great either, as Poroshenko was not transparent with the Rada about the negotiation nor the agreement. They, alongside pro-Ukraine activists, described it as a “temporary pause that would allow the rebels to rest, train, and resupply” and predicted that fighting would only continue to escalate and extend westward by Spring.\textsuperscript{279}

\textsuperscript{275} Dempsey, “Merkel Alone.”
\textsuperscript{278} International Crisis Group, "Reaction," 5.
\textsuperscript{279} International Crisis Group, "Reaction," 7.
The fighting continued, controversial elections took place in the Donbas that fall, and it became overwhelmingly clear that the Protocol had failed by the end of the year. DPR forces captured the Donetsk airport, which was the final portion of the city still controlled by the Ukrainian government on January 21.\textsuperscript{280} Eduard Basurin, a spokesman for the DPR, was quoted saying that “The Minsk Memorandum will not be considered in the form it was adopted… But it doesn’t mean there will be no other types of talks, since we all need peace—both us, who are living here, and citizens of Ukraine.”\textsuperscript{281} Renewed talks were held in Munich, Germany, which Foreign Minister Lavrov was present for following this peak. Merkel and Hollande travelled to both Moscow and Kyiv during this period. A new plan was proposed by Merkel and Hollande on February 7, 2014 as U.S. and NATO officials began debating whether to directly send weapons to the Ukrainian Armed Forces to fend off the separatists and Russians and was intended to deter them from doing so, according to Merkel.\textsuperscript{282}

The Normandy Format and the Trilateral Contact Group flew back to Minsk to debate Merkel and Hollande’s proposal. The officials present were Merkel, Hollande, Putin, Poroshenko, alongside Zakharchenko and Plotnitsky, Tagliavini, Kuchma, and Zurabov. The second Minsk Agreement—Minsk II—was signed on February 12 by the same parties as the first iteration.\textsuperscript{283} The deal reportedly resulted from a continuous 15-hour long negotiation spearheaded by Merkel, and yet was not signed by any of the senior diplomats present and was heavily in Russia’s favor.\textsuperscript{284} Minsk II had thirteen points and would be in effect starting at midnight in Kyiv on February 15.

\textsuperscript{280} Hopmann, “Negotiating the Ukraine-Crimea Crisis,” 110.


\textsuperscript{284} Pifer, “Ukraine.”
The parties agreed to a ceasefire, that heavy weaponry must be withdrawn by both sides beginning on the 16th and be completed in two weeks for the formation of a 50 kilometer wide security zone, the OSCE must be able to effectively monitor this withdrawal as well as “all foreign armed formations, military equipment, as well as mercenaries from the territory of Ukraine,” and the Ukrainian government should draft a new constitution by the end of the year.285 The document was “of hasty drafting” and “As a result, it contains contradictory provisions and sets out a convoluted sequence of actions” according to Duncan Allan at Chatham House.286 The 11th point on the creation of a new constitution instructed Ukraine to prioritize decentralization in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions and establish self-government clauses in the Donbas region. They would be guaranteed constitutionally to their political, economic, and legal autonomy within Ukraine as pro-Russian separatists.287 It was heavily criticized as being greatly in favor of Russia, who continued to state that they did not have any forces in the region and no mention of Ukraine’s sovereignty was made. But an agreement was made that held to a higher extent than its predecessor.

It is also incredibly fascinating to me that the signatories from both Ukraine and Russia are not the leaders of their respective countries’ armed forces, nor were they the leaders of said countries. It isn’t as if the other leaders were not the ones negotiating the ceasefire’s agreement and stipulations, but the fact that Kuchma, a Ukrainian political leader that was ousted from power during the Orange Revolution because of his ties to the Russia government signed the ceasefire is worth highlighting. The final negotiations were also held in Minsk, Belarus with the endorsement of the Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, the self-proclaimed last dictator of Europe.288 Minsk was agreed as the location for the talks because of its good relationship with Russia and

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287 Allan, 13.
Ukraine prior to the conflict’s breakout, and because the two countries’ presidents mutually concluded that it would be the only comparable place for them to meet with the other members of the Normandy Format, according to the Guardian. Assuring Russia’s comfortability and willingness seemed to be the most important or pivotal thing about these negotiations, in sum.

The biggest hole in the negotiations, beyond their actual efficacy, was the lack of action on the annexation of Crimea. There was no active war going on between the Russian and Ukrainian Armed Forces on the peninsula, but nowhere in any of the ceasefires was the removal of Russian forces from the region given as a negotiated stipulation for the end of Ukraine’s use of force against the separatists. I can therefore conclude that the issue was a non-starter in the quest to quell the violence of the war. Beyond calls for Russia to leave Ukraine and enhanced targeted trade sanctions being exported or imported from the Crimean Peninsula, it was never specifically targeted. And there was no proposed autonomous zone as part of a new Ukrainian constitution for Crimea because it already was one. At that point, Crimea was a lost cause for debate even if the international community tried to treat it as anything else.

With that being said, the tactics used by NATO and the European Union shifted drastically between the Georgian and Ukrainian Wars. NATO decided to full-send it and promote the buildup of their members’ collective defense initiatives by constantly talking about it in the media and the agreements of the Wales Summit in September for each member to increase the amount it spent on defense to 2% of their respective gross domestic products. The European Union took a seat back and did not directly participate in the negotiations of the ceasefires or any conflict resolution measures. But Germany and France continued to push the message of diplomacy while also

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sanctioning Russia; they flipped roles and Germany took the reins controlling the horse. With the establishment of the Normandy Format in June 2014 and Russia’s willingness to participate in negotiations with them, in a context where they still arguably denied that they had any participation in the formation and support of the Donetsk and Luhansky People’s Republics. The level of violence declined but as will be discussed in the next section, it waxed and waned, escalating and then deescalating over and over again until Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine’s eastern border in 2022.

But it doesn’t seem like they were ever expecting much. Following Minsk II’s signature, Angela Merkel was quoted saying that it was a “glimmer of hope” but that there was still much to do. Frank-Walter Steinmeier said that while it was a step in a direction, “I say that without any excitement and certainly without euphoria, for it did not come easy. Nevertheless, we have achieved something. … Today’s agreement is not a comprehensive settlement and certainly no breakthrough. … If there is a chance of this happening then our efforts have been worth it.” Their goal was not to create a comprehensive, deliberately complex, and tightly managed ceasefire agreement; they wanted to potentially accomplish something. It mattered more to the diplomats that they try their hardest to reach somewhat of a diplomatic agreement after months of people dying and millions fleeing their homes. Isn’t that a little bit sad? It makes me sad. But this whole situation makes me sad, so what new information am I contributing here? None.

In sum, the responses of my four actors in these wars prior to their respective large ceasefires differed. NATO during the Georgia Crisis held emergency meetings, expressed concerns, and temporarily suspended meetings of the NATO-Russia Council. But during Ukraine’s

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290 Steven Pifer, “Minsk II—Will It Meet a Better Fate than Minsk I?,” Brookings (blog), November 30, 1AD, https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2015/02/12/minsk-ii-will-it-meet-a-better-fate-than-minsk-i/.
own war, during the Wales Summit, the collective security and burden sharing mechanisms to bolster defenses were prioritized on top of condemnations for Russia’s actions. The EU in 2008 acted with French leadership as a conflict negotiating party with the support of German diplomats, but they were waiting behind the scenes to step in if France failed. With Ukraine in 2014, the EU utilized its economic power to offer humanitarian aid and loans to Ukraine while economically sanctioning Russia, a definite policy shift between this crisis and the previous. A power shift also occurred between German and French leaders, as German diplomats led minilateral formats for ceasefire negotiation with French support. What resulted from both were two ceasefire agreements, the Six-Point Plan and Minsk II, that quelled violence to a certain degree and while not adhered to, harm did not escalate substantially to the same level again.\textsuperscript{292}

\textsuperscript{292} Once again, this is referring to the pre-2022 period of Ukraine.
5. After the Storm, When the Flowers (don’t) Bloom

In the aftermath of the ceasefire negotiations and their signatures, my four actors—NATO, the EU, Germany, and France continued to condemn the actions of Russia. That has remained consistent. But there was a large narrative differential between the conclusions made following the signing of the Six-Point Plan in the case of Georgia and the Minsk Agreements in the case of Ukraine. The unified message after Georgia was one of continued diplomacy; the invasion of Georgia was not worthwhile to be the cause of permanent shifts in the relationship between NATO, the European Union, their member states and Russia. They were put a bit on edge, but the solution presented, argued successfully by the French and Germans, was one of continued and intensified cooperation with Russia in order to prevent an environment where Russia becomes more isolated. That did not happen with Ukraine. NATO led a messaging campaign of intensified regional cooperation, collective security, and promoted burden sharing strategies in the face of the conflict to demonstrate their own willingness to act as an alliance if they are threatened. The EU supported this narrative and implemented programs aimed at surging up their defense efforts on bilateral and multilateral levels and continued the economic sanctions they had instigated prior. German and French diplomats and their parliamentarians continued to present the narrative of cooperation and needing to work towards successful ceasefire negotiations as their Normandy Format alongside OSCE-led initiatives were continuing to flounder, but were instrumental in assuring the continued EU sanctions and “played their part” in leading and organizing those EU and NATO strategies with deterrence on the forefront of their minds.

Neither of these ceasefires held nor were they adhered to even immediately after; there has also not been a widespread effort for conflict resolution or peace agreements beyond them. NATO, the EU, Germany, and France all continued to call for the adherence to the Six-Point Plan and Minsk Agreements despite their obvious inefficacy. They did not call for a continuing resolution
to the conflicts and partially as a result of this the conflicts remained frozen in Georgia and became a war of attrition in Ukraine. But are Germany and France obligated to continue negotiating ceasefires, or even potentially a peace agreement for that matter? For whatever reason, be it domestic politics, their own national security agendas, or the politicians in power, they have continued to argue for nonintervention and to deescalate the conflicts by whatever avenue is deemed as more plausible by their apparatuses. They have felt obliged to intervene and act as the leading parties via whatever mechanism they need—preexisting institutions like the European Union or ones they create like the Normandy Format—in order to respond somehow and minimize future violence by whatever means necessary, while still holding Russian leadership accountable. That is the role they created for themselves in the conflicts and perpetuated this in both of their aftermaths.

The degree to which German and French policies were followed differentiated with Ukraine in the aftermath. On the part of NATO and the EU, the two became the main actors that prioritized cooperation within the respective alliances and unions. They responded forcefully by upping their presence in the Baltic States, emphasizing joint procurement methods, and all while maintaining a constant messaging campaign on the importance of maintaining collective defense on the European continent, shielding it from all external threats including the theoretical threat of a land invasion by the Russian Armed Forces. A notable action not taken by either NATO or the EU is accession into the two for Georgia or Ukraine.

To return to the format of Michael Brecher and Patrick James’ Crisis and Change in World Politics, my modified importance indicators for the Russo-Georgian and Russo-Ukrainian Conflicts will be briefly outlined: a change in 1) the distribution of power (i.e., the hierarchical differentiation of conflict and negotiating parties); 2) actors present (i.e., newly independent states
as a result of the conflict); 3) alliance configuration; and 4) rules of the game.\textsuperscript{293} This is to offer a summative understanding of the resulting policies and moves by the parties involved and appears before my dissection of each portion the actors in the aftermath.

**Georgia after the Ceasefire:**

Despite debates of whether or not NATO was the right organization to step in, or if the international community should not have let the French leaders essentially steamroll conflict negotiations and ceasefires, diplomacy was prioritized and that is the reality of the post-Georgia politics of Europe and beyond. And that reality is evident in all policy decisions regarding Georgia, Russia, and the potential for future conflicts, with an exception in NATO’s ballistic missile network and its extension in Romania. The Russo-Georgian War arguably shifted the policies and attitudes of NATO, the European Union, and specifically France, Germany. But in what ways exactly? As I will demonstrated in this chapter, the war led to more coalition building between the actors I have focused on and Georgia, but most notably Russia as well. Their response was increased bilateral and multilateral commitments and operations involving two non-NATO or EU states, but their “Partners in Peace.”

It’s fascinating that NATO and the European Union are often criticized for not having a unified policy and messaging campaign in regards to their policies on Russia’s actions, but following the signing of the ceasefire agreement, they were united: united in continuing cooperation. They did not back away from their commitments and actually created new ones. They suspended some things here and there, but then unsuspended them as “cooperation was what was needed most” at the time.

\textsuperscript{293} Brecher and James, *Crisis and Change in World Politics*, 40-43.
First, the way in which the conflict was settled did not change the hierarchical nature of European politics. The result of the European Union taking over conflict negotiation did not make them viewed more favorably in comparison to NATO; a false dichotomy between the two did not emerge as a result of the Russo-Georgian Conflict. It wasn’t as if NATO or the EU had failed and the other had to step in their stead. France and Germany are two of the largest economies on the continent, and so their role was solidified by the war.

Second, and relatedly, the hierarchy between Russia, Georgia, South Ossetia, and Abkhazia remained the same after the conflict as did the number of independent states. Russia was still a superior force to Georgian, Russia continued to support the Abkhaz and South Ossetian governments. Russia recognized the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia following the war, but the international community did not follow in their footsteps and still adhere to the several UN Security Resolutions recognizing the two as within the sovereign territory of Georgia. What did change was the number and intensity of international organizations’ observing missions in the region, which will be further discussed below.

Third, the “rules of the game” did change significantly as a result of the war and ceasefire. Despite signing the Six-Point Plan and assuring conflict parties and ceasefire negotiators that they would, Russia did not remove all troops from Georgia as they are still within Abkhazia and South Ossetia, violating the ceasefire. The Russian Armed Forces have been concluded as pushing the Administrative Border Lines of Abkhazia and South Ossetia further into Georgian territory dubbed

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“borderization.” It was also found by the European Court of Human Rights in 2021 that Russia had indeed targeted Georgian civilians, prevented 20,000 Georgians from returning to their homes in South Ossetia, and tortured prisoners taken. Many of these conclusions were confirmed previously in the 2009 investigation by the European Union and thus was not “new” to the world.

NATO, the European Union, and all of the states I highlight have publicly and behind closed doors called for the removal of Russian troops from beyond Georgia’s sovereign borders, but they are still there. In essence, Russia has been able to violate the ceasefire since its signing; but truly, as I stated in the previous section, even after Medvedev stated publicly that Russian Armed Forces would pause their operations they continued to move towards Tbilisi. Words can only do so much, and no counter measures were taken by any of them in relation to the Georgia conflict. An air of diplomacy continued to surround the relationship between Russia, NATO, and the European community.

And finally, the top-line alliance configuration did not significantly change, but they were certainly reified. MAPs were extended to Albania and Croatia at the Bucharest Summit, and they became official members of the Alliance in April 2009 at the Strasbourg/Kehl Summit. Georgia has still not been offered a MAP, which scholars and political pundits speculate is in large part because of the Russo-Georgian War’s proximity to both the debate of Georgian accession and the promise of future membership. The extension of NATO’s ballistic missile defense system to the Black Sea and the surging of support for its members closest to the conflict should not be taken

296 Seskuria, 3.
298 Mouritzen and Wivel, Explaining Foreign Policy, 142.
lightly. In terms of the European Union, Croatia is the only country that has been offered membership status since the war (July 2013).

Now to further illustrate the state of European politics after the signing of the ceasefire, I will detail the policy and diplomatic actions of the parties I have highlighted. I will also be illustrating the effects that these policies (and lack thereof of long-term policy shifts) had on burden sharing of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. In essence, what I find is that because the conflict was “resolved” diplomatically and without additional mid-crisis arms transfers or exterior military interventions by third parties, the crisis was not deemed “serious” and therefore “important” enough for long-term shifts in defense spending. While top-line spending did not change dramatically, the disaggregated NATO data demonstrates that internal reshuffling was occurring within the domestic military budgets of France and Germany.

*A chronology of NATO’s public responses post-conflict & strategic assessments:*

The North Atlantic Council issued a press release on August 19, 2008 after a meeting of their foreign ministers at their Brussels Headquarters. While acknowledging the swiftness in which the international community operated to end the conflict, the release also announced the NATO-Georgia Commission. This commission, which had already been semi-guaranteed by the outcomes of the previous Bucharest Summit, was launched with the intention of “assist[ing] Georgia, a valued and long-standing Partner of NATO, to assess the damage caused by the military action and to help restore critical services necessary for normal public life and economic activity,” as its recovery is integral to the alliance. A team of 15 civil emergency planning experts would be deposed to Georgia, the Alliance would ensure Georgia’s Ministry of Defence and Armed

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302 “Statement - Meeting of the North Atlantic Council at the Level of Foreign Ministers Held at NATO Headquarters, Brussels.”
Forces would be properly assessed and maintained, alongside re-establishing their damaged air traffic system and prevent cyber-attacks.\(^{303}\) The inaugural meeting of the Commission at the ambassadorial level took place mid-September when the Council visited Georgia.\(^{304}\)

While conducting the press conference for this meeting of the Council, Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer stated that “the NATO-Russia Council meetings would be placed on hold until Russia adhered to the ceasefire… We are not closing doors… [but] we… cannot continue with business as usual… as long as Russia does not commit to the principles upon which we agreed to base our relationship.”\(^{305}\) Formal meetings of the NATO-Russia Council were thus suspended until the following summer when they resumed and included Russian diplomats until the invasion of Ukraine in 2014. Even though formal meetings resumed, it was not because the peace agreement was continuously upheld, as Russia never took back its recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

Following Russian Government’s recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia’s independence from Georgia, NATO’s Secretary-General issued another statement rejecting this move. He declared that this action was in direct conflict with United Nations Security Resolutions pertaining the nation’s territorial integrity and that Russia’s actions in August have caused their commitment to peace to be called under serious question.\(^{306}\) The next day the NAC condemned the recognition, called on Russia to reverse their course of action, and declared that they must follow the ceasefire agreement signed by both Medvedev and Saakashvili.

Seemingly unrelated to the conflict, but certainly an \textit{interesting} thing to not cancel, the Standing NATO Maritime Group One (SNMG1) conducted a routine visit on the Black Sea from


\(^{305}\) “NATO’s Foreign Ministers Reiterate Their Support to Georgia.”

August 21-28. In the press release’s headline, the organization tried to make it explicitly known that this operation was unrelated to political realities with the title “NATO ships in Black Sea on routine visit, unrelated to Georgia Crisis.”

The Group consisted of Spanish, German, Polish, and Canadian frigates and destroyers and also conducted exercises with Romanian and Bulgarian ships. Vice-Admiral Pim Bedet, the Deputy Commander of Allied Maritime Component Command Headquarters in Northwood made sure to note that SNMG1 conducts operations in “the Black Sea region to interact and exercise with our NATO partners Romania and Bulgaria … in order to maintain high levels of interoperability and cohesion within the Alliance.”

The only other lightly aggressive policy shift for NATO was in 2010 with the extension of the ballistic missile defense system to the Black Sea.

Following the inaugural meeting of the NATO-Georgia Commission in September, there was not another press release that directly referred to Georgia or Russia until November 6; that press release only denoted a meeting of the Commission to take place during the NAC’s December Foreign Ministers Meetings in Brussels.

The final communiqué of the meeting continued to call on Russia to adhere to the peace agreement and recognize the sovereignty of Georgia.

At the Strasbourg/Kehl Summit in April 2009, Heads of State and Government that participated in the NAC’s meeting issued the Summit Declaration. The principles outlined in the Bucharest Declaration were once again reemphasized on top of the importance of maintaining the NATO-Georgia Commission, which only deepened their relationship as directed in Section 31.
In Section 32 the declaration outlines their encouragement of OSCE, UN, and EU observers needed to maintain peace within Georgia. Then they shift towards the NATO-Russia relationship, and how “we remain committed to it.” They explicitly state how communication has broken down between them in the past year, the condemnation of Russia’s recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and to remove its military presence in the regions. Section 35 begins with “Despite our current disagreements, … NATO and Russia share common security interests, such as the stabilization of Afghanistan; arms control, disarmament, and non-proliferation of WMD.” It is here that the Council soft launches the resuming of formal NATO-Russia Council meetings by the following summer, as “We are convinced that the NATO-Russia Council has not exploited its full potential. We therefore stand ready, in the NATO-Russia Council, to assess possibilities for making it a more efficient and valuable instrument for our political dialogue and practical cooperation.”

This summit was also when the Seventh Strategic Concept was released, titled “Active Engagement, Modern Defence.” This was the Concept enacted prior to the launch of the Eighth in Madrid 2022. In Sections 33 and 34, the Strategic Concept states that:

we want to see a true strategic partnership between NATO and Russia, and we will act accordingly, with the expectation of reciprocity from Russia… [W]e remain convinced that the security of NATO and Russia is intertwined and that a strong and constructive partnership based on mutual confidence, transparency and predictability can best serve our security. We are determined to: …enhance the political consultations and practical cooperation with Russia in areas of shared interests… [and] use the full potential of the NATO-Russia Council for dialogue and joint action with Russia.314

312 Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council, "Strasbourg / Kehl Summit Declaration."
313 Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council, "Strasbourg / Kehl Summit Declaration," section 35.
Thus, despite the fact that Russia did not adhere to the peace agreement and continuously calling upon them to do so, the North Atlantic Council concluded that continued diplomatic relations with Russia was the necessary policy to move forward. They were bolstering their relationship with Georgia while simultaneously doing the same with Russia. Essentially, it was time to move on and go about business as usual. The reality that nothing was going to happen really—other than increased diplomatic relations with Georgia—was really going to occur via NATO.

Those steps and subsequent summits did not, and have not to this day, included the actual extension of a Membership Action Plan to Georgia. Scholars and figures like Russian President Medvedev have subsequently claimed that the war effectively stopped Georgian membership from ever occurring.\(^{315}\) If it was concluded in a state’s foreign policy apparatus that Russia invaded because of the promise of eventual Georgian membership in NATO, then what would Russia do if they were admitted? Would the Alliance then become vulnerable to being attacked by their “Partner in Peace,” opening the door for Article V invocation, and an all-out war on the continent?

This perspective is effectively undermined by the principle of second-strike. Russia could and likely does properly rationalize that any invasion done by them of a NATO member would launch an all-out war on the continent. And with the combined force of the United States Armed Forces—that was the third largest armed forces in the world in 2008—and its NATO allies, Russia knew it would be an unstrategic move. That in my humble opinion is why Russia nor any other state has invaded a NATO member, but there have been other actions committed against them that were not defined or interpreted as “war-beginning,” such as the 2007 and 2022 cyber-attacks of

the Estonian parliament, its banks, newspaper organizations, and ministries connected to the Russian government and Russian organizations.\textsuperscript{316}

\textit{The European Union: Russia & Georgia committed war crimes and were doing nothing about it.}

The European Union was instrumental in the ceasefire agreement, and they kept the ball rolling on cooperation between them and Georgia following the conflict, eventually becoming the country’s largest trading partner.\textsuperscript{317} Despite issues that emerged as a result of the Union-commissioned fact-finding mission and the Human Rights Watch concluding that Georgia committed war crimes, that has not stopped their diplomatic relationship.

EU officials met on Monday, September 1, 2008 to discuss the ceasefire agreement. The European Commission President José Manuel Barroso commented that “It is clear that, in the light of events, we cannot continue as if nothing happened.”\textsuperscript{318} President Sarkozy was quoted saying that “if Russia did not keep its word, ‘we will get together and take another decision,’ but that he preferred a ‘step-by-step’ approach.” The EU too admitted that there was little to be done about Russia’s recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, or that they did not have the right mechanisms in place to do anything about it.

Prior to its commencement, French Foreign Minister Kouchner publicly announced on August 28 that sanctions were up for debate against Russia in order to incentivize them to remove their troops from Abkhazia and South Ossetia.\textsuperscript{319} He and the rest of the French government were


\textsuperscript{319} Fix, 54.
against sanctions in large part because of how large Russian oil makes up in their market. It would be bad for the French, and largely Europe, for them to sanction Russia because of this reality. And it wasn’t only French diplomats arguing against sanctions; Poland and the United Kingdom also refrained from endorsing the idea of sanctions.

So then how was the European Union and its members going to enforce the ceasefire? In order to “ensure” that the Six-Point Agreement was being followed, the EU established an unarmed civilian monitoring mission in Georgia on September 15, 2008, aptly titled the European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia (EUMM). 200 civilian monitors were deployed to the country. They have three field offices in Gori, Mtskheta, and Zugdidi, with a headquarters in Tbilisi. According to the EUMM website, the South Ossetian and Abkhazian authorities “have so far denied access to the territories under their control” but they “want[] to contribute to create conditions whereby civilians can cross the Administrative Boundary Lines of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in both directions without fear of obstacles.” The EUMM is still in operation today.

The European Union Council established the Independent Internal Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia (IIFFMCG) on December 2, 2008. This was the launch of the first EU-led fact-finding mission post EU ceasefire intervention. In the lengthy report released September 19, 2009, the IIFFMCG concluded that the shelling of Tskhinvali by the Georgian Armed Forces on August 7, not the invasion by Russia the following day, was the start of the conflict. Up until this point, the general consensus was that August 8 was the start date, which is why it is dubbed “France’s Kouchner Warns against Sanctions on Russia,” Reuters, September 6, 2008, sec. Earnings, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-georgia-ossetia-russia-france-idUKL640843220080906.

Fix, 55.


the “five-day war”—it was, according to the fact-finding mission, six days in length.326 “Several elements suggest the conclusion that ethnic cleansing was carried out against ethnic Georgians in South Ossetia both during and after the 2008 conflict.”327 While it could not conclude whether international law was violated as it was not a court ruling, it was heavily implied that Russia’s actions were disproportionate to the point of cruel.

After the announcement of the IIFFMCG, the financial crisis was taking a major toll on European economies, as the economic recession was in full-swing, global trade collapsed in the final quarter of 2008, and the lurkings of what will become the European sovereign debt crisis were rapidly approaching.328 While meeting in Brussels December 11-12 2008, the European Central Bank (ECB) launched the European Economic Recovery Plan (EERP) to increase stability for bank depositors and tax relief that it had proposed the previous month. The EERP was approximately 1.5% of the European Union’s GDP (€ 200 billion) That was the primary cause for concern at this meeting, as, you know, the global economy was on the brink of collapse. And despite their active involvement in the ceasefire, other than the endorsing nondescript determinations and guidelines made at previous meetings, there was no reference to that year’s conflict in the Caucasus by the office of the European Council President Sarkozy.329

The 2009 Prague Summit of the European Union saw a shifting back towards Georgia with the launch the Eastern Partnership (EaP), a joint initiative between the Union, its member states, and Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine.330 A part of the European

327 “Report,” 394.
Neighborhood Policy, EaP is meant to strengthen the economic and political relationship of all parties and coordinate regional policies. Strategically, the Partnership was a way for the EU to prove a commitment to solidifying relations between them and other states that have historic and current economic ties with Russia. It had been negotiated and debated at the December 2008 meeting.\textsuperscript{331} German diplomats were incredibly concerned about this agreement and how quickly it could “turn into an initiative that offers the partner countries prospects of membership and antagonizes Russia.”\textsuperscript{332} German strategy adhered to a “Russia First” policy, and by prioritizing a partnership that did not include them, the EaP did not follow a trust-building model.\textsuperscript{333} The French and Bulgarian government too were skeptical and wanted to ensure that this would not both become a step in the partner countries’ eventual EU membership, and it hasn’t been. The only new member to join the Union since 2008 has been, once again, Croatia.

At this point in the story is when the fact-finding mission on the Russo-Georgia War is released to the public. The headlines all point to the conclusion that the European Union blames the war on Georgia and not Russia. RefWorld’s headline was “EU report pins blame on both Georgia and Russia for 2008 war,” Radio Free Europe’s “EU Report on 2008 War Tilts Against Georgia,” and France 24 said “Georgia ‘triggered’ war with Russia, EU investigation finds.” The story thus focused on the blame for the war’s instigation by Georgia and not Russia, even though when you click on the article it discusses the horrid dynamics of the actual war and how both likely broke international law. Even though the potential breakdown of the NATO, EU, and Georgian relationship was prophesized as likely dissolving in these headlines, it only continued to grow. As already outlined when discussing NATO, the NATO-Georgia Commission kept going strong. And

\textsuperscript{331} Presidency, 10.
\textsuperscript{333} Gotkowska, 2.
a few years later in 2014, an Association Agreement was signed and implemented in July 2016 alongside a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA). These agreements cemented the economic and political integration of the two with the intention of easing future European Union membership for Georgia. Georgian citizens are also permitted to travel without visa in the Schengen Zone since March 2017.

Similar sentiments can be shared in the diplomatic relationship between the Union and the Russian Federation prior to 2014. While Russia did not intend to apply for membership, they had remained partners as outlined in the 1997 Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) between them. As to be discussed under Germany’s sub header below, the Partnership for Modernization and the Meseberg Initiative were two German-led, EU initiatives to link and kindle a close partnership between the Union and Russia. A continued economic partnership was recognized as being integral to both the EU and Russian economy alongside the co-financing of Cross Border Cooperation Programs.

The idea of increased cooperation and the EU’s adherence to its previously agreed-to initiatives even in light of bad things happening is what I would like to emphasize in this section. A rise in diplomatic efforts, not the cutting off of partnerships, was emphasized at the European Union level alongside the North Atlantic Treaty Organization’s.

*France, toeing the line:*

Following the Czech Republic’s ascension to the European Union Council presidency, France took a step back from its leadership position on diplomatic relations with Georgia. But that did not mean France stopped cooperation with Georgia or Russia—they just no longer had as

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334 "The European Union and Georgia."
public of a forum or immediate involvement with the maintenance of the ceasefire. They were instrumental in setting up the immediate post-war commissions, investigations, and diplomatic environment in Europe, but then they took a step back and let other countries, especially Germany, led those efforts.

At the Strasbourg/Kehl NATO Summit in April 2009 it was announced that, for the first time since 1966, France was officially reintegrating its armed forces into NATO. President Sarkozy had signaled the beginnings of this foreign policy shift in a June 2008 White Paper.\textsuperscript{337} The white paper also outlined a focal shift towards Asia and a stationing of more French troops in Afghanistan as a part of NATO’s Afghanistan mission.

The diplomatic relationship that France prioritized with Georgia extended also to the Russians. France continued annual meetings of the Franco-Russian Cooperation Council for Security Issues as well as the Franco-Russian Governmental Seminar. But the most significant signal of their continued cooperation was an arms purchase. On June 17, 2011 the French and Russian governments signed an agreement for two French Mistral class helicopter carriers to be purchased by the Russians for €1.2 billion.\textsuperscript{338} This deal is lauded as the “first major arms sale to Russia by a North Atlantic Treaty Organization state” and was heavily criticized by other members.\textsuperscript{339} The deal had been in its negotiating phase since 2009 to the concern of the United States, Poland, and the Baltic states; six U.S. senators sent a letter to the French Ambassador to the U.S. Pierre Vimont to express their concerns and then-U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates


expressed issue with the deal while visiting France the following year.\textsuperscript{340} The ultimate settling of the issue will appear in my following case study on Ukraine.

The Georgian government was not too thrilled either by the deal, with Saakashvili stating that it was concerning for France to “reward Russia’s continued military presence in Georgia’s breakaway provinces, in violation of a French-brokered ceasefire agreement after the 2008 war” in February 2010.\textsuperscript{341} But these actions have not severely impacted the relationship between Georgia and France. The Coface credit insurance mechanism, which had been under negotiation for years, was extended to Georgia in 2009 as planned.\textsuperscript{342} In November 2009 while Kouchner was visiting with Georgian Foreign Minister Grigol Vashadze it was announced that 170 Georgian troops, trained in France, would be serving under French command in Afghanistan as part of the current operations of the country.\textsuperscript{343} An official state visit by President Saakashvili occurred in early June 2010 and Sarkozy visited in October 2011.\textsuperscript{344} Continuing this pattern, French and Georgian leadership consistently have conducted state visits, remained friendly at international summits, and have generally continued a good working relationship with one another.

The trend is that as more time passed from the conflict, cordial relations between France, Georgia, and Russia were promoted, but not necessarily on the Georgia-Russia front. The French Ministry of Foreign Affairs seemed ready to move beyond the conflict and not isolate Russia on the world stage. They promoted bilateral and multilateral cooperation and relations with Russia while simultaneously continuing to call for the removal of Russian troops from Abkhazia and

\textsuperscript{340} Isbister and Quéau, 2-3.
\textsuperscript{341} Isbister and Quéau, 3-4.

114
South Ossetia. The French government had done their part with the Russo-Georgia War, and were now ready to go back to the delicate dance of not inciting another conflict.

To move beyond France’s foreign policy of Russia and Georgia during this post-conflict period, the French government’s top-line military spending remained quite consistent between 2009 and 2013. When looking at the military expenditure data from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), there was both a nominal and real increase in France’s annual spending between 2008 and 2009.\(^{345}\) Following this period, though, the amount spent dropped significantly, as evident in Table 1. Spending decreased to 2008 levels in 2011 and consistently declined after 2009.

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\text{Table 1: France's Military Expenditure, 2008-2013 (Constant 2021 USD, Millions)}
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<td>TOTAL:</td>
<td>$48,410.23</td>
<td>$51,991.93</td>
<td>$49,527.31</td>
<td>$48,054.46</td>
<td>$47,316.30</td>
<td>$47,009.74</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1.90%</td>
<td>2.10%</td>
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In order to observe actual shifts in the defense spending of country’s budget allocations, following the Jordan Becker model, it is critical to look at the disaggregated figures released by NATO.\(^{346}\) I compiled this information from NATO’s own annually published “Financial and Economic Data Relating to NATO Defence.”\(^{347}\) The observable shifts on Figure 2 when compared to the drops in spending of Table 1 is that as spending decreased more was spent on equipment at the expense of either personnel or research and development investment. France is one of the largest exporters of arms exporters in the world.\(^{348}\) The first was Russia at this time (25% of world

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market). This increase in equipment expenditure is likely linked to its increased presence in Afghanistan and the arming of Georgian troops participating in their operative ranks.

What is interesting is the cut in expenditure on personnel, which really just fluctuates in 2010 and then remains relatively stable. In comparison to pre-2009 numbers, France, like all NATO and EU countries following the end of the Cold War was downsizing their military. These defense budget cuts were also a part of France’s general austerity measures during this period to maintain the country’s AAA credit rating.\textsuperscript{349} Sarkozy’s government introduced higher taxes and lower government spending amid predicted declines in GDP growth and the ongoing European sovereign debt crisis.

Therefore, I conclude that because France was maintaining productive diplomatic relations with both Georgia and Russia after the crisis, was reintegrating its troops into NATO and increasing their involvement in current NATO operations, as well as facing concerning threats to their gross domestic product and responding with austerity measures, the Georgia crisis was not enough to spark French “burden sharing” strategies via increased spending. Actually, France was already one of the top contributors to NATO before the crisis began as it was one of the largest economies, and so it stayed in its ways. They increased their involvement in NATO’s mission in Afghanistan, but also decreased their budget like most of Europe at the time. They shouldered more of the burden in equipment investment, but that was not a direct result of the Russo-Georgian War.

**Figure 4: France’s annual disaggregated defense budgets. Note that from 1995-2005, the figures are compiled from those years alone. From 2009 on, the statistic becomes annual.**

**Germany, a Policy Proposer:**

The decision to resume diplomatic relations with Russia via the EU and NATO was a German spearheaded one. Above all else, a return to normalcy and increased cooperation between the conflict parties and neighboring alliances following the Russo-Georgia War was prioritized. While stating how important it was to aid Georgian recovery efforts, Steinmeier in the opening speech of the Ambassadors Conference in Berlin on September 8, 2008 also said that “The current crisis… must not be allowed to blind us to the fact that both sides have much to gain from close cooperation… We must be clear in our minds that Russia too has a great deal to lose if the crisis causes the lasting disruption of our cooperation.”350 The policy of the German government was to grow not sever ties, so that is what they did.

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In the same vein Steinmeier also argued and lobbied other foreign leaders for the unsuspension of the NATO-Russia Council’s formal meetings. He spoke openly about it, and sent a public letter to then-U.S. President-Elect Barack Obama to ask for his support. In December 2008 while giving a speech at the Schwarzkopf Foundation in Berlin, he stated that “A new beginning is… urgently needed between NATO and Russia. Therefore, the NATO-Russia Council should meet again as soon as possible—especially in what are currently somewhat difficult times. … It is precisely in such times that we should make use of the opportunity for controversial discussion.” The consensus became that dialogue was needed to be had and solidified between NATO and Russia, yes, but also bilaterally between individual states and Russia. And, as noted under the previous section on NATO, it was announced at the Prague Summit of NATO that the Council would resume its formal meetings.

Discussions on the renewal of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, the very foundational document establishing the connection between the European Union and Russia, had been stalling for years. In order to reify an EU-Russia partnership through a new line of coordination, the Germans formally proposed the Partnership for Modernization initiative in November 2009, but had been in negotiation since 2006, in order to step around the outdated Agreement. The timeline of the Russo-Georgian War was close in proximity to the beginning of the bilateral modernization project’s signing between Germany and Russia, which occurred in October 2008, two months after the conflict. As Liana Fix assessed, “the war did not change the

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351 Fix, 53.
principled willingness of German policy makers to move ahead with the bilateral Modernisation Project and to invest more, not less, with Russia.\textsuperscript{355} The desired effect of the Partnership for Modernization was the locking-in of Russia through an intricate web of economic cooperation and soft-power dynamics that would weave together a complaisant network keeping them back from invading another country.

The following year the European Commission decided to put the larger Partnership for Modernization on the agenda of the EU-Stockholm Summit after an agreement between the EC president and Medvedev and then formally launched in June 2010 at the Rostov-on-Don Summit.\textsuperscript{356} Its adoption demonstrates the validity of Germany’s policies towards attempts to integrate Russia more closely with European Union members, but it proved like many of the other solutions to emerge after (and including) the ceasefire agreement, the underlying roots of the conflict were unresolved. Scholars like Arkady Moshes already concluded that the Partnership for Modernization had “essentially failed to make a difference” in 2012.\textsuperscript{357} He, among others, essentially labelled it as a plan that only exposed their differences and not unifying notions of economic linkage and modernization, only furthering the divide between. Russia wanted an economic-focused modernization plan, while the EU wanted a political- and social-modernization agenda for Russia.\textsuperscript{358} But it was still adopted and remained relatively stable until the Ukraine invasion.

The Meseberg Initiative, another German-led, Russian-connecting plan proposed by Chancellor Merkel after the Georgia crisis failed to garner significant attention and was not

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{355} Fix, 78.
\textsuperscript{357} Moshes, “Russia’s European Policy under Medvedev,“ 20.
\end{flushleft}
adopted. Meseberg was a proposed continuing EU-Russian dialogue at the foreign-minister level as well as an EU-Russian crisis management mechanism launched in June 2010. The two groups would be primarily focused on the “frozen” conflicts heavily linked to the collapse of the USSR and resolve them. Quite significantly these groups would not include NATO and the United States, which are typically the designated parties to deal with long-lasting conflict prevention strategies, at least the most prevalent\(^\text{360}\) The initial memorandum was not approved of by the European Union, despite its proposed active participation. This was proposed in part because of the inability for other established diplomatic mechanisms to prevent the Russian invasion of Georgia and the ongoing crisis in Transdniestria. Conflict prevention was one reason, but the fact that the Six-Point Plan was not being followed and no one batted an eye was of concern to Germany.

Despite a lot of negativities surrounding the uncertainty that this was even going to ever potentially become a reality, Germany was not the only country supporting the initiative: France joined too.\(^\text{361}\) French involvement became more about countering the German drive behind Meseberg and not purely a desire to be the ones proposing new policy initiatives. Like France, their support for bilateral and multilateral cooperation between them and Russia also extended to Georgia. Germany today the largest contributor to the European Union’s Monitoring Mission in Georgia.\(^\text{362}\) By October 2009, the total amount given for immediate humanitarian relief by the German government was €2 million and €12 million for conflict management.\(^\text{363}\) The Federal Foreign office of Germany donated 300 prefabricated, winterproof houses to the government of


\(^{360}\) Fix, 92-3.

\(^{361}\) Fix, 107.


Gori, Georgia to alleviate some of the housing concerns for people still irregularly displaced as a result of the conflict. The two countries continuously have and had regular meetings between their highest diplomats; relations have not been suspended due to Germany’s continued involvement with their attempts to web-in Russia.

Table 2: Germany’s Military Expenditure, 2008-2013 (Constant 2021 USD, Millions)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL:</td>
<td>$40,371.17</td>
<td>$41,900.07</td>
<td>$42,002.02</td>
<td>$41,150.51</td>
<td>$42,326.36</td>
<td>$40,761.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% OF GDP</td>
<td>1.21%</td>
<td>1.31%</td>
<td>1.27%</td>
<td>1.21%</td>
<td>1.24%</td>
<td>1.19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Germany’s military budget remained quite consistent throughout this time, but actually did increase between 2008 and 2010, as evident in Table 2. Annual fluctuations occurred for the country, as gradually more was being invested in research in development; but when that increased it tended to correspond with decreases in personnel spending, as evident in Figure 5. Consistently, equipment spending rises during these times. When compared to France, Germany spends considerably less of its GDP share on military spending, never raising above 1.31% between 2008 and 2013.

In sum, the aftermath of the Russo-Georgian War following the ceasefire agreement came with it a narrative of diplomatic cooperation and the further integration of Georgia into the European apparatus. But the same principles were applied to Russia. States like Germany and France wished to return to normal. Georgia had little impact on the durable changes resulting from the war other than drastic shifts in the rules of the game.
After Minsk II: A War of Attrition & The Collective Defense of Europe

Is there even an “aftermath” if the conflict never ended? What does it mean for conflict to end when another invasion occurs seven years later, the Crimean Peninsula is all but annexed, and fighting continues in the Donbas with two secessionist movements in the country? Simply put, there is no aftermath. We’re still living in it. The reality was that the conflict entered a war of attrition: a deadly, persistent, so-called stalemate with instances of revived conflict that eventually accumulated into the February 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine’s eastern border by the Russian Armed Forces. And while so much of the 2014-15 conflicts’ peak has been shadowed by the current war, it still exists as a distinct entity that too, like Georgia, deserved time for light to be shone on it. There’s no real way for me to delineate in the sand again when the “after” period really ends, but I will be concentrating on instances and policy shifts that occurred before 2022 and after Minsk II’s signature.
The truth of the matter is that diplomacy has not worked in the aftermath of this conflict. The second Minsk ceasefire was almost immediately broken, as on February 18 fighting continued in Debaltseve as a reignition of the weeks-long struggle over the control of the city.\textsuperscript{364} There were calls by the conflicts’ negotiators, the European Union, NATO, the United States officials—basically everyone—for Russia to order their separatist forces and the Ukrainian Armed Forces to stop and adhere to the ceasefire to no avail. Debaltseve fell to separatist forces and more villages were attacked around Mariupol by DPR and LPR forces.\textsuperscript{365} But the Security Working Group of the OSCE continued to strengthen their enforcement and presence in the Donbas region and prioritized conflict management, not resolution.\textsuperscript{366} There were not as frequent casualties following the agreement either, but the conflict continued to perpetuate. A constant ebb and flow of peaks and valleys in the conflict continued to occur throughout the rest of the year. New ceasefires were negotiated and agreed to between the Russians and Ukrainians, which were then subsequently violated every time.

What perpetuated was the breakdown of diplomatic cooperation between Russia, NATO, and the European Union. The NATO-Russia Council never resumed its meetings, the European Union continued its waves of sanctions while saying they would still be willing to cooperate if Russia was willing to compromise, and so the fighting persisted, and the Alliance and Union prioritized their own collective security measures. Relations never really “returned to normal” between Russia and the rest. A war of attrition continued, but waves of technological and equipment assistance to Ukraine from NATO and EU members did not occur until 2022; instead, the organizations created mechanisms through which investment in European-made, advanced


\textsuperscript{365} Hopmann, “Negotiating the Ukraine-Crimea Crisis.” 111.

\textsuperscript{366} Hopmann, 112.
equipment could be purchased by European countries. They increased their own budgets, technological capacities, and cooperation amongst one another in the name of collective defense. France cancelled the billion-dollar Mistral deal it had entered with Russia following Georgia in 2015, but Germany entered the Nord Stream II Pipeline deal, which later turned out to be a bit of a disaster.

I will now return to my importance indicators for the conflict. First, unlike the Russo-Georgian War, the conflict “settlement” in Ukraine did change the hierarchical nature of European politics. Coupled with the Syrian Refugee Crisis, their leadership in supporting the economic sanctions against Russia, and continuous willingness to settle the conflict themselves, Germany and not France—Germany and not the European Union directly—took the lead. The French were still present, but not directly calling the shots beyond being a driving force behind who was speaking with Vladimir Putin at the Normandy memorial. Because of the way that the Minsk Protocols were negotiated, and evident in their language, much more power was given to the Russian government because that was calculated as the only way to potentially reach any sort of lesser violence.

Secondly, the Russo-Ukrainian War led to the independence movements of the Donetsk and Luhans’k People’s Republics. The actual fighters in the region, beyond the Russians that invaded Ukraine, were already members of Ukrainian society. No other exterior forces intervened beyond the attempted OSCE missions in the country and different task forces set up by the European Union. And even though only about a dozen countries recognized the DPR and LPR’s independence, none of which were NATO or EU members, the oblasts were never fully reincorporated into the Ukrainian government and operated semi-autonomously. But it is not officially recognized that this war contributed to new, independent and recognized states; they were later also annexed by Russia in September 2022.
Alliance configuration certainly changed during an in the wake of the conflict. First, the
DPR and LPR aligned themselves with the Russian government and were supported by the Russian
Armed Forces in their efforts to gain recognized autonomy from Ukraine. NATO stopped all
official cooperation with Russia as a “partner in peace” and continued to emphasize the need for
its members to boost its collective defense efforts via economic investment in military technology
and capacity. The only new members to join NATO before 2022 were Montenegro and North
Macedonia, two countries located in Southeastern Europe. Only one member joined the European
Union: once again, Croatia. The Ukrainian government, which I had described previously as
seemingly flipping back and forth between pro-Russian and pro-“Europe” alliances stuck to their
pro-“Europe” stance following the conflict, but still has yet to join either NATO or the European
Union. Yet if organizations like NATO and the European Union did not outright cut all
communications with Russia—a move that would much more likely result in more escalatory
conflicts due to a lack of concrete knowledge of what the other actor is up to—or admit Ukraine
into their alliance networks, there was such a fundamental break in their trust. Countries were more
skeptical of Russia’s actions following their invasion and annexation of Ukrainian territory. They
violated another country’s territory and were widely condemned for it. Even if direct breaks in
alliance networks and informal meetings occurred or didn’t, there was now a constant cloud of
doubt in the minds of other states about Russia’s future actions.

Finally, the rules of the game absolutely shifted and were arguably destroyed. The broader
focus of the Russo-Ukrainian War was the settlement of the conflict in the Donbas region and the
prevention of potential escalation, but not the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula. Russia took
over the peninsula, held an annexation vote, and basically that was that. Yes, there were economic
sanctions waged against Russia, the world publicly condemned these actions, and there were fears
of other possible Russian annexations, but where was the concerted effort by the international
community to force Russia to remove its presence in the region really. They also essentially backed another independence referendum—a non-internationally recognized vote—but did not claim the Donbas as its own territory at the time. However, while they supported the separatist forces and the building of the respective Republics according to military intelligence reports, the Russia government did not recognize the Donetsk and Luhansk People’s Republics as independent from Ukraine until February 21, 2022.367

And, just like the case with the Six-Point Plan, the ceasefire that “ended” the Russo-Georgia War was not followed by Russia. There was a larger punishment this time around in relation to the severity of Russia’s actions in the Donbas region and Crimean Peninsula, but that does not mean that rules of the game were not broken. In the international order, states are supposed to respect one another’s sovereignty and abide by their commitments to one another. Beyond the actual invasion and initial violation of Ukraine’s sovereignty by Russia, they didn’t follow the ceasefire either. The rules-based international order was facing a direct challenge by Russia not following those guidelines, and they responded in a way that they deemed would not escalate the conflict anymore. They acted within their means with the desired intention of mitigating the conflict’s continued harm.

**NATO: Burden Sharing & Collective Security**

It cannot be ignored that NATO changed their tone following the Russian annexation of Crimea and subsequent aiding of separatist movements in the Donbas region. There was not, notably, a new Strategic Concept released in light of the war; a new one would not be released until 2022 at the Madrid Summit, where the Russian Federation was labelled as “the most significant and direct threat to Allies’ security and to peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area,”

and that “In light of its hostile policies and actions, we cannot consider the Russian Federation to be our partner.”

But that is focusing on a post-2022 invasion reality, and I would like to our attentions towards the world before.

Simply put, trust had broken down between NATO and Russia. The two went back-and-forth with military exercises that would put the news cycle and their security apparatuses in a tizzy and an international war of attrition kept being perpetuated. The Wales Summit established the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) that could be deployed within two days to respond to any threats facing the Alliance in response to Russia’s military operations in Ukraine.

A few days prior to the second Minsk Agreement’s signature, NATO’s defense ministers announced that there would be 5,000 standing troops composing air, maritime, and special operations teams and that France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Spain, and the United Kingdom would assume leadership positions on a rotational basis of the groups. The interim VJTF had been led by Germany, the Netherlands, and Norway. Following a large-scale “snap exercise” conducted by the Russian Armed Forces across Russia and the Arctic and Black Sea regions, the force was deployed for the first time in Żagań, Poland in Exercise Noble Jump on June 9, 2015.

The content of these exercises was evidently militaristic; SACEUR Phillip Breedlove stated that the exercise “has been designed to test NATO’s high readiness troops under battlefield conditions and to ensure that our concepts and procedures will work in the event of a real crisis.”

Noble Jump was the third exercise of the “Allied Shield” strategy, which also included a major naval exercise off of the in the Baltic Sea off of the Polish at the beginning of the month and Saber Strike, a combined army

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372 “NATO ‘Spearhead’ Force Deploys for First Time, Exercise Noble Jump Underway.”
and air force exercise some 6,000 troops. Saber Strike’s field and situational training was conducted in Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland, while joint tactical air controller training occurred in Estonia. The overall Allied Shield plan had approximately 15,000 troops committed from 19 NATO members in these June exercises. Following continued training, increased resources, and certification throughout the rest of 2015, VJTF was officially certified as operational.

To reiterate the origination of the Force, the establishment of the VJTF within the NATO Response Force came via the adopted Readiness Action Plan (RAP) by NATO in the midst of both the conflict and the 2014 Wales Summit. Command of the NRF, alongside the VJTF, lies with SACEUR. Over the course of the next year NATO continued to develop its VJTF and expand the NRF. On February 10, 2016 following a meeting between the NATO defense ministers, Secretary General Stoltenberg stated that they agreed to “increase[] NATO’s presence in the eastern part of the Alliance… We have tripled the size of the NATO Response Force to more than 40,000 troops.”

This announcement was a prelude to the agenda of the upcoming Warsaw Summit, the first summit since the more successful of the ceasefires. NATO members’ heads of state and government met from July 8-9, 2016 to discuss their operation in Afghanistan and how they were bolstering the alliance’s collective defense in light of “provocative military activities in the periphery of NATO territory” by Russia and “its demonstrated willingness to attain political goals by the threat and use of force … [that] are sources of regional instability, fundamentally challenge

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375 “NATO Response Force.”
376 “NATO Response Force.”
the Alliance, have damaged Euro-Atlantic Security, and threaten our long-standing goal of a Europe whole, free, and at peace.”378 The Communiqué issued reaffirmed their stances that the NRC would remain suspended, all formal military and civilian cooperation between the Alliance and Russia would not continue, and that they are open to discussions with the Russian government.379 They declared their continued endorsement of the Normandy Format and the Trilateral Contact Group’s continued efforts and the Minsk Agreements, imploring them to continue working towards implementation of the ceasefire agreements, particularly in relation to the Russian capacity for a military buildup in the Baltic and Black Seas.380

This declaration that the NRC would remain suspended was preceded by the Council’s actual meeting in April of that same year. All 29 members of the NRC met in order to discuss the implementation of the Minsk Agreements, encourage continued transparency between them alongside the OSCE, and Afghanistan.381 This meeting seems to be incredibly buried deep in the memory and messaging campaigns of NATO and their member states, as just about everything widely available about NATO-Russia relations claims that the NRC was permanently suspended as a direct result of the Russo-Ukrainian War at a formal level, yet Secretary General Stoltenberg and the rest of them met just months before the Warsaw Summit.

To discourage increased presences or perceived threats by the Russian Armed Forces in the Baltic region, at the Warsaw Summit, the North Atlantic Council announced its decision to create an enhanced forward presence (EFP) in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland in early 2017.382 Germany, alongside the United Kingdom and Canada, would serve as framework nations

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while Poland would host the division’s headquarters. The EFP, officially deployed in April 2017, has four battlegroups led by the U.K., Canada, Germany, and the United States, one for each respective country; Germany’s battlegroup operates in Lithuania alongside Czech, Belgian, Luxembourgian, Netherlander, and Norwegian forces.\(^\text{383}\) The total number of troops part of the overall EFP is approximately 5,000. According to John Deni at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace–Europe, this was the first time NATO combat forces had been based east of former West Germany.\(^\text{384}\) The EFP, due to the arguments of France and Germany, was not to be stationed permanently in the four countries and that their size should remain relatively small “to signal an opening to a potential better future relationship with Russia, and to allay Moscow’s fears that NATO’s deployments might be offensive.”\(^\text{385}\) They successfully pointed out that NATO’s Article V would dissuade them from ever truly invading the Baltic States or Poland, as that would launch a continental and world war.

Because of the length of the conflict, failure of the ceasefires, and physical proximity to the conflict, the Secretaries General went a short tour to many of its member states and made statements such as “Romania can count on NATO” both in said meetings and press releases after the Minsk Agreements.\(^\text{386}\) These statements and visits include mentions of the members’ participation in NATO-led missions and operations, commitments to either meeting the 2% mark or their promise to maintain a higher level, and verbal confirmation that “‘NATO is here. NATO is ready to defend [member-state] against any threat’” by Stoltenberg. These comments were largely reserved for members that were closer in proximity to the conflict than those further away,

but that has exactly been the desired outcome of Romanian security policies: the prioritization of not only their country’s safety and sovereignty, but the Black Sea region too. At the Warsaw Summit it was reaffirmed that Romania would be the headquarters of the Multinational Division Southeast of NSF, take command of the NATO Force Integration Units, and that the Aegis Ashore Site in Romania, which was declared operational earlier that spring, was part of the larger collective defense operations of the Alliance.\footnote{NATO Heads of State and Government, “Warsaw Summit Communiqué,” sections 37E, 57.}

The same messaging campaign applied to Ukraine. When Stoltenberg visited Kyiv in September 2015, he said that “In these difficult times, Ukraine can rely on NATO.”\footnote{Jens Stoltenberg, “Remarks by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine,” NATO Press Office, September 22, 2015, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_122737.htm.} In this visit he and Ukrainian President Poroshenko formalized Ukraine’s diplomatic relationship with NATO and publicly declared that Ukraine would once again open itself to potential membership, but that they were not yet ready.\footnote{Robin Emmott, “NATO Says Russia Must Withdraw Heavy Weapons from Ukraine,” Reuters, September 21, 2015, sec. World News, https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-ukraine-crisis-nato-idUKKCN0RL1UR20150921.} This visit is also when the “Ukraine 2015” joint exercise between all 28 NATO members, its Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Center (EADRCC), and Ukraine’s State Emergency Service (SESU) took place.\footnote{“Secretary General Highlights Value of Partnership as He Opens Joint NATO-Ukraine Civil Emergency Exercise,” NATO Press Office, September 21, 2015, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_122740.htm.} More than 1,100 people participated in the four-day exercise that tested participants’ cooperative skills and response to a mine explosion and collapse. Beyond interoperability tests between the two, at the Warsaw Summit it was announced that Ukraine would receive a Comprehensive Assistance Package (CAP) from NATO, which is supposed to align Ukraine’s security mechanisms to NATO standards and practices.\footnote{“Relations with Ukraine,” NATO, April 4, 2023, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_37750.htm.} The package is complementary to the Trust Funds established in 2014 and described previously.
CAP has included equipment training, response mechanisms for potential hybrid threats, and strengthen its security measures.

The NATO-Ukraine Commission (NUC) is the organization that initially established the cooperative ties between the two to discuss security issues, like the Georgia Commission. It was established in July 1997 via the NATO-Ukraine Charter on a Distinctive Partnership.\textsuperscript{392} They made a joint statement on April 1, 2014 in a joint condemnation of the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula; another meeting was called by Ukraine at the end of the month as it became incredibly evident that Russian troops and their equipment had crossed into Ukrainian territory beyond Crimea.\textsuperscript{393} Following the Minsk Agreements, nothing distinctive seemed to be achieved via the NUC other than to reaffirm the support of NATO for Ukraine, emphasizing the importance of maintain Ukraine’s sovereignty, and declaring NATO’s role in assisting the country with maintaining its own security apparatus in the midst of a continuing war.\textsuperscript{394}

Discussions about sharing the appropriate level of the burden for maintaining collective security was pushed to the forefront of member states’ minds. That’s why there was such a large increase in the amount spent by each country in the years subsequent to the outbreak of the Russo-Ukrainian War, a point that will be expanded on under Germany and France in this chapter. This partially was in response to the gross decline in spending for much of NATO’s European member states following the financial crises they faced years prior and the prioritization of austerity measures. But the fact that NATO was able to galvanize its members in Wales to agree that what the Alliance needed was to boost its spending, research and development efforts, and bring collective defense to the front of their security agendas is remarkable. Every statement made by

\textsuperscript{394}NATO, “NATO-Ukraine Commission (NUC).”
Jens Stoltenberg, every document issued by the North Atlantic Treaty outlined the severity and importance of the ongoing conflict and how Russia was not abiding by the rules of the international order—rules they signed onto themselves. NATO was mobilizing without engaging in actual conflict. Their members were populating and leading joint exercises, their soldiers were stationed throughout different parts of Europe, and condemning the continuous breaking of the Minsk Accords. It does not matter whether or not the threat of a Russian invasion was logical or actually imminent, but the possibility of it was enough for them to just completely shift their regional and national security agendas. Like with the signing of the Minsk Agreements, the investment in defense apparatuses and collective security measures was perceived as better than doing nothing in response and just letting the Russians potentially—disregarding the rationality of that—in invade or continue their forward presence. Ukrainians were viewed as Europeans, a national identity of people who wanted to join the West and by default NATO and the European Union—who staged a revolution “because” their government denied the signing of the EU Association Agreement.

Yet the military spending of European members of NATO has actually only increased in gross terms and not a percentage of GDP. As will be evident later, France and Germany both experienced increases in their overall defense spending, but the percentage spent on defense in GDP was declining; France, unlike Germany, stays well above the 20% minimum for equipment spending. By 2021, the only countries to have hit the 2% floor are the, Croatia, Estonia, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States.395 These measures are so incredibly arbitrary though—I must say once again—as they do not account for the quality or capacity of these investments, or the diplomatic role that member states have played in these conflicts or in quelling others from occurring. The 2% statistic gets noted quite frequently

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by members that have met it in order to demonstrate their own contribution to collective defense measures and in order to pressure publicly their other member states to “do better” and pick up their share of the burden, the most notable of which is the United States. The U.S. by this measure spends the most overall and is second in GDP percentage to Greece, with the U.S. spending 3.48% of its GDP. And while there has always been rhetoric from the U.S.’ presidential administrations and respective security apparatuses that more members of NATO need to “pull their weight” respective to their collective defense, it sparked a new high in the interim years between the Russian invasions.

The worries of other NATO allies lies in the conundrum of what happens to the Alliance if the United States was no longer there to protect them, but that was semi-determined as incredibly unlikely until the election of U.S. President Donald Trump, who was actually impeached but not removed from office for threatening to withhold aid to Ukraine unless Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy investigated the business dealings of Hunter Biden.396 Not unlike other former U.S. presidents, Trump called on fellow NATO members to play their part in maintaining collective security and defense, pressuring them diplomatically to take steps now to the 2% and 20% on expenditure markers. But at the 2018 Brussels Summit he argued that spending must be boosted to 4%, which overshadowed many of the other agreements made at the Summit, such as enhanced forward presence mechanisms.397 He also threatened to withdraw the U.S. from NATO if European members do not pay their “fair share” at the Summit as well, a sentiment he had alluded to years prior on the campaign trail.398 Trump stated “How about if we get into a conflict


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because a country was attacked? Now we are in World War III and protecting a country that wasn’t paying its bills.”

The U.S., in his eyes, was not being treated as an equal partner and therefore the entity that Europe was freeriding off of, and so therefore they should just leave. While we know today that the U.S. is still a NATO member, had Trump removed the country from the alliance permanently—somehow—then the organization would have gone into freefall, and European members recognized that. They now had to actually picture what the Alliance could look like in case of the volatility of both Trump and other leaders that could argue the same thing, and thus attitudes shifted.

In sum, a messaging campaign of increased cooperation amongst NATO members and the need to meet the 2% “requirement” by 2024 persisted in the period between the renewed, full-scale conflicts. The collective defense of NATO members, particularly those closest to Russia in proximity, continued throughout the years following the Minsk Agreements in order to assure them against abandonment fears. Those agreements continued to be called on by NATO and endorsed while they condemned Russia’s illegal annexation and occupation of Crimea alongside their involvement in the Donetsk and Luhansk People’s Republics declared independence from Ukraine. The direct war of attrition itself though was put a bit on the backburner and instead became a continuing reality of the European security environment and growing fear that the United States would pull out of the alliance. But tensions did not go away simply because diplomatic crises were amok in Europe. Russia deployed prohibited cruise missile in what U.S. Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Paul Selva assessed as a deliberate threat against NATO.

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Russian fighter jets were flown over the Black Sea near American warships, and conducted multiple large-scale exercises like Zapad-2017 along the borders of member-states Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland via Belarus. NATO and Russia were making moves that would slightly intimidate one another for a little bit, make them worried for a few days according to the news cycle, and then it would remain normal again.

Notably there was never a statement of public support by the North Atlantic Council or the Secretary General for another elaborate and multilaterally negotiated ceasefire agreement other than those formed in Minsk; they just continued to call for its adherence. There was also no concerted effort or declaration by the Alliance that Ukraine would receive a Membership Action Plan but given the level of involvement that NATO had with Ukraine via its continued integration plans and the NATO-Ukraine Commission, it is not as if the relationship between Ukraine and the Alliance did not increase. With the elections of pro-NATO leaders came with it more assurances that the Ukrainian Rada would not once again stop the process of membership like it did during the presidency of Yanukovych.

The European Union: United in Structure

The European Union followed the same messaging campaign as the North Atlantic Treaty, focusing on growing relations between them and Ukraine, increasing pressure on Russia for their actions on the Crimean Peninsula and the Donbas region, and bolstering their role in maintaining a collective security environment for the region. As noted previously, they continued their economic and political sanctions targeting the Russian economy and its figures. The European Union and Russia continued to have a tough, uncooperative relationship while they were moving towards building a more secure Europe and integrating Ukraine into those mechanisms.

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War with Russia has not been the only security threat to the European Union. One of the appealing notions of being a part of the Union or having good relations with them is the Schengen Area, an established zone where certain passport holders, more specifically from participating EU member states, can travel to any other country within the zone with ease.\(^\text{402}\) Established in 1997, it abolished the checks at the EU’s internal borders for passport holders of every EU country except citizens of Bulgaria, Cyprus, Ireland, and Romania. Critics of the zone claim that Schengen has opened the door to increased amounts of criminals and migrants entering Europe and staying to commit acts of terrorism\(^\text{403}\) and that it increases the barriers for non-Schengen members to enter the zone including discriminatory and profiling practices by border control agents.\(^\text{404}\) On May 11, 2017 the European Council moved Ukrainian citizens from being assessed under Annex I protocols at border checkpoints (requiring a visa to enter) to instead Annex II (visa-free). Ukrainians with biometric passports no longer needed to apply for tourist visas to travel within the Schengen area and could instead enter without much fuss. This policy was part of a larger plan for increased cooperation between the EU and Ukraine in light of progressing their Association Agreement’s implementation, which was lagging behind.\(^\text{405}\)

Economic cooperation and assistance strategies have been some of the key ways that the EU and Ukraine have deepened their partnership. The Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) between the EU and Ukraine officially took effect at the beginning of 2016 and is another key component of the Association Agreement. Trade and export duties, alongside


subsidies, were to be gradually decreased to zero between the two with guaranteed increases to Ukraine’s GDP via trade and greater access to European markets. Between the start of the war and 2020, the European Union contributed €3.4 billion (approximately $4.2 billion) via microfinance assistance (MFA) packages for Ukraine; this is the largest amount given by the EU via MFAs.\footnote{Balázs Jarábik Waal Gwendolyn Sasse, Natalia Shapovalova, Thomas de, “The EU and Ukraine: Taking a Breath,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, February 27, 2018, https://carnegieendowment.org/2018/02/27/eu-and-ukraine-taking-breath-pub-75648.} An additional €2 billion was promised at the Eastern Partnership Summit in December 2017. The MFAs have not been as strongly enforced as other international lending programs such as the IMFs; tranches were released on the assumption of eventual compliance, despite criticisms even from within the Union that Kyiv lacked the proper absorption capacity for these funds to be allocated properly. But loans are not the only forms of funding provided. As part of the Ukrainian Humanitarian Response Plan of 2017 from the United Nations office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the European Commission funded $13.5 million and was the second largest contributor behind the United States government, which provided $16.1 million. The third largest contributor was the German government, providing $10.7 million. According to Chatham House, by 2020, the total grants given to Ukraine via the European Union was approximately €4.8 billion.\footnote{Kataryna Wolczuk and Darius Žeruolis, “Rebuilding Ukraine: An Assessment of EU Assistance,” Ukraine Forum (Chatham House, August 2018), 10, https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/publications/research/2018-08-16-rebuilding-ukraine-eu-assistance-wolczuk-zeruolis.pdf.}

This economic association has not translated into a membership offer for Ukraine. So while agreements have been made and forums are held between the two entities, just like NATO, regional relation agreements remain the thing that ties them together and not accession. I must note that the amount of given in grants is about the same comparatively to Central and Eastern European states prior to their own accession into the Union, and concerns about an inability to adhere to the same standards that other states had met at that point dissuaded the Union from admitting Ukraine as a
member state.\textsuperscript{408} Ukraine has not been ready to join the Union, but that has not meant that cooperation and integration into the fold has not continued to grow.

No level of economic assistance and integration had yet to successfully stop the war from continuing, and so it did. Economic assistance programs to Ukraine, while proving themselves as something that the European Union were able to semi-well distribute despite the calls that they were not used effectively, so the EU also faced inward. The EU does not have a standing army, unlike NATO and its own member states, so they took steps to bolster cooperation amongst their members in an effort to increase regional security measures. The “Europeanization of defense” stemmed not only from the ongoing war of attrition but also the Syrian Refugee Crisis and arguably had been building up for quite some time, but coupled with the very security environment that was emerging with continuous peaks and valleys, rising and falling tensions, hills and valleys in the conflict’s escalation in Ukraine, it is incredibly notable that the level of Europeanized defense mechanisms emerged when they did.

A new European Union Global Strategy, the “Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe” was delivered and adopted in June 2016 to replace its predecessor, the European Security Strategy of 2003 better known as the “Solana Strategy.”\textsuperscript{409} It focused on the growing frequency of hybrid threats that its previous policies were not equipped to handle or assess, which had become increasingly evident with the number of Russian-instigated ones utilized in knowing their weak spot. It was also during this time that the Union called for more integration and communication with NATO’s own efforts in collective defense. While attending the Warsaw Summit weeks after the Global Strategy was released, European Council President Donald Tusk, European

\textsuperscript{408} Wolczuk and Žeruolis, 30.
Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, and NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg issued a joint declaration stating that while the two have a history of coordination…

In light of the common challenges we are now confronting, we have to step-up our efforts… because our security is interconnected…; and because we have to make the most efficient use of resources. A stronger NATO and a stronger EU are mutually reinforcing. Together they can better provide security in Europe and beyond.

…we believe that there is an urgent need to: Boost our ability to counter hybrid threats, including by… working together on analysis, prevention, and early detection, through timely information sharing and, to the extent possible, intelligence sharing between staffs; and cooperation on strategic communication and response […] … Develop coherent, complementary and interoperable defence capabilities of EU Member States and NATO Allies, as well as multilateral projects […] … Step up our coordination on exercises.410

It is not as if these two organizations can operate without one another in order to properly address threats posed against both of them. Most of their member states overlap. They held joint maritime exercises in the Mediterranean Sea to militarize the humanitarian migration crisis, increased their cooperation on facing hybrid and cyber threats, all while “promoting the women peace and security agenda.”411 The two reinforced this partnership in July 2018 and welcomed each other’s respective efforts to bolstering regional security and defense.

On the part of the European Union, those efforts primarily involved the proposal of bilateral and multilateral coalitions that increasingly prioritized a more militarized idea of EU response mechanisms. The European Commission proposed the European Defence Fund (EDF) to be part of the existing Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). The EDF was established “1) to support investment in joint research and the joint development of defence equipment and technologies…; 2) foster investments in SMEs [small and midsize enterprises], start-ups, mid-caps

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and other suppliers to the defence industry…; [and] 3) strengthen the single market for defence” in Europe.\footnote{“European Defence Action Plan: Towards a European Defence Fund,” Text, European Commission Press Office, November 30, 2016, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_16_4088.} This proposal was for the joint development, investment, and procurement of technologies by European Union members via the pooling of national resources, funding via the European Commission and loans via the European Structural and Investment Funds and the EIB. The EDF typically requires that at least three member states collaborate with one another in order to receive funding in order to incentivize both the pooling of resources from multiple sources and joint ownership over technology.\footnote{“The European Defence Fund” (European Commission, June 30, 2021), 3, https://defence-industry-space.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-05/Factsheet%20-%20European%20Defence%20Fund.pdf.} The results of these projects must also be purchased by investing countries following their development. The EDF’s budget between 2021-2027 is only €8 billion though, so while resources will be available for countries, it is not much in comparison to even smaller members’ own defense budgets.

One of the most significant programs to be adopted is the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), established by the European Council on December 11, 2017.\footnote{“Council Decision (CFSP) of 11 December 2017 Establishing Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) and Determining the List of Participating Member States” (Official Journal of the European Union, December 14, 2017), 57, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32017D2315&from=EN.} PESCO was introduced as a reinforcement mechanism to promote joint and collaborative defense capacity development projects for opting-in European Union members. PESCO projects include not only capability development, but also cyber defense and operational readiness for its members. What differentiates PESCO from other programs is that opting-in members are a part of binding commitments to 1) regularly increase their defense budgets to be 2% of annual shares of GDP, 2) gradually boost investment expenditure to or more than 20% of said defense budgets, and 3) continue to collaborate with one another on capabilities projects, to name a few.\footnote{“Binding Commitments,” Permanent Structure Cooperation (PESCO), accessed April 14, 2023, https://www.pesco.europa.eu/binding-commitments/.} The only two
members not part of PESCO are Denmark and Malta at present. A year and a half after PESCO’s adoption the European Council announced that collectively its member states had increased their defense budgets from 3.3% to 4.6% between 2018 and 2019.\footnote{“Defence Cooperation: Council Assesses Progress Made in the Framework of PESCO after First Year of Implementation,” May 14, 2019, \url{https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2019/05/14/defence-cooperation-council-assesses-progress-made-in-the-framework-of-pesco-after-first-year-of-implementation/}.} PESCO is another example of how the European Union is reinforcing the policies of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, as they too are adopting the policies set forth by the Wales Summit to encourage its members to increase their annual defense spending.

The final program launched before the 2022 invasion was the European Peace Facility (EPF), which the replacement organization for the Athena Mechanism and the African Peace Facility beginning in March 2021.\footnote{“European Peace Facility,” European Council, March 24, 2023, \url{https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/european-peace-facility/}.} It is now the funding mechanism for all CSDP projects and is meant to allow the European Union “for the first time, to complement the activities of its [CSDP] missions and operations in host countries with assistance measures… embedded in a clear and coherent political strategy and will be accompanied by thorough risk assessments and strong safeguards.”\footnote{“EU sets up the European Peace Facility,” Parlement.com, March 22, 2021, \url{https://www.parlement.com/id/vlhbfyvaw2yu/nieuws/eu_richt_europese_vredesfaciliteit_op}.} Thus, any European Union-led operations involving the conflict in Ukraine, joint-purchasing, research, and development endeavors must receive approval from the EPF in order to receive their funding.

The European Union thus responded to the heightened tension on the European continent by creating more mechanisms for its members to meet the standards NATO had set for collective security measures. They were actively developing new ways in which its members could collaborate with one another on research and development of new technologies, boost their own defense spending in their national budgets, contributing to a growing idea of an insular Europe that
both collaborated with NATO and bolstered up their own borders. They granted sent less conditional loans and grants to Ukraine, while recognizing that the country was not ready to become a fully-fledged member of the Union. It promoted interoperative defense strategies in collaboration with NATO, their partner on the continent, in order to streamline intelligence collection. Channels between them and Russia continued to be open, but it was undeniable that they were also building up their own capacity to fend off threats—by Russia, the migration and refugee crisis in Syria, and beyond.

The fact that a hypothetical war’s extension on the continent without public efforts of renegotiating the ceasefire agreement—or promoting an actual peace settlement agreement between Ukraine and Russia—was ever really on the table is quite concerning to me. The European Union, like NATO it seemed, accepted that settlement and resolution were not realistic enough to put their strength behind. And so they worked on increasing their own cooperation on military investment and infrastructure development as a unit.

_Germany: A Supporter, but not a Quitter_

The public perception of the war in Germany is quite interesting, as some political analysts have dubbed Berlin as having “established itself as a discreet backbone of the [NATO] Alliance” and the European Union.419 According to the Pew Research Center, 69% of the German public supported providing economic and financial assistance to Ukraine, 51% for imposing travel and asset restrictions on Russian politicians, half for economic sanctions against the invading country, and only 18% were in favor of providing military assistance to Ukraine at the start of the war.420 After the Minsk Agreements, 71% of Germans polled were in favor of economic aid to Ukraine in

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response to Russia’s aggression, 57% opposed the country joining NATO—the largest opposition force of all countries polled—and, slightly better, only 54% opposed Ukraine joining the European Union.\textsuperscript{421} 77% of Germans opposed supplying arms to Ukraine, which they did not do throughout this period, and 58%—also the largest percentage of the countries polled—opposed the usage of force by NATO in the event that Russia was to attack another ally. More support comes from the western portion of the country than the east. When polled in 2019, 34% of Germans said their own country should use force to defend a NATO ally hypothetically attacked by Russia.\textsuperscript{422} Overall reluctance towards Article V obligations included 60% of the populous, while 55% favor some sort of close relationship with Russia in comparison to the United States.

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\caption{Germany's Military Expenditure, 2014-2020 (Constant 2021 USD, Millions)}
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{Year} & \textbf{2014} & \textbf{2015} & \textbf{2016} & \textbf{2017} & \textbf{2018} & \textbf{2019} & \textbf{2020} \\
\hline
\textbf{TOTAL:} & $40,810.00 & $41,510.71 & $43,252.80 & $44,479.71 & $45,710.40 & $50,148.53 & $53,210.99 \\
\hline
\textbf{\% OF GDP} & 1.15\% & 1.14\% & 1.15\% & 1.15\% & 1.17\% & 1.26\% & 1.39\% \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

The German government has generally adhered to its population’s perspective on the North Atlantic Treaty, their willingness to commit weapons and troops, and overall unsettlement with a potential conflict snowballing into a major war. Despite lots of outside pressure towards increasing military budgets as a share of overall GDP, the German government did not give in, as demonstrated by Table 3, to pushing artificially its share of expenditure to more than they were willing. Real spending increased by $13 billion between 2014 but still remained well below the 2% threshold. German politicians have not been in favor of 2%, particularly the Sozialdemokratische Partei (SPD) in recent years, which are much more in favor of non-military


demonstrations of alliance commitments.\textsuperscript{423} Germany also has gotten closer towards the 20% threshold for equipment expenditure in large part due to cuts in the amount spent on personnel in their defense budgets, as demonstrated by Figure 6. Infrastructure spending has remained relatively consistent with minor fluctuations during this period, but nothing too significant. An overall increase in research and development priorities is also demonstrated by the figure. This is part of a greater trend in Germany’s political strategy, as the country represents a large share of Europe’s research and development investment, particularly with its spearheading of Airbus. The German government has been utilizing one of its strongest sectors, manufacturing, in order to contribute its part.\textsuperscript{424} They still remained incredibly against the commitment of German forces to external wars, and utilized their positions within the European Union and NATO to quell the policies that other members were pushing.

The German government contributed highly to the enhanced forward presence’s battlegroups, leading the forces in Lithuania. They were and continue to play a large part in the humanitarian relief given to Ukraine in the wake of the conflict and the need for economic assistance becoming more and more evident. But they were also intent on continuing with the spirit of the NATO-Russia Founding Act while being instrumental to the continued renewal of European Union-based economic sanctions.\textsuperscript{425}


\textsuperscript{424} “Transatlantic Perspectives on Defense Innovation: Issues for Congress” (Congressional Research Service, April 24, 2018), 20, https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/20180424_R45177_80b0de5e262bec5c528f7a64fdabacab87c8104d.pdf.

\textsuperscript{425} Judy Dempsey, “Nato’s Eastern Flank and Its Future Relationship with Russia” 6, 12.
One thing can be said: while behind closed doors they argue in favor of policies that would not provoke aggression, the German government takes leadership positions in the implementation of said strategies in order to ensure that both they do not become escalatory and that they are contributing their fair share. But German political leanings towards Russia cannot be put in one box, as they entered the Nord Stream II agreement in 2016 against the suggestion of the European Union and the United States.

What is incredibly evident when looking at the response of Germany to the continued violation of the ceasefire agreements was a great attempt by the government to reignite the Normandy Format with France. Angela Merkel and Frank-Walter Steinmeier did not go quietly into the night when conflict persisted in Ukraine. The Normandy Format met in Berlin in March 2015 at the political directors and deputy foreign ministers level to discuss the future of the Minsk implementation; another month later following a second Normandy meeting in Berlin, the same
sentiments were expressed.\textsuperscript{426} A meeting of the four’s heads of state was held in September, which did not amount to much other than debate and promises from Russia about reaching agreements with the Ukrainian government via negotiated settlements with the Trilateral Contact Group.\textsuperscript{427} And as we know, because I believe I have strongly emphasized this, the ceasefire did not hold nor was Minsk ever fully adhered to. But there was no concerted or at least publicly-known effort by the Germans or the French for another ceasefire to be brokered by them specifically. It did not seem like the Normandy Format was deemed politically salient enough for that to become a reality for the third time.

There were still instances in which the Germans and French convened the Format over the subsequent years, either for emergency meetings, scheduled visits to Berlin of all four’s foreign ministers, or their summits. When tensions heightened in November 2018 after Russia fired on and seized three Ukrainian ships in the Sea of Azov and Poroshenko declared martial law for 30 days, German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas publicly said that Germany would offer to broker the conflict.\textsuperscript{428} Chancellor Merkel and President Putin created some sort of solution to the issue and the Format convened in Berlin to discuss.

To reiterate my point, Germany was calling for increased diplomatic cooperation with Russia while simultaneously playing an instrumental, quiet role in the negotiations of the policies implemented by NATO and the EU. These policies were enshrined when the Bundeswehr released their updated national security plan, the Weißbuch 2016 (White Paper). Highlighting the continued pressure put on the region’s security environment, the document states that:

Sustainable security and prosperity in and for Europe cannot... be ensured without strong cooperation with Russia. It is therefore all the more important that, in our relations with Russia, we find the right balance between collective defence and increased resilience on the one hand, and approaches to cooperative security and sectoral cooperation on the other. What is important for the common security space of our continent is thus not the development of a new security architecture, but rather respect for and consistent adherence to existing and proven common rules and principles.429

The document clearly defines Germany’s strategy as two-sided: “credible deterrence and defence capability as well as a willingness to engage in dialogue.”430 And so that is what they did. This has not meant that Germany has ignored blatant movements by the Russian government to stoke the fire. Following reports that the U.S. elections were interfered with by the Russian government via cyber warfare strategies, Germany’s head of domestic intelligence Hans-Georg Maassen warned that there was piling evidence of Russian-backed cyber attempts to interfere with their own 2017 elections.431 They have continuously criticized Russia for its non-adherence to the Minsk Agreements and continuing to back the separatist forces in the Donbas region of Ukraine, all while being one of the main contributors to continued economic sanctions against the country and increased NATO and EU efforts to bolster regional security maintenance.

The most publicly criticized, seemingly left field move came from the Nord Stream II agreement between the German and Russian governments. Proposed initially in 2015, the pipeline was to run under the Baltic Sea, through Germany, and end at the Austrian border, completely bypassing Ukraine and cost an estimated $2 billion annually in gas transit fees to Europe.432

Interestingly enough, a few days prior to the “green light” being issued by the Germans in 2018, four Russian diplomats were expelled from the country in response to the poisoning of Sergei Skripal.433 Die Grünen Partei alongside affiliate parties across Europe sent a letter to Angela Merkel to stop Gazprom’s building of the pipeline in part because it would increase Germany and broadly Europe’s reliance on Russian energy. The prime ministers of the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Slovakia, and Romania, as well as the president of Lithuania, signed a letter addressed to European Commission President Juncker in opposition as well, stating that it could lead to “potentially destabilizing geopolitical consequences.”434 But the pipeline’s construction continued. Germany was one of Russia’s top three trading partners, while German exports to Russia were only 2% of 2018 totals. Some of the rationales presented argue that Germany could leverage the agreement to bolster Russia’s reliance on the country’s economy and not be utilized as a weapon because, retaliatorily, Germany relied so much less GDP-wise on Russia. Yet Germany is Europe’s largest natural gas consumer and is incredibly reliant on Russian gas, as we know now based on recent news.435 Fluctuating between 50-75% of all natural gas imports annually come from Russia. The project was suspended following the 2022 invasion of Ukraine and the energy crisis of Germany commenced.

The relationship between Ukraine and Germany shifted in response to this plan. The two had such a long history of mutual cooperation, especially because Germany played such a critical role in ensuring that forums continue for eventual adherence to the ceasefire. Chancellor Merkel came out in favor of the Association Agreement with Ukraine in order to promote good

cooperation. In October 2015, Germany was the third largest trading partner of Ukraine following Russia and China.\textsuperscript{436} They fell to fourth after increased trade with Poland superceded Russian and German trade by 2021.\textsuperscript{437} But as a result of the Nord Stream II pipeline deal and construction, the Ukrainian government began a narrative of betrayal.\textsuperscript{438} Ukrainian officials began a renewed push towards asking Germany and NATO at large to militarily intervene on their behalf, especially in light of their continued appeasement of Russian officials in the negotiation of the Minsk ceasefires. Bilateral relations were not about to completely disappear between Germany and Ukraine, but their direct relationship changed. This also did not result in the pulling back of German foreign aid to Ukraine and its commitments to collective security defense measures that it was already part of that came subsequently after Russia invaded Ukraine in 2014. Tensions were high, but Germany did not stop continuing its foreign policy goals.

\textit{France: Stepping into the Spotlight}

French public perception to the war in Ukraine and response mechanisms are also quite fascinating, particularly in comparison to Germany’s own. Following the signing of the Minsk II Agreement, 67\% of the French public were in support of economic aid to Ukraine, 55\% in favor of Ukraine joining NATO and 46\% for the European Union, and 40\% supported NATO sending arms to Ukraine.\textsuperscript{439} There was much more support in France for the last three questions; there was much more public support thrown behind doing more comparatively “radical” actions in bolstering Europe’s relationship with Ukraine. But France was the second highest country, only behind Germany, that was the most reluctant to using force to defend its NATO allies against Russian

\textsuperscript{439} Simmons, Stokes, and Poushter, “NATO Publics Blame Russia for Ukrainian Crisis.”
forces (53%). By 2019 only 31% of the French public wanted to maintain any form of close relationship with Russia, with much more people favoring closer ties with the United States instead. France’s favorability of NATO has fluctuated much more than Germany’s between 2015 and 2019, with more people now having negative or neutral opinions of NATO than not.

The security environment in France was, understandably, a complex one. Fresh off of the Minsk II signature with no adherence to it in sight, President François Hollande officially cancelled the sale of Mistral helicopter carriers that had been years in the making. The cancellation was preceded by mounting international pressure to put their money where their mouth was and not continue to supply Russia, as it would only increase the country’s military capacity in the Black Sea region. This €1.2 billion deal resulted in the French building of these ships and the planned delivery of them in 2014, which had been delayed due to the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. In August 2015 France had to reimburse Russia for the full amount of the deal and the matter was said to be “resolved” by the Kremlin. Then, on November 13, 2015, the French capital experienced a series of terrorist attacks with gunmen and suicide bombers that attacked a concert hall, major stadium, and several restaurants and bars. Approximately 130 died and hundreds were left wounded. Hollande called the attacks an “act of war” and the North Atlantic Council following it condemned these actions and stated that “We are all more than ever determined to counter and defeat the threat of terrorism and extremism.”

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440 Fagan and Poushter, “NATO Seen Favorably Across Member States.”
West Africa overall, the French only increased their “anti-terrorist” operations abroad.\footnote{Claudia Major, “NATO and European Security: Back to the Roots?,” 12.} In light of the attack, France did not invoke Article V and the full-force of NATO, but that generally continued to be more their focus of attention than the war in Ukraine during this period. France was facing a series of crises, and so terrorism came to its forefront once again following November 2017. Yet that did not mean France would not continue to play a larger role following the election of Emmanuel Macron.

The French government did not issue a new White Paper following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, but they did release the \textit{Strategic Review of Defence and National Security} in 2017. The short document describes how “Jihadist” terrorist activities have continued to be prevalent and are growing in their threat to Europe, alongside the changed environment of regional security as a result of Russia’s continued presence in Ukraine.\footnote{French Government, “Strategic Review of Defence and National Security: Key Points,” 2, \url{https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/strategic_review_of_defense_and_national_security_2017_-key_points_cle0d61fa.pdf}.} It states that the “international system that emerged after the Cold War is giving way to a multipolar environment subject to sweeping changes. … A growing number of established as well as emerging powers are increasingly displaying military assertiveness.”\footnote{French Government, “Strategic Review of Defence and National Security: Key Points,” 2.} One of the ways identified to address the growing number of crises and rising military capacities of other states and organizations is to increase France’s own arsenal. If France and the rest of the European community did not act, they “increase[e] the risk that European capabilities end up lagging behind.”\footnote{French Government, “Strategic Review of Defence and National Security: Key Points,” 2.}

| Table 4: France's Military Expenditure, 2014-2020 (Constant 2021 USD, Millions) |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| **TOTAL:**      | 2014            | 2015            | 2016            | 2017            | 2018            | 2019            | 2020            |
| % OF GDP        | $47,827.85      | $49,136.24      | $51,041.33      | $51,712.88      | $50,437.13      | $51,270.42      | $52,747.06      |
| 1.86%           | 1.87%           | 1.92%           | 1.91%           | 1.84%           | 1.84%           | 2.01%           |

\footnote{French Government, “Strategic Review of Defence and National Security: Key Points,” 2.}
Like Germany and most of Europe, France’s total military spending increased both in real terms and as a share of GDP. In 2020, as can be seen in Table 2, France reached over the threshold of 2% spending in 2020 but that has subsequently decreased with the COVID-19 pandemic. France has continued to maintain over 20% spent on equipment with annual percentages overall maintaining relatively similar but overall higher. Like Germany, France has been consistently spending more on research and development, the costs for which tend to come from decreased spending in personnel as seen in Figure 7. When spending on equipment declines in certain years, that tends to be a result of increased amounts spent instead on personnel. But French foreign policy was not solely focused on the threat from Russia as they were committed to the suppression of other external threats via the alliances. The French government was more concerned with their operations in West Africa and anti-terrorism movements, which in part is why Germany played such a prominent role in this case study.\textsuperscript{450} That does not mean that France no longer was going to pay Ukraine no mind.

Much of the diplomatic effort of Europe was led by German officials and general assessments have concluded that the French played an integral, but stepped-back role, until the election of current French President Emmanuel Macron. The French continued to play their part in the Normandy Format and supported the ideas of the European Union, albeit like Germany arguing that less aggressive and assertive measures should be adopted. They participated in the Enhanced Forward Presence’s UK-led battlegroup in Estonia and created the European Intervention Initiative (E12) following their dissatisfaction with the outcome of PESCO in 2017.\textsuperscript{451}

\textsuperscript{450} Major, “NATO and European Security: Back to the Roots?,” 6.
E12 is deliberately separate from the EU and NATO, as it is a flexible, direct-to-defense contacts and contracts between members instead of using a third party.

![France's Disaggregated Defense Budget (%)](image)

*Figure 7: France's annual disaggregated defense budgets. Data courtesy of NATO.*

As stated under my section on Germany, it is not as if the French government stopped its efforts to both convene the Normandy Format to discuss the potential implementation of the Minsk Agreements. Macron met with Vladimir Putin in the Palace of Versailles in May 2017 to celebrate their two countries’ 300-yearlong diplomatic relationship. Macron had announced the week prior that he wanted to resume the Normandy Format’s role in conflict resolution strategies and then he and Putin reportedly agreed that another round of “peace talks” were necessary to commence.\(^\text{452}\) Smaller meetings were held with defense and foreign ministers of the respective countries subsequently, but nothing new emerged. Macron since 2017 had been arguing in favor of resuming

the Format and “courting” Putin according to the Financial Times.\textsuperscript{453} Eventually, another Normandy Format Summit was held in December 2019 in Paris. Russia and Ukraine agreed to a “full and comprehensive implementation’ of a cease-fire agreement in the Donbas region of Ukraine before the end of 2019” in the agreement brokered with German Chancellor Merkel and Macron.\textsuperscript{454} This was the first Normandy Summit with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy instead of Poroshenko; of course, it was also Macron’s as well. At this point in the conflict, approximately 13,000 people had died and over 3.9 million civilians were affected by it. The two agreed to conduct mass prisoner exchanges by the end of the year as well. This, once again, did not last very long and the fighting persisted. The Trilateral Contact Group once again decided to try its part and negotiated another ceasefire with Russia and Ukraine in the middle of 2020, taking effect on July 27, 2020, marking the eighth ceasefire agreement since the beginning of 2018.\textsuperscript{455} As a result of Macron’s renewed willingness to prioritize the Ukrainian conflict, the Ukrainian and French relationship flourished. France’s government has more broadly been supporters of the Association Agreement and the DCFTA overall. In 2016 France was Ukraine’s seventh-largest importing country,\textsuperscript{456} but then fell to its ninth in 2019.\textsuperscript{457} But as we know, economics is not the only portion of the equation.

In sum, diplomatic efforts were not enough for NATO, the European Union, Germany, and France in to do in response to the ongoing conflict in Ukraine and the constant ceasefires negotiated.
and broken, but that was their policy following the Six-Point Plan. German and French-led ceasefires for Ukraine became almost obsolete, and all three of the ones they publicly took part in failed, but they kept calling for their following alongside the international community. There was a “collective security” message campaign conducted by NATO that the EU followed; battlegroups were established, collective pools of resources to incentivize multilateral research and development for weapons technologies, alongside a perpetual, perhaps irrational fear that one day Russia would strike, and the alliance’s largest armies would not intervene on their behalf and fulfill Article V obligations. Germany and France, two of the largest economies and militaries on the continent, used their standings within the alliances in order to effectively argue that the route forward must also include diplomacy, even if at every avenue it continues to fail. There was hope on the horizon, maybe naively or bravely, that one day there would be a brokered ceasefire that would stick.

Defense spending went up and towards that arbitrary 2% share of member states’ gross domestic products. Germany and France were continuing to bolster the amount they contributed to in research and development strategies, making up alongside the United Kingdom the largest drivers of that portion of burden sharing. There are much more inputs to burden sharing other than just the raw amount spent on defense and military capacities. Each member “proves themselves” via different mechanisms, but the peer pressure to contribute in some way persists no matter what. Germany and France, two of the largest contributors, were tamping down the voices in the various alliance networks that wanted escalatory practices. They maintained good diplomatic relations with Russia and Ukraine and were continuing to push the Normandy Format, however unsuccessful, to the forefront of conflict mitigation strategies.

But there is no peace. A ceasefire is not a peace resolution, they are short not-so-comprehensive documents with a few points listed and agreed to after hours of negotiations, not
weeks or months. And so the conflict persists. Those were deemed as the achievable things that could be accomplished in a timely enough manner to prove to the rest of the community that something was done and done with valiant effort and without the escalatory nature of military commitments beyond stations in their allies’ territory. It’s just pushing down the conflict’s resolution further down the line via promises of negative peace. Even though the Six-Point Plan minimized the amount of physical violence, it made the conflict frozen and to this day remains unresolved; no positive peace emerges in its aftermath either.
6. A Conclusion

Through the presentation of the two cases of the Russo-Georgian and Russo-Ukrainian Wars, I have argued that the more severe each crisis is perceived by my four actors—NATO, the European Union, and their member states Germany and France—the more important they are deemed. Therefore, a higher level of emphasis is placed on maintaining the “collective security” of Europe when the conflict has a higher level of severity and importance. Within this argument and each frame exists the level of adherence to or perceived breakdown of ceasefire negotiations, alongside their success rate at quelling the level of violence. When ceasefires are broken to a higher degree the conflict continues, becoming more severe and its durable changes become more important. Once it becomes evident that ceasefires will not hold or be as plausible as they once were, more collective security measures are taken by my actors. When the crisis is severe, but its durable changes are not perceived as important by my actors, then the continued answer in the aftermath of the conflict is to maintain diplomatic ties to strengthen the trust between everyone.

Levels of diplomacy also vary. It is not as if with the Russo-Ukraine Crisis resulted in the complete breakdown of all interaction with the Russian Federation and their political leaders. But the messaging campaign of collective security, burden sharing, and assurances against abandonment by both NATO and the EU became heavily prominent over the course of the Russo-Ukrainian War’s continuation. Germany and France were the two most outwardly spoken about wanting to continue discussions via the Normandy Format with the goal of positively contributing to the perpetuation of negative peace.

When looking at the severity indicators, the Russo-Ukrainian War was more severe in comparison to Georgia. The two’s proximity to NATO were relatively the same. They are both located on the Black Sea, yet portions of Ukraine were annexed by Russia and not in Georgia. The same major power was present in both cases as a conflict party: The Russian Armed Forces. The
range of issues at hand is more complex to compare, as both were facing their own domestic political crises. The Georgian War was also shorter in its duration, while Ukraine’s remained an ongoing war of attrition until February 2022, with more overall casualties and displaced persons. The number of military actors in Ukraine was higher and so was its rates of ceasefire violations. Comparatively, then, Ukraine based on these indicators was deemed a “more severe crisis” than Georgia’s given its intensity. When eyeing the durable changes both conflicts resulted in, rules of the game certainly shifted as a direct result. The alliances of NATO and the EU did not shift much member-wise, but both organizations only increased their ties with Georgia. Both faced independence movements: Abkhazia and South Ossetia for Georgia and the Donetsk and Luhansk People’s Republics for Ukraine. Once again though, the scale of Ukraine’s durable changes on the climate of Europe and the world made it more “important” than the conflict in Georgia in the perspective of my actors.

Why a hierarchy is needed to be made in my opinion between severity and importance is another sad thought. Why is it that one form of harm is held above others? More people were hurt in Ukraine but the “impact” that has on NATO, EU, German, and French response mechanisms to the conflict should not be done at the expense of not prioritizing another conflict and other people hurt from said conflict. It was through my own modification of the severity and importance indicators from Michael Brecher and Patrick James’ Crisis and Change in World Politics that I presented both my cases and framed my arguments. While at times a bit convoluted as the Ukraine case occurred after Georgia and thus was influenced by the response mechanisms utilized then, it is interesting to compare the two based on facts and figures, and determining whose policies were adhered to on the international stage. I think they were helpful in getting my bearings on each case and understanding some of the inputs that world leaders were concerned with at certain moments when making decisions. But the overall counts and durable changes were not always directly
known by world leaders when coming up with these policies, a hole that needs to be addressed. I view this as perceived potential realities by world leaders in their risk assessments anyway prior to taking action; some of them were the best, worst, or in-between case scenario. And so, while not everything would have completely been available for them to comprehend, the idea that they could be reality was important enough for me to continue using this comparative framework.

These cases extend well beyond the scope and writings of this thesis. We know today that the war in Ukraine has escalated to a scale unimaginable and no end in sight, as ceasefire negotiations have begun to fizzle out with little reported hope on the horizon. The potential actors have also not been just limited to my four as pulling the strings on stage and behind the scenes as the world has been turned towards the conflict since the Russian Armed Forces attempted to seize the entire country in one fell swoop and failed. But there still continues to be a dual messaging campaign of the need to sure up collective defense mechanisms while needing to use every tool imaginable to stop the fighting. An interesting development between both Ukraine cases is the willingness of the international community to send arms to Ukraine to fight back the Russian Armed Forces. This does not in the short-term prevent further conflict, but allows for combatants and civilians to be able to defensively fend off the Russian army.

These cases are part of a larger picture of Europe becoming more insular as it increases the frequency and priority of regional cooperation agreements. The rise in authoritarian nationalist-focused sentiments on the continent should not be ignored, as they too have contributed to this growing idea of both an independent Europe, but one that leaders want to become more homogenous and patriotic, rallying around the flag. With an increased narrative of the need to sure up domestic and regional securities against exterior threats comes insularity. For more on this
subject, I recommend looking at Jordan Becker’s “Authoritarian Populism and Burden-Sharing in the Transatlantic Community.”

My initial intention for this honors thesis was much too ambitious: to look at each case of Russia’s land invasions (all three) through the lens of six actors: NATO, the EU, Germany, and France, of course, but also Bulgaria and Romania. The two were to add a juxtaposing perspective to the French and German one, especially as the two of them tend to have a larger say in the immediate policymaking of NATO and the EU and have two of the largest economies on the continent. Including Bulgaria and Romania was also supposed to give a greater perspective on the perceived geopolitical threat posed by Russia in the invasion of two Black Sea littorals and the extension of collective security measures into the subregion. But as the deadline approached closer I had to no longer detail the third case (Ukraine 2022) and both Bulgaria and Romania became too much of an afterthought for me to give their actions the time of day they deserved without being half-done. Had I had another month to write this thesis, I would have included their perspectives.

Another issue that I wished to tackle more onto was the importance of leaders. While I think that I made it clear that certain figures such as Nicholas Sarkozy, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Angela Merkel, François Hollande, and Vladimir Putin’s presence in these cases made them the way they were, I did not spend as much time as I would have liked on exploring their specific intricate relationship with one another. What surprised me about how certain policies were followed, or certain figures came to be the ones negotiating, was largely influenced by small interactions between other world leaders that had instrumental consequences. Sarkozy told Barroso to enjoy his vacation and so he traveled to Moscow to negotiate the ceasefire agreement for Russia and Georgia. The Normandy Format formed because these leaders came together to celebrate the

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70th anniversary of the D-Day invasion; Hollande’s team orchestrated strategic dinner placards to make Putin and Obama not interact with each other. Had I had more time, like with Bulgaria and Romania, I would have spent more time getting to the bottom of the importance of diplomatic meetings. This is just fascinating.

The overall theme of this thesis has been on *The Politics of Response* and how each of these organizations, be it because of their diplomatic or economic ties, a willingness from their populations to do something, or because they were just scared, acknowledged, addressed, and countered the invasions of Georgia and Ukraine via non-uses of force. They did not intervene militarily, nor sever all ties with the Russian Federation; they condemned their actions, either negotiated directly or called for the adherence to various ceasefire agreements, and in the case of Ukraine, bolstered their defense budgets in the name of maintaining “collective security” and “sharing the burden” with its other allies. But within this larger story is one of persisting attempts at ceasefire negotiations via any means necessary—within certain reason—with the hope of eventually reaching peace.