BACK TO ITS ROOTS? THE WAR IN UKRAINE AS A 'CHANCE' FOR THE EUROPEAN UNION

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1. Introduction

The full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 represents the most serious challenge to the European security order since the end of World War II. More specifically in relation to the European Union, it has brutally exposed the EU's strategic weakness when it comes to security and its inability to anticipate crises. As such, the war represents both a practical challenge - what should the organization do, in practical terms about, and for, Ukraine - as well as a strategic and normative one: What can the EU do to better prepare for, and prevent, such crises from occurring in the first place and what does this conflict mean for what the European Union is there *for*?

In this paper I will look at these questions utilizing the conceptual framework of Complexity, with particular emphasis on the idea of 'coherence', which I will define below. I will argue that, in fact, the full-scale invasion of Ukraine seems to be moving the European Union towards a much more coherent posture when it comes to European security. This coherence offers the chance for some significant reforms of the EU approach towards security both in a strategic and a procedural sense. Yet, in order to take this chance, this emerging coherence needs to be maintained. To be able to do so, though, certain things need to happen within the European Union, as I will discuss below. However, it is far from certain that the EU will succeed in maintaining current coherence, which would be potentially disastrous for the EU, and the continent as a whole.

2. The invasion of Ukraine as a 'wake-up' call for the EU

In this paper I do not want to get into the details of the war, how it is going, who might win etc. I simply do not understand enough about war as an event or a process to give commentary on it. I am also a bit reluctant to talk about this war as an 'opportunity' for anything other than death and destruction. Furthermore, it is very difficult to make any accurate predictions about how the war will change the world, and Europe within it, in the long term. I am always reminded of the late Robert Fisk who argued that the consequences of the Arab Spring will take generations to work out (Cockburn and Fisk 2017).

However, despite all of this, there are a couple of general predictions we can make about this conflict: It will significantly change the way the European Union thinks about security. Second, it does at least provide an opportunity for the European Union to regain some kind of strategic coherence which, I will argue, it lost in the early 2000s and which, despite some considerable efforts, it has not regained since.

In relation to the first point, the full-scale invasion of Ukraine came as a shock to the European Union which had, until then, always bet on both engagement with, and containment of, Russia. Yet, at the same time, the invasion exposed deep divisions within the European Union which, as will be shown below, have played themselves out in the open ever since.

The shock of the European Union was evident in the first statements coming out of the Commission and the Council following the full-scale invasion and attack on Kyiv. The European Union, on 24th February 2022, condemned

> *'in the strongest possible terms the Russian Federation's unprovoked and unjustified military aggression against Ukraine. By its illegal military actions, Russia is grossly violating international law and the principles of the UN Charter and undermining European and global security and stability'*
> *(European External Action Service 2022a).*

By EU standards, this is quite a strong statement. It acknowledges the illegality of the invasion; it states clearly that it is an act of unjustified aggression which was initiated by one side only and it acknowledges that the invasion undermines European and global security and stability. The statement reflected a broad consensus between EU-member states that the invasion did, indeed, represent a turning point in European security and that it would, in all probability, fundamentally alter the European security system as it had existed since the end of the 2nd World War.

This is important since it shows that there was never any ambiguity about who is right and who is wrong here. Rhetorically and politically, the EU 'took sides' from the very beginning. Yet, it is interesting to see what this has actually meant in practice over time to see the evolution of EU policy and discuss what this means for the EU in the longer term. Critically, here, we see enormous tensions within the EU which, I would expect, will play themselves out over many years and will, perhaps fundamentally, alter the internal dynamics of the EU, both in terms of *what* the EU does and *how* it does so.

It is worth looking at this in a little more detail.

At the very beginning of the full-scale invasion a clear, and deep division became obvious between those member-states who wanted a response which was as hard and as practical as possible with the specific aim of having Russia lose the war and those who essentially aimed to end the war as quickly as possible as a result of negotiations between the two sides (Dempsey 2022; Lange 2022).

This division can be explained by a number of factors, ranging from the historical to the practical. For the first group of countries, the full-scale invasion was essentially *confirmation* of long-held views, and long-held fears, about Russia. In very simple terms, countries like the Baltic Republics, Poland and several others *always* saw

Russia as a threat to their security and their very existence which, rather than be contained, needed to be *confronted* (Dempsey 2022). One only has to look at the declarations about Russia by the leaders of these countries over the years to be able to clearly identify this posture (Deutsche Welle 2022).

Therefore, the full-scale invasion of 2022 was *confirmation* of a long-held view (and fear) about Russian behaviour. The *actions* taken in response must be seen in this light: Poland, the Baltic Republics and Finland were amongst the first to react to the invasion, either by supplying military support for Ukraine or by, in Finland's case, abandoning decades of foreign policy doctrine, dispensing with neutrality and applying to join NATO (Henley 2022).

For the second group, the full-scale invasion also represented, in the words of German chancellor Scholz, a 'turning point' ('Zeitwende') but such recognition was perhaps psychologically harder to process since it represented a monumental policy-failure (Scholz 2022). Over 30 years, the EU had tried to deal with Russia the way it tends to want to deal with third countries. It 'engaged' in 'areas of common interest' in the hope of influencing Russian behaviour, bring it 'into the family of democratic nations' and, therefore contain it.

For example, the 1997 Cooperation and Partnership Agreement between the two focusses on the promotion of bilateral trade and investment, whilst talking about a 'shared belief' in international peace and security (European Union 1997).

In 2003, in St. Petersburg, Russia and the EU agreed to the so-called 'Four common spaces', cooperation in the areas of the economy; freedom, security and justice; external security; and a space of research, education, and cultural exchange (European Commission 2004).

This partnership was renewed as the 'Partnership for Modernization', signed in 2010 in Rostow. In this partnership, the number of priority areas for cooperation was, in fact, expanded:

- expanding opportunities for investment in key sectors driving growth and innovation;
- enhancing and deepening bilateral trade and economic cooperation, and also creation of favourable conditions for small and medium-sized enterprises;
- promoting alignment of technical regulations and standards;
- high level of intellectual property protection;
- transportation;
- promote the development of sustainable low-carbon economy and energy efficiency;
- support international negotiations on combating climate change;
- enhancing cooperation in innovation, research and development, and space;
- ensuring balanced development by taking measures in response to regional and social consequences of economic restructuring;
- ensuring the effective functioning of the judiciary and strengthening the fight against corruption;
- promote the development of relations between people and

- the strengthening of dialogue with civil society to promote the participation of people and business (European Commission 2010).

In many ways, there is nothing particularly innovative about this. These agreements are firmly placed in the EU's 'comfort zones' of policy action. Yet, as mentioned above, in the case of Russia at least, these agreements have been a monumental, and catastrophic, policy-failure. They failed to bring Russia into 'the European family' and they failed to contain the country militarily. Worse still, this failure has been a consistent feature over the last 30 years, with the European response to repeated military action by Russia - in Georgia, in Chechnya, or indeed in Ukraine in 2014, as well as many others - having repeatedly been to seek more 'engagement' with Russia (European Commission 2021).Over the years, France and Germany were key drivers of this 'engagement' approach. Successive French Presidents were loath to criticize Russia openly and publicly, whilst the current German chancellor's two immediate predecessors both had close political, personal and, in Schrföder's case, business ties (Kornelius 2014; Bennhold 2022).

Furthermore, we need to consider Germany's post-World War II foreign policy history - which has been focused essentially on using diplomacy to resolve international problems - and also attaches great importance to using foreign policy for economic advancement. Taken all these points together, it should come as no surprise that, whilst strongly condemning the invasion, there was still a strong urge to use diplomacy as a way of resolving the crisis. In the early part of the full-scale invasion, Macron, in particular, was a frequent visitor to Moscow for numerous meetings with Putin, hoping to find a diplomatic solution to the war. This was in stark contrast to leaders from the Baltic Republics and Finland, who visited Kyiv, not Moscow, to show their support for Ukraine.

As a result, the institutional EU response was, initially, based on what the EU historically likes to do because it is politically less controversial and it is what is possible without opening up big public rifts within the organization and between its member states: it imposed several rounds of economic sanctions on Russia across a number of 'sanction packages', focused mainly on financial transactions, the freezing of Russian assets abroad and specific economic sectors, such as aviation, as well as many others (European Council 2023).

Yet, today, the EU has, at least publicly, shifted significantly in the direction of the first group of countries, which have always seen Russia as a direct, and lasting, threat not just to their security, but Europe's security as a whole. Voices demanding that 'Ukraine must win' have gained prominence whilst those seeking an end to the war as quickly as possible have become quieter. The EU has essentially decided that, for its own interests, as well as those of Ukraine, Ukraine must win (European Commission 2023).

To explain this shift, and what it means for the EU in both the short and long term, I will now introduce the conceptual framework of Human Systems Dynamics and the concept of coherence. I will argue that the EU has progressively shifted towards more coherence in response to the invasion of 2022 and that this coherence has allowed it to act more decisively. However, problems remain and there is a danger that this coherence

will not last to allow the EU to undertake serious long-term structural reforms in response to the new security environment that it finds itself in.

It is these issues that I will turn to now.

3. Conceptual framework: CDE model and the importance of coherence

What I, as a German, have been noticing since the beginning of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine is the number of questions regarding Germany's (initial) reluctance to provide arms and other military hardware to Ukraine and its reluctance to state clearly that it wants Ukraine to win this war.

Whilst I share these frustrations - which have been aired publicly, and repeatedly, by many East European leaders in particular, I argue that they are based on an incomplete reading of Germany's (or, for that matter, France's) particular circumstances (or, as the specialized literature calls it: local boundary conditions). To understand these, and how they impact, the EU's evolution in response to the invasion, we need a different conceptual framework: Complexity and Huan System Dynamics.

From a Complexity/HSD perspective, the war in Ukraine, for all its normative simplicity (there is clearly right and wrong here), and the EU's response to it, is clearly the expression of a deeply complex patterns of conditions. In other words, it can be characterized by:

- The presence within the system of a large number of elements;
- These elements interact in a rich manner, that is, any element in the system is influenced by, and influences, a large number of other elements.
- These interactions are often non-linear.
- There are multiple short feedback loops in the interactions.
- The openness of the system and its elements to their environment;
- These systems operate in a state far from equilibrium.
- These systems have a history.
- The elements of the system are ignorant of the behaviour of the system as a whole.
- (adapted from Geyer and Rihani 2010)

Eoyang (2010: 466) has defined problems with such characteristics as complex-adaptive, 'a collection of semi-autonomous agents with the freedom to act in unpredictable ways and whose interactions over time and space generate system-wide patterns.' As Edwards (2002: 17) observed, such systemic patterns 'have remarkable resilience in the face of efforts to change them.' This is partly due to the fact that the system's agents 'are constantly changing, as are the relationships between and amongst them' (Eoyang and Holladay 2013: 16-17). There is, then, significant *interdependence* not just between agents within a particular system, but between the individual agents and the system as a whole. The system as a whole self-organizes, self-organization here being defined as a process by which the internal interactions between agents and conditions of a system generate system-wide patterns (Eoyang 2001). Such a process

of self-organization is ongoing. In other words, it does not stop. The result is that Complex Adaptive Systems are both full of uncertainty *and* stability and resilience. There are constant changes, but similar effects.

To act in a system with such characteristics, Eoyang and Holladay (2013, 30) propose what they call 'Adaptive Action' as a way to exercise '[c]onscious influence over self-organizing patterns.' It permits 'seeing, understanding, and influencing the conditions that shape change in complex adaptive systems.' These conditions, as will be shown below, interact within a framework of fundamentally stable simple rules. In order to be able to do this, 'Adaptive Action' is based on three questions:

What?

The 'what' question identifies the current state of the process of self-organization, which, according to Eoyang (2001), is based on three conditions: elements which hold the system together (such as shared objectives), differences between the agents of the system which generate tensions that allow for change and channels through which these differences can be expressed (elements Eoyang (*ibid*) calls 'Containers', 'Differences' and 'Exchanges' (CDE)). These conditions are interdependent and influence each other across time and space and are the guiding factors to self-organization.

Questions that might be asked to reveal the current state of self-organization include: What do we see? What containers are the most relevant? What differences exist and what impact do they have? What exchanges are strongest and what are the weakest? What has changed and what has stayed the same and, critically, What do we want these patterns to look like in the future?

So, what (does it mean)?

The 'so, what' question tries to make sense of what has been observed. What do the patterns we observe mean for any possibility of action? Such a question is critical in that it generates options for action but also allows for the adaptation of action to different circumstances across time and space which, as will be further discussed below, is crucial in responding effectively to both the risk of disaster, as well as disasters themselves. In other words, the 'so what' question is crucial to make actions adaptable to the variable particular circumstances within which they have to be applied.

Questions might include: So, what does the current state mean to you, to me and to others? So, what does that mean for our ability to act? So, what options do we have for action? So, what option is best suited to the means I/we/they have available at this particular time in this particular context?

Now what (do we do)?

The 'now what' question, finally, allows for the taking of action having considered the current state of self-organization and its implications. Crucially, this question allows for the consideration of different actions across time and space. The focus is on what *can* and what *should* be done across time and space.

Questions may include: Now what will I/you/we/they do? Now what will be communicated to others? Now what will the results and the consequences be? Now what will be done in response to these results?

These three questions - what? So what? Now what? - can be applied at all levels of analysis across time and space. They allow for the identification of patterns that are scaled across the various levels of a Complex Adaptive System. Recognizing systemic patterns, in turn, greatly facilitates the taking of action as 'parts interact to generate emergent patterns while the patterns influence parts and their interactions. The result is a self-generating, self-organizing reality of human systems dynamics' (Eoyang and Holladay 2013, 18), based on the interdependence between the parts and the whole of the system.

In this particular case, they allow for the identification of the conditions and patterns that give rise to, and sustain, violence. As such, it is useful to define more precisely what we mean by conditions and patterns.

Conditions

Conditions are the elements of the social system which, individually and in interaction with one another, determine the speed, direction, and path of a social system as it evolves (i.e., self-organises) into the future. As stated above, there are three conditions which determine self-organisation: containers, differences, and exchanges (or connections).

Patterns

As these different conditions interact, they form patterns, here understood as the similarities, differences and connections that have meaning across time and space. In other words, patterns are the expression of the interaction between the three different conditions just outlined above (Eoyang and Holladay 2013: 30). The interesting thing, though, is that processers of self-organization often take place within a framework of often enduring systemic stability. As Eoyang and Holladay (2013, 17) put it, interactions 'simply change the conditions and relationships among the parts and the whole; they do not change the system in any fundamental way.'

This is crucial for identifying and addressing problems within social systems. It requires policymakers to ask the question what explains the persistence of patterns despite concerted efforts to change them?

It is critical to bear this question in mind when looking at the EU's response to the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. It is this that we shall turn to now.

4. The EU response – From incoherence to coherence

As shown, at the beginning of the full-scale invasion in February 2022, whilst there was widespread condemnation of Russia's actions, there were fundamental disagreements between EU member states about what this meant in practice. Whilst some, like France, launched into frenzied diplomatic activity, particularly with Russia,

to end the war as quickly as possible others, like Poland, were very clear that the war could, and should, only end with Russian defeat and Ukrainian victory. Others still, like Germany, talked about the fundamental transformation this war would bring about whilst, at the same time looking for a negotiated settlement and warning against 'escalation' of the war (Gehrke 2022).

These differences had the practical consequence of creating various exchanges both inside and outside the structures of the European Union itself. Onn the one hand, both the Council of the European Union and the Council of Ministers were hyperactive whilst, at the same time, various EU member states conducted their own national diplomacy which, in many cases, ran across each other. In simple terms, whilst the group of countries around Poland, trod a path to Kyiv to ascertain how they could help Ukraine, the French President was regularly travelling to Moscow to negotiate with President Putin. There were hence divergent paths.

The practical result of this was that, early on, the policy process at EU level was marked by a considerable degree of *incoherence*, here defined as the state of the system in which the parts of a (social) system do *not* fit together, making it impossible to establish system wide patterns (Eoyang 2001).

Therefore, what the organization initially produced in policy terms in response to the full invasion should not come as a great surprise: the organization imposed a series of packages of economic sanctions on Russia. At the time of writing, we are onto package number 11, targeting everything from the financial to the energy sector to people closely associated with Vladimir Putin, who saw their assets in Europe frozen (European Council 2023).

In many ways, these actions were of the type the EU is comfortable in taking and what was politically possible at the time without causing major internal divisions. It is possible to illustrate this pattern of conditions visually:

Figure 1:
CDE model-The EU's initial response to the full Russian invasion of Ukraine

Conditions for Self-organisation	
Container	Condemnation of Russian actions by EU and its member states
Difference	Objective of EU policies Policy approach towards Russia Best way to achieve policy objective
Exchange	European Council meetings European Commission Visits by political leaders to Moscow/Kyiv Public opinion
Emergent Behaviour	Incoherent: Deep divisions between member states; difficulty in developing policy

In many ways the interesting part of this story is what has happened since: Essentially, the EU, collectively, has shifted *not* towards the position of its two historic powerhouses, but towards the 'Ukraine must win' position. Not only that, but that position has been defended at EU institutional level by the leaders of those very institutions. This has, potentially, huge implications for the EU which go far beyond the war in Ukraine, but for which the EU needs to prepare *now* in order to avoid a significant internal crisis in the future.

During the year of the full Russian invasion of Ukraine, there have been a lot of internal arguments between EU member states about the depth and speed of the EU's response to the invasion. Most prominently, perhaps, has been Polish criticism of Germany's (initial) reluctance to provide military hardware, including its most advanced tanks, to Ukraine (Collis 2022). Yet, there is no doubt that, during this year, the EU has shifted significantly. This became most evident when the President of the European Commission - Ursula von der Leyen - stated publicly that 'Ukraine must win' (European Commission 2023). At the same time, the EU and its member states have significantly increased its provision of military hardware- including Germany's most modern tanks (Le Monde 2023). Finally, there have been no more visits by top EU officials or leaders of EU countries to Moscow. By contrast, the number of visits to Kyiv have increased significantly.

What has brought about this change? Whilst there are many reasons - and it is beyond the scope of this paper to go into all of them - five key developments stand out.

First, there has been a consistent, and persistent, push on the part of the first group of countries discussed at the start of this paper, to move the EU's position to an explicitly pro-Ukrainian position. This has been done both through diplomatic means but also through 'shaming' those EU member states who, according to this line of argument, have not moved 'fast enough' to recognize the reality of the war and what it means (Collis 2022).

This push has, secondly, been aided by public opinion within the European Union which has shown strong support for the argument that Russia, and only Russia, is to blame for this war and that, as such, Ukraine has a right to defend itself and should be aided in this effort (European Parliament 2023).

This leads to the third key factor, which is the political leadership provided by the leaders of the EU's institution. Here, the public posture adopted by Ursula von der Leyen as President of the European Commission, and Josep Borell, as Head of the European External Action Service can be considered critical since, between them, they have managed to align the EU as a whole behind this position. Interestingly, there has also been a division of labour between the two, with von der Leyen in her speeches consistently stressing the normative and moral dimension of the EU's response to the invasion (European Commission 2023). Meanwhile, Borell has been very clear in his public manifestations about the *practical* implications of the war for the EU and its member states, be it in the question of energy security, food security or the need for European strategic autonomy (European Union External Action Service 2023).

Fourthly, I do believe that the EU's shift is, at least in part, the consequence of an element of luck. Specifically, Europe had a comparatively mild winter 2022/23, which

meant that worries about energy shortages proved unfounded, which may have had a significant impact on public opinion.

Finally, and this has been widely pointed out by military analysts, Ukraine has shown that, with the support provided, it knows how to conduct a war and recapture territory. In other words, Ukraine has shown that, with the right support, it can fight its own wars and do so successfully, allowing Europe (and the United States, for that matter) to not have to think about crossing their crucial red line: the non-involvement in direct combat operations (Obrien 2023).

In combination, these factors allowed for the emergence of a much more coherent pattern of conditions which has allowed for quicker, and more coherent, decision-making at European level. We can visually demonstrate this as follows:

Figure 2: C
DE model-The EU's response to the full Russian invasion of Ukraine today

Conditions for Self-organisation	
Container	Ukraine must win The EU as a peace actor
Difference	Best way of achieving Ukrainian victory
Exchange	European Council meetings European Commission Visits by political leaders to Kyiv and Ukrainian leaders to EU Public opinion
Emergent Behaviour	More coherent: Clear container; few policy divisions, institutional leadership at EU level

5. What does this mean? The implications for the EU into the future

The short-term implications of this coherence, as described above, have been clear and relatively easy to identify. However, the implications go far beyond this and can, with the right actions, point to a longer-term change within the EU.

Critically, the invasion of Ukraine has finally forced the EU to face up to the 'mission' question which it has been steadfastly been avoiding ever since, at the very least, the conclusion of the Eastern enlargement process at the end of the first decade of the 21st century: What is the EU *for*? This is a question which, for many years, the EU has been unable to answer with any clarity. Whilst, for its global actions, the organization often *proclaimed* its normative credentials - particularly in its dealings with the developing world - in practice it has been, for the most part, a quite realist organization which defends and furthers its particular interests in a particular part of the world at a particular moment in time. In practical terms that has meant that, in many cases, the EU has been quite happy to ignore blatant abuses of its values by some leaders in the name of 'stability' (Lehmann 2016).

This has tied in with a second characteristic of the EU since the beginning of the 21st century: the avoidance of conflict in the name of political expediency. The EU has, on the whole, been loath to have conflicts, either internally or externally, if it meant one could 'muddle through' for a little bit longer. The European Sovereign Debt crisis is one classic example of this, but the organization's dealings with Putin's Russia are also clear evidence of this approach (Lehmann 2018).

It *seems*, at least, that this these contradictions and ambiguities, and the tensions they create, may finally be addressed. For the moment the EU, just like NATO, seems to have rediscovered its sense of mission. Von der Leyen, in particular, together with some member states, has succeeded in framing the EU's action for Ukraine in clear moral terms and in terms which define the EU, once again, as a peace actor, in many ways reaching back to its historic roots. There appears to be a moral clarity about what the EU is doing and why, which has been absent from the organization for many years. Critically this has allowed the EU to construct a clear (normative) Container to frame its policies for Ukraine and allowed it to act practically, i.e. through the provision of military hardware.

Longer-term, this normative clarity has meant that certain topics that were, at the very best, on the back burner have become 'live' again: For instance, the EU is now actively talking about what to do in the sphere of defence, security and foreign policy in much clearer terms than it was before. These areas have become critical to the very security and existence of (some of) its member states. These issues are no longer abstract and hypothetical, they are very, very real (European Union External Action Service 2022b).

Linked to this, the EU is once again seriously talking about enlargement. Not only are there several states, including Ukraine, which *want* to join the organization as a matter of urgency, the EU has, it seems, seen clearly how such a process is both a moral, and political, imperative. It would be, politically, unthinkable to pour in the resources that the EU and its member states have into a war which 'Ukraine must win' only to then shut the door on the country when it has won. The pressure from other East European countries will surely be too great for the EU as a whole to resist. Ukraine, as well as Moldova, for instance, will become an EU member in the foreseeable future.

Such process of enlargement will, then, almost inevitably, lead to pressure for reforms of both the EU's policy processes and policies. More broadly, the outcome of the war in Ukraine may well lead to a more permanent shift in the political dynamics within the organization. I would be very surprised if we didn't see, over the next 10 years, a much more prominent, and permanent, role for countries like Poland or Finland who will claim, with some justification, that they were 'right' when it came to Russia and should, therefore, be listened to when it comes to question of security and defines. It seems highly unlikely to me that they will simply slide into the background and stay quiet. We may well see a more permanent shift in power dynamics within the EU as a result of the invasion of Ukraine.

With all of this in mind, the question then become what the EU has to do to be prepared for these changes. This is what we will turn to now, in the final part of this paper.

6. Challenges ahead: Uncertainty in terms of war outcome and its own coherence. What needs to be done?

What I have argued so far is that, over the duration of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the EU's position has moved from quite incoherent to far more coherent. As a result, the EU's policies in response to the Russian invasion have become progressively bolder and clearer, both in practical and normative terms. This, finally, has opened up the possibility, one might argue the necessity, for future significant changes within the EU.

However, for these changes to occur without causing a major crisis certain things need to happen *now*.

On a practical level, the EU needs to *prepare for enlargement*. As ever, enlargement has political and processual implication which should be considered now. Informally, talks about the impact of enlargement on the treaties, decision-making processes etc. need to begin as soon as possible. Treaty changes are, in my view, as inevitable as enlargement itself.

With these talks, several possibilities might actually open up to strengthen the normative aspect of the EU treaties. If and when Ukraine is admitted to the EU, the organization will have to deal with its 'Hungary problem'. It seems, to me, inconceivable that the EU admit Ukraine but leave Hungary untouched, a fully-fledged member of the European Union, in receipt of financial benefits and with full voting rights within the Council. There have been some moves by the Commission to confront Hungary's slide into an authoritarian regime in recent months, but it is still moving too slowly and too cautiously. The EU has to decide what it stands for and will have to defend what it stands for not just to the rest of the world but also vis-à-vis its own member states.

A lot of these issues will obviously be influenced by what happens in Ukraine. Can Ukraine win the war and expel Russia from all its territory? Or, at least, can it have enough successes on the battlefield to make Russia want to negotiate? The EU should not only continue its support for Ukraine to bring such an outcome about but prepare for what follows afterwards now. I consider it highly likely that there will come a point, possibly still this year, when the call for some kind of negotiations will grow louder, following the long-awaited Ukraine offensive. This will, I suspect, cause some tensions and ruptures within the EU, with some countries pushing Ukraine to enter into negotiations with the invader.

In this respect, it is critical that the EU institutions hold the line and reinforce the line: Ukraine must win. The strategic argument about why this is the only good outcome for the EU must be made, over and over and over again, be it by the Commission, be it by the EEAS, be it by the Council or the member states. There cannot, and must not, be any ambiguity on this point, but this point needs to be 'sold', both internally and to the public at large.

These tasks, as well as others, are often cumbersome. They are difficult. They require clear communications, both in practical and normative terms. They have to

be undertaken in a context of extreme uncertainty and volatility. In other words, the hard-won coherence the EU is currently displaying, despite Hungary's best efforts, is fragile. But, as the last 15 months have shown, the establishment and maintenance of coherence has real practical impact and benefits for EU policymaking. The EU cannot, and must not, throw them away.

7. Conclusions

In this brief paper I have used the HSD framework to trace how the EU's response to the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine has evolved from incoherence to coherence over 15 months. It has also been shown that this coherence has allowed the EU to act far more decisively in pursuit of a, now, clearly defined goal: Ukrainian victory. This, in turn, has opened up significant opportunities for the EU to 'return to its roots' of being an organization with strong normative principles which is, above all, dedicated to peace and security for, and between, its member states. The EU, therefore, could recover something essential which it has lost for a couple of decades now: an overarching purpose.

Yet, to be able to do so, and sustain current coherence, it has to prepare for a series of difficult scenarios now: Europe in a post-war scenario, quite possibly with a defeated Russia on its doorstep. An enlarging EU, taking in states with enormous needs. The need to reform treaties in light of enlargement. The need to reform its policies, particularly as they pertain to external, defence and security policies.

The task is daunting, but the scenario is currently favourable. Just like NATO, the war has the chance to give the EU back its 'sense of mission'. It should make the most of this moment and do it now.

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