Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Journal of European Integration

ISSN: 0703-6337 (Print) 1477-2280 (Online) Journal homepage: www.tandfonline.com/journals/geui20

From role change to policy change: EU member states and change in EU foreign policy after Russia's invasion of Ukraine

Tyyne Karjalainen & Marco Siddi

To cite this article: Tyyne Karjalainen & Marco Siddi (16 Oct 2025): From role change to policy change: EU member states and change in EU foreign policy after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Journal of European Integration, DOI: 10.1080/07036337.2025.2574424

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/07036337.2025.2574424

Published online: 16 Oct 2025.

JOURNAL OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION
https://doi.org/10.1080/07036337.2025.2574424

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

RESEARCH ARTICLE

OPEN ACCESS Check for updates

From role change to policy change: EU member states and change in EU foreign policy after Russia's invasion of Ukraine

Tyyne Karjalainen [a] and Marco Siddi [b]

[a]Finnish Institute of International Affairs, University of Turku, Turku, Finland; [b]Finnish Institute of International Affairs, University of Cagliari, Cagliari, Italy

ABSTRACT

Russia's war against Ukraine has led to a fundamental rethinking of EU foreign policy, including enlargement, security and defense, and energy policy. The nature and depth of the shift, as well as the agency driving it, remain largely unexplored. Drawing on role theory, this article examines the agency of member states in shaping the policy shift in a co-constitutive process of resolving role conflicts and adjusting roles. Based on original interview data and document analysis, it finds that role changes – such as abandoning opposition to enlargement, renouncing the energy partnership with Russia, and the military turn – remain contested and context-specific, limiting the policy outcomes. While the enlargement pledge appears irreversible, the role changes are not sufficient for enlargement to materialize. In EU security policy, role adjustments are even more limited but have already produced policy outcomes. Finally, in energy policy, decoupling has not been fully achieved, despite fundamental role changes.

KEYWORDS

European Union; Common Security and Defence Policy; EU enlargement; energy policy; role theory

1. Introduction

Since Russia started its full-scale invasion in Ukraine, the foreign, security and energy policies of the European Union (EU) changed to an extent that researchers asked whether the EU itself is experiencing a transformational moment (Blockmans 2022). For the first time in history, a decision was taken at the EU level to jointly finance the delivery of lethal materiel to a partner country. The Common Security and Defense Policies (CSDP) pivoted to the Eastern neighborhood and took a military turn. In addition to the weapon deliveries funded through the European Peace Facility (EPF), a military training mission (EUMAM) was established to train and equip Ukrainian soldiers. These policies could not be taken for granted, considering that until very recently, several member states had opposed including any military element in the EU's activities in the Eastern neighborhood.

EU enlargement, previously considered to be at rest (Bechev 2022), was similarly rebooted in 2022: Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia received a membership perspective, Albania and North Macedonia started accession talks after a decade of impasse, and

CONTACT Tyyne Karjalainen tyyne.karjalainen@fiia.fi Finnish Institute of International Affairs, University of Turku, Turku, Finland

Bosnia and Herzegovina was granted candidate status. Previously, several member states had opposed offering a membership perspective to Eastern neighbors in particular, while the overall political will to enlarge remained low (e.g. Karjalainen 2023). Moreover, in 2022 the European energy market endured a profound shock. With the lead of the Commission, the EU adopted the RePowerEU plan to decouple from Russian energy. This happened at a time when Russia was the EU's largest oil, gas and coal supplier and several member states were still investing in energy trade with Russia.

While *change* seemed to characterize EU foreign policy in 2022, limited scholarly attention has been devoted to questions such as what constitutes this change, and how profound and durable it is. Some analyses on individual member states' policy shifts have been conducted (see for instance Martill and Sus 2024; Tarasov, Passalacqua, and Ventura 2024) and change in individual policy issues has also been explored. For example, Fiott (2023) argued that EU security and defense policy is not becoming more integrated. Meanwhile, Anghel and Dzankic (2023) compared the 2022 enlargement policy shift to the one that occurred after the Yugoslav wars. Siddi (2023a) analyzed how the REPowerEU plan drove policy change and the challenges stemming from high energy prices, deindustrialization and economic crisis. Juncos and Vanhoonacker (2024) and Nitoiu and Simionov (2023) in turn investigated concepts and ideas and Bosse (2024) norms and values shaping EU foreign policy.

However, *agency* in these policy shifts, including the role of member states, remains largely unexplored.[1] This is striking, considering that some member states renounced their earlier opposition and have become vocal drivers of policy change. Addressing this gap in literature, this research explores the roles played by the member states in changing EU security, enlargement and energy policies in 2022.[2] The analysis both clarifies the agency of member states in different EU policy fields and contributes to the understanding of whether the novel policies born as crisis responses can be expected to revert back to the earlier equilibrium when the war ends. The analysis draws on a mixed data set that combines original interviews with officials and policy documents and builds on role theory.

Role theory was developed by sociologists and social psychologists to understand agency embedded in social structures (Holsti 1970; Merton 1957) and it hence provides us with analytical tools to explore how the changing roles of member states shape and are shaped by the evolving EU policies. While role theory has been applied extensively to explain foreign policy behavior, its recent focus on static national role conceptions has limited the interest and ability of role theorists to explain *change* in foreign policy. In this article, we return to the roots of role studies by exploring the co-constitutive processes of role taking, role change and role contestation; by doing so, we aim to demonstrate the added value that role studies can have in theorizing change and continuity in the context of EU studies. Moreover, while role theorists have found the study of *role changes* important in understanding international relations (e.g. Breuning 2011; Harnisch 2011), the interface between role change and policy change remains undertheorized. While earlier literature has often assumed a unidirectional causal link between the two, our empirically grounded analysis reveals a more complex relationship between member states' role changes and EU policy change, depending among other things, on the decision-making powers and division of competences in each policy domain.

After presenting the theoretical framework and the research design, the analysis focuses on the role changes and then on the interface between role changes and EU policy change. The empirical analysis is further divided into sub-sections on enlargement, security and energy policies. In the policy domain of EU enlargement, the article finds formerly hesitant member states supporting the EU integration of the Eastern neighborhood; however, it also points out that the achievable policy outcome changed little in 2022, as one opposer suffices to prevent enlargement. In the field of security, the role adjustments are smaller but sufficient to transform the EU as a security actor with implications that extend beyond the Ukraine crisis context. Finally, in the policy field of energy, role changes were guided by the initiative of EU institutions. Here, the connection between member states' role changes and the policy shift is ambivalent: while the member states enacted the Commission's vision, they also limited its full implementation through residual energy trade with Russia.

2. Role theory and international relations

Role theory was introduced to the discipline of International Relations by Holsti (1970) drawing on the work of sociologists and social psychologists (Goffman 1956; Mead 1929; Merton 1957). Their work on roles was motivated by an attempt to understand and explain situations of complex human interaction, in which "the individual goes, and the social structure remains" (Merton 1957, 117). The adoption of role theory to the field of IR relies on an assumption that similar enduring social positions and processes of socially constructing them can be observed at the level of international relations. Like individuals, states are expected to play multiple roles that constitute 'role sets', while their roles can also include smaller role elements (e.g. Frank 2011; Harnisch 2011).

Following Holsti's example, the concept of 'national role conception' (NRC) has been at the core of IR role studies (see also Aggestam 2006, 13; Misík 2013). Role conceptions include both self-perceptions ('ego' conceptions) as well as others' conceptions ('alter' conceptions) on one's social position (Holsti 1970, 238–240). While ego conceptions draw on historical events among others, alter expectations rise in interaction, shaped by complementary roles and counter-roles of others (Harnisch 2011, 8). Scholars have debated whether ego or alter conceptions are more impactful in shaping role behavior, and how states behave if conflicts between conceptions emerge (Benes and Harnisch 2015; Brummer and Thies 2015). Some refer to this issue as the 'structure and agent' dilemma (Breuning 2011), highlighting the question whether the international system shapes policy agents that operate in it or vice versa. The EU can be considered both as an agent in the international system, or as the structure in which the member states operate (see e.g. Elgström and Smith 2006; Thies 2017).

While the concept of 'role conception' helps us to analyze roles of member states in EU policy, further conceptual tools are needed to unpack the phenomenon of *change* in EU foreign policy. The concept of 'role change' brings us halfway toward our goal. IR role theorists have found that roles of states tend to change because of 'crisis learning', socialization (Frank 2011; Harnisch 2011, 13), changes in the international system (see Breuning 2011; Strycharz 2022), changes in the hierarchy of internal role elements (Frank 2011, 132) or due to internal or external 'role conflicts' (Aggestam 2006; Brummer and Thies 2015).[3] Shocks in the

international system in particular create disjuncture between existing roles and new realities, leading to the adoption of new roles, which then need to be renegotiated both domestically and internationally (Thies and Wehner 2023, 88). Not all roles are similarly affected by shocks: the centrality and persistence of the role, the number of other roles, material capabilities, the domestic context and the degree of integration in the international system might affect how a shock shapes a state's roles (ibid.: 88–89).

IR scholars generally assume role conceptions to explain policy behavior (Frank 2011, 131–132) and treat the NRC as an independent variable (Brummer and Thies 2015, 275; see also Benes and Harnisch 2015, 147). The relationship between role change and policy change is not well theorized: role researchers have mostly expected a causal link between the changing role conceptions, changing role behavior and changing policies. When policy change has been defined, role scholars have often referred to Hermann's (1990) definition that differentiates between adjustments, program changes, problem/goal changes and changes of international orientation. Somewhat more attention has been paid to the nuances in role changes, which can be limited to adjustment of policy means or include the learning of new objectives (Grossman, Schortgen, and Friedrichs 2022; Harnisch 2011, cf.; Checkel 2005 on internalization).

We therefore are interested in exploring what roles the member states played in the EU foreign policy shift in 2022. By exploring interactive and co-constitutive role changes, we address a gap in role theoretical IR studies, which have focused on explaining foreign policy behavior from a historical angle and overlooked the interaction of roles as the source and mechanism of change (cf. Benes and Harnisch 2015, Holsti 1970; Mead 1929). This approach also allows us to propose clarifications to the concept of role change and to the relationship between role change and policy change, as we next demonstrate.

2.1. Data collection, sources and methodological note

The selection of the three policy domains (enlargement, security and energy) as policy cases is functional to unpacking the mechanisms of change in EU foreign policy. Major policy shifts occurred in all three in 2022, including the historic funding of weapon deliveries, granting the membership perspective to three new countries, and decoupling from Russian energy. The three policy fields also reveal the varying roles that member states have in EU policy.

The case studies on EU enlargement and security policy draw primarily on a corpus of 53 interviews conducted in 2023 with EU and state officials in Berlin, Brussels, Copenhagen, Helsinki, Paris, Strausberg, Warsaw, Chisinau and Kyiv. Most of the interviewees worked at EU member states' ministries of foreign affairs or at their diplomatic representations. Interviews were also conducted with officials of defense ministries and other national security organizations, as well as with representatives of the larger political parties and non-governmental organizations closely following the topics under research. Representatives of the European External Action Service and Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) operations were also interviewed. The interviews provide us with data concerning role conceptions, role changes, policy changes and, importantly, the links between roles and policies. Following the

constructivist framework behind role theoretical studies, we treat the interviewees also as agents whose perceptions of roles and role changes de facto shape the EU's policies.

The interviews followed a semi-structured format and focused primarily on the EU's enlargement process, security policies and neighborhood policies.[4] The interviewees were selected based on their expected knowledge about the research topic and, in most cases, based on their seniority in governmental bodies. The snowball method was utilized in the recruitment of interviewees. The list of interviewees is provided in Annex 1.[5] The study on energy policy relies primarily on policy documents, strategies and other public information released by the European Commission and the European Council in the period under investigation (from February 2022 to the end of 2023). This includes, most notably, the European Commission's communications on the REPowerEUPlan and the Green Deal Industrial Plan, and the European Council's timeline of restrictive measures adopted against Russia. Furthermore, the analysis draws on articles and reports of reputed online media and news agencies (EUObserver, Politico, Reuters) to reconstruct the positions of EU institutions and member states.

Our analysis only applies to the specific case of EU policymaking and to the policy fields under investigation. Moreover, the research portrays roles of member states as perceived by the officials during an ongoing crisis in Europe and in retrospect: different results could have emerged if the interviews were conducted years earlier and later, or if another type of data was used. While the extensive interview data enables us to identify trends – such as officials noting shifts in member states' roles in 2022 - the interviewees did not always agree, instead portraying both the role changes and the policy changes as contested.

3. Key role changes in three policy fields

3.1. Enlargement: Opposers playing advocates

> Germany's role relates to Nord stream, Russia. [. . .] It's a little bit our fault – we get this accusation. [. . .] We are seen as one of the leading states in the EU. [. . .] Those that are enlargement-friendly try to build expectations on other countries. But we have just different interests. (Two German Diplomats, June 2023)

In the decade from 2013 to 2022, the EU's enlargement policy was shaped by the 'opposers'. These included France, which had taken the stance that the EU should not enlarge before major internal reforms, and other countries that were skeptical of further enlargement, such as the Netherlands. Some member states blocked accession processes because of bilateral disputes with the candidate countries, as highlighted by Bulgaria's and Greece's stance on North Macedonia.[6] Germany's position was ambivalent: on the one hand, it supported enlargement, including through the Berlin process; on the other hand, it prioritized other foreign policy goals, including its bilateral relationship with Moscow, which considered the Eastern neighborhood as its sphere of interest. To an extent, France experienced the same role conflict.[7] The Nordics fell in between supporting enlargement in principle but highlighting the merit-based approach, whereby the lack of reform in the candidate states and the strong opposition in key member states led to deprioritizing the issue.[8]

'Advocates' of enlargement, including the Central and Eastern European (CEE) states, believed that the EU's Eastern enlargement would contribute to peace and stability on the wider region. However, they were not sufficiently influential to impose their agenda at the EU level. Poland's leverage on EU policies for instance was undermined by its conflicts with Brussels and Berlin.[9] France and Germany in turn were perceived to be the 'leaders' of EU policy, and this leadership role combined with the fact that the two found common ground on non-enlargement, shaped the EU policy until 2022.[10] Reflecting and consolidating this opposition, the Juncker Commission (2014–2019) declared that the EU should focus on internal challenges instead of enlarging. Only after 2022, the long-term advocates of enlargement were recognized as 'experts' that should be listened to in the EU's Eastern neighborhood policies.[11] Until then, the accession of Western Balkan states was deprioritized, while Eastern Partnership countries were not offered a European perspective.

After Russia started its full-scale war against Ukraine, the opposers of enlargement gradually lifted their opposition. In the first months of the war, France proposed the European Political Community as an alternative to enlargement.[12] Several interviewees referred to the train trip of the French, Italian, German and Romanian state leaders to Kyiv as a turning point for lifting the hardest opposition. The opening of the EU perspective to Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia was, however, perceived in many EU capitals as 'just' political signaling that does not bind to anything: the actual objective of integrating the candidate countries to the EU was adopted more gradually and not equally by all.[13]

The reasoning behind lifting opposition on enlargement varied. States that had resisted Eastern enlargement to not provoke Russia (most importantly Germany) found the non-provoking policy unfit after an escalation had taken place.[14] Others (notably France) found the choice necessary for the EU to emerge as a geopolitical actor and to build a credible war response.[15] The fading opposition, the empowered advocates, and the context of war pushed also those relatively neutral about enlargement to turn in favor of it. Finland among others hesitated about granting candidate status to a country that seemed to lack the usual merits: what a Finnish diplomat described as 'merit-nihilism' was loosened only after the general attitude in Europe shifted.[16]

EU institutions catalyzed these changes: in contrast to Juncker, who had put enlargement on hold, the 2022 Commission President Von Der Leyen, High Representative Borell and, to some extent, Council President Michel all advocated for Ukraine's EU membership. The 2023 enlargement package (European Commission 2023b) commended reforms in both Ukraine and Moldova and highlighted positive developments in Georgia despite apparent negative trends.[17]

The interviewees noted two main limits to these role changes: they were both contested and likely reversible. President Macron and his administration were believed to have adopted a new objective of Ukraine's and Moldova's EU integration, indicating a major role change (not just adjustment of means), but many interviewees expected this role change to be domestically contested and hence not sustainable.[18] Similarly, some interviewees expected Germany's earlier role conflicts to persist and potentially work against enlargement to the contested neighborhoods in the future.[19] Moreover, new opposers already appeared, notably Hungary.[20]

3.2. Security policy: Role adjustments between role conflicts

> We advocated it [the EPF] to cover also the Eastern neighborhood. [. . .] I remember how difficult it was to agree on a few million [Euros]. It was not even Germany that opposed the most. (Two Romanian diplomats, June 2023)

Interviewees almost unanimously noted that, before 2022, military support from the EU to a country in the Eastern neighborhood was considered impossible. Several explanations were provided for this, all of which can be conceptualized as role conflicts.

Firstly, such engagement would have conflicted with the civilian role that several EU states embraced at the national level and projected onto the EU. Germany in particular, along with most Nordic states, opposed any military engagement in conflicts.[21] The peace mediator role that France and Germany had assumed in the Normandy format was also seen as conflicting with the idea of supporting Ukraine militarily.[22] Moreover, several member states preferred other platforms than the EU for military cooperation, Nato in particular.[23]

Secondly, several member states including France and Germany prioritized bilateral relations and the avoiding of confrontation with Russia. Their partnership with Russia – many interviewees highlighted Germany's energy dependence as part of it – prevented developing a military role for the EU in the Eastern neighborhood, which Russia considered as its sphere of influence.[24] Thirdly, EU member states in general had conflicting expectations on *where* the EU should emerge as a security actor: divergent threat perceptions hindered joint security agency in any region. France, along with many Southern and Western European states, prioritized engagement in the South, whereas Eastern European members focused on the Eastern neighborhood.[25]

When Russia started its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, these role conflicts were partly resolved. Firstly, the doctrine of limiting military engagement in conflicts was revised in several EU capitals, including Berlin and the Nordic capitals. Defense budgets were ramped up and the principle of not delivering weapons to conflict zones was abandoned to support Ukraine's right to self-defense. Consensus emerged about the need to adapt the EU's identity as a 'civilian power' to the increasingly hostile security environment.[26]

Secondly, after the escalation, prioritizing relations with Russia was no longer feasible, which removed the key geopolitical role conflict of supporting Ukraine. While Russia's 'red lines' would continue to be considered, its security interests were questioned and Ukraine's ontological needs prioritized – according to many interviewees for the first time in history.[27] Thirdly, the divergent threat perceptions among the member states converged in the crisis, allowing joint action. Western European capitals shifted their focus to the East. For some, such as Paris, this pivot was instrumental towards the objective of developing European strategic autonomy: the war could spur the development of European security agency, including defense industries.[28]

The evolution of EU member states' roles took place in an intertwined and co-constitutive manner. Joint decisions were preferred to share the risks and to avoid targeted reactions by Russia. In particular, the decision to fund weapon deliveries through the EPF encouraged the more cautious member states to perform new more assertive roles: in addition to the economic incentive, the EU-level decision was seen as reducing the political risk for individual member states.[29] Moreover,

the member states took varying and mutually complementary roles in implementing the policy shift. The first suppliers of EU-funded weapons included Poland and the Baltic states, while the bigger member states enabled weapon deliveries by making major contributions to the EPF budget.[30] Early weapon supplies by some Eastern EU members arguably encouraged other European states to move on with their contributions.[31] Some opposers of the military engagement also played a role in enabling the policy shift by using constructive abstention instead of blocking the decisions. Hungary in turn shifted to the role of an active opposer in 2023, effectively freezing the EPF.[32]

Finally, changes in the member states' roles were limited and could be considered as *adjustments*, rather than complete role changes: while policy means were adapted to the crisis context, the earlier national security priorities and objectives remained. The interviewees highlighted Germany's continuing caution about Russia's reactions as well as the internal contestation of the new military role. Some interviewees questioned whether *Zeitenwende* took place as expected.[33] France's pivot to the East was limited by its security interests elsewhere. Paris was criticized by non-French interviewees for sending relatively little support to Ukraine as well as for instrumentalizing Ukraine-support by demanding that only Europe-made defense materiel should be funded through the EPF.[34] Moreover, the earlier divergence among national threat perceptions was expected to remain and reappear over time.[35]

3.3. External energy policy: from contested partnerships to the decoupling plan

> 'We were urging for decades that Russia is not the economic partner, it is not reliable partner' (Official in a Leadership Position, MFA of Poland, October 2023)

Between 2014 and 2022, energy relations with Russia were a heavily contested topic among EU members.[36] Until 2022, several EU member states, including Germany, Austria, Finland, France, Italy and the Netherlands among others, valued the energy partnership with Russia despite the increasing geopolitical tensions and the EU sanctions linked to the annexation of Crimea and the Donbas conflict. Some Eastern member states were critical of the energy trade, even while continuing to import substantial volumes of energy from Russia themselves. In February 2022, Russia was the largest provider of oil, gas and coal to the EU.

Thanks to its prerogatives in energy policy (where it shares competence with member states), the European Commission played a major part in steering the role changes that started in 2022 (by contrast, decision-making in enlargement and defense policy is intergovernmental). Two weeks after the start of the invasion, the Commission proposed a plan to end imports of Russian fossil fuels by 2030 (European Commission 2022a),[37] which was eventually reframed as the REPowerEU Plan in May (European Commission 2022b). The Commission coordinated efforts to phase out imports of Russian gas and to increase imports from other producers (Genschel, Leek, and Weyns 2023). Previously a staunch supporter of competition, liberalization and curbing state intervention in the energy market, after February 2022 the Commission enabled state intervention to guarantee energy supplies, lower energy prices and accelerate the low-carbon transition. State aid rules for subsidies to crisis-hit industries were loosened.

Member states did not only take action to decrease their energy dependence on Russia but also committed to the changed political objective of ending the trade partnership with Russia. Role change occurred especially in countries such as Germany, which had invested in energy relations with Russia and opposed strong state intervention in energy markets. On the eve of the Russian attack, Germany suspended the certification process of the Nord Stream-2 pipeline, a project in which Berlin had invested considerable political and economic capital (Siddi 2023b, 96).[38] This move corresponded to the expectations of Germany's Eastern neighbors (Poland, the Baltic states), which had been calling on Berlin to give up the project. The long-standing belief among German leaders that Russia was a reliable energy supplier was abandoned.[39] However, this turn was internally contested by increasingly popular opposition parties (Alternative for Germany, Bündnis Sahra Wagenknecht) and some mainstream politicians.

Other earlier supporters of energy cooperation with Russia – such as Austria, Finland, France, Italy and the Netherlands – also endorsed, or at least did not oppose, the EU-level decision to ban coal imports, impose a nearly full embargo on oil imports and phase out gas imports via pipeline. The change of the strategy behind energy trade was captured in speeches by state leaders that replaced the earlier narratives of peace through trade by highlighting the need to decrease dependencies.[40] However, a few Eastern EU members (i.e. Hungary, Slovakia) sought and obtained exemptions from some of these measures, while some Western members (Belgium, France, Spain) increased LNG imports from Russia. Hungary proceeded with its plans to install two Rosatom reactors at its Paks nuclear power plant.

The member states' changed role performance also included establishing new LNG infrastructure and imports, accelerated gas storage programs, an increase in renewable energy production, the exploitation of domestic gas deposits, and renewed commitments to nuclear power and coal. However, as we discuss in the next section, the performance of the new roles remained limited, not least due to the high cost of decoupling from a major energy provider and the ensuing energy and economic crisis: the incomplete role changes at the national level challenged the policy shift away from Russian energy at the European level.

4. Problematizing the policy shift

4.1. From a policy of non-enlargement to a shallow membership perspective

After Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the objectives and beliefs of the advocates of enlargement started to shape EU policy. While corresponding to the preferences of the long-term advocates, the interviewees were, however, almost unanimous in that the policy shift was driven by the role changes of leading EU member states such as France, which lifted its opposition.[41]

> The decision that our president took to support the candidate status played an important role in convincing other states like Italy and Germany to do so as well. There was the common visit by Scholz, Draghi, Macron and Romanian president in June 2022. Ukrainian called this the train miracle. (Official in a Leadership Position and Senior Official, MFA of France, November 2023)

However, the policy shift had significant limitations that cast doubts on its essence and durability. Firstly, several interviewees noted that the European integration of the Eastern neighborhood has been ongoing for decades, and the official membership perspective only consolidates the trend. The earlier build up – the Association Agreements and Deep and Comprehensive Trade Agreements, the Eastern Partnership and the bilateral support from CEE states among others – created the conditions to grant Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia candidate statuses in 2022.[42] Moreover, it was questioned whether the recent progress in the Western Balkans revitalized the process or just continued the trend of sporadic and pendulum-like advancements.[43]

Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, some of the opposition that prevented enlargement before 2022 persisted. Moreover, as EU decision-making in this field is based on unanimity, the opposition of one member state at a time is enough to derail the process. New member states have already started to play the opposer role (Hungary), while the former opposers (France in particular) are not believed to have permanently abandoned their opposition.[44] The policy shift could therefore be hollow. Several interviewees referred to the experience of the Western Balkans to highlight how EU declarations about enlargement have little significance as long as the member states are not performing aligned roles.[45]

Other interviewees believed that a policy shift did occur, but it is not permanent and a new shift might cancel the expected policy output of enlargement. In other words, the role changes were significant enough to affect the enlargement *policy*, but more complete and sustainable role changes would be needed for the EU to actually enlarge (*output*). Many interviewees believed that the incumbent member state governments had genuinely adopted new objectives and roles in 2022, but their successors might change course.[46]

Nonetheless, it was argued that most member states will feel pressured to adhere to their new pro-enlargement roles. Especially the merit focused member states were considered committed to the membership bid. On paper, the membership prospect was perceived irreversible. Incoming governments would hence need to adjust to a reality where the EU is committed to enlarging.[47] Following this interpretation, EU policy would serve as an anchor preventing the reversal of member state roles. This interpretation was challenged by other interviewees who believed that the Western Balkans' 'limbo' would endure and be replicated with the eastern European candidates.[48]

4.2. From a non-military EU policy to an Eastern military pivot

The EPF is one step forward for EU defense (French Diplomat, November 2023)

In the field of EU security and defense, relatively minor member state role adjustments seem to have enabled remarkable changes in the EU's security agency. Earlier role conflicts were resolved only to an extent: militarization remains internally contested, Russia's security interests are still considered in key EU capitals, Western Europe's commitment to the Eastern neighborhood remains limited, and there is no joint understanding of a security role for Europe. Yet, the role adjustments that did occur allowed major shifts in the EU's security agency, with long-term consequences.

Firstly, the role adjustments allowed the EU to implement a new policy on Ukraine. The EU could establish a military training mission, incentivize weapon supplies through a reimbursement rate between 40 and 50% and encourage the delivery of ammunition (in particular in a three-track approach including emptying stocks, buying off-shelf and increasing production) among others. These efforts were seen as having a concrete impact on Ukraine's war effort.[49]

Whether there also was a link to the other direction – from policy change to role change – divided the interviewees to an extent. The interviewees often referred to the EPF having boosted agency of *other* member states in supporting Ukraine but denied that the instrument influenced their own (state's) performance, claiming that their own country would have supported Ukraine, nonetheless. Finnish interviewees however often expressed a self-perception that the changed EU policy encouraged the national role change in security cooperation with Ukraine.[50]

Secondly, the role adjustments were believed to have led to the strengthening of EU military actorness beyond the context of the Russo-Ukrainian war. After arming Ukraine, the EU was believed to adopt a similar military approach in other contexts: a decision on sending lethal aid to Niger was already taken. Moreover, the relevance of the CSDP was found increased, particularly in the eyes of CEE states, after the joint exercise of arming Ukraine. The tangible policy *output* in Ukraine further encouraged role adjustments, whereby the Eastern members in particular became more interested in using the EU as a framework for pursuing their policy objectives.[51]

On the other hand, the earlier role conflicts that prevented military agency in the Eastern neighborhood resurfaced and started to affect policy implementation. French leaders argued that EU funding must be used to boost European defense industries, while other member states opposed this approach and Germany bemoaned its large share of EPF costs. Most significantly, Hungary started blocking Ukraine support completely, halting EPF funding for Ukraine for years. While the resurfacing role conflicts were not expected to stop the development of the EU as a security actor, they were were seen as limiting the policy shift and policy outcomes broadly.

4.3. Learning to derisk external energy relations

In energy policy, the contestation of the new objectives and roles is low, and the ability of member states to hinder the implementation of the policy shift is limited by the distribution of competences and the lack of veto power. However, some member states resort to activities that are not consistent with the new EU policies.

The limited contestation of the policy shift is demonstrated by controversial topics such as the sabotage of the Nord Stream pipelines in September 2022. Even Germany, which had promoted the pipelines, refrained from raising the issue, despite strong suspicions of Ukrainian involvement and the complacency of Eastern European members such as Poland.[52]. However, political dynamics in the member states and economic considerations suggest that the post-2022 role adaptation could be reversed when the geopolitical crisis subsides. Extensive infrastructure for energy trade with Russia remains in place and it would be technically easy to return to the pre-2022 energy partnership.

While the member states have scaled down significantly energy trade with Russia and are implementing EU sanctions, the performance of the new roles by the member states

remains incomplete, limiting the policy outcome. Energy trade was not relinquished altogether and in all fields. For instance, several EU members continued to import nuclear fuel and enriched uranium from Russia. Some states – notably Belgium and Spain – even increased LNG imports from Russia, which were not subject to sanctions or common phaseout decisions (Sanchez Nicolas 2023). The French company TotalEnergies, which is partly state-owned, continued to invest in and own a share of the giant project Yamal LNG in Russia (Reuters 2022). Hungary continued and even expanded energy cooperation with Moscow, for instance with the construction of two new nuclear reactors (the Paks-2 project), while a few other Eastern members obtained temporary derogations on the oil embargo.

At the same time, the policy outcomes of the role changes are wide-ranging. The experience of being vulnerable to the weaponization of energy has led the EU and its members to focus on broader policies of de-risking (European Commission 2023a). The Green Deal Industrial Plan proposed by the Commission in March 2023, with its Critical Raw Materials Act and Net-Zero Industry Act, reflects this change of the EU from supporter of 'desecuritised' free trade to an approach that is more strategic and wary of economic dependencies (Siddi and Prandin 2023). Furthermore, the enabling of state aid in the energy sector is likely to have long-term consequences. Germany's case illustrates this. While Berlin had been a strong advocate of liberalization and competition in the EU energy market, the German state responded to the 2022 spike in energy prices by announcing an unprecedented €200 billion package to cushion consumers and businesses from the effects of the energy crisis (Lynch et al. 2022). The EU's Green Deal Industrial Plan catalyzed this policy shift by advocating derogations from state aid rules to support renewable energy; as a result, Germany has pledged further public investments in the energy transition. Regarding energy relations with Russia, despite the persistence of reduced volumes of trade, the role and policy changes were epitomized by the Commission's May 2025 Roadmap to stop all remaining imports of Russian gas by 2027 (European Commission 2025), which received broad endorsement by member states and was only criticized by Hungary and Slovakia (Fisayo-Bamby 2025).

Furthermore, the role and policy changes in the energy field likely influence other EU policy domains. Some interviewees highlighted that Russia's role as a key energy supplier had previously influenced decisions taken in enlargement and security policy. As Moscow could restrict the supply of energy to EU countries, tensions were avoided at the cost of neglecting partners in the neighborhood.[53] Hence, decoupling from Russian energy can enable further role and policy changes in other domains – and the limited performance of the new roles in the energy domain can similarly limit the role and policy changes in the other fields.

5. Discussion

The empirical analysis zoomed into the undertheorized link between role change and policy change in the context of the EU's foreign policy. Three key findings should be discussed further. Firstly, the EU foreign policy change in 2022 is more complex and contested than proposed in recent policy analyses (e.g. Blockmans 2022; Karjalainen and Mustasilta 2022). Secondly, the assumption in earlier literature of a causal link between role change and policy change oversimplifies reality. Thirdly, the concept of role change

seems too wide to capture the contested and nuanced developments in the member states' positions and agency in EU policy-making in the three policy sectors.

The nuances proposed by role theorists to the concept of role change were useful in our analysis, notably the differentiation between adapting means and learning new objectives (e.g. Harnisch 2001, 2011). As Thies and Wehner suggested (2023), we found that not all types of roles are similarly shaken by crises. We propose three further clarifications: firstly, our analysis suggests that role changes can be detected at the level of perceptions with little concrete implementation. In other words, role changes at the level of role perceptions and at the level of role performance should be differentiated. For instance, France's declared pivot to Eastern Europe (highlighted by both French and other interviewees) materialized in limited concrete contributions; hence, analyzing only the shift in role perceptions conveys a misleading picture of the role change.

Secondly, the analysis showed how a member state can change a role while continuing to perform or add new conflicting roles to their role set. For instance, member states that stopped importing Russian pipeline gas simultaneously increased LNG imports from Russia: while the earlier objectives and the strategy behind energy partnership with Russia drastically changed in 2022, some elements of the earlier roles continued to be performed in the margins. Thirdly, our analysis highlighted the need for closer analysis of the contestation of role changes in order to understand their sustainability and impact. In all three policy domains, member states' role changes are contested by domestic political actors. In intergovernmental policy domains, conflicting counter-roles of other member states can curb the role changes of individual member states. Moreover, role changes are contested by external actors – enlargement and the militarization of the EU in particular are viewed critically by geopolitical competitors (eg. Monde 2024; Sauer and agencies 2024). This emphasizes the usefulness of an interaction-focused perspective to role studies: neither the roles nor the role changes are performed in isolation, but in relation to counter-roles of other policy actors.

The main contribution of this research concerns the connection between role change and policy change. Our empirical evidence proposes that none of the analyzed changes in EU foreign policy would have been possible without EU member states abandoning their previous roles as trade partners of Russia and as opposers of EU enlargement and of military cooperation with Eastern neighbors. At the same time, the policy shifts – such as the Commission's RePowerEU plan – also shaped the member states' roles. Some role changes evoked policy shifts but do not change achievable policy outcomes: the shift in enlargement policy in particular will not result in decisive outcomes unless all member states support enlargement or the requirement of unanimity is revised. In the fields of security and energy policy the role changes had immediate, far-reaching effects: the development of EU military tools and the drastic decrease in EU energy imports from Russia. Because of these shifts, member states are unlikely to return to their pre-2022 roles.[54] As our analysis highlighted, reversing role changes in energy cooperation with Russia could also influence roles of member states in other EU policy domains.

Earlier literature took the connection between role change and policy change for granted or expected a causal link between the two; our analysis shows that the connection varies depending on the context. This includes the structure in which the policy agents pursue their objectives, such as the context of policymaking in the specific policy domain, as well as the roles of other policy agents. In enlargement policy, the policy

context (unanimous decision making and a decade of impasse) and the roles of several member states (opposing enlargement) created a context in which the role changes of large member states from opposers to advocates of enlargement are not enough to deliver policy outcomes. In security policy, the context (the emerging institutional framework of military tools and the war in Ukraine) and the lack of opposing agents (at least until Hungary took up this role) ensured that minor role adjustments resulted in concrete policy outcomes concerning EU security actorness and support to Ukraine. In the field of energy, the policy context (the supranational powers of the Commission) and the roles of member states (implementing Commission guidelines to phase out Russian energy imports, but with some seeking exemptions and importing more Russian LNG) highlighted a complex and partly contradictory connection between roles and policies.

The interaction-focused approach proved useful in elaborating on the complex relationship between role change and policy change. The role changes of France and Germany from opposers to advocates of enlargement and military cooperation with the Eastern neighborhood affected EU policies because of the two countries' leadership role in the EU.[55] Moreover, their role changes took place in a coordinated manner, which strengthened their impact on EU policies. Yet, their impact on policy outcomes continues to depend on the roles played by other member states, notably on the condition that no other member state takes an opposing role in the policy domains with unanimous decision-making rules. We encourage future research on the link between role change and policy change to focus on interaction and structure: the role change of an individual country is always embedded in a context where the roles of others and the existing policies contribute to shaping the outcome.

6. Conclusion

In 2022, Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine evoked a series of intertwined changes in EU foreign policy. This article highlights that policy change was enabled and shaped by European policy actors. Relying on original interviews and document analysis, the article showed that the foreign policy shifts – including the revival of enlargement policy, the militarization of security policies and the decoupling from Russian energy – were only possible after coordinated role changes and the (partial) resolution of internal and external role conflicts in larger member states, notably France and Germany. However, the policy shifts remain contested and tensions between the current, crisis-time policies and opposing roles have already emerged. Hungary continues to invest in its energy relationship with Russia, and other countries have increased imports of Russian LNG even while officially adhering to the EU goal of phasing out imports of Russian energy by 2030. Germany continues to cherish its civilian power role and remains wary of stronger military support to Ukraine, while France's low share of military assistance to Kyiv highlights the limits of its new policy focus on the Eastern neighborhood.

Most notably, the renewed commitment to EU enlargement is not accompanied by sufficient role changes that would allow the policy outcome of enlargement. The adoption of an opposing role by one member state is enough to halt the process, and there is no shortage of member states playing this role. Without further role changes – or changes to the EU's unanimity-based decision-making – the achievable policy outcome remains the same as before 2022. At the same time, the EU's membership pledges cannot be

cancelled, and the citizens of the new candidate countries expect being rewarded for their commitment.

Our analysis highlighted that the link between role change and policy change is not unidirectional. In security policy, relatively minor role adjustments enabled the EU to jointly fund weapon deliveries to Ukraine, which in turn encouraged some countries to abandon their earlier principles for conflict responses. In energy policy, the policy shift initiated by the Commission with REPowerEU catalyzed the role changes of member states such as Germany, which ceased to see Russia as a reliable supplier. While both the role changes and the new policies remain domestically contested, the policy outcomes – Ukraine receiving weapons and Russia being progressively excluded from the EU energy market – cannot be easily cancelled.

Notes

1. As an exception, Baracani and Danesi (2025) apply role theory to understand the role of the European Parliament in the EU's foreign policy behaviour in 2022, Costa and Barbé (2023) investigate the EU's evolving international actorness, Anghel and Jones (2022) compare actorness in the EU's war response and the pandemic, and Håkansson (2023) studies the role of the Commission. See also Juncos, Lovato, and Pomorska (2024) and Della Sala (2023) about crisis responses.
2. Previously, similar questions about agency in the EU's policy change have been asked by researchers investigating policy entrepreneurs (Blavoukos and Bourantonis 2012; Sus 2023). This literature sidelines, however, the other roles played by member states in the EU's policies, including opposing change, for instance.
3. Operationalization of the concept of role change is not particularly advanced in role studies, as most role literature is empirics-focused and not theory-heavy. Instructive examples by leading role theorists include Tewes' (1998) take on Germany's contested role change from 'integration deepener' to 'integration widener', Harnisch's (2001) study on change in Germany's foreign policy role, and Wehner's (2025) examination of role displacement, role layering, role drifting and role conversion.
4. The interviews were conducted by Karjalainen as part of an ongoing PhD research: the 53 interviews analyzed for this article were extracted from a dataset of more than 80 interviews. The informed consent of the interviewees was obtained via email and orally: as agreed with the Ethics Committee for Human Sciences at the University of Turku, signatures were not collected in order to apply highest standards of identity protection.
5. Interviewees spoke on condition of their identity not being revealed in the publications or during the research process. Specific attention was paid to protecting their identity because the interviews dealt with ongoing policy processes that concern among others arms deliveries and stocks, as well as sensitive diplomatic relations between European states.
6. Eg. interviews (not repeated from here on) 38, 31, 25, 37, 6.
7. 45, 1, 26, 28, 23, 25.
8. 39, 31, 41.
9. 12, 23, 19, 11.
10. 25, 9, 26.
11. 11, 1, 6.
12. 46, 2, Elysée 2022.
13. 24, 7, 8, 10, 29, 25.
14. 28, 23, 25.
15. 6, 8, 26, 35, 23. According to several interviewees, Ukraine's membership is also viewed in France from the point of view of strengthening European security (e.g. interview 7). Two

German diplomats explained that Germany could not say 'no to everything': Ukraine's candidacy and sending tanks were simultaneously on the table.

16. 36.
17. For instance, on the day of the enlargement package being published, a senior expert at Verkhovna rada described the reception in Kyiv: '*Surprising that it [the assessment on Ukraine] was so positive. What Ukraine really needed. Sometimes maybe it was even better than it is the situation on the ground. But of course, we understand that we need the good reports to overpass the impasse in the EU Council on December.*' On the conditionality during the war, see Rabinovych and Pintsch (2024).
18. 7, 8, 10.
19. 29, 25.
20. 23, 41, 9.
21. 19, 40, 17, 22.
22. 4, 22.
23. 47, 12, 21.
24. 30, 7, 28, 37, 48, 21, 51, 45.
25. 10, 14, 19, 16, 5.
26. 19, 40, 27, 20, 53, 39, 35.
27. 32, 49, 30. See Allison (2025).
28. 5, 9, 3.
29. 32, 33, 39, 37.
30. 20, 5, 40, 10, 14, 37. It was also raised that France played a key role in developing the European Peace Facility as it insisted developing European strategic autonomy, and the fact that the instrument existed before the war shaped the war response.
31. 10, 14, 12.
32. 15, 9, 22, 34. See also Mustasilta and Karjalainen (2025).
33. 28, 35, 20, 21.
34. 7, 9, 27, 10.
35. 48, 7.
36. 1, 15.
37. Already before, on the day of the invasion, the European Council had convened in a special summit and agreed on imposing restrictive measures on Russia in numerous areas, including the energy sector (European Council 2024).
38. 49.
39. 35, 27.
40. e.g. Siddi (2019).
41. e.g. interviews (not repeated from here on) 8, 10, 26, 29, 25.
42. 17, 44, 19, 46.
43. 30, 29.
44. 7, 8, 10, 23, 41, 9.
45. 16, 26, 29, 42.
46. 7, 8, 10.
47. 2, 35.
48. 9, 25.
49. 46, 50, 32, 31, 33, 53, 10.
50. 20, 18, 32, 33, 39, 37.
51. 52, 13, 27.
52. 22, 24.
53. 46, 45, 1.
54. Nonetheless, if structural conditions change (for instance, the war ends and other suppliers are seen as less reliable), a reversal of roles and the resumption of some energy trade between the EU and Russia remains possible.

55. The alter-perception of a 'leader' was highlighted. The power of alter-conceptions has been elaborated among others by Chaban and Elgström (2021) that connect role theories to image studies.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

This work was supported by the Finnish Cultural Foundation (Tyyne Karjalainen's personal grant).

ORCID

Tyyne Karjalainen http://orcid.org/0000-0003-1760-2350
Marco Siddi http://orcid.org/0000-0002-5881-5574

Ethical statement

The Ethics Committee for Human Sciences at the University of Turku has issued a positive statement concerning the involvement of human participants (research interviews) in this research.

AI tool (MS Copilot) was used to revise the language of individual sentences.

References

Aggestam, Lisbeth 2006. "Role Theory and European Foreign Policy. A Framework of Analysis." In *The European Union's Roles in International Politics. Concepts and Analysis*, edited by Ole Elgström and Michael Smith, 11–29. Routledge - Taylor & Francis Group.

Allison, Roy 2025. "Averting Acute Escalation in Russia's War Against Ukraine." *International Affairs* 101 (5): 1769–1791. https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiaf137.

Anghel, Veronica, and Jelena Dzankic. 2023. "Wartime EU: Consequences of the Russia – Ukraine War on the Enlargement Process." *Journal of European Integration* 45 (3): 487–501. https://doi.org/10.1080/07036337.2023.2190106.

Anghel, Veronica, and Erik Jones. 2022. "Is Europe Really Forged Through Crisis? Pandemic EU and the Russia – Ukraine War." *Journal of European Public Policy* 30 (4): 766–786. https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2022.2140820.

Baracani, Elena, and Michele Danesi. 2025. "The European Parliament's Foreign Policy Behaviour: The Case of EU Foreign Policy Towards Ukraine Following the Russian War of Aggression." *European Security*. https://doi.org/10.1080/09662839.2025.2506512.

Bechev, Dimitar 2022. "What Has Stopped EU Enlargement in the Western Balkans?" *Carnegie Europe Article*. https://carnegieeurope.eu/2022/06/20/what-has-stopped-euenlargement-in-western-balkans-pub-87348 .

Benes, Vít, and Sebastian Harnisch. 2015. "Role Theory in Symbolic Interactionism: Czech Republic, Germany and the EU." *Cooperation and Conflict* 50 (1): 146–165. https://doi.org/10.1177/0010836714525768.

Blavoukos, Spyros, and Dimitris Bourantonis. 2012. "Policy Entrepreneurs and Foreign Policy Change: The Greek–Turkish Rapprochement in the 1990s." *Government and Opposition* 47 (4): 597–617. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1477-7053.2012.01376.x.

Blockmans, Steven 2022. "Editorial: The Birth of a Geopolitical EU." *European Foreign Affairs Review* 27 (Issue 2): 155–160. https://doi.org/10.54648/EERR2022016.

Bosse, Giselle 2024. "The EU's Response to the Russian Invasion of Ukraine: Invoking Norms and Values in Times of Fundamental Rupture." *Journal of Common Market Studies* 62 (5): 1222–1238. https://doi.org/10.1111/jcms.13569.

Breuning, Marijke 2011. "Role Theory Research in International Relations. State of the Art and Blind Spots." In *Role Theory in International Relations*, edited by S. Harnisch, C. Frank, and H. W. Maull, 16–35. Abingdon, UK: Taylor & Francis Group.

Brummer, Klaus, and Cameron G. Thies. 2015. "The Contested Selection of National Role Conceptions." *Foreign Policy Analysis* 11 (3): 273–293. https://doi.org/10.1111/fpa.12045.

Chaban, Natalia, and Ole Elgström. 2021. "Chapter 2 Theoretical Innovations: Synergizing Role Theory with Insights from Image and Perception Studies." In *The Ukraine Crisis and EU Foreign Policy Roles*, edited byNatalia Chaban and Ole Elgström, 19–36. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing.

Checkel, Jeffrey T. 2005. "International Institutions and Socialization in Europe: Introduction and Framework." *International Organization* 59 (4): 801–826. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818305050289.

Costa, Orol, and Esther Barbé. 2023. "A Moving Target. EU Actorness and the Russian Invasion of Ukraine." *Journal of European Integration* 45 (3): 431–446. https://doi.org/10.1080/07036337.2023.2183394.

Della Sala, Vincent 2023. "Ontological Security, Crisis and Political Myth: The Ukraine War and the European Union." *Journal of European Integration* 45 (3): 361–375. https://doi.org/10.1080/07036337.2023.2183396.

Elgström, Ole, and Michael Smith, eds. 2006. "*The European Union's Roles in International Politics. Concepts and Analysis*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge - Taylor & Francis Group.

Elysée 9.5. 2022. "Closure of the Conference on the Future of Europe." https://www.elysee.fr/en/emmanuel-macron/2022/05/09/closure-of-the-conference-on-the-future-of-europe.

European Commission. 2022a. "REPowerEU: Joint European Action for More Affordable, Secure and Sustainable Energy, 8 March 2022." *Com(2022) 108 Final*. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:71767319-9f0a-11ec-83e1-01aa75ed71a1.0001.02/DOC_1&format=PDF .

European Commission. 2022b. "REPowerEU Plan, 18 May 2022." *COM(2022) 230 Final*. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:fc930f14-d7ae-11ec-a95f01aa75ed71a1.0001.02/DOC_1&format=PDF.

European Commission. 2023a. *A Green Deal Industrial Plan for the Net-Zero Age, 1 February*. COM (2023) 62 final.

European Commission. 2023b. "Commission Adopts 2023 Enlargement Package, Recommends to Open Negotiations with Ukraine and Moldova, to Grant Candidate Status to Georgia and to Open Accession Negotiations with BiH, Once the Necessary Degree of Compliance is Achieved." *Commission Press* Release. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_23_5633.

European Commission. (2025). "Roadmap Towards Ending Russian Energy Imports." 12 May, COM (2025) 440 final/2. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52025DC0440R%2801%29&qid=1747125158211.

European Council. 2024. "Timeline - EU Restrictive Measures Against Russia Over Ukraine." https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/sanctions/restrictive-measures-against-russia-over-ukraine/history-restrictive-measures-against-russia-over-ukraine/.

Fiott, Daniel 2023. "In Every Crisis an Opportunity? European Union Integration in Defence and the War on Ukraine." *Journal of European Integration* 45 (3): 447–462. https://doi.org/10.1080/07036337.2023.2183395.

Fisayo-Bamby, Jerry 2025. "Orban and Fico Lambast EU at 130th Anniversary of Maria Valeria Bridge." *Euronews*, September 28. https://www.euronews.com/2025/09/28/orban-and-fico-lambast-eu-at-130th-anniversary-of-maria-valeria-bridge.

Frank, Cornelia 2011. "Comparing Germany's and Poland's ESDPs. Roles, Path Dependencies, Learning and Socialization." In *Role Theory in International Relations*, edited by Harnisch, Sebastian, Cornelia Frank, Hanns W Maull, 131–146. Abingdon, UK: Taylor & Francis Group.

Genschel, Philipp, Lauren Leek, and Jordy Weyns. 2023. "War and Integration. The Russian Attack on Ukraine and the Institutional Development of the EU." *Journal of European Integration* 45 (3): 343–360. https://doi.org/10.1080/07036337.2023.2183397.

Goffman, Erving 1956. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. University of Edinburgh. Social Sciences Research Centre.

Grossman, Michael, Francis Schortgen, and Gordon M. Friedrichs. 2022. "Introduction: Defining Roles in a Polycentric World." In *National Role Conceptions in a New Millennium. Defining a Place in a Chancing World*, edited by Michael Grossman, Francis Schortgen, and Gordon M. Friedrichs, 1–22. New York, USA: Routledge.

Håkansson, Calle. 2023. "The Ukraine War and the Emergence of the European Commission as a Geopolitical Actor." *Journal of European Integration* 46 (1): 25–45. https://doi.org/10.1080/07036337.2023.2239998.

Harnisch, Sebastian. 2001. "Change and Continuity in Post-Unification German Foreign Policy." *German Politics* 10 (1): 35–60. https://doi.org/10.1080/09644000412331307384.

Harnisch, Sebastian 2011. "Role Theory. Operationalizing of Key Concepts." In *Role Theory in International Relations*, edited by S. Harnisch, C. Frank, and H. W. Maull, 7–15. Abingdon, UK: Taylor & Francis Group.

Hermann, Charles. F. (1990). "Changing Course: When Governments Choose to Redirect Foreign Policy." *International Studies Quarterly* 34 (1): 3. https://doi.org/10.2307/2600403.

Holsti, Kalevi 1970. "National Role Conceptions in the Study of Foreign Policy." *International Studies Quarterly* 14 (3): 233–309. https://doi.org/10.2307/3013584.

Juncos, Ana E., Marianna Lovato, and Karolina Pomorska. 2024. "Coordinative Europeanization and Russia's War of Aggression: How Crises Shape Europeanization Dynamics in EU Foreign Policy." *Comparative European Politics*. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41295-024-00390-8.

Juncos, Ana E., and Sophie Vanhoonacker. 2024. "The Ideational Power of Strategic Autonomy in EU Security and External Economic Policies." *JCMS Journal of Common Market Studies* 62 (4): 955–972. https://doi.org/10.1111/jcms.13597.

Karjalainen, Tyyne 2023. "EU Enlargement in Wartime Europe: Three Dimensions and Scenarios." *Contemporary Social Science* 18 (5): 637–656. https://doi.org/10.1080/21582041.2023.2289661.

Karjalainen, Tyyne, and Katariina Mustasilta. 2022. "War in Ukraine: The European Union Evolves as Putin Attacks." *Fiia Comment*. https://fiia.fi/en/publication/war-in-ukraine .

Lynch, Suzanne, Paola Tamma, Hans von der Burchard, and Hannah Roberts. 2022. "Tensions Flare Over the EU's New Irresponsible Big Spender: Germany." *Politico*, October 3. https://www.politico.eu/article/tensions-flare-over-the-eus-new-irresponsible-big-spender-germany/.

Martill, Benjamin, and Monica Sus. 2024. "Winds of Change? Neoclassical Realism, Foreign Policy Change, and European Responses to the Russia-Ukraine War." *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* https://doi.org/10.1177/13691481241280170.

Mead, George Herbert 1929. "National-Mindedness and International-Mindedness." *International Journal of Ethics* 39 (4): 385–407. https://doi.org/10.1086/intejethi.39.4.2377726.

Merton, Robert K. 1957. "The Role-Set: Problems in Sociological Theory." *The British Journal of Sociology* 8 (2): 106–120. https://doi.org/10.2307/587363.

Misík, Matús 2013. "How Can Perception Help Us to Understand the Dynamic Between EU Member States? The State of Art." *Asia Europe Journal* 11 (4): 445–463. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10308-013-0364-4.

Monde, Le. 2024. "Putin Says Russia Has Right to Strike Countries Supplying Weapons Used Against It." November 21. https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2024/11/21/putin-says-russia-has-right-to-strike-countries-supplying-weapons-used-against-it_6733625_4.html.

Mustasilta, Katariina, and Tyyne Karjalainen. 2025. "European Strategic Cultures in Flux? Case Study on the European Peace Facility." *European Journal of International Security*. https://doi.org/10.1017/eis.2025.10022

Nitoiu, Cristian, and Loredana Simionov. 2023. "A New Business as Usual? The Impact of the 'Resilience Turn' on the EU's Foreign Policy and Approach Towards the Eastern Neighbourhood." *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 31 (4): 1073–1085. https://doi.org/10.1080/14782804.2021.2023484.

Rabinovych, Maryna, and Anne Pintsch. 2024. "Political Conditionality as an EU Foreign Policy and Crisis Management Tool. The Case of EU Wartime Political Conditionality Vis-à-Vis Ukraine." *Journal of European Integration* 47 (4): 491–512. https://doi.org/10.1080/07036337.2024.2407091.

Reuters. 2022. "TotalEnergies Stays in Russia's Yamal LNG." December 9. https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/totalenergies-stays-russias-yamal-lng-source2022-12-09/.

Sanchez Nicolas, Elena 2023. "Spain and Belgium Increased Russian LNG Imports, Study Finds." *EUObserver*, October 31. https://euobserver.com/green-economy/157627.

Sauer, Piotr, and agencies. 2024. "Putin Warns That Russia Could Supply Arms to Other Countries to Strike West." *Guardian*, June 5. https://www.theguardian.com/world/article/2024/jun/05/russia-ukraine-war-us-weapons .

Siddi, Marco 2019. "Theorising Conflict and Cooperation in EU-Russia Energy Relations: Ideas, Identities and Material Factors in the Nord Stream 2 Debate." *East European Politics* 36 (4): 544–563. https://doi.org/10.1080/21599165.2019.1700955.

Siddi, Marco 2023a. "Europe's Energy Dilemma: War and the Green Transition." *Current History* 122 (842): 83–88. https://doi.org/10.1525/curh.2023.122.842.83.

Siddi, Marco 2023b. *European Energy Politics: The Green Transition and EU–Russia Energy Relations*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

Siddi, Marco, and Federica Prandin. 2023. "Governing the EU's Energy Crisis: The European Commission's Geopolitical Turn and its Pitfalls." *PaG*, 11(4). https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.v11i4.7315.

Strycharz, Damian. 2022. "Role Change and Russia's Responses to Upheavals in Ukraine." *Foreign Policy Analysis* 18 (4). https://doi.org/10.1093/fpa/orac017.

Sus, Monika. 2023. "Exploring the Dynamics of Policy Change in EU Security and Defence: Policy Entrepreneurs Behind the Strategic Compass." *West European Politics* 47 (4): 942–966. https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2023.2232704.

Tarasov, Andrei Tarasov, Claudio Christopher Passalacqua and Raffaele Ventura. 2024. "The Cherished Outcast: Italian Foreign Policy Change Towards Russia in the Cases of Georgia (2008), Crimea (2014), and Ukraine (2022)." *Italian Political Science* 18 (1): 34–56. https://doi.org/10.69101/IPS.2023.18.1.3.

Tewes, Henning. 1998. "Between Deepening and Widening: Role Conflict in Germany's Enlargement Policy." *West European Politics* 21 (2): 117–133. https://doi.org/10.1080/01402389808425247.

Thies, Cameron. 2017. "Role Theory and Foreign Policy." *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies*. https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190846626.013.291.

Thies, Cameron G. and Leslie Wehner. 2023. "Role Theory and Political Shocks." In *Shocks and Political Change. A Comparative Perspective on Foreign Policy Analysis*, edited by Thompson, William R. and Thomas J. Volgy, 85–99. Springer.

Wehner, Leslie E. 2025. "Gradual Change in Foreign Policy: A Role-Theoretic Approach." *International Studies Perspectives*. https://doi.org/10.1093/isp/ekaf007.

Annex I – List of interviewees

Interviews were conducted in 2023 in Kyiv, Chisinau, Warsaw, Bucharest, Helsinki, Copenhagen, Berlin, Paris and Brussels. State leadership here refers to the President, Prime Minister, Foreign Minister or Defense Minister.

Code	Title, Month
1	Official in a Leadership Position, MFA of France, November
2	Official in a Leadership Position, MFA of France, November
3	Official in a Leadership Position and Senior Official, MFA of France, November
4	Official in a Leadership Position and Senior Official, MoD of France, November
5	Official in a Leadership Position and Senior Official, MoD of France, November
6	Senior Official, MFA of France, November
7	Senior Official, MFA of France, November
8	Official, MFA of France, November
9	French Diplomat, November
10	French Diplomat, October
11	Former State Leadership of Poland, October
12	Official in a Leadership Position, MFA of Poland, October
13	Official in a Leadership Position, MFA of Poland, October
14	Two Senior Officials, a Polish national security organization, October
15	Official in a Leadership Position, MFA of Poland, October
16	Two Polish Diplomats, July
17	Two Romanian diplomats, June
18	Romanian diplomat, June
19	Official in a Leadership Position, Federal Chancellery of Germany, October
20	Official in a Leadership Position, MoD of Germany, October
21	Senior Official, FFO and MoD of Germany, October
22	Official, FFO of Germany, October
23	Official, FFO of Germany, October
24	Two German diplomats, June
25	Two German Diplomats, June
26	German Diplomat, September
27	German diplomat, June
28	Expert, Major German Political Party, October
29	Expert, Major German Political Party, October
30	Expert, Major German Political Party, October
31	Senior Official, MFA of Denmark, December
32	Senior Official, MFA of Denmark, December
33	Senior official, MoD of Finland, October
34	Official, MoD of Finland, November
35	Two Finnish Diplomats, October
36	Finnish Diplomat, June
37	Finnish Diplomat, June
38	Finnish Diplomat, September
39	Finnish Diplomat, June
40	Swedish Diplomat, December
41	Swedish Diplomat, October
42	Official in a Leadership Position, MFA of Moldova, May
43	Senior official, MFA of Moldova, May
44	Moldovan CSO leader, May
45	Former state leadership of Ukraine, November
46	Official in a Leadership Position and Senior Official, MFA of Ukraine, November
47	Official, MFA of Ukraine, November
48	Former Official, a Ukrainian national security organization, November
49	Former Senior Official, a Ukrainian national security organization, November
50	A Senior Expert, Verkhovna rada, November
51	Official in a Leadership Position, EEAS, June
52	Senior Official, EEAS, June
53	Official in a Leadership Position, EUMAM Ukraine, October