

Mapping, Analysing and Debating the European Union's Actions as a Diplomatic Actor

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Introduction

“Democracy is Europe’s most powerful diplomatic tool. It is essential to our security, the stability in our region, and to the well-being of our societies. Our work to uphold democracy globally has never been so important.” - Ursula von der Leyen

Negotiations, sanctions and maintaining full transparency among the European Union (EU) member states are factors of prime importance for safeguarding the EU's diplomatic role of guaranteeing effective cooperation among its members and strategic problem solving. Additionally, this is nowadays facilitated through the establishment of the European External Action Service (EEAS) in late 2010 following the Haiti earthquake, allowing the EU to delegate its powers in diplomacy- and foreign defence matters to the EEAS. Since then, there have been ‘ups and downs’ in the consistency of the EEAS response to crises, especially concerning international conflicts in its early establishment such as the Arab spring. Interestingly, the EU member states are often deeply divided when it comes to agreeing on how far-reaching diplomatic assistance should be, and if there should be any to begin with; understandably these sabotages the overall aim of the EEAS in providing humanitarian assistance and conflict resolution where possible. Thus, it is questionable if the EU’s diplomatic assistance will ever come ‘full-circle’, a point where its own member states will cease to hinder its overall mission and for the Union to achieve a consistent response.

Within this body of work, the authors will be exploring a range of events which took place after the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty and after the formation of the EEAS in 2010. Most notably, the timeframe of 2010 was deliberately selected as it is often infamously referred to as the point of first-time active collaboration between the Union and its Member States. Overall, this paper will explore how major political events have shaped and influenced the EU’s foreign diplomatic policy and if its response was beneficial or disadvantageous to the situation in question.

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2010: EEAS and Arab Spring

During 2010 the most notable diplomatic development can be classified as the formation of the EEAS. Following the Haiti earthquake earlier that year, this monumental event can be seen as the first time of active collaboration between the EU and Foreign Policy Actors concerning external action services.¹ Its unspoken aim lies within introducing key coordination between the Commission, Council of Europe and Member States utilizing tools such as mediation.² Allowing the EEAS to resolve disputes between third countries, the EU and other international actors, it can be a useful tool in diplomatic conflicts. Interestingly the project found itself initially to be between two situations of: either satisfying the EU's external policies on a global playing field or focusing on external governance within the Union itself; and as a newly established institution it is not likely to satisfy both points immediately.³ While its concept has a stance within global politics, the EEAS still faces many far-reaching issues primarily concerning initiating multilateral action which many, such as hardliners, are still opposed to.⁴

Not soon after, the infamous targeted anti-government protests started within multiple Arab countries which are now also known as the Arab Spring. Lasting until late 2012, with noticeable effects still nowadays, these series of demonstrations were sparked by the initial uprising against police corruption and governmental mistreatment in Tunisia.⁵ Triggered by Mohamed Bouzazi, a 'national hero', who, after being threatened and humiliated by government officials for selling fruit without a license, set himself on fire in front of a government building, the movement primarily started to spread through social media.⁶ Step by step more unrest within the Arab nation was set off within countries such as Egypt and Yemen, which similar to the situation in Tunisia, resulted in the rulers being forced out of power.⁷ Especially within Libya the situation quickly escalated and then collapsed into civil unrest, which is still ongoing today.

¹Jozef Bátora and David Spence, 'Introduction: The EEAS as a Catalyst of Diplomatic Innovation' In: David Spence and Jozef Bátora (eds) *The European External Action Service* (Palgrave Macmillan 2015) 4-5.; 'Haiti and the EU' (*EEAS - European External Action Service - European Commission*, 2016) <https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/israel/13873/haiti-and-eu_en> accessed 18 March 2022.

² 'About The European External Action Service (EEAS)' (*EEAS - European External Action Service - European Commission*, 2019) <https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/82/about-european-external-action-service-eeas_en> accessed 18 March 2022.

³ Bátora and Spence (n 1) 4-5.

⁴ Kooops J, and Macaj G, *The European Union As A Diplomatic Actor* (1st edn, Palgrave Macmillan 2015) 40-41.

⁵*Policy Area: The EU and the Arab Spring* (European Union Center of North Carolina - EU Briefings 2012) 2-4 <https://europe.unc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/314/2016/11/Brief_EU_Arab_Spring_2012.pdf> accessed 18 March 2022.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid 2-5.

It holds a crucial message; overthrowing a government is simply easier than building a stable, democratic, and just system on no existing grounds. A democracy is largely supported by the link between freedom of speech and other related liberties such as equality – if these are constrained, a democracy cannot exist.⁸

Due to the event's violent nature as well as the oil and gas stability the middle east and south Mediterranean offers, the Arab spring was a golden opportunity for the EU to become more involved in the matter to fund new relations. Promoting a political reform through mere economic liberalization, for example by initiating free trade and eliminating subsidies proved itself to be ineffective.⁹ Instead, the EU immediately responded with humanitarian protection of 30 million Euros to Libya, Tunisia as well as Egyptian borders, cooperation and evacuation as well as supporting a democratic transition. In the long-term policies such as complex trade agreements as well as sanctioning non-compliance were of primary importance in order to enhance cooperation between the EU and Mediterranean.¹⁰ In addition, the EEAS was able to establish an office within Benghazi in May 2011 before the situation could in any way shape or form be stabilized, a small victory.¹¹

Most notably, the Support for the Partnership Reform and Inclusive Growth (SPRING) fund was established; a budget primarily set up to initiate and support political reform among the Arab states.¹² With a core value of 350 million Euros to cover the years of 2011 and 2012, SPRING's aim was to promote jobs, democracy, higher education as well as other core EU values.¹³ However, the fund was nevertheless limited, far from the requested needs of the countries and the criteria for the money's allocation remained largely unclear - as a result, humanitarian aid could not always be guaranteed.¹⁴

The EU's approach was very much focused on creating a so-called 'deep-democracy' founded on core EU values such as equality, an independent judiciary and calling for awareness

⁸ Beata Paragi, 'Eastern and Western Perceptions on EU Aid in Light of the Arab Spring' (2015) 11(1) *Democracy and Security* 60, 63 <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/48602358>> accessed 28 March 2022.

⁹ Edward Burke, 'Running into the sand? The EU's faltering response to the Arab revolutions' (Centre for European Reform 2013) 6-7 <https://www.cer.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/attachments/pdf/2013/esy_cb_arab_18dec13-11005.pdf> accessed 18 March 2022.

¹⁰ Commission, 'Joint Communication to the European Council, The European Parliament, The Council, The European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: A Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean' COM (2011) 200 final.

¹¹ *Policy Area: The EU and the Arab Spring* (n 5) 3-5.

¹² Sven Biscop, Rosa Balfour and Michael Emerson, 'An Arab Springboard For EU Foreign Policy?' (2012) 54 *Egmont Papers - The Royal Institute for International Relations* 30 <http://aei.pitt.edu/47691/1/Arab_Springboard_for_EU_Foreign_Policy.pdf>.

¹³ *Ibid* 30-31.

¹⁴ Burke (n 9) 6-7.

of the diversity of people.¹⁵ A democracy can only be built in a sustainable way if there is enough collaboration between the people and the government, mostly by delegating their official powers to NGOs and other civil structures. This proves itself to be especially true within the Arab nation, where society is based on cultures, traditions, and religious beliefs; thus, it is of even greater importance for the government to work on establishing core shared values and exercising in a tolerant and inclusive manner. This avoids corruption and unequal distribution of wealth, thus not giving individuals an incentive to rebel against the status-quo.¹⁶

While the EU was one of the first countries to comment on the situation and provide somewhat sufficient help, there are mixed responses between European citizens and individuals living within the aid recipient countries. According to the Eurobarometer 405, citizens of donor countries, primarily situated within the EU's richer countries in northern Europe, were more inclined to provide help for developing countries.¹⁷ This approach is far less visible in the southern and eastern regions of Europe, which can be linked back to the poverty-stricken nature of their respective countries.¹⁸ In aid recipient countries, especially when looking at Egypt, the Arab Barometer shows that only 32.1% of people who were questioned believe that the EU's influence in supporting democratic values within the country has been positive/somewhat positive. This number hit an all-time low in 2013 and 2014 with only 6-12% of citizens agreeing.¹⁹ A probable cause of these low numbers is official propaganda targeting foreign interference, the Egyptian revolution of 2011 as well as the military takeover in 2013, which led to the EU suspending its SPRING funding program.²⁰ In order for the EU to provide adequate aid towards the countries in need, it would have been beneficial to specify policy goals with the members to act as a Union, together. Moreover, evaluating the foreign policy input, output, outcome and long-term impact of the decisions could prove beneficial in structuring a sufficient response to the humanitarian crises.²¹

¹⁵Policy Area: *The EU and the Arab Spring* (n 5) 5-6.

¹⁶ Kalina Panayotova, 'Arab Spring: Hopes For Change And Challenges To The EU Foreign And Security Policy' (*Library.fes.de*) 3-5 <<http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/sofia/09400.pdf>> accessed 28 March 2022.

¹⁷ TNS Opinion & Social, 'EU Development Aid and The Millennium Development Goals' (European Commission 2013) 25-27 <https://www.ab.gov.tr/files/ardb/evt/EU_Development_aid_and_the_millennium_development_goals_2013.pdf> accessed 20 March 2022.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹'Wave II Public Opinion Survey' (*Arabbarometer.org*, 2011) <<https://www.arabbarometer.org/survey-data/data-downloads/>> accessed 20 March 2022.; 'Wave III Public Opinion Survey' (*Arabbarometer.org*, 2014) <<https://www.arabbarometer.org/survey-data/data-downloads/>> accessed 20 March 2022.

²⁰ Paragi (n 8) 69.

²¹ Joint Statement by the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council, the European Parliament and the European Commission, 'The European Consensus On Humanitarian Aid - The Humanitarian Challenge' (European Commission) 11, 14 <https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/media/publications/consensus_en.pdf> accessed 20 March 2022.

One of the main outcomes of the Arab Spring was the Arab Winter which consisted of many more uproars, among others including sustained civil and religious wars, as well as overall instability and even economic decline; these traits can still be seen nowadays, 11 years onwards.

2011: The First Libyan War

Muammar Gaddafi was the sole person in control of Libya, for 42 years. Nationalizing the western controlled oil industry, his people benefited to some extent from his dictatorship; primarily through free education and healthcare.²² However, by financially supporting international terrorist groups such as the IRA, in line with his anti-imperialist views, it was Gaddafi's foreign policy that made him an enemy of the west.²³ Once the USA invaded Iraq, Gaddafi feared that Libya could be next, thus he formally accepted responsibility for the Lockerbie Bombings and opened his oil reserves up to financial investments from the west.²⁴ However, what really sparked the Libyan revolution was Gaddafi's systematic abuses of the system as well as his inhumane treatment towards any opposition.²⁵

Similar to the Arab Spring Uprisings in late 2010, the Libyan civil war commenced with the arrest of human rights lawyer Fethi Tarbel. Triggering the February Revolution, protesters called for the release of such political prisoners as well as the capitulation of Libyans Dictator, Gaddafi.²⁶ While primarily being portrayed as peaceful protests by the western media, the uprising against Gaddafi soon became a militant rebellion by Islamic militias, often affiliated with terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda and later on ISIS.²⁷ On the 26th of February, the UN Security Council (UNSC) passed Resolution 1970 & 1973 urging member states to "take all means necessary (...) other than foreign occupation force".²⁸ These included a no-

²² Jos Kuiper, 'Understanding the European-Libyan relation - The changing geopolitical relation between Libya and the European Union through the cosmopolitical and economic globalist lens' (Conflicts, Territories and Identities thesis, Radboud University Nijmegen 2012) 74-75 <https://theses.uibn.ru.nl/bitstream/handle/123456789/2880/Kuiper%2C_Jos_1.pdf?sequence=1>; Tatenda Gwaambuka, 'Ten Reasons Libya Under Gaddafi Was A Great Place To Live' *The African Exponent* (2016) <<https://www.africanexponent.com/post/ten-reasons-libya-under-gaddafi-was-a-great-place-to-live-2746>> accessed 20 March 2022.

²³ Kuiper (n 22) 5-6.

²⁴ BBC News, 'Colonel Gaddafi 'Ordered Lockerbie Bombing' (2011) <<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-south-scotland-12552587>> accessed 20 March 2022.

²⁵ Kuiper (n 22) 55.

²⁶ Nicole Koenig, 'The EU and the Libyan Crisis: In Quest of Coherence?' (2011) IAI Working Papers 11/19, 2 <<https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/iaiw1119.pdf>>.

²⁷ Kuiper (n 22) 61.

²⁸ UNSC Res 1973 (17 March 2011) UN Doc S/RES/1973.

flight zone, an embargo placed on Libya, freezing Ghaddafi's assets and restricting him from leaving the country, as well as other efforts to protect civilians and encourage a democratic playing field as much as possible.²⁹ Moreover, the UNSC referred the matter to the International Court of Justice (ICC) for further investigation.³⁰ The EU Security Council implemented both Resolutions only two days after being established through Decision 2011/137/CFSP.³¹

As the rebels were taking over most of eastern Libya, the regime's response to this was filled with violence towards all citizens, ranging from incarceration to brutal killings. It was this alleged 'blood-bath' that was used to justify international intervention by the UN and other joint forces.³² Thus, in early March the UNSC voted to authorize military intervention, which was not supported by all nations, among others Germany who believed that such an armed interference would worsen the conflict.³³ Nevertheless, air-strikes led by France, Italy, the UK and the USA against pro Gaddafi forces began, which NATO soon took over by establishing Operation Unified Protector.³⁴

Interestingly, France had key interests in seeing Gaddafi out of power, due to the country's interest in Libya's oil production and preventing Libya from establishing its own pan-African currency independent of the influence and regulations of France.³⁵ It was such individual interests that really held a unified collaboration between the US and the EU back. Moreover, the EU took more than 6 months to establish a unified consensus on the situation and only recognized the National Transition Council (NTC) as the new government by late September.³⁶ Whereas France independently recognized the NTC as the only legitimate government of Libya from the get-go, which can probably be attributed to its own interests in seeing Gaddafi out of power.

By late March there were many discussions surrounding a ceasefire but, without a peace-treaty in mind nor a smooth transition into a new democratic power the crisis had resulted

²⁹ UNSC Res 1970 (26 February 2011) UN Doc S/RES/1970; UNSC Res 1973 (n 28).

³⁰ UNSC Res 1973 (n 28) 4.

³¹ Council Decision 2011/137/CFSP of 28 February 2011 concerning restrictive measures in view of the situation in Libya [2011] OJ L58/53.

³² Koenig (n 26) 3.

³³ Kuiper (n 22) 58-59.

³⁴ Koenig (n 26) 3.

³⁵ 'Wikileaks - Hillary Clinton Email Archive' (*Wikileaks.org*) <<https://wikileaks.org/clinton-emails/emailid/6528>> accessed 21 March 2022.

³⁶ Kateryna Ivashchenko-Stadnik, Roman Petrov, Luca Raineri, Pernille Rieker, Alessandra Russo, Francesco Strazzari, 'How the EU is facing crises in its neighbourhood: Evidence from Libya and Ukraine' (2017) EUNPACK Working Paper 1/2017, 12-13 <<http://www.eunpack.eu/sites/default/files/publications/D6.1%20The%20EU%20facing%20crises%20in%20its%20neighbourhood%20evidence%20from%20Libya%20and%20Ukraine.pdf>>.

in many casualties and was far from over.³⁷ Contrary to how NATO responded, the EU launched EUFOR Libya. Built on the insight of the EEAS, if requested by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (hereinafter referred to as OCHA), the mission would provide humanitarian assistance and evacuation for displaced people.³⁸ However, the UN OCHA never did and thus its headquarters were closed in November of 2011, stressing the lack of cooperation between EU institutions and well thought-through plans targeting an achievable result by the EU.³⁹

Neither NATO nor the EU were able to remove Gaddafi from power or succeed in implementing western-democracy traits within Libya, leading to a long-winded confrontation between loyalists and rebels for months with no end in sight. However, once the NTC seized power over Tripoli and killed Gaddafi by late August, it was able to declare the liberation of Libya and the Libyan people.⁴⁰

At the heart of the EU's response to the Libyan revolution was the EEAS which, as discussed earlier, was established right before the crisis occurred. It was supposed to allow the EU to communicate and speak as one entity, as well as ensuring consistency in its external actions.⁴¹ However, many issues occurred especially concerning communication to the public from EEAS representatives and communication between the EEAS and the European Council. Leaving the general EU population somewhat confused, this move was very counterproductive in the EEAS' mission.⁴² Moreover, the works of the EU within the Libyan crisis were incoherent with their general aim of imposing and encouraging a democratic government as well as providing active humanitarian aid, as their actions were simply too slow and too uncoordinated.⁴³ While they tried to take the necessary steps through for example EUFOR Libya and other cooperative measures with the UNSC, these measures proved themselves to only do the bare minimum, if that.⁴⁴ Notably, as Gaddafi was the only person in power, he had not built any institutions to delegate power to, thus there were no institutions for the NTC to delegate power to, in order to establish a functioning democracy. Furthermore, 'blindly' supporting the NTC without a peace-treaty, long-term plan of action and continuous

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Koenig (n 26) 4-5.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Kuiper (n 22) 63-64.

⁴¹ European Commission, 'Libya: EU Geared Up For The Humanitarian Challenge' (2011) <https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_11_983> accessed 21 March 2022.

⁴² Stelios Stavridis, "'EU Incoherence And Inconsistency Over Libya": Evidence To The Contrary' [2014] 89 Cahiers de la Méditerranée 159, 5-6 ; Koenig (n 26) 9.

⁴³ Koenig (n 26) 7-8.

⁴⁴ Ibid 11.

communication is unfavourable and as recent events confirm, instability through a ‘power vacuum’ within Libya only started once the NTC took control.⁴⁵

For the EU’s plan of action to have flourished, it would have been beneficial to avoid discrepancies among the members’ response as well as establishing unified vertical response at EU level.⁴⁶ Such cooperation is crucial in ensuring credibility and preventing long-term division between the member states. In addition, it would have been increasingly constructive to have a more proactive relationship between NATO and the EU itself. This would most importantly allow for uniform, targeted decision making which was needed in the Libyan crisis more than ever.⁴⁷

As the biggest donor, the EU has provided 84.3 million Euro for humanitarian aid since 2011 including around 9 million Euro in 2021, which shows its sustained involvement in supporting an independent democratic Libya.⁴⁸ Sadly, this fight is far from over and without the necessary corporations, the EU alone cannot consistently fight for diplomatic playing field with the same ‘ineffective’ measures.

2011: Syrian Civil War

As a spill-over effect from the Arab Uprisings in late 2010, the Syrian Civil war began in the city of Daraa, due to the imprisonment of 15 children who painted anti-governmental graffiti on a school wall.⁴⁹ Like the situation in Libya, events quickly escalated with a wave of demonstrations to which Bashar al-Assad responded with brutal targeted shootings at protestors, imprisonment and torture of any opposition.⁵⁰ As this civil uprising was violently suppressed by loyalists and Assad himself, protestors formed the Free Syrian Army (FSA) as the main military opposition to the Assad regime; it was at this time that the uprising transitioned into a civil war.⁵¹ Not soon after, the situation turned into a proxy-war due to the number of different nations, among others including the USA, Russia, Iran, the Gulf States and Turkey, supporting the rebels or the Assad regime and sometimes even directly intervening in

⁴⁵Kuiper (n 22) 77.

⁴⁶Koenig (n 26) 12-13.

⁴⁷Ibid 12.

⁴⁸ ‘Libya’ (*European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations*) <https://ec.europa.eu/echo/where/africa/libya_en> accessed 21 March 2022; European Commission (n 41).

⁴⁹ Zelal Başak Kizilkan, ‘Changing Policies of Turkey and the EU to the Syrian Conflict’ (Mardin Artuklu Üniversitesi 2019) 1-2 <<https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/641989>>.

⁵⁰ Itamar Rabinovich and Carmit Valensi, *Syrian Requiem* (Princeton University Press 2021) 42-43.

⁵¹ Robert M. Ker, *Syrian Civil War: the Essential Reference Guide* (ABC-CLIO, LLC 2020) xii.

the matter.⁵² In addition, through the various interventions of terrorist organizations and other militia such as the Islamic State (ISIS), Hezbollah or groups linked to Al-Qaeda, the war soon also showed transnational terrorist tendencies. Assad initially supported this by releasing more jihadist prisoners, making it more difficult for the west and other international actors to intervene.⁵³ Several years later, the Syrian war is more intense than ever with Bashar al-Assad still in charge.

Throughout the crisis, the EU responded relatively quickly to the conflict, by commenting on the situation and urging the government to listen to criticism from its citizens.⁵⁴ Only 2 months after the initial crack-down on the protesters, the EU issued its first sanctions against Syria. Most importantly, it suspended any cooperation with Syria under the EU Neighbourhood Policy, while also imposing unilateral monetary sanctions.⁵⁵ Moreover, the EU also froze the draft Association Agreement which it had entered into with Syria and shortly after, in September 2011, introduced an arms and crude oil embargo with the aim of forcing Assad to resign.⁵⁶ While the embargo seriously diminished Syria's economy, it did not have the desired effect – Assad remained in power and created alternative ways of sustaining arms trade from other countries such as China.⁵⁷ However, after those initial response mechanisms the EU could not agree on maintaining an embargo on crude oil and arms.⁵⁸ Although Germany consistently objected to this stating that the opposition groups would use such an 'opportunity' to prolong and potentially spread the war, the embargo was lifted in 2013 due to pressure from the UK and France.⁵⁹ From then onwards the Union's objectives were no longer clear as the EU's overall aim was no longer actively seeking to overthrow Assad but rather to minimise the impact ISIS had on the regions they were controlling. While this promoted inconsistencies, it also severely lowered the public's confidence in the EU's mission, which was yet another piece to the puzzle that made the EU's operation less effective.⁶⁰ In an effort to accelerate the situation, the EU introduced "*Towards a comprehensive EU approach to the Syrian crisis*",⁶¹

⁵² Rabinovich and Valensi (n 50) 48.

⁵³ Ibid 46.

⁵⁴ 'Syria: EU Response To The Crisis' (*Consilium.europa.eu*) <<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/syria/>> accessed 21 March 2022.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Kizilkan (n 49) 5.

⁵⁸ Official Journal of the European Union, Council 9 May 2011 Regulation No442/2011 of May 2011 Concerning Restrictive Measures in view of the situation in Syria; Chen Zhao and others, *Syrian Civil War And Europe* (1st edn, Routledge 2020) 22-23.

⁵⁹ Kizilkan (n 49) 6.

⁶⁰ Zhao and others (n 58) 23.

⁶¹ Commission, 'Towards a Comprehensive EU Approach to the Syrian Crisis' JOIN (13) 22 final.

a strategy which mainly consisted of an increased budget targeting humanitarian aid, supporting vulnerable individuals in need of evacuation or resettlement and preparing for the rehabilitation period.⁶² While being the biggest donor the EU's influence was severely diminished and hindered by the increasing involvement of other regional actors such as Russia or Iran.⁶³ The EU's strategy since then, as well as the Syrian war, have not changed much and have for the majority been dependent on providing humanitarian aid, political solutions, backing NGOs which support democracy and justice as well as pressuring its allies to ensure the same.⁶⁴

It is questionable if the EU's efforts can be seen as successful, as Assad is still in power and the war is still ongoing, thus obviously it did not fulfil its initial aim of removing his regime. Moreover, as the EU was consistently hindered through intervention by regional actors supporting the opposition or loyalists, as well as by the differing opinions of its own member states, its efforts had minimal effect.⁶⁵ The Union could collaborate with the UNSC using sanctions to target individuals as well as institutions which could repress violence. Moreover, having a uniform response mechanism and being 'on the same page' with all its members could be a step in the right direction, restoring the general population's faith in its operation.⁶⁶ Notably, sanctions alone are not a sufficient means in stopping the acceleration of the war, the EU, alongside them, should establish concrete goals that they want to achieve in the long run, which could elevate their effectiveness.⁶⁷ Throughout the years, the EU set concrete goals on 6 specific areas of primary concern to place their focus on such as ending the war in Syria and promoting democracy etc.⁶⁸ It is yet to be seen if these goals alongside the Sanctions will help end the Syrian civil war for good.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Çiğdem Nas, 'The EU's Approach to the Syrian Crisis: Turkey as a Partner?' (2019) 16(62) *Uluslararası İlişkiler* 45, 53.

⁶⁴ Rim Turkmani and Mustafa Haid, 'The Role Of The EU In The Syrian Conflict' (2016) 10 <https://brussels.fes.de/fileadmin/public/editorfiles/events/Maerz_2016/FES_LSE_Syria_Turkmani_Haid_2016_02_23.pdf> accessed 26 March 2022.

⁶⁵ Muriel Asseburg, and Heiko Wimmen, 'Civil War in Syria: External Actors and Interests as Drivers of Conflict' (2012) 43 *SWP Comments*, 3-4 <https://www.swp-berlin.org/publications/products/comments/2012C43_ass_wmm.pdf>.

⁶⁶ Turkmani and Haid (n 64) 17-18.

⁶⁷ Kizilkan (n 49) 14.

⁶⁸ 'Syria: EU Response To The Crisis' (n 54).

2013: Euromaidan

Triggered by the failed Association Agreement (AA) EU-Ukrainian deal aimed at strengthening the parties political ties, Euromaidan or later the ‘Revolution of Dignity’ symbolized immense civil unrest and pressure from society against the kleptocratic Ukrainian leadership.⁶⁹ Gathering on the Maidan Nezalezhnosti, Kyiv’s Independence Square, individuals were protesting against the post-soviet ideals of corruption and nepotism as well as overthrowing President Viktor Yanukovich’s regime;⁷⁰ The protests underlying aim however resided within breaking away from Ukraine Russian influence and joining the Union as a new member state.⁷¹ After a constant back and forth of 3 months, the winter-demonstrations reached a new climax when the police met opposition with violence and bullets, resulting in many deaths.⁷² Not soon after, Yanukovich was conveniently offered a \$15 billion financial deal by Russia, as well as a 33% discount on Russia’s natural gas – which Yanukovich gladly accepted.⁷³ As a result coupled with the announcement of an anti-protest law in early 2014, demonstrations yet again reached a new height; they were no longer political but rather a societal uprising against the government’s sustained violence and non-compliance. These riots were interestingly also experienced in Eastern parts of the Ukraine which are closer to Russia and therefore are usually more pro-communism and in support of Yanukovich.⁷⁴ Above all this signalled how universally dissatisfied citizens were with the overall response to the situation by both the Ukraine and Russia. By late February Yanukovich capitulated and shortly after fled the country after receiving asylum in Russia. Shortly after, an interim government

⁶⁹ ‘Ukraine - The Maidan Protest Movement’ (Encyclopedia Britannica) <<https://www.britannica.com/place/Ukraine/The-Maidan-protest-movement>> accessed 26 March 2022.

⁷⁰ Marik Dabrowski, Marta Domínguez-Jiménez and Georg Zachmann ‘Six years after Ukraine’s Euromaidan: reforms and challenges ahead’ (2020) 14 Bruegel Policy Contribution, 2 <<https://www.bruegel.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/PC-14-2020-final.pdf>> accessed 26 March 2022.

⁷¹ Kateryna Pishchikova and Olesia Ogryzko, ‘Civic awakening: The impact of Euromaidan on Ukraine’s politics and society’ (2014) Fride Working Papers 124/2014, 3 <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/182317/Civic%20awakening_%20The%20impact%20of%20Euromaidan%20on%20Ukraine's%20politics%20and%20society.pdf> accessed 26 March 2022.

⁷² Mychailo Wynnyckyj, *Ukraine’s Maidan, Russia’s War: A Chronicle and Analysis of the Revolution of Dignity* (Columbia University Press 2019) 7.

⁷³ Nadia Diuk, ‘EUROMAIDAN: Ukraine’s Self-Organizing Revolution’ (2014) 176(6) World Affairs 9, 9 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/43555086>> accessed 26 March 2022.

⁷⁴ Wynnyckyj (n 72) 9-10; Pishchikova and Ogryzko (n 71) 3-4.

was agreed upon which was later replaced by Petro Poroshenko.⁷⁵ As a direct consequence of Yanukovich's capitulation an economic decline was experienced throughout Ukraine which the International Monetary Fund tried to restore with no success.⁷⁶

The EU's reaction was timed well according to the protests, the measures included active communication through the European Parliament (EP) and its institutions, as well as the adoption of two resolutions, 2014/2595 (RSP) and 2014/2699 (RSP). While the EP was able to show its support for the opposition with these Resolutions "*condemning all forms of extremism and urging Ukraine to respect the rights of all national minorities*",⁷⁷ it would have been beneficial to also provide adequate humanitarian intervention, such as by providing forms of protection, due to the increased violence.⁷⁸ Being one of the largest pro-European demonstrations, it was sad to see that yet again one of the main difficulties was the non-existent coherence of the EU's policy. As many states had differing opinions on what would be the most beneficial solution, the democratic measures came late and uncoordinated which sadly led to them being less effective than planned.⁷⁹ An obvious step to resolve this in the future, is to have more active communication among member states representatives to establish thought through plans and measures which can be implemented when necessary. Through this the Unions actions will seem more coordinated and that will in turn guarantee public confidence. Moreover, only recently did the EU-Ukrainian relations flourish again when the AA finally entered into force in 2017 and became one of the most influential and advanced agreements the EU has ever entered into.⁸⁰ Even though the EU reacted promptly, it was not a diplomatic break-through - many people needed humanitarian assistance and sadly mere verbal warnings did not 'threaten' the Ukrainian nor Russian government into submission. Furthermore, to avoid future discrepancies between Russia and Ukraine would mean to have proactive

⁷⁵ VOA News, 'Yanukovich: I Was Forced To Leave Ukraine' (2014) <<https://www.voanews.com/a/yanukovich-i-was-forced-to-leave-ukraine/1861218.html>> accessed 26 March 2022.

⁷⁶ 'Ukraine - The Maidan Protest Movement' (n 69); Klant, 'Maidan, The Aftermath: Could The EU Have Avoided The Ukrainian Drama?' *Eyes on Europe* (2016) <<https://www.eyes-on-europe.eu/maidan-the-aftermath-could-the-eu-have-avoided-the-ukrainian-drama/>> accessed 26 March 2022.

⁷⁷ Directorate-General for External Policies: Policy Department, 'Human Rights In Ukraine And The EU Response, Including Relevant Activities Of The European Parliament' (Think Tank - European Parliament 2018) 23 <[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/603834/EXPO_STU\(2018\)603834_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/603834/EXPO_STU(2018)603834_EN.pdf)> accessed 26 March 2022.

⁷⁸ Ibid; Klant (n 76); Michael McCall, 'Determining A Successful Humanitarian Intervention' (*E-International Relations*, 2017) <<https://www.e-ir.info/2017/07/09/determining-a-successful-humanitarian-intervention/>> accessed 26 March 2022.

⁷⁹ Klant (n 76).

⁸⁰ 'Reinventing EU Neighbourhood Policy As A Development Exercise: The Case Of Post-Euromaidan Ukraine | Crossroads Europe' (*Crossroads Europe*, 2018) <<https://crossroads.ideason europe.eu/2018/09/13/reinventing-eu-neighbourhood-policy-as-development-exercise-the-case-of-post-euromaidan-ukraine/>> accessed 26 March 2022.

cooperation, agreements and treaties ensuring that both countries can co-exist peacefully. In addition, adequate sanctions should be in place for tackling the situation easily if these agreements are broken.

Ukraine and the EU, are both very much reliant on Russia due to their natural gas and oil reserves, which Russia very strategically uses to put pressure on them to conform in its interests.⁸¹ If the EU were to increase its renewable energy supplies, it could ‘win’ Ukraine over, allowing it to break away from Russia’s post-soviet influence.⁸²

The situation within Ukraine worsened after Euromaidan ‘ended’ and tension once again increased after Russia started the annexation of Crimea; while this would destabilize Ukraine’s economy, it also would unite its people and their pro-EU beliefs even more.⁸³ Crimea and the influence Russia had when the takeover occurred will be explored in a later section, where again the Unions Diplomatic measures and their effectiveness will be elaborated upon.

2013: North Korea Nuclear Testing

As the EU and international community, primarily support cooperation and integration among its members, it is a *de facto* advocate for disarmament of specifically nuclear weapons. Thus, when North Korea (DPRK) launched its 3rd nuclear test in 2013, it received widespread condemnation and criticism for threatening international peace and security.⁸⁴ This was a clear violation of multiple UN Security Council Resolutions which had been implemented consecutively since 2009 in response to DPRK’s nuclear testing.

Among others, the USA specifically called upon the international community and the EU as a whole to follow with sanctions to prevent further experimental launchings.⁸⁵ In order to sanction DPRK, only a few months later, the EU transposed UN Security Council Resolution 2087, which included economic sanctions such as banning certain exports and imports of

⁸¹ The Economist, ‘How Will Europe Cope If Russia Cuts Off Its Gas?’ (2022) <<https://www.economist.com/europe/2022/01/24/how-will-europe-cope-if-russia-cuts-off-its-gas/>> accessed 26 March 2022.

⁸² Eugene Chausovsky, ‘Ukraine Needs Energy Reform To Counter Russia’ *Foreign Policy* (2021) <<https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/11/17/ukraine-energy-diversification-russia-gazprom/>> accessed 26 March 2022.

⁸³ Dabrowski, Domínguez-Jiménez and Zachmann (n 70) 3.

⁸⁴ ‘North Korean Missile Launches & Nuclear Tests: 1984-Present’ (*Missile Threat: CSIS Missile Defence Project*, 2017) <<https://missilethreat.csis.org/north-korea-missile-launches-1984-present/>> accessed 26 March 2022.

⁸⁵ CBS News, ‘EU Slaps North Korea With More Sanctions’ (2013) <<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/eu-slaps-north-korea-with-more-sanctions/>> accessed 26 March 2022.

goods, as well as imposing a travel ban and freezing assets.⁸⁶ It's a great example of diplomatic cooperation between different states, which is of great importance especially when wanting to impose sanctions promptly and effectively. A crucial part of the EU's foreign security policy is 'warning' countries that if their wrongful behaviour does not stop, sanctions will be imposed. In this case it is the same thus, if the DPRK's nuclear testing continues more sanctions will follow; the aim is to prevent future issues from arising by scaring the country in question into submission.⁸⁷ However, if these are too harsh they can inflict harm on the individuals already suffering under the country's leadership.⁸⁸ This is particularly true in this case, where due to the already existing food shortage in DPRK, coupled with an imbalanced food-chain, due to the suspension of exports to DPRK, food prices were increasing making it more difficult for most individuals to obtain food.⁸⁹ While it is important to limit North Korea's nuclear activities, it should not come at the expense of the individuals already at a disadvantage under Kim Jong-un's dictatorship. To avoid this the EU could focus its foreign security policy primarily on negotiation with North Korea.⁹⁰

Notably such warnings are not always preventative – especially in this case, given that North Korea launched further tests throughout the years and recently in 2022.⁹¹

2014: Crimea

As a result of the Euromaidan uprising in late 2013, Russia used its ever growing power and influence to start the invasion and annexation of the now ex-Ukrainian Crimean Peninsula in the middle of 2014.⁹² Crimea is located near the black sea, a position where both Ukraine and Russia have had their naval bases in previous years due to the surrounding warm water as well

⁸⁶ 'EU Restrictive Measures Against North Korea' (*Consilium.europa.eu*) <<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/sanctions/history-north-korea/>> accessed 26 March 2022; Ramona Bloj, 'Sanctions, a privileged instrument of European Foreign Policy' (2021) 598 *European Issues*, 25 <<https://www.robert-schuman.eu/en/doc/questions-d-europe/qe-598-en.pdf>> accessed 26 March 2022.

⁸⁷ Bloj (n 86) 25.

⁸⁸ 'ODUMUNC 2020 Issue Brief: The Role Of The Sanctions In Diplomacy' [2020] UN General Assembly Fourth Committee: Disarmament, 1 <<https://www.odu.edu/content/dam/odu/offices/mun/docs/ib-4th-sanctions-in-diplomacy.pdf>> accessed 26 March 2022.

⁸⁹ *Ibid* 8.

⁹⁰ Bloj (n 86).

⁹¹ 'North Korean Missile Launches & Nuclear Tests: 1984-Present' (n 84); Gawon Bae and Junko Ogura, 'North Korea Conducts A Fourth Presumed Missile Test In A Month' *CNN* (2022) <<https://edition.cnn.com/2022/01/16/asia/north-korea-missile-test-intl-hnk/index.html>> accessed 26 March 2022.

⁹² Jonathon Cosgrove, 'THE RUSSIAN INVASION OF THE CRIMEAN PENINSULA, 2014–2015: A Post-Cold War Nuclear Crisis Case Study' (The Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory 2020) ix <<https://www.jhuapl.edu/Content/documents/RussianInvasionCrimeanPeninsula.pdf>> accessed 26 March 2022.

as its prime location for defence strategies.⁹³ This makes the port in Sevastopol a key part of Russia's strategy to control Ukraine especially after Yanukovich resigned or to invade countries where necessary.⁹⁴

The first pro-Russian and pro-Ukrainian demonstrations in Crimea were held in the beginning of 2014, just after the resignation of Yanukovich, signifying the inhabitants' support for the Russian regime.⁹⁵ While the ethnic majority within Crimea is Russian, the land was transferred to Ukraine in 1956 and has been internationally recognized as theirs ever since.⁹⁶ The Muslim Crimean 'Tatar', making up the minority of inhabitants within the Peninsula, are very opposed to the Russian regime due to the systemic suppression and deportations they have experienced during the USSR;⁹⁷ Once Russia took Crimea, these individuals were once again incarcerated and suppressed - repeating crimes against humanity.⁹⁸ In March 2014, with the general focus on Kyiv and the Euromaidan protest, Russia invaded Crimea and requested to use force within the Ukraine to protect Russian interests. While this was severely condemned by both the EU and the USA, Russia was granted their request by the Federal Assembly of Russia which significantly facilitated Crimea's annexation.⁹⁹ Shortly after, the Supreme Council of Crimea declared the peninsula's independence, which was confirmed by a referendum on March 16th, despite its international illegitimacy.¹⁰⁰ With its takeover, the "Ukraine lost 80% of oil and gas deposits in the black sea and a significant part of the port infrastructure due to the annexation of Crimea",¹⁰¹ as Ukrainians former Energy Minister stated. Making Ukraine even more dependent on Russia this was a strategic move, following Euromaidan a few months prior where Russia offered Ukraine a \$15 billion deal. Moreover, through the invasion, Vladimir Putin was able to destabilize the Ukraine further by preventing

⁹³ 'Crimea's Strategic Value To Russia' <<https://www.csis.org/blogs/post-soviet-post/crimeas-strategic-value-russia>> accessed 26 March 2022.

⁹⁴ Caroline Mortimer, 'Ukraine Crisis: Why Is Crimea So Important To Russia?' *The Independent* (2014) <<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/ukraine-crisis-why-is-crimea-so-important-to-russia-9166447.html>> accessed 26 March 2022.

⁹⁵ Wynnycykj (n 72) 142.

⁹⁶ Mortimer (n 94).

⁹⁷ Матвійчук Микола, 'Deportation Of The Crimean Tatar People: History Of Genocide' *Crimea Media* <<https://crimea.suspilne.media/en/articles/71>> accessed 26 March 2022.

⁹⁸ Katerina Dee, 'Repeating History: Russia Inflicting Crimes Against Humanity Upon the Crimean Tartars' (2021) 36(2) *American University International Law Review* 287 <<https://digitalcommons.wcl.american.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2063&context=auilr>> accessed 26 March 2022.

⁹⁹ Cosgrove (n 92) 12.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid 14.

¹⁰¹ Ukrinform, 'Ukraine Loses 80% Of Oil And Gas Deposits In Black Sea Due To Annexation Of Crimea' (2019) <<https://www.ukrinform.net/rubric-economy/2644538-ukraine-loses-80-of-oil-and-gas-deposits-in-black-sea-due-to-annexation-of-crimea.html>> accessed 26 March 2022.

a possible accession to the EU, increasing his influence in Ukrainian politics and everyday life¹⁰²

Despite the significant signs of an annexation, such as discussions of separatism and secession on Russian TV, the EU nevertheless only reacted with mild economic access restrictions to the European market against Russian and Ukrainian officials on March 17th.¹⁰³ It then took until the end of June 2014 for the EU to impose an import ban on all goods from Crimea; sanctions which were again of a purely economic nature and only limited to a specific region.¹⁰⁴ In turn Russia imposed a ban on all foods coming from the west in August of 2014.¹⁰⁵ In that regard, Russia acted more harshly compared to the Union which only imposed restrictions once Crimea had already fallen subject to a takeover. Therefore, it would have been better if the EU imposed preventative measures such as threatening to impose specific sanctions to all of Russia if Russia marches into Crimea and further ones if they take it over. However, since the EU remains dependent on Russia, due to oil and gas imports, it would severely harm the EU's economy if it would restrict all forms of trade with Russia.¹⁰⁶ Moving away from fossil fuels and investing in renewable energies, as explained in the Euromaidan section, could in the long-term prove to be a valuable asset the EU could use to step away from relying on Russian oil and gas.¹⁰⁷ Especially Germany, which is one of the most influential European countries, has strong economic ties with Russia through Nord Stream 1 & 2.¹⁰⁸ Running from Russia into Germany, Nord Stream 1 supplies Germany with much needed gas due to the increasing natural gas prices among Europe.¹⁰⁹ Without it, Germany would not be able to supply enough gas for heating to

¹⁰² 'Ukraine - The Crisis In Crimea And Eastern Ukraine' (*Encyclopedia Britannica*) <<https://www.britannica.com/place/Ukraine/The-crisis-in-Crimea-and-eastern-Ukraine>> accessed 26 March 2022.

¹⁰³ 'EU Restrictive Measures In Response To The Crisis In Ukraine' (*Consilium.europa.eu*) <<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/sanctions/restrictive-measures-ukraine-crisis/>> accessed 26 March 2022.

¹⁰⁴ 'Timeline - EU Restrictive Measures In Response To The Crisis In Ukraine' (*Consilium.europa.eu*) <<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/sanctions/ukraine-crisis/history-ukraine-crisis/>> accessed 26 March 2022.

¹⁰⁵ Edward Hunter Christie, 'Sanctions After Crimea: Have They Worked?' (*NATO Review*, 2015) <<https://www.nato.int/docu/review/articles/2015/07/13/sanctions-after-crimea-have-they-worked/index.html>> accessed 26 March 2022.

¹⁰⁶ Congressional Research Service, 'Russia's Nord Stream 2 Natural Gas Pipeline To Germany Halted' (2022) <<https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF11138>> accessed 26 March 2022.

¹⁰⁷ Jen Kirby, 'The Pipeline At The Center Of Geopolitical Drama' *Vox* (2022) <<https://www.vox.com/22881709/nord-stream-2-russia-ukraine-germany-united-states-cruz>> accessed 26 March 2022.

¹⁰⁸ The New York Times, 'Germany Wants Its Russian Pipeline. German Allies Aren't Sure It's A Good Idea' (2021) <<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/12/28/world/europe/nord-stream-pipeline-germany-russia.html>> accessed 26 March 2022

¹⁰⁹ Congressional Research Service (n 106).

their population.¹¹⁰ Nord Stream 2 is a planned pipeline which is yet to be operated; however, it symbolizes that Germany and the EU to some extent tolerate Russia's unacceptable behaviour. Thus, there is no initiative for Russia to change its behaviour if there is inconsistency within the EU's response.¹¹¹ Finally, it would be beneficial for a peace agreement to be drawn up, as well as actively encouraging and facilitating constructive conversations between Russia and the Ukraine, with sanctions ready in place if cooperation would prove to be unsuccessful.¹¹²

The tension between Russia and Ukraine rises more and more each day, specifically with the recent deployment of Russian troops alongside the Russian-Ukrainian border; 8 years later, this dilemma is far from over.¹¹³

2014: Ebola Virus

Since Ebola was first discovered in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 1972, there have been around 12 confirmed virus outbreaks within West Africa.¹¹⁴ The largest Ebola outbreak that occurred in 2014 lasted up until 2016 and was initially reported in Guinea in late 2013 where a boy had supposedly been infected with the virus through contact with bats.¹¹⁵ Due to the pressing threat the world was facing, the EU allocated around 1.8 billion Euros to stopping the virus from spreading any further.¹¹⁶ In response, a high-level conference was held in late 2015 which had the aim of drawing up a complex plan to restrict the virus and establishing a long-term support- and recovery system.¹¹⁷ By then already thousands of people had died and the virus was spreading over Africa and into neighbouring continents; in hindsight it would have been beneficial to have such a conference at the beginning of the epidemic, to limit the spreading and to save more people especially because many individuals were uneducated about

¹¹⁰ The New York Times (n 108).

¹¹¹ Kirby (n 107).

¹¹² Anna-Sophie Maass, 'The Actorness of the EU's State-Building in Ukraine-Before and after Crimea' (2020) 25(2) *Geopolitics* 387, 396.

¹¹³ Paul Kirby, 'Why Has Russia Invaded Ukraine And What Does Putin Want?' *BBC News* (2022) <<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-56720589>> accessed 26 March 2022.

¹¹⁴ 'History Of Ebola Virus Disease' (*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*) <<https://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/history/summaries.html>> accessed 26 March 2022.

¹¹⁵ '2014-2016 Ebola Outbreak In West Africa' (*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*) <<https://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/history/2014-2016-outbreak/index.html>> accessed 26 March 2022.

¹¹⁶ European Commission, 'EU Response To The Ebola Outbreak In West Africa' (2015) <https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/fr/MEMO_15_5339> accessed 26 March 2022.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

the virus and how it was spreading to begin with.¹¹⁸ Most importantly however, the EU did provide adequate humanitarian aid, consisting of 70 million euros, which given the speed at which the virus was spreading was of fundamental importance. These funds were primarily used to provide treatment supplies, epidemic surveillance and education which are key in embanking the virus.¹¹⁹ Among other things, the EU also funded medical equipment, research for vaccinations and supported the national health care sector in underdeveloped areas which also helped building trust to local communities.¹²⁰

Throughout the epidemic around 11325 people had died from the viral hemorrhagic fever, while more 28600 people were infected with it when the outbreak was finally declared as over in 2016 .¹²¹ In 2019, a one dose vaccination was established which was then complemented by a two-step vaccine in 2020 however, due to its limited quantity and the unpredictable nature of the virus itself, authorities primarily reserved these doses for future events in case an outbreak occurred again.¹²² Thus, the Union alongside local authorities promoted continued handwashing and contact tracing paired with the vaccinations where necessary, which were found to be the most effective measures against the spreading of the virus.¹²³

Even though the initial Ebola help, prior to the epidemic outbreak, was slightly under-condensed, the EU nevertheless reacted in an effective manner once a larger spread was detected.¹²⁴ This can also be attributed to the good communication skills between the relevant authorities and the WHO monitoring the surrounding areas.¹²⁵ As the Ebola virus is not exterminated yet, it is highly unpredictable when and where an outbreak might occur. Therefore, the WHO and other actors such as the EU need to uphold adequate communication, in order to restrict an outbreak if one does occur in future settings.¹²⁶

¹¹⁸ 'Ebola Virus Disease: Vaccines' (*World Health Organization*, 2020) <<https://www.who.int/news-room/questions-and-answers/item/ebola-vaccines>> accessed 26 March 2022.

¹¹⁹ Commission, 'EU Response To The Ebola Outbreak In West Africa' (n 116).

¹²⁰ European Commission, 'Fact Sheets - Ebola' (European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations 2021) <https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/aid/countries/factsheets/thematic/wa Ebola_en.pdf> accessed 26 March 2022.

¹²¹ 'Ebola Outbreak 2014-2016 - West Africa' (*World Health Organization*) <<https://www.who.int/emergencies/situations/ebola-outbreak-2014-2016-West-Africa>> accessed 26 March 2022.; 'History Of Ebola Virus Disease' (n 114).

¹²² 'Ebola Virus Disease: Vaccines' (n 118).

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Cordelia E. M. Coltart et al., 'The Ebola outbreak, 2013-2016: old lessons for new epidemics' (2017) 372 *Philos Trans R Soc Lond B Biol Sci* 1721 <<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5394636/>> accessed 26 March 2022.

¹²⁵ Commission, 'EU Response To The Ebola Outbreak In West Africa' (n 116).

¹²⁶ 'Ebola Virus Disease: Vaccines' (n 118)..

2015: Restrictive Measures Against Iran - Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)

In 2015, the European Union took multiple diplomatic actions to international situations. One of these being the restrictive measures against Iran which were made to incite compliance with their international obligation on nuclear proliferation.¹²⁷

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which was implemented by the EU through legislation, was adopted in 2015 after almost a decade of resolutions and restrictive measures from the UN Security Council.¹²⁸ The restrictive measures, known as Resolution 2231(2015) were agreed upon by the UNSC, Iran and the “EU+3”, allowing specific exceptions to restrictive measures already in place as well as a schedule and termination plan for the restrictions.¹²⁹ Besides the restrictions set in the agreement, the European Union has imposed restrictive measures on the trade in several goods, financial sector, transport sector, human rights violations, and travel restrictions and asset freezing on individuals and entities.¹³⁰

On the implementation day of the agreement, 16 January 2016, the UN as well as the EU Council lifted certain nuclear economic and financial sanctions as set by the predetermined termination clause in the Resolution. It was determined, after verification from the International Atomic Energy Agency, that the sanctions on the issue had achieved their purpose as Iran had implemented all agreed upon measures.¹³¹ However, both the EU and UN have restrictive measures that are still enforced to this day.¹³² It can be questioned whether the operation in Iran was successful due to the still enforced restrictive measures, however, it is important to note that while the initial tensions were diffused through diplomatic action, it is still considered a risk area by international actors.

¹²⁷ ‘EU Restrictive Measures Against Iran’ (*Consilium.europa.eu*) <<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/sanctions/iran/>> accessed 26 March 2022.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Council of the European Union, ‘Iran: Council Lifts All Nuclear-Related Economic And Financial EU Sanctions’ (2016) <<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/01/16/iran-council-lifts-all-nuclear-related-eu-sanctions/>> accessed 26 March 2022.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² ‘EU Restrictive Measures Against Iran’ (n 127).

2015: Syrian War and Refugee Crisis EU Response

Perhaps the most important action by the European Union in 2015 is that of the Council's response to the conflict in Syria. The EU has been the largest contributor of humanitarian aid, in what is viewed as the largest disaster in recent history, seeing 11,7 million Syrian residents in need of aid while 5,6 million have fled the country.¹³³ As mentioned above, the Syrian refugee crisis was a direct result of the Syrian Civil War in 2011 and was influenced further by the Arab Spring in late 2010 early 2011.

While the Council has adopted sanctions in the area since 2011, the EU regional strategy for Syria and Iraq was adopted in March 2015 due to the perceived threat of Da'esh and other terrorist groups.¹³⁴ It was decided that the EU actions in the area would be made up of both its own and Member State actions, implemented and in compliance with the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, depending wholly on their need, feasibility and priorities.¹³⁵ The strategy included stemming the flow and dealing with returnees of foreign fighters to Syria and Iraq, providing support and increasing border security to surrounding States, supporting global efforts within police and judiciary cooperation, addressing evolving terror based propaganda methodologies and cooperation with the International Criminal Court in the investigation and collection of evidence against criminals.¹³⁶

On review of the strategy in 2016, the EU reported that its objectives remained valid and should be continuously pursued. However, it was noted that the situation had changed since the strategy's adaptation and that it needed changes.¹³⁷ As such, the Council adopted the EU strategy on Syria on 3 April 2017, focusing on six key areas: ending the war through a political inclusive transition, addressing humanitarian needs, promoting democracy, human rights, and freedom of speech, holding war crimes accountable, and supporting the resilience of the Syrian

¹³³ 'Syria: EU Response To The Crisis' (*Consilium.europa.eu*) <<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/syria/>> accessed 26 March 2022.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Council of the EU, 'Council Conclusions On The EU Regional Strategy For Syria And Iraq As Well As The ISIL/Da'esh Threat' (2015) 19 <<https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-7267-2015-INIT/en/pdf>> accessed 26 March 2022.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid 2.

population.¹³⁸ However, with the passing of a decade of ongoing conflict in Syria, the EU's involvement and its effectiveness should be analysed. The 2021 CRU report from Clingendael, the Netherlands Institute of International Relations, concluded that the EU failed to intervene effectively in the Syrian civil war due to its late implementation of non-coercive intervention tools which did not encourage the parties involved to compromise.¹³⁹ It was noted that, even if the EU and its Member States, all with varying policy differences, took a more direct approach to the conflict, it would not have been enough in comparison to the scale of tensions. Thus, the Unions should instead early on have used its diplomatic efforts to develop large-scale support with the same policies from other international actors.¹⁴⁰ If this had been done, the situation may have been different from its current status, as the EU renewed sanctions in 2021.¹⁴¹

2016-2017: Paris Agreement

The European Union has been one of the leading powers in combating climate change and showed instrumental diplomatic action in the creation of the Paris Agreement which entered into force on 4 November 2016.¹⁴² The agreement, being the first of its kind, brought together 190 parties in a “*universal, legally binding global climate change agreement*”.¹⁴³ Due to its ambitious scope, the agreement was decided to only enter into force when at least 55 States, representing at the very least 55% of global climate emissions, had entered the process of ratification.¹⁴⁴ As such, the EU needed to play an instrumental part in encouraging international cooperation on the issue of climate change.

The EU's work leading to the Paris Agreement started in October 2014 where the EU leaders, through the European Council, agreed on the Climate and energy policy framework for 2030, which most notably aimed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 40% by 2030.¹⁴⁵

¹³⁸ ‘Syria: EU Response To The Crisis’ (n 133).

¹³⁹ Clingendael: The Netherlands Institute of International Relations, ‘EU Institutional Policies And Interventions In The Syrian Civil War’ (CRU Reports 2021) <<https://www.clingendael.org/pub/2021/eu-relevance-in-the-syrian-and-iraqi-civil-wars/3-eu-institutional-policies-and-interventions-in-the-syrian-civil-war/>> accessed 26 March 2022.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Council of the EU, ‘Syria: Four New Ministers Added To EU Sanctions List’ (2021) <<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/11/15/syria-four-new-ministers-added-to-eu-sanctions-list/>> accessed 26 March 2022.

¹⁴² ‘Paris Agreement’ (*European Commission*) <https://ec.europa.eu/clima/eu-action/international-action-climate-change/climate-negotiations/paris-agreement_da> accessed 26 March 2022.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ European Council, ‘European Council (23 and 24 October 2014) – Conclusions’ (2014) EUCO 169/14, 24 October 2014.

Continuing this policy the Environment Council adopted a conclusion ahead of the 2015 UN climate change conference in Paris, in which the ministers agreed that the EU position would aim for “*an ambitious and durable legally-binding agreement*”.¹⁴⁶ Thus, they agreed that there was an urgency for global action, and that in order to achieve their goals they would play a leading role in negotiations contributing an articulated vision of its contents from the EU and its Member States.¹⁴⁷ Furthermore, the ministers and the Economic and Financial affairs Council agreed upon the EU’s climate finance, emphasizing the need for financial resources in helping developing countries reach their climate change goals.¹⁴⁸ After the Paris Agreement was reached in December 2015, the Foreign Affairs Council adopted a climate diplomacy action plan for 2016 in which the EU outlined its focus in encouraging global implementation of the Agreement.¹⁴⁹ It was decided that the EU would maintain climate change advocacy as a priority in diplomatic dialogues, support the implementation of the Paris Agreement, and increase efforts to address the nexus of climate change.¹⁵⁰ Furthermore, the Environment Council adopted a statement on the EU’s ratification of the Agreement, which gave a strong political message of its continued commitment.¹⁵¹

Since its entry into force in 2016, the EU has continuously shown utmost support for the Agreement with essential financial, policy and diplomatic strategies.¹⁵² Following the United States 2017 decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement, the Council adopted conclusions reaffirming that the Agreement is fit for its purpose and should not be renegotiated based on the US’s scepticism.¹⁵³ Furthermore, the Union took action in supporting the United Nations, and the other parties to the agreement, with special focus on the developing countries,

¹⁴⁶ Council of the EU, ‘EU Position For The UN Climate Change Conference In Paris: Council Conclusions’ (2015) <<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2015/09/18/council-conclusions-un-climate-change-conference-paris-2015/>> accessed 26 March 2022.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Council of the EU, ‘Council Conclusions On Climate Finance’ (2015) <<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2015/11/10/conclusions-climate-finance/>> accessed 26 March 2022.

¹⁴⁹ European Council, ‘European climate diplomacy after COP21- Council conclusions (15 February 2016)’ (2016) EUCO 6061/16.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Council of the EU, ‘Council Statement On The Ratification Of The Paris Agreement’ (2016) <<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/06/20/envi-statement-ratification-paris-agreement/>> accessed 26 March 2022.

¹⁵² ‘Paris Agreement On Climate Change’ (*Consilium.europa.eu*) <<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/climate-change/paris-agreement/>> accessed 26 March 2022.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

emphasizing that while it is ambitious in its purpose, the agreement allows each party to forge its own path in achieving its goals.¹⁵⁴

2018: Venezuelan Presidential Crisis

The 2018 Venezuelan Presidential Crisis was caused by the lack of a legally elected and sworn in president on the day a new presidential term began in January 2019.¹⁵⁵ The issue unfolded as Nicolás Maduro claimed the title of president on the grounds of being proclaimed as such by the Venezuelan electoral authority. However, the Venezuelan National Assembly, as well as over 50 other States, deemed the election illegitimate.¹⁵⁶ This result due to the fact that, the national constituent assembly, which organized the election, has been deemed illegitimate with no authority to perform that act, and the election itself proven to have violated a number of integral political rights, failed to show transparency, and made unethical use of a humanitarian emergency to coerce voters.¹⁵⁷ As a result, Juan Guaidó, as the President of the National Assembly, was sworn in as interim president in accordance with article 233 of the Venezuelan Constitution.¹⁵⁸ However, the issue remains as he cannot command his post effectively due to the fact that Nicolás Maduro is essentially a usurper of his title and authority, with a number of legal procedural problems arising from that.¹⁵⁹

As a result, a number of governments have officially recognized Guaidó as the interim president in order to pave the way for international representation in Venezuela and allow him to effectively conduct his affairs as interim president.¹⁶⁰ The EU took early diplomatic action to the situation in Venezuela urging them, already in 2016, to bring about political reconciliation in the country.¹⁶¹ Furthermore, in 2017, the Council adopted conclusions on targeted sanction on both legal basis and an embargo of arms and equipment, with the aim of

¹⁵⁴ Council of the EU, ‘Climate Change: The Council Reaffirms That The Paris Agreement Is Fit For Purpose And Cannot Be Renegotiated’ (2017) <<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2017/06/19/climate-change/>> accessed 26 March 2022.

¹⁵⁵ José Ignacio Hernández G., ‘Venezuela’s Presidential Crisis And The Transition To Democracy’ (Center for Strategic & International Studies 2019) 1 <https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/190125_Hernandez_Venezuela_pageproofs3.pdf> accessed 28 March 2022.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid 2.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid 3.

¹⁶¹ Council of the EU, ‘Council Conclusions On Venezuela’ (2016) <<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/07/18/fac-venuela-conclusions/>> accessed 28 March 2022.

encouraging peaceful negotiation of the current political crisis.¹⁶² After the presidential election in 2018, the EU issued statements both on its own and in cooperation with the G7 leaders rejecting the elections process on the basis of lack of democracy, transparency, and rule of law.¹⁶³ Afterwards, the Union called for additional sanctions that would not be of harm to the population, but would encourage working towards the international democratic standards.¹⁶⁴ On the 10th January 2019, the start of the Venezuelan presidential term, the EU issued a statement expressing its regrets that its call for a new election was ignored, and that the newly appointed President Maduro was non-democratically elected.¹⁶⁵ Furthermore, they issued a declaration condemning the violence of authorities against demonstrators and expressed full support for the National Assembly and Guaidó as Venezuela's legitimate body of government.¹⁶⁶ Throughout this, the EU worked for and established an international contact group on Venezuela with other Latin American Countries, through which they would work towards and promote a peaceful new election.¹⁶⁷ Throughout the long period of tension, violence and crisis that assumed in 2019, the EU issued and facilitated multiple calls for international cooperation in promoting peace, providing humanitarian aid, and condemning the human rights violations taking place.¹⁶⁸ In January 2021, following another unlawful and non-democratic election for the National Assembly which removed Guaidó and other members of the Assembly from their positions, the EU issued a statement of regret that the election had

¹⁶² Council of the EU, 'Venezuela: EU Adopts Conclusions And Targeted Sanctions' (2017) <<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2017/11/13/venezuela-eu-adopts-conclusions-and-targeted-sanctions/>> accessed 28 March 2022.

¹⁶³ Council of the EU, 'Declaration By The High Representative On Behalf Of The EU On The Presidential And Regional Elections In Venezuela' (2018) <<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2018/05/22/declaration-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-eu-on-the-presidential-and-regional-elections-in-venezuela/>> accessed 28 March 2022.

¹⁶⁴ Council of the EU, 'Venezuela: Council Adopts Conclusions' (2018) <<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2018/05/28/venezuela-council-adopts-conclusions/>> accessed 28 March 2022.

¹⁶⁵ Council of the EU, 'Declaration By The High Representative On Behalf Of The EU On The New Mandate Of President Maduro' (2019) <<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2019/01/10/declaration-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-eu-on-the-new-mandate-of-president-maduro/>> accessed 28 March 2022.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ European Union External Action Service, 'Remarks By High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini At The Press Conference Following The First Day Of Informal Meeting Of The EU Foreign Affairs Ministers' (2019) <https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/57481/remarks-high-representativevice-president-federica-mogherini-press-conference-following-first_en> accessed 28 March 2022.

¹⁶⁸ 'Venezuela: The Council's Response To The Crisis' (*Consilium.europa.eu*) <<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/venezuela/>> accessed 28 March 2022.

taken place in such a manner and emphasized that they would continue to work with the outgoing members of the National Assembly to bring back democracy in the country.¹⁶⁹

As the situation is still ongoing, it is difficult to fully report whether the diplomatic activities of the Union in the Venezuelan Presidential crisis have had substantially negative or positive effects. Currently, the EU has renewed the sanctions and restrictive measures for Venezuela a further 12 months until November 2022.¹⁷⁰

2019: Turkey Sending Troops into Syria

As a result of the Syrian war, Members of the European Union have seen a large number of refugees and asylum seekers arriving at their borders since 2011. Through the continuous growth of the crisis, it has led to a threat of the Union's hard achieved advances in integration as there lacked an essential mechanism to allow for sharing the burden.¹⁷¹ In an attempt to mitigate this, the EU entered into an agreement with Turkey in 2016, seeking to limit the number of asylum seekers who travelled through Turkey to EU territory.¹⁷² Through this agreement the EU aided with six billion Euros for what would be known as the *"EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey"*.¹⁷³ The statement of the EU-Turkey agreement stated that in return *"All new irregular migrants crossing from Turkey into Greek islands as from 20 March 2016 will be returned to Turkey"*.¹⁷⁴ The deal would send a message, both internally and internationally, of unity of the EU Member States even in times of crisis.¹⁷⁵

However, because of the increased pressure upon the State it allowed for an uprising of social tensions, dissatisfaction, and scepticism for the agreement. Especially in 2019, when

¹⁶⁹ Council of the EU, 'Venezuela: Declaration By The High Representative On Behalf Of The European Union' (2021) <<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/01/06/venezuela-declaration-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-european-union-on-the-situation/>> accessed 28 March 2022.

¹⁷⁰ Council of the EU, 'Declaration By The High Representative On Behalf Of The EU On The Alignment Of Certain Countries Concerning Restrictive Measures In View Of The Situation In Venezuela' (2021) <<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/11/26/declaration-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-eu-on-the-alignment-of-certain-countries-concerning-restrictive-measures-in-view-of-the-situation-in-venezuela/>> accessed 28 March 2022.

¹⁷¹ 'The EU-Turkey Deal, Five Years On: A Frayed And Controversial But Enduring Blueprint' [2021] *Migration Policy Institute* <<https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/eu-turkey-deal-five-years-on>> accessed 28 March 2022.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ European Parliamentary Research Service, 'Briefing: EU-Turkey Relations In Light Of The Syrian Conflict And Refugee Crisis' (European Parliament 2020) <[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2020/649327/EPRS_BRI\(2020\)649327_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2020/649327/EPRS_BRI(2020)649327_EN.pdf)> accessed 28 March 2022.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ 'The EU-Turkey Deal, Five Years On' (n 171).

Turkish President Erdogan's party suffered a major loss in local elections, political tensions heightened, and distrust rose of the refugee project, with some seeing the refugees themselves as being a security threat for the nation.¹⁷⁶ September 2019 became a catalyst for what would ultimately lead to a continuous strain on EU-Turkey relations, as the Turkish military sent troops into north-east Syria aiming to create a safe-zone for the Syrian refugees to return and integrate back into the country, an action called Operation Peace Spring.¹⁷⁷ These actions, as well as the 2016 failed military coup and general lowering of democratic standards led to the European Parliament ultimately requesting the Council and Commission to stop the ongoing talks of Turkish accession to the EU. Furthermore, it was decided that further diplomatic action should be considered such as suspending trade preferences on agricultural products and the Customs Union decided between Turkey and the EU, while still maintaining support for social and educational programmes.¹⁷⁸ While there has been criticisms of the deal from a humanitarian perspective, the European Commission has emphasized that it has brought positive results and is still a valid agreement, and leaders within both the EU and Turkey have shown continued interest in upholding the nature of the deal.¹⁷⁹

Nevertheless, it must be noted, with the events that transpired in 2020, that the EU-Turkey relations are severely strained. While 100% of the funding had been either spent or at least planned to be spent within 2020 for aid to Turkey, President Erdogan accused the Union of not upholding their agreement, threatening multiple times to open the borders allowing for an overflow of migrants into Greece and the rest of the EU.¹⁸⁰ This came to pass in February of 2020 with Erdogan stating *"We opened the doors... We will not close those doors ... Why? Because the European Union should keep its promises"*.¹⁸¹ In response the EU leaders visited Greece, which had called a state of emergency, providing political support and a show of unity, agreeing to aid Greece with humanitarian and financial assistance in the newly erupted crisis.¹⁸² However, a long-term solution to the issue is yet to be seen, as EU-Turkey relations have continued to rise in tension with lack of attention on supporting the Union's Member States with maritime borders.

¹⁷⁶ European Parliamentary Research Service (n 173).

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ 'The EU-Turkey Deal, Five Years On' (n 171).

¹⁸⁰ European Parliamentary Research Service (n 173).

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Ibid.

2019: China-US Trade War

Since the 2018 decision by the US to apply tax on the imports of Chinese produced solar panels and washing machines, the two states have taken to engaging in an extensive trade war, affecting the entire world as a whole, due to their high status in world trade.¹⁸³ The European Union, while having not been hit too harshly from the war, has had special interest in taking diplomatic action for reconciliation due to critical strategic interests, while both the US and China have been vying for their support on the matter.¹⁸⁴

While it is largely disputed whether the trade war would have negative or positive effects on the Union, being the largest economy in the world, the EU upholds its promotion of free trade and calls for reconciliation, not approving of the US imposed tariffs set upon China.¹⁸⁵ The Dutch minister of foreign affairs stated “*Nobody has an interest in a trade war and free trade is crucial for the Netherlands*”, a view largely shared by all Member States.¹⁸⁶ While the EU has not had to make a clear choice as of yet on the issue of which nation to support, with hesitation of the consequences of such a choice, they do share some concerns with the US about China.¹⁸⁷ However, the EU has also been subject to its own lesser form of trade war with the US as they in 2018 launched 25 percent tax on steel, and an additional 10 percent tax on aluminium from the EU with threats of further sanctions from the Trump administration.¹⁸⁸ However, with the most recent development in October of 2021, the US and EU came to an agreement easing the tariffs on EU steel and aluminium imports, additionally deciding to cooperatively come to a long-term policy plan against China.¹⁸⁹

Thus, while the EU took some diplomatic action encouraging negotiations during the US-China trade war, it seems that there is a general discourse on the level of approach that should be taken, with the US calling for the EU to take a much tougher approach against China.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸³ Sebastien Goulard, ‘The Impact Of The US–China Trade War On The European Union’ (2020) 12 *Global Journal of Emerging Market Economies* 56, 58.

¹⁸⁴ Maximilian Kärnfelt, ‘Europe’s Position In The US-China Trade Conflict: It’S The Exports, Stupid’ <<https://merics.org/en/short-analysis/europes-position-us-china-trade-conflict-its-exports-stupid>> accessed 28 March 2022.

¹⁸⁵ Goulard (n 183) 59.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid* 59.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid* 65.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid* 60.

¹⁸⁹ Steven Overly, ‘Trump-Era Tensions Set To Cool Under U.S.-EU Deal’ [2021] *Politico* <<https://www.politico.com/news/2021/10/30/us-eu-steel-dispute-resolved-517828>> accessed 28 March 2022.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid*.

2020: Covid Outbreak - Early Response

With the outbreak of Covid-19 in 2020, declared a global pandemic by the WHO on March 11, the European Union, while slow to respond initially, took far reaching measures both internally and globally to curb the spread of the pandemic and its effects.¹⁹¹ These efforts include donations of equipment, help in bringing stranded citizens of other nations home, and cross border treatment of patients when hospitals had reached capacity.¹⁹²

Throughout the pandemic the EU has funded various global research into the virus, starting already in January 2020.¹⁹³ Furthermore, the EU acted early in an immediate response to deliver aid to China through medical and protective equipment in February, also launching its own joint programme with the Member State to procure equipment, having more influence with the EU as one big buyer.¹⁹⁴ February 2020 also saw the implementation of the Commission's new aid package of 232 Million Euros to support global efforts to tackle the outbreak.¹⁹⁵ Furthermore, the EU made their standards for medical equipment freely available, helping both Member States and third- country companies with swift production.¹⁹⁶ During an extraordinary G20 leaders call in late March the EU reemphasized its full commitment to international cooperation in its response to the outbreak.¹⁹⁷ Additionally, provision of aid was made to countries such as Iraq and Jordan hosting large quantities of Syrian refugees with a first aid package of 240 million euros.¹⁹⁸ In April, the EU joined with various international actors to launch a pledging effort, calling for "*global action for universal access to affordable coronavirus vaccination, treatment and testing*".¹⁹⁹ Finally, the Union launched several measures of humanitarian aid for the worst affected areas throughout the world.²⁰⁰

¹⁹¹ László Andor et al, 'The European Response To The Coronavirus Crisis' (2020) 55(3) *Intereconomics* 132.

¹⁹² 'Coronavirus Response' (*European Commission*) <https://ec.europa.eu/info/live-work-travel-eu/coronavirus-response_en> accessed 28 March 2022.

¹⁹³ 'Timeline Of EU Action' (*European Commission*) <https://ec.europa.eu/info/live-work-travel-eu/coronavirus-response/timeline-eu-action_en> accessed 28 March 2022.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁵ European Commission, 'COVID-19: EU Working On All Fronts, €232 Million For Global Efforts To Tackle Outbreak' (2020) <https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_316> accessed 28 March 2022.

¹⁹⁶ European Commission, 'Coronavirus: European Standards For Medical Supplies Made Freely Available To Facilitate Increase Of Production' (2020) <https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_502> accessed 28 March 2022.

¹⁹⁷ European Commission, 'Joint Statement By President Von Der Leyen And President Michel Following The G20 Leaders' Videoconference' (2020) <https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/statement_20_537> accessed 28 March 2022.

¹⁹⁸ European Commission, 'EU Approves Close To €240 Million To Strengthen Resilience In Neighbouring Countries Hosting Syrian Refugees In Light Of The Coronavirus Pandemic' (2020) <https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_549> accessed 28 March 2022.

¹⁹⁹ 'Coronavirus Global Response' (n 192).

²⁰⁰ 'Timeline Of EU Action' (n 193).

2021: Afghanistan

In order to adequately grasp the concept of the recent event of the takeover of Afghanistan's capital Kabul by the Taliban, it is important to look at the situation from a 2001 perspective. After 9/11, the USA primarily had the goal of capturing Osama Bin Laden, the then leader of Al Qaeda, who had admitted to being 'behind' the attacks that shook the US earlier that year.²⁰¹ Primarily, the USA – when invading Afghanistan wanted to find Bin Laden, toppling the Taliban, an extremist Islam-oriented group which had taken over most of the eastern rural areas.²⁰² Secondly, they wanted to introduce Afghanistan to a democratic ideology with the help of the UN by creating a central government, building schools and health care facilities.²⁰³ However, because the Afghan government was stricken with corruption, many of the projects the USA had planned for introducing a democracy never actually took place.²⁰⁴ While the USA was occupied with invading Iraq in 2003, the Taliban started to regroup by recruiting many individuals from different Islamic faiths which allowed them to take control over more rural areas; throughout the years they were able to take over most land that wasn't already occupied by American troops.²⁰⁵ Moreover, this was primarily possible because the Taliban received support from Pakistan who trained, armed and educated their fighters possibly due to fear of being invaded by the Taliban in the future.²⁰⁶ Meanwhile in 2008, the USA made the decision of sending an additional 30 000 troops into Afghanistan for around 18 months, as a last resort before possibly withdrawing troops. This can also be seen as the monumental turning point or the beginning of the end.²⁰⁷ As soon as the US withdrew their troops and started relying on the Afghan army to lead the war, the Taliban, due to the corrupt government and lack of faith in it from society, were able to soon take over most parts of Afghanistan again.²⁰⁸ Under the Trump Administration, the Taliban were able to make a deal with the USA which would as one of the

²⁰¹ 'Timeline: U.S. War In Afghanistan' (*Council on Foreign Relations*) <<https://www.cfr.org/timeline/us-war-afghanistan>> accessed 28 March 2022.

²⁰² Griff Witte, 'Afghanistan War | History, Combatants, Facts, & Timeline' (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2021) <<https://www.britannica.com/event/Afghanistan-War>> accessed 28 March 2022.

²⁰³ 'Timeline: U.S. War In Afghanistan' (n 201); Suresh Kumar and Meha Pant, 'Un Involvement In Afghanistan' (2014) 18(3) *World Affairs: The Journal of International Issues* 116, 129 <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/48505112>> accessed 28 March 2022.

²⁰⁴ 'Timeline: U.S. War In Afghanistan' (n 201).

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁶ Witte (n 202).

²⁰⁷ Anna Shortridge, 'The U.S. War In Afghanistan Twenty Years On: Public Opinion Then And Now' (*Council on Foreign Relations*, 2021) <<https://www.cfr.org/blog/us-war-afghanistan-twenty-years-public-opinion-then-and-now>> accessed 28 March 2022.

²⁰⁸ Natascha Turak, Abigail Ng and Amanda Macias, 'Intelligence Failure Of The Highest Order' - How Afghanistan Fell To The Taliban So Quickly' *CNBC* (2021) <<https://www.cnbc.com/2021/08/16/how-afghanistan-fell-to-the-taliban-so-quickly.html>> accessed 28 March 2022.

conditions leave Afghanistan fully and this became reality within 2021. As soon as the US troops left, the government collapsed, and the Taliban were able to take over Kabul.²⁰⁹

A rule under the Taliban means a systematic oppression of women through denial of their basic human rights such as sustained education or the freedom to leave their houses without being accompanied by a male relative.²¹⁰ Moreover, women are obliged to wear a full body covering, the burqa, without which they are under no circumstances allowed to exit their homes.²¹¹ There is no security or safety which can be guaranteed to these women, and if a woman were to break these laws she would for example get beaten, or stoned to death.²¹² Since the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001, women were able to actively participate in the Afghan society with many being in lower and higher education as well as sustaining jobs ranking from engineers and athletes to doctors and business owners.²¹³

In response to those reoccurring human rights violations, the Council of the EU released that they would be partnering with the UN in order to stabilize the region and ensure humanitarian support.²¹⁴ Working together with the UN will allow the EU to achieve more far-reaching decisions which will allow for more adequate peacekeeping in Afghanistan.²¹⁵ Additionally, Secret General António Guterres appealed to the international community as a whole to act together to ensure adequate support will reach those in need. This task may seem simpler than it is; because there are many different countries with multiple ideologies tucked into the UN and its agencies it is difficult to find a general consensus on what should be done.²¹⁶

²⁰⁹Ibid; The White House, 'Briefing Room: Remarks By President Biden On Afghanistan' (2021) <<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/08/16/remarks-by-president-biden-on-afghanistan/>> accessed 28 March 2022.

²¹⁰ Heather Barr, 'List Of Taliban Policies Violating Women's Rights In Afghanistan' *Human Rights Watch* (2021) <<https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/09/29/list-taliban-policies-violating-womens-rights-afghanistan>> accessed 28 March 2022; Bart Édes, 'Afghan Women Under Taliban Rule' (*Observer Research Foundation*, 2021) <<https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/afghan-women-under-taliban-rule/>> accessed 28 March 2022.

²¹¹ Édes (n 210).

²¹² Sinéad Baker, 'Afghan Women Fear The Taliban Will Bring Back Harsh Restrictions, Such As Barring Them From Work, And Punish Rule-Breakers With Stonings' *Insider* (2021) <<https://www.businessinsider.com/taliban-rules-for-women-during-last-afghanistan-takeover-2021-8?international=true&r=US&IR=T>> accessed 28 March 2022.

²¹³ 'Afghanistan: Women Call On The International Community To Support Women's Rights Amid Ongoing Taliban Suppression - Amnesty International Canada' (*Amnesty International Canada*, 2021) <<https://www.amnesty.ca/news/afghanistan-women-call-on-the-international-community-to-support-womens-rights-amid-ongoing-taliban-suppression/>> accessed 28 March 2022.

²¹⁴ Council of the EU, 'Statement On The Situation In Afghanistan' (2021) <<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/08/31/statement-on-the-situation-in-afghanistan/>> accessed 28 March 2022.

²¹⁵ United Nations Regional Information Centre for Western Europe (UNRIC), 'How The European Union And The United Nations Cooperate' (2007) <https://unric.org/en/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/2021/02/Leporello_EU-VN_e.pdf> accessed 28 March 2022.

²¹⁶ 'How Decisions Are Made At The UN' (*United Nations*) <<https://www.un.org/en/model-united-nations/how-decisions-are-made-un>> accessed 28 March 2022.

What makes matters more complicated is that the 5 permanent members hold veto-power, allowing them to prevent a resolution from being adopted if they do not agree with its contents.²¹⁷

At present, the EU's primary concerns are to ensure that there will not be another uncontrolled influx of illegal immigration to and criminal activity linked to the Taliban in the EU.²¹⁸ Moreover, the EU was quick to evacuate any EU citizens and third country nationals which were working closely together with the EU and thus would have faced prosecution or worse.²¹⁹ Admittedly, to date the EU's handling of the Kabul takeover in late last year has been somewhat prompt and effective; it will be interesting to see if the UN and EU can reach an agreement together on their collaboration in specifically ensuring human rights will be respected by the Taliban rule.

2021: Russia-Ukraine

Russo-Ukrainian relations have been at an all-time low since early 2021 when Russia deployed 100 000 soldiers and equipment near their shared border, being the first mobilization of such forces since the annexation of Crimea in 2014.²²⁰ Moreover, in late 2021 the USA and NATO warned the international community that Russia may be preparing to invade Ukraine.²²¹ The EU, US and certain individual states such as Denmark have openly stated that sanctions will be imposed if Russia will try to invade Ukraine. So far, the EU has given macro-financial assistance worth 1.2 billion Euros "to support Ukraine in the medium and long-term".²²² This package allows Ukraine to make independent decisions as a free country and to step away from the Russian influence. Considering that the conflict is still 'in the making' we have yet to see what kind of sanctions the EU and other actors have planned to introduce if an invasion does

²¹⁷ 'Voting System' (*United Nations*) <<https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/voting-system>> accessed 28 March 2022.

²¹⁸ Council of the EU, 'Statement On The Situation In Afghanistan' (n 214).

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Matthew Chance and Laura Smith-Spark, 'Tensions Are High On Ukraine's Border With Russia. Here's What You Need To Know' *CNN* (2022) <<https://edition.cnn.com/2022/01/20/europe/ukraine-russia-tensions-explainer-cmd-intl/index.html>> accessed 28 March 2022.

²²¹ Teri Schultz, 'Russia Has Been Warned: So Will NATO Defend Ukraine?' *DW* (2021) <<https://www.dw.com/en/russia-has-been-warned-so-will-nato-defend-ukraine/a-59983502>> accessed 28 March 2022.

²²² Ursula von der Leyen, 'The EU Stands By Ukraine. We Are Firm In Our Resolve' (*Twitter*, 2022) <<https://twitter.com/vonderleyen/status/1485568283818569728>> accessed 28 March 2022.

occur.²²³ For the time being, it would be important for the EU to act as a whole, to convey a uniform picture and to provide support as well as humanitarian assistance to the Ukrainian citizens and country as a whole. Moreover, as stated by Joseph Borrel it is crucial to build up “Ukraine’s internal resilience (to) increase Ukraine’s capacity to resist external challenges. Strengthening anti-corruption efforts, pursuing judicial reforms and building stronger democratic institutions are the best ways to face Russian pressure.”²²⁴ This can primarily be achieved through targeted sanctions which are most effective if bigger actors such as the USA and EEAS as well as the EU act together.²²⁵ This conveys a sense of unity as well as showing that they will and can stand up against Russia.²²⁶

Update: Since the last time this timeline was updated, many major events shook Ukraine - primarily Putin’s invasion on February 24th 2022 and consequences stemming from it.²²⁷ In an overall picture, Putin sees NATO and the West as ever-growing threats to not only the Russian government but mainly to the old USSR ideologies that he and his supporters hold onto. Many post-Soviet countries are now members of NATO, with only a few being left out, most notably Ukraine.²²⁸ But with the steady decline of Russia’s lost influence in Ukraine after Yanukovych fled the country and after Crimea was annexed, Putin only saw one way in building up his influence again. Firstly, he moved troops and ammunition to the Ukrainian border from Belarus and Russia, as well as conducting many military drills. While many believed that Putin was only trying to make a statement and would not dare to invade Ukraine, this is exactly what played out to happen.²²⁹

In early 2022 Russian backed separatists took over two eastern Ukrainian regions on the Russian border, Donetsk and Luhansk, and declared them independent; this was Russia’s first step in invading Ukraine.²³⁰ Not soon after, Russia moved into the separatist regions, justified by Putin as Russia was providing assistance to the separatist movement ‘on a

²²³ DW, ‘Ukraine-Russia Crisis: Attack Will Have ‘Consequences,’ EU And US Warn’ (2022) <<https://www.dw.com/en/ukraine-russia-crisis-attack-will-have-consequences-eu-and-us-warn/a-60532426>> accessed 28 March 2022.

²²⁴ ‘EU Support To Ukraine And The Security Architecture In Europe’ <https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/109462/eu-support-ukraine-and-security-architecture-europe_en> accessed 28 March 2022.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ DW (n 223).

²²⁷ Silvia Aloisi and Frank Jack Daniel, ‘Timeline: The Events Leading Up To Russia’s Invasion Of Ukraine’ *Reuters* (2022) <<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/events-leading-up-russias-invasion-ukraine-2022-02-28/>> accessed 28 March 2022.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Ibid.

peacekeeping mission'.²³¹ Zelensky, Ukraine's President, responded by declaring a state of emergency as well as a direct appeal to the Russian people, to no avail as Russia launched its full scale invasion into Ukraine, directly targeting Kyiv. Not only the EU, but many other World powers such as the USA, NATO etc. harshly condemned Putin's war in the Ukraine and soon started cracking down on it with sanctions to directly target and impact Russia's Economy as well as Putin and his associates.²³² The Ruble fell to an all-time low triggering inflation when most Russian banks were excluded from Swift.²³³ Since then, many countries have started sending military aid to Ukraine allowing it to defend itself as well as many individuals online and offline have shown their support with mass demonstrations around the world.²³⁴ It is relieving to see that many countries stand with Ukraine, and that the EU even though Ukraine is not a member state supports and aids Ukraine and the Ukrainian people to defend themselves. On March 3rd, 2022, the Temporary Protection Directive was drawn up, imposing immediate rights and protection to people fleeing the war in the Ukraine, which will allow individuals access to housing, medical assistance, social welfare assistance etc.²³⁵ Moreover, for the Member states it will reduce pressure on the asylum system as well as showing solidarity towards Ukraine in times of conflict.²³⁶

This time is without a doubt a historic event, and most likely it will mark a turning point in the EU's approach to crises especially in Europe. Nonetheless, Putin's war is far from over, and has been ongoing since 2014 - when will it stop, and what will it take?

²³¹ The New York Times, 'A Timeline Of The Tensions Between Russia And Ukraine' (2022) <<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/18/world/europe/russia-ukraine-timeline.html>> accessed 28 March 2022.

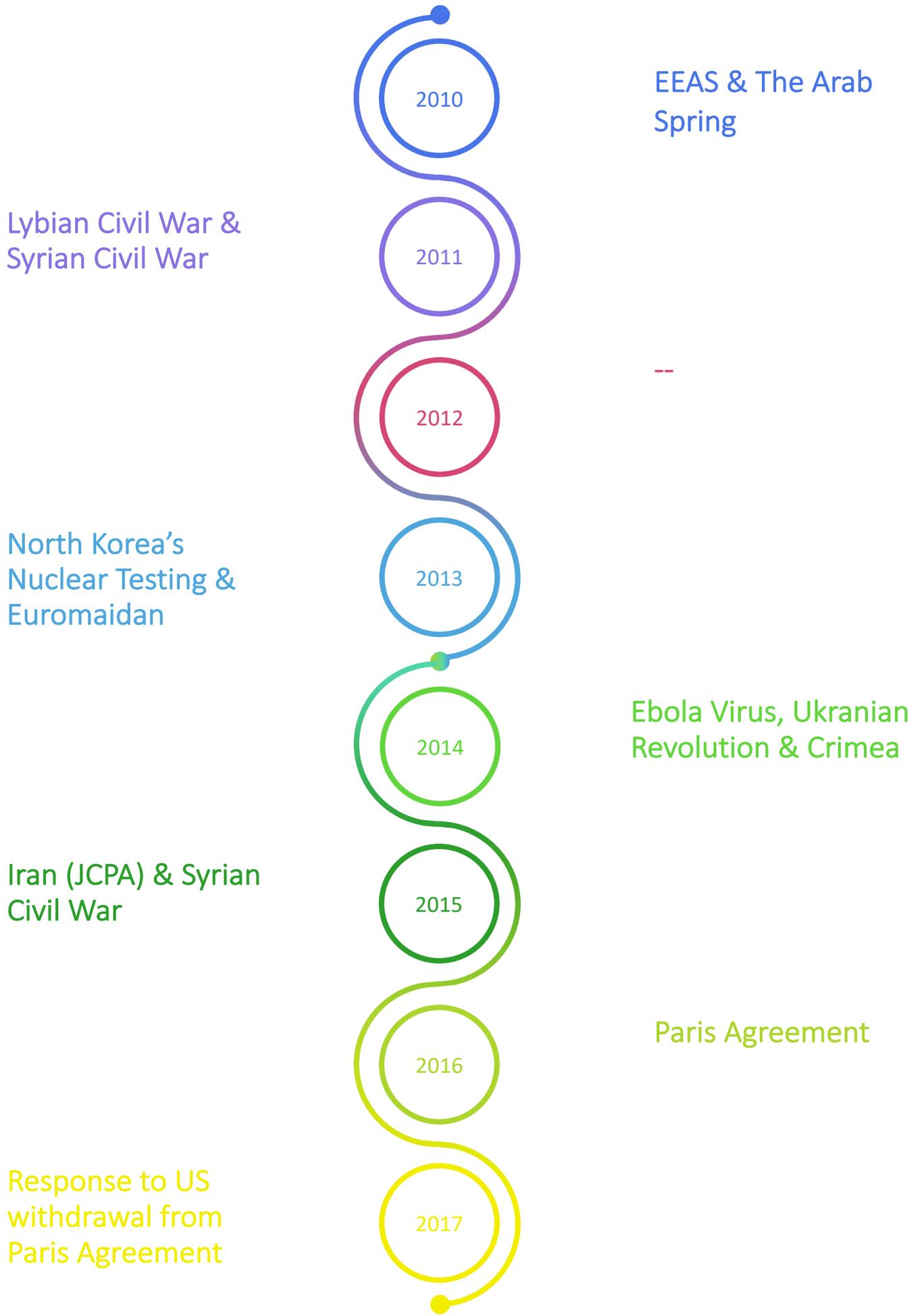
²³² Ibid.

²³³ Aloisi and Daniel (n 227).

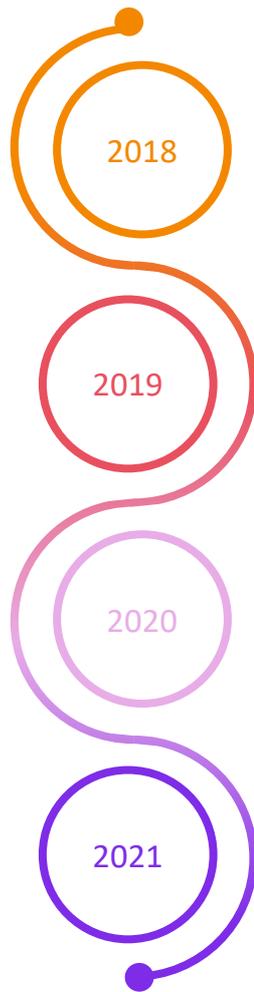
²³⁴ The New York Times, 'A Timeline Of The Tensions Between Russia And Ukraine' (n 231).

²³⁵ Commission, 'Proposal for a council implementing decision establishing the existence of a mass influx of displaced persons from Ukraine within the meaning of Article 5 of Council Directive 2001/55/EC of 20 July 2001, and having the effect of introducing temporary protection' COM (2022) 91 final.

²³⁶ Ibid.



Venezuelan
Presidential Crisis



Covid 19, Navalny
Novichok poisoning
& US-Iran relations

Turkey-EU relations,
Syrian war/refugee
crisis & China-US
trade war

Kabul Takeover &
Russo-Ukrainian
conflict

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