



Moving Beyond Crisis Management in Relations with Russia?



Joan DeBardeleben

Presented at a workshop on “The EU and Canada in the Face of
Changing US Global Policy”
March 25, 2019, Carleton University

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



Funding

- ▶ Insight Grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC)
 - Focus: To what extent has the EU altered its policy approach in response to the Ukraine crisis?
 - Context: Crisis response as an facilitator of EU policy change
(Falkner, 2016; Laffan, 2016; Clime, 2018; Foster, 2019; Zaun, 2018; Niemann and Speyer, 2018; D'Erman and Verdun, 2018)
- ▶ Draws on material from Jean Monnet Multilateral group policy report
 - *EU–Russia Relations: Developing a Transnational Perspective*, 2013–2016 (with Carleton University, St. Petersburg State University and Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz)
 - Policy report *EU–Russia Relations: Which Way Forward?*

(<https://carleton.ca/eureast/wp-content/uploads/JMC-Policy-Report-2018-EU-Russian-Relations-Which-Way-Forward.pdf>)

Disclaimer: The views expressed in this presentation are the independent views of the presenter and are not those of the European Union.

Possible responses to crisis

(drawing on Allison, 1969;)

1) Reliance on standard operating procedures

- Technical adjustments
- Denial of basic inadequacy of policy

2) **Sustained crisis response**

- Acknowledges problems with current approach
- No agreement on alternate approach
- May reflect lack of consensus

3) **Incremental adaptation**

- Acknowledgement of problems with policy
- But goals and underlying strategy not retained

4) Paradigmatic adaptation

- Acknowledges failure of past approaches
- Goals and assumption challenged
- May lead to broader paradigm shift

EU Russia policy response: Five Guiding Principles

- ‘Demand full implementation of Minsk agreements’
- ‘Reinforce ties with Eastern partners and Central Asia countries’
- ‘Strengthen the EU resilience to Russian threats’
- ‘Engage selectively...where there is a clear EU interest’
- Support Russian civil society youth

(YouTube video summary, 2018)

October 2016
(unanimous, Council of the EU)



Federica Mogherini

Other indicators

- ▶ European Council: Sanctions most frequent focus, also Syria
- ▶ Many policy dialogues frozen (including summits, Energy Dialogue,)
- ▶ But meetings of Lavrov and Moghieri
- ▶ Member states: bilateral contacts (varying)
- ▶ Some contacts maintained
 - Research cooperation (e.g., EU–Russia Joint Science and Technology Cooperation Committee)
 - Civil society forum
 - Ad hoc energy meetings
 - Cross-border cooperation with Russia

Nature of EU Policy Change

- *Incremental adaptation*, but primarily *sustained crisis response*
- **Crisis response**: sanctions, Minsk, strengthen resilience, freeze on many relations
- **Incremental adaptation**:
 - Omits reference to shared values
 - Backing away from strategic partnership
 - 'common interests' (rather 'clear EU interest')
- **No paradigm change**:
 - Maintains Eastern policy (Eastern Partnership)
 - Does not acknowledge legitimate Russian interests in the neighbourhood
 - Minimizes threat discourse, while countering specific threats (e.g., misinformation, election meddling)
 - Reliance on NATO
- **No strategic direction**

US Response

- ▶ Ambiguity and confusion, but so far no 'great power bargain' to sacrifice Ukraine
- ▶ Sanctions
- ▶ Freezing US Russia Bilateral Presidential Commission Working Groups (2019)
- ▶ High level contacts intermittent
- ▶ Some agreements still in effect
- ▶ Highly politicized issue
- ▶ US withdraws or suspends agreements (INF Treaty, Iran deal, Paris Climate Agreement)
- ▶ Sustained crisis response, potential paradigmatic change

US and EU with Russia: Differing contexts

- ▶ Distance
- ▶ Low trade
- ▶ Security dominated
- ▶ History (superpowers)
- ▶ Objectives global
- ▶ Proximity
- ▶ High trade
- ▶ Energy dominated
- ▶ History (mixed)
- ▶ Objectives regional

US Russia

EU Russia

Comparing responses

- ▶ Sanctions maintained (expanded)
 - ▶ Mixed messaging
 - ▶ Politicized
 - ▶ Strong rhetoric
 - ▶ Inconsistent contacts
- ▶ Sanctions maintained (expanded)
 - ▶ EU consistent; MS mixed
 - ▶ Less politicized
 - ▶ Measured rhetoric
 - ▶ Lower level/selected pragmatic contacts
 - ▶ Non-political contacts supported (CBC, science, education)

US Russia

EU Russia

Canadian approach

- ▶ Sanctions, Ukraine support
- ▶ Largely a freeze in relations
- ▶ Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act (Sergei Magnitsky Law), 2017
- ▶ NATO as response forum (Latvian deployment)
- ▶ **Lack of strategy; following Allies** on sanctions
- ▶ Still, Arctic common interests (direct neighbour)
- ▶ **No leadership** exerted relating to Russian response

Argument: Align Canada more closely with EU

Considerations:

- Ukraine and interests of EE countries
- Long term perspective and risks of escalation

Methods:

- Small steps, pragmatic engagement
- Trust-building (reenable dialogue)
- Ad hoc formats (e.g., Normandy format, EU- Russian energy discussion, Arctic, other shared issues)
- Embed in multilateral context (OSCE, WTO, Arctic Council, Paris Agreement, Iran Deal, Council of Europe)
- + Direct bilateral dialogue
- But maintain firm stance on Ukraine

Objectives and principles

- ▶ Reduce escalating militarization (security dilemma)
- ▶ Principles of selective reengagement
 - Secure sovereign choice for Ukraine and other countries inbetween
 - But move away from 'either-or' options (double concentric circles)
 - Keep Russia in and strengthen multilateral fora
 - Reengage on collective security in Europe (OSCE)
 - People-to-people contacts
 - Aim for long term 'Lisbon to Vladivostok' economic area