

LEGAL DYNAMICS IN EU-UKRAINE RELATIONS: STRENGTHENED SUPPORT ON THE JOURNEY FROM THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP COUNTRY TO THE EU CANDIDATE COUNTRY IN THE CONTEXT OF RUSSIAN INVASION

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ABSTRACT

The article examines the changing relations between Ukraine and the European Union in light of the increased EU backing of Ukraine after the Russian invasion. It argues that Ukraine's steadfast pro-EU stance has intensified in response to many challenges caused by Russian actions in that country, resulting in a noteworthy increase in legal backing from the EU. The qualitative research method is used to explore the EU-Ukraine relationship through historical context, official documents, and expert analysis. It starts by setting the historical background of Ukraine's ties with the EU, highlighting the key documents and events, and tracking the advancement of Ukraine's pro-European stance. The main emphasis is on how the Russian actions in Ukraine, starting with the annexation of Crimea, backing of separatists in eastern Ukraine, and finally, the invasion, changed relations between the EU and Ukraine. This entails estimating how Ukraine's adherence to EU values and legal standards has changed in response to Russia's gradually intensifying actions in Ukraine. Also, it involves an analysis of varied aspects of the EU's assistance mechanisms and tools used by the EU to strengthen its backing for Ukraine, emphasising the reciprocal nature of their legal dynamics. The article concludes by examining Ukraine's path towards EU membership and the criteria and legal requirements that Ukraine has to meet. This provides insights into the legal dynamics shaping EU-Ukraine relations in the context of intense external pressures.

Keywords: *EU-Ukraine Relations, Eastern Partnership, EU Candidate State Status, EU sanctions, Legal Dynamics, Russian Invasion*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the early 1990s, following the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the declaration of independence, Ukraine aimed to enhance ties with the European Union while also preserving friendly relations with Russia. In response, the EU signed the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) in 1994 and ratified it in 1998. After its enlargement in the 2000s, the EU aimed to emphasise its commitment to strengthening relations with its new neighbouring countries. Therefore, in 2004, the EU included Ukraine in the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), establishing a new framework for cooperation. In 2009, the EU created the Eastern Partnership (EaP), especially for cooperation with its eastern neighbours, including Ukraine. The EaP was established within the ENP framework, further enhancing EU-Ukraine relations, anticipating deeper integration with the neighbours, and, in that context, signing the Association Agreement. Ukraine's determination to continue developing relations with the EU despite Russian obstructions caused a sharp reaction from Russia. In 2014, Russia annexed Crimea and backed separatist groups in Eastern Ukraine. These actions not only violated Ukraine's territorial integrity but also caused destabilisation in the region, raising serious concerns about regional security. The European Union decided to respond by imposing the sanctions on Russia. At the same time, the EU increased its backing for Ukraine, showing strong dedication to protecting the country's sovereignty and stability. The EU-Ukraine Association Agreement, within the framework of the Eastern Partnership, was signed in 2014. The European Union had envisioned a comprehensive partnership with Ukraine and the creation of a free trade zone as a cornerstone of their cooperation. However, after Russia's invasion, Ukraine wanted to pursue EU candidate status. This development prompted the European Union to reassess its enlargement and regional strategy approaches. Recognising the need to counter Russian influence and safeguard European security, the EU granted Ukraine candidate country status. This decision was widely seen by member states as crucial to halting further Russian encroachment and preserving stability across Europe. In this light, the issue of enlargement becomes more significant, serving as a key tool in Western efforts to resist Russian dominance and uphold democratic values and sovereignty.

The article examines the relationship between historical events and the EU's responses, focusing on Ukraine-EU ties in regional geopolitics. It seeks to reveal the lasting effects of these events on European security and integration, exploring how historical contexts, EU reactions to Russian actions, and legal changes in EU-Ukraine relations intersect. The goal is to offer a detailed understanding of the legal foundations of EU-Ukraine relations amid shifting geopolitical landscapes. It uses a qualitative method, including historical analysis, document review, and academic literature. The EU and Ukraine legal documents and official EU an-

nouncements are used as primary data sources for the article. The central hypothesis suggests that Russia's harsh actions in Ukraine, which began in 2014 with the annexation of Crimea and culminated in 2022 with its invasion of this country, brought about significant changes in relations between the EU and Ukraine. Even though these events brought new difficulties and complexities, they also increased cooperation and opened the door to the EU's complete integration of Ukraine.

To validate this hypothesis, the article commences by examining pivotal historical events and their repercussions on Ukraine-EU dynamics, including Ukraine's declaration of independence, the Orange Revolution, and the Euromaidan protests. Subsequently, it scrutinises the legal frameworks supporting bilateral relations between the EU and Ukraine, dissecting existing agreements and cooperation mechanisms. Following this analysis, the article delves into the EU's response to the Russian invasion, discussing implemented measures and policies along with their implications for the broader scope of EU-Ukraine relations. The Russian invasion prompted discernible shifts and adaptations, exemplified by Ukraine's notable achievement of EU candidate status, which received special attention.

2. UKRAINE-EU RELATIONS: FROM INDEPENDENCE TO THE RUSSIAN INVASION

Following Ukraine's independence, it maintained a solid political and economic connection with Russia, reflecting historical ties and a sizable population of ethnic Russians within Ukraine. However, despite this close relationship, Ukraine pursued broader international cooperation. In the early 1990s, following Ukraine's independence from the Soviet Union, the European Union proposed new agreements to replace the Trade and Cooperation Agreement with the Soviet Union. Ukraine signed the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement in 1994 to support economic reforms and sustainable development. This agreement encompassed specific provisions on trade, science, technology, and nuclear energy, along with plans to harmonize Ukraine's legislation with the single market and World Trade Organization. In the meantime, Russia continued to question Ukraine's sovereignty, leading to its isolation and pressure to surrender nuclear weapons. In 1994, a Budapest agreement allowed Ukraine to denuclearise in exchange for recognition of its sovereignty, which also led to its inclusion in NATO's Partnership for Peace Programme.¹ During that period, Ukraine pursued a multi-vector foreign policy, which was demonstrated by signing the Agreement on Friendship and Cooperation with Russia in 1997. Six years later, Ukraine furthered this approach by joining Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan in an agreement for a single economic space.

¹ D'Anieri, P., *Ukrainian Foreign Policy from Independence to Inertia*, Communist and Post-Communist Studies, Vol. 45, No. 3-4, 2012, p. 448.

The Ukrainian Prime Minister, V. Yanukovych, saw alignment with Russia as a winning strategy for the 2004 presidential election. However, due to accusations of falsification of the results of the presidential elections, the Orange Revolution occurred, which marked significant changes in the country's internal and foreign policy.² Russia immediately showed distrust towards the direction of Ukraine's further development. At the same time, the EU supported the Orange Revolution as an expression of fundamental European values and an opportunity to become a democratic and market-oriented country. The Union, however, did not show readiness to see this country as a potential member state but believed that the European Neighbourhood Policy was a sufficient framework for cooperation with Ukraine.³ The EU considered the EU-Ukraine Action Plan of 2005 under the ENP as a foundational document for future cooperation. It emphasised Ukraine's recognition as a market economy, included discussions on free trade, and deliberated on visa liberalisation. The overarching objective was to stimulate economic growth by fostering increased commerce and attracting international investments. The cooperation within the ENP also envisioned the negotiation between the EU and Ukraine about a new agreement that would replace the old Partnership and Cooperation Agreement. In line with the EU-Ukraine Action Plan, negotiations for signing the Association Agreement, including the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA), commenced in March 2007.

Due to the different expectations and perceptions of the countries included in the ENP, experts and politicians have proposed that this policy, to be as effective as possible, be further elaborated to adapt to the specifics of the eastern and southern neighbours. During the French presidency of the Union in 2008, within the EPS, the Mediterranean Union was created as a framework for closer cooperation with its southern neighbourhood. Another factor that encouraged the EU to launch the Eastern Partnership was the Russian-Georgian armed conflict in 2008, which pointed to significant security issues and risks in the region. The introduction of the Eastern Partnership was accelerated by disputes between Russia and Ukraine over gas, negatively affecting the European Union. A year later, at the summit in Prague, the Eastern Partnership was formulated as an integral part of the ENP, which established the basis for stronger cooperation with the neighbours of Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus.⁴ Today's neighbours of the EU in Eastern Europe and the

² Kubicek, P., *Ukraine and the European Neighborhood Policy: Can the EU Help the Orange Revolution Bear Fruit?*, East European Quarterly, Vol. 41, No. 1, 2007, pp. 3-5.

³ Dannreuther, R., *Developing the Alternative to Enlargement: The European Neighbourhood Policy*, European Foreign Affairs Review, Vol. 11, No. 2, 2006, p. 185.

⁴ Jović-Lazić, A., *The European Union Initiative for Cooperation with Neighbours in Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus: Objectives, Limitations and Challenges of Integration without Membership*, International Problems, Vol. 72, No. 2, 2020, pp. 404-426.

South Caucasus, although very different, are interconnected economically, politically, and socially and have similar problems because they were part of the USSR for half a century. The Eastern Partnership envisaged that the Union should provide neighbouring countries with the necessary financial and technical assistance, as well as, after applying political, economic, and institutional reforms and harmonising legislation with the EU legal system, provide them with the opportunity to participate in the single European market. Delcour summarises the offer of the Eastern Partnership through the so-called four pillars: association agreements, free trade zone, visa liberalisation, and intensification of sectoral cooperation, one of the most significant of which is in the field of energy. Cooperation with the EU depends on respect for European values, market economy principles, and legislation harmonisation with the EU legal framework, i.e., the interest and ability of each neighbour to engage.⁵ Unlike the candidate countries, the countries of the Eastern Partnership are not required to comply fully with EU law. However, the EU envisages providing more political, financial, and technical support to those neighbours who implement the reform commitments to a greater extent. Therefore, it also contains elements of the conditionality policy, which should influence these states to fulfil the agreed obligations. The realisation of this initiative's goals requires numerous activities, both within the framework of policies that are under the exclusive competence of the EU and those that are still under the competence of the member states. So, it is a concept that seeks to engage various norms and instruments of the European Union to achieve security, stability, and prosperity in the neighbourhood.⁶

Pro-Russian candidate V. Yanukovych again secured the presidential mandate in 2010. At that time, Ukraine wanted to maintain good relations with both the Union and Russia. This complex diplomatic endeavour aimed to create the conditions for reform and stable economic development. Consequently, the election campaign of V. Yanukovych was focused on advocating for closer cooperation with the EU and the normalisation of relations with Russia. However, Ukrainian foreign policy took an unexpected turn after the new government's election. It became clear that Ukraine is moving towards an increasingly pronounced alignment with Russia's interests. Not long after the change of government, Ukraine concluded agreements that met Russia's interests. The Law on Basic Principles of internal and external policies from July 2010 abandoned the policy of NATO membership and declared the non-bloc status of the country.⁷ During that period, President V. Yanukovych underscored

⁵ Delcour, L., *The EU and Russia in Their "Contested Neighbourhood"*, Routledge, 2016, pp. 38–46.

⁶ Van Vooren, B., *EU External Relations Law and the European Neighbourhood Policy: A Paradigm for Coherence*, London, New York, Routledge, 2012, p. 73.

⁷ Zakon Ukrainy, Pro zasady vnutrishn'oyi i zovnishn'oyi polityky (Vidomosti Verkhovnoyi Rady Ukrainy (VVR), 2010, № 40, st.527)/The Law of Ukraine, About the Principles of Domestic and

that Ukraine's foreign policy objectives, including EU integration and the policy of balancing relations between the East and the West, remained unchanged. However, there was a discernible shift in foreign policy towards Russia. Ukraine's negotiations with the EU concerning the Association Agreement persisted despite this political shift. Following negotiations, in December 2012, the EU's Foreign Affairs Council approved signing the agreement with Ukraine after fulfilling specific requirements. In its intention to distance Ukraine from the EU, Moscow begins to openly offer significant economic and political incentives to Kyiv while at the same time using blackmail tactics. In November 2013, President Yanukovich faced a pivotal decision: signing the EU association agreement or strengthening Ukraine's relationship with Russia. Russia provided a loan and reduced gas prices as a reward for rejecting the agreement with the EU. In the end, Yanukovich decided to agree to Russia's proposal, which triggered several months of demonstrations in Maidan Square in Kyiv. In February 2014, following the outbreak of intense confrontations between demonstrators and police, Yanukovich left Ukraine.⁸

In 2014, Ukraine's new pro-Western government signed the Association Agreement with the EU. Prime Minister Yatseniuk signed the political section in March, President Poroshenko signed the economic component in June, and the entire agreement received approval in September, indicating a clear shift in geopolitical stance from neutrality to a firm, pro-Western orientation. On this change, Putin responded by annexation of Crimea in March 2014. As a direct response to the illegal takeover of Crimea and Sevastopol and deliberate attempts to destabilise Ukraine, the European Union began imposing sanctions against Russia. The leaders of the EU have also strongly condemned Russia's unlawful actions, pushing the European Commission to assess the legal consequences and propose implementing economic, commercial, and financial measures against Russia.⁹ Moreover, they stressed that any additional attempts by Russia to undermine the stability of Ukraine could result in more substantial repercussions for their relationship. Despite the EU diplomatic effort, pro-Russian factions took over government facili-

Foreign Policy (Information of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine (VVR), 2010, No. 40, Article 527), available at: [<https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2411-17#top>].

⁸ Jović-Lazić, A.; Lađevac, I., *Ukrainian Crisis as a Security Challenge of the Contemporary World*, In Social and Economic Problems and Challenges in the Contemporary World, Đorđević B.; Tsukimura, T. (eds.), Global Resource Management, Doshisha University, Institute of International Politics and Economics, Kyoto, Belgrade, 2017, p. 117.

⁹ European Council, Statement of the Heads of State or Government on Ukraine Brussels, 6 March 2014, Brussels, [<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/29285/141372.pdf>]. Council of the European Union, Press Release, 3304th Council meeting Foreign Affairs, Brussels, 17 March 2014, 7764/14, [<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/28722/141614.pdf>], European Council, Conclusions, Brussels, 21 March 2014, [<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/29198/141749.pdf>].

ties in eastern Ukraine. In May 2014, referendums were conducted with evident backing from Russia, leading to the establishment of the Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics. The Ukrainian government's military effort against secessionist rebels, intended to regain control in the region, ultimately worsened the conflict. Following the MH17 plane crash in July 2014, the EU imposed a wide range of sanctions, including asset freezes and travel restrictions on certain political and military officials linked to the annexation of Crimea and conflict in eastern Ukraine. Economic sanctions targeted Russian state banks' access to EU capital markets, imposed an import embargo on weapons and dual-use goods, limited economic cooperation with Crimea and Sevastopol, and restricted investments in key sectors of the Russian economy. These sanctions, while targeted, held significant weight, intending to convey a resolute message against breaches of international norms, apply pressure on Russia, and show solidarity with Ukraine without causing extensive economic or political harm.¹⁰ In December 2014, the European Union established the EU Advisory Mission to Ukraine (EUAM Ukraine) as an advisory mission to provide additional support to Ukraine. This mission is focused on assisting Ukrainian officials in restructuring the civilian security sector and harmonising its activities with EU standards and international principles. The main goals of this initiative are to offer strategic guidance, support implementation efforts, and promote cooperation among Ukrainian and international stakeholders from different organizations, all to improve the Ukrainian civilian security sector. Nevertheless, the implementation of EUAM was also perceived as a strategy to balance Russia's actions in Ukraine and demonstrate political support.¹¹

The EU was willing to lift sanctions and improve relations with Russia if it actively helped find a solution to the Ukrainian crisis. In 2016, the EU outlined five principles for future relations with Russia, with the first principle connecting the duration of sanctions to progress in implementing the Minsk Agreement for resolving the conflict in eastern Ukraine.¹² Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany and President François Hollande of France supported this agreement, which outlined conditions for a ceasefire in eastern Ukraine, restored Ukrainian control over borders, planned local elections in separatist-held areas, and advocated for constitutional changes providing more autonomy to eastern regions. However, EU and Western sanctions against Russia have had a limited impact on its actions

¹⁰ Natorki, M.; Pomorska, K., *Trust and Decision-Making in Times of Crisis: The EU's Response to the Events in Ukraine*, Journal of Common Market Studies, Vol. 55, No. 1, 2016, p. 63.

¹¹ Nováky, N, I.M., *Why so Soft? The European Union in Ukraine*, Contemporary Security Policy, Vol. 36, No. 2, 2015, pp. 244–266.

¹² Jović-Lazić, A.; Lađevac I, *Redefining Russia-European Union Relations – Is It Possible to Overcome a Deep Crisis?*, in: Europe in Changes: The Old Continent at a New Crossroads, Zakić, K.; Demirtaş, B. (eds.), Institute of International Politics and Economics, Belgrade 2021, p. 227.

in Ukraine, and deep-seated mistrust among parties has hindered progress towards lasting peace. Violence had persisted at a reduced level, making it challenging to achieve a sustained ceasefire and remove heavy weaponry.¹³

3. FROM THE EU-UKRAINE PARTNERSHIP AND COOPERATION AGREEMENT TO THE EU-UKRAINE ASSOCIATION AGREEMENT

The first basic agreement between the European Union and Ukraine was the EU-Ukraine Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, signed on June 14, 1994. This agreement, which replaced the previous Trade and Cooperation Agreement with the former Soviet Union in 1989, was important as it formalised their bilateral relationship. It established core principles of cooperation focused on democratic governance, protecting human rights, and establishing a market-driven economy, with the overall objective of encouraging closer cooperation and economic integration between the European Union and Ukraine. It covered various areas such as trade in goods, labour conditions, company operations, services, maritime transport, payments, competition, intellectual property, and economic cooperation. The EU also offered technical assistance through the TACIS programme to support economic cooperation in mining, science and technology, agriculture, energy, and more industries. This agreement aimed to enhance cooperation in various sectors, including regional development, small and medium-sized enterprises, and information and communication.¹⁴

Negotiations for a new enhanced agreement to replace the previous PCA started in March 2007, as outlined in the EU-Ukraine Action Plan. At the EU-Ukraine Summit in September 2008 in Paris, it was agreed that the new, improved agreement would be named the Association Agreement. In February 2008, Ukraine joined the World Trade Organization (WTO), which prompted discussions to expand and develop the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) to enhance economic ties. Negotiations between Ukraine and the European Union to establish the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement lasted nearly six years. During that time, there were twenty-one negotiation rounds for the Association Agreement. Eighteen negotiation sessions were dedicated to discussing the DCFTA chapter.

¹³ Wittke, C., *The Minsk Agreements – More than ‘Scraps of Paper*, East European Politics, Vol. 35, No. 3, 2019, pp. 264–290.

¹⁴ Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Communities and their Member States, and Ukraine - Protocol on mutual assistance between authorities in customs matters - Final Act - Joint Declarations - Exchange of Letters in relation to the establishment of companies - Declaration of the French Government. [1998] OJ L49/3.

The EU-Ukraine Cooperation Council recommended implementing the Association Agenda to speed up the entry into force of the new Association Agreement, replacing the current Action Plan, on November 23, 2009.¹⁵ In December 2012, the European Council linked signing the Association Agreement with Ukraine to meeting three conditions: electoral practice standards, ending selective justice, and implementing agreed reforms. Progress was monitored by the High Representative and the Commission, with the Council staying informed during preparations for the June 2013 EU-Ukraine Cooperation Council and the November 2013 Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius.¹⁶ Bearing in mind that, as previously written, the EU and Ukraine did not sign the AA at the Vilnius summit, it was signed during two European Union summits held on March 21 and June 27, 2014.¹⁷ After receiving approval from the Ukrainian Parliament on September 16, a gradual approach to implementation was adopted. The relevant provisions were provisionally applied starting on November 1, 2014, and the complete implementation of the DCFTA began on January 1, 2016.¹⁸ With its extensive content spanning 2,140 pages, 46 annexes, three protocols, and a joint declaration, this agreement sets a new benchmark for cooperation with non-member states.¹⁹

The agreement between Ukraine and the EU aims to deepen political association and economic integration, offering a comprehensive framework for cooperation. It encompasses various aspects, including the establishment of a DCFTA, cooperation on foreign and security policy, and the promotion of reforms in areas such as the rule of law, democracy, and human rights. Detailed provisions in economic collaboration, foreign policy, and justice are provided to facilitate this cooperation. Contrasting with the previous PCA agreement, the Association Agreement,

¹⁵ Recommendation No 1/2009 of the EU-Ukraine Cooperation Council of 23 November 2009 on the implementation of the EU-Ukraine Association Agenda. [2010] OJ L111/31.

¹⁶ Council of the EU, Council conclusions on Ukraine, Brussels, 10 December 2012, [https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/foraff/134136.pdf].

¹⁷ Council Decision 2014/668/EU of 23 June 2014 on the signing, on behalf of the European Union, and provisional application of the Association Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the one part, and Ukraine, of the other part, as regards Title III (with the exception of the provisions relating to the treatment of third-country nationals legally employed as workers in the territory of the other Party) and Titles IV, V, VI and VII thereof, as well as the related Annexes and Protocols [2014] OJ L278/1; Council Decision 2014/295/EU of 17 March 2014 on the signing, on behalf of the European Union, and provisional application of the Association Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the one part, and Ukraine, of the other part, as regards the Preamble, Article 1, and Titles I, II and VII thereof, [2014] OJ L161/1.

¹⁸ Association Agreement between the European Union and its Member States, of the one part, and Ukraine, of the other part, [2014] OJ L161/3.

¹⁹ Van der Loo, G., *The EU-Ukraine Association Agreement and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area*, Brill, 2016.

with its comprehensive scope, outlines specific EU laws that Ukraine must adopt. The obligations, which include adhering strictly to specified deadlines and implementing best efforts clauses, are intended to enhance the political and economic relations between Ukraine and the EU by establishing institutional frameworks and implementing regulatory measures.

In the Preamble, Ukraine and the EU recognise their historical ties and aim to strengthen relations based on shared values such as democracy, a free market economy, and human rights. It recognises that Ukraine, as a European country, is dedicated to promoting these values, and the EU supports its European aspirations. Both parties stress that progress in political, economic, and legal areas is vital for Ukraine's integration with the EU. They are committed to implementing principles from international organizations like the UN, OSCE, and Council of Europe to promote peace and security through multilateralism. They aim for effective cooperation within these organizations by prioritising independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity. Seeking closer alignment on various issues, they uphold shared values and goals in line with the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy. They pledge to meet international obligations, combat weapons of mass destruction, advance reform in Ukraine, support economic integration, and strengthen political ties. Energy cooperation, security, environmental protection, and sustainable development are priorities. The parties aim to align Ukraine's legislation with the EU and effectively implement their agreement, with room for future developments in their relationship.²⁰ The I chapter of the AA further states its objectives to promote closer relations between the parties based on common values and ties, increase Ukraine's links with EU policies and programmes, improve political dialogue about questions of common interest, maintain regional and international peace in accordance with international principles, and support the economic integration of Ukraine into the EU internal market. The goal is also to improve cooperation in the areas of justice, freedom, and security to strengthen the rule of law and human rights. As further stated, these efforts seek to support Ukraine's transition to a market economy and establish its strong partnership with the European Union.²¹ The basic principles of the Association Agreement are outlined in Title I. Both the EU and Ukraine pledge to uphold human rights, democratic principles, and fundamental freedoms as laid out in different international agreements and conventions. At the core of these principles lies the significance of the rule of law. Also, the parties promise to uphold principles like autonomy, sovereignty, and the prevention of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. They also acknowledge the importance of supporting

²⁰ Preamble, Association Agreement between the European Union and its Member States, of the one part, and Ukraine, of the other part (AA), *op. cit.*, note 18.

²¹ Article 1, Objectives, AA, *op. cit.*, note 18.

a free market system, encouraging effective governance, fighting against corruption and organised crime, and promoting sustainable development. These principles are crucial components of the Agreement that shape the way the EU and Ukraine work within its framework.²² Title II of the agreement is focused on enhancing political dialogue, cooperation, and alignment in foreign and security policy to strengthen Ukraine's engagement in European security. The objectives include deepening political association, increasing convergence in security policy, promoting international stability, and enhancing cooperation on security and crisis management. The agreement establishes a platform for political dialogue and commits to cooperation on domestic reform, peace promotion, and regional stability. Parties aim to intensify discussions on conflict prevention, crisis management, and arms control, focusing on independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity principles. Cooperation involves cooperation on defence policy, crisis management, military technology, preventing the spread of weapons of mass destruction, disarmament, arms control, regulation of arms exports, combating illegal arms trade, counterterrorism, and enhancing military capabilities through the European Defence Agency. The agreement highlights the importance of joint efforts to prevent weapons proliferation, promote peace, and enhance security.²³ Within the framework of cooperation in the areas of justice, freedom, and security from Title III, the parties undertake to strengthen the rule of law, institutions, and the judiciary, fight against corruption, and respect human rights. They will cooperate to protect personal data and implement migration control measures, including the fight against illegal migration and integrating migrants into national development strategies. Dialogue and cooperation are based on solidarity, trust, and partnership, including exchanging information and experts. The focus is on the effective implementation of border management measures, the improvement of document security, and migrant policy. The mobility of workers should be maintained and improved in accordance with EU laws and national legislation. The ultimate goal is to improve the rights of movement of citizens and workers between the EU and Ukraine. Cooperation between the parties in the fight against organised crime includes trafficking in people, arms, drugs, and corruption. Cooperation aims to reduce the supply and demand of drugs and prevent the abuse of chemical precursors. Measures for training, protection of witnesses and victims, and implementing relevant UN conventions and instruments were agreed upon. Cooperation in the fight against terrorism includes the exchange of information about terrorist groups and trends in terrorism, in accordance with the law. The cooperation aims to develop judicial cooperation in civil and criminal matters and facili-

²² Title I, General Principles, AA, *op. cit.*, note 18.

²³ Title II, Political Dialogue and Reform, Political Association, Cooperation and Convergence in the Field of Foreign and Security Policy, AA, *op. cit.*, note 18.

tate cooperation between the EU and Ukraine. Cooperation in criminal matters will also be improved through legal aid, extradition, and cooperation with Eurojust.²⁴

Title IV of the agreement focuses on trade and trade-related matters, emphasising national treatment and market access for goods. It lays the groundwork for the DCFTA, aiming to align key sectors of the Ukrainian economy with EU standards by gradually reducing customs tariffs and quotas and harmonising laws and regulations. The main components include market access for goods, trade issue resolution, technical standards, food safety measures, customs procedures, service trading, financial transactions, and government procurement. The agreement eliminates customs duties on imports and exports, with specified timelines for certain products and agricultural goods to receive duty-free tariff rate quotas. It addresses non-tariff barriers, technical regulations, and WTO trade defence tools. The DCFTA also facilitates collaboration on customs issues, capital movement rules, public procurement laws, and mutual administrative assistance. Overall, the agreement strengthens economic ties between the EU and Ukraine, promoting growth and competitiveness across various sectors. The parties commit to implementing international intellectual property agreements, covering copyrights, patents, trademarks, and more, and ensuring fair competition through antitrust and merger regulations. The parties emphasize the importance of free market competition for trade and implement measures to prevent distortions. Competition rules must be applied transparently, with enforcement authorities upholding fairness and the right to defence. Ukraine aligns with EU competition standards, particularly regarding vertical and horizontal agreements. Energy regulations include defining products, setting domestic prices, and restricting dual pricing, tariffs, and quotas unless it is in the public interest or security. Cooperation on infrastructure aims to ease gas trade, reduce traffic interruptions, and manage energy passage, with exceptions for disruptions from third countries. The energy trade rules in the agreement consider Ukraine's involvement in the Energy Charter Treaty. It further promotes cooperation and the application of transparency standards in international trade. The main objective is to establish a regulatory environment that encourages business entities, with an emphasis on small businesses, to provide legal certainty. The parties are committed to transparency, consultation, and the management of measures according to the WTO Agreement. The provisions aim to improve stakeholder involvement, information sharing, and problem-solving through consistent, fair, and proportionate administrative procedures. The parties undertake to promote international trade in a way that contributes to achieving the goal of sustainable development. They recognise the right to establish environmental and labour protection standards and implement sustainable development policies according to international principles. Also, they undertake to

²⁴ Title III, Justice, Freedom and Security, AA, *op. cit.*, note 18.

promote full employment, dignified work for all, and respect for fundamental labour norms. Furthermore, they encourage the prudent use of natural resources, trade in sustainable products, and cooperation to protect the environment and workers. They also foresee a mediation and dispute resolution mechanism, facilitating swift resolution of trade issues without raising legal concerns. Counselling is used to resolve disputes stemming from the agreement's implementation. If counselling fails, parties can opt for arbitration. The Arbitration Council provides a temporary report within 90 days outlining the situation, provisions, and recommendations. Parties can request a review within 14 days. Urgent cases have expedited processes. Energy disputes may skip interim reports. The Council can amend reports after objections before making a final decision. If the dispute is connected with the termination of energy trade between Ukraine and the EU, parties can seek conciliation from the Council President. If no agreement is reached within 15 days, the President will make a recommendation for resolution that must be followed.²⁵

Title V of the agreement focuses on economic and sectoral cooperation in different areas. It covers areas such as energy, macro-economic policies, public finances, taxation, statistics, environmental, transport, space exploration, science, technology, industrial policies, financial services regulations, corporate governance, information society, audio-visual policy, tourism, agriculture, rural development, fisheries, maritime policies, consumer protection, employment cooperation, social policy, equal opportunities, public health, education, training, youth empowerment, culture, sport, civil society engagement, cross-border cooperation, and participation in European agencies and programs. These initiatives also aim to align with the EU *acquis* and international norms and standards.²⁶ Title VI of the EU agreement focuses on financial cooperation with anti-fraud provisions. According to the Agreement's principles, Ukraine will receive financial assistance through EU funding mechanisms. The assistance will support the Agreement's goals and will be provided based on EU Financial Instrument Regulations. Indicative programs reflecting policy priorities will outline priority areas for assistance, considering Ukraine's needs and reform progress. Assistance will be coordinated with other donor countries and institutions to maximise resources and effectiveness. Separate agreements will establish the legal and technical bases for assistance. The Association Council will receive information about the progress and impact of financial assistance, with ongoing monitoring and evaluation to ensure its effectiveness in achieving the Agreement's objectives. Parties must follow strong financial management principles and work together to protect the EU and Ukraine's financial interests. This involves implementing actions to combat fraud, corruption, and illegal activities through mutual administrative

²⁵ Title IV, Trade and Trade-Related Matters, AA, *op. cit.*, note 18.

²⁶ Title V, Economic and Sector Cooperation, AA, *op. cit.*, note 18.

and legal assistance.²⁷ Title VII covers the agreement's institutional, general, and final provisions. The Association Council oversees the Agreement's implementation through annual meetings and, when needed, in various configurations. It consists of members from the EU Council, European Commission, and Ukrainian Government, who make binding decisions, update the Annexes, and ensure that laws align with EU standards. An Association Committee supports the Council by addressing trade issues, while sub-committees monitor economic cooperation. A Parliamentary Association Committee allows for exchanges between EU and Ukrainian lawmakers, and a civil society platform promotes dialogue. Provisions include equal access to courts, non-discrimination, legislation alignment with EU law, and monitoring implementation. Disputes are resolved by the Association Council. Trade disputes follow the Agreement's Dispute Settlement section, with good-faith consultations necessary for resolution. Unresolved matters are discussed until a decision is reached, with confidentiality maintained in all discussions. Compliance with obligations is mandatory, with non-compliance addressed through special processes.²⁸

The EU-Ukraine Association Agreement is comprehensive and demanding, necessitating significant domestic reforms in Ukraine. Despite initial challenges and a lack of EU membership prospects, Kyiv worked towards meeting the agreement's standards. The Ukrainian crisis of 2014 further motivated both parties to work together, resulting in adjustments to negotiation terms. The EU's goal to uphold Ukraine's stability and pro-European stance guided their approach and responses to Ukrainian requests during the agreement's implementation.²⁹ In 2019, amendments to the Ukrainian Constitution formally highlighted the importance of affirming Ukraine's European identity and commitment to Euro-Atlantic integration. The Verkhovna Rada was tasked with establishing principles for domestic and foreign policies to achieve full EU and NATO membership. The President is responsible for implementing Ukraine's strategic plan for joining the EU and NATO, while the Cabinet of Ministers is responsible for facilitating integration.³⁰ This shift marked a significant departure from Ukraine's previous ambivalence

²⁷ Title VI Financial Cooperation, with Anti-Fraud Provisions, AA, *op. cit.*, note 18.

²⁸ Title VII Institutional, General and Final Provisions, AA, *op. cit.*, note 18.

²⁹ Rabinovych, M.; Pintsch, A., *Compliance Negotiations in EU External Relations: The Case of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement*, Journal of European Integration, Vol 46, No. 2, 2024, pp. 261–262.

³⁰ Zakon Ukrainy, Pro vnesennya zmin do Konstytutsiyi Ukrainy (shchodo stratehichnoho kursu derzhavy na nabuttya povnopravnogo chlenstva Ukrainy v Yevropeys'komu Soyuzi ta v Orhanizatsiyi Pivnichnoatlantychnoho dohovoru) (Vidomosti Verkhovnoyi Rady (VVR), 2019, № 9, st.50)/The Law of Ukraine, On making changes to the Constitution of Ukraine (regarding the state's strategic course towards full membership of Ukraine in the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization) (Information of the Verkhovna Rada (VVR), 2019, No. 9, Article 50, available at: [<https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2680-19#n2>]).

towards Western integration. External threats, such as Russia's annexation of Crimea and the significant change in the political landscape following the Party of Regions' division, influenced this shift. The departure of their loyal supporters resulted in a lasting change in Ukraine's internal political equilibrium.³¹

4. THE EUROPEAN UNION'S SUPPORT FOR UKRAINE: CONFRONTING THE RUSSIAN INVASION

The European Union responded swiftly and decisively to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, recognising the significant military threat it posed and its broader implications for European security. In light of escalating tensions, the EU transitioned its previous diplomatic appeasement strategy towards Russia to a more assertive approach. This shift was influenced by criticism from member countries such as Poland and the Baltic states, which emphasised the need for a stronger stance against Russian aggression. The EU's new strategy prioritises support for Ukraine while upholding EU values and legal norms. This included implementing harsh sanctions and providing financial aid packages and military assistance to bolster Ukraine's capacity to defend itself. Despite varying perspectives among member states, the EU enforced economic requirements to ensure unanimous consensus on key decisions and prevent individual member states, such as Hungary, from leveraging their veto power. This demonstrated the EU's commitment to unity and solidarity in the face of external threats.³²

4.1. The EU's support for Ukraine through enforcing sanctions on Russia

The EU took different measures to address threats to Ukraine's sovereignty and independence. On February 23, 2022, the EU imposed sanctions on Russia for recognising Donetsk and Luhansk as separate entities and deploying troops there. These sanctions, known as the first packet of sanctions, include targeting 351 Russian State Duma members and 27 others, limiting economic ties with the areas, and restricting Russia's access to the EU's financial markets.³³ On February 25, the EU implemented

³¹ Per, E., *Painful Moments and Realignment: Explaining Ukraine's Foreign Policy, 2014–2022*, Problems of Post-Communism, September 13, 2023, pp. 1–13.

³² Bosse, G., *The EU's Response to the Russian Invasion of Ukraine: Invoking Norms and Values in Times of Fundamental Rupture*, Journal of Common Market Studies, December 14, 2023, pp. 1–17. Heidi, M.; Whitman, R. G.; Wright, N., *The EU and the Invasion of Ukraine: A Collective Responsibility to Act?*, International Affairs, Vol. 99, No. 1, 2023, p. 219.

³³ Council Regulation (EU) 2022/259 of 23 February 2022 amending Regulation (EU) No 269/2014 concerning restrictive measures in respect of actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine [2022] OJ L42/1. Council Implementing Regulation (EU) 2022/260 of 23 February 2022 implementing Regulation (EU) No 269/2014 concerning restrictive

a second packet of sanctions in reaction to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The EU has frozen the assets of Vladimir Putin and Sergey Lavrov and imposed restrictive measures on members of the Russian National Security Council and State Duma who backed the recognition of Donetsk and Luhansk. Due to Russia's military aggression against Ukraine, we have approved additional individual and economic sanctions targeting the finance, energy, transport, and technology sectors, as well as changes to visa policies.³⁴ The EU implemented a third package of sanctions on February 28 and March 2, 2022. The EU prohibits Russian air carriers, Russian-registered aircraft, and aircraft controlled by Russian entities from landing, taking off, or flying over EU territory. The measures include two assistance packages under the European Peace Facil-

measures in respect of actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine [2022] OJ L42/3. Council Implementing Regulation (EU) 2022/261 of 23 February 2022 implementing Regulation (EU) No 269/2014 concerning restrictive measures in respect of actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine [2022] OJ L42/15. Council Regulation (EU) 2022/262 of 23 February 2022 amending Regulation (EU) No 833/2014 concerning restrictive measures in view of Russia's actions destabilising the situation in Ukraine [2022] OJ L42/74. Council Regulation (EU) 2022/263 of 23 February 2022 concerning restrictive measures in response to the recognition of the non-government controlled areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts of Ukraine and the ordering of Russian armed forces into those areas [2022] OJ L42/77. Council Decision (CFSP) 2022/264 of 23 February 2022 amending Decision 2014/512/CFSP concerning restrictive measures in view of Russia's actions destabilising the situation in Ukraine [2022] OJ L42/95. Council Decision (CFSP) 2022/265 of 23 February 2022 amending Decision 2014/145/CFSP concerning restrictive measures in respect of actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine [2022] OJ L42/98. Council Decision (CFSP) 2022/266 of 23 February 2022 concerning restrictive measures in response to the recognition of the non-government controlled areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts of Ukraine and the ordering of Russian armed forces into those areas [2022] OJ L42/109. Council Decision (CFSP) 2022/267 of 23 February 2022 amending Decision 2014/145/CFSP concerning restrictive measures in respect of actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine [2022] OJ L42/114.

³⁴ Council Decision (CFSP) 2022/327 of 25 February 2022 amending Decision 2014/512/CFSP concerning restrictive measures in view of Russia's actions destabilising the situation in Ukraine, [2022] OJ L48/1. Council Regulation (EU) 2022/328 of 25 February 2022 amending Regulation (EU) No 833/2014 concerning restrictive measures in view of Russia's actions destabilising the situation in Ukraine, [2022] OJ L49/1. Council Decision (CFSP) 2022/329 of 25 February 2022 amending Decision 2014/145/CFSP concerning restrictive measures in respect of actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine, [2022] OJ L50/1. Council Regulation (EU) 2022/330 of 25 February 2022 amending Regulation (EU) No 269/2014 concerning restrictive measures in respect of actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine [2022] OJ L51/1. Council Decision (CFSP) 2022/331 of 25 February 2022 amending Decision 2014/145/CFSP concerning restrictive measures in respect of actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine, [2022] OJ L52/1. Council Implementing Regulation (EU) 2022/332 of 25 February 2022 implementing Regulation (EU) No 269/2014 concerning restrictive measures in respect of actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine, [2022] OJ L53/1. Council Decision (EU) 2022/333 of 25 February 2022 on the partial suspension of the application of the Agreement between the European Community and the Russian Federation on the facilitation of the issuance of visas to the citizens of the European Union and the Russian Federation [2022] OJ L54/1.

ity to strengthen the Ukrainian Armed Forces and help protect the country's territorial integrity and civilian population. The assistance, totaling EUR 500 million, provided the Ukrainian Armed Forces with equipment and supplies, including lethal equipment. Also, an additional 26 individuals and one organization faced new sanctions.³⁵ The EU Council also imposed stricter sanctions against Belarusian individuals, including trade and export restrictions, to address its involvement in the conflict and uphold international law.³⁶ Additionally, the EU has extended its measures targeting individuals from Belarus.³⁷ To address hybrid threats, the EU Council has also decided to impose sanctions on Russian media outlets such as Russia Today and Sputnik for disseminating propaganda within the EU.³⁸ The Council has introduced restrictions that aim to prevent investment in projects linked to the Russian Direct Investment Fund, prohibit the provision of financial services to certain Russian entities, strengthen export controls, and reduce support to entities related to the Fund. In addition, the Council prohibited the sale, supply, transfer, or export of euro-denominated banknotes to Russia or any entity in Russia, including the government and the Central Bank of Russia. Seven Russian banks also faced a ban on SWIFT.³⁹ On March 15, 2022, the EU introduced a fourth round of sanctions, which targeted Russian oligarchs like Abramovich, Khan, Rashnikov, and others who profit from actions in Crimea and Ukraine, influence Russian politics and the economy, benefit from connections to Putin, and contribute to government revenue. These sanctions prohibit transactions with state-owned enterprises, credit-rating services for Russians, new in-

³⁵ Council Regulation (EU) 2022/334 of 28 February 2022 amending Council Regulation (EU) No 833/2014 concerning restrictive measures in view of Russia's actions destabilising the situation in Ukraine, [2022] OJ L57/1. Council Decision (CFSP) 2022/335 of 28 February 2022 amending Decision 2014/512/CFSP concerning restrictive measures in view of Russia's actions destabilising the situation in Ukraine [2022] OJ L57/4. Council Decision (CFSP) 2022/338 of 28 February 2022 on an assistance measure under the European Peace Facility for the supply to the Ukrainian Armed Forces of military equipment, and platforms, designed to deliver lethal force [2022] OJ L 60/1. Council Decision (CFSP) 2022/339 of 28 February 2022 on an assistance measure under the European Peace Facility to support the Ukrainian Armed Forces [2022] OJ L 61/1.

³⁶ Council Decision (CFSP) 2022/356 of 2 March 2022 amending Decision 2012/642/CFSP concerning restrictive measures in view of the situation in Belarus [2022] OJ L67/103.

³⁷ Council Decision (CFSP) 2022/354 of 2 March 2022 amending Decision 2014/145/CFSP concerning restrictive measures in respect of actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine [2022] OJ L66/14.

³⁸ Council Regulation (EU) 2022/350 of 1 March 2022 amending Regulation (EU) No 833/2014 concerning restrictive measures in view of Russia's actions destabilising the situation in Ukraine [2022] OJ L65/1; Council Decision (CFSP) 2022/351 of 1 March 2022 amending Decision 2014/512/CFSP concerning restrictive measures in view of Russia's actions destabilising the situation in Ukraine [2022] OJ L65/5.

³⁹ Council Regulation (EU) 2022/345 of 1 March 2022 amending Regulation (EU) No 833/2014 concerning restrictive measures in view of Russia's actions destabilising the situation in Ukraine [2022] OJ L 63/1. Council Decision (CFSP) 2022/346 of 1 March 2022 amending Decision 2014/512/CFSP concerning restrictive measures in view of Russia's actions destabilising the situation in Ukraine [2022] OJ L 63/5.

vestments in Russian energy, luxury goods exports to Russia, and imports of iron and steel from Russia. The sanctions also apply to the supply, sale, export, or transfer of technology and goods in the energy sector to Russia. Prohibitions include technical assistance, brokering services, financing for such goods, transport of fossil fuels, creation of new joint ventures, investment services, transactions with Russian entities, and selling luxury goods. The sanctions also involve banning all transactions with specific state-owned enterprises, prohibiting the import of iron and steel from Russia to the EU, and banning the provision of credit-rating services to any Russian individual or organization.⁴⁰ The EU imposed a fifth round of sanctions on Russia on April 8, 2022, including a coal ban on all Russian coal imports, financial measures such as transaction bans on Russian banks and restrictions on crypto-asset and trust services, transport bans on Russian and Belarusian freight road operators, targeted export bans on certain technologies and products, extended import bans on various goods, including spirits and seafood, exclusion of Russia from public contracts and European funding opportunities, legal clarifications on currency exports and securities sales to Russian entities, and asset freezes on additional individuals and organizations. These measures aim to put pressure on Russia and its supporters in response to ongoing conflicts and violations. On June 3, 2022, the EU imposed a sixth round of sanctions on Russia, including oil import restrictions and financial sanctions, to limit Russia's ability to export oil and reduce Putin's financial resources for further aggression. These measures include an embargo on Russian oil, exemptions for certain member states with pipeline dependencies, and temporary derogations for Bulgaria and Croatia. European Union operators are prohibited from providing insurance and financing services for the transportation of oil to countries outside the EU. Additionally, certain banks from Russia and Belarus have been excluded from the SWIFT system. Trust measures have been adjusted with exceptions for humanitarian purposes and civil society. Business services like accounting and tax consulting are prohibited for the Russian government and entities. The suspension of Russian state media broadcasting and expanded export restrictions on chemicals and military-related entities aim to further isolate Russia economically. The EU, the US, the UK, and the Republic of Korea have aligned on export restrictions, with Belarusian organiza-

⁴⁰ Council Implementing Regulation (EU) 2022/427 of 15 March 2022 implementing Regulation (EU) No 269/2014 concerning restrictive measures in respect of actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine [2022] OJ L1 87/1. Council Regulation (EU) 2022/428 of 15 March 2022 amending Regulation (EU) No 833/2014 concerning restrictive measures in view of Russia's actions destabilising the situation in Ukraine [2022] OJ L1 87/13. Council Decision (CFSP) 2022/429 of 15 March 2022 amending Decision 2014/145/CFSP concerning restrictive measures in respect of actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine [2022] OJ L1 87/44. Council Decision (CFSP) 2022/430 of 15 March 2022 amending Decision 2014/512/CFSP concerning restrictive measures in view of Russia's actions destabilising the situation in Ukraine [2022] OJ L1 87/56.

tions facing additional limitations.⁴¹ The Council of the European Union implemented a comprehensive package of additional measures named - Maintenance and Alignment on July 21, 2022. These measures include a ban on importing gold from Russia, strengthened reporting requirements for sanctioned individuals to declare their assets, targeted export bans on dual-use and advanced technology items, a ban on Russian-flagged vessels accessing certain ports, extended financial sanctions on deposits from Russian-owned entities, exemptions for food and energy transactions, medical and pharmaceutical exemptions, and clarifications on existing measures such as public procurement and asset freezes. The sanctions list also included the addition of 54 individuals and ten organizations. These measures aim to further align EU policies with those of the international community in response to Russia's actions.⁴²

⁴¹ Council Implementing Regulation (EU) 2022/876 of 3 June 2022 implementing Article 8a(1) of Regulation (EC) No 765/2006 concerning restrictive measures in view of the situation in Belarus and the involvement of Belarus in the Russian aggression against Ukraine [2022] OJ L 153/1. Council Regulation (EU) 2022/877 of 3 June 2022 amending Regulation (EC) No 765/2006 concerning restrictive measures in view of the situation in Belarus and the involvement of Belarus in the Russian aggression against Ukraine [2022] OJ L 153/11. Council Implementing Regulation (EU) 2022/878 of 3 June 2022 implementing Regulation (EU) No 269/2014 concerning restrictive measures in respect of actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine [2022] OJ L 153/15. Council Regulation (EU) 2022/879 of 3 June 2022 amending Regulation (EU) No 833/2014 concerning restrictive measures in view of Russia's actions destabilising the situation in Ukraine [2022] OJ L 153/53. Council Regulation (EU) 2022/880 of 3 June 2022 amending Regulation (EU) No 269/2014 concerning restrictive measures in respect of actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine. [2022] OJ L 153/75. Council Implementing Decision (CFSP) 2022/881 of 3 June 2022 implementing Decision 2012/642/CFSP concerning restrictive measures in view of the situation in Belarus and the involvement of Belarus in the Russian aggression against Ukraine [2022] OJ L 153/77. Council Decision (CFSP) 2022/882 of 3 June 2022 amending Decision 2012/642/CFSP concerning restrictive measures in view of the situation in Belarus and the involvement of Belarus in the Russian aggression against Ukraine [2022] OJ L 153/88. Council Decision (CFSP) 2022/883 of 3 June 2022 amending Decision 2014/145/CFSP concerning restrictive measures in respect of actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine [2022] OJ L 153/92. Council Decision (CFSP) 2022/884 of 3 June 2022 amending Decision 2014/512/CFSP concerning restrictive measures in view of Russia's actions destabilising the situation in Ukraine [2022] OJ L 153/128. Council Decision (CFSP) 2022/885 of 3 June 2022 amending Decision 2014/145/CFSP concerning restrictive measures in respect of actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine [2022] OJ L 153/139.

⁴² Council Regulation (EU) 2022/1269 of 21 July 2022 amending Regulation (EU) No 833/2014 concerning restrictive measures in view of Russia's actions destabilising the situation in Ukraine [2022] OJ L 193/1. Council Implementing Regulation (EU) 2022/1270 of 21 July 2022 implementing Regulation (EU) No 269/2014 concerning restrictive measures in respect of actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine [2022] OJ L 193/133. Council Decision (CFSP) 2022/1271 of 21 July 2022 amending Decision 2014/512/CFSP concerning restrictive measures in view of Russia's actions destabilising the situation in Ukraine [2022] OJ L 193/196. Council Decision (CFSP) 2022/1272 of 21 July 2022 amending Decision 2014/145/CFSP concerning restrictive measures in respect of actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine [2022] OJ L 193/218.

The European Council has imposed an eighth package of sanctions on individuals and entities involved in Russia's occupation of several Ukrainian regions, as well as those spreading disinformation, on October 5, 2022. Targets include decision-makers, oligarchs, military officials, and propagandists undermining Ukraine's sovereignty. The measures now cover all non-government-controlled areas in specific regions, with new export restrictions on military and industrial items. Import restrictions worth nearly €7 billion have been enforced, focusing on Russian steel, machinery, plastics, vehicles, textiles, and other goods. The EU is implementing a G7 oil price cap to reduce Russia's revenue and stabilise global energy markets. Additionally, restrictions on EU nationals in state-owned enterprises and banning transactions with the Russian Maritime Register are in place. Further measures include tightening restrictions on crypto assets, prohibiting certain services to the Russian government, and introducing a criterion to sanction individuals aiding in sanctions circumvention. These efforts are intended to pressure Russia and limit its access to critical services, deterring individuals from bypassing sanctions.⁴³ A nine-package package of sanctions was imposed on December 16, 2022, by the Council of the European Union. Additional measures in response to Russia's aggressive actions include listing almost 200 individuals and organizations for asset freezes, such as Russian armed forces, political figures, and companies involved in attacks against civilians and theft of Ukrainian resources. The EU has also imposed new export restrictions on dual-use technologies and military equipment that enhance Russia's military capabilities. Severe export restrictions have targeted one hundred sixty-eight more Russian organizations, limiting their access to sensitive technology items. Additionally, the EU has introduced new bans on industrial goods, technology, business services, and media outlets. The EU has sanctioned four Russian media channels and imposed transaction bans on three Russian banks. The EU has restricted the export of drone engines to Russia and imposed economic measures against the Russian energy and mining sectors. These measures were made in collaboration with international partners to significantly increase pressure on Russia in response to its hostile actions.⁴⁴ The EU

⁴³ EU Council Regulation 2022/1903 modifies sanctions related to Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts and Russian troop deployment. Regulation 2022/1904 changes Regulation 833/2014 due to Russia's actions destabilizing Ukraine. Regulation 2022/1905 amends Regulation 269/2014 on Ukraine's territorial integrity. Council Regulation 2022/1906 implements measures against threats to Ukraine. Decision 2022/1907 modifies Decision 2014/145/CFSP on Ukraine's sovereignty. CFSP Decision 2022/1908 amends measures regarding Donetsk and Luhansk due to Russian involvement. Decision 2022/1909 modifies sanctions on Russia for actions in Ukraine. Official Journal of the European Union, L 259I, Volume 65, 6 October 2022.

⁴⁴ Council Regulation (EU) 2022/2474 of 16 December 2022 amending Regulation (EU) No 833/2014 concerning restrictive measures in view of Russia's actions destabilising the situation in Ukraine [2022] OJ L 332/1. Council Regulation (EU) 2022/2475 of 16 December 2022 amending Regulation (EU) No 269/2014 concerning restrictive measures in respect of actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine [2022] OJ L 332/315. Council Implementing Regu-

adopted the tenth package of sanctions against Russia, targeting individuals and entities involved in the war against Ukraine, spreading disinformation, and supporting information warfare on 27 February 2023. Export bans on advanced technologies used in weapons systems have been implemented, along with restrictions on goods that could aid Russia's military efforts. The EU is coordinating with international partners to strengthen the impact of these actions, aiming to deter Russian aggression and support Ukraine's defence. The total value of EU export bans to Russia now amounts to EUR 11.4 billion, with additional sanctions on Russian banks and restrictions on critical infrastructure and gas storage capacity. Enforcement measures include reporting on frozen assets and prohibiting the transit of dual-use goods. The EU is working with third countries to enforce sanctions effectively, including banning Russian media outlets and making technical amendments to improve maritime safety services. These measures seek to enhance enforcement efforts and prevent the circumvention of sanctions against Russia.⁴⁵ In the eleventh sanction package imposed on June 23, 2023, the EU has implemented various trade and transport measures to strengthen existing restrictions. Trade measures include a new anti-circumvention tool, extended transit prohibitions, and the addition of entities supporting Russia's military complex to the restrictions list. Tighter export restrictions on certain items,

lation (EU) 2022/2476 of 16 December 2022 implementing Regulation (EU) No 269/2014 concerning restrictive measures in respect of actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine [2022] OJ L 332/318. Council Decision (CFSP) 2022/2477 of 16 December 2022 amending Decision 2014/145/CFSP concerning restrictive measures in respect of actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine [2022] OJ L 332/466. Council Decision (CFSP) 2022/2478 of 16 December 2022 amending Decision 2014/512/CFSP concerning restrictive measures in view of Russia's actions destabilising the situation in Ukraine [2022] OJ L 332/614. Council Decision (CFSP) 2022/2479 of 16 December 2022 amending Decision 2014/145/CFSP concerning restrictive measures in respect of actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine [2022] OJ L 332/687.

⁴⁵ Council Regulation (EU) 2023/426 of 25 February 2023 amending Regulation (EU) No 269/2014 concerning restrictive measures in respect of actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine [2023] OJ L 59/1. Council Regulation (EU) 2023/427 of 25 February 2023 amending Regulation (EU) No 833/2014 concerning restrictive measures in view of Russia's actions destabilising the situation in Ukraine [2023] OJ L 59/6. Council Implementing Regulation (EU) 2023/429 of 25 February 2023 implementing Regulation (EU) No 269/2014 concerning restrictive measures in respect of actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine [2023] OJ L 59/278. Council Implementing Regulation (EU) 2023/430 of 25 February 2023 implementing Regulation (EU) 2020/1998 concerning restrictive measures against serious human rights violations and abuses. [2023] OJ L 59/423. Council Decision (CFSP) 2023/432 of 25 February 2023 amending Decision 2014/145/CFSP concerning restrictive measures in respect of actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine [2023] OJ L 59/427. Council Decision (CFSP) 2023/433 of 25 February 2023 amending Decision (CFSP) 2020/1999 concerning restrictive measures against serious human rights violations and abuses [2023] OJ L 59/583. Council Decision (CFSP) 2023/434 of 25 February 2023 amending Decision 2014/512/CFSP concerning restrictive measures in view of Russia's actions destabilising the situation in Ukraine [2023] OJ L 59/593.

prohibitions on luxury cars and intellectual property rights, and simplified classification in the industrial goods annex have been put in place. Regarding transport measures, bans have been imposed on certain trucks and vessels to prevent the circumvention of sanctions. Energy measures include prohibiting vessels from manipulating their navigation systems while transporting Russian oil and restricting oil imports from Russia through pipelines. Asset freezes have been imposed on over 100 individuals and entities, with revised listing criteria and derogations for certain transactions. The media ban has been extended, and information exchange and reporting provisions have been introduced.⁴⁶ On August 3, 2023, the EU implemented new measures in response to the situation in Belarus. The updates aim to align sanctions on Russia and Belarus to prevent evasion through Belarus. The changes include expanding the export ban to Belarus, particularly for military and technological items. Additional bans were placed on firearms, ammunition, and aviation and space goods. These urgent measures combat the evasion of sensitive goods and technologies.⁴⁷ On December 18, 2023, the EU adopted a twelfth packet of measures against actors in the Russian military, defence, and IT sectors and those involved in illegal activities in Ukraine. Trade measures include importing bans on Russian diamonds and raw materials for steel production and export restrictions on dual-use and advanced technological goods. The EU has also introduced export controls on dual-use and advanced technology to weaken Russia's military capabilities. The EU has added 29 entities related to Russia's military-industrial complex to a list, including those in Uzbekistan and Singapore. The EU has imposed prohibitions on the supply of certain software to the Russian government or companies. These measures aim to impede Russia's industrial and military capabilities. The EU has worked with partners like the US and the UK to ensure the effectiveness of these measures within the G7. The EU has approved stricter asset freeze obligations aimed at those who profit from forced transfers

⁴⁶ Council Regulation (EU) 2023/1214 of 23 June 2023 amending Regulation (EU) No 833/2014 concerning restrictive measures in view of Russia's actions destabilising the situation in Ukraine [2023] OJ L1 159/1. Council Regulation (EU) 2023/1215 of 23 June 2023 amending Regulation (EU) No 269/2014 concerning restrictive measures in respect of actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine [2023] OJ L1 159/330. Council Implementing Regulation (EU) 2023/1216 of 23 June 2023 implementing Regulation (EU) No 269/2014 concerning restrictive measures in respect of actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine [2023] OJ L1 159/335. Council Decision (CFSP) 2023/1217 of 23 June 2023 amending Decision 2014/512/CFSP concerning restrictive measures in view of Russia's actions destabilising the situation in Ukraine [2023] OJ L1 159/451. Council Decision (CFSP) 2023/1218 of 23 June 2023 amending Decision 2014/145/CFSP concerning restrictive measures in respect of actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine [2023] OJ L1 159/526.

⁴⁷ Council Implementing Regulation (EU) 2023/1591 of 3 August 2023 implementing Article 8a(1) of Regulation (EC) No 765/2006 concerning restrictive measures in view of the situation in Belarus and the involvement of Belarus in the Russian aggression against Ukraine [2023] OJ L 195I.

of Russian subsidiaries of EU companies. Additional measures include tightening the G7+ oil price cap, placing an import ban on LPG, and implementing stronger anti-circumvention measures. Member States are required to trace the assets of listed individuals to prevent breaches. These measures aim to strengthen sanctions against Russia and prevent the circumvention of restrictions.⁴⁸

On February 23, 2024, the European Union adopted the thirteen packages of sanctions. It imposes 194 additional measures, including 106 against individuals and 88 against entities, targeting Russia's military and defence sector, partners in the war effort, circumvention tactics, temporary occupation of Ukraine, and violations of children's rights. The new listings aim to stop Russia from acquiring sensitive Western technologies for its military, mainly focusing on unmanned aerial vehicles. Trade measures include export restrictions on 27 Russian and third-country companies associated with Russia's military-industrial complex and adding 17 Russian companies involved in electronic components for drones. To further weaken Russia's military capabilities, the package also expands the list of advanced technology items that could enhance Russia's defence and security sectors. This comprehensive approach strongly signals against Russia's actions and aims to disrupt its military advancements.⁴⁹

4.2. The EU's Financial and Military Aid for Ukraine

Financial aid and assistance from the European Union, its member states, and financial institutions have been crucial for Ukraine during the Russian invasion. In 2022, the EU promised €43.3 billion in aid, with €11.5 billion coming directly from the EU budget for Ukraine. The focus was on strengthening Ukraine's resilience and stability. In 2023, an additional €18 billion in EU financial aid was allocated for favourable loans to support economic growth. Member countries also contributed €12.2 billion, showing solidarity and commitment to helping Ukraine overcome challenges.

⁴⁸ Council Regulation (EU) 2023/2878 of 18 December 2023 amending Regulation (EU) No 833/2014 concerning restrictive measures in view of Russia's actions destabilising the situation in Ukraine [2023] OJ L.

⁴⁹ Council Regulation (EU) 2024/745 of 23 February 2024 amending Regulation (EU) No 833/2014 concerning restrictive measures in view of Russia's actions destabilising the situation in Ukraine. [2024] OJ L. Council Decision (CFSP) 2024/746 of 23 February 2024 amending Decision 2014/512/CFSP concerning restrictive measures in view of Russia's actions destabilising the situation in Ukraine. [2024] OJ L. Council Implementing Regulation (EU) 2024/753 of 23 February 2024 implementing Regulation (EU) No 269/2014 concerning restrictive measures in respect of actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine. [2024] OJ L. Council Decision (CFSP) 2024/747 of 23 February 2024 amending Decision 2014/145/CFSP concerning restrictive measures in respect of actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine. [2024] OJ L.

In February 2024, the EU established the Ukraine Facility for 2024–2027, which authorised an extra €50 billion in financial aid for the 2024–2027 timeframe. This aid package consisted of €33 billion in loans and €17 billion in grants. It aims to support Ukraine through financial assistance, investments, and technical assistance to implement the Ukraine Plan and maintain macro-financial stability. It consists of three pillars: financial support for reforms and investments, an investment framework, and technical assistance for accession-related reforms. The overarching goals of the Facility are to address Russia's aggression consequences, promote recovery, enhance cohesion with Union standards, and align with Union values for potential membership. It aims to achieve stability, security, peace, prosperity, and sustainability through various areas such as infrastructure rebuilding, demining, social and health challenges, security against hybrid threats, economic transition, market integration, and more. The Facility also focuses on strengthening media, civil society involvement, gender equality, anti-corruption efforts, environmental protection, digital transformation, decentralisation, and local development. It promotes cross-border cooperation, development effectiveness principles, ownership of priorities by Ukraine, inclusive partnerships, transparency, and mutual accountability while ensuring a balanced allocation of resources and alignment with international laws.⁵⁰ Besides to providing financial aid, the EU has also managed the distribution of essential emergency supplies to Ukraine, meeting urgent humanitarian requirements. Additionally, the EU has implemented measures to allow the use of funds obtained from frozen Russian assets to support the reconstruction efforts in Ukraine.⁵¹

The EU created the Military Assistance Mission for Ukraine (EUMAM) on October 17, 2022, to support Ukraine's response to the Russian invasion. EUMAM works with the EU delegation and EUAM Ukraine civilian mission to strengthen Ukraine's Armed Forces by providing training, enhancing military capacities, and safeguarding borders. Over 40,000 Ukrainian soldiers have received training through EUMAM, improving the Armed Forces' effectiveness.⁵² The EU also adopted the Act in Support of Ammunition Production (ASAP) in July 2023 to boost ammunition production and ensure the timely delivery of defence products.⁵³ Financial assistance of €33 billion, including €11.1 billion from the European Peace Facility (EPF), has been allocated to support Ukraine's military capabilities.

⁵⁰ Regulation (EU) 2024/792 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 February 2024 establishing the Ukraine Facility [2024] OJ L.

⁵¹ Archick, K., *Russia's War Against Ukraine: European Union Responses and US-EU Relations*, US Government, Congressional Research Service, 27 March 2024, pp. 1–3.

⁵² Council Decision (CFSP) 2022/1968 of 17 October 2022 on a European Union Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine (EUMAM Ukraine) [2022] OJ L270/85.

⁵³ Regulation (EU) 2023/1525 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 July 2023 on supporting ammunition production (ASAP) [2023] OJ L185/7.

The EU provides an additional €5 billion in support starting March 18, 2024, demonstrating a long-term commitment to Ukraine's security. The EPF has a maximum budget of €17 billion for 2021–2027 to further support the region's security.⁵⁴ Overall, this EU military aid to Ukraine underscores its commitment to supporting Ukraine's security and defence needs. Through means of immediate assistance, joint procurement efforts, and long-term investments in production capacity, the EU aims to bolster Ukraine's resilience in the face of external threats while enhancing the collective defence capabilities of its member states.

At the same time, Russia's invasion of Ukraine has heightened security concerns throughout EU member states, prompting a significant increase in focus on defence and security measures. Germany's commitment to defence, evidenced by an additional €100 billion investment, aligns with projections indicating an increase in defence spending across EU member states over the next three years, intending to move closer to NATO's target of allocating 2% of GDP for defence purposes. Simultaneously, efforts are underway to bolster Europe's defence industry and ensure a consistent supply of military aid. Strategies include joint purchasing and restocking to address shortfalls in defence production.⁵⁵ However, despite these initiatives, concerns are mounting over the growing reliance on US military aid and equipment. As European countries face dwindling inventories and increased demand for weapons supplies, there's a notable trend towards seeking replacements from US sources, indicating a shift away from strategic military independence towards greater dependence on US defence capabilities during times of conflict. While the EU continues to enhance its defence capabilities and provide aid to Ukraine, the rising reliance on US military aid poses a challenge to achieving long-term strategic autonomy. This underscores the importance of ongoing initiatives to strengthen European defence capabilities and foster increased self-sufficiency in defence affairs.⁵⁶

4.3. The European Union's Support for Ukraine's EU Candidacy Post-Russian Invasion

Amidst the backdrop of Russia's invasion, Ukraine's ambition to join the European Union represented a notable departure from previous discussions within the Eastern Partnership program. Before the invasion in February 2022, Ukraine's path to

⁵⁴ Council Decision (CFSP) 2024/890 of 18 March 2024 amending Decision (CFSP) 2021/509 establishing a European Peace Facility [2024] OJ L.

⁵⁵ Besch, S.; Ciaramella, E., *Ukraine's Accession Poses a Unique Conundrum for the EU*, [<https://carnegieendowment.org/2023/10/24/ukraine-s-accession-poses-unique-conundrum-for-eu-pub-90838>], Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 24 October 2023.

⁵⁶ Tocci, N., *Europe and Russia's Invasion of Ukraine: Where Does the EU Stand?*, LSE Public Policy Review, Vol. 3, No. 1, 2023, pp. 1–7.

EU membership seemed obstructed, primarily due to the territorial dispute with Russia. This conflict saw the annexation of Crimea and Russia's indirect control over parts of the Donbas region. Ukraine also grappled with internal challenges, particularly in combating corruption and ineffective administration.⁵⁷

Just four days after the invasion started, on February 28, 2022, Ukraine officially submitted its application to join the European Union. As the Russian invasion intensified, the European Union faced a pivotal moment, prompting a reassessment of its stance on potential member states. Ukraine's plight fueled its desire for closer integration with the EU, causing significant shifts in Europe's geopolitical landscape. On June 17, 2022, the European Commission recommended granting Ukraine candidate status, outlining seven steps for Ukraine to fulfil and signalling a significant change in the EU's perspective.⁵⁸ The European Parliament echoed this sentiment on June 23, 2022, endorsing Ukraine's application, leading to the European Council granting Ukraine candidate status on the same day.⁵⁹ By February 2023, the Commission had concluded its evaluation of Ukraine's application. The Commission introduced a proposal for a new Ukraine facility to aid recovery efforts, setting a target completion date of June 2023. Additionally, the Commission report proposed initiating accession negotiations with Ukraine by November 2023, with ongoing progress monitoring in various areas. The document underscored Ukraine's dedication to democratic and legal reforms in the wake of the Russian invasion, while acknowledging the challenges of safeguarding the rights of minorities and vulnerable groups, fighting crime and corruption, and tackling the impact of the invasion on economic growth. In December 2023, despite internal disagreements, the European Council took a crucial step by starting formal talks about Ukraine joining the European Union.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Sapir, A., *Ukraine and the EU: Enlargement at a New Crossroads*, Intereconomics, Vol. 57, No. 4, 2022, pp. 213–217.

⁵⁸ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council and the Council Commission Opinion on Ukraine's application for membership of the European Union, Brussels, 17.6.2022 COM(2022) 407 final, [https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/c8316380-6cb6-4ffd-8a84-d2874003b288_en?filename=Ukraine%20Opinion%20and%20Annex.pdf].

⁵⁹ European Parliament resolution of 23 June 2022 on the candidate status of Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia (2022/2716(RSP)) [2022] OJ C 32 OJ/2. European Council, European Council conclusions, 23–24 June 2022, [<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/06/24/european-council-conclusions-23-24-june-2022/>].

⁶⁰ European Council. European Council conclusions on Ukraine, enlargement and reforms, 14 December 2023, [<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2023/12/14/european-council-conclusions-on-ukraine-enlargement-and-reforms/>].

The nomination by the EU carries significant symbolic weight, representing its unwavering commitment to upholding core values despite encountering geopolitical challenges. The European Union has historically pursued an enlargement policy towards non-EU nations, providing a transparent path to accession, promoting reforms, and advocating for the adoption of EU standards. Central to this approach is political conditionality, which rewards progress in reforms with positive integration status. The effectiveness of this policy hinges on the EU's attractiveness and credibility as a guiding political force in the region.

Against Russia's invasion, Ukraine's pursuit of candidate EU status underscores its steadfast dedication to embracing EU values, norms, and legal standards despite formidable obstacles. However, there is no expedited accession process; it is merit-based and requires meeting EU criteria through substantive reforms and aligning national laws with EU legislation. To strengthen legal ties with the EU amidst the conflict, Ukraine must adapt its legal frameworks to foster deeper cooperation, thereby contributing to ongoing governance improvements. Ukraine's preparation for EU membership is crucial to its adherence to EU market principles and legal statutes. Extensive reforms, including judicial system enhancements, media independence, anti-corruption measures, security sector restructuring, and robust institutional establishment, are imperative to fortify Ukraine's resilience against Russian influence. Furthermore, integrating into European energy networks and supply chains and bolstering resilience in the cyber and digital sectors are vital for Ukraine's future. This endeavour extends beyond administrative procedures and has profound implications for Ukrainian society, economy, and political landscape, particularly considering the ongoing Russian invasion. If Ukraine wins the war and regains its internationally recognised borders, its chances of joining the EU will greatly improve. This isn't solely due to the restoration of territorial integrity; it also entails the complete reconstruction of the country.⁶¹ Also, Ukraine's candidature for EU membership holds significant geopolitical importance. Making sure Ukraine remains strong is crucial, as is getting ready to protect a possible new external border from Russian aggression—a matter of equal significance for the EU and its member countries. The EU's previous hesitations about countries involved in significant interstate conflicts, particularly without NATO security assurances, could result in reevaluating the EU's security role and potential actions towards establishing a defence alliance. As a result, negotiations and strategic partnerships are crucial in navigating Ukraine's journey towards EU accession and managing regional geopolitical issues simultaneously.⁶²

⁶¹ Sapir, A., *Ukraine and the EU: Enlargement at a New Crossroads*, *op. cit.*, note 57.

⁶² Besch, S.; Eric C., *Ukraine's Accession Poses a Unique Conundrum for the EU*, [<https://carnegieendowment.org/2023/10/24/ukraine-s-accession-poses-unique-conundrum-for-eu-pub-90838>].

5. CONCLUSION REMARKS

The relationship between the EU and Ukraine has evolved due to critical events, agreements, and the repercussions of Russian actions within the country. Significant occurrences such as achieving independence, the Orange Revolution, and the Euromaidan protests underscored Ukraine's dedication to enhancing collaboration with the EU, resulting in stronger ties between the two entities. Simultaneously, the EU's dedication to enhancing connections was evident in its cooperation with Ukraine via the ENP and Eastern Partnership, the penalties imposed on Russia following its capture of Crimea, and the backing of separatists in eastern Ukraine. The Accord signed post-Maidan uprising in 2014 laid the groundwork for legal and economic collaboration, aiding Ukraine in aligning with EU standards. However, the EU realised that its diplomatic approach was inadequate to maintain peace in Ukraine following the Russian invasion, prompting a shift in strategy towards Russia, imposing unprecedented sanctions, and providing clear military support for Ukraine. The EU's response to the invasion displayed its strong support for democratic values and commitment to upholding stability in the region, as evidenced by providing financial aid and engaging in political cooperation. The invasion led to lasting alterations in EU-Ukraine relations due to heightened geopolitical tensions.

Nevertheless, Ukraine is ramping up efforts to join the EU, and the EU's choice to grant its candidate country status is a strategic move to combat Russian influence and safeguard European security. In the future, following EU regulations and receiving consistent assistance will lead to favourable chances for greater harmonisation. Nonetheless, navigating geopolitical complexities, economic constraints, and internal governance issues is essential. Ukraine must adapt its legal systems with the EU and develop strong cooperation mechanisms with NATO to effectively manage internal stability, shifting geopolitical landscapes, and external influences.

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