The Politics of Stigmatization

Poland as a ‘Latecomer’ in the European Union

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SUMMARY

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The accession into NATO and the EU, from the perspective of the new Central and Eastern European members, symbolized their ‘return to Europe’. However, as the former outsiders have become insiders, they have become subjected to a new form of hierarchy. This is even reflected in international relations literature that studies the socialization of the new members into ‘European’ or ‘Western’ states (Checkel 2005; Gheciu 2005; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005, etc.). The new members continue to be perceived as geographically and culturally on the ‘verge of Europe’, ‘not quite European’ or ‘in transition’ (Wolff 1994; Kuus 2004a; Mälksoo 2010; Zarycki 2014). Their status as ‘latecomers’ in Western institutions has become a stigma. This dissertation asks how stigmatization and subjection to tacit hierarchies, constructed through discourse, affect a state’s foreign policy. It focuses on the East-West relation in the European Union as one example of a hierarchy within this community of states.

This dissertation looks at Poland’s foreign policy in the EU. Analytically, I build on the concept of strategic culture, a set of collective, historically shaped ideas and norms guiding a state’s pursuit of security. I go beyond the existing literature to argue that the guiding principle of a state’s strategic culture is the pursuit of not just physical but ontological security, which refers to stable subjectivity (Giddens 1991; Kinnvall 2004; Mitzen 2006a; Zarakol 2010). The recognition as a full member of the ‘Western’ and ‘European’ identity community is essential for Poland’s ontological security. This dependence on recognition makes Poland particularly sensitive to stigmatization within that community. In three case studies, the 2003 Iraq crisis, the 2008 Russo-Georgian war, and the 2013/4 Ukraine crisis, I study how its ‘latecomer’ stigma, and quest for recognition as a full-fledged member of ‘Europe’, and the ‘West’, affects Poland’s foreign policy. I show how Polish foreign policy-makers alternate between two possible responses to stigmatization, adaptation and contestation, and how, paradoxically, both of these strategies often reinforce stigmatization.
PREFACE

This dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. It is not substantially the same as any that I have submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for a degree or diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. I further state that no substantial part of my dissertation has already been submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for any such degree, diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. It does not exceed the prescribed word limit for the relevant Degree Committee.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AA</td>
<td>Association Agreement</td>
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<tr>
<td>CBOS</td>
<td>Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej (Center for Public Opinion Research)</td>
</tr>
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<td>CEECs</td>
<td>Central and Eastern European countries</td>
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<tr>
<td>CFSP</td>
<td>Common Foreign and Security Policy</td>
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<td>CIA</td>
<td>Central Intelligence Agency</td>
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<td>CoE</td>
<td>Council of Europe</td>
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<td>CSDP</td>
<td>Common Security and Defence Policy</td>
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<tr>
<td>EaP</td>
<td>Eastern Partnership</td>
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<td>EEAS</td>
<td>European External Action Service</td>
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<td>ESDP</td>
<td>European Security and Defence Policy</td>
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<td>ESS</td>
<td>European Security Strategy</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<td>EUAM</td>
<td>EU Advisory Mission</td>
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<td>IR</td>
<td>International Relations</td>
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<tr>
<td>LPR</td>
<td>Liga Polskich Rodzin (League of Polish Families)</td>
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<tr>
<td>MEP</td>
<td>Member of the European Parliament</td>
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<td>MAP</td>
<td>Membership Action Plan in NATO</td>
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<td>MFA</td>
<td>Ministry of Foreign Affairs</td>
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<td>MP</td>
<td>Member of Parliament</td>
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<tr>
<td>NATO</td>
<td>North Atlantic Treaty Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>OSCE</td>
<td>Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe</td>
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<tr>
<td>OUN</td>
<td>Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists</td>
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<tr>
<td>PCA</td>
<td>EU-Russia Partnership and Co-operation Agreement</td>
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<tr>
<td>PiS</td>
<td>Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (Law and Justice)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PGNiG</td>
<td>Polskie Górnictwo Naftowe i Gazownictwo (Polish Oil and Gas Company)</td>
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<tr>
<td>PO</td>
<td>Platforma Obywatelska (Civic Platform)</td>
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<tr>
<td>PSL</td>
<td>Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe (Polish People’s Party)</td>
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<td>SLD</td>
<td>Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej (Democratic Left Alliance)</td>
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<td>Abbreviation</td>
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<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
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<td>UNSC</td>
<td>United Nations Security Council</td>
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<td>U.S.</td>
<td>United States</td>
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<tr>
<td>USSR</td>
<td>Union of Soviet Socialist Republics</td>
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<td>WMDs</td>
<td>weapons of mass destruction</td>
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INTRODUCTION

The year 1989 became widely regarded as the triumph of democracy and of the West as a political idea (e.g. Fukuyama 1992). During the Cold War, Europe had been the main scene of the geopolitical power contest between the Western and the Eastern bloc, but also of the competition between two visions of modernity. The enduring attraction of the Western model was understood as a sign of not only its material but also ideological triumph (Sarotte 2009). The new European democracies, such as Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland, which emerged from Communism, had become symbols of the struggle for freedom and democracy. The end of the Cold War was also seen as the victory of the ‘West’ over ‘Eastern’ Communism, although communist ideas and movements were strong in different parts of the globe, including Western Europe and the United States. Subsequently, the former communist states one after another began to join a range of West European and Atlanticist institutions, such as the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the Council of Europe, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the European Union (EU). The enlargement of Western international institutions, particularly the EU and NATO, was considered to have finally ended the Cold War divisions between the ‘East’ and ‘West’ in Europe. The world became a world without alternatives, without a competing economic or political model to that of the West. It became an uncontested view that if any country deviates from this model, it is a weakness, a deficit. In this way, the ‘West’ had become a ‘norm’, a model to follow.

The view of the post-communist transformation as the ‘Westernization’ of Eastern Europe is also reflected in international relations (IR) literature, which portrays Western institutions as ‘agents of change’ in the former Soviet region. In the early 2000s, as the biggest wave of the enlargement process of NATO and the EU was taking place, it became particularly fashionable to conceptualize the relation between these institutions and their newer members in terms of socialization (e.g. Checkel 2005; Gheciu 2005; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005). According to this school of thought, the institutions were regarded as ‘teachers’ who educate the new members as ‘students’ and guide them into becoming real
‘European’ or ‘Western’ states. The socialization framework, however, was more than an academic fashion; it corresponded to the dominant understanding of the relationship between the new members and Western institutions in European public and political discourse. This thesis shows that the narrative depicting the transformation of the former Soviet space as a victory and an accomplishment of the West, prevalent in both public and academic discourse, fundamentally shaped the relations between the new members and the institutions they joined. This is because this narrative maintains existing hierarchies.

For the Central and Eastern European members joining these institutions indeed symbolized their ‘return to Europe’, or to the ‘West’, more generally. However, from their perspective, their democratization and ‘return to the West’ was their own accomplishment, a result of their own fight for freedom and national self-determination (see Hankiss 1994; Wöll and Wydra 2007). This fight drew on national traditions of freedom in their history and political thought. As Adam Michnik (2011:25) writes, the summer of 1980 in Poland “was a celebration of Polish democracy as it restored meaning to the sense of human freedom, dignity, and truth.” In contrast, the West had failed to support these countries in their struggle against Soviet occupation, for example, during the Hungarian Uprising of 1956, the Prague Spring of 1968, or when Polish communists attempted to suppress the Solidarity movement in 1981. Poles or Hungarians were thus convinced that they had liberated themselves, even despite the ‘self-interested’ West, which had come to terms with the Soviet occupiers. They also considered themselves inherently ‘Western’ – sometimes more ‘Western’ than the existing West given that they had to fight for liberal and democratic values. Yet they had been separated from the West as a result of power politics and ‘abandonment’ by their allies (see Mäkssoo 2010).

For Poland, which is used as a case study here, the relationship with the West has been contentious. Poles consider themselves culturally and historically as a part of the civilizational West. At the same time, the country has been ‘cut off’ from the West, beginning with its partitions in the late eighteenth century, followed by foreign invasion and occupation in the twentieth century. The experience of betrayal and abandonment, especially the division of Europe in Yalta 1944, combined with the cultural and material need of
acknowledgement by the West, has endowed Poland with a sense of ontological insecurity vis-à-vis the West. As will be later elaborated, ontological security rests in an actor’s stable sense of Self, and a stable relation with the world and with other actors (see Giddens 1991; Kinnvall 2004; Mitzen 2006b). Poland’s ontological insecurity is manifested in the country’s simultaneous strive for recognition as ‘Western’ and sense of contempt towards the West that had betrayed it. While membership in Western institutions, especially NATO and the EU, has helped to resolve many of Poland’s fundamental security dilemmas, its low sense of ontological security has prevailed and continues to shape its foreign policy. Poland and other Central and Eastern European countries (CEECs) still struggle with their status as ‘latecomers’ in these institutions and seek recognition as full-fledged members.

This thesis offers a thick analysis of a case study and contributes to the work of scholars who claim that a normative distinction between Eastern and Western Europe continues to exist in the post-Cold War era. Despite entering Western institutions, CEECs continue to be perceived as geographically and culturally on the ‘verge of Europe’, ‘not quite European’ or ‘in transition’ (see Wolff 1994; Kuus 2004a; Mälksoo 2010; Zarycki 2010). These authors point out that Eastern Europe is, at least since the early modernity, perceived – and often perceives itself – in relational terms to the West and in comparison to the West. Eastern Europe is the ‘less mature’, ‘less rational’, ‘less experienced’, and politically and economically ‘backward’ version of Europe. These perceptions have remained even after the CEECs joined the EU. The new members are perceived to be in a continuous process of transformation, in the process of becoming ‘real’ members of the West and Europe (Mälksoo 2010). As Merje Kuus (2004a) points out, in this normative judgment, ‘Eastern Europe’ is not so much a geographical place but a ‘quality’, which the new members are in danger of slipping back into. ‘Easternness’, while having different shades and degrees (see Todorova 2009), is associated with various negative attributes, such as tendencies to authoritarianism, corruption and ethnic nationalism (Kuus 2004a).

This thesis begins with the premise that the ‘Eastern European past’ of the Central and Eastern European member states, and their status as ‘latecomers’ in Western institutions, can be seen as a stigma, an undesirable characteristic that sets them apart from the ‘normals’ (see Goffman 1963; Zarakol 2011). The ‘normals’ are in this case the more ‘established’
members of the ‘West’. The new members’ ontological insecurity has made them sensitive to stigmatization, and elites in these countries have internalized the narrative that places them on the margins of the West and Europe. With this premise in mind, I argue that ontological insecurity shapes a country’s strategic culture, a set of deeply engrained ideas guiding its foreign policy. On the example of one of the ‘newer’ members, i.e. Poland, I show how its ontological insecurity in relation to the West affects its foreign policy within the EU.

Poland as a case study
This dissertation focuses on the experience of Poland as one of the ‘latecomers’ among the EU members. It specifically looks at Poland’s relationship with the EU, especially with a view towards its more ‘established’ members’. Poland represents the largest, most active and ambitious among the newer member states which joined the EU since 2004. Since the beginning, Warsaw has been ambitiously trying to seek influence in the area of EU foreign policy.

At the same time, Poland is dealing with its ‘latecomer’ and ‘second-class’ status in the EU. This status is not merely the result of the fact that Poland together with other CEECs joined the EU relatively late in time. It reflects its position in relation to the West. The Central and Eastern European countries are seen (and have internalized a view of themselves) as different from the West although they are considered less ‘Eastern’ relative to others, for example, the EU’s eastern neighbors. Maria Todorova (2009:58) illustrates this ‘nested orientalism’ as follows:

- a Serb is an ‘easterner’ to a Slovene but a Bosnian would be an ‘easterner’ to a Serb although geographically situated to the West […] or all Balkan peoples, the common ‘easterner’ is the Turk although the Turk perceives himself Western compared to real ‘easterners’ such as Arabs.

Similarly, Poland perceives itself as more Western compared to Ukraine or Belarus, and especially in comparison to Russia. It can be argued that Poland projects its sense of ontological insecurity, which stems from the internalization of not being ‘Western enough’, onto its relation with its eastern neighbors, thus transferring a similar form of hierarchization.
As Tomasz Zarycki argues, even within Poland “easterners” are stigmatized (see Zarycki 2010). At the same time, the positive myth of the Kresy, the former eastern borderlands of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, plays a strong role in Polish culture (see chapter 2).

The special status of Poland and other Central and Eastern European countries, such as Hungary and the Czech Republic, is therefore that they are ‘almost Western’ but still ‘never quite there’. This makes them especially conscious of their status and especially eager to overcome it. Among them, Poland has had the biggest aspirations in shaping European politics. This has to do with its status as a former empire but also its relative size, and political and economic weight. For example, in area of economic integration it is telling that Poland did not seek to join the Eurozone while smaller newcomers such as Slovakia or the Baltic states did.

The West, and in this dissertation specifically the EU, constitutes a central reference point for Poland – as a community of ‘normals’. What makes this premise seemingly difficult to uphold is that these ‘communities’ cannot be easily demarcated. The ‘West’ is, on the one hand, imagined and assumed, and at the same time embodied by concrete actors, such as Western international institutions, Western states etc. The EU is a more clearly defined community, with a clear distinction between insiders and outsiders. Nevertheless, the ‘normals’ in the EU are, of course, also far from monolithic. The East-West hierarchy is only one of many, and there are multiple layers of hierarchies, e.g. creditors versus debtors in the Eurozone, and – to a lesser extent – North versus South. Moreover, the identity of the West and of Europe is constantly evolving and changing. In the period discussed in this dissertation, shifts occurred in the hierarchies within the EU and the West. Notably, the Atlantic rift (see chapter 3) changed the West and additionally complicated the situation for Poland and other new members. The understanding of who the ‘normals’ are therefore depends on the case examined.

Since this dissertation has a critical take on the mainstream constructivist framework, and therefore shares many ideas with postcolonial scholars, or scholars studying cases with a colonial past (e.g. Epstein 2014; Gallagher 2014), the applicability of the postcolonial framework to the case of Poland should be addressed. Even if one considered the partitions in
the eighteenth century and the Soviet occupation in the twentieth century a form of
colonization, Poland never had a colonial status in relation to the West. Nevertheless,
scholars such as Ewa Thompson (2012) have attended to postcolonial theory to look at
Poland. Similarly, other scholars have applied a postcolonial approach to the study of cases
in Eastern Europe. For example, Viatcheslav Morozov (2015) argues for the case of Russia
that a history of colonization is not necessary for the postcolonial discourse to apply. He
considers Russia a subaltern empire, which is economically and normatively dependent on
the West, and located between the West and its orientalized periphery. The term subaltern
refers to disenfranchised individuals and groups whose agency is limited and who are
deprived by the hegemonic social order of the possibility to make their voices heard, who are
being spoken of rather than speaking for themselves. Morozov argues that Russia has
‘colonized itself’ on behalf of Europe in the sense that Russia’s discursive space has been
fully ‘Europeanized’ during several centuries of catching up modernization; and the social
structure has evolved in a way that there are no groups within the country developing an
alternative articulation of Russian identity. Its identity was framed in orientalist terms
borrowed from the Western tradition. A similar case can be made about Poland in the sense
that Poland’s identity today is predominantly formulated in relation to the West.

However, there are differences between Poland’s and Russia’s relationship with the
West. As Stanley Bill (2014) points out, Poland’s cultural heritage shares many elements
with Western European powers, notably religion, but also the Renaissance and Republican
traditions. Poland sees itself as, and is historically and culturally ‘Western’ in the sense that
there is no obvious distinction between the ‘indigenous’ and the ‘foreign’. Poland was also
once a large empire itself with a distinctive culture and political traditions. The Polish-
Lithuanian Commonwealth, in its culture, and political and economic system, did not imitate
the Western European monarchies but saw itself as an alternative version of Western
civilization (see Walicki 1994). Only since the end of the seventeenth century Poland started
to gradually become an internal periphery of the ‘West’ (e.g. Wolff 1994; Wallerstein 2011).
Especially since the Enlightenment Poland became regarded as economically and culturally
inferior to Western Europe (see Wolff 1994). During the twentieth century this image has
been consolidated, especially in the aftermath of World War II and during the Cold War.
Since then Poland has been in a pursuit of ‘re-entering’ the West.
Even though Poland has been ‘officially’ part of the West (i.e. since it entered NATO in 1999 and the EU in 2004), it is still often treated as a partial outsider. This is visible in discourse, diplomatic practice, and decision-making processes in the EU. To illustrate this point, a quantitative study by the European Council on Foreign Relations from May 2017 asked which European capitals have the greatest influence in the EU and are perceived as ‘essential partners’ by others. It confirms that Germany has the most overall influence on EU policy and is best connected, while Central and Eastern European countries are sidelined by the original EU members (see Zunneberg, Klavehn, and Janning 2017). As Iver Neuman (2002) argues, international actors, including diplomats, deal with one another through habitual practices, established patterns of behavior that are difficult to change. Scholars who look at diplomatic practice point to traditions, historical experiences, and similar situations in the past that support behavior that becomes socially dominant (Neumann 2002; Kuus 2015; Pouliot and Cornut 2015).

This can be seen in the area of EU foreign policy where, despite its size and strong interest in certain issues, Poland was often excluded from key deliberations. For instance, during the Ukraine crisis, discussed in chapter 5, Poland tried to be part of the Minsk negotiations involving Ukraine and Russia. However, it was pushed out by Germany and France because its presence at the negotiation table was considered diplomatically unhelpful for European mediation efforts. The habitual practice that the ‘big’ EU member states take over difficult negotiations with third parties is largely justified by the level of experience of their diplomats, leverage, and long-standing diplomatic relations, as opposed to new members like Poland.

On the discursive level, the focus in this dissertation, Poland has been alternatingly labeled as a ‘trouble-maker’ and at other times as “the most astonishing success story in Eastern Europe” (Puhl and Follath 2012). Despite occasional praises, Poland remains ‘conditionally’ European, meaning, it is only recognized as European as long as it continues to perform a certain way. Yet, whether ‘good student’ or ‘trouble child’, the infantilization is maintained in discourse. Poland has since been largely regarded as a problem case. Developments following the Polish parliamentary election in 2015, such as controversial judiciary reforms that have led to accusations of constitutional violation by the opposition,
are cited in international media as a sign of the country’s incomplete transformation. This is suggested by media accounts about the ‘Orbanization’ or ‘Putinization’ of Poland, which draw parallels to Hungary, Russia, and even to Turkey (e.g. Kelemen and Orenstein 2016). Debates frame Poland’s problems as a sign of ‘slipping back’ into its authoritarian past (Neuger 2016). The problems are attributed to characteristics of the ‘region’, i.e. the general “weakness of some liberal norms in Eastern Europe” (Hanley and Dawson 2017). In the discourse on Central and Eastern Europe different negative developments, such as the so-called rise of illiberal democracy, nationalism or populism, are put in the same basket without differentiation. Moreover, although problems of populism and right extremism also exist in Western European countries or the United States, undesirable trends in the former Soviet space are often explicitly attributed to the countries’ ‘Easternness’. In this discourse, negative developments are attributed to ‘indigenous’ forces in the region whereas positive developments are linked to ‘Europeanization’ (e.g. Schimmelfennig 2005). Such stereotyping discourses make it not only difficult to study political processes, but such discourses are also part of these processes. This dissertation therefore attempts to give a more contextualized or ‘situated’ account of Poland’s foreign policy in the EU to understand better its role in Europe. Thereby it contends that discourse and stereotyping have to be studied as part of political processes that shape relations between international actors anywhere but also in Europe.

**Conceptual framework**

This dissertation is located within the work on hierarchies in international relations. Hierarchies are understood here “as deep structures of organized inequality” (Zarakol 2017:7). This kind of understanding of a deep structure of hierarchy has been developed, among others, in post-structuralist, post-colonial, feminist and critical scholarship in international relations. This dissertation takes a critical constructivist approach, which is close to critical social theory (see Hopf 1998). It shares the assumption of conventional constructivism that discourse and narratives play a fundamental role in shaping relations between political actors (e.g. Jepperson, Wendt, and Katzenstein 1996). However, scholars who identify as critical constructivists contend that power is entailed in discourse. They
sugest that discourses both *express* and *create* power relations between actors, meaning that discourses give existing ‘objective’ differences a normative meaning. Critical constructivists also disagree with ‘mainstream’ constructivists on the role of norm diffusion. Whereas conventional constructivists argue that norms are diffused as a result of social learning, scholars with a critical take on constructivism (e.g. Epstein 2014; Zarakol 2014) point out that the practice of norm diffusion is about drawing boundaries between the ‘normal’ and the ‘unacceptable’, and is therefore an exercise of power. Norm diffusion is a projection of power that keeps hierarchies in place. As Ayşê Zarakol (2014, 2017) argues, hierarchies in the international society are maintained because those who deviate from certain (usually Western) norms are stigmatized and pressured to adapt.

This dissertation uses the concept of stigma, drawing on Erving Goffman (1963) who developed it in sociology, and Zarakol (2010, 2011, 2014) and others who apply the concept to IR. A stigma is an attribute that is judged by a society as deeply discrediting. It is this judgment of the larger society that makes an attribute a stigma. A person that possesses such a discrediting attribute is perceived as deviant from the ‘norm’. Stigmatization assumes a community of ‘normals’, i.e. actors who are practicing stigmatization. In practice, it is not always clear-cut who the ‘normals’ are because a society is usually differentiated and complex. In the case examined here, those actors practicing stigmatization consider themselves to be speaking on behalf of the EU and to be representing its norms.

As Goffman (1963) points out, stigmatization presupposes that the stigmatized individual shares the society’s views of what is ‘normal’ and ‘abnormal’, has internalized the view that he or she fails to meet societal expectations, and in one way or another reacts to it. Scholars have outlined a range of different possible reactions to stigmatization (e.g. Adler-Nissen 2014b; Zarakol 2014). Two mechanisms of dealing with stigma will be specifically considered in this dissertation. Both of these coping mechanisms are often self-defeating and have limited chances of success. One possible response is to rebel and challenge the discourse that imposed the stigma in the first place. This kind of ‘contestation’ approach, however, often affirms the society’s negative preconceptions about an actor and further contributes to alienation from the larger society. The second option is ‘passing’ or ‘adaptation’, which essentially means concession to the process of socialization in the hope
of losing one’s undesirable qualities. However, as Zarakol (2014) demonstrates, stigma is not merely overcome by successful socialization. A stigmatized actor continues to be perceived as someone who once had a particular blemish – like a dry alcoholic who quit drinking but is at constant threat of relapse. This will also be shown for the case of Poland. At times, Poland’s elites managed to behave in the international arena in such a way that the country became regarded as an example of ‘successful socialization’. However, even the accounts which praised the accomplishments of this ‘model student’ (“Musterschüler”) often explicitly contrasted them with the country’s ‘dark past’ (see Vetter 2008). Moreover, even then the country failed to achieve ‘equal’ status in the EU as Poland’s earlier mentioned exclusion from the Minsk talks (see chapter 5) demonstrates.

Among IR scholars, there have been different uses of stigmatization. Zarakol (2011, 2014) argues that modern international society was built on a dynamic of stigmatization of especially non-Westerners, which points to thick cultural roots of stigmatization in the current international system. By contrast, in Rebecca Adler-Nissen’s (2014a) account, stigmatization can happen among nominally equals. Actors, she argues, use stigmatization intentionally as a tool of political power. Janice Bially Mattern (2005a) illustrates a similar practice in which allies resort to verbal shaming to coerce one another into certain behavior. The two views of stigmatization (thick and instrumental) are not mutually exclusive. In fact, this dissertation draws on both approaches and applies them to the case of Poland in the EU. Chapters 1 and 2 explore the historical roots of Poland’s stigmatization, which are connected to a long-term process of stigmatization of Eastern Europe as the ‘inferior’ counterpart to Western Europe. At the same time, as I will show in chapters 3-5, political actors intentionally stigmatize through diplomatic practice and language – mostly praising, scolding, and labeling, but in rare cases also exclusion – to shape the foreign policy behavior of others. In the empirical chapters, it will be shown how actors in the EU practiced stigmatization through discourse and labeling in disputes over foreign policy. By doing so actors conjured deep-seated historically shaped stereotypes.

Poland and other ‘newcomers’ are easy targets of stigmatization because of their relatively low sense of ontological security. The concept of ontological security was
developed by Anthony Giddens (1990, 1991) in sociology and it can be understood as ‘security as being’. Ontological security represents a subject’s basic need for predictability of social order and for biographical continuity. All social actors need a stable identity or feeling of Self in order to realize a sense of agency. At the same time, their identity needs to be accepted and affirmed by other actors. The concept of ontological security has been imported into IR under the assumption that not only individuals but also collective actors, such as states, pursue ontological security (Kinnvall 2004; Mitzen 2006a, 2006b; Steele 2008; Zarakol 2010; Mälksoo 2015; Ejdus 2017; Kinnvall and Mitzen 2017; Mitzen and Larson 2017). The incorporation of this concept into IR assumes that beyond being concerned with physical survival, collective international actors have a need for ontological security (Kinnvall and Mitzen 2017).

There are two possible ways of thinking about the relationship between stigmatization and ontological security, which I will outline in detail in chapter 1. Subjects with a low sense of ontological security are more sensitive to stigmatization because they are particularly dependent on recognition by others. In other words, they are ‘easier targets’ of stigmatization. This matters especially because, as pointed out above, political actors engage in discursive ‘battles’, which include but are not exclusive to stigmatization. Actors can also purposefully exploit the ontological insecurity of others through what Janice Bially Mattern (2005a, 2005b) calls ‘representational force’. Representational force is entailed in discourse and “operates through the structure of a speaker’s narrative representation of ‘reality’” (Bially Mattern 2005b:586). A narrative wields representational force when it meaningfully exploits contradictions within the victim’s identity and understanding of the world.

At the same time, the experience of stigmatization can decrease ontological security because it questions the validity of core values and the way of thinking about the world. In other words, when an actor experiences stigmatization that results in a feeling of inferiority, its established view of the world is shaken. The deeper rooted and more established the stigma is in the past, the stronger is an actor’s sense of inferiority (see Wolff 1994; Zarakol 2011). Additionally, as argued earlier, a stigmatized actor is not likely to simply accept a stigma but struggles to overcome it, for example, through adaptation or contestation. The constant strive for recognition by others contributes to a feeling of ontological insecurity. Zarakol (2010) argues that international actors who have been ‘outsiders’ to the West define
their identity by comparisons to the West, and fear being perceived as backward in relation to
it. These insecurities created by the international environment have been built into national
identities of these stigmatized ‘outsiders’ (Zarakol 2010:20).

Applying the concept of ontological security to the study of foreign policy has raised
questions about the unit of analysis. In other words, who are the actors experiencing
ontological insecurity? Can scholars treat states as if they are persons with ontological
security needs, or should ontological security be attached to a state’s population, or the elites
(Mitzen and Larson 2017)? I address this problem by connecting ontological security to
strategic culture (see chapter 2). Strategic culture is understood as a set of collective beliefs
and ideas guiding foreign policy (Longhurst 2004; Meyer 2005, 2006; Giegerich 2006;
Longhurst and Zaborowski 2007). A national strategic culture is shaped over time based on
experiences and in response to the international environment. It can be seen as a framework
of reference that elites have to engage with when making decisions on foreign policy. Most
of the existent work views strategic culture as ideas regarding the aims and means in the
realm of security, equating the preoccupation of a national strategic culture with the pursuit
of physical security (e.g. Longhurst 2004; Giegerich 2006; Meyer 2006). Amending the
current definition, I argue that strategic culture guides not only the pursuit of physical but of
ontological security. It is important to note that the pursuit of ontological security can, but
does not have to, coincide with the pursuit of physical security. Incorporating ontological
security into strategic culture addresses the level of analysis problem. Doing so means that,
while ontological insecurity is collectively shaped by the international environment and a
result of historical experience, it affects the thinking of individual decision-makers. Foreign
policy aims that provide ontological security for a collective international actor can include,
for example, the recognition of a certain status by others. Developing an account of strategic
culture that takes ontological security into consideration allows understanding and analyzing
the pursuit of recognition by the West in Poland’s foreign policy.
Methodology and Research Design

This thesis illustrates how hierarchies, established in political and academic discourse but rooted in historical narratives, influence politics. It focuses specifically on the hierarchy between East and West, between newer members from the former Soviet bloc and established members of the EU. In order to understand how stigmatization of the ‘latecomers’ from the former Soviet bloc impacts on the political dynamics within the EU, I study the tensions between Poland as a representative of the newer members and the EU, including its established members. I focus on the area of foreign policy. On the example of three international crises, the 2003 Iraq war, the 2008 Russo-Georgian war and the 2013/14 Ukraine crisis, I analyze Poland’s foreign policy using the framework of strategic culture. This account helps to understand how Poland’s failures to meet certain EU expectations on foreign policy – which have a normative character – reinforced stigmatization. At the same time, I show how Poland’s foreign policy actors saw international crises as opportunities to overcome stigmatization, and pursued either ‘contestation’ or ‘adaptation’.

This approach challenges the assumption that, during moments such as the Iraq crisis, Poland and other new members acted simply ‘at odds with European norms’ on foreign policy, and that it speaks of their incomplete transition into full-fledged members of the Western identity community. Instead, I uncover the roots of these divergences in foreign policy approaches by drawing on extensive literature which argues that the preferences and ideas regarding foreign policy are contextually shaped and engrained in national strategic cultures (e.g. Longhurst 2004; Giegerich 2006; Meyer 2006; Das 2010). This approach is in line with the view that norms are rooted in specific traditions and practices, and their interpretation varies in different contexts (Wiener 2015; Niemann and Schillinger 2017).

Referring to strategic culture, I seek to understand the normative and cultural foundations of Poland’s foreign policy choices to better apprehend some differences to other (‘established’) EU actors. For example, an analysis through the lens of strategic culture helps to understand why Poland’s interpretation of the causes of the Russo-Georgian war of 2008 – its significance for Europe, and the appropriate EU response to it – was fundamentally different from France’s. Strategic culture is especially valuable for the analysis of foreign policy choices because it combines normative and pragmatic considerations, historical traditions, and responses to immediate events. I argue that Poland’s strategic culture is
uniquely burdened by a past of fragile statehood and territorial discontinuity, and a constant struggle of self-definition vis-à-vis the West, which is reflected in the country’s foreign policy. In a detailed and empirically grounded manner I show how Poland’s strategic culture shapes its foreign policy within the EU.

Foreign policy constitutes one of the most disputed areas in EU politics. It has been argued that foreign policy, while increasingly dealt with at the EU level, remains relatively little integrated (e.g. Smith 2004; Thomas 2011). EU institutions have less competence in the area of foreign policy compared to commercial, economic and monetary policies, and foreign policy continues to be dominated by member states. One of the main reasons is that the self-determination over foreign policy lies at the heart of national sovereignty (Moumoutzis 2011). Nevertheless, already around the time of the 2009 Lisbon Treaty, which reformed the EU’s institutional structure, the EU had formally adopted over a thousand legal acts under the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) to address issues and problems in world affairs (Thomas 2009). There are also many unofficial conventions and expectations about how EU members should conduct their foreign policy, and how to approach a specific international problem. According to Daniel C. Thomas, a commitment to joint action functions as a meta-norm. Additionally, procedural norms include regular communication and consultation between member states, decision-making by consensus, and confidentiality in the use of shared information (Thomas 2009). Other examples of both official and unofficial ‘EU norms’ on foreign policy include the commitment to multilateralism, solving conflicts through negotiations, avoidance of provocative or confrontational language, adherence to international law, and showing willingness to compromise with other members. This does not, however, mean that EU member states necessarily come to the same responses or find a common position. If newer members are stigmatized – through negative discourse and verbal punishment – for failing to meet expectations in an area where norms are relatively vague as in the case of foreign policy, it reflects the hierarchical order very clearly.

Crisis situations are particularly suitable case studies for examining the dynamics within a community of states. For once, under the time pressure of crises, actors rely on their ‘gut feeling’ and draw on pre-exiting conceptions regarding a particular issue. Therefore,
differences in national strategic cultures, which normally are covered up by diplomacy (or bureaucracy), become visible during crises. Secondly, during international crises, especially those involving the loss of human lives, political actors are likely to use direct and emotional language. In other words, the discourse in the media and political sphere is less subtle, which makes it easier to see stigmatizing language. Finally, in crisis situations, diplomatic practice becomes more visible and hierarchies more pronounced. When looking at the EU where member states usually try to find a common response to major international crises, there are always actors (member states or individuals) that emerge at the forefront. For example, during the Georgia war French President Sarkozy emerged as the representative of the EU. Crises therefore bring hidden hierarchies to the surface. Adrian Hyde-Price (2004:323) makes a similar argument when he claims:

Nothing is more dramatic than war, and nothing illuminates the main features of – and fissures within – international society more. War comes as a bolt of lightning on a dark night, lighting up the geostrategic topology of global politics, and illuminating the patterns of power and influence amongst the major actors, their formal and informal alliances, and their varying cultural assumptions about strategic theory and practice.

The three international crises discussed in this dissertation illuminate some existent differences in strategic cultures among member states of the EU, which led to tensions. Some of these differences were portrayed in the European political discourse as deviations from common European norms on foreign policy. While the dividing lines were slightly different in each of the conflicts, there was always some form of tension between ‘new’ and ‘old’ member states. During the Iraq war (chapter 3) it concerned primarily transatlantic relations and visions about the role of the U.S. in Europe. During the crises in Georgia (chapter 4) and Ukraine (chapter 5), these differences concerned relations with Russia, and the countries ‘in-between’ Russia and the EU. By looking at these tensions and how they came to be resolved, I study the stigmatization of the new members, specifically Poland.

To understand where deviations over foreign policy trigger stigmatization of newer member states, I look at media and political discourse in Europe. I consider mainstream media, particularly English, German, and Polish speaking media. The discourse in the media is picked up ‘along the way’ from large, well-known outlets, primarily print media that is
The function of this media analysis is to get a sense of the discursive background against which actors formulate their positions. These positions come from core officials. I therefore look at the discourse and public statements of state leaders and diplomats, such as statements made at press conferences after key events. The function of this analysis is to demonstrate stigmatization, and show how this stigmatization reflects in Polish officials’ policy positions. I also look at retrospective statements such as official interviews and recollections of key decision-makers, including Nicolas Sarkozy and Lech Kaczynski, which I use to validate the courses of action and practice.

Multiple rounds of interviews conducted by myself support the empirical work. The first round of interviews was conducted in Kiev, Ukraine, in the summer of 2014 with Polish diplomats, officials of the European External Action Service (EEAS), and EU member state diplomats. It also included Ukrainian politicians, journalists and academics who had been present during the Maidan protests of 2013-2014. A number of interviews were gathered on shorter trips to Warsaw and Brussels between the spring of 2015 and the spring of 2016. These include, among others, interviews with Polish politicians and diplomats, Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), and officials of the EEAS and the European Commission. The final round of interviews was conducted in Tbilisi, Georgia, in the summer of 2015 with Polish diplomats, Georgian politicians (many of whom were members of the Georgian government in August 2008), and EU and NATO officials. The interviews support my analysis that is based on process tracing, media discourse analysis, and secondary literature.

The interviews primarily play a role for analyzing discourse and practice during the crises diplomacy in the cases of Georgia (2008) and Ukraine (2013/14) where I talked to observers who were present at the time. In the case of Georgia, the interviewed actors who justified their actions retrospectively whereas in the case of Ukraine they were relating their position as the events were unfolding. As a result, the data gathered from the interviews is treated with respect to the different backgrounds and fitted into the wider data collection. This allows overcoming some of the gaps that arise from the selection of interviews and the different time horizons. For example, interviews and recollections for the case of Georgia are triangulated with media coverage from the time. In the case of Ukraine, the discourse has been recorded as it happened from a range of different sources. Thus, while any selection of
interviews is incomplete and potentially selective, this triangulation of sources of discourse covers these gaps.

Plan of the dissertation

The first chapter introduces the theoretical framework for studying relations between Western institutions and new member states. It places this work in the wider scholarship on hierarchization and stigmatization in international relations, and discusses the relation between stigmatization and ontological insecurity. The second chapter discusses the concept of strategic culture as a framework for analyzing foreign policy. It introduces the understanding of strategic culture as the ideas and beliefs guiding a state’s pursuit of not just physical but ontological security. The second half of the chapter maps Poland’s strategic culture along its main dimensions and depicts its main characteristics. It shows how Poland’s ontological insecurity vis-à-vis the West has shaped its national strategic culture. It also illustrates the importance of the ‘Eastern’ dimension of Polish strategic culture, which guides Poland’s foreign policy towards its eastern neighborhood.

Chapters three to five discuss Poland’s responses to three international crises based on attempts to overcome its ‘latecomer’ status in the EU. Chapter 3 discusses Poland’s response to the Iraq crisis in 2003. This first case study takes place at a time when Poland was still new in its role as ‘insider’ in the institutional West. At the time of the Iraq crisis, Poland had recently joined NATO and, although it only officially became an EU member the following year, its membership was already certain. Poland was thus making the transition from a ‘self-liberated new democracy’ to a ‘newcomer’ in the West. When Poland’s policy-making elites tried to pursue an Atlanticist foreign policy during the Iraq crisis against the interest of key European partners, they became subject to ‘verbal scolding’. During the dispute over Iraq a discrepancy between facts and discourse can be observed. Although many of the older member states, such as the United Kingdom and Spain, supported the invasion of Iraq, the main discourse in the media and the public sphere focused on the ‘new Europeans’ (see Davis Cross and Ma 2015). Politicians and publicists in Germany and France (two member states most opposed to the Iraq war) linked the foreign policy choice of the CEECs, which arguably was at odds with European values, explicitly to their incomplete transformation into
‘European’ states. Poland’s ‘latecomer’ stigma first emerged in narratives around the Iraq crisis before it became subsequently consolidated in public discourse. It also worsened Poland’s relations with key member states, such as Germany, which had previously been an advocate of Poland’s membership in the EU.

The following two chapters show how Poland sought to overcome its ‘latecomer’ stigma by employing different foreign policy strategies. The question of how to deal with stigma becomes the main point of contention in domestic politics, with some of Poland’s elites favoring contestation and others adaptation. The main protagonists in chapters four and five are embodiments of stereotypes established in discourse: the ‘bad Pole’ Lech Kaczyński, the ‘good Pole’ Donald Tusk, and the ‘personification of successful transformation’ Radosław Sikorski. In chapter four, I turn to Poland’s diplomatic initiative during the Russo-Georgia war in 2008. The final chapter looks at the Ukraine crisis of 2013/14 and Poland’s response to it within the larger EU framework. In both chapters’ the differences between Poland and other key actors in the EU concern the eastern neighborhood. In particular, Poland’s position on Russia, which regards Russia as a potential threat, was often portrayed as anachronistic and irreconcilable with ‘European’ standards of international behavior, which emphasize dialogue and cooperation. Ironically, following the Ukraine crisis, the EU adopted a hardline policy towards Russia – a shift particularly led by Berlin – and Poland’s traditional position became more acceptable.
1 FROM SOCIALIZATION TO STIGMATIZATION: NEW MEMBERS IN WESTERN INSTITUTIONS

Western international institutions, such as the European Union (EU), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the Council of Europe (CoE), or the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), are seen as agents of change in post-Cold War Europe (Flynn and Farrell 1999; Jacoby 2004; Gheciu 2005; Vachudova 2005; Park 2006; Asmus 2012). From the perspective of former Soviet bloc countries in Central and Eastern Europe, particularly the dual enlargement of NATO and the EU is often cited as a symbolic ‘return to Europe’, to their rightful place in the community of Western liberal democracies. Especially important for the transformation of these countries was their accession into the EU, which as an international institution arguably forms an unprecedentedly strong identity community. A powerful narrative in both academic literature and, as I will argue, public and political discourse, maintains that the EU and NATO teach their newer members how to be ‘good Europeans’ (see Checkel 2001; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2004; Gheciu 2005).

This thesis contributes to the literature which shows, that despite the expansion of NATO and the EU, the imaginary divide between Eastern and Western Europe has not been abolished (e.g. Wolff 1994; Chakrabarty 2000; Kuus 2004b; Mälksoo 2010; Zarycki 2014). As Merje Kuus (2004a) argues, the imagined Eastern Europe, as an inferior counterpart of Western Europe, is associated with various negative traits, including irrationality and emotionality, a tendency to ethnic nationalism, instability, and authoritarianism. Even within the EU community the East-West hierarchy continues to exist over a decade after the eastern enlargement. In fact, the ‘socialization framework’, which dominates the way in which the relations between these institutions and their newer members are conceptualized, perpetuates this divide. The newer members from the former Soviet bloc remain stigmatized by their past as outsiders. They are ‘conditionally’ European – i.e., they are only considered ‘European’ as long as they continue to act as model students of socialization – but they are at constant risk of slipping back into the representational Eastern Europe.
This chapter seeks to understand the foundations of the discourse on the Central and Eastern European countries (CEECs), which frames them as ‘conditionally’ European, and asks what accounts for its persistence. Drawing on Ayşe Zarakol’s (2011) theoretical argument, I contend that the relationship between newer members and the EU, including its older (Western European) members, resembles an established vs. outsider figuration. The ‘conditional’ status of the newer members, which is conveyed in discourse, can be called a stigma. In this chapter, I demonstrate that this stigma was shaped by the legacy of the Cold War divide between East and West but has deeper historical roots. Indeed, the discourse has been so powerful because, historically, it had an identity forming function for Western Europe, for which Eastern Europe served as a complementary other half (Hankiss 1994; Wolff 1994). This is the case although – or rather because – the ‘West’ is itself a historically fluid concept and far from a homogenous entity. Considering only the last three decades, the revolutions of 1989, the enlargements of the EU and NATO, but also the transatlantic rift following the Iraq war, all altered the West’s identity. Despite this vagueness, as will be shown in this dissertation, the West remains a crucial, highly normative idea, and a point of reference for those who consider themselves its members and outsiders alike. As I will argue, stigmatization of outsiders and newcomers plays an important role in defining Western identity. The practice of stigmatization helps to delineate the otherwise fluid and ambiguous concepts of Western norms and Western identity. This is also the case in the European Union as an identity community within the larger West. Political actors in the EU sometimes intentionally construct stigmatizing discourses to define ‘normality’. The stigma of the new members as ‘conditionally’ European is therefore deliberately reproduced through language.

The aim of the first chapter is to conceptualize the historically rooted hierarchies maintained in discourse that exist in IR and are continued in the EU. I draw on literature that examines how discourses shape reality and create hierarchies by giving a normative meaning to existing differences. This account will help to grasp the complexity of the dynamic relationships between actors within the EU, and consequently, to understand the behavior of newer members. Subsequently, I ask how these hierarchies impact on European politics, specifically how ontological insecurity, which results from the subjection to hierarchies, affects the foreign policy behavior of the new members (see chapter 2). This chapter begins
with polemics against ‘mainstream’ constructivist approaches that conceptualize the relationship between the institution and their new members in terms socialization. I argue that the socialization framework presupposes tacit stigmatization but fails to explicitly deal with it. Secondly, I examine possible mechanisms of coping with stigmatization and discuss the connection between stigmatization and ontological insecurity. In the following chapter, I introduce the concept of strategic culture to understand how stigma and ontological insecurity affect foreign policy behavior. The case studies in chapters 3-5 employ this framework to show different attempts by Poland to overcome its ‘latecomer’ stigma in the EU.

I. HIERARCHIES IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

My discussion of the relation between newer members and Western institutions is located within a larger theoretical debate about the organization of the international system. In other words, it says something about the nature of the environment in which international actors interact with one another. This approach engages critically with the ideas about the international system of the social constructivist school of thought in international relations, in which much of the work about the accession of the former Soviet bloc countries to Western institutions is located (e.g. Checkel 2005; Gheciu 2005). The leading constructivist literature studying the relationship between new members in Western institutions has been particularly interested in the diffusion of norms.

The general interest of constructivism in norm diffusion (e.g. Finnemore and Sikkink 1998) is closely connected to its premises about the nature of processes that govern social order. Social constructivism rejects the idea that relations between actors in the international system are based primarily on material power and the desire of self-preservation. International actors are not interacting in a vacuum or anarchy, as realist IR theories would argue, but in a cultural and normative landscape (Jepperson et al. 1996). Particularly two concepts play an important role in providing order to the international system, namely, identity and norms. As Finnemore and Sikkink (1998) argue, shared ideas, expectations, and beliefs about appropriate behavior give the world structure, order, and stability. The existence of a normative cultural landscape accounts for the spread of certain norms and ideas internationally. It accounts for the empirical phenomenon of ‘norm diffusion’, which
seems to define the contemporary global context. It can be described as the spread of certain norms, standards, and ideas, in such a way that they have become at least acknowledged or nominally recognized as valid by most actors in the international system. In the words of Katzenstein et al. (1996:48), “the spread of democratic ideologies and market models provides obvious examples, along with the underlying consolidation of regional and even global ideologies of citizenship and human rights.” Much constructivist research in international relations is therefore concerned with the mechanisms through which norms are disseminated (e.g. Checkel 2001; Gheciu 2005; Börzel and Risse 2009). More recently, constructivists have become increasingly interested in the rejection and contestation of norms. For example, Antje Wiener (2015) argues that contestation is likely when norms travel from one cultural context to another.

As will be further discussed later in this chapter, one of the biggest problems that the literature on norm diffusion faces concerns the nature of the norms in question. Are they universal or dependent on the cultural context in which they are socially constructed? In fact, this problem has not only profound theoretical but also normative implications. As Epstein (2014:298) points out, much constructivist work on norm diffusion shares the “universalizing pull”, which is commonly known as a feature of the liberalist approach in IR theory. However, if norms, for example, those connected to democracy and human rights, are universal, the question arises: why has historically the ‘West’ always promoted these norms to non-Western ‘outsiders’? It is also difficult to ignore that these norms emerged in the context of specific cultural and political developments in Europe and later the United States.

On the other hand, if the norms are socially constructed, it means that what is ‘good’ and ‘bad’ behavior depends on the social context and can change over the course of history. This makes the spread of primarily Western norms to ‘outsiders’ of the West look highly problematic – as it could be considered cultural imperialism. According to Katzenstein (1996:5), norms, generally speaking, are “collective expectations for the proper behavior of actors with a given identity.” Thus, norms both prescribe and define an actor’s identity, and vice versa. This point has been the focus of postcolonial critique of mainstream constructivist IR (see Epstein 2014). As Epstein (2014:307) argues, “postcolonial scholars have a wealth of
knowledge to offer on what it means for one’s identity to be molded by norms that are molded elsewhere.”

Ayşe Zarakol (2014) suggests that ‘mainstream’ constructivist scholarship uncritically implies a hierarchical relation between the norm disseminator (usually the West) and the norm receptor (usually a non-Western actor). The ‘West’ should be understood here as a normative rather than a geographical concept. It is this hierarchical relation that underlines the mechanisms of norm diffusion. Critics of the conventional constructivist approach, such as Zarakol and Bially Mattern (see Bially Mattern 2005a; Zarakol 2011, 2014; Bially Mattern and Zarakol 2016) argue that this approach fails to engage explicitly with the power relations it implies. The critical constructivist view amends conventional constructivism’s understanding of the international system as a ‘cultural and normative landscape’ by bringing power relations back into the equation. However, unlike realist IR, critical constructivism understands power to exists not only in the material but also in the ideational space.

According to Bially Mattern and Zarakol (2016), a conceptualization of the international system as governed by hierarchies provides better insight to understanding the contemporary global context compared to ‘mainstream’ constructivism. Hierarchies can be broadly understood as “intersubjectively constituted systems structured by vertical stratification” (Bially Mattern and Zarakol 2016:625). As Zarakol (2014) argues hierarchization provides order in a society. Similarly, Rebecca Adler-Nissen (2014b:149) contends that most societies “rely not only on socialization (in the form of emulation, learning, or persuasion)” but also on stigmatization, which helps “clarify the boundaries of acceptable behavior and identity and the consequences of nonconformity, (that is, shame, exclusion or other forms of punishment).” In a hierarchical order, a certain role distribution is accepted and internalized by actors. Those who do not fit certain criteria or fail to comply with certain norms are stigmatized (see Zarakol 2014). Discourse and language play a particular role in the construction of hierarchies. While there are certainly ‘objective’ differences between international actors, they are always interpreted through discourse. Discourse articulates and normalizes these differences.
Much of the scholarship looking at hierarchies focuses on the relationship between the West and non-Western states (e.g. Zarakol 2011; Epstein 2014). By contrast, this dissertation is interested in a hierarchical relation where the insider-outsider distinction is even more vague. It looks at Eastern European states, which are now members of Western institutions, and which are therefore officially within a ‘Western community’ of states. However, these countries continue to be perceived simultaneously as Western and ‘not-quite’ Western, European and ‘not-quite’ European.

At the same time, this project is smaller in scale than the previously mentioned literature on hierarchies within the global system (see Bially Mattern and Zarakol 2016). Instead of looking at dynamics in the international system as a whole, it focuses on the EU, as a ‘closed system’, a community, or a micro-society of international actors, which share a particular identity, and which are bound by a set of institutions. It therefore does not have to deal with the question whether or not there is such a thing as a global society or a global system. The EU is a densely integrated community in which states pool and share sovereignty on different levels. The international actors that constitute this community declare their commitment to certain norms and principles, and a shared identity. They are also institutionally integrated in a way that is historically unprecedented. This research project therefore shows how identity communities, such as the EU, are hierarchically organized, how these hierarchies are maintained, and how they affect relations between actors.

Of course, hierarchies are multilayered, and nested (see Bially Mattern and Zarakol 2016). Within the EU, different sets of hierarchies exist, such as between the North and the South, or as Adler-Nissen (2014a) explains, between members of the Economic Monetary Union and ‘opt out’ countries. This research focuses on one of these hierarchical relations: the East-West relation. Hierarchies are not stable but are a dynamic interplay between actors. Even within a hierarchical relation there are different ‘sub-hierarchies’. For example, within the category of ‘Eastern Europe’ there is a distinction between the Central-East European countries (e.g. Poland, the Czech Republic) and Eastern Europe (Balkans, Russia, Ukraine). As Maria Todorova (2009:12) observes, the perception of the “Orient” has been “relational, depending on the normative value set and the observation point.”
II. DISCOURSES ON NEW MEMBERS IN WESTERN INSTITUTIONS

Accounts on NATO and EU enlargement often frame the institutional expansion in civilizational terms as the eastward expansion of the ‘West’. The two institutions embody identity communities that represent the cultural and ideological ‘West’. Whereas NATO symbolizes the larger transatlantic West, the EU sees itself as the historical ‘core’ of Western civilization, rooted in the European Enlightenment, but additionally holds a ‘postmodern’ identity based on the overcoming of Europe’s history, demarcated by divisions, wars, and destructive nationalism (see Checkel and Katzenstein 2009). Externally, the EU sees itself as a postmodern security actor, emphasizing multilateralism and rejecting zero-sum security politics (Mälksoo 2010:68–9). Sjursen (2002) argues that the inclusion of the CEECs into this community was motivated by a sense of moral obligation based on “kinship duty”. It is directly linked to the EU’s self-identity as a value community, open to all states on the continent that share the universal values of freedom, democracy, and human rights. IR scholars studying the EU often argue that the enlargement has been the EU’s strongest foreign policy tool (e.g. Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005; Vachudova 2005).

For Central and Eastern European countries the peaceful revolutions of 1989 and the subsequent accession to Western institutions have come to signify a ‘return to Europe’, a reunification with European civilization from which they have been separated by years of communist domination (Bialasiewicz 2002). The idea of the ‘West’ served as an ideal to which the resistance movements against communist dictatorship in these countries aspired. Based on a history of imprisonment (Hankiss 1994) and struggle for liberation, these countries view their entrance into the EU and NATO as a pursuit of their right to symbolic membership in the ‘European family of nations’ (Bialasiewicz 2002). This is, for example, expressed in the speech of Polish Foreign Minister Bronislaw Geremek (1999) during the celebrations of the accession to NATO:

This is a great day for Poland as well as for millions of Poles scattered all over the world. Poland forever returns where she has always belonged – to the free world. Poland is no longer alone in the defense of her freedom. We are in NATO for your freedom and ours.
Both the narratives of the institutions, including their older members, and of the newer members from the former Soviet bloc assign a high moral value to the dual enlargement. Merje Kuus (2004b), however, points out a hidden negative aspect of the dominant discourses on enlargement. Both journalistic and academic texts portray the double enlargement as a process of uniting Europe and eroding old divisions between East and West. At the same time, these accounts “betray a tacit distinction between Europe and Eastern Europe” (Kuus 2004a:472). As the expanding institutions come to be identified with the normatively superior version of Europe, the other becomes its inferior other half. This dichotomy is not abolished with the institutional expansion. The border between ‘Europe’ and ‘Eastern Europe’ is simply shifted further east, beyond the border of the EU and NATO. The ‘East’ continues to exist, not primarily as a geographical place but a symbolic concept, a complementary ‘other’ to ‘Western Europe’. Eastern Europe is part of Europe and yet ‘not quite Europe’, a place between ‘Europe’ and the ‘Orient’ (Wolff 1994; Kuus 2004a; Mälksoo 2010; Zarycki 2014). Some go as far as to characterize this discourse as demi-orientalism (e.g. Wolff 1994; Chakrabarty 2000; Kuus 2004a; Adamovsky 2005; Zarycki 2014).

By virtue of the above discourse, for the accession countries, their exit from ‘Eastern Europe’ and entrance into membership in Western institutions becomes a process of emancipation. And yet, as Merje Kuus (2004a) argues, after accession their status as ‘European’ and ‘Western’ remained conditional. Accounts of the enlargement often imply that the CEECs’ entrance into the West ultimately depended on benevolent “acts of grace in Brussels and Washington” after the end of the Cold War (see Dawson and Fawn 2002). Despite their patronizing tone, such narratives are even more convincing over a decade after the enlargements as economic and security-political contrasts increase between, for example, Poland, and Ukraine or Belarus – one being torn by a separatist war, the other having slid into authoritarian rule. Despite all shortcomings that one might wish to point out, one could argue that Poland would be ‘much worse off’, like its neighbors, if not for the EU and NATO.

Thus, the same discourses, which propagated the moral significance of the dual enlargement, draw a distinction between post-Soviet bloc countries and ‘established’ Europe.
The accession countries are constantly framed as being “on the margins, on the verge of Europe” (Zarycki 2014:4). They are culturally and historically ‘in Europe’ and yet not ‘fully European’ (Kuus 2004a; Mälksoo 2010). Kuus (2004a) points out that the CEECs are depicted as coming short of certain characteristics, which separates them from the idealized Europe, associated with Western Europe. In particular, they are portrayed as less rational than the Western ideal, and thus prone to ethnic nationalism and authoritarianism. Their ‘Easternness’ is something that the newer members are in danger of slipping into.

The EU is conceived as a disciplining power, operative in the minds of East Europeans […]. East Europeans are framed as victims of the ‘father-state’ – naïve, immature, in need of overcoming the ‘mental straightjacket’ of communist society, and the relationship between the West and East-Central Europe is construed in terms of the viewing (western) subject and the monitored (Eastern) object. (Kuus 2004a:478)

Even after over a decade since the EU’s eastern enlargement and almost two decades after the first eastern expansion of NATO, the outlined discourse on Central and Eastern Europe has not disappeared. An example is the debate regarding Poland’s alleged constitutional violations following the Polish parliamentary election in 2015. Media accounts suggest that Poland is again “worrying the EU” and question its successful transition from communism (e.g. Why Is Poland’s Government Worrying the EU? 2016). Speculations about the “Orbanization” or “Putinization” of Poland and debates about “whether eastern Europe is slipping back into its authoritarian past” (Neuger 2016) place the country in a category of problematic cases in the ‘region’, and engage in the old time practice of constructing ‘Eastern Europe’. For example, Hanley and Dawson (2017) argue that current developments are attributed to the general “weakness of some liberal norms in Eastern Europe.” Enlargement of Western institutions, therefore, has not simply erased the idea of Central and Eastern Europe as ‘transitory’. By contrast, undesirable developments in Western European countries, for example, the rise of far-right populist parties, are rarely framed as a sign that these countries as such are ‘not fully’ nor ‘not yet’ European. A similar point could be made when comparing the discursive framing of corruption cases, for example, in Romania as opposed to France. This idea is so deeply embedded in academic and social discourses, and is often even present in those accounts that depict the post-communist transformation of Central and Eastern Europe as a success story. For example, one study concedes that the overall good
record compliance with EU law of the new members that joined the EU in 2004 “appears puzzling” (Sedelmeier 2016:6).

This chapter attempts to understand how the East-West hierarchy, which portrays the ‘East’ as unequal and as an aspirant to the West, is maintained in academic and public discourses on the relation between newer members from the former Soviet bloc and Western international institutions, including their established members. Secondly, it lays out the theoretical foundations for understanding how the stigmatizing East-West dichotomy affects political processes in Europe. As I will show in the next section, an implicit hierarchy can be found in the socialization framework, i.e., an academic discourse which conceptualizes the relation between the Central and Eastern European members, and Western institutions as the socialization of the former by the latter.

It will introduce the concept of ontological insecurity, which will be further discussed in the subsequent chapter to help understand why the new member Poland is sensitive to stigmatization. In the next chapter I will then show the connection between ontological security and strategic culture.

2.1 The Socialization framework
In international relations literature and literature studying European integration, the relationship between newer members and the EU (and to a lesser extent NATO) has been predominantly studied in terms of the diffusion of norms and institutions (e.g. Jacoby 2004; Schimmelfennig 2000; Gheciu 2005; Börzel and Risse 2012; Flynn and Farrell 2014). Both NATO and the EU were involved in “programs to support the emergence of democratic institutions, to modify civil-military relations, and to help create an economic infrastructure in the transition states of Central and Eastern Europe” (Flynn and Farrell 1999:505). A significant body in constructivist IR scholarship focuses on the spread of Western norms and institutions eastward through socialization (e.g. Checkel 2005; Gheciu 2005; Lightfoot and Szent-Iványi 2014). Through membership in Western institutions the former Soviet bloc states are being transformed into Western-style liberal democracies by virtue of ‘teaching and persuasion’ (Gheciu 2005). The role of institutions like the EU is understood as that of a
‘teacher’ of norms that anchors the post-communist states in the Western model of political pluralism and economic liberalism (Tocci 2008).

The new members, as subjects of socialization, choose to adopt norms and regulations designated by the international institutions either based on rational cost-benefit calculation (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2004, 2005; Treib and Falkner 2008) or internalization (Checkel 2005; Gheciu 2005). The former assumes that the incentives for compliance are material benefits, such as economic advantages of EU membership, or non-material, such as the inclusion into a community. By contrast, the latter understands socialization as a process in which the subject is externally transformed to accept and institutionalize the outsider’s norms. Socialization is understood as a deeper transformation of norms and preferences, rather than the mere fulfillment of criteria for membership. Actors follow a logic of appropriateness (see Finnemore and Sikkink 1998; March and Olsen 1998). This means they “adopt the relevant norms and laws not because they have to (as in the conditionality framework), but because these rules become internalized and the conviction gradually develops that they represent the only proper way to act” (Lightfoot and Szent-Iványi 2014:1261). Socialization understood as internalization of norms is linked to identity change (Gheciu 2005; Hooghe 2005). In the process of socialization, the subject’s identity undergoes a transformation as the subject begins to identify with the norms and interests of the socializer.

Socialization occurs in different forms on different levels. It can range from the country’s formal compliance with the EU’s acquis communautaire, the incorporation of EU directives and adherence to EU laws (see Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2004; Sedelmeier 2016), to individual diplomats’ and politicians’ informal changes of practices and norms due to frequent interaction with actors from established member states in Brussels (see Copsey and Pomorska 2014). The socializing agents are either peers in Brussels-based working groups (see Kratochvíl and Mišík 2015), established member states, or certain institutions, such as the European Commission that function as ‘norm entrepreneurs’ (Lightfoot and Szent-Iványi 2014).
The internalization model of socialization makes an important contribution because it shows that identification with the Western institutions has been a paramount incentive for reforms and adjustments in these countries. In other words, an important reason why these countries, for example, readily and voluntarily adopted the *acquis communautaire* was that they desired to become Western liberal democracies and to be recognized as full EU members. Furthermore, social learning explains how, at later stages, officials and diplomats from the new members adapt their behavior in the interaction with the established members, for example, during interactions in working groups in Brussels (see Pomorska 2007; Kaminska 2010; Kratochvíl and Mišík 2015).

Nevertheless, the socialization approach (in its different forms) is highly problematic for its hidden power discourse. It implies a top-down relationship between the ‘norm-maker’ and the ‘norm-receiver’ in which the latter passively adopts the norms of the former. This hierarchical relationship is not simply overcome once the candidate countries become members. Ulrich Sedelmeier (2012:6) argues, even after membership, states that entered international institutions based on conditionality maintain a position that is “qualitatively different from other member states that have not experienced pre-accession conditionality.” This is because the “adjustment pressures of membership are different for states that did not participate in the making of these rules” (Sedelmeier 2012:6). Moreover, the transformation of the new members is looked at entirely from the socializer’s perspective. As Charlotte Epstein (2012:140) argues about socialization, “the logic of the concept [...] inherently impedes the possibility of fully restoring the perspective of the socializee, insofar as the latter can only ever be apprehended on the receiving end of the socialization process.” The new members are reduced to passive receptors of socialization. However, from the perspective of Poles, Czechs or Hungarians ‘the return to Europe’ was seen as having resulted, to a large extent, from the states’ own agency of self-liberation from communism and the strive towards the West (see Davies 1984; Hankiss 1994; Szacki 1995; Verdery 1996; Wöll and Wydra 2007). By virtue of this, these countries regard themselves as co-creators of the post-Cold War idea of the ‘West’.

Furthermore, by the socialization model’s own logic, the criteria for the measurement of successful socialization are designated by the ‘teacher’. After all, the direction of
normative change that the ‘student’ undergoes is based on the socializer’s assumption that the student ought to “behave like itself [the teacher]” (Epstein 2012:142). As a consequence, studying a process of change in terms of socialization presumes a hierarchical relationship. Susanne Rudolph (2005) argues that the practice of imposing one’s own concepts on the ‘other’ creates a hegemonic relationship between the exporter of categories and the subject studied. Without being reshaped to fit the new context, these categories of study become “modes of creating and controlling” (Rudolph 2005:7). Tomasz Zarycki (2014) compares this hierarchy of knowledge about Central and Eastern Europe to Edward Said’s claim that the Orient is usually described by the West and by Western experts, while its own representatives fail to interpret the position. The ‘student’ also begins to identify with its role as a receptor of socialization.

After the EU’s Eastern Enlargement IR literature on socialization temporarily lost momentum. However, recent perception that the socialization process in Central and Eastern Europe is regressing has sparked new interest in socialization (Börzel and Schimmelfennig 2017; Sedelmeier 2017). These authors ask how the EU can prevent “democratic backsliding” in new member states drawing specifically on the examples of Poland, Hungary and Romania. Referring to Checkel (2001) Sedelmeier (2017) argues that to prevent backsliding in Central and Eastern Europe, EU institutions will have to rely primarily on persuasion and shaming, rather than material sanctions. It implies that the EU, as a ‘moral policing force’, can counteract endogenous drives towards illiberalism and authoritarianism in Central and Eastern Europe through socialization mechanisms.

2.2 Socialization as a political discourse

The ‘socialization framework’ conceptualizes the relationship between newer members from Central and Eastern Europe, and Western institutions as a diffusion of norms. Kuus (2004a:474) argues, as the double enlargement is framed in terms of teaching and learning community values and norms, “the accession countries are tacitly demarcated as not-yet-fully European.” This is evident not only in academic but also in public and political discourse. French President Jacques Chirac’s remark during the Iraq crisis that EU accession countries displayed “not well brought up behavior” is one of the most evident examples of such rhetoric (cited in Kuus 2004a:474). The comment implies that the accession countries,
choosing a foreign policy strategy different from ‘core’ Europe, had not yet developed into ‘proper’ Europeans.

This analogy between the conceptualization of these dynamics in IR theory and public/political discourse is not surprising. Zarycki (2014:56) points out:

The process of knowledge production is not taking place in isolation from other aspects of social life, particularly from economics and politics. Resources, including material, institutional and political, both generate prestige as well as create machinery necessary for the production and sustaining of knowledge.

Furthermore, academics also participate in the public sphere and read media articles, which shape their views. Therefore, even pieces of highly theoretical work are to a certain extent informed by contemporary political discourses. Conversely, academic and journalistic texts have some influence over the way public and political debates are framed.

The same kinds of discourses on the newer member states are constantly reproduced in academic literature and political speech and writing. For example, Ainius Lašas (2012), seeking to explain the Polish and the Baltic states’ condemnation of Russia’s actions during the Russo-Georgian war, traces it back to ‘Cold War trauma’. He argues that “in the case of Baltic and Polish identities historical-psychological legacies vis-à-vis Russia are principally associated with traumatic and painful experiences immediately before and during World War II” and “generate hypersensitivity” towards Russia (Lašas 2012:1061–2). Thus, events like the Russo-Georgian war can easily trigger a “surge of political activism” (Lašas 2012:1063). The political initiative of five Central and Eastern European leaders during the war in 2008, in this interpretation, is largely brought down to ‘emotional’ and ‘irrational’ factors. Furthermore, this article seeks to explain the situation in which these countries pursued an active foreign policy as an ‘anomaly’. In fact, the discourse in the international press about this diplomatic initiative emphasized particularly its ‘emotional’ aspect (see chapter 4). The CEEC’s actions were specifically contrasted with the French EU presidency’s initiative that was depicted as ‘pragmatic’, ‘balanced’ and ‘rational’.

Moreover, a change in behavior from ‘emotional’ to ‘rational’ and ‘pragmatic’ is often attributed to influence of the EU and the effects of social learning (see Baun and Marek
This kind of academic discourse therefore not only reflects but also partakes in the construction of the image of the new members as normatively inferior. As Zarakol (2014:313) argues:

The typical constructivist study [...] reproduces existing hierarchies in the international system, treating only non-compliance with a norm as an endogenously driven decision, while attributing compliance to supposedly benign exogenous drivers.

The socialization approach to studying the relation between the newer members and Western institutions is therefore both an academic discussion and a framework of reference for a larger political discourse. It is the conventional way in which the relations between Western institutions, particularly the EU, and its newer members are conceived in the minds of social scientists, journalists, and policy makers.

III. ‘LATECOMER’ STIGMA IN THE EU

The problem of the socialization framework, as a way of describing the relation between Central and Eastern European countries and Western institutions, is that it does not in any way address the hierarchical relations that it implies. A different theoretical approach is therefore needed to study this relationship. One can argue that relations between the newer members, on the one hand, and the institutions and the older members, on the other hand, resemble an established vs. outsider figuration (see Elias and Scotson 1994; Zarakol 2011). The ‘liminal’ position of the former Soviet bloc countries distinguishes them from more established members. The relationship can be understood in terms of stigmatization. When a stigma is present, both the ‘normals’ and those who carry the ‘stigma’ agree on the basic parameters of the situation (Zarakol 2014). Despite active attempts of overcoming it, the newer member states have internalized a sense of ‘conditional belonging’ to Europe attributed to their relative ‘latecomer’ status in Western institutions. This stigma is rooted in a much older idea of Central and Eastern Europe as a late arrival to Western civilization, which is present in European thought at least since the Enlightenment, but can even be traced back to the time of Frankish Empire and the first centuries of Latin Christendom (see Berend 1986; Wolff 1994).
3.1 Dynamics of stigmatization

According to Erving Goffman (1963:3) who developed the concept of stigma in sociology, stigma generally refers to an “attribute that is deeply discrediting.” It is a characteristic by which an individual deviates from the ‘norm’. As Goffman argues, stigma is not grounded in the attribute itself but rather in relationships between actors. This means that the larger society, in which the stigmatized individual lives, designates a specific attribute as discrediting. According to Adler-Nissen (2014b), the process of stigmatization usually consists of four components: labeling, stereotyping, separation, and discrimination. The first component involves singling out certain differences, the second linking them to a stereotype. The third feature of stigma imposition occurs when labels indicate a separation of ‘us’ vs. ‘them’. Finally, in the fourth stage some kind of status loss of the stigmatized occurs.

However, stigmatization is only possible if the individual adheres to the same values as the larger society and shares its judgment (Goffman 1963). If the individual does not recognize the same values, he or she remains untouched by the failure to live up to the society’s expectations and is ignorant of its judgment. However, if the individual shares the society’s worldview, i.e., views himself or herself through the eyes of that society, the individual is affected by the stigma. Stigma, therefore, rests on a shared social ground between the ‘normals’ and those who are labeled as different or abnormal (Zarakol 2014). Stigmatization is the “internalization of a particular normative standard that defines one’s own attributes as undesirable” (Zarakol 2014:314). Zarakol (2011, 2014) points to the close connection between socialization and stigmatization. Socialization often presupposes that the ‘student’ recognizes that he or she has inferior and undesirable characteristics and needs to become more like the ‘normals’. Socialization is therefore often a result of stigmatization and the acceptance of the hierarchical role distribution between ‘teacher’ and ‘student’.

3.2 Eastern Europe as the ‘Defining Other’

As previously mentioned, the stigma of the Central and Eastern European countries is a lingering perception that these countries are somehow distinctive from ‘Europe’. However, what exactly constitutes the stigma of the new members? And what accounts for its persistence?
It is usually implied that the legacy of Communism, including the economic backwardness and bureaucratic structures, accounts for the negative characteristics that the CEECs slowly had to overcome (e.g. Gheciu 2005; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005). According to Mälksoo (2010), the Central and Eastern European countries adopted a sense of inferiority as a consequence of their communist past. Due to their exclusion from the West during the Cold War, the countries internalized a sense of having lost proper belonging to the West, despite seeing themselves as European (Mälksoo 2010). The experience of Communism and Soviet occupation left an imprint of shame (a self-imposed stigma) on the countries’ identities. Such a sense of shame is, of course, not exclusive to the former Soviet bloc countries. It often follows a major defeat, when an international actor recognizes its own inferiority and is willing to learn from the victor (see Schivelbusch 2001). It was, for example, characteristic for Germany’s relationship with Western empires in the nineteenth and for a large part of the twentieth century.

Larry Wolff (1994) argues that the stigma of the Central and Eastern European countries long predates the Cold War period. The Cold War, he argues, only solidified an already existing dichotomy between Eastern Europe and Western Europe on the mental maps of Western European thinkers. The central thesis of Wolff’s book Inventing Eastern Europe is that the Cold War division of Europe “from Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic” (Churchill 1946) was so easily accepted because the imaginary dividing line between Eastern and Western Europe already existed since the Enlightenment.

What made the Cold War such an epoch in the intellectual history of the idea of Eastern Europe was not only its capacity of appropriating and applying a discourse that dated back to the Enlightenment, but also its capacity for camouflaging the cultural origins of that idea [...]. The Soviet bloc gave the idea of Eastern Europe some substantial geopolitical significance. (Wolff 1994:370)

The construction of ‘Eastern Europe’ as an inferior counterpart to Western Europe had been the exercise of Western European intellectuals of the Enlightenment. Intellectuals, historians, travelers and diplomats, such as François-Marie Aroue Voltaire, William Coxe, Jean-Paul Marat, and Louis Philippe Séguar, in their writings created an imaginary idea of Eastern Europe, designated to Western European readers. This ‘region’ was depicted as
underdeveloped, barbaric, as geographically and culturally located ‘in between Europe and the Orient.’ Throughout the eighteenth century, Wolff argues, these images have dominated the minds of Western European travelers to places like the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Wallachia, Moldavia or the Russian Empire, and continued to influence future scholarship. These writings not only imposed cultural inferiority but also false homogeneity on the ‘region’, treating it as a single cultural entirety (e.g. classifying Hungarian a Slavic language). Historical events of the late eighteenth century helped solidify these narratives. The partitions of Poland at the end of the century and the Commonwealth’s disappearance from the map seemed to confirm this image of weakness and cultural inferiority. For example, in Anarchy of Poland Claude-Carloman de Rulhière discussed the failings of the gentry republic’s government (Wolff 1994:272–277).

The mental construction of ‘Eastern Europe’ was in fact an intellectual exercise of Enlightenment scholars in inventing ‘Western Europe’. In this exercise, the idea of ‘Eastern Europe’ as culturally subordinate served as a ‘defining other’ (Wolff 1994). Similarly, during the Cold War, the Soviet bloc constituted a ‘defining other’ for the Western allies. The ‘negative othering’ of Eastern bloc countries, had an identity-forming function for the West. It helped to create the idea of the democratic and liberal West as a source of good in the international environment. As Hankiss (1994:116) argues, although for forty years the people of Western and Eastern Europe lived separate lives, they “were bound tightly together, engaged in a strange and silent dialogue [...] or perhaps it was only two monologues, since it was not too important that either side listened to the other.” Thus, stigmatizing discourses can fulfill a positively affirmative identify-forming function for the opposite other. As I will elaborate, stigmatizing discourses also continue to exist over time because they are deliberately evoked as a political tool for defining the ‘normal’.

The power of stigmatizing narratives, therefore, lies not in their description of the past but in the way actors use them to justify consecutive actions. With the end of the Cold War the geopolitical significance of the East-West division ceased to exist. The aspiration of the new democracies to join NATO and the EU seemingly abolished these categories. However, new stigmatizing discourses quickly emerged. An example is the widespread discourse on the negative effects of migration from Eastern Europe in Western European media preceding
the EU’s eastern enlargement. After joining NATO and the EU, the CEECs were no longer outsiders but as newcomers they soon faced a new form of an older stigma. Negative traits were connected to their lack of experience or incomplete transition. The new stigma was connected to the perceived failure of the CEECs to comply with certain defined expectations of the EU and other institutions. This will be shown in the empirical chapters.

3.3 Stigmatization through language

The relationship between Western Europe and Eastern Europe, as portrayed by Wolff, strongly resembles that between Western and non-Western actors described by Zarakol (2011, 2014). The ‘latecomer’ stigma of Central and Eastern European countries is profoundly rooted in European intellectual traditions. As Adler-Nissen (2014b) points out, stereotypes linger over time and the identities of individuals associated with them may remain ‘spoiled’ even after behavioral change. Because the stereotypes about Eastern Europe, for example, the association of the region with ‘backwardness’, are so deeply engrained in European intellectual thought, they are resilient against ‘factual’ changes, such as the development of the CEEC’s economies in the last decade.

One might intervene that to demonstrate that a stigma has been around for a long time is not in itself sufficient to explain its present continuation. There are, after all, many examples of a formerly stigmatized quality or behavior becoming accepted as a result of evolving norms in a society. Nevertheless, there are strong reasons why an old stigma is likely to persist. The concept of ontological security, which will be more thoroughly discussed in the following chapter, helps to understand that this. Ontological security refers to an individual’s sense of safety in the world and includes a basic trust in the relation with others. It is rooted in a stable and consistent set of narratives, as modes of orientation, by which an individual makes sense of the world and his or her own role in it (see Giddens 1991; Kinnvall 2004; Mitzen 2006b). Ontological security rests on an actor’s stable subjectivity or notion of Self, his or her preferences and interests, which are recognized and affirmed by others. As I will elaborate in detail in the following chapter, ontological security can be transposed on collective actors, such as states. It is as vital as physical security (Mitzen 2006b). According to Mitzen (2006b), a stable identity that is recognized by other actors and the understanding of the own role in the international environment are crucial for a
state’s ability to act. Conversely, uncertainty can restrain the ability of an individual or a state to act.

Stigmatization and ontological insecurity are connected in two ways. On the one hand, an actor who is stigmatized as an outsider is likely to feel ontologically insecure. This is because stigmatization challenges core values and creates a sense of inferiority. Therefore, a stigmatized actor will seek recognition. After all, most actors will not simply accept being stigmatized but will try to escape this condition. Such actors are thus in a constant pursuit of overcoming their stigma, and their ontological security is conditioned on gaining the recognition of others. On the other hand, an actor that is ontologically insecure is more susceptible to stigmatization. In other words, someone who is insecure in his or her relations with others and the world around is more likely to internalize a negative judgment imposed by society.

Goffman (1963) also makes clear that the practice of stigmatization has a function for the larger society. According to Goffman (1963), stigmatization is used to reinforce the concept of normality. Actors may therefore deliberately use stigmatization as a tool of political power to set the parameters of the ‘normal’. I will argue that, just as historically the othering of Eastern Europe had an identity forming function for Western Europe, the stigmatization of the new members helps to assert the standard of normality within the EU. This happened, for example, when the EU (including member states and candidates) split over the war in Iraq. The inability of the EU to ‘speak with one voice’ created a sense of uncertainty. Political leaders of France and Germany stigmatized the Central and Eastern European candidate countries for their decision to support the U.S. intervention to enforce the idea of what is ‘normal’ behavior and ‘deviation from normal’. The reason stigmatizing discourses persist over time is therefore that actors continue to employ them as a political tool. These discourses are actively reproduced and adapted to new circumstances.

Language plays a particular role in the reproduction of stigma. It can become a tool of power in the form of speech acts (see Austin 1962) or narratives that carry “representational force” (see Bially Mattern 2005a, 2005b). Because an actor’s sense of ontological security is sustained through a matrix of narratives, it can also be attacked through language. As Bially Mattern (2005b) argues, actors in international politics frequently engage in verbal fighting.
over the ‘true’ meaning of ‘reality’. An actor can use language as an instrument of power and try to enforce his or her understanding of reality on another actor. Language wields power when it challenges the narratives by which an actor makes sense of the world.

One such way is through speech acts, which give a negative label to an individual (one that is at odds with how the individual wants to be perceived). According to John L. Austin, who developed the speech act theory, statements can have a performative function when the speaker utters them with the intention of ‘making them true’ (Austin 1962). Through performative speech, or speech acts, an author creates reality. As Adler-Nissen (2014b:147) argues, stigmatization always begins with “labeling”, which is the act of singling out certain human or social differences and deeming them salient while ignoring others. For example, as I will argue in chapter 3, during the Iraq crisis political actors in the EU used the label ‘New Europe’ to signal that the Central and Eastern European candidate countries are different from ‘established’ Europeans. Public intellectuals and politicians in the EU who disapproved of the candidate countries’ decision to support the Iraq war used the label to indicate that these countries’ behavior was deviating from the European ‘normals’. Because the ontological security of the candidate countries was strongly tied to their recognition by others as ‘European’, the label had a stigmatizing effect.

Furthermore, language can damage an actor’s sense of ontological security, exploiting the inconsistencies within the narratives that make up an actor’s sense of Self. According to Bially Mattern (2005b), actors in international politics strategically construct narratives about ‘reality’ in an attempt of coercing another actor into certain behavior. Narratives should be generally understood as acts of speech that ‘tell a story’ about reality. Narratives can wield “representational force”, a form of power that “operates through the structure of a speaker’s narrative representation of ‘reality’” (Bially Mattern 2005b:586). Representational force “exploits the fragility of the sociolinguistic ‘realities’ that constitute the victim’s Self” threatening to harm the victim’s ontological security” (Bially Mattern 2005b:586). For example, French President Chirac effectively employed representational force when scolding the candidate countries during the Iraq crisis. He exploited the contradiction between the candidate countries’ desire to be perceived as ‘good Europeans’ and as loyal allies to the United States.
Representational force or labeling is not always effective. It may be used with the intention of stigmatizing the victim but may not achieve this goal. The victim can defend himself or herself by challenging the attacker’s narratives and constructing counter-narratives. However, if the victim’s sense of ontological security is already fragile, it is more sensitive to representational force. As will be shown in the following chapter, this is the case for Poland. If a discourse that is harmful to an individual’s ontological security persists over time and becomes internalized by the individual, it becomes stigma. Two conditions therefore account for the persistence of the stigma of former Soviet bloc members. First, it is constantly recreated through discourse and adapted to new political realities. Second, the vulnerable ontological security of these countries makes them sensitive to the internalization of stigmatizing discourse.

3.4 Response to stigma
How does being stigmatized affect an actor’s behavior? Social scientists looking at stigma agree that stigma creates a struggle for the targeted actor. In one way or another the actor’s behavior (even ignoring) is always a response to stigma (see Goffman 1963; Zarakol 2011, 2014, Adler-Nissen 2014a, 2014b). A stigmatized actor can pursue a number of different coping strategies. For example, an individual may engage in counter-stigmatization turning the stigma into an emblem of pride (see Adler-Nissen 2014b). This strategy, however, involves a complete distancing from the stigmatizing society and the rejection of its values. For the Central and Eastern European countries, which want to be part of the EU identity community, this strategy is not a likely option.

Instead there are two more realistic coping mechanisms for these countries. The first involves the recognition of the stigma (see Adler-Nissen 2014b) and attempting to correct discrediting characteristics. This type of stigma management implies trying to actively become ‘normal’, which means conceding to the process of socialization (Zarakol 2014). I will call this response adaptation strategy.

The second option is contestation. In this case, the stigmatized actor rebels against the stigmatizing discourse and tries to challenge the categories which imposed the stigma in the first place. This is different from ‘counter-stigmatization’ because the individual does not
withdraw from the society which imposed the stigma, but engages in a debate with that society on what is ‘normal’. Instead of conceding to the process of socialization, the individual might question the role of the ‘teacher’ and try redefining the society’s norms. In later chapters I will argue that Poland has pursued both patterns of behavior (adaptation and confrontation) alternatingly or even simultaneously for different aspects of its foreign policy. However, neither of these strategies necessarily helps an actor to overcome stigmatization. Zarakol (2011:19) argues:

Contrary to what most of IR literature would lead us to believe, emulation does not necessarily guarantee that the socialized actor comes automatically to resemble the ‘normals’. Socialization driven by a desire to escape stigmatization can actually perpetuate the established-outsider figuration.

The subject of socialization can at best become a copy of the socializer. It is uncertain when the student emancipates to become the norm-setter. Also, according to Goffman “what often results is not the acquisition of fully normal status, but a transformation of self from someone with a particular blemish into someone with a record of having corrected a particular blemish” (Goffman 1963:9). For example, a former convict is likely to be stigmatized by society for his or her past transgressions. An individual might also be perceived as being at constant risk of relapsing into his or her old behavior. In the same manner, as discussed earlier, the Central and Eastern European countries are often treated as being at risk of ‘relapsing’ into their past, associated with authoritarianism, ethnic nationalism and corruption – even when they are perceived to be performing well (see Kuus 2004b). Furthermore, the mere presence of the desire to emulate is telling because it means that the actor has internalized the judgment of the larger society. Emulation therefore legitimizes the stigma. In contrast, confrontation is also problematic. Rebellion against stigma, the refusal to accept the discourse which imposed the stigma, can lead to further isolation. It might only reaffirm the negative expectations about the individual and lead to more dissonance between him or her, and the larger society.

Both types of behavior can be observed for former Soviet bloc countries in the EU. For example, Maria Mällsöö (2010) argues that the Baltics and Poland simultaneously pursue both types of behavior in EU memory politics regarding Russia and World War II.
Their actions are “a combination of simultaneously seeking recognition from, and exercising resistance to the hegemonic ‘core Europe’ narrative of what Europe is all about” (Mälksoo 2010:84). In a similar way, the three case studies, which will be discussed here, examine Poland’s attempts to overcome its ‘latecomer’ stigma, alternating between challenging existing foreign policy norms and seeking recognition. My empirical research focused on international crises because in these instances, existing discourses are challenged, and opportunities of overcoming stigma arise.

A consequence for a country that is subject to stigmatization is that the stigma becomes incorporated into domestic politics and then exported back out. According to Adler-Nissen (2014b:154), “stigma management is subject to domestic debate, which may also help explain why states change coping strategies over time.” Differences among political camps on how to deal with stigma lead to alternation between coping strategies depending on who is in power. Zarycki (2014), who looks at the way different parts of the larger Eastern European region deal with hierarchization, shows how it can be the trigger for internal conflicts. He argues for “zone 1” countries (CEECs that are part of the EU) that different political camps focus the blame for their country’s subordinate status in the EU on one another. In his words, “[t]he Euro-enthusiastic camp, which tends to be most critical of its own conservatives, sees the persistent reproduction of ‘cultural backwardness’” whereas “the conservative camp blames mainly the liberals, and “the historical heritage of past occupation and aggression, in particular, that of the communist period” (Zarycki 2014:43). The conservative camp accuses the liberals of increasing stigmatization and vice versa. Internal disputes can in turn affect foreign policy behavior, further weaken the country’s international position, and thus ‘trap’ it in stigma. An example will be provided in chapter 4 where Poland’s actions were weakened by an internal conflict between two political camps on how to deal with EU expectations regarding Poland’s foreign policy towards Russia.

IV. NORMS AND COMPLIANCE
Stigmatization always implies that an individual is deviating from the ‘normal’. The stigmatized individual is believed to fail to comply with or violate a norm established by the
larger society. For the Central and Eastern European EU members, the ‘latecomer’ stigma is attributed to their perceived failure to meet – or at least being at risk of violating – certain expectations in the EU. The socialization literature emphasizes that with membership in the EU comes a set of norms about how an international actor should behave. Yet how are these norms defined? What does compliance actually mean?

The easiest way to define EU norms is to look at those listed officially in the acquis communautaire. The EU acquis entails directives on domestic and international norms. The Treaty on European Union (2012) lists as common EU norms the “respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities.” Furthermore, it states that “these values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail” (Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union 2012). However, the listed norms and values express very general principles. They are what Michael Walzer (1994) would call ‘thin’ norms. They differ from ‘thick’ norms, which are embedded in a specific cultural or organizational context, i.e., how they are implemented in practice. This does not mean that the EU lacks thick norms. However, these are entailed in regulations and directives, and include a wide range of informal norms. Both formal and informal norms shape expectations on how a member state should act (Finnemore and Toope 2001). It is the thick norms that are most disputed and contested. How exactly they should be implemented and institutionalized is debatable (see Wiener 2015; Niemann and Schillinger 2017).

Academic literature on socialization considers all of these types of norms. Examples include the adoption of legislation on health and safety in the workplace, civil service reforms, decentralization etc. (see Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2004). The EU plays the role of anchoring the post-communist states in a Western model of political pluralism and economic liberalism (Tocci 2008). Conventional studies of socialization do not specifically distinguish between general principles (thin norms) and looser, more pragmatic institutional norms (thick) that are tied to a specific political culture, e.g. democracy vs. specific constitutional designs, or civilian control over military vs. specific structures of the military.
More recently, constructivist scholarship has engaged more critically with the problem of defining norms. Norms are usually tied to shared understanding through processes of norm entrepreneurship and norm diffusion (Niemann and Schillinger 2017). This does not, however, guarantee that norms, such as ‘democracy’, are understood in exactly the same way in different contexts. Norms are always culturally defined and are interpreted in different ways in different contexts. Cultural contexts define the meanings of norms (Wiener 2015; Niemann and Schillinger 2017). Because of this diversity all norms are constantly being contested (see Niemann and Schillinger 2017).

The problem with conventional discourses in literature on new members in Western institutions is that they are rarely interested in the specific cultural and situational context in which these norms are formed, interpreted and appropriated, or in which the role distribution between ‘teacher’ and ‘student’ takes place. However, it is only through this context that we can distinguish violations of norms from competing interpretations. Therefore, critical constructivists and postcolonial scholars have been calling for a ‘situated’ perspective on norm diffusion (see Epstein 2014).

4.1 The case of foreign policy norms

The focus of this dissertation is on norms regarding foreign policy. The new members are expected to become ‘Western’ or ‘European’ international actors. However, foreign policy norms are among the most strongly contested norms. In foreign policy, it is even harder to speak of common ‘Western’ – let alone ‘universal’ – norms than in other subject areas. Moreover, even those norms that are generally recognized are frequently broken – even by leading Western states – in the absence of an enforcement mechanism. In EU politics, foreign policy constitutes one of the most disputed areas with little integration of policies. Compared to other policy areas, foreign policy is still the one most intergovernmental (see Smith 2004). This has remained the case although in the time frame, which is considered here, there have been important developments in the institutionalization of a common EU policy, notably the design of the first European Security Strategy (ESS), and the creation of the European External Action Service (EEAS), the EU’s diplomatic service. Despite these significant developments, member states retain a crucial role in shaping the EU’s external relations,
especially when managing international crises. One of the main reasons is that the self-determination over foreign policy lies at the heart of national sovereignty (Moumoutzis 2011).

In the EU commitment to joint action among member states functions as a kind of meta-norm (see Thomas 2009). Nevertheless, the principles and norms in foreign policy, which all member states accept, are relatively few and many of them are unofficial. The few examples within the EU include norms such as the commitment to multilateralism, abstention from the use of force and international intervention without a mandate of the United Nations, commitment to solving conflicts through negotiations, avoidance of language that could be considered provocative or confrontational, and adherence to international law. However, as will be discussed throughout this dissertation, the consensus regarding international behavior in the EU has been subject to change. There has been much internal contestation regarding the interpretation of certain common principles. The three empirical chapters will discuss such foreign policy principles, which are contested within the EU and change over time.

Foreign policy is one of the areas where the role of cultural context in defining norms is particularly visible. Member states, new and old, also have their individual strategic cultures and foreign policy traditions. As I will show in the next chapter, differences in the interpretation of thin foreign policy norms are therefore common. However, while many have argued that socialization or adaptation should not be applied to foreign policy (see Moumoutzis 2011), the expectation that members adapt remains a political ‘fact’. This goes for both learning certain customs of diplomatic behavior as well as designing long-term strategies (e.g. Poland’s Eastern policy). In an area where norms are especially vague, and where interpretation of norms is dependent on the cultural context and is less ‘clear’ and ‘objective’, the hierarchization of different approaches is particularly visible.

4.2 Poland in the EU: newcomer, frontrunner, troublemaker
Poland arguably makes an ideal case for the study of the dynamics between the EU and its new members. Among the newcomers, Poland stands out for having quickly adapted to the EU acquis and for relatively early seeking to influence politics of the European Union
Poland’s economic performance is seen as the most important success of its post-communist transformation and accession into the EU (see Puhl and Follath 2012). In some areas, for instance foreign policy towards the Eastern neighborhood, Poland is sometimes perceived by other EU actors as too ambitious, too eager to influence the EU’s approach, and reluctant to compromise (see Copsey and Pomorska 2014:433). Poland simultaneously holds the reputation of ‘frontrunner’ and ‘model socializee’, and ‘troublemaker’. It is seen as a ‘good student’ but at the same time always in danger of slipping back into old patterns of ‘irrational’ or ‘emotional’ behavior. In recent years, for example, some developments in the country are interpreted as signs of democratic ‘backsliding’ (Börzel and Schimmelfennig 2017; Rupnik 2017; Sedelmeier 2017). Although many of these developments, such as media and judicial reforms, would normally not resonate much beyond domestic politics, the criticism from the EU institutions and some Western European state leaders has given the issue an international dimension.

Early on, Poland conducted internal reforms in preparation for membership in both EU and NATO. Kratochvil and Mišík (2015) argue that Poland quickly and successfully adapted to the working methods in the European Union. According to their study, diplomats of older member states perceive Poland as both the ‘biggest player’ among the new members as well as one that has successfully learned the ‘rules of the game’ and gained diplomatic skills (Kratochvil and Mišík 2015). Additionally, only a few years after Poland joined the EU, the new member had “already been profiled as a state that ‘makes a difference’ and has a distinctive foreign and security policy. Of the new entrants to NATO and the EU, Poland is not only the largest but also the most vocal and most self-confident” (Longhurst and Zaborowski 2007:90).

The positive image of being a successful frontrunner that can actively shape EU policies is often directly equated with being a model socializee. For example, Kaminska (2014) looks at degrees of compliance and adaptation to EU norms, and patterns of behavior in Poland’s foreign policy. She also argues that socialization is a strategy for gaining influence in the EU: the more Poland socializes, the more it can shape EU policies. Others
similarly argue that the more Poland learns to adapt, adjust national policy preferences and ‘rebrand them as European preferences’, and set more modest goals, the more it can exercise influence in the European Union (Pomorska 2007; Copsey and Pomorska 2014). Arguably all members of the EU are expected to adjust their preferences. However, observers also emphasize the process of ‘learning’ and ‘proving commitment’ to the EU, which Poland as a new member has to undergo before it can shape EU policies. This emphasis on ‘socialization first’ shows that agency of the newer members is rarely conceived in terms other than “emulating Europe” (Kuus 2004b:477) and ‘demonstrating commitment’. The success of Poland’s foreign policy within the EU is often seen as a response to negative expectations of about its behavior. For example, Kaminska (2014:72) argues about the Eastern Neighborhood policy: “Wishing to be a good European and willing to prove its commitment to EU values, Poland faced strong pressure from the EU to shape Eastern policy according to European expectations.”

The above suggests a tension between Poland’s wish to be perceived as a ‘good European’ and other foreign policy goals that it wants to pursue. There are certain areas in foreign policy where Poland’s visions strongly differ from certain key actors in the EU. The next chapter will outline Poland’s foreign policy visions through the contextualized framework of strategic culture. The areas where tensions with other EU actors occur include transatlantic relations, and relations with the Eastern Neighborhood and Russia. For example, Poland favors the swift integration of the eastern neighbors, especially Ukraine, with the European Union, and initially even promoted EU membership for Ukraine. In contrast, Poland advocated greater distance and caution towards Russia. Therefore, as Copsey and Pomorska (2010:319) argue, “Poland often found itself directly opposed to the policy preferences of other key Member States on policy towards the eastern neighbours: notably Germany and France.” These differences sometimes lead to tensions. For example, in 2006 Poland vetoed the European Commission’s mandate to negotiate a new Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with Russia. Germany and France perceived this move very negatively, and even though other EU members silently welcomed the veto, it “left Poland as an isolated player” (Copsey and Pomorska 2010:313). Such tensions have given Poland the reputation of a ‘troublemaker’ within the EU who often tries to ‘punch above its weight’.
Thus, much of the literature discussing Poland’s role in the EU tends to portray the ‘misfits’ between the preferences of the newer member and the more established members as an indication that Poland is not yet adequately socialized. Yet in order to be considered an ‘established’ member in the EU, a state is generally expected to do more than just adapt (see Kratochvíl and Mišík 2015). It should make original proposals, and show leadership skills and develop areas of expertise. These premises create a paradoxical situation in which it is unclear how the newer member should act to become an ‘established’ member.

V. CONCLUSION
The ‘socialization framework’ implies a tacit hierarchy between the ‘student’ and the ‘teacher’, and it is unclear how the student can emancipate from this status. This can be seen in the case of the former Soviet bloc countries and Western institutions, including the EU. This chapter conceptualized the hidden hierarchies established through discourse and diplomatic practice that exist within the EU. It argued that the dominant academic and public discourses about the accession of former Soviet bloc countries into Western institutions maintain hierarchies through tacit stigmatization. Stigmatization happens, among other things, through language and speech acts. Established actors use explicitly normative language vis-à-vis the newcomers to enforce a sense of ‘normal’. As I will argue in the next chapter, the high sense of ontological insecurity makes new members like Poland particularly sensitive to stigmatization. At the same time, the newcomers’ reaction to stigma often contributes to the persistence of their ‘latecomer’ status. As a result, the CEECs remain constantly short of a full-fledged status as ‘European’ or ‘Western’. Drawing on existent literature, I examined the cultural, historical and political dimension of this ‘latecomer’ stigma, the reasons for its endurance, and its effects on the countries’ identity and behavior.

I argued that one of the main problems of the ‘socialization framework’ as a way of studying the relation between the EU and the new members is that it always looks at the problematic from the ‘socializer’s’ perspective. On the example of Poland in the EU, I will subsequently illustrate the problems of the ‘socialization framework’ in practice by focusing on the perspective of one of the new members. Poland makes a suitable case because it is the largest and most ambitious among the ‘newcomers’. While it might seem contradictory, this
ambition makes Poland particularly sensitive to stigma. In the following chapter, I turn to strategic culture to reconstruct the perspective of the ‘student’.
2 A QUEST FOR ONTOLOGICAL SECURITY: STRATEGIC CULTURE AS AN ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

To understand how foreign policy actors deal with hierarchies and react to stigmatization I use the concept of strategic culture, which will be introduced in this chapter. The previous chapter theoretically explored hidden hierarchical structures in the relationship between Western international institutions, including their established members, and new members from the former Soviet bloc. This hierarchy is maintained through practice and normative discourses in the public and political sphere, and academic literature on the eastern enlargement of NATO and the EU, which portray the newer members as ‘not fully’ or ‘conditionally’ European, as ‘not completely’ Western but ‘in-between’ East and West (Wolff 1994; Kuus 2004a, 2004b; Mälksoo 2010; Zarycki 2014). This stigmatization of the Central and Eastern European countries is rooted in the more or less mutually accepted role distribution between the institutions as ‘teachers’ and the new members as students. The countries are perceived – and to an extent perceive themselves – to be in a constant process of learning to be ‘Western’ international actors. The tacit hierarchy between the newcomers and the institutions is therefore codified as a relationship between ‘norm disseminator’ and ‘norm receptor’.

As previously argued, the view of the newer members as receptors of European or Western norms is problematic because it assumes a clearly defined, static understanding of such norms. In practice, however, these norms are often very fluid and unspecific. Although foreign policy is an area where this is especially the case, there are strong expectations in the EU that newer members adjust their foreign polices to become ‘European’ international actors (see Kuus 2004b; Pomorska 2007; Kaminska 2010; Mälksoo 2010; Baun and Marek 2013). This goes beyond formal agreements and concerns, for example, the position that member states take in handling an international conflict. As mentioned in the previous chapter, policy actors engage in shaping the idea of what is considered ‘normal’ foreign policy behavior for an EU member, which enforces a hierarchical structure between actors.
The aim of this chapter is to outline the analytical tools for a ‘situated’ study of a country’s foreign policy. This will allow for a more critical account of foreign policy norms within the EU. I seek to understand the points of tensions between Poland’s behavior and the expectations of other, more ‘established’ actors in the EU, which lead to stigmatization. At the same time, Poland’s behavior is often a response to stigmatization. I refer to strategic culture, as an operational framework for understanding the cultural and normative assumptions guiding a country’s foreign policy. Strategic culture refers to a country’s historically shaped norms and ideas regarding foreign policy (Booth and Trood 1999; Longhurst 2004; Meyer 2005, 2006; Giegerich 2006). An analysis based on strategic culture assumes that an international actor’s norms and ideas regarding foreign policy are interpreted through the lens of specific cultural contexts. Perceptions regarding strategic objectives and the international environment are shaped by cultural and historical experiences. This approach acknowledges the unique cultural landscape in which a country develops its foreign policy strategy. A low degree of ontological security, which comes from Poland’s uncertain position in the ‘West’, affects its strategic culture and finds expression in Poland’s foreign policy. The historical instability of Poland’s statehood and territorial integrity explains the country’s susceptibility to stigmatization. As a consequence, overcoming this stigma becomes a constant preoccupation of the country’s foreign policy elites. Paradoxically, the attempts to overcome its position of insecurity often lead to actions that reinforce stigmatization.

The first part of the chapter defines strategic culture with reference to the relevant literature and shows how it can be employed to the study of a country’s foreign policy. I go beyond the existing literature to argue that the guiding principle of a state’s strategic culture is the pursuit of not just physical but ontological security, i.e., a stable subjectivity as an international actor and the recognition of this subjectivity by other actors. Strategic culture is therefore an international actor’s unique view of means and ends in foreign policy to ensure ontological security. For Poland the recognition as a member of the ‘West’ is crucial for its ontological security. This dependence on recognition makes Poland particularly sensitive to hierarchization within the Western community.
In order to understand this problem, the second half of this chapter provides an overview of Poland’s strategic culture with its most important elements. A history of ontological insecurity, of being torn between ‘West’ and ‘East’, and of having repeatedly faced existential threat from different sides, has fundamentally shaped Poland’s strategic culture. The two main dimensions of Poland’s contemporary strategic culture will be referred to as Eastern and Western dimension, respectively. They do not, however, exclusively refer to geographical concepts, but rather represent larger cultural and civilization points of reference, which define Poland’s self-identity as an international actor. A guiding thread in Poland’s strategic culture is the quest for overcoming its ontological insecurity conditioned by a past of territorial discontinuity of the Polish state, attacks from neighbors, and unreliable alliances with Western powers. Belonging to the West – both in the sense of being incorporated in Western security structures, especially under the protection of the United States, and being perceived as an integral part of the West as an identity community – has been of nearly existential importance for Poland. The pursuit of recognition as ‘Western’ and ‘European’ is therefore a central element of Poland’s strategic culture. At the same time, the Eastern dimension of Poland’s strategic culture, especially the relation with nations that have emerged on the territories of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, is where Poland has the greatest potential for agency. For its eastern neighbors, especially Ukraine, Poland can play the role of a ‘bridge to the West’. However, in the Eastern dimension Poland faces constraints connected to its relations with the West, with Russia, and the relations between the West and Russia. Ontological insecurity and the tension between the Eastern and Western dimension has shaped Poland’s strategic culture.

I. UNDERSTANDING STRATEGIC CULTURE
In the following section I draw on existing literature to explain the concept of strategic culture as a set of historically shaped norms and traditions that inform a country’s pursuit of security. How strategic culture can be understood and how it can be applied to research on foreign policy is part of an ongoing debate among IR scholars interested in this concept. Most of its theorists roughly agree that strategic culture describes collective, culturally shaped ideas or attitudes in national approaches to security (e.g. Snyder 1977; Johnston 1995;
Gray 1999; Longhurst 2004; Giegerich 2006; Meyer 2006). Jack Snyder (1977) first used strategic culture to describe culturally informed attitudes of states to the use of force, specifically nuclear force. Among the relatively early explorations of strategic culture, theorists treat it as an intervening variable, which explains deviation from what could arguably be considered rational-choice, cost-benefit calculations-based foreign policy decisions (Snyder 1977; Johnston 1995). Some IR scholars continue to use this understanding of strategic culture as a supplement to realism and neo-realism, accounting for seemingly irrational behavior (e.g. Lantis 2002).

Constructivist and critical IR scholars have given the concept a wider and deeper scope. Notably, Colin Gray (1999) argues that strategic culture is not merely an intervening variable but a cultural and normative context in which political actors make decisions about foreign policy, thus ‘going all the way down’, influencing all aspects of foreign policy making. This understanding of strategic culture builds on the larger constructivist assumption that actors do not start with a blank sheet when making decisions but “draw on pre-existing and usually stable schemata, beliefs and ideas about the external world and deeply ingrained norms about appropriate behavior” (Meyer 2005:527). Meyer (2005) argues that because actors cannot extract themselves and their considerations of actions from the cultural and social context in which they are embedded, their actions always reflect this context. Culture refers to both a set of evaluative standards, such as norms and values, as well as cognitive standards, such as rules and models, that shape how an actor perceives the world (Katzenstein 1996). Strategic culture is therefore comprised of socially transmitted, identity-derived norms and ideas regarding the international environment and informs approaches to security.

1.1 Understanding foreign policy through strategic culture

My account follows the constructivist (or critical constructivist) view of strategic culture by which the concept is used to understand rather than explain a state’s foreign policy. I draw on the so-called third (and fourth) generation of literature on strategic culture, which defines the concept as a set of historically shaped ideas, norms and patterns of behavior that influence a state’s international behavior (Booth and Trood 1999; Longhurst 2004; Giegerich 2006; Meyer 2006). This dissertation uses strategic culture to understand the larger cultural
and normative context in which Poland’s foreign policy leaders are embedded, and to which they refer when making decisions. An analysis based on strategic culture can therefore help to understand the differences to the approaches of other member states. It encompasses a complex set of ideas regarding foreign policy derived from historical experiences, traditions, and responses to new challenges. Poland’s strategic culture therefore also reflects the struggle against stigmatization in relation to the West.

In the following, I will explain how strategic culture can be used to understand a country’s foreign policy. In order to do so, some of its main problems have to be addressed. First of all, how can we speak of a national strategic culture despite the plurality of opinions among foreign policy actors within a country? Secondly, how can strategic culture show the role of culture and historical experience on foreign policy decision-making without claiming that actors are predetermined? Thirdly, the concept of strategic culture is only useful if we assume that it persists over time, but simultaneously it must have the possibility of evolving. How can this seeming contradiction be accounted for?

Strategic culture assumes the existence of a collective national identity. The idea that states have strategic cultures presupposes that the pursuit of security is connected to identity (Katzenstein et al 1996). In other words, despite internal plurality states have a sense of Self as a distinctive actor in the international environment. Collective foundational myths and narratives about past experiences, a common political culture of which strategic culture is one aspect, all shape this sense of Self. A national strategic culture is comprised of collective, historically evolved assumptions regarding security. According to Meyer (2005), certain norms and ideas are shared among a broad majority of actors and social groups within a country’s security community, and help to shape a set of options for a community’s pursuit of security and defense goals. These may include ideas regarding the overarching means and ends of a national defense policy (Meyer 2005), collective beliefs regarding allies and adversaries, or normative principles regarding the use of force, which are grounded in intellectual, philosophical traditions, religion, and past experience. Strategic culture constitutes those sets of norms and narratives embedded in a national collective consciousness that political leaders at least have to take into consideration when making decisions.
At the same time, strategic cultures are also eclectic – comprised of different ideas and narratives – and can therefore be subject to internal tensions. As Meyer (2005:19) points out, because “governments are often motivated by more than one reason, […] norms can clash on different levels.” Political leaders can disagree on the interpretation of these ideas and norms, or on how they should be translated into practice. It is therefore common that disputes arise between political leaders resulting from such different interpretations. Such contradictions can manifest themselves especially often during moments of crisis and lead to foreign policy dilemmas.

Scholars have also struggled to explain how strategic culture can help to understand foreign policy choices without claiming determinism. Meyer (2006:2) understands strategic culture as a compass that “helps countries chart their long-term path in security and defense policy, but also helps them make choices at various junctures of uncertainty.” This becomes especially important in times of crisis when decisions must be made under time pressure. For example, during the Russo-Georgian war discussed in chapter 4, which lasted only five days, EU members had to make rapid decisions, on first of all, how to assess and secondly how to respond to the conflict. Larsen (2009) shows how preexisting beliefs engrained in national strategic cultures, for example regarding Russia, informed individual responses of European countries. Duffield (1999) argues that an analysis based on strategic culture can help understand a country’s foreign policy in so far as it can exclude certain possibilities that would be at odds with a national strategic culture as unlikely to be taken:

The overall effect of culture is to predispose collectivities toward certain actions and policies rather than others. Some options will simply not be imagined. Of those that are contemplated, some are more likely to be rejected as inappropriate, ineffective, or counterproductive than others. To be sure, culture is not deterministic. […] But it can significantly narrow the range of actions likely to be adopted in any given set of circumstances. (Duffield 1999:772)

From the perspective of other actors in the international arena, strategic culture therefore accounts for a certain degree of predictability of state’s behavior. Internally, it acts as a kind of consensus between foreign policy elites and the wider public. Berger’s (1997) study of political and military culture in Germany emphasizes the active role of different societal actors in constructing strategic culture. Norms regarding international behavior are a
negotiated reality among foreign policy elites, and between elites and the publics. These norms are shaped by past experience and become a “consensus or historical narrative that then becomes stabilized and legitimated by subsequent generations of political leaders” (Lantis 2002:110).

Finally, the challenge of change and continuity has to be addressed. Strategic culture is shaped by events of the past, and the concept would be of little use if it did not refer to something long lasting. At the same time, strategic culture is responsive to new situations and challenges in the international environment. Kerry Longhurst (2004:17) acknowledges this tension between permanence and change, arguing that strategic culture is:

[...] present over time, tending to outlast the era of its inception, although it is not a permanent or static feature. It is shaped and influenced by formative periods and can alter, either fundamentally or piecemeal at critical junctures in that collective’s experience.

Das (2015) further distinguishes between certain ‘foundational aspects’ of a national culture, which are ideas crucial in the construction of national identities, and strategic choices articulated by foreign policy leaders in response to specific developments in the international environment. Foundational aspects refer to elements of culture that define a national understanding of Self. They are narratives, drawn from historical experiences, national legacies, which define how a state sees itself and its role in the international environment. For Poland, as will be discussed later in this chapter, many foundational aspects of its strategic culture draw on the legacies of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (1569-1795) and the Second Republic (1918-1939). Aspects of strategic culture informed by foundational narratives are particularly resistant to change because they are deeply connected to a nation’s identity. This also explains how these ideas can persist despite the lack of direct continuity of statehood, as in the case of Poland. Conversely, dramatic moments in history can function as cut-off points, and lead to the rejection of previous narratives. For example, Germany’s strategic culture is shaped by the experience of total defeat after World War II, and German elites reject most ideas on foreign policy that precede 1945 (Berger 1997). International crises and traumatic experiences, such as invasion by foreign powers or defeat after a war, can therefore be catalysts of new elements that are integrated into a strategic culture because
they ‘shake up’ and put into question some existent convictions of policy-makers and societies.

At the same time, strategic cultures can also evolve gradually. Giegerich (2006) argues that strategic culture is only open to gradual change through policy-making elites. Policy makers may start to depart gradually from traditional aspects of strategic culture by adapting to the demands of the international environment. This can happen particularly in times of perceived crisis, or in the face of new threats where old norms and traditions do not seem to provide security anymore. Similarly, the elimination of old threats could lead strategic cultures to evolve. Certainly, in the case of Poland, membership in Western institutions, particularly in NATO and the EU, changed the security landscape, making its position more secure than it had been in centuries, which had some impact on its strategic culture. Especially Poland’s embedment in NATO and protection of Article Five of the North Atlantic Treaty, which guarantees the assistance of its allies in the case of a foreign attack, accounts for this. Poland also faces no direct threat to its sovereignty from its neighbors.

Despite said challenges, an analysis based on strategic culture is valuable because it helps understand how calculations regarding physical survival are connected to normative questions and self-identification. The constructivist contribution to the study of strategic culture is that it shows how security-strategic calculations cannot be clearly separated from culturally influenced normative views. It acknowledges that there is no clear separation or distinction between norms, habits, and interests. Strategic culture therefore constitutes a framework for studying states’ security interests as “constructed through the process of social interaction” (see Katzstein 1996:2). How a state, for example, chooses its allies is based on rational cost-benefit calculations about how to best guarantee its own security but also on cultural attachment, and historically-informed trust. Otherwise it would be difficult to explain the problem of Poland’s membership in the Warsaw Pact. After all, the protection of Russia’s nuclear weapons arguably guaranteed Poland’s physical security and survival. However, despite four decades of Polish communist leaders trying to sell this narrative to the public, it failed to stick with Poland’s national self-perception. Soviet control was not only externally imposed but also did not resonate with Poland’s sense of Self.
Strategic culture has both a pragmatic and a prescriptive normative dimension: it shapes the understanding of national leaders about how their foreign policy should be like. Berger (1997) argues that state behavior is shaped by a particular set of normative and cognitive beliefs which a society and its leaders hold about the nation and its role in the international system. This suggests that strategic culture cannot be reduced to ideas guiding the pursuit of security in the sense of solely physical survival.

1.2 Pursuit of ontological security
As has been established, strategic culture is, broadly speaking, a set of collective ideas, norms and beliefs informing a state’s pursuit of security. However, some further differentiation is required regarding the understanding of security that international actors pursue. The aforementioned scholarship has been too restrictive in understanding strategic culture as norms and ideas merely guiding a states’ pursuit of physical security, such as the security of a state’s borders, or stability in its neighborhood. In the following section I will make the case for extending the meaning of strategic culture beyond its previous scope to encompass not only the beliefs, ideas, and norms guiding the pursuit of physical but also of ontological security.

The central claim in the realist school of IR is that the primary goal of states is to achieve physical security defined as physical survival and power. Most scholars of strategic culture refer to this understanding of security. The obvious way in which a state seeks security is the elimination of physical threats, such as the invasion of its territory by others, attacks against its population or other forms of physical violence. The greatest form of insecurity is existential threat, the possibility of complete annihilation. IR scholars tend to consider this to be the case when a state loses its sovereignty, when it ceases to be an independent international actor. For example, according to Fazal (2007), ‘state death’ is the loss of control over one’s own foreign policy and the ability to conduct independent international relations. Such a threat to a state’s ability to act, however, is imaginable without physical force being necessarily in play. This kind of threat would mean a situation where the state is restricted in the ability of being Itself.
As Das (2010, 2015) points out, the sense of safety and danger, ‘otherness’ and ‘familiarity’ is produced out of the context in which people gave meaning to their actions and make sense of the world around them. In a constantly changing environment, political actors discursively define meanings, drawing upon cultural beliefs and interpretations of past experience in order to attain a sense of comfort and consistency. The sociologist Anthony Giddens (1990, 1991) calls such a sense of safety in the world ontological security. On a personal level, ontological security refers to a basic trust in the relation with others and a feeling of security in one’s environment. It is based on stability and consistency of narratives, as modes of orientation, by which the individual explains the world and her own role in the world to herself. IR scholars who extend this idea to states assume that collective actors need ontological security just as much as physical security (Huysmans 1998; Mitzen 2006a, 2006b; Zarakol 2010; Mälksoo 2015; Ejdus 2017; Kinnvall and Mitzen 2017; Mitzen and Larson 2017).

According Filip Ejdus (2017), to feel ontologically secure, collective international actors, such as states, need to have trust in the continuity of their external environment. They need to possess a practical understanding of what to expect from their environment. For example, a state needs to expect that an international institution it is part of is durable. Furthermore, polities require biographical continuity, which means a coherent set of narratives bundling past and present experience (Ejdus 2017). A stable identity and an understanding of Self as a particular kind of international actor is necessary for an international actor to formulate its interests. According to Jennifer Mitzen (2006a), if collective international actors for some reason cannot find such consistency of meaning, they are restrained in their ability to act.

Another essential element of ontological security is security in relations with others and recognition by others (Huysmans 1998; Mitzen 2006b; Steele 2008; Ejdus 2017). States depend on recognition both inward and outward. A state depends on legitimacy in the eyes of its own population, which requires the ability to provide ontological security by fixing social relations with other states into a symbolic and institutional order (Huysmans 1998). In fact, states need stable identities, grounded in routines in relations with significant others, its
neighbors, its friends and foes in order be actors at all (Mitzen 2006a). Ontological security is both relational and subjective. According to Steele (2008), a state’s sense of ‘Self’ helps process the ‘relevant’ elements of the environment. At the same time, the environment can impose or suppress certain identities. Many states’ foreign policies are strongly focused on establishing or maintaining a particular kind of international identity (e.g. the United States as ‘force of good’, Germany as ‘civilian power’). It is often just as fundamental as the pursuit of physical security.

Ontological security and material interests sometimes deviate. When that is the case states might be willing even to compromise their physical security or important material grains for the sake of ontological security (Mitzen 2006b; Steele 2008; Ejdus 2017). At the same time, physical and ontological insecurity are usually not completely independent or separable. A collective entity facing annihilation, such as Poland in the late eighteenth century before the partition, is certainly also ontologically insecure. Nevertheless, there can be a degree of ontological security without physical security and *vice versa*. During the time of the partitions, the emergence of powerful national myths, maintained in literature and intellectual traditions, provided some ontological security to Poles as a collective entity, even in the complete absence of a state.

An often-debated problem in IR literature on ontological security concerns the unit of analysis, in other words the question ‘whose ontological security’ are we speaking about. As Mitzen and Larson (2017) point out, the idea that collective entities like states experience ontological insecurity, which implies that states can experience something as if they were persons, is problematic. Alternatively, one might speak of the ontological insecurity of individual decision-makers, or of a state’s societies and its different groups. However, this leaves the difficulty of explaining how an individual’s or group’s sense of ontological insecurity can be considered representative of the state. To overcome this problem, I argue that ontological security can be attached to strategic culture. Since strategic culture is a set of collective beliefs developed over a long period of time but at the same time shapes the decisions of individual political leaders of a country, it bridges these different units of analysis. The pursuit of ontological security is therefore part of a state’s strategic culture. From here on I will therefore understand strategic culture as *a historically shaped set of*
collective beliefs, norms and values, and patterns of behavior that inform a state’s pursuit of ontological security. Beyond physical safety, ontological security requires a basic sense of safety in the international environment based on a consistent notion of the Self as an international actor that is affirmed by others.

One may argue that preoccupation with ontological security is particularly high in strategic cultures of those states that are more ontologically insecure compared to others. At least the fixation on ontological security becomes a focus in times when state leaders perceive chaos or uncertainty in the international environment that threatens the consistency of their modes of orientation. Equally, leaders may view the stability of their state to be dependent on the recognition by a specific community. This has been the case for Poland and other Central and Eastern European states. The countries maintained a low ontological security in the post-Cold War period conditioned by their past experience of foreign occupation and their ‘peripheral’ position in Europe’s geopolitical landscape. Maria Mäksoo (2010:123) characterizes the ontological insecurity of Poland and the Baltic states, and its effects on these countries’ international agency as follows:

Without Western recognition of their Europeanness, both in the civilizational sense of the term and as well as being granted acceptance to the institutions that have come to embody Europeanness in today’s world, their vulnerable geopolitical position is generally regarded as allowing only very modest maneuvering space in which they may exercise their ‘personhood’.

The pursuit of ontological security is therefore an element of every strategic culture, but for some international actors it is much more important than for others, depending on how ontologically secure they are in the first place. As Mitzen and Larson (2017:3) point out, “on a daily basis, we simply are ontologically secure and do not need to actively pay attention to the need for it, much less make choices to intentionally ‘pursue’ it. Rather, we become aware of ontological security in the breach, when that self-stability is threatened.” This happens, for example, when aspects of our social and physical world become destabilized, routines are no longer sustainable, and self-narratives are called into question. In such situations actors are more self-consciously engaging in practices that yield ontological security. Ontological insecurity at various degrees might be a consequence of a
critical situation that a state is faced with (Ejdus 2017). One might intervene that during the period, which this dissertation focuses on, Poland was never in a critical situation that raptured routines and brought fundamental questions on the level of discursive consciousness. The exception is being faced with the situation of being a relative newcomer in Western institutions, which should account for only a low degree of ontological insecurity. However, as I will show in the second half of this chapter, Poland’s ontological insecurity has accumulated over centuries as a result of existential threats and separation from the ‘West’. This is expressed in the idea of Poland’s ‘return to Europe’.

II. POLAND’S STRATEGIC CULTURE: EAST AND WEST

Many ideas shaping Polish political thought have developed in a high-pressure environment of existential threat where the existence of a Polish state could not be taken for granted – this has also influenced strategic culture. Poland is often perceived as a ‘classical’ security actor that is preoccupied with traditional security questions, compared to the ‘postmodern’ approach to security of the EU (see Mälksoo 2010:68). However, whereas traditional security questions, especially regarding Russia, remain of high importance, Poland’s sense of insecurity today should be understood primarily in the larger ontological sense. Centuries of existential threat and territorial discontinuity shaped a strategic culture focused on the quest of regaining a stable subjectivity in the international environment. Poland is simultaneously concerned with attaining recognition in the West, and with maintaining its agency in the face of European integration.

Modern Polish strategic culture can be best understood as having two main dimensions or orientations, which will be referred to as Eastern and Western. These dimensions should not so much be ascribed to geographical concepts; rather they represent sets of ideas guiding Poland’s foreign policy in two most important areas. Each of the dimensions is a crucial aspect of Poland’s self-understanding as an actor in the international environment. The Western dimension is about managing relations with the ‘West’ – presently primarily the EU and the United States – especially the pursuit of ontological security by establishing itself as part of the Western community of states. Poland’s historically ambiguous relation with the West shapes this dimension. As will be explained, historically, Poland had been simultaneously a part of the West, and distinctive from it. The
legacy of the twentieth century, especially the abandonment by its Western allies, also plays an important role. The Western dimension of Poland’s strategic culture can be divided into two sub-dimensions – the European and the transatlantic dimension. This distinction has become more important with the Iraq crisis.

The Eastern dimension of Poland’s strategic culture represents ideas guiding its foreign policy in the post-Soviet space. These ideas are largely informed by the legacy of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (1569-1795), which also encompassed large areas of today’s Ukraine and Belarus. The Eastern dimension should also be divided into two sub-dimensions. The first concerns relations with Russia, which despite attempts of cooperation, especially under the pressure of the EU, represents Poland’s most important strategic adversary. The other defines approaches towards the so-called Eastern Neighborhood, i.e. the countries located ‘between’ Russia and the West, such as Ukraine, Belarus and even the Caucasus countries. In the relations with these countries Poland has arguably the greatest agency. Its long-term goal has been to bring these countries closer to the West and out of Russia’s ‘sphere of influence’.

The two strategic orientations are by no means disconnected from one another – on the contrary, they reinforce one another. Many of Poland’s state leaders from Józef Piłsudski to Lech Kaczyński have accepted the guiding principle that the stronger Poland is the East, the more influence it has in the West. Conversely, the more embedded Poland is in the West, the more it can shape international affairs in the East. However, conceptions about how this plays out in practice have varied among political leaders. It can be argued that contemporarily, the Western dimension is primarily a quest for recognition, and relates to the problems described in the previous chapter. The Eastern dimension is where Poland sees itself as a sovereign actor but is also constrained by its aspiration to coordinate with its Western partners.

2.1 Roots of ontological insecurity in Poland’s strategic culture

Poland’s ontological insecurity is a product of its past characterized by the absence of state sovereignty during the entire nineteenth century, limited sovereignty for a large part of the twentieth century, instability of national borders, threat from immediate neighbors, and
unreliable alliances. In the absence of sovereignty or full self-determination Poland could not take part in certain crucial international developments in the ‘long nineteenth century’ and the post-World War II era, and subsequently had to reinvent its role in the changed international environment. Furthermore, for many periods in its history, Poland’s geopolitical situation was so fragile that it *de facto* could not pursue its foreign policy freely because it had to focus on survival. Finally, the problem of abandonment by the West led to a mixed sense of resentment and indignity *vis-à-vis* the West. This section discusses how these problems in Poland’s history continue to impact on its strategic culture today.

To begin with, the absence of a fully sovereign and independent Polish state during crucial developments in modern European history led to situations where Poland had to reinvent and reestablish itself in international society. Under the partitions 1795-1918, Poland missed out on many aspects of modernization processes taking place elsewhere in Europe, including the development of the nation-state (Chakrabarty 2000). Poland’s elites during the partitions were largely preoccupied with the quest for national independence from foreign powers to deal with questions of what kind of state the newly reestablished Poland should be.

In the Second Republic political elites therefore had to reinvent the idea of Polish statehood and to redefine nationhood (see Walicki 1994; Brubaker 1996; Snyder 2003). During the nineteenth century, the conceptualization of the Polish national community became both wider and narrower. On the one hand, the national community expanded vertically. Whereas in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth political rights had been reserved to the class of nobles, after regaining independence in 1918, Poland introduced universal suffrage (for men and women of all classes). On the other hand, the emergence of the ethnically based nation state in Europe forced Poland to rethink the question of national identity. This led to a competition between an ethnically based Polish nationalism of the National Democrats, and Federalist ideas based on the legacy of the multiethnic and culturally diverse Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (Walicki 1994).

How to define ‘Polishness’ became even more difficult as new national identities emerged on the territories of the former Commonwealth. Ukrainians, Lithuanians, and to some extent Belarusians began to claim their right to nationhood (Snyder 2003).
Furthermore, the question of where Poland’s borders should be, especially in the east, was left unresolved. The interwar period was thus a path from a political to an ethnic concept of Polish nationhood. Attempts were made to resolve these problems largely through state policies, such as attempts of assimilating the Ukrainian population and other ethnic groups to Polish culture (Snyder 2003:144). All these questions were *de facto* only resolved ‘by coincidence’ as a consequence of World War II. In the aftermath of the Holocaust the thriving Jews population practically ceased to exist in Poland. Additionally, Poland’s borders were shifted westward leading to a resettlement of people. These externally imposed circumstances turned Poland into monoethnic nation-state. Only during the communist period, Poland’s statehood, as well as its territorial borders were consolidated.

The emergence of the nation-state system was but one of the developments that altered existing international structures at the time Poland was partitioned. The industrial revolution and new political ideas brought about a transformation of the world in the ‘long nineteenth century’ leading to major shifts of power (see Hobsbawm 1989). As a consequence, by around the first decade of the century, “it is possible to speak of a major shift from a ‘polycentric world with no dominant center’ to a core-periphery hierarchical international order in which the leading edge was in northwestern Europe, a previously peripheral part of the Eurasian trading system” (Buzan and Lawson 2013:625). The modern state system developed with a hierarchical structure. Thus, when Poland regained independence, its experience can be compared to that of Japan, China or Turkey, which entered modern international society (see Suzuki 2009; Zarakol 2011; Okagaki 2013). Poland had to build up its political institutions and to catch up with economic development. While Poland’s position arguably differed from that of non-Western states (because it had been part of the ‘Western’ world before), after 1918 it had to establish itself in an international society with a set hierarchy and set rules.

Similarly, between the end of the Second World War and 1989, Poland, as a Soviet satellite state, was in many ways cut off from developments in Europe. On the one hand, the Polish People's Republic was officially recognized as a sovereign state, and the Polish government signed treaties, such as those with the Soviet Union, that delimited the state’s eastern and western borders. It also became a member of the United Nations, although its
voting record, much like in the case of other satellite states, mirrored that of the Soviet Union (Micgiel 1995). Following 1989, Poland therefore had to once again reinvent itself as an international actor: “This process of self definition was particularly evident in discussions of Poland’s place in Europe and the nation’s ‘Eastern policy’” (Vinton 1995:24). Meanwhile the process of European integration, and the development of the ‘postmodern’ state system took place without Poland’s participation. Arguably, the idea of the ‘postmodern’ state, which no longer emphasizes sovereignty and a clear separation between domestic and international affairs, rejects the use of force and has open borders (Cooper 2000), was consolidated after 1989. However, the development of this idea had already begun with the end of World War II. As this process was under way in Europe, Poland was still preoccupied with consolidating its full sovereignty.

At different moments in its history Poland was therefore forced to reinvent itself against the background of a transformation that had already taken place without its presence in order to fit into a new order. Having to catch up and rejoin a society that had undergone certain processes made it difficult for Poland to establish a stable international identity and to fit into existing hierarchies. Poland’s strategic culture is therefore strongly concerned with seeking recognition and trying to find its place in the ‘club’, against the background of what is considered the ‘norm’ in the developments of the ‘Western state’.

Secondly, Poland’s territorial instability shaped a strategic culture in which territorial defense is a primary concern. Since the eighteenth century, Poland was not able to effectively pursue its foreign policy and shape international politics in the way it wanted because it had to deal with territorial concerns and immediate threats from its neighbors. This shaped a ‘traditional’ or ‘modern’ (as opposed to ‘postmodern’) strategic culture focused on territorial security.

From the partitions in the late eighteenth century until the end of World War II, Poland’s territoriality was deeply unstable. Its territorial questions were not fully resolved until the early years of the post-Cold War period. In the interwar period, the newly reestablished Polish state found itself in a security dilemma between two great powers, only temporarily defeated, and was thus left with the option of balancing between Russia and Germany (Micgiel 1995:6). Poland’s primary concern was the fragility of its borders,
especially in the east. Although the Entente powers had helped to reestablish the Polish state, they did not offer any protection against Bolshevik Russia. Thus, in the first years of its existence, the Second Republic had to militarily defend its eastern borders against the Bolsheviks. Simultaneously, the emergence of Ukrainian, Lithuanian and other national movements on territories of the former Commonwealth, which all wanted to create independent states, led to territorial disputes. The western borders of the Second Polish Republic, which had been established with the mediation of the Entente, could not be guaranteed, as Germany started to strive for revisions. There were also territorial disputes with all its new neighbors, such as Czechoslovakia. Throughout the entirety of its existence the Second Republic was preoccupied with the question of territorial protection only to be simultaneously attacked and partitioned by Germany and Russia in 1939.

Related to the issue of discontinuity of Poland’s borders and disturbed territoriality was that Poland’s fate was frequently decided by others. In 1944, Poland became the victim of allied division of Europe into spheres of influence; the decision to redraw Poland’s borders was made entirely without consultation with Polish government representatives (Davies 1984:65). Poland’s territory was also shifted westward, which resulted in the resettlement of, in total, about 1.4 million Poles and Ukrainians in the east, and over three million Germans (Kordan 1997).

As a consequence, Poland is extremely allergic to ‘sphere of influence’ and ‘balance of power’ politics (Mälksoo 2010). For this reason, Poland’s political elites often criticized a pragmatic approach to Vladimir Putin’s Russia, which recognizes Russia’s interests, propagated by some actors in EU institutions and member states. Yet Poland’s sensitivity is often perceived negatively by its EU partners who have trouble comprehending these supposedly outdated traditional security concerns focused on “territorial integrity and political sovereignty” (see Mälksoo 2010:69). National elites are therefore “caught in a dilemma between efforts to be loyal and dutiful members of the Euro-Atlantic security community, and attempts to address the security fears and expectations of their electorates vis-à-vis Russia” (Mälksoo 2010:70–1).

Finally, the narrative of abandonment plays a strong role in Polish national identity. Poland’s historical relationship with its allies in the West throughout the twentieth century
has been deeply problematic. Although the West is a crucial provider of physical and ontological security, it is at the same time perceived as unreliable and even ‘treacherous’. This has profoundly impacted on Poland’s strategic culture. Although Poland sees membership in Western institutions as the best guarantee for its security, it maintains some reservation about the permanence of alliances. For this reason, Polish foreign policy leaders, regardless of their political affiliation, have been proponents of expanding the EU’s defense capabilities in addition to NATO (see Huff 2013).

The sense of threat from its immediate neighbors led Poland to seek alliances with Western powers as security guarantors. In the interwar period, primarily Britain and France fulfilled this role, and later also the United States. It is deeply engrained in Poland’s strategic culture that these alliances are crucial for Poland’s security and sovereignty – even though they have repeatedly failed to protect it. Although the Entente powers did not support Poland’s struggle against Russia, Poland still relied on its allies for protection against Germany (Nowak 2001). Nevertheless, in the interwar period, the West’s role in the protection of Poland remained largely unfulfilled, beginning with the ‘forgotten appeasement’ policy of 1920, in which Britain was willing to de facto hand over Poland to the Soviet sphere of influence (Nowak 2015). The fact that in September 1939 neither Britain nor France came to Poland’s aid left a sense of distrust towards the West, despite desperately seeking to be part of it. This notion was only increased by the second abandonment in Yalta. According to Mälksoo, Poland and the Baltic states share a similar memory of the twentieth century, which guides the countries’ contemporary EU politics.

An aspiration to be part of ‘core Europe’ coexists with a sense of inferiority in the field of European foreign affairs, mixed with a fear of the reincarnation of the Western abandonment of Eastern Europe at the end of the Second World War, discernible in an inherent angst of betrayal of Polish and Baltic declared interests in the Union’s relations with Russia (Mälksoo 2010:75).

Especially the Abandonments of 1939 and 1944 imbued Poland’s strategic culture with a mixed sense of indignity and resentment, or even contempt, for the West’s actions. Poles independent of their political affiliation came to regard the Yalta accords as “proof of having been given up to the Communists by the Western Allies” (Micgiel 1995:19).
Embedment in the West nevertheless came to be seen as the only remedy. The idea of who constitutes the ‘West’, of course, underwent some change: initially, the Entente powers, later also the U.S., and eventually in the post-Cold War period even Germany. Membership in NATO and the EU is therefore also seen as the best available insurance against repeated Western abandonment. The institutions not only serve as security guarantors but are also a precondition for the pursuit of the kind of foreign policy Poland envisions. In fact, membership in the ‘West’ is seen as a precondition for being an international actor at all, despite the fact that the institutions also constrain Poland’s behavior.

2.2 The Western dimension

By virtue of membership in institutions, such as the EU, NATO, and the OECD, at present Poland is at least officially part of the ‘West’ despite its continued struggle to be recognized as an unconditional, full-fledged member of this identity community. Historically, Poland’s relationship with the ‘West’ has been complex, not least because the understanding of what the ‘West’ actually stands for has been fluid. The idea of ‘the West’ referred, among other definitions, to Western Christianity, monarchies of Western Europe, the Entente powers, liberal democracies, and Western international institutions (see Davies 1996:19–32). Depending on different conceptualizations, of both the West and Polish identity, Poland perceived itself as an integral part of and yet distinctive from the West. It is necessary to dwell on this complexity in order to understand the current quest for recognition as part of the ‘West’ in Poland’s strategic culture.

Although geographically very ‘Eastern’, encompassing all of what is today Poland, Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine, and at one point extending almost to the Black Sea and bordering with the Ottoman Empire, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (also referred to as I Rzeczpospolita) identified itself as part of the ‘West’, as it was then understood. The elements defining ‘Westerness’ were considered to be Poland’s attachment to Western Christianity (as opposed to Eastern Orthodox Christianity) and to Rome, its Latin-based culture, and reference to republican traditions of the Antiquity (Walicki 1994).
At the same time, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth stressed its cultural distinctiveness in relation to the absolutist states of Western Europe. The “Sarmatian” ideology of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, developed by the Polish gentry, stressed its cultural uniqueness and fundamental difference from Western European monarchies (Walicki 1994). This identity arose through the transformation of the medieval, ethnically homogenous Polish kingdom into a part of a multiethnic, multi-religious, federal republic of the gentry (szlachta). It rested on the shared ideology of the Commonwealth as the “granary of Europe”, i.e. an agricultural as opposed to industrializing society, as Europe’s “bulwark of Christianity,” defending it primarily against the Ottoman Empire, and the idea that the gentry republic was a perfect political system, superior to Western absolutist monarchies (Walicki 1994:11). Especially Poland’s republican ideas and political system distinguished the Commonwealth from other nations in Europe since the sixteenth or seventeenth century (Grześkowiak-Krwawicz 2002). The political system of the Commonwealth rested on the idea of Golden Freedom, which guaranteed the gentry, regardless of material status, the right to elect the monarch and hold legislative power through the Sejm (see Davies 2005:259–60). The gentry republic therefore saw itself as the best incarnation of Christian and republican values. The heritage of the gentry’s republic, as simultaneously Western and yet exceptional for its alternative concept of Western civilization to Western European powers, continues to inform Poland’s political traditions.

However, towards the middle of the eighteenth century, the Commonwealth visibly started falling economically behind Western Europe and was weakened by wars and internal problems, eventually resulting in its dissolution by neighboring powers. The age of the Enlightenment signified a growing tendency among Western European powers to see Poland as a periphery of the West. Generally, the emergence of the idea of progress (as linear) in European political thought contributed to the perceived distinction between more and less developed (rather than just different) civilizations. This contributed to the emergence of a hierarchical relationship between ‘Eastern’ Europe and the ‘West’ (Wolff 1994). Consequently, Poles themselves began to see their ‘peripheral’ status and economic ‘backwardness,’ especially under the shock of the Commonwealth’s partitions. Therefore,

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1 Sarmatians were a confederation of tribes, which between the fifth century BC and the fourth century AD expanded encompassing a territory between the rivers Vistula Danube, and Volga, the shores of the Black and Caspian, and the Caucasus.
whereas the pursuit of recognition as ‘Western’ is relatively new to Poland’s history, it reflects the weakness of its geopolitical position that developed towards the end of the eighteenth century, as opposed to the ‘golden era’ during which Poland did not have such existential concerns. Following the partitions of Poland, “the three partitioning powers and their official historians sought to portray the Commonwealth as an anarchic anachronism, a monstrosity best swept away into oblivion in the name of orderly progress” and thus sought to legitimize their domination (Butterwick-Pawlikowski 2016:31).

During the partitions under Prussia, Russia, and the Austrian Empire (1795-1918), a different understanding of the ‘West’ was used among Polish political thinkers and intellectuals (see Wierzbicki 1984). The ‘West’ symbolized forces that could help Poland regain its independence from the occupying powers: France under Napoleon, the French and Italians during the 1848 Spring of Nations, to an extent Britain in 1863, all of which supported Poland’s attempts of regaining freedom but eventually failed. By contrast, the occupying powers were considered ‘non-Western’, especially Russia, which was regarded as a foreign civilization (Wierzbicki 1984). This assertion of a ‘Western’ identity emerged from a desire to distinguish oneself ideologically and culturally from the occupying powers.

When a sovereign Polish state finally reemerged in the interwar period, it was in a fragile position between two hostile powers, the Soviet Union and Germany, which both had unsettled territorial disputes with Poland. The threat from its direct neighbors led many of Poland’s interwar leaders to view a strong alliance with the Entente powers – primarily Britain and France, and initially the U.S. – as a principle for securing Poland’s independence. The Entente powers, especially the U.S., had helped to reinstate a sovereign Poland. However, since Poland was still resolving the question of its eastern borders militarily until 1921, there was much debate as to what extent it should rely on the ‘West’. As Andrzej Nowak argues, the game in 1919 took place not only in the vast lands of the European east but also in the salons of Western diplomacy that were used by different pressure groups (Nowak 2001:134). To Poland’s disappointment the Entente was partly unable and partly unwilling to protect Poland’s eastern borders. The alliance was still supporting white (non-Bolshevik) Russia, and used the different powers operating in Eastern Europe for their own aims to solve the problem of Bolsheviks (Nowak 2001:134). Eventually, the West proved
unable to control the situation in the east altogether, and Poland needed to secure its sovereignty and territorial integrity through its own military campaign against the Bolsheviks (Suleja 1995; Nowak 2001). The recognition that relations with the Western powers were, on the one hand, necessary for Poland but, on the other hand, that Poland could not rely on the West for protection sparked some political divisions. Józef Piłsudski and his camp believed that Poland should focus on alliances with aspirant nation-states of the former Russian Empire, such as Ukrainians, Finns, or Belarusians, and thus weaken its powerful eastern neighbor. In contrast, the National Democrats, such as Roman Dmowski, argued that Poland’s engagement in the East was weakening Poland by drawing it away from the West (Wyszczelski 2016). This dilemma continues to inform Poland’s strategic culture.

The events of World War II and its aftermath effectively cut Poland off from the West once again for almost half a century. It was especially bitter that despite giving a guarantee to defend Poland’s territorial integrity, France and Britain did not come to Poland’s aid in 1939, or during the 1944 Warsaw Uprising, and that the Allies gave in to Soviet pressures in Yalta and allowed for Poland to fall under the Soviet occupation zone (Davies 1984; Micgiel 1995). On the one hand, the resentment made it easier for some Poles to accept the communist propaganda portraying the West as an enemy. On the other hand, it was under these conditions of imprisonment behind the iron curtain that the West as an idea acquired a powerful symbolic meaning for Poles and other peoples in the Communist countries (see Hankiss 1994; Wöll and Wydra 2007). For the resistance movements against Communism, the West constituted a ‘dream’ that represented what Poland would be without Soviet control. In this sense, the Communist era solidified both the Polish understanding of the West and its Western aspiration. Thus, after 1989, Poland perceived to finally have the opportunity of pursuing its rightful place in the West, and also to escape a status as “no-man’s land” between the West and Russia. This was, for example, expressed in Poland’s new Defense Doctrine 1993-2000, which stressed Poland’s commitment to Western and European institutions, and identified membership in NATO as a key strategic goal (Michta 1995).
Two ‘Wests’: Atlanticist and European conception

The 2003 Iraq crisis, which will be extensively discussed in the next chapter, sharpened the distinction between two conceptions of the ‘West’: the Atlanticist and the Europeanist model. The former emphasizes the importance of a strong link between the United States and Europe, and stresses the shared values and interests of the transatlantic community and the importance of the U.S. as a security provider for Europe. The latter emphasizes the need for deeper European integration and for Europe to become less reliant on the United States. It further sees a distinctiveness of culture and values between Europe and the U.S. (Derrida and Habermas 2003; Kagan 2003; Todd 2003; Rifkin 2004).

Prior to the Iraq crisis Poland had not been faced with the problem of having to choose between the two conceptions. Since the end of the Cold War its foreign policy leaders simultaneously pursued NATO and EU membership. However, from its beginning, the foreign policy of the newly democratic Poland stressed the importance of a strong U.S. presence in Europe, and although Poland pursued EU membership, it was skeptical of a European security community that could undermine the importance of NATO.

An important reason for Poland’s Atlanticist outlook and skepticism towards the Europeanist model was its historical relationship with its neighbor Germany. From the beginning, Poland’s post-Cold War foreign policy prioritized a strong American engagement in Europe to counterbalance Germany, which, following its reunification, became a leading state in Western Europe. Poland has remained cautious of German power even though, after 1990, this historical relationship had undergone a dramatic paradigm shift by which Germany turned from a major strategic adversary into an ally and gateway to the West.

The long history of Polish-German relations is very complex especially because one cannot speak of a single object ‘Germany’. Cultural and economic exchange but also periods of conflict between Poles and Germans go back to the Piast era (tenth century) and to the wars with the Teutonic Order (fourteenth and fifteenth century). The emergence of Germany’s role as adversary began with the rise of Prussian power in the late eighteenth century. For two centuries Germany constituted a major threat for Polish sovereignty. During the partitions, Prussia – and later the German Empire – was one of Poland’s occupiers; in the
interwar period Germany strove for revisionism of the German-Polish border, and in World War II again became Poland’s invader and occupier.

Previous to the post-Cold War period, Poland’s view of the ‘West’ therefore did not include Germany. This perspective is not exclusive to Poland as many German historians share the view about Germany’s late entrance into the West. As Heinrich August Winkler (2002) argues, until 1945, Germany conceived itself as distinct from the Western Europe. This is explained by the comparatively late transition into a nation-state and later a democracy. Thus, in Winkler’s view, only after the defeat of 1945 (West) Germany became embedded in the West (Winkler 2002).

In the mid-1960s a rapprochement between Poland and Germany began with the German ‘Ostpolitik’ under Chancellor Willy Brandt, and the ‘Letter of the Polish Bishops’ to the German counterparts, which appealed for an end to the historic enmity between the two nations (Micgiel 1995:15). Poland’s relations with the reunited Germany were a reversal of momentous significance in the history of Polish-German relations (Vinton 1995). Additionally, Germany’s continued commitment to the transatlantic institutions created an unprecedented opportunity for Poland to build a relationship with Germany as a conduit to the West. This raised expectations in Warsaw that Germany would advocate Poland’s inclusion in NATO (Michta 1995). After all, it was also in Germany’s interest to have a stable and democratic Poland on its eastern periphery, and Poland’s inclusion into the West could facilitate this. In 1990, a treaty was signed between Poland and unified Germany, recognizing Poland’s Western borders, and a year later the Polish-German Treaty on Good Neighborly Relations and Friendly Cooperation. Polish Foreign Minister Krzysztof Skubiszewski described Polish-German relationship after the German reunification as the ‘second grand European reconciliation’ (Michta 2004).

Despite this dramatic shift, the increasingly strong position of Germany in Europe continues to be a problem for many Polish leaders, notwithstanding the periods of rapprochement, such as in 1990s with Władysław Bartoszewski as foreign minister and under the Platforma Obywatelska government 2007-15. Initially, Poles perceived the EU as an institution binding German power. Especially, the perspective of the resurgence of a strong Russian-German cooperation is still seen as a nightmare scenario for Poland.
For these reasons, Poland considered continued American presence in Europe, including military presence, essential to its long-term security (Michta 1995). Relations with the United States have therefore been, for a long time, a priority for Poland. Unlike other European countries, Poland never perceived the idea of American hegemony in the post-Cold War period as a problem (see Lubecki 2005). This is connected to Poland’s traditional practice of seeking out alliances and protection of strong powers outside of its immediate neighborhood as a counterbalance to its expansionist neighbors.

The U.S. had played a significant role during crucial moments in Poland’s history. Poland’s historical ties with the U.S. go back to the late eighteenth century when many Poles fled their partitioned homeland to fight in the American Revolutionary War (Dunn 2007). Furthermore, ties were strengthened due to the U.S. involvement in the post-World War I restructuring of Europe, which had facilitated Poland’s regaining of independence (Dunn 2007). The creation of a Polish state was provided for in the Fourteen Points outlined by U.S. President Woodrow Wilson. Even though Poland had to fight militarily to preserve this independence in the years to come, Wilson’s help in legitimizing Poland’s sovereignty was significant. It sent an important signal to Poland’s former occupying powers.

A positive myth of America in Polish thought, which even survived the Communist period, was also shaped by the vast Polish immigration to the United States. Again, in the 1980s, the U.S. under the Reagan Administration was the one foreign government in the West most openly supporting Poland’s struggle for liberation from Communism and Soviet occupation (see Reagan 1981). When the Polish government declared martial law in December 1981 to crush the anti-communist Solidarity movement, Western European governments avoided a hardline approach whereas the U.S. announced sanctions against Poland and the Soviet Union the same month (Goddeeris 2010:2). Thus, the idea of America as a contributor to Poland’s freedom and liberation became engrained in Poland’s strategic culture and shaped its foreign policy after 1989. Poles welcomed the global primacy of the U.S. in the post-Cold War order, and had little trust in other states potentially performing such a role.

On a more general strategic level, Poland sees the U.S. and NATO as the most important security guarantor. Accession to NATO was initially higher on the priority list than
membership in the EU. Poland had limited trust in the idea of a European defense system without the United States. In Warsaw’s eyes, Western Europeans generally had too little concern for the security priorities in Poland and other Central and Eastern European capitals, especially regarding Russia. France had even opposed the eastern enlargement of NATO and later the EU (Bugajski and Teleki 2007).

The pursuit of close relations with the U.S. is also a result of perceived commonalities of values, specifically in strategic cultures. As will be elaborated in the next chapter, Poland shared a more ‘classic’ or ‘modern’ (as opposed to post-modern) view on security with the U.S., and had similar views on international intervention and preventative war. As lessons learned from its own history, Poland was weary of appeasement policies. It was more inclined than its Western European partners to regard war as justified if it was for the protection of liberal values, human rights, and democracy (see Krakiewicz 2007).

Nevertheless, as will be discussed in the next chapter, the Iraq war began a shift of Poland’s strategic culture towards a more European dimension. Following the Iraq war, enthusiasm for the Atlanticist option generally waned in Europe, and the U.S. retreated from European affairs, which incentivized Poland to turn towards the EU. Since then, Poland has seen embedment in European political and security structures as necessary (see Huff 2013). Poland has been interested in the EU’s Common Foreign and Security Policy (CSDP) (although not as a replacement for NATO). However, while Poland has accepted the reality of America’s declining role in Europe, the transatlantic dimension was not permanently erased from Poland’s strategic culture.

2.3 The Eastern dimension
In the Eastern dimension, Poland perceives itself as a subject and seeks to actively shape politics in its eastern neighborhood, its historical sphere of influence. Historically, Poland engaged in a competition with Russia over the territories east of its present borders. Presently, many Polish foreign policy leaders still subscribe to the idea that Russian influence on the region should be limited. Despite attempts of cooperation, Russia continues to be perceived as a potential adversary. Furthermore, Poland seeks to prevent that Ukraine and its other eastern neighbors become cut off from the EU and the Euro-Atlantic West. This has to
do with both security considerations and cultural attachment to the former ‘borderlands’ of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

**Russia: Strategic adversary**

Poland’s relations and general attitude towards Russia probably constitute the greatest point of contention with other EU countries. Russia was historically, and to a large extent has remained, Poland’s ‘strategic enemy’. Especially prior to the Ukraine crisis, Poland’s view on Russia was often perceived as ‘outdated’.

It can be argued that the competition with Russia dates back as far as the mid-fourteenth century, with the expansion of the Grand Duchy of Moscow (later Tsardom of Russia). In the mid-sixteenth century, the Grand Duchy of Moscow became a serious challenge for Poland. While at the beginning of the seventeenth century forces of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth defeated Russia and occupied the Kremlin, since the middle of that century the Commonwealth was beginning to lose in this competition. The Tsardom’s acquisition of the eastern Ukrainian lands, which had been under Polish-Lithuanian rule in the mid-seventeenth century, is often considered the beginning of the decline of Polish-Lithuanian power, and simultaneously the beginning of Russia’s imperial rise.

During the partitions of Poland, Russian domination “generally exceeded in brutality that of Prussia and Austria” (Prizel 1994:99). Repression and attempts of cultural assimilation were particularly strong in the parts of Poland under Russian rule, especially following the crushing of Polish attempts of liberation. Most importantly, however, a defeat to Russia was particularly painful to bear for Poles since Russia had been generally perceived as culturally inferior and as outside of the civilized (Western) world (Prizel 1994:99). Also, because Russia occupied the most sizeable portion of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth’s territory, it came to be seen as the most serious enemy among the partitioning powers and the greatest obstacle to regaining independence (Walicki 1994:15–23).

Thus, with the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century the idea in Polish political thought that Russia is the greatest enemy of Polish sovereignty
became prominent (see Wyszczelski 2016). In this spirit, Poland’s interwar leader Józef Piłsudski and his political camp believed that the only possible way of preserving Poland’s sovereignty was not simply deterrence but complete elimination of the Russian threat to Poland (Suleja 1995:198). One manifestation of this was a foreign policy project in the early interwar years of weakening Russia by supporting national independence movements in the territories of the Russian Empire (and later the Soviet Union) called the policy of Prometeizm. It was based on the doctrine that any strong Russia – regardless if imperial (‘white’) or Bolshevik (‘red’) – constituted a threat for Poland (Suleja 1995; Nowak 2001; Wyszczelski 2016).

The outbreak of World War II, in many ways, confirmed the fear of Russia as an existential threat. In September 1939, half of Poland found itself under Soviet occupation as a result of the Stalin-Hitler Pact. An exemplary case of Soviet brutality was the Katyn massacre on Polish officers taken as prisoners of war. When the Soviet troops returned to Poland as ‘liberators’ in 1944, the Soviet secret police (NKVD) murdered members of the Polish underground army and crushed Polish resistance against Sovietization. For almost half a century, Poland became a communist satellite state of the Soviet Union, which de facto ended Polish sovereignty.

Nevertheless, attempts of cooperation with Russia have also existed in different periods of Polish history. In the spirit of ‘balancing’ between its powerful neighbors, there were those who saw Russia as a ‘lesser evil’. Under the partitions a conception of a Polish nation embedded in the Russian Empire was particularly popular among the emergent National Democrats, who believed that a stronger relation with Russia would limit German influence on Poland (Walicki 1994:52). However, eventually the concept of a Western-orientated Polish nation, culturally and religiously separate from Russia, outweighed. Also, in the interwar period, Poland supported leaders of a democratic Russia, who wanted to distance themselves from both Imperial Russia and the Bolsheviks (Nowak 2001). During the communist period, Poland’s leaders had to legitimize communist rule by inscribing their narratives into Polish strategic culture. The communist narrative, to an extent, successfully portrayed the Soviet Union as Poland’s liberator from Nazi occupation (which the West had failed to do), and as a protector and the only guarantor of Polish survival.
Another phase of cooperation was in the early 1990s. The first leaders of the newly democratic Poland believed, that since the Soviet Union (and after its dissolution, Russia) would remain a great European power, Poland needed to maintain close and peaceful relations with the eastern neighbor. Furthermore, policy makers believed that Poland’s integration with the West was “contingent on Russia’s Europeanization and on Poland’s ability to sustain normal relations with the East,” including Russia (Prizel 1994:103). This approach was motivated by a mixture of hope that democratic tendencies in Russia would crystallize and fear that Russia would try to reclaim its domination over Poland. It was also connected to the fear of becoming a ‘buffer’ between great powers again (Prizel 1994).

Similarly to the case of Germany, the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the USSR in many ways revolutionized the role of Russia in Poland’s strategic culture. Despite much uncertainty about the stability of Russian democracy, the concern that Russia could in the future become a direct threat to Poland’s security became largely hypothetical (see Michta 1995). Additionally, with the emergence of an independent Ukraine and Belarus, and the reemergence of the Baltic states on the map, Poland for the first time in centuries (almost) no longer shared a border with Russia. In the years after 1989, the Polish government followed the principle of “pursuing friendly relations with all neighboring states based on equality, international standards, and the inviolability of borders” (Vinton 1995:25). With uncertainty about its future in the West, the new Poland knew that it could not afford to antagonize the Soviet Union (later Russia).

However, by 1994 neo-imperialist tendencies began to resurge in Russia (Michta 1995). Despite phases of cooperation, the relations between the two countries started to become increasingly tense, especially following Poland’s entry into NATO. This is evident in numerous disputes over historical memory, especially regarding the end of World War II and Katyń (see Gorska 2010), as well as political and economic tensions, such as over Poland’s veto on the European Commission’s negotiation of the Partnership and Co-operation Agreement in 2006, and the Russian embargo on Polish meat (see Copsey and Pomorska 2010). In general, Poland has remained skeptical about Russia’s ability to give up claims to its ‘sphere of influence’ in Poland’s Eastern Neighborhood and to become a reliable partner for Poland and the West.
Poland’s politics regarding Russia, arguably, often had to take into consideration the West’s position. Historically, Poland had to come to terms with Russia when it could not rely on the West’s support for its eastern policy. For example, the Entente powers did not want to get involved in Poland’s war against the Bolsheviks (1919-1921). As a consequence, the war ended with the Treaty of Riga (1921) in which Poland made several concessions. Among other things, it agreed to abandon its support for further independence movements on the territories of the former Russian Empire. After 1989, Poland sometimes strategically tried to improve its relations with Moscow in order to calm down concerns in the West about antagonizing Russia. For example, when trying to attain membership in NATO, the Polish government put significant efforts into showing that this foreign policy goal is not directed against Russia. This was to a large degree a strategy of gaining support from member states like France, which value a strategic partnership with Russia. The most profound departure from traditional skepticism towards Russia took place under the leadership of the Platforma Obywatelska (PO) government, which launched a policy of ‘reset’ in relations with Moscow upon taking office in 2007. As will be argued later, this policy was largely motivated by a wish to prove Poland’s maturity in dealing with its former occupier. This approach continued until the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014, which led the Polish government leaders to revert to the traditionally skeptical position on Russia.

Thus, on the one hand, the historic competitor and former occupier turned from being perceived as a direct threat to a hypothetical threat in the post-Cold War period. Yet the hope of the years immediately following the fall of the Iron Curtain that Russia would enter a path towards democratization and Westernization, soon faded among the majority of Polish political thinkers. As will be argued in chapters 4 and 5, despite attempts of cooperation, Polish leaders quickly reverted to tough measures towards Moscow.

Eastern Neighborhood

The Eastern Neighborhood broadly refers to the countries on the former ‘borderlands’ (Kresy) of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and beyond this, the Caucasus and other non-Russian parts of the former Soviet Union. In this region – if we can call it that – Poland has the greatest potential for agency. It is in the relations with these countries that Poland
sees itself, and is perceived, as a subject. However, Poland’s ambitions to shape politics in the East have at times led to tensions with its EU partners. Its strive for acknowledgment by the West has therefore constrained Poland’s agency in the East. The tension between the pursuit of recognition in the West and leadership in the East constitutes a central dilemma in Poland’s strategic culture.

It has been a consensus among Poland’s foreign policy-makers in the post-Cold War period that Poland should have an active role in the Eastern Neighborhood. The idea that what happens in the region is of vital concern for Poland is shaped by cultural proximity and historical connectedness as well as security considerations. Poland’s relationship with the former ‘borderlands’ of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth is based on shared heritage and traditions with these countries. For Poland, relations with Ukraine or Belarus are a reminder of its history of territorial greatness and its cultural influence on the region. At the same time, its eastern policy is a response to its geopolitical reality as the ‘periphery’ of the EU and NATO, and a continuation of its traditional rivalry with Russia over the region.

The Kresy, ‘borderlands’ of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, which during its golden age stretched almost to the Black Sea, included the territories of today’s Ukraine, Belarus, and Lithuania, and constituted a significant portion of Poland’s national heritage (Wolczuk and Wolczuk 2003). Despite cultural, religious and ethnic diversity, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth built a common “Sarmatian” identity (Walicki 1994). The Jagiellonian\(^2\) idea of Poland’s role in Europe, which claims that Poland’s heritage has shaped the culture and mentality of Ukrainians, Belarusians and Lithuanians, has influenced Polish intellectuals for centuries and accounts for Poland’s attachment to the former Kresy (Klymenko 2009:259).

Tensions and revolt against Polish cultural domination, most notably the Cossack rising of 1648 by semi-military communities who inhabited today’s Ukraine, eventually contributed to the Commonwealth’s loss of power in the East. The failure of the Polish crown and the Cossacks to come to an agreement resulted in territorial separation from the Commonwealth and eventually the incorporation of significant parts of today’s Ukraine into

\(^2\) Referring to the Jagiellonian dynasty, which unified Poland-Lithuania through the Union of Krewo in 1385.
the Russian Empire (Snyder 2003). The loss of Ukraine is often considered the beginning of the decline of the Commonwealth’s greatness in Polish historiography. The conclusion drawn from this is that the ‘loss’ of Ukraine to Russian influence and a weakening of Polish-Ukrainian ties, undermines Poland’s position. This idea still influences Polish strategic thinking.

In the interwar period, as leaders had to abandon the ambition of reconstructing the former Commonwealth, Poland developed new foreign policy traditions that to an extent still inform its approach towards the Eastern Neighborhood today. Of particular significance was the aforementioned idea of Prometeizm, the policy of “ripping Russia open along the stitches of nationalities” (“rozpruwać [Rosję] po szwach narodowościowych”) (Wyszczelski 2016:26). This foreign policy conception, propagated especially by Józef Piłsudzki, assumed that the best strategy to weaken the Russian Empire, and later its successor state, the Soviet Union, is to actively support national independence movements on its territory, including the nations of the Caucasus, Ukraine, Belarus, or Finland (Wyszczelski 2016). The creation of a series of independent states by supporting the national movement of peoples of the Baltic, Black and Caspian Sea basins was envisioned as simultaneously serving as a common defensive front against Russian aggression and a ‘buffer zone’ for Poland. The ideas of Prometeizm impacted on Poland’s contemporary strategic culture in so far as most of its policy leaders agree that the building of relations with these countries and encouraging their political independence from Russia benefits Poland’s security.

However, in the interwar period, Poland’s eastern policy was weakened by unresolved territorial disputes with the newly emerging nations. With the failure of reaching a compromise over Vilnius, Poland alienated Lithuania (Micgiel 1995). Similarly, unsettled territorial issues with Ukraine, especially regarding Lviv, which both Poles and Ukrainians considered a center of national culture, obstructed the success of a Polish-Ukrainian alliance. Polish-Ukrainian relations also experienced a difficult period with the outbreak of World War II. Especially two events remain vivid in contemporary politics of memory: the Volhynia massacre in which the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) killed 60,000-80,000 Polish civilians between 1943 and 1944 in an attempt to eradicate Polish
presence on Ukrainian territory, and the Operation Vistula, a forceful resettlement of Ukrainians by Polish communist forces (Klymenko 2009).

In the post-war period, intellectuals began to reformulate Poland’s eastern policy. A new approach was particularly developed by the Polish-émigré literally journal *Kultura* (1947-2000), which encouraged the peaceful settlement of Poland’s eastern borders and reconciliation with Ukraine. However, until 1989 Poland could not freely develop a foreign policy strategy towards the east because its foreign policy was – despite degrees of autonomy – externally dictated by the Soviet Union.

In the post-Cold War period, Ukraine emerged as Poland’s most important partner in the east, despite the extremely contentious historical relations between the two nations. Poland was among the first countries to recognize Ukrainian independence from the Soviet Union. The Orange Revolution in Ukraine further strengthened the relations between the two countries. Drawing from its own experience of post-communist transformation, Poland strongly welcomed and supported the striving for democracy in its neighbor country.

Poland’s policy in the eastern neighborhood is not limited to parts of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Poland kept close ties with nations in the former Soviet space that share similar strategic interests, especially that of limiting Russian influence. A paramount example of this is Georgia. The ‘natural’ solidarity of the two nations comes from their similar fate of foreign occupation. Georgia lost its autonomy first to the Ottoman Empire and in 1813 to Russia. With Georgia and a large part of Poland both occupied by the Tsarist Empire, the two nations built close relations. For example, Polish political activists were sent to exile in Georgia. In 1919, Poland acknowledged the independence of Georgia, and never accepted its annexation by the Soviets but continued to support the Georgian national independence movements (Wyszczelski 2016). The interwar government maintained close contact with the Georgian government in exile and kept the door open for Georgian expats. Despite the geographical and cultural distance, this relation was in many ways more successful than with Ukraine because it lacked negative moments in history. In line with these traditions, Poland later advocated EU and NATO membership for Ukraine and Georgia. It acted under the assumption that if these countries were given the chance to participate in
Western institutional structures and were ‘liberated’ from Russian influence, they would undergo a positive transformation.

A fundamental debate among Polish foreign policy leaders and political thinkers concerns the question whether Poland’s ambitious eastern policy negatively impacts on its position in the West. This thinking was famously propagated by a group of political thinkers in Galicia called Stańczyce, including, among others Michał Bobrzyński. He blamed the decline of the I Rzeczpospolita and its fall behind the Western model of development on its Eastern expansion. Much later, in 1976, the historian Sergiusz Mikulicz argued that the policy of Prometeizm pushed Poland away from European politics while leading to additional conflicts with Russia for which Poland lacked the necessary material capabilities (cited in Wyszczelski 2016). Polish communist thinkers propagated a similar narrative arguing that by giving up on eastern expansion, post-war Poland would finally embark on a path towards modernization. All of these opinions reflect the view that the pursuit of the Eastern dimension limits Poland’s ability to pursue the Western dimension. As will be shown in later chapters, the concern that too much focus on its eastern neighborhood weakens Poland’s position in the EU has been prevalent among Polish elites across the political spectrum.

Conversely, many politicians and intellectuals across the political spectrum see Poland’s eastern policy as essential not only for its security but also its self-definition as an international actor. According to this view, without its Eastern dimension Poland would be nothing but a periphery of the West. Both dimensions of Poland’s strategic culture are arguably essential for its ontological security. Embedment in the West, especially membership in NATO and the EU, provides the necessary conditions for Poland’s freedom and ability to pursue its goals in the east. Having attained membership in NATO and the EU means that Poland is no longer primarily concerned with its own survival. As Mälksoo (2010:79) argues, Poland therefore has been pursuing twin foreign policy traditions of rooting [itself] in the West and spreading Western influences further into the East, arguing against the understanding of Europe as a ‘lifeboat to which one tries to prevent others from getting on board’ and constructing the identity of Poland as a bridge to the East.
A friendly and democratic Eastern Neighborhood came to be seen as essential for Poland’s own security because it would prevent Poland from becoming a NATO/EU ‘outpost’. At the same time, having a strong eastern policy strengthens Poland’s position in the EU and NATO because it can provide its familiarly and expertise to the community.

III. CONCLUSION
This chapter discussed strategic culture as a set of collective norms and ideas that guide a state’s pursuit of security in both the physical and the larger ontological sense. It outlined Poland’s strategic culture, which provides a contextualized account for understanding Poland’s foreign policy behavior. Strategic culture helps to understand some differences in Poland’s foreign policy preferences and norms to the expectations in the EU. In particular, the pursuit of overcoming its low ontological security in relation to the West, shaped by a history of territorial instability and interrupted statehood, is an essential element of Poland’s strategic culture. To overcome its ontological insecurity, Poland pursues two parallel objectives. First, Poland seeks to assert itself as an ‘insider’ in the West as an identity and security community, represented by the EU and NATO. Second, it seeks to exercise its subjectivity as a regional player in the Eastern Neighborhood. However, because of its ontological insecurity, Poland is vulnerable to stigmatization. As I will show in the following empirical chapters, Poland’s ‘latecomer’ stigma in the EU has impacted on its foreign policy within this institution.
3 BECOMING ‘NEW EUROPE’: THE IRAQ CRISIS AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF POLAND’S ‘LATECOMER’ STIGMA

“These countries have been not very well behaved […]. It is not well brought-up behavior. They missed a good opportunity to keep quiet” (in Chirac Lashes out at “New Europe” 2003). Such were the words of French President Jacques Chirac on February 18, 2003, at a press conference following an extraordinary European Council meeting regarding the planned U.S. invasion of Iraq. The French president expressed his disapproval of a number of EU candidates that supported the American intervention.

A couple of weeks earlier, three candidate countries and five current EU members had signed the controversial ‘Letter of the Eight’ published in the European press, which voiced support for the United States’ ambition to enforce régime change in Iraq. This diplomatic move was met with severe criticism from other EU members, especially France and Germany. Although five existing EU members, the United Kingdom, Denmark, Spain, Italy and Portugal had also signed the letter, the verbal scolding was primarily directed at the candidate countries, Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic (Davis Cross 2017).

The portrayal of the future EU-members as ‘misbehaved’ was not limited to this statement by the French president but was repeated throughout the media and public sphere. According to the German weekly Der Spiegel, High Representative Javier Solana was “in deep shock” about the fact that the Eastern candidates “had run over to the US” on the issue of Iraq (Koch 2003). Even months after the heat of the crisis had passed, this discourse never fully faded away. As one journalist of the Guardian observed: “before it is integrated into the club of western democracies, Poland is being cast by some of its new EU partners as a troublemaker” (Traynor 2003). The discourse in the European media and political sphere portrayed the candidate countries as ‘less mature’ or ‘incomplete’ Europeans. Political actors, like Chirac, deliberately employed the negative language as a tool of political power.

The verbal dispute in Europe seemed so severe that it even yielded speculations about the end to the EU’s Eastern enlargement plans. This threat never materialized and the crisis seemingly blew over by the end of the spring. A year later, eight Central and Eastern
European countries (CEECs) and two Mediterranean countries entered the EU. Nevertheless, the Iraq crisis gave rise to new narratives in public discourse that shaped the political realities in post-enlargement Europe. This is reflected in a famous essay written by Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida (2003). The authors argued that the Iraq crisis consolidated a common European identity under the leadership of France and Germany, so-called ‘core’ Europe, in opposition to the U.S., but also reinforced the gap between so-called ‘old’ Europe and ‘new’ Europe.

This chapter examines Polish foreign policy regarding the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in the context of Poland’s pursuit of becoming an established member of ‘Europe’ and the ‘West’. As the West split in two over the issue of Iraq, Poland was faced with the choice between two ‘Western options’: a European and an Atlanticist conception of the West. The Polish decision to support the Iraq war expressed the Atlanticist outlook of its strategic culture (see chapter 2). Poland favored a strong U.S. presence in Europe not only as its main security guarantor, but also as an important counterbalance to the emergence of a powerful European ‘core’ under German and French leadership. By siding with the superpower, Poland and the other CEECs saw an opportunity to reconceive their traditionally marginal position in Europe (Mälksoo 2010).

Additionally, for reasons engrained in its strategic culture, Poland did not oppose the idea of preventative intervention as many of its Western European neighbors. Having once been a victim of Western appeasement politics, Poland was unconvinced by arguments promoted by many Western European politicians and intellectuals in opposition to the Iraq war, built around the moral supremacy of stability and peace over justice.

As the dispute over Iraq progressed, and the verbal scolding of the French and the Germans became more severe, for Poland the issue became also a matter of self-determination of its foreign policy. Polish political elites contested the Franco-German narrative and reaffirmed their commitment to the alliance with the United States. By actively formulating their foreign policy on Iraq against the line of major EU powers, Polish elites tried to assert their position as full-fledged and equal ‘insiders’ to the Euro-Atlantic community. In general, many among the elites in the Central and Eastern European candidate
countries concluded that unless they actively resisted the Franco-German ‘bullying’, they would always have to yield to their more powerful partners, once members of the EU. To defend their position, state leaders and diplomats in these countries challenged what they perceived as intolerance on the part of the ‘established’ Europeans. Polish deputy foreign minister Adam Rotfeld responded that whereas “we [Poland] respect France’s right to define its own policy, France must offer the same respect to Poland” (in Smith 2003). A Czech senior official told the Guardian that the candidate countries were evidently “being bullied into choosing the Franco-German line” (in Black and Traynor 2003).

Although the Eastern European candidate countries resisted the Franco-German attempt to present themselves as the ‘voice of Europe’, it was more difficult to establish their counter-narrative in the European public discourse. As aspirational members of the EU, the CEECs came from a position of weakness. Especially the fact that the Iraq war did not turn out as successful as the U.S.-led coalition had expected gave the ‘core’ European position additional leverage. Because of its dependency on recognition as ‘European’, Poland was vulnerable to Western Europe’s verbal scolding. Portraying the ‘new’ Europeans as ‘immature’, ‘badly behaved’ and ‘un-European’, and exploiting the dilemma between being a ‘good European’ and ‘good American ally’, the Franco-German narrative wielded strong representational force (see Bially Mattern 2005a, 2005b). It targeted the already low ontological security of the candidate countries. The former communist countries sought to escape their ‘outsiders’ stigma through recognition by the West as full members. However, as they formally became ‘insiders’ in Western institutions the ‘New Europe’ narrative, which portrayed them as ‘un-European’, became a reincarnate ‘outsider’ stigma.

This chapter argues that the Iraq crisis ultimately solidified an implicit hierarchical dynamic in the EU between the new and the established members. Discourse, as this chapter will show, played a crucial role in establishing this hierarchy. Additionally, the decline of U.S. presence in Europe strengthened the position of France and Germany in Europe – exactly the kind of undesirable development Poland had wanted to prevent. The narrative put forward by ‘core’ Europe, which portrayed the Iraq war as a transgression against international law, and the candidate countries’ support for it as a sign of their incomplete
internalization of European values, became consolidated in public discourse. In this context, European values on foreign policy concerned primarily the commitment to international law and multilateralism, and the rejection of a proactive use of military force. In later chapters I will show how this discourse would reemerge in situations of a discrepancy between Poland’s foreign policy and actors representing ‘established’ Europe. As a consequence, the lesson Poland learned was that it could face verbal punishment if it dissents from the normative guidelines of ‘core’ Europe. Furthermore, the Iraq crisis crushed Poland’s previously held assumption that once it joined both NATO and the EU its ‘return to the West’ would be completed. It showed that even with the entrance of the candidate countries into the EU and NATO, an East-West distinction would continue to exist. The experience of Iraq became internalized in Poland’s strategic culture and would continue to influence its foreign policy. Subsequently, Poland’s foreign policy would become strongly focused on overcoming its ‘latecomer’ stigma.

I. DIVIDED WEST, DIVIDED EUROPE
The Iraq crisis has been widely discussed in academic and publicist works for its effects on transatlantic relations. For some, it revealed a fundamental difference between the American and European worldviews and value systems (Kagan 2002; Derrida and Habermas 2003). It had a long-lasting effect on the nature of transatlantic cooperation. However, the intra-European division regarding the war was just as significant (Chari and Cavatorta 2003). There were several dividing lines within Europe. For once, the inability of the ‘Big Three’ (France, Germany and the UK) to come to an agreement raised questions about the future of a common EU foreign policy (Davis Cross 2017). Also, in most EU member states and candidate countries the public opposed the war. Thus, in those countries where governments decided to support the war the crisis revealed a rift between publics and political elites. On February 15, 2003, public demonstrations against the U.S. invasion of Iraq took place all over Europe (Derrida and Habermas 2003). However, despite the multiplicity of dividing lines, it was the decision of the Central and Eastern European candidate countries to support the U.S. invasion of Iraq that received particularly much attention (Davis Cross and Ma 2015; Davis Cross 2017).
The dispute over Iraq began in late 2002 when U.S. President George W. Bush addressed the United Nations calling for the international community to support an invasion of Iraq. In November, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) passed Resolution 1441 (2002) offering Iraq the final opportunity to disarm, and to disclose and abandon all allegedly ongoing programs to build weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). From the beginning the positions among European countries diverged. When Bush expressed readiness to invade Iraq even without a UN mandate, the governments of France and Germany joined forces in opposition of the intervention (EU Allies Unite against Iraq War 2003). Other opponents in Europe included Austria, Belgium, Finland, Greece, Ireland, Luxembourg, and Sweden. On the other side of the dividing line stood the signatories of the so-called ‘Letter of the Eight’: five EU members, Britain, Spain, Italy, Portugal and Denmark and three EU candidates, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland. Signed on January 2003, the letter stated that UNSC Resolution 1441 “is Saddam Hussein’s last chance to disarm using peaceful means”, and indirectly expressed support for the U.S. plans for a military intervention in Iraq (Aznar, Barroso, Berlusconi, Blair, Havel, Medgyessy, et al. 2003). About a week later, the ‘Letter of the Eight’ was followed by the ‘Vilnius Letter’, a more outspoken declaration of support for the United States’ position signed by the Baltic states, Poland and other EU candidates (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Latvia 2003). The letters were met with strong criticism from the anti-war camp led by France and Germany.

Although there have been many instances in the past where EU countries had disagreed on foreign policy issues, the Iraq crisis triggered an exceptionally negative discourse in the European media and political sphere. According to one publicist, “there has rarely been a more dramatic illustration of the Union’s failure to speak with a common voice” (James 2003). Another observer called for his readers to “mourn European unity” (Garton Ash 2003). The language conveyed in public and media discourse not only reflected the dispute among political leaders but even amplified the sense of crisis (Davis Cross and Ma 2015; Davis Cross 2017).

Interestingly, while the media discourse generally portrayed the Iraq dispute as a catastrophe for European unity, the coverage of the crisis disproportionately focused on the
divide between Western Europe and Central and Eastern Europe (Davis Cross and Ma 2015; Davis Cross 2017). This is striking given that the real dividing lines were not so clear-cut East vs. West. As Davis Cross and Ma (2015:1059) conclude based on a survey of leading newspapers:

> The media’s narrative about East vs. West amplifies a particular framing of the Iraq issue that was not necessarily self-evident because Western member states were just as significantly divided among themselves as the new member states were supposedly divided from them.

Thus, since there was no single EU position on Iraq, and since Poland and the other CEECs had not even entered the EU yet, the degree of outrage over these countries’ Iraq policy was exceptional. Moreover, since EU membership does not legally oblige member states legally to a common foreign policy, the candidate countries did not violate any EU rules.

Poland, in particular, became a target of this negative discourse. After all, the Polish government not only signed the ‘Letter of the Eight’ but it also decided to join the so-called ‘Coalition of the Willing’ and contributed troops to the military mission. After the end of operations, Poland commanded one of the four stabilization zones in Iraq (Bugajski and Teleki 2007). This chapter takes a closer look at the discourse regarding the candidate countries’ Iraq policy, and how it shaped Poland’s relation with the EU. First, however, to understand the roots of the divide in Europe, the reasons behind Poland’s decision to support the Iraq war will be analyzed in the context of Polish strategic culture.

II. PLAYING THE MODEL ALLY: POLAND’S RATIONALE ON THE IRAQ WAR

The deep controversy within Europe over the war yields the question why the Polish government decided to participate in the Iraq mission, risking a deterioration of relations with two of its key European partners. This might seem especially puzzling given that in early 2003 Poland was just on the verge of EU membership. An analysis based on strategic culture, which integrates a historically grounded strategic outlook with responses to current opportunities and challenges of the international environment, offers the best tool for
understanding Poland’s decision. Attachment to an Atlanticist conception of the West in Poland’s strategic culture helps to understand the inclination of Poland’s leaders to ally with the United States. By siding with the Americans, Polish elites saw an opportunity of playing an active role in the Euro-Atlantic security community, which would help overcome its newcomer status within NATO and the EU (Cichocki 2003; Osica 2005; Mälksoo 2010). Additionally, Polish leaders were attracted by the expected benefits of a successful Iraq mission. However, as the dispute in Europe progressed and the negative narrative about ‘New Europe’ became more widespread, Poland’s support for the Iraq war became a strategy of contestation against the stigmatizing discourse of the Franco-German camp. Poland concluded that unless it entered the EU from a position of strength, it would signal that it would make concession to bigger members on vital questions regarding foreign policy.

2.1 Atlanticism in Poland’s strategic culture

Poland’s involvement in Iraq should be understood within the context of Atlanticism in its strategic culture, briefly discussed in the previous chapter. Polish Atlanticism is, first of all, linked to its view of U.S. military presence in Europe as the best solution to Poland’s traditional security concerns, primarily regarding Russia. Second, a strong alliance with the U.S. provides ontological security because it strengthens Poland’s position within the Euro-Atlantic community in the long run. It relates to what Poland perceives as a certain similarity of values and attitudes on security with the United States compared to some of its Western European partners. This found expression during the Iraq crisis as Polish leaders criticized the Western European ‘appeasement’ approach. For reasons related to both security considerations and values, Poland therefore preferred a Western community under American leadership to a Euro-centric version led by a Western European ‘core’. Hence, Poland’s elites saw an opportunity of shaping the European security landscape actively, and in this way “reconceive” their country’s “liminal status” in Europe (Mälksoo 2010:134). The underlying reasons for Poland’s inclination to support the U.S. mission had therefore less to do with its take on the situation in Iraq as with its relationship to the United States and the meaning of this relationship for its own role in the Euro-Atlantic configuration.
Poland regarded the U.S. and NATO as the most important providers of security in Europe (Osica 2005; Baylis and Roper 2006). This view has been shaped, first of all, by the historical role of the U.S. as a supporter of Polish independence, discussed in the previous chapter. Second, membership in NATO with its guarantee of protection by the United States had allowed Poland to escape its historical position as ‘no man’s land’ or ‘security gray zone’ located between powerful neighbors (Osica 2005). Poland did not expect its EU allies to be able and willing to replace the U.S. in its role as the main security provider, even though membership in the EU certainly had been one of Poland’s top priorities since the end of the Cold War.

In particular, Poland believed that its Western European allies did not understand its security concerns, which primarily revolved around Russia. Although arguably Poland’s situation in the post-Cold War period was safer than it had been before in the last two centuries of its history, Russia remained at least a hypothetical threat (Michta 1995). Poland shared similar views with the Baltic states, which accounts for the four countries’ similar position on the Iraq war. As the Estonian prime minister explained in an interview justifying the Baltic states’ support for the intervention, the U.S. would be badly needed in case a ‘Stalin Jr.’ came to power in Moscow (in Mälksoo 2010:137). The idea that a Russian threat could reemerge in the future is also at the core of Polish strategic culture and shaped the country’s Atlanticist outlook.

While in 2003 this Russian threat seemed indeed largely hypothetical, Poland perceived certain worrying trends. Some of Poland’s European partners, especially Germany and France, were developing what Poland perceived as too friendly relations with Russia. A prime example of this was the Russian-German Nord Stream pipeline project, which bypassed Poland and Ukraine. In general, Germany’s Social Democratic/Greens coalition government sought out warm relations with Moscow. This pro-Russian course was, among others, driven by Chancellor Schröder’s close personal ties to Russian President Vladimir Putin (Chivvis and Rid 2009). The trend in the foreign politics of both France and of Germany was towards resisting American hegemony in Europe, and towards greater cooperation with Russia. Despite the revolutionary transformation of Germany’s role in Polish strategic culture following 1991 from historical adversary to partner and advocate for
Poland’s membership in the EU, Poland nevertheless remained cautious of German power. Especially the idea of German-Russian cooperation ‘above Poland’s head’ brought back nightmare images from Polish history. Polish leaders therefore felt highly uncomfortable when Schröder spoke about a “Paris-Berlin-Moscow axis” of cooperation (Adomeit 2005:6). Poland regarded a strong American influence in Europe as an important counterbalance to the formation of such an axis (Bugajski and Teleki 2007). For this reason, much unlike its French and German partners, Poland was not bothered by the idea of American hegemony and even welcomed it.

Moreover, being on the verge of EU accession and with its NATO membership still fresh, Poland was still uncertain what its role in the Euro-Atlantic configuration would be. This was especially the case since both institutions were undergoing a phase of transition. Poland feared a ‘second-class status’ in both institutions and exclusion from an ‘inner core’ of Europe (Bugajski and Teleki 2007). In the light of these uncertainties, the pursuit of a stable role within the Euro-Atlantic relation was essential for obtaining ontological security. In 2003, Poland was therefore seeking to define its role within the two Western institutions. To establish itself as a committed but equal partner to its Western allies, Poland sought out close relations with the United Kingdom and tried to reinforce cooperation through the Weimar Triangle with Germany and France (Bugajski and Teleki 2007).

Meanwhile, even before the Iraq war, the relationship between the U.S. and Europe was weakened. Following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 (9/11), the U.S. had turned its attention towards the Middle East and away from Europe. Poland was concerned that if the U.S. lost interest in Europe, “an exclusive club of privileged European states would seek to replace it and marginalize Poland’s voice” (Baylis and Roper 2006:26). After 9/11, Poland was therefore quick to align with the U.S. and stressed that it would participate in the ‘war on terror’. Polish President Kwasniewski declared that Poland would act as a leader to coax Eastern European countries into the West and persuade the West to accept them. An example of this was an Anti-Terrorism conference hosted in Warsaw with leaders from Central, Eastern and Southern Europe (Baylis and Roper 2006).
The envisioned status as a bridge between Europe, especially Central and Eastern Europe, and the U.S was supposed to raise Poland’s international profile and counterbalance its weak newcomer status in the EU and NATO. The Iraq crisis offered a unique opportunity for Poland to stand “on the side of the stronger battalions,” and this way Poland hoped to improve its own rating in Europe (Mälksoo 2010:125). Therefore, Poland’s Iraq policy expressed its pursuit of “securing a better position within the European Union than Poland’s structural and economic potential alone would warrant” in order to enable Poland’s “effective pursuit of its policy within the France-Germany-Britain configuration” (Cichocki 2003:17).

The Atlantic Alliance was also undergoing changes, some of which Poland perceived as unwelcomed trends. In many ways, Poland was attached to NATO’s traditional role as ‘Europe’s pacifier’ that keeps ‘the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down’ (Osica 2005). Following the Kosovo war in 1999 and the engagement in Afghanistan, NATO’s security role had been shifting towards expeditionary operations. Poland was worried that this shift would be at the expense of territorial defense (Chappell 2010). Additionally, Poland had not received all the benefits of NATO membership it had hoped for. Due to an informal agreement with Russia, no NATO troops had been stationed on Polish ground or the territories of any of the other former Soviet bloc countries. According to a senior diplomat, after accession to NATO, it turned out that the alliance’s defense plans for Poland were arbitrary. Poland therefore wanted a new strategic plan within NATO, particularly American bases on Polish ground and a missile defense shield (Interview 27).

Also, NATO’s role was shifting from collective defense towards a collective model of security (Osica 2005). This was especially evident when, following the attacks of 9/11 and America’s engagement in the ‘war on terror’, Washington had begun a rapprochement with Russia. Through its support for the Iraq war, Poland signaled its commitment to the alliance’s traditional role based on mutual military assistance. Polish policy-makers wanted the Article Five guarantee to be made more credible (Chappell 2010). The focus on reciprocity reflects caution towards alliances, rooted in strategic culture. It follows from the Polish experience of repeated abandonment by its allies. Since alliances cannot be taken for granted, Polish leaders reasoned that they would have to be actively reaffirmed on the basis of reciprocity.
By participating in missions outside of its security interests, Poland wanted to retain its role as a ‘reliable ally’ (Chappell 2010).

Finally, during the Iraq war a tension between two sets of values arose, which many characterized as a difference in the ‘American’ and ‘European’ view of the international order (Kagan 2002, 2003; Derrida and Habermas 2003; Todd 2003; Rifkin 2004). From this followed alternative approaches to foreign and security policy. The ‘postmodern’ approach draws on the Kantian theory of perpetual peace and stresses that security is best achieved through cooperation rather than competition (Rifkin 2004; Diez 2005). It is characterized by a reluctance to use military force, and an emphasis on diplomacy, economic assistance, and peacekeeping missions. By contrast, the ‘modern’ approach assumes that the employment of force is sometimes necessary for the protection of national security interests. It also assumes that because international law is unreliable, security and defense, and the promotion of the liberal order are dependent on military power (Kagan 2003). Opponents of the Iraq war based their arguments on the ‘postmodern’ view that international law must be respected at all circumstances, and warned that engagement in Iraq would create instability in the country and the region. By contrast, the interventionist camp stressed the responsibility of the West to actively shape world order and promote freedom and democracy, if necessary, through military means.

The view of the international order and attitude to international intervention in Polish strategic culture resembled much more the attitude of the United States than that of some of Poland’s EU allies. However, since the end of the Cold War, as part of its pursuit of membership in NATO and the EU, Poland had to accept “a shift away from a military centric and territorial-defence-based security thinking, concealing traditional security concerns towards Russia, and thus imbuing unanimity with a more ‘postmodernist’ conceptualization of security of the Western European states” (Mälksoo 2010:127). The Iraq war offered the first opportunity for Poland to pursue its traditional security approach.

From its own experience of constant threat to its sovereignty, Poland saw the advantage of a proactive use of military force (Chappell 2010). Poland’s leaders therefore
favored a policy of “advocacy for the nations suffering under undemocratic regimes or nations fighting for their right to self-determination” (Osica 2002:26). The idea of promoting freedom and supporting the liberation of allied nations from oppressive regimes is engrained in Polish strategic culture under the motto “for our freedom and yours” (“za naszą i waszą wolność”), which originated in the nineteenth century and was used in various contexts in Polish history. The argument that Iraq was a totalitarian regime and that Western intervention would liberate its citizens from tyranny spoke to the tradition of proactive interventionism in Polish strategic culture shaped through its own experience of oppressive regimes and totalitarianism. In the Polish view the moral duty of intervention also trumps international law (see Krakiewicz 2007).

The rhetoric of freedom contrasted with the arguments used in Western Europe in opposition to the war. The emphasis on the importance of maintaining stability of the international order did not resonate with Poland’s normative outlook on foreign policy. At the core of Polish strategic culture lies its historical experience as a victim of ‘European-style realpolitik’ (Osica 2005; Mälksoo 2010). Poland was therefore highly suspicious of Western European pacifism in line with Kant’s ‘perpetual peace’ theory, which entails “sustaining a stable but unjust status quo” (Mälksoo 2010:135). Poland’s idealistic approach to international intervention for the sake of liberation from totalitarianism provided a justification for its participation in the Iraq war. The ability to express its strategic outlook and the active attempt to influence the position of the Euro-Atlantic community gave Poland the opportunity to act as a subject in foreign relations. It was therefore seen as a step towards becoming an ‘established’ member within the Western community.

Thus, Poland’s Atlanticism, its proactive view towards military force, and its desire to prove itself as a reliable NATO ally account for the inclination of Polish leaders to participate in the Iraq war. At the same time, Poland tried to shift the European security landscape and, simultaneously, to overcome its newcomer position in the European community. Even in the light of the European divide over Iraq, Poland’s leaders believed that a firm stance was important as it would allow Poland to enter the EU from a position of
strength. Paradoxically, as will be later explained, in the aftermath of the Iraq crisis the East-West hierarchy within the enlarged European Union was reinforced.

2.2 Reasoning of the Polish elites

The view of Poland’s engagement in the military intervention and the stabilization mission in Iraq through the prism of strategic culture might be unconvincing to those who point out the material and political rewards Polish leaders expected from the United States (see Newnham 2008). The low popular approval for the Iraq war in Poland (see below) indicates that Poland’s decision was largely an elite project. Since strategic culture is understood as a collective set of values and ideas, negotiated between the public and policy makers, the public opposition puts into question my earlier claim that Poland’s Iraq policy can be best comprehended through the framework of strategic culture. Additionally, the questionable legitimacy of the Iraq intervention itself poses some queries about the Polish involvement. For example, did Polish leaders actually believe that Iraq had WMDs? Certainly, the confusion between the intervention in Iraq against a dictator and the so-called ‘war on terror’ in the language of Polish leaders could raise doubts about how well Poland even understood the Bush Administration’s reasoning.

The public discourse in Poland regarding the Iraq war must therefore be examined. Since political elites were largely unified on this issue, there was comparatively little debate either in parliament or publicly in Poland prior to the government’s decision to participate in the mission (Wągrowska 2004). The lack of an extensive debate about Poland’s participation in the intervention makes it difficult to distinguish between official reasons and expected gains, which were partly hidden motivations. However, this section will demonstrate the consistency of the decision on Iraq with Polish strategic culture based on the official reasons provided by the Polish president and government. The justification of Polish leaders was primarily based on two sets of augments: 1) Poland’s obligation as an ally to the United States, and 2) its duty to challenge totalitarianism represented by the Iraqi regime.

Among Poland’s political elites there was almost unanimous support for the American mission. Even though both the president and the leading figures in government
were members of the post-communist party *Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej* (SLD), which traditionally has been less pro-American than the post-Solidarity ‘right’, both government and president pioneered the decision to support the Iraq war. The *Sejm* (parliament) approved the government’s decision on Iraq with a significant majority, including the ‘right’ opposition, consisting of two newly emerged parties *Platforma Obywatelska* (PO) and *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość* (PiS). The only opponents of the war in the *Sejm* included the farmers’ party PSL and two populist parties on both ends of the political spectrum: the left Euroskeptic *Samoobrona* and religious right *Liga Polskich Rodzin* (LPR) (Lubecki 2005). Such unanimity between the post-Solidarity right and the post-communist left was untypical for Poland since the two fractions were divided over many domestic and foreign policy issues.

In this respect, Poland strongly differed from other countries in the ‘Coalition of the Willing’. The domestic political alignment on the question of Iraq was quite unlike Spain’s or Britain’s insomuch as “all the mainstream Polish political forces, including both the governing ‘left’ and the opposition ‘right’, supported the deployment, which was opposed only by the marginalized populists” (Lubecki 2005:88). By contrast, in Spain the main opposition party was against the war and following the Madrid bombings promised to withdraw the Spanish contingent from Iraq. Thus, the governing party later lost the next elections as Spanish voters decided to punish the conservative party of Prime Minister Aznar for its decision to participate in the intervention (Sedivy and Zaborowski 2005). In Poland, the opposition did not politicize the topic of Iraq. Therefore, participation in the war was a low political risk for the ruling SLD government despite public opposition to the war (Lubecki 2005).

The set of arguments that political elites stressed in favor of Poland’s involvement in Iraq concerned primarily the duty to intervene against the oppressive regime of Saddam Hussein and the reciprocal nature of the alliance with the United States. Officially, the UNSC Resolution 1441 constituted the legal basis for Poland’s engagement. The government argued that the threat posed by WMDs in the hands of the Iraqi dictator, especially in the context of international terrorism, justified military action which aimed at preventing the potential use of those weapons (Krakiewicz 2007:43). However, the main argument used by Polish leaders
to justify their decision did not focus so much on the issue of WMDs as on the totalitarian nature of Saddam Hussein’s regime. In line with Poland’s own experience of totalitarian oppression, its leaders justified their participation in the Iraq war based on the “obligation to carry the ‘torch of freedom’” (Mälksoo 2010:128). As former Solidarity leader Zbigniew Bujak argued, “our signature under the ‘letter of the eight’ resulted from a simple gut impulse and the knowledge that when we are dealing with authoritarianism somewhere in the world, it should dread us” (Jak trzeba, stajemy w szeregu 2003).³ Poland had been generally supportive of America’s post-9/11 politics of trying to proactively settle issues in the Middle East on the basis that regimes like those in Iraq would eventually become a threat to the West. As foreign minister Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz argued, “We decided to participate in the war on terror […] in the conviction that through our involvement in the coalition we will contribute to building a secure future” (in Wągrowska 2004:5).

The other set of arguments stressed Poland’s obligation to the United States and the need to demonstrate that Poland takes its responsibility within the transatlantic alliance seriously. As Prime Minister Leszek Miller later explained:

It is a question whether we treat our alliance responsibility seriously […] or if we think that it has no meaning. One must abide by one’s commitments, and if we won’t do so, then in a time when we are facing a threat, someone else will say: how does this concern us? In 1939, the French did not want to die for Gdansk, but they were later dying for Paris. This is the logic of such commitments. (in Leszek Miller o wojnie irackiej 2013)⁴

Given its fresh membership status in NATO, Poland wanted to prove that it could play a useful role. Furthermore, Poles wanted to demonstrate their conviction that the matter of reciprocity in the alliance is of binding significance. By acting out of sheer loyalty to the alliance, Poland demonstrated its commitment. The statements of political leaders are made

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³ “Nasz podpis pod ‘listem ośmiu’ to reakcja wynikająca z prostego odruchu i wiedzy, że jak mamy gdzieś w świecie do czynienia z autorytaryzmem, to może się on objawić i o nas” (translated by author).
⁴ “To jest pytanie, czy nasze zobowiązania sojusznicze […] czy też uważamy, że to nie ma żadnego znaczenia. Trzeba przestrzegać zobowiązań, jeśli nie będziemy tego robić, to gdyby zawisło nad nami jakieś niebezpieczeństwo, to ktoś powie: a co nas to obchodzi? W 1939 roku Francuzi nie chcieli umierać za Gdańsk, tylko potem umierali za Paryż. Taka jest logika tych porozumień” (translated by author).
at a specific time to a specific audience; they use arguments that could be accepted by the public and the opposition. They are therefore likely to appeal to ideas engrained in national strategic culture. The two sets of arguments that political elites used to justify Poland’s involvement in the Iraq war were consistent with Poland’s strategic culture. Those who opposed Poland’s involvement in the war, such as the religious right Liga Polskich Rodzin, also engaged with the issue of reciprocity but drew different conclusions. This camp argued that America was using Poland for its own gains – as has often been the case in the history of Poland’s relation with its Western allies. Given the highly disproportional relationship, this political camp argued, such unconditional commitment to the U.S. from Poland’s side was against national interests (Koziełło 2013).

Apart from reasons connected to grander ideas engrained in strategic culture, some material and political benefits that the participation in the Iraq mission offered might have attracted Polish leaders. The economic benefits included contracts for investments in post-war Iraq (Newnham 2008). Having participated in the building of the “road network, municipal power systems, and other part of Iraq’s economic infrastructure in the 1970s and ’80s, Poles, Czechs, Hungarians, and others stress their familiarity with Iraq and personal ties to Iraqis“ (Rhodes 2004:431). The Central and Eastern Europeans therefore excepted to take part in the post-war reconstruction of Iraq (Newnham 2008).

Poland’s leaders additionally hoped that showing commitment to the transatlantic alliance would be rewarded through political gestures from the U.S., for example the liberalization of the visa regime. Officials hoped that their support on Iraq would eventually lead to expanded U.S. military assistance to their countries (Rhodes 2004). For Poland, especially the establishment of a U.S. missile defense shield on Polish ground, which had been under discussion, was an important incentive.

2.3 Public opinion
In comparison to the United Kingdom and other countries participating in the ‘Coalition of the Willing’ the domestic context of the debate over Iraq was “rather muted” in Poland (Baylis and Roper 2006:27). This also applies to discussions between elites and the public, and among the public. While opinion polls show that the majority of the Polish public
opposed the war and Poland’s engagement in it, the whole issue was given much less public attention than in Western European countries. Because of the small amount of public debate, it is difficult to be conclusive about the reasons for the public’s opposition. However, survey data indicates that the reasons for public opposition to the Iraq war were very different from those in Western European countries.

It can be argued that Poland’s participation in the ‘Coalition of the Willing’ was primarily a project of political elites. By March 2003, up to 66% of Poles opposed their country’s endorsement of the invasion and up to 75% opposed the participation of Polish troops in the operation (Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej (CBOS) 2003). Another survey by Gallup shows similar results (see Hummel 2007). Nevertheless, the often-emphasized thesis that publics in Europe were unified in their opposition against the war (see Derrida and Habermas 2003; Davis Cross 2017) should be approached with caution. First of all, the Iraq war was generally a much less important issue for the Polish public than it was in many Western European countries where citizens mobilized mass demonstrations against the U.S.-led intervention. In the spring of 2003, the Polish public was largely preoccupied with the referendum on EU membership coming up in May 2003 (Radziszewski and Wolfe 2012). This partly explains why policy-makers were able to pursue a foreign policy divergent from the public’s preferences at low political costs.

An even more significant difference to Western Europe, where protests against the Iraq war were strongly tied to the rejection of American hegemony, was that in Poland the public’s anti-war attitudes did not coincide with anti-American sentiments (Lubecki 2005). In the spring of 2003, according to opinion polls, 61% of Poles considered U.S. President George W. Bush their favorite foreign politician, even though his approval rating had fallen from 73% in 2002 (Lubecki 2005). Hence, while it is true that the public in Poland, like virtually all publics in the CEECs, opposed the Iraq war as much as the West Europeans did, it appears that they opposed it for different reasons than the fear of U.S. hegemony and unilateralism (see Grigorescu 2008). The predominantly positive sentiments towards the United States among the Polish public shows that at least on the issue of Atlanticism there was a relative consensus between elites and society.
Alternative explanations for the Polish public’s opposition to the Iraq war concern the benefits of the military engagement itself. Especially the participation of Polish troops in an expeditionary war in the Middle East might have been difficult to understand given that many still perceived security threats in Poland’s neighborhood (see Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej (CBOS) 2007). It seems that the public was unconvinced by the government’s reasoning regarding the need for intervention in Iraq. Pope John Paul II – for many Poles a spiritual and moral authority – openly opposed the Iraq war stating that war was “always a defeat for humanity” (*Pope Condemns War in Iraq* 2003). Moreover, memories of war are still vivid in Polish collective memory, and the public tends to see war as a last resort.

Thus, whereas the public in Poland was by far not as enthusiastic about an intervention in Iraq as their government elites, their opposition to the war was of a different kind than in France or Germany, or even the UK and Spain. Although Poland’s participation in the Iraq war was driven by political elites, the discrepancy between the public and the elite was not as deep as in Western European countries that participated in the ‘Coalition of the Willing’.

III. EMERGENCE OF THE ‘NEW EUROPE’ NARRATIVE

The rise of neologisms such as ‘Old Europe’, ‘New Europe’ and ‘Core Europe’, invented and referenced by politicians and opinion leaders, and picked up by the media, illustrates the importance of the Iraq crisis for questions of European identity. It indicates that actors of the European public sphere, such as the media, policy-makers and public intellectuals, perceived the crisis to have shaped political reality and were trying to make sense of it (see Levy, Max, and Torpey 2005). The Iraq crisis was in many ways a moment of transition for Europe. Parallel processes of Atlantic friction and the intra-European division on the eve of the EU’s eastern enlargement shaped the new reality. At the same time, this reality was co-constituted through the speech acts performed by politicians and opinion leaders, such as Chirac, Habermas and Rumsfeld (see Austin 1962; Sedivy and Zaborowski 2005; Bially Mattern 2005b). Especially in moments of crisis and uncertainty actors are likely to engage in stigmatization in order to establish the ‘normal’ (see Goffman 1963; Adler-Nissen 2014a).
This section looks at the narratives constructed during the intra-European dispute. It pays particular attention to the ‘New Europe’ narrative, which in its negative connotation portrayed the Iraq policy of the candidate countries as a sign of their incomplete transformation into ‘full Europeans’. This narrative was used by politicians of Western European countries that opposed the war – particularly of France and Germany – and was repeated throughout the European media. The ‘New Europe’ narrative wielded what Bially Mattern calls “representational force”, a form of power entailed in language (Bially Mattern 2005a, 2005b). Successfully exploiting the dilemma between being a ‘good European’ and a ‘reliable ally to the United States’, the narrative targeted Poland’s sense of ontological security.

3.1 The crisis discourse: ‘New Europe’, ‘Old Europe’, ‘Core Europe’

Given that divergent views over external relations are frequent within the EU, it does not seem to be unusual that the candidate countries found themselves in disagreement with a number of EU members on the issue of Iraq. However, since U.S. President Bush had asked for support of his war against Iraq, the European and international media coverage, which regularly discussed the European divide, focused in particular on the East-West divide (Davis Cross and Ma 2015; Davis Cross 2017).

The negative discourse expressed the “shock” of politicians and publics from the existent EU member states over the candidate countries’ decision (Traynor 2003). Much of the irritation was connected to an expectation that on the verge of their entry into the European Union, the candidate countries would show humility and seek to avoid controversies with leading member states of the EU. As expressed in the words of French defense minister Michèle Alloit-Marie, Poland acted like the bride who wants to become a family member but causes trouble before the wedding (Triumph Der Treue 2003). Some interpreted this as a sign that the candidates were not committed enough to the EU. According to Jacques Rupnik, France’s “irritation about the alignment of the candidates toward the U.S. position” came from the suspicion that the poorer European countries were attracted only by European Union economic support whereas “for the serious stuff they address themselves to Washington” (in Smith 2003). A language of ‘deep concern’ about the perspective of EU enlargement appeared in the press and public discourse. The German EU
Commissioner Günter Verheugen voiced doubt if the EU’s expansion was not a big mistake after all (Relativ Surrealistisch 2003).

Much of the negative attention in the press was devoted to Poland since Poland not only diplomatically supported the U.S. but also directly participated in the military intervention. The country was labeled Washington’s ‘Trojan horse’ in Europe, corrected which ‘Trojan donkey’ to emphasize its actual insignificance (Baylis and Roper 2006). The German press mocked Poland’s attempt to ‘play big power.’ One commentator observed: the Poles “first have to fall on their noses before they see what they actually can do” (Hofmann 2003).

The expression ‘New Europe’ as a description for the Central and Eastern European candidate countries that supported the Iraq war became a central element of this discourse. The originator of the term ‘New Europe’ had intended it in a positive sense. U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, criticizing Germany and France for their lack of support, pronounced them “old Europe,” whereas he argued that Europe’s “center of gravity is shifting east” (Outrage at “Old Europe” Remarks 2003). Rumsfeld’s intention was to scold France and Germany for their opposition to the intervention and to praise the CEECs. French President Chirac gave ‘New Europe’ a different meaning. When he called the CEECs “badly behaved”, he linked their newcomer status to ‘immaturity’ or ‘childishness’ (Chirac Lashes out at “New Europe” 2003). Subsequently, the ‘Old Europe-New Europe’ discourse became replicated by journalists, politicians, and public intellectuals who engaged in a debate about the connotations of ‘New’ and ‘Old’. Some interpreted ‘New’ in the Rumsfeldian sense as ‘the future of Europe’. Others interpreted it negatively as ‘inexperienced’ or ‘not yet fully European’. In the remainder of the section I argue that especially the second meaning dominated European public discourse.

The discourse concerning the candidate countries and their future role in Europe went hand in hand with debates regarding the question of European or EU identity in general. This is reflected in a famous essay written by two of Europe’s celebrity intellectuals, Jürgen

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5 “Und die Polen? Die müssen, bekommt man zu hören, erstmal auf die Nase fallen und sehen, was sie können” (translated by author).
Habermas and Jacques Derrida, which in May 2003 appeared in the German *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. The essay not only describes and tries to make sense of the new post-Iraq war reality but also seeks to contribute to its construction. It is simultaneously a reaction to Rumsfeld’s rhetoric denunciation of ‘Old Europe’. According to the authors, the public anti-Iraq war demonstrations of February 15, 2003 signified the “birth of Europe”. As the European publics and parts of the elite unified in opposition to American aggression and hegemonic unilateralism, a new “avant-garde” European identity had emerged. The two authors envisioned this revitalized and more unified Europe under the leadership of “Old Europe” or “Core Europe”, namely France and Germany (Derrida and Habermas 2003:6).

The defense of European values against the Atlanticist fraction becomes even more explicit in an article by the German intellectual Peter Sloterdijk (2003). He writes:

> Old Europe, honorably represented by France and Germany, is the advanced fraction of the West, which under the impression of the twentieth century had adopted a post-heroic culture – its politics correspond to it; by contrast, the United States is stuck in the convention of heroism. (Sloterdijk 2003:33)

Defining ‘Core Europe’ with its postmodern values as the superior and more advanced form of the West, the discourse places the ‘New Europeans’, which had chosen the American camp, in the backward category. Habermas and Derrida (2005:5) observe a widening “gap between the continental and the Anglo-Saxon countries, on the one hand, and between the ‘old Europe’ and the Central Eastern European membership candidates, on the other hand.” The authors thus locate the ‘new’ Europeans outside of ‘real’ Europe – or at least on the verge.

The ‘New Europe’ narrative in its negative understanding attributes the choice of the candidate countries to support the Iraq war to their status as ‘newcomers’ to the EU. The expression ‘New Europe’ became a synonym for the CEECs’ lack of experience but also their lack of commitment to European unity and European values. It therefore ties onto an existing practice of stigmatizing Eastern Europe as ‘not quite European’, as having to ‘earn’

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6 “Das alte Europa, durch Frankreich und Deutschland ehrenvoll vertreten, ist die avancierte Fraktion des Westens, die sich unter dem Eindruck der Lektionen des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts zu einem postheroischen Kulturstil - und einer entsprechenden Politik - bekehrt hat; hingegen sitzen die Vereinigten Staaten in den Konventionen des Heroismus fest” (translated by author).
the right to be accepted into this identity community (Wolff 1994; Kuus 2004a; Mälksoo 2010; Zarycki 2014). What is not said explicitly in any of the discussed statements, but what is implied, is that what really distinguishes these countries even from the other supporters of the war is that they are *Eastern European*.

### 3.2 Verbal scolding and representational force

While negative discourse and verbal scolding are common in politics, and even more so in political commentary, the ‘New Europe’ narrative was exceptional for its lingering effect on the dynamics between the CEECs and so-called ‘core’ Europe. The narrative became inscribed in European public discourse and was, as I will argue, internalized in Poland’s self-perception. The status of the CEECs as ‘New Europeans’, who are somehow different from the existent members, became a reincarnation of their stigma as ‘outsiders’ to the West. To explain how verbal scolding eventually led to stigmatization, I refer to the concept of “representational force” (Bially Mattern 2005a, 2007). Representational force is understood as “a form of power that operates through the structure of a speaker’s narrative representation of ‘reality’” (Bially Mattern 2005b:586).

The verbal dispute in Europe regarding the Iraq war also concerned the question which of the two sides is speaking on behalf of Europe. The Europeanist camp sought to assert a ‘postmodern’ European voice in opposition to American hegemony and unilateralism. Also, as Davis Cross (2017) points out, the dispute over Iraq brought to surface pre-existing tensions relating to concerns about the upcoming EU enlargement. Among the current members there were worries that the eastern enlargement threatened the EU’s ‘postmodern’ identity. At the same time, the newcomers were concerned about receiving a ‘second-class’ membership status and that the EU would impose restrictions on their sovereignty (Kaminska 2014; Davis Cross 2017). Thus, political actors used the crisis to establish their position within the political configuration. Adler Nissen (2014a) points out that actors within a group or society rely on stigmatization to enforce order. As Erving Goffman (1963) argues, stigma helps to establish a sense of ‘normality’. Therefore, in a situation of transition and identity crisis, such as the dispute over the Iraq war in the EU, actors are especially likely to employ stigmatization.
The political dispute over the Iraq war shows particularly strikingly a situation where actors shape reality through language. Especially in phases of transition and crisis, language plays an important role for reality construction. This is carried out through narration, discourse and speech acts. John L. Austin, who developed the speech act theory, argues that statements can have a performative function when the speaker utters them with the intention of ‘making them true’ (Austin 1962). Through performative speech, or speech acts, an author ‘creates’ reality. Speech acts played a particular role during the Iraq crisis (Sedivy and Zaborowski 2005). Rumsfeld performed a speech act when he made the distinction between ‘Old’ and ‘New’ Europe. Through this speech performance he deliberately created a distinction between two parts of Europe – one representing the future, the other one the past. Similarly, Chirac performed a speech act when changing the meaning of ‘New Europe’, attaching it to ‘childish’ behavior and ‘backwardness’. Chirac not only defined ‘reality’ through language but at the same time exercised political power using what Bially Mattern (2005b) calls “representational force”.

Just like physical force, representational force can coerce its object by threatening unthinkable harm. However, representational force operates through discourse and targets the object’s ontological security. According to Bially Mattern (2005a, 2005b, 2007), narratives carry representational force if they highlight weaknesses and inconsistencies of an actor’s subjectivity or sense of Self. An actor’s Self is what Bially Mattern calls a sociolinguistic matrix comprised of different roles that the actor plays and that are communicated to others. This identity matrix consists of an actor’s essence, and it defines his or her place in the world and relations with other actors. A sense of consistency of these different roles provides ontological security (Giddens 1991; Kinnvall 2004; Mitzen 2006b). For a state, such overlapping roles can be, for instance, ‘democracy’, ‘EU member’, or ‘Western country’. As previously argued, ontological security lies in a consistent sense of Self as a particular kind of international actor and the affirmation of this identity by others (Huysmans 1998; Mitzen 2006b; Steele 2008; Zarakol 2010).

Representational force threatens an actor’s ontological security through the exploitation of inconsistencies within the sociolinguistic matrix that comprises its Self. Representational force is entailed in discourse and “operates through the structure of a speaker’s narrative representation of ‘reality’” (Bially Mattern 2005b:586). A narrative that
wields representational force locates “the contradictions in her victims and exploit them meaningfully”, and threatens the audience with “unthinkable harm” (Bially Mattern 2005b:603).

French President Chirac employed the ‘New Europe’ narrative to assert the political position of France and Germany (and generally the anti-Iraq war camp) in relation to the Eastern European newcomers. The ‘New Europe’ narrative carried representational force because it successfully exploited the inconsistencies within the sociolinguistic matrix of the candidate countries by constructing an opposition between supporting the Iraq war and being a ‘good European’. It declared the alliance with the United States irreconcilable with the status as full-fledged member of the European identity community. For Poland, it therefore created a direct contradiction between two more or less equally important quests at the heart of its strategic culture. In other words, Poland’s already fragile ontological security, which so strongly depended on recognition by both the transatlantic community and the EU, came under attack. Poland had to “confront a nightmare dilemma” of being torn between the U.S. and Europe (Osica 2005:116).

While there are different forms of representational force (see Bially Mattern 2005a), the form used in this context can be referred to as highjacking. An actor constructs a narrative where he or she claims to speak on behalf of the whole identity community. Chirac de facto took ownership over the ‘European perspective’ when he defined the support for the American military invasion of Iraq as at odds with European values, thus constructing a discourse by which all support of the U.S. becomes in a way ‘un-European’. Hijacking is particularly effective in EU politics because actors do not want to be perceived as deviating from community values. Actors can therefore claim to represent the EU’s values best and strategically condemn alternative choices of behavior. Similarly, the Habermas-Derrida essay engages in highjacking. The authors attribute the ‘postmodern’, ‘avant-garde’, and ‘pacifist’ identity to ‘Europe’ as a whole while simultaneously acknowledging the ‘rift’. Their unspoken implication is that those who reject the authors’ understanding of European identity are not ‘real’ Europeans – at least not yet. The essay conveys the idea of a ‘correct way’ to be European.
As Bially Mattern argues, actors faced with representational force are left with a “non-choice”: They can either accept the articulated ‘reality’ or “deny it and contradict the logic and integrity of the narratives that inscribed their ‘goodness’” (Bially Mattern 2005b:606). The victims of representational force are therefore coerced into a certain kind of behavior. Political actors in the anti-Iraq war camp engaged in the construction of reality when employing the ‘New Europe’ discourse. The narrative presented ‘core’ Europe as a morally righteous community of states pointing to its opposition to the war, and advocacy of multilateralism and obedience to international law. By defining the criteria of what is appropriate behavior and attributing it to ‘Europeanness’, the ‘New Europe’ discourse left Poland and other candidates with the choice of either conforming or being perceived as lacking these qualities.

3.3 ‘New Europe’ responds through contestation

The immediate response among the elites of Poland and the other candidate countries to the verbal scolding was to challenge the stigmatizing Franco-German narrative. In particular, Eastern Europeans contested the ‘core’ Europeans’ claim of speaking on the behalf of Europe. After all, the Western world and Europe had split in two over the issue of Iraq. Poland and the other CEECs chose the Atlanticist camp. In the words of Poland’s prime minister, as Europe had divided itself over Iraq, Poland had to choose “between a French-German-Russian coalition, which was de facto an anti-American coalition” and the British-Spanish-Italian side, “which took into account the realities of the time. And we chose rightly” (in Leszek Miller o wojnie irackiej 2013). The fact that the ‘core’ Europeans scolded and the Americans praised Poland was a confirmation for the righteousness of this choice. For Polish elites, the title of ‘New Europe’ was understood positively, in the sense Donald Rumsfeld had intended.

By contrast, the language of the Franco-German narrative conveyed that even after joining both NATO and the EU the CEECs were not necessarily recognized as real ‘insiders’ by all. A Polish journalist and political commentator picked up on the fact that the ‘New

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7 “[…] ówczesna Europa podzieliła się na tle interwencji w Iraku i my, jako Polska, musieliśmy być po jednej ze stron. Mieliśmy do wyboru - albo koalicję francusko-niemiecko-rosyjską, która była de facto koalicją antyamerykańską, albo koalicję brytyjsko-hiszpańsko-włoską, która była koalicją uwzględniającą ówczesne realia. I wybraliśmy właściwie” (translated by author).
Europe’ narrative makes a distinction between the candidate countries and the members of established Europe. He observes in his response to the Habermas-Derrida op-ed:

Jürgen Habermas forgives the Spaniards and Italians – which have always been part of the West – their American infidelity; yet he does not forgive the Poles and Hungarians […] they will first have to humbly wait outside. (Krzeminski 2003)8

The author notices the distinction between the way in which the candidate countries are treated compared to existent EU members who also supported the Iraq war, and that this is tied to their respective position in the ‘West’. In other words, the Central and Eastern European countries are treated as ‘conditionally’ European. They are only ‘European’ as long as they behave in a certain way. This is different from Spain or Italy whose behavior might be at odds with what Habermas and Derrida perceive as European values, but it would not deprive them of their status as Europeans as in the case of the candidate countries. Hungarian writer Péter Esterházy (2005) also argues that in their essay Habermas and Derrida make a distinction between ‘first class’ and ‘second-class’ Europeans.

For elites in Poland this discourse seemed to confirm already existing concerns of becoming ‘second class’ Europeans upon EU accession. Additionally, as Kaminska (2014) points out, although opinion polls indicated strong support for membership, there were widespread concerns that EU accession might become restrictive of Poland’s national identity – this had not been the case for NATO membership. It reinforced the idea for Polish leaders that how Poland behaved in the Iraq dispute would determine how it would be received in the EU. The political debate over Iraq thus became about the CEECs’ position in Europe and the self-determination over foreign policy. After all, the ability to determine its own foreign policy in accordance with norms engrained in strategic culture is at the heart of national sovereignty (see chapter 1).

The counter-narrative formulated by the candidate countries rejected the idea that there was a correct way of being European and that the CEECs needed to be ‘taught’ European values. Estonian Prime Minister Mart Laar declared that the candidate countries

8 “Den Spaniern und Italienern - da schon immer dem Westen angehörend - verzeiht Jürgen Habermas ihren amerikanischen Seitensprung, den Polen und Ungarn aber nicht […] Sie müssen erst einmal […] demütig draußen warten” (translated by author).
would neither shut up nor choose between the Americans and ‘Old Europe’. Instead, through becoming EU members, they would revitalize and reform the Union to make it more united and competitive (in Wood 2003).

In the spring of 2003, Polish politicians adopted a mostly confrontational strategy towards the Franco-German alliance. Poland’s Foreign Minister Cimoszewicz called for a ‘Europe of Equals’ (Bugajski and Teleki 2007). Contestation happened not only through language but also through policies. In May 2003, Poland signed a deal to buy 48 American F-16 jets over a French alternative. It was the biggest defense contract by a former Soviet-bloc country since the end of the Cold War (Lubecki 2005). The intra-European dispute therefore initially strengthened Poland’s commitment to the ‘Coalition of the Willing’.

IV. CONSEQUENCES: CONSOLIDATION OF STIGMA
Initially, the participation in the Iraq war seemed to be a success for Poland. Coalition forces had quickly defeated the army of Saddam Hussein. Poland was given the administration over an occupation zone. This was interpreted as a sign that Poland had proven itself as a serious and reliable ally in the American-led coalition. As the Head of Poland’s National Security Bureau Marek Siwiec assessed: “Poland has proven a certain determination and efficiency” as a country that is a credible partner for the U.S. (in Champion 2003). It therefore looked as though Poland had benefitted from its decision to support the U.S. in Iraq. According to the Wall Street Journal, the Iraq conflict had shown that Poland was becoming an “international player” (Champion 2003).

Over time, however, the allied occupation of Iraq became increasingly challenging. Iraq was growing highly unstable due to frequent insurgencies. After the first Polish casualty in November 2003, the enthusiasm for the mission waned among parts of the Polish elite (see Baylis and Roper 2006). The insurgency by Mahdi Army militiamen in the spring of 2004 revealed that the Polish contingent was badly equipped for the conditions of the prolonged occupation. A year after Poland had taken responsibility over the occupation zone, with the number of Polish casualties rising, much of the government’s earlier confidence subsided (Baylis and Roper 2006). At the same time, hopes about the liberalization of visas to the U.S.
for Polish citizens in return for Poland’s support in Iraq remained unfulfilled. Polish investments in post-war Iraq were also less successful than anticipated. The public grew increasingly critical of the occupation and wanted Polish troops to be withdrawn. Disappointment connected to these unfulfilled expectations triggered an unprecedented wave of anti-Americanism in Poland (Lubecki 2005). One might argue that Poland’s trust in U.S. leadership had simply gone too far. As it turned out a decade later, as part of its assistance for America’s ‘war on terror’, Poland had also hosted secret CIA prisons where terrorist suspects were held and tortured (European Court Condemns Poland over Secret CIA Torture Prisons 2014). Polish senior diplomat Radosław Sikorski, who had been a staunch supporter of Poland’s participation in the Iraq war, remarked retrospectively, “Poland joined the US rather uncritically and enthusiastically” (Thornhill and Cienski 2014). President Kwaśniewski expressed discomfort about the fact that Poland had been misguided by Washington’s alleged information about the presence of WMDs in Iraq. He later claimed that Poland supported the Iraq war based on false information on WMDs provided by the U.S. government (in Lepiarz 2006).

Others, including then Prime Minister Leszek Miller, continued to claim that the choice was still right, given that the United States launched a military intervention and with the information that was available to Polish decision makers at the time. Witold Waszczykowski, then working at the MFA’s department for strategic planning and the department on Africa and the Middle East, admitted: “I personally think that war was unnecessary. But we had to be on the side of the Americans” (Interview 27). According to the senior diplomat, it was a matter of establishing Poland’s role in the Atlantic security alliance. In other words, even if the Iraq war itself was a political miscalculation on the part of the United States, it does not mean that Poland’s decision to support it was.

With the disappointment over Iraq, Poland’s enthusiasm for supporting the U.S. faded. The disillusionment with the United States went hand in hand with resentment over the fact that the Iraq war had alienated Poland from its EU partners. ‘Europeanists’ among the Polish elite began to criticize Foreign Minister Cimoszewicz’s policy for contributing to what they saw as Washington’s plan of ‘keeping Europe divided’ (Lubecki 2005:90). The
experience of the Iraq war started a shift towards a more critical Atlanticist outlook in Poland’s strategic culture and greater openness towards collective European security provisions as a supplement to NATO. Following EU accession, Poland began to take an active part in the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), including in the discussions on the European Security Strategy (ESS) of 2003, and began its participation in ESDP missions (Chappell 2010). One might argue that Poland’s strategic culture started to transition towards greater orientation to the ‘European West’. The experience of Iraq also shaped Poland’s strategic culture in so far as Poland adopted a more reluctant attitude to military intervention. At least, the conclusion arose that analogies derived from Poland’s own experience with oppressive regimes and expectation of allied assistance could not be transferred to other parts of the world, such the Middle East. Warsaw’s neutral position on the intervention in Libya in 2011 illustrates this changed attitude.

This transformation in Poland’s strategic outlook was partly driven by the necessity of a changed political reality. The Iraq war had led to a retreat of the U.S. from Europe. It was in a way exactly what Poland had wanted to counteract with its Iraq policy. The U.S. announced plans for a large-scale reduction of its military presence in Europe (Baylis and Roper 2006). The prolonged occupation of Iraq was a hit to the American economy. The negative relations with Western Europeans also contributed to the withdrawal of the U.S. from European affairs, especially after the Obama Administration took office. One of the greatest disappointments in Poland was the abandonment of the missile defense shield project on Polish territory in 2009. To restore negative relations with France and Germany, among other reasons, the U.S. decided to leave matters regarding Europe and its neighborhood much more to the Europeans. This trend was already evident during the remainder of Bush’s presidency and impacted on events during the Georgia war discussed in the next chapter.

Meanwhile, the terrorist attacks in Madrid in March 2004 weakened the Atlanticist camp in Europe. In Poland, the internal critique of the Iraq war certainly contributed – although probably not decisively – to the declining popularity of the post-communist SLD government. However, while the governing party lost the national election in 2005, the new government under PiS maintained a pro-American outlook. Only the PO government under
Prime Minister Donald Tusk, elected in 2007, withdrew Polish troops from Iraq and pursued a much more ‘Europeanist’ foreign policy than its predecessors. In the decade following the Iraq crisis Poland was less able to pursue its Atlanticist outlook and therefore focused more on the EU. It would, however, be an exaggeration to conclude, as some have done, that following the Iraq war Poland embarked on a transformation “from eurosceptic Atlanticist to enthusiastic pro-European” (Thornhill and Cienski 2014). The Atlanticist element never fully disappeared from Poland’s strategic culture, which has been proven by more recent events. After the Ukraine crisis, discussed in the final chapter, Poland used the opportunity of a renewed American interest in the region to push for the deployment of American troops on Polish territory (Smith-Spark and Shubert 2017). The transformation was therefore subtler than the earlier commentary portrayed.

From ‘New Europe’ to ‘latecomer’ stigma

What implication did the Iraq crisis have for the relationship between Poland and the EU? The intra-European dispute over Iraq had calmed down by the end of spring 2003. Mai’a Davis Cross (2017) argues that, paradoxically, the dispute over Iraq had brought Europeans closer together. The crisis allowed European leaders to openly address their concerns regarding the upcoming Eastern enlargement and achieve a ‘catharsis’. Following the height of the crisis, European leaders were more prepared to move forward and overcome their differences. As a sign of unity, the leaders of France, Germany and Poland held a Weimar Triangle meeting in the Polish city Wroclaw in May 2003 during which they “reaffirmed their mutual respect and attachment to European unity and trans-Atlantic ties” (Lubecki 2005:77). The next month, Poles voted in a referendum on joining the European Union. The high approval for EU membership of 77.6% of the votes showed that Poles were still overwhelmingly committed to becoming EU members. The German and French critique on the candidate country was gradually replaced with a more positive discourse on the perspective enlargement. The following spring, Poland and seven other Central and Eastern European states entered the EU.

However, while the intra-European divide over Iraq had been overcome, and perhaps even contributed to closer European integration in the area of foreign policy, as Davis Cross argues, it also had a lingering impact on the dynamics between so-called ‘new’ and ‘old’
Europe. Both the ‘new’ Europeans and the ‘core’ Europeans used the Iraq crisis as a way to shape the political reality of post-enlargement Europe. Actors try to enforce order within a society through stratification (Adler-Nissen 2014a). They use discourses to reshape (hierarchical) order of a society (Lincoln 1989; Bially Mattern 2005a). At first, Poland and the other CEECs successfully resisted the verbal stigmatization of the anti-Iraq war camp through a strategy of contestation. The candidate countries were, however, affected much more by the verbal fighting than the other parties in the dispute. As newcomers to the Western institutions, they were in a vulnerable position since they depended on the recognition as part of the larger Western identity community. Especially when the Iraq war itself turned out unsuccessful and the Atlanticist option became less viable, Poland found itself in an ontologically insecure position.

As the Atlanticist camp in Europe crumbled, ‘core’ Europe remained the only authority in the discursive construction of political reality in Europe. Thus, the Franco-German narrative about the Iraq crisis became established in European public discourse. In particular, the discourse portrayed the Atlanticist camp as ‘troublemakers’ who had compromised European unity. It blamed the division of Europe on the ‘Letter of the Eight’, in which solidarity with America was declared (see Hofmann 2003). The ‘New Europe’ narrative, which portrayed Poland and the other new EU members as questionably European, continued after the Iraq crisis. It became a new form of the former communist countries’ stigma as ‘outsiders’.

During the Iraq crisis, Poland’s leaders tried to resist stigmatization through a confrontational response. However, a ‘contestation’ strategy can lead to further alienation of the individual from the larger society and reinforce the insider-outsider dynamics. Polish elites realized that they could not afford to alienate France and Germany. As a lesson learned from this, some among Poland’s elites began to favor a different strategy of dealing with stigmatization. The ‘adaptation’ strategy aimed at proving that Poland had learned from its mistakes in the Iraq conflict. As I will argue in later chapters, this strategy focused on demonstrating to its EU allies that Poland had become an easier partner to work with and had become ‘fully’ European. Since the Iraq crisis, Poland found itself caught in tensions
between, on the one hand, its ambition to contest its stigma as a ‘latecomer’, and, on other hand, proving itself as a full member of the European identity community.

V. CONCLUSION
An analysis based on strategic culture provides a framework for understanding Poland’s decision to participate in the U.S. intervention in Iraq. The Atlanticist outlook in Poland’s strategic culture is connected to the idea that the United States and NATO are Poland’s most important security guarantors. Additionally, certain norms and ideas on security embedded in Poland’s strategic culture were closer to the United States than some of its EU partners. Simultaneously, Poland saw a strong U.S. presence in Europe as an important counterbalance to the emergence of a powerful European ‘core’, particularly under German leadership.

The debate over the Iraq war presented itself as an opportunity for Poland to actively participate in shaping the European security landscape. By formulating its foreign policy independently from some of its most important European partners, Poland wanted to assert its position in the Euro-Atlantic configuration. This was particularly important because the Iraq crisis coincided with a time of significant transition in Poland’s foreign policy. Having recently entered NATO and being on the verge of membership to the European Union, Poland was transitioning from ‘outsider’ to ‘newcomer’ in the ‘West’. After over two hundred years of limited or no sovereignty and threat from its immediate neighbors, Poland was finally securing its long-term strategic objective of becoming part of the ‘Western’ political and security alliance. Through the participation in the Iraq mission, the Polish government wanted to affirm Poland’s position as established ‘insider’.

The Iraq crisis became a defining moment for the West and the EU as identity communities. The transatlantic rift and the upcoming of the eastern enlargement of the EU created a new political reality in Europe, which was conveyed in public discourse. In moments of transition and instability actors construct new narratives to make sense of what they perceive as changed reality and engage in ‘verbal fighting’ over the definition of reality. The transatlantic dispute therefore triggered new narratives and attempts to define European identity. In particular, the verbal dispute focused on the East-West divide between
‘established’ EU members and the Central and Eastern European candidate countries, so called ‘New Europe’. The Franco-German discourse portrayed the candidate countries’ support of the Iraq war as evidence that they are unprepared for EU accession, which targeted Poland’s ontological security.

Initially, the critique of its Western European neighbors only consolidated Poland’s pro-American position. For Polish elites the stigmatizing language of Germany and France, and the praising of the Americans affirmed their choice. Politicians and opinion leaders in Poland and other Central and Eastern European countries actively contested the stigmatizing Franco-German discourse. Initially, many among the Polish political elite also regarded the Iraq war itself as a success. However, as the situation in Iraq became increasingly unstable and was turning into a prolonged occupation, the enthusiasm among Polish elites faded. The disillusionment was amplified by the absence of expected rewards for Poland’s commitment to the United States. This coincided with a retreat of the U.S. from Europe and a general weakening of the Atlanticist camp. As the strongly Atlanticist position in Poland wore off, the Europeanist position of ‘core’ Europe emerged as the winner of the Iraq dispute.

The Iraq crisis had a lingering effect on Poland’s ontological security as the country prepared for EU membership. Its ‘latecomer’ stigma was consolidated in European public discourse. While the stigmatization of Eastern Europe was nothing new, it was the first instance that the stigma emerged in this particular form. Polish elites would continue to refer to this experience of verbal punishment when making controversial decisions in foreign policy. The consequences of the ‘Iraq adventure’ became internalized in Poland’s strategic culture.
A LITTLE WAR THE WORLD FORGOT: POLAND’S INITIATIVE DURING THE RUSSO-GEORGIAN WAR

On the night of August 11, 2008, the leaders of five countries, Polish President Lech Kaczyński, Lithuanian President Valdas Adamkus, Estonian President Toomas Hendrik Ilves, Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko, and Latvian Prime Minister Ivars Godmanis, crossed the Azeri-Georgian border. The five statesmen travelled in cars which were offered by the Azeri government to take them from their landing site to the border where they switched into Georgian vehicles. The next morning, they arrived in the Georgian capital Tbilisi. The country they entered was in midst of a war. For four days, heavy fighting had continued in the Tskhinvali region, also known as South Ossetia, a disputed, semi-autonomous region within Georgia, between Georgian forces on the one side, and Ossetian separatist groups backed by Russian military forces, on the other. The Russian military had also invaded Georgia proper bombing Georgian cities, including sites close to Tbilisi, and was threatening to seize the capital.

The leaders of Poland and the Baltic states had travelled together from Warsaw in the Polish governmental plane. On a stopover in Crimea, Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko joined them. Initially, the five men were supposed to fly directly into Tbilisi, but they did not receive a safe air passage. It was the Polish president who initiated this untypical and adventurous state visit. On the day of their arrival, the four presidents and one prime minister appeared during a rally in Tbilisi in front of a crowd of thousands of Georgian citizens to condemn what they called aggressive and imperialist actions by Russia against its neighbor. “We are here to show solidarity,” they declared to the crowd of Georgians (Lech Kaczyński w Gruzji 2008).

At the same time as the five Eastern European leaders, French President Nicolas Sarkozy was also present in Georgia but declined to participate in the rally. With France holding the (rotating) EU Presidency, Sarkozy was acting as representative of the EU. He had just returned from Moscow where he had negotiated a ceasefire agreement with Russian
President Dmitry Medvedev. The Baltic states and Poland, however, were highly critical of this plan due to its vague terminology and lack of reference to Georgia’s territorial integrity. Meanwhile, other European states, notably the French and the Germans, disapproved of what they perceived as Eastern European “hysteria towards Russia” (Six Days that Broke One Country 2008). What motivated this, as The Economist called it, “hair-raising trip to Tbilisi” by “sympathetic ex-communist states” to rescue Georgia (In Memoriam: Lech Kaczynski 2010)? Why did these leaders become so invested in the fate of a small country in the South Caucasus to de facto sideline Sarkozy’s negotiation efforts?

Analyzing the conflict through the lens of Poland’s strategic culture helps to show how Poland’s leaders interpreted the events, and their significance for Poland’s and the EU’s relations with Russia, Georgia and the wider post-Soviet space. In particular, Poland’s past experience of Russian occupation and Western abandonment, and historical ties with Georgia informed Poland’s position. These elements of strategic culture connected Poland with the other countries partaking in the mission to Tbilisi. A ‘situated’ analysis referring to strategic culture can also help to understand the difference between these countries’ position towards the war and that of Poland’s key Western European partners, including the position represented by President Sarkozy. This diplomatic initiative demonstrated Poland’s pursuit of exercising subjectivity in the wider Eastern Neighborhood in the attempt to act as a ‘regional’ leader and, at the same time, trying to influence the common European response to this conflict.

However, the Polish president’s initiative was facing domestic opposition. Poland’s Prime Minister Donald Tusk tried to discourage the mission. Initially, he even refused to give the president permission to use the governmental plane. The internal divide resulted from constraints imposed by the ‘Western’ dimension of Poland’s strategic culture, notably the relationship with its EU allies. As the domestic political dispute over the Georgia crisis showed, many among Poland’s political elite were driven by the concern of being perceived as overly ‘biased’ and ‘Russophobe’. Already prior to the Russo-Georgian war, Poland’s position on Russia had isolated it from its Western European partners (Copsey and Pomorska 2010). For example, after its veto on the European Commission’s mandate to negotiate a new Partnership and Co-operation Agreement (PCA) with Russia at the end of 2006, Poland was
criticized for infringing on the EU’s ability “to speak with one voice” (EU-Russian Summit in Helsinki 2006). Poland’s expressions of its skeptical attitude towards Russia were negatively perceived in the EU and were seen as a sign of Poland’s inability to compromise. The image of Poland as ‘irrationally’ and overly ‘emotionally’ ‘Russophobe’ was, among other things, contributing to its ‘latecomer’ stigma, its allegedly incomplete transformation into a ‘European’ international actor. The Iraq crisis had already shown the consequences of a Polish foreign policy deviant from France and Germany.

The action of President Lech Kaczyński during the Georgia crisis – which sidelined the efforts of the EU presidency and openly confronted Russia – not only failed to ‘comply’ with EU ‘norms’ on foreign policy. It deliberately sought to contest the assumptions about acceptable and unacceptable behavior, and thus challenge established hierarchies. In other words, this approach rejected the logic of socialization and viewed it as the perpetuation of hierarchies within the EU. By contrast, the government of Prime Minister Tusk sought to overcome Poland’s ‘latecomer’ status by demonstrating that Poland can effectively comply with the expectations of its key EU partners. This approach not only accepted socialization but saw it as key to Poland’s success within the EU community. The war in Georgia intensified the rivalry between two political camps in Poland, one preferring the ‘contestation’ approach, and the other the ‘adaptation’ strategy. The crisis became a test for these strategies. This chapter shows that under time pressure and in the heat of war the more confrontational position dominated Poland’s response and seemed to bring successes. However, soon after the war ended, it turned out that Poland was not able to influence the EU’s position in line with its interpretation of the conflict. In the medium-run, Poland’s foreign policy towards the Eastern Neighborhood became driven by the ambition of the Polish government to prove to its EU partners that Poland was able to cooperate within the EU through ‘adaptation’.

I. THE RUSSO-GEORGIAN WAR IN POLAND’S STRATEGIC CULTURE
Poland’s strong political involvement in a war so far away from its borders may appear surprising. Indeed, in one of the few international relations articles analyzing the visit of the five statesmen to Tbilisi Ainus Lašas (2012:106) asks:
Why did the Baltic states and Poland take a decisive and unequivocal stand on the Russo-Georgian war and thus risk substantive deterioration of relations with Moscow? Why were they willing to incur considerable costs standing up for a country that had little geopolitical and economic relevance to the Baltic region at large?

Through a contextualized account, which considers historical experience and interpretation of geopolitical realities rooted in Polish strategic culture, and which integrates material interest, physical and ontological security, I shall refute the assumption entailed in the second question. As argued earlier, strategic culture helps to understand how a foreign policy actor assesses a situation in the international environment. In the situation of an international crisis, where decisions must be taken under time pressure, actors make decisions based on bounded rationality, drawing on ideas and beliefs engrained in national strategic cultures. An analysis based on strategic culture can therefore help to understand why many among the Polish public and political elite believed that the Russo-Georgia conflict signified a dangerous trend with direct consequences for Poland’s security.

1.1 Poland’s views on Russia

The main difference between Poland’s assessment of the conflict and that of the ‘official’ EU line represented by Sarkozy relates to perceptions and attitudes towards Russia. To President Kaczyński and many others in Poland, the conflict signaled a renewed trend in Moscow’s foreign policy to control the post-Soviet space. This trend – if not stopped – could in the future threaten Poland’s own security. This belief was also what connected Poland with the other countries partaking in the mission. As argued in chapter 2, the historical experience of Russia as Poland’s main adversary, and existential threat to Poland’s security and territorial integrity has deeply shaped Polish strategic culture. The experience of Russian imperialism and later Soviet expansion led influential strategic thinkers, such as the interwar leader Józef Piłsudski, to conclude that any form of Russian expansionist ambition constitutes a direct threat to Poland (see Suleja 1995; Nowak 2001). After the end of the Cold War, the retreat of Russian troops from Polish territory, and Poland’s entrance into NATO, the country was in an unprecedentedly stable and secure position. As a result, Poland adopted a largely
cooperative foreign policy approach towards Russia. Nevertheless, Russia had remained at least a hypothetical threat in Poland’s strategic thinking (Michta 1995).

In the time leading up to the war in Georgia, certain developments in Russian domestic and foreign politics were alarming Polish elites. Polish-Russian relations had enjoyed a mostly peaceful period under the presidency of Boris Yeltsin. Russia came to accept the independence of Ukraine, Belarus and other states emergent from the disintegrated Soviet Union. It tolerated the Western orientation of Poland and other former Soviet satellite states, and even their accession into Western international institutions. However, the end of the 1990s and especially the presidency of Vladimir Putin signaled a change in Russian policy. The Chechen wars (1994-1996 and 1999-2000) indicated that Moscow would not accept any further aspirations of independence on the territory of the Russian Federation. Russia’s action in response to the ‘colored revolutions’ in its neighborhood also showed that Moscow was unwilling to let go of its political and economic influence in the post-Soviet space. Both the Rose Revolution in Georgia in 2003 and the Orange Revolution in Ukraine in 2003 were triggered by civil outrage against falsified elections, and protesters demanded democratization and a pro-Western course of their countries. In response, Moscow imposed economic sanctions on both countries. After President Aleksander Kwaśniewski and other Polish politicians mobilized international support for the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, Poland’s relations with Russia substantially cooled (see Wagstyl and Warner 2005). The Kremlin began a hostile foreign policy towards Warsaw, including, among other things, under false pretenses imposing an embargo on Polish meat products and other agricultural goods exported to Russia in 2005.

Poland and other countries in the former Soviet space, notably the Baltic states, viewed this trend with great concern. Despite membership in NATO and the EU, Poland maintained some skepticism whether its security can be permanently maintained in the light of Russia’s ambitions to control politics in the post-Soviet region. This concern stemmed from the deep ontological insecurity about its position as ‘outpost’ or ‘periphery’ of the West. Poland’s ontological security is strongly dependent on the situation in its Eastern Neighborhood – the countries that lie in between Poland and Russia. This concerns especially
Ukraine, discussed in the next chapter, but also other countries in the former Soviet space. Poland worried that Moscow was actively trying to prevent the democratization and integration of these countries with the West.

Moreover, Russia’s politics in the post-Soviet space constituted a problem for Poland’s energy security. Russia remained the biggest supplier of oil and gas to Poland and Europe in general. After the breakdown of the USSR, only parts of the Soviet energy reserves had fallen to Russia. However, because of the arrangement of the transport networks, Moscow had *de facto* maintained control over the reserves in other parts of the former Soviet Union (Wyciszkwiecz 2008). By 2008, it was becoming obvious that the Russian government was, as one scholar puts it, “using energy dependencies for political purposes in order to pressure former Soviet republics into not pursuing ‘too close’ relations with the West and into agreeing to Russian-led integration initiatives, and otherwise following policies considered desirable by Russian leadership” (Balmaceda 2007:8). Polish politicians therefore increasingly discussed the need to diversify the country’s energy sources. Since its entry into the EU, Warsaw also introduced a number of projects at the EU-level aimed at reducing the EU’s dependency on exports from Russia.

Despite Poland’s fear of Russian ‘economic imperialism’, Poland’s energy policy was nevertheless also driven by economic interests and the preferences of domestic actors, especially the state-owned monopoly Polish Oil and Gas Company (*Polskie Górnictwo Naftowe in Gazownictwo* PGNiG) (Gorska 2010). With all options of diversification being costly and difficult to implement, Russian gas was simply the most affordable choice. Thus, Joanna Gorska argues, although there was much discussion about diversifying energy imports away from Russia especially among center-right politicians, in practice Poland continued to rely on Russian gas.

1.2 Poland’s friend in the South Caucasus

Poland and Georgia have a history of friendly relations at least since the nineteenth century. The friendship between the two countries can be tied to three main factors: a sense of solidarity resulting from analogous histories, periods of cultural exchange, and most importantly, shared strategic goals, especially concerning Russia.
The ‘natural’ solidarity between the two nations comes from their similar fate of foreign occupation. Both Georgia and Poland are old countries – the former even more ancient than the latter – that were once powerful kingdoms. Both countries, as they passed their ‘golden age’, became a nexus between expanding empires and subjects to competition between great powers. The Kingdom of Georgia, which had been most prosperous during the thirteenth century, had first fallen under Persian and Ottoman, and then Russian rule (Rayfield 2012). Just like parts of partitioned Poland, Georgia remained under Russian occupation until World War I. Seizing the opportunity created by the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the Russian Civil War (1917-1922), the Georgian national movement declared independence at the same time as the Polish state reemerged on the map. However, after only a brief period of independence, the Georgian Democratic Republic (1918-21) was defeated by Bolshevik forces and incorporated into the Soviet Union.

Georgia and Poland were also connected by a sense of Western indifference towards them. As Donald Rayfield (2012) describes in his book Edge of Empires: A History of Georgia, the fate of Georgia’s history was repeatedly determined by the failure of faraway outside powers – be it the Byzantine Empire, Venice or Britain – to reciprocate Georgia’s ‘pro-Western’ sentiments (Georgians perceived themselves as closer to ‘Western’ civilization than their occupiers). Many times in their history, Georgian rulers had vainly appealed to foreign powers to come to their aid and protect their independence (Rayfield 2012). Poland and Georgia therefore share the historical experience of having been left on their own in their struggle for freedom and self-determination. However, compared to Georgia, Poland’s geographical location, its proximity to ‘Western’ powers, is much more advantageous. Even when Poland’s territoriality was very fragile in the interwar period, it could maintain its sovereignty longer (Kowal 2010). According to a Georgian international relations scholar, at present “Georgia is a victim of geography” (Interview 28). Despite Georgia’s efforts of modernization, democratization and the pursuit of closer relations with the EU and NATO, he argues, few in the West are convicted that the country could join these institutions because it is seen as lying in a ‘problematic region’.
Despite the geographical distance, the geopolitical environment fostered periods of intense cultural exchange between Georgia and Poland. As Georgia became part of the Russian Empire in the late eighteenth century, the fates of the two nations became interwoven. From Poland’s perspective, Georgia was a fellow nation imprisoned by Russia. They were both peripheries, at two different ends of the Russian Empire; both faced the oppression of non-Russian nations under Tsarist rule; both were constant rebels (Kowal 2010). Tsarist authorities banished Poles who had partaken in the uprisings for independence, such as the November Uprising of 1830-1831, to the South Caucasus, including Georgia. Captured Polish insurgents were also incorporated into the Russian Army and forced to partake in the suppression of independence movements in the Caucasus. Other forms of cultural exchange in this period include, for example, the prominent architecture in Georgia by the Tbilisi-based Polish architect Aleksander Szymkiewicz (1858-1908).

In the early twentieth century, Georgians and Poles were connected by common political goals. After the fall of the Georgian Democratic Republic to the Soviet Union, many Georgian nationalists fled to Poland. High-ranking officers of the Georgian army were given asylum in Poland. They graduated from Polish schools and are remembered in the history of the Polish military tradition. Many of them participated in the defense of Poland in 1939 and fought during the time of Nazi German occupation (Interview 15). Before the Second World War, a number of Polish-Georgian clubs and societies were active in Poland. All in all, despite the geographical distance and cultural differences (e.g. Catholicism vs. Orthodox Christianity, Slavic language vs. Kartvelian language), the two countries enjoyed a history of close and friendly relations. This is expressed in the writings of a Georgian poet:

We were far from one another … separated by mountains and space… Yet in spirit we were close. […] Our fates were the same. The same pain and the same wounds were tormenting us […] Yet the bright thought of liberation of Poland and Georgia lived in us, and grew and blossomed. (Kurulishvili 1923:1)

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9 “Daleko byliśmy jeden od drugiego… Góry i przestrzeń rozdzielaly nas… Ale duchem byliśmy bliscy i pokrewni. […] Los i dola nasza były jednakowe. Te same bóle i rany szarapły i męczyły nas […] Ale myśl świetlana wyzwolenia Polski i Gruzji żyła w nas, rosla i rozkwitła” (translated by author).
Also, in contrast to Ukraine, discussed in the next chapter, this relationship was not tainted by conflicts or territorial disputes. Poland’s relations with Georgia have been much less contentious and controversial.

Most importantly, Georgia plays a crucial role in Poland’s strategic vision of limiting Russian influence on the wider European continent. Already in 1904, Józef Piłsudski, who later became Poland’s leader, wrote in his memoir about the ‘historical nations of Russia,’ which included the Poles, Fins, Georgians and Armenians (Wyszczelski 2016:19). He developed the program of Prometeizm aimed at weakening the Russian Empire (or its successor state, the Soviet Union) by supporting independence movements of these nations. Piłsudski and his political supporters regarded the existence of a series of independent states in the Baltic, Black and Caspian Sea basins, instead of a single, aggressive Russian state, as crucial for Poland’s security. Georgian independence leaders were among the most supportive of the Prometeist idea (Wyszczelski 2016). In 1919, Poland immediately recognized Georgia’s independence and never officially accepted its annexation by the Soviets. It maintained close contact with the Georgian government in exile.

Although this foreign policy approach of the interwar period was eventually fruitless – mostly because of lacking support from the Entente powers – one might say that it inspired Poland’s foreign policy after 1989. Since the 1990s, Poland supported the independence of those nations that newly emerged from the USSR. However, Poland focused initially primarily on the close neighborhood, Ukraine, Belarus and Lithuania, without a strong conception of how to engage with the countries of the South Caucasus (Kowal 2010). For example, Poland only recognized the sovereign Georgian state in March 1992 – almost a year after Georgia had declared independence from the USSR. By contrast, Poland was along with Canada the first to recognize Ukraine’s independence. For some time, Poland’s historical connection with Georgia became almost forgotten. However, Poland’s interest in the Caucasus intensified after the Rose Revolution of November 2003, which, after forged election results, deposed the Georgian leader Edward Shevardnadze, formerly a prominent Soviet politician. After Russia imposed economic sanctions on Georgia following the government change to a strongly pro-Western and pro-American government, Poland renewed its engagement with Georgia. Since 2006, Poland also officially supported NATO
membership for Georgia. This was largely initiated as result of the personal friendship between Polish President Lech Kaczyński and Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili.

Mutual concern over Russia’s increasing surge for influence over the former Soviet space incentivized cooperation between the two countries. In Poland, particularly Lech Kaczyński, since he became president in 2005, initiated the pursuit of close alliances with other former-Soviet bloc states. Apart from Georgia, also Ukraine under Viktor Yushchenko and Lithuania under Valdas Adamkus were very interested in such a regional cooperation. Regional initiatives were driven by a shared sense that Brussels and Western European capitals were to some extent indifferent to these countries’ concerns regarding Russia. This concern also extended to the area of energy security. The building of the Nord Stream pipeline project, which would supply Russian gas directly to Germany omitting Poland and Ukraine, was strongly worrying Poland and highlighted the need for the diversification of energy (see Orenstein and Kelemen 2017:92). One such concept was the Odessa-Body-Gdansk pipeline project. Poland’s President Kaczyński and his cabinet advocated the building of a pipeline, which would supply oil and gas from Azerbaijan and Central Asia through Georgia to Poland. The pipeline project was supposed to reduce Poland’s economic dependency on Russia (Interview 40).

Since the only route that could provide oil and gas from the Caspian Sea region to Europe independently from Russia was through Georgia, the country was regarded to be of central importance to Poland’s and, in general, European energy security (Kowalski 2011). The regional cooperation project envisioned by the president was supposed to include current EU countries, Poland and Lithuania, two aspiring countries, Georgia and Ukraine, as well as Azerbaijan and ideally Kazakhstan. In the EU, this conception found support, among others, in Latvia, Estonia and the Czech Republic (Kowal 2010). The highpoint of Poland’s struggle for this kind of subjective and autonomous policy in the Eastern Neighborhood was the energy summit in Krakow in May 2007 organized by the Polish president. This summit was attended by the presidents of Lithuania, Ukraine, Georgia and Azerbaijan, and a representative from Kazakhstan (Światłowski 2015).

The Polish president’s initiative during the Russo-Georgian war thus related to a larger idea that former Soviet bloc states can work together to limit Russian influence on the
wider region and put pressure on the ‘West’. Seeing Poland as a leader of such an initiative, the president and his camp wanted to raise Poland’s potential for agency in the Eastern Neighborhood.

1.3 Impact of Western attitudes on Poland’s foreign policy strategies

Polish leaders since the end of the Cold War shared the understanding that the realization of Poland’s goals in regard to the Eastern Neighborhood depends on the support of the West – first the United States, later increasingly Europe. However, the role of Poland’s Western allies was ambiguous. A long-term concern for Poland had been the perception that Washington and Brussels (and Berlin and Paris) are willing to recognize Russian claims to the former Soviet space as a sphere of political and economic influence.

Since the end of the Cold War, primarily the United States and NATO were fulfilling the role of keeping Russia in check. As discussed earlier, Poland regarded the strong presence of the U.S. as the main guarantee against the re-emergence of a Russian threat. The U.S. had also become involved in the Caucasus. Especially following the Rose Revolution in Georgia, Washington began to support Georgia’s aspiration for a Membership Action Plan (MAP) in NATO and American businesses had made investments in Georgia. American support, among other things, enabled the opening of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline in 2005, which omits Russia. However, following the conflict in Iraq, the United States had begun a gradual retreat from Europe and the post-Soviet space. Moreover, in 2008 the second term of the Bush Administration was coming to an end and, pre-occupied with elections, the United States was less engaged in foreign policy matters (see Asmus 2010).

Given these developments, Poland was less able to rely on the Atlanticist West. With America’s decreasing involvement in the post-Soviet region, Poland had to rely on its European allies. However, in the EU, Russia was seen as an important strategic partner. Key members of the EU, including France and Germany, insisted that the EU needed to cooperate with Russia and engage in such a way in the region that was not seen as confrontational. Moreover, many European leaders saw the ‘change of leadership’ in Moscow under the presidency of Dmitri Medvedev in 2008 as a sign that Russia was democratizing, despite the
fact that Vladimir Putin had become prime minister. Medvedev was regarded as a liberal and a reformer of Russia, and welcomed in European capitals (see Orenstein and Kelemen 2017:91). Meanwhile, Poland’s open support of former Soviet Republics, like Ukraine and Georgia, for membership in the EU and NATO was causing tensions between Poland and influential member states, such as Germany and France, because it was seen as antagonizing Moscow. Especially Germany valued its ‘special relationship’ with Russia. Russian elites regard Germany as a “true friend and advocate in the West” while German elites enjoyed “their country’s role as an advocate of European interests with Russia, particularly in the economic field and often as mediator between Russia and the United States” (Rahr 2007:137).

Germany and France were therefore using their influence to push for a cooperative approach towards Russia to become a foreign policy ‘norm’ in the EU. These actors also tied this approach to the lager vision of the EU and its members as ‘postmodern’ security actors that avoid confrontation with other actors (see Mälksoo 2010:69). Despite criticism regarding Russia’s democratic developments and interference in the domestic affairs of countries in the post-Soviet region, the dominant view among countries of ‘old’ Europe was that Russia should be dealt with through attempts of ‘socialization’ and inclusion, or at least dialogue, rather than isolation. Thus, Poland’s approach was seen as confrontational and dangerous. As a result, Poland and other former Soviet bloc countries were increasingly ‘scolded’ for their ‘anti-Russian’ position. This reached its height under the Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (PiS) government (2005-2007). The issue of Russia was evoking memories of the Iraq war where Poland’s foreign policy choice was framed as contradictory to European norms.

Given these developments, Poland became increasingly caught in a dilemma between having to face Russia’s reviving interests in the Eastern Neighborhood, on the one hand, and dealing with pressures from its European partners, on the other hand. Of course, there were also divergences in attitudes towards Russia within the EU. Differences between political factions existed even in Germany; the government of Angel Merkel was more critical towards Russia than its predecessor under Gerhard Schröder. However, with the exception of Poland and the Baltic states, the tendency in the EU was to treat Russia as a partner (see
Orenstein and Kelemen 2017:90–2). Poland’s elites therefore saw two strategic choices. Poland could challenge the ‘logic of appropriateness’ regarding Russia that was widely accepted in the EU and build an alliance of like-minded actors, but therefore face increasing criticism from its European partners. The other option was showing that it had adapted to ‘European standards’ in order to gain credibility among its European partners in the hope of escaping stigmatization. This dilemma between two strategies manifested itself as an internal political divide in Poland. The war in Georgia became an opportunity of putting these two strategies to a trial.

**Domestic Split in Poland**

In chapter 2, I have argued that different aspects of a national strategic culture can come into conflict. Because more than one motive guides the actions of political elites, different elements of the national strategic culture can clash on different levels. This became visible in Poland on matters regarding Georgia and Russia. Since 2007, Poland had a period of cohabitation in which the president and the government represented two different political camps. According to Article 133 of the Polish Constitution, “the President of the Republic shall cooperate with the Prime Minister and the appropriate minister in respect of foreign policy” (The Constitution of the Republic of Poland (Engl.) 1997). This means that constitutional power to conduct foreign policy is shared between the president as the head of the state, and the prime minister and his or her government. The details, however, are not specifically determined, and neither does the constitution provide guidelines for a situation of disagreement over foreign policy matters between president and government. The constitution does not specify either whether the president or the prime minister should represent Poland in the EU – it has, however, become a convention that the prime minister takes this role. This ambiguity became the source of a power competition in the period of cohabitation between 2007 and 2010.

Poland’s President Lech Kaczyński adopted the strategy of contesting the ‘logic of appropriateness’ regarding Russia in the EU. His approach was based on the premise that Poland and other countries of Central and Eastern Europe have a right to define European politics towards Russia, thus challenging what was considered a foreign policy ‘norm’, and
in general partake in shaping these norms. This approach was preoccupied with asserting Poland’s ‘subjectivity’ *vis-à-vis* the EU (Cichocki 2009). It also rejected the established hierarchies between ‘new’ and ‘old’ EU members, and it challenged Poland’s position as a ‘student’ in a constant process of socialization. Such a foreign policy conception was not exclusive to Kaczyński and his political camp because it had already been pursued by President Kwaśniewski and the SLD government during the Iraq conflict (Cichocki 2003). However, it became increasingly identified with the politics of Lech Kaczyński and PiS.

The president was critical of the Western tendencies of ‘appeasing’ Russia. To pursue its foreign policy in the East, he believed, Poland needed to create a ‘regional bloc’. As a senior diplomat close to Kaczyński’s political camp explains, the president believed that the more friends Poland had in the East the more influence it had in the West, and that in order to be a serious partner in the West, Poland needed a coalition of like-minded countries (Interview 27). This related to the larger question of how active Poland should generally be in shaping rather than merely partaking in EU politics. The president and his supporters wanted Poland to have the position of a ‘subject’ in the EU. The maximum goal was to be one of the countries that make decisions in the EU and NATO but at least to be in a position where common decisions on eastern policy are discussed with Poland (Interview 27). This political camp also continued the aspiration of building stronger relations with the U.S. to counterbalance the sole focus on the EU (especially on Germany) in Poland’s foreign policy. This was especially because of America’s traditionally tougher approach to Russia and its willingness to consider NATO expansion to Ukraine and Georgia. Although President Kaczyński did not oppose a dialogue with Russia as such, he argued that Poland needed to maintain a firm position on Russia as long as Russia does not abandon its ‘imperial ambitions’ in the post-Soviet space.

However, Lech Kaczyński was unpopular in Europe. He and the PiS party were often viewed as Eurosceptic. In 2006, the president had claimed that the EU Constitutional Treaty had no chance of being ratified in Poland, and in 2008, he postponed the signature of the Lisbon Treaty until the second Irish referendum even though the treaty had already been approved by the Polish parliament (Beunderman 2006).
The Platforma Obywatelska (PO) government under Prime Minister Donald Tusk, which came to power in late 2007, pursued a fundamentally different strategy. Until about 2005, the two parties had pursued similar political agendas. Both parties had previously supported Poland’s engagement in the Iraq war. The PO party had also strongly opposed the plans to change the system of voting in the EU Council. In 2003, one of PO’s leading politicians (later the party’s candidate for the position of prime minister) famously said “Nice or death”, indicating Poland’s refusal to agree to the replacement of the weighted voting system as provisioned in the Treaty of Nice with a double majority system (“Nicea albo śmierć” 2004). However, after coming to power the leaders of the new government wanted to distinguish themselves from President Kaczyński and their predecessor government. The PO government opted for a smoother style than the often ‘-blunt’ diplomacy of the previous government under PiS. As Joanna Kaminska (2014:29) describes it, the government generally tried to act according to the logic of appropriateness in relations to the EU, i.e., in a way that its foreign policy would be “perceived as proper by other EU members.”

Prime Minister Tusk was pursuing the goal of bringing Poland closer to the ‘decision center’ of Europe through improving relations with Germany. He accepted Germany’s leadership in the EU, as explicitly conveyed in a famous speech by foreign minister Sikorski in Berlin (see Lucas 2011). In order to prove that Poland had matured and learned how to act within the EU framework, Tusk and his party wanted to reform Poland’s foreign policy. Drawing on the negative experience of the Iraq war, this political camp believed that Poland should recognize the competency of the West – increasingly equated with the European conception of the West – in formulating foreign policy goals, including those concerning Russian and the countries of the Eastern Neighborhood.

Tusk and his camp recognized that Berlin, which had a strong economic and political interest in a strategic partnership with Russia, reacted allergically to any signs of ‘anti-Russian’ diplomacy coming from Warsaw, especially when it appeared ‘emotionally-loaded’. A note of the Polish ministry of foreign affairs from 2008 reveals the change of strategy towards Russia and the Eastern Neighborhood. It suggests a revision of Poland’s assumption regarding Russia, rejecting the long-held view of Russia as a potential threat to Poland and other EU and NATO members. It also emphasizes that Poland needed to enter a dialogue
with Russia in order to increase its credibility among its European allies (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Poland 2008). Improving relations with Russia was therefore a strategic decision of the Polish government to be more in line with its partners in the EU. The PO government thus started a reset of relations with Russia. Within a month in office the new government withdrew Poland’s veto on the Partnership and Co-operation Agreement between the EU and Russia. In return, Russia responded with the abolition of its embargo on Polish meat (Russia Lifts Embargo on Polish Meat 2007). Tusk’s visit to Moscow in early 2008 was the first visit of a Polish government leader to Russia since 2003 (Tusk w Moskwie 2008).

The prime minister also changed Poland’s strategy towards the United States, moving away from the ‘uncritical pro-Americanism’ which marked Poland’s foreign policy during the Iraq war, and which was continued during the two years under the PiS-led government. In 2008, Poland withdrew its troops from Iraq. The government also toned down on the unconditional endorsement of the U.S. project to deploy a strategic missile defense shield on Polish soil by its predecessors and the president (Tusk Pledges Better Poland-EU Relations 2007). Instead, Tusk was bargaining with Washington, demanding more money to fund Poland’s military modernization goals in exchange for cooperation on missile defense (Tusk’s Missile Defense Dilemma 2008). The Polish government also began to support the general trend in Europe of transforming the focus of the military from territorial defense to expeditionary corps and highly trained elite troops.

One can therefore characterize the difference between the two political camps in the following way: One camp rejected the logic of socialization and saw it as the perpetuation of hierarchies within the EU; the other accepted it and saw it as key to Poland’s success within that community. These domestic differences over foreign policy strategy became further visible during Poland’s response to the Russo-Georgian war in August 2008.
II. CRISIS FORESHADOWED: THE NATO BUCHAREST SUMMIT

A decisive moment for what was about to happen in August 2008 was the NATO Bucharest Summit a few months earlier. On April 2-4, 2008, the alliance met in Bucharest to discuss, among other topics, the possibility of a Membership Action Plan (MAP) for Georgia and Ukraine. The summit revealed the differences among members of the alliance on the issue of potential enlargement. It also showed the lack of zeal in the Euro-Atlantic community for supporting the membership aspirations of these two countries and in general their quest for inclusion in the ‘West’. The great exceptions were Poland, Lithuania, and a few other Central and Eastern European members, acting under a silent patronage of the United States.

The issue split the alliance more or less in half, and the friction somewhat resembled the division over the Iraq war. Supporters of granting a MAP included a ‘coalition of friends of Georgia’, especially Poland, the Baltic states, Romania, and the United States. Other supporters included Canada and, to a lesser extent, Britain. The main opponents were Germany and France, as well as Belgium, the Netherlands, Greece, Luxembourg, Italy, Spain, and Turkey (Asmus 2010). German Chancellor Angela Merkel had openly declared her opposition during her visit to Moscow a few weeks earlier and had refused to meet either Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko or Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili in Brussels a month earlier when they sought talks on NATO.

2.1 Reasons for disagreement over Georgia

In the case of Georgia, the arguments against a MAP revolved primarily around three issue areas: the breakaway republics Abkhazia and South Ossetia, the democratic development in the country, and relations with Russia. Probably the strongest objection to a MAP, officially brought up by the opposing camp, was the question of Georgia’s territorial integrity. Many NATO members were pushing for Georgia first to settle its disputes with the two breakaway republics, South Ossetia and Abkhazia, before its membership could be considered. Since the disintegration of the Soviet Union, separatists in the Tskhinvali region (South Ossetia) and Abkhazia, who were largely oriented towards Russia, were struggling for recognition of the regions’ independence from Georgia. Although tensions were constant since the mid-1990s, the situation was deteriorating in the months before to the NATO summit.
Another issue brought up by the countries opposing a MAP for Georgia concerned the development of democracy in the country. Since the Rose Revolution of 2003, which ended the rule of post-communist leader Eduard Shevardnadze, Georgia had made significant progress in the areas of democracy, rule of law and human rights. The government under Mikhail Saakashvili, who was one of the leaders of the Rose Revolution, sought closer relations with the West. In order to become an eligible member for both the Atlantic alliance and in the long run also the European Union, Georgia underwent a modernization process improving governance and implementing economic reforms while upholding democratic aspirations. Saakashvili’s modernization agenda entailed a fight against organized crime and corruption, and implied “strengthening or even building state institutions from scratch, challenging ethnic and clan affiliations, and promoting a sense of modern citizenship through new rhetoric and reform of the education system” all of which contributed to the centralization of power (Darchiashvili 2012:42). This was a painful process for many Georgian families because it dismantled their traditional sources of income and was one of the reasons why the government began to lose public support. In late 2007, a series of anti-government demonstrations took place in Tbilisi to which Saakashvili responded by declaring a state of emergency. Many European leaders, especially those already skeptical about Georgia’s readiness to receive a MAP, became critical of Saakashvili’s government as the events demonstrated how far the current leadership was prepared to go to retain power.

The final issue brought up by the opponents concerned the effect of Georgia’s MAP on the alliance’s relations with Russia. According to the French defense minister, Hervé Morin, Georgia could only acquire a MAP if it is not seen as a threat by Russia (French Minister’s Remarks Wrong Message to Russia 2007). The argument was based on the concern about Georgia’s unstable relations with Russia and the fear that if Georgia became a NATO member, and its relations with Russia deteriorated, so would the West’s relations with Russia. Even worse, if the Abkhazia and South Ossetia conflicts escalated, NATO and Russia would find themselves supporting opposing sides of an ethnic territorial conflict. Some experts argued that the question of a MAP for Georgia and Ukraine was not just a strategic matter but also a political issue. “If we get Georgia or Ukraine into NATO, it transfers the nature of the alliance from military to a political club,” argued Thomas Gomart, director of
Actors in favor of Georgia’s future membership in NATO, on the other hand, emphasized that a membership perspective would motivate Georgia’s development in the direction of the West. They also argued that if the alliance endorsed Georgia, tensions in South Ossetia and Abkhazia were more likely to be resolved. They argued that only a clear political signal from NATO would give a chance for a lasting stabilization in the South Caucasus. After all, as long as the debate over a MAP was still open, Russia had an incentive to prevent the resolution of Georgia’s territorial disputes. Georgia’s NATO membership aspirations were also motivating reforms and cooperation with the West. Just a month after the Rose Revolution, the Georgian government had drafted an Individual Partnership Action Plan, which was approved in October 2004 under NATO’s Partnership for Peace program. In 2005, Georgia signed an agreement with NATO on providing host-nation support and transit of NATO forces and personnel. Georgia had also supported the Iraq invasion, sending 2,000 soldiers as it counted on American backing for its NATO accession (Asmus 2010).

Among the allies, Poland was one of the greatest supporters of Georgia’s MAP. President Lech Kaczyński, together with his head of chancellery, Anna Fotyga, and Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski attended the summit. Warsaw stressed that both Ukraine and Georgia can contribute to the functioning of the Alliance (Górka-Winter and Madej 2010). Poland’s position was that the admission of both countries should not be interpreted as a confrontational step toward Russia but as a way to consolidate those countries’ pro-democratic reforms and to increase stability in Europe. However, as an intense debate broke out over the issue, much of the discussion concerned Russia. Poland believed that the opponents of a MAP were mostly weary of antagonizing Moscow. Polish President Lech Kaczyński argued that the alliance could not “let Russia have a veto on this,” it was unfair to Georgia and Ukraine, and “not how NATO works” (in Asmus 2010:133).
2.2 Outcome of the summit

Because the meeting had come to a deadlock over this issue, German Chancellor Merkel proposed a compromise according to which the alliance would not grant a MAP to the two countries but declare that both countries would ‘in the future’ become NATO members (Asmus 2010). Lithuanian President Adamkus recalls that the proponents of a MAP were effectively “trying to change every word in that resolution […] to bring closer the admittance of those countries” (in Chagelishvili 2014). Finally, a text was created that all sides were willing to accept for the time being. The result was a somewhat imprecise declaration, which stated that “NATO welcomes Ukraine’s and Georgia’s Euro-Atlantic aspirations for membership,” and agreed that “these countries will become members of NATO” and that a “MAP is the next step for Ukraine and Georgia on their direct way to membership” (NATO Bucharest Summit Declaration 2008). However, the declaration was without any reference to a specific time or accession plan.

At the same time, the alliance declared its concern with “the persistence of regional conflicts in the South Caucasus […] We will continue to support efforts towards a peaceful settlement of these regional conflicts, taking into account these principles” (NATO Bucharest Summit Declaration 2008). It was agreed that the question of a MAP would be discussed again in December even though Lithuania, Poland and Romania were firmly against postponing the issue until then. Although the CEECs somewhat successfully influenced the wording of the declaration, Poland was deeply dissatisfied with the solution. This is reflected in an interview Lech Kaczyński gave in Newsweek following the war in August. He argued: “[…] if NATO had offered the MAP [Membership Action Plan] to Ukraine and Georgia in Bucharest, I doubt we would have had this crisis,” making clear that in his opinion the Bucharest decision had a direct impact on what happened a few months later in Georgia (Nagorski 2008). The American diplomat and strong supporter of NATO’s Eastern enlargement, Ronald Asmus (2010) makes a similar claim in his analysis of the conflict. He argues that the Bucharest Summit created a window of opportunity for Russia to act. The alliance’s lack of commitment to Georgia revealed the possibility of eliminating the country’s perspective of NATO accession altogether if territorial disputes in the breakaway regions were to escalate.
III. WAR IN THE CAUCASUS AND WESTERN REACTION

The immediate trigger of the Russo-Georgian war was the tension in Georgia’s two breakaway republics, South Ossetia and Abkhazia. The tensions between Georgia and separatist forces in both regions were a constant problem since Georgia’s independence from the Soviet Union and had led to a war in the early 1990s. Since then, multiple rounds of negotiations to resolve the territorial disputes had taken place with the mediation of the international community, including the United Nations (UN) and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). Negotiations kept failing not least because of the involvement of the Russian Federation. While Russian peacekeepers were deployed in the disputed territories to prevent hostilities, there is evidence that they contributed to the instigation of conflicts. This included the distribution of Russian passports to residents of the two breakaway regions by institutions not legally authorized to do so, such as military authorities (Parliament of Georgia 2009). Russia was also likely to be involved in the deposition of South Ossetian and Abkhazian leaders with a sympathetic attitude towards Georgia (Interview 37). Since Mikhail Saakashvili came to power in Georgia, he had begun to increase pressure on South Ossetia (Nichol 2009).

In the months immediately before the war of 2008, Russia no longer kept its involvement in Georgia’s breakaway regions a secret. In March 2008, the lower chamber of the Duma recognized the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Shortly after, Russian troops were detected crossing the border transporting anti-aircraft missiles and helicopters. Multiple violations of Georgian airspace by Russian military aircrafts took place (Nichol 2009; Parliament of Georgia 2009). Russia also launched cyber-attacks on Georgian websites related to communications, finance, and the government (Holliis 2011). Despite the intervention of the international community, negotiations with the separatists were failing. Poland and other former Soviet bloc countries were calling on the international community to intervene. In the European Parliament, individual MEP’s, especially from the newer members states, were asking for the EU to take a more active role and to engage in conflict resolution with the deployment of a European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) mission, and to call on the UN Security Council to “establish truly independent international
peacekeeping forces” replacing Russian peacekeepers (European Parliament Debate 2008). Nevertheless, according to then Georgian foreign minister, Ekaterine Tkeshelashvili, no one among the major Western powers seemed to believe that tensions could actually turn into a conventional war (Interview 31).

Increased artillery shelling in South Ossetia since August 4 led President Saakashvili to announce a unilateral ceasefire on the evening of August 7 and call for peaceful negotiations. The same night, the president made phone calls to the presidents of Poland and Lithuania, the Swedish Foreign Minister, and the NATO Secretary-General informing them about the situation (Chagelishvili 2014). At 23:50 Georgian military forces launched an attack on Tskhinvali. The war officially began. When the Georgian National Security Council in an emergency session received reports about the movement of Russian tanks, Georgia declared unilateral ceasefire again (Jones 2013). In spite of that, Russia responded by invading Georgia proper through the Roki tunnel. The Georgian opposition later blamed the government for having overestimated the Georgian military capacity and underestimated the Russian reaction (Jones 2013). Nevertheless, the Russian response by far exceeded the official pretext of acting under the ‘responsibility to protect’.

3.1 Two European responses
When the Georgian war began, the eyes of the world were turned towards China, which hosted the Beijing Olympics opening on August 8. The speed of events, and their timing – many European state officials were either on vacation or in Beijing – made it difficult for EU crisis management structures to come into force (Interview 35). The European crisis response can therefore be described as the sum of two more or less independent diplomatic initiatives: a French initiative, representing the EU Presidency, and a Central and Eastern European one. The United States was initially in the background, but it played a decisive role on the final day of the war. However, as documents revealed through Wikileaks show, Washington supported the CEEC’s approach and viewed Sarkozy’s plan rather critically (Szymaniak and Lorenc 2010).

Although neither of the European initiatives claimed to be undermining the other, when analyzing the underlying assumptions and goals of each initiative, fundamental
differences can be found. One could intervene that the Eastern European initiative was largely symbolic whereas the French diplomatic effort achieved factual results in the ceasefire negotiations with Russia, and that therefore the two can hardly be compared. However, of interest here is that both Sarkozy and the Central and Eastern European leaders had concrete aims, and these aims expressed the actors’ convictions about the meaning of this conflict for Europe at large.

As France was holding the EU Presidency, the French President Sarkozy acted as the spokesman of the EU during the crisis. The French president acted under the assumption that he embodied a common EU approach. According to Larsen, France’s action can be explained as an ‘overwhelming’ identification with the EU, among other things, to show that the EU was able to manage a crisis in its immediate neighborhood, especially without having to rely on Washington (Larsen 2009). On August 12, Sarkozy and his foreign minister, Bernard Kouchner, travelled to Moscow to negotiate a ceasefire. They brokered a deal, which they believed to be a success because Russia agreed to stop its military advance (Sarkozy 2016:202–3). Sarkozy believed that the crisis could only be solved through a dialogue with the Russians and not by ‘offending’ them (Sarkozy 2016:203) France’s approach to the negotiations was based on the conviction that Saakashvili should not have launched his military offensive and that Georgia has “in essence lost the war” (Asmus 2010:202). As Asmus argues, the goal of Sarkozy and Kouchner’s negotiations was all along not to accuse Russia of being the aggressor. Nor had they intended to try to win back for Georgia what it had lost on the battlefield. […] They] wanted to bring the war to a close while preventing a chasm from opening up in relations between Moscow and the West. (Asmus 2010:202)

However, the document that Sarkozy presented in Tbilisi was not received as a great success by the Georgian government. It was considered vague, having no reference to Georgia’s territorial integrity, and lacked specific dates and locations, which would later turn out to be problematic.

A group of Central and Eastern European states, including Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Ukraine, organized a different kind of response. Poland’s president, who had
initiated this action, argued that the EU’s foreign policy decisions should not be made only by Berlin and Paris, which in his view, had so far been the case (*Präsidet Kaczynski will Osteuropa-Block 2008*). The group of countries was concerned with the asymmetric distribution of power in the conflict. Poles were not uncritical of Saakashvili’s decision to start the war but considered it to have been the result of a provocation (see Szymaniak and Lorenc 2010). The countries wanted the international community to take action almost immediately after the first guns had been fired. Already on August 8, they asked for an extraordinary EU summit meeting on Georgia. Because their call was unanswered, the next day the presidents of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland met in Warsaw and issued a ‘Joint Declaration on the Situation in Georgia’ in which they condemned Russia’s actions. The leaders were also asking the EU presidency to take more supportive steps towards Georgia. They unveiled a plan for an international stabilization force for the South Caucasus and recommended this plan to French President Sarkozy for consideration by the EU (Nichol 2009). The Deputy Chief of the President’s Chancellery, Piotr Kownacki, was supposed to fly to Georgia to promote a seven-point plan authored by the presidents of Ukraine and Lithuania, and backed by President Kaczyński. The plan, which President Kaczyński reportedly briefed President Sarkozy about, called for the immediate cessation of hostilities and the transformation of the Russian peacekeeping force in Georgia into an international force under EU command. However, the French president decided to take the initiative into his own hands (Szymaniak and Lorenc 2010).

In the meantime, a second front opened in Abkhazia. Russian troops had also occupied the Tskhinvali region, and bombed and occupied the Georgian city of Gori. The positioning of the troops less than 80 kilometers from the Georgian capital indicated that the Russian army was getting ready to march on Tbilisi. Georgian leaders were convinced that Russia intended to invade the capital and replace the Georgian government with a pro-Russian puppet government, which the international community would have to accept (Interviews 31 and 39). It was in this situation that the five leaders’ trip to Tbilisi was initiated. According to the Polish president’s spokesman, the aim of the mission was to show support for Saakashvili and the Georgian nation, and to motivate the West to act (*Kamiński 2008*). Their demands included the immediate ceasefire and withdrawal of the Russian troops.
from Georgia. The five leaders were also supposed to serve as ‘human shields’ in the case of
an invasion, meaning that Russia was less likely to seize the capital if five heads of state or
government, including those of four NATO countries, were present (Interview 39). Although
the Russian air force had allowed Sarkozy to fly into Tbilisi on the same day, it had denied
the Polish presidential jet a safe passage through Georgian airspace (Asmus 2010:205).
Moscow seemed to be signifying that, whereas it recognized Sarkozy’s mediating role, it saw
the Polish initiative as a hostile action. After waiting in the plane for multiple hours, the
decision was made to fly to Baku instead and from there to drive to the Georgian capital.

The initiative for the five leaders was, in the first place, a symbolic gesture. Saakashvili had called for a rally of national unity in front of the Georgian parliament building to boost public morale. The Georgian president invited the five Central and Eastern European leaders and Sarkozy to participate. However, the French president turned down the offer with the justification that he had “come not to give a speech but to end a war” (in Asmus 2010:204). Sarkozy also did not meet the Central and Eastern European leaders in Tbilisi, although the Polish president had hoped for a meeting (Borowski 2008). The five CEEC leaders appeared in front of crowds that gathered in the Parliament square enthusiastically shouting and waving Georgian and EU flags. The speech of the Polish president summarized his understanding of the purpose of the visit. It stressed that the Georgian war was not an exception but a manifestation of a larger trend in Russian foreign policy, which could become a threat in the future, even to Poland’s own security:

We, the leaders of five countries are here to take up a fight. […] Russia] believes that the
surrounding countries should be under its domination. We say: no! […] We know that what is
Georgia today, tomorrow might be Ukraine, the day after tomorrow the Baltic States, and
then the time may even come for my country, for Poland! (in Lech Kaczyński w Tbilisi
2008)¹⁰

¹⁰ “Jesteśmy tutaj, przywódcy pięciu państw […] Jesteśmy po to, żeby podjąć walkę. […] Ci sąsiedzi
[Rosja] uważają, że narody wokół nich powinny im podlegać. My mówimy: nie! my też świetnie
wiemy, że dziś Gruzja, jutro Ukraina, pojutrze państwa bałtyckie, a potem może czas na mój kraj, na
Polskę!” (translated by author).
However, the initiative was also a symbolic act of ‘contestation’ of the dominant approach to the larger Eastern Neighborhood in the EU, which simultaneously placed Poland and the other CEECs on the margins. This is evident in the president’s words directed explicitly at the EU: “And I wanted to tell this [...] also to the European Union – East Central Europe, our entire region, and Georgia, will matter. And we are a subject.” Furthermore, the Polish president argued that “if the values for which Europe stands have any meaning in practice [...] there should be 27 countries here” (in Lech Kaczyński w Tbilisi 2008).

On the one hand, these statements expressed the idea of Poland and the Eastern Neighborhood countries as a ‘region’ that has the right to determine its own future. By opting for a ‘regional’ approach, the Polish president wanted to signal to both Russia and the EU that Poland could be a spokesman for the region and that these countries could cooperate (Interview 27). On the other hand, this statement stressed that Poland saw the Eastern Neighborhood countries, including the Caucasus, as an integral part of Europe, and that the EU therefore had responsibility to support these countries’ ‘Westward’ aspirations and to counteract Russia’s attempts to prevent this process. This expressed an idea, deeply engrained in Poland’s strategic culture, which also influenced Warsaw’s response during the Ukraine crisis discussed in the next chapter. The ‘contestation’ of the EU’s approach became more explicit in the president’s comments given to the press following his Tbilisi speech. He openly criticized Sarkozy’s ceasefire plan for its lack of reference to Georgia’s territorial integrity, and he argued that the war had shown that Paris and Berlin drove decisions on foreign policy in the EU and try to ‘monopolize’ the European position. In general, he criticized the attitude of France and Germany towards Russia as too soft and driven by economic interest (Polens Präsident kritisiert Deutschland und Frankreich scharf 2008).

The two European responses thus represented fundamentally different interpretations of the conflict and its meaning for Europe. They also expressed different ideas about how the EU and the Euro-Atlantic community should respond to the war. The question to whom the ending of the five-day war should be credited is still debated. Some interviewed Georgian

11 “I chciałbym to powiedzieć [...] Unii Europejskiej, że Europa Środkowa, Gruzja, że cały nasz region będzie się liczył. Że jesteśmy podmiotem! [...] że jeżeli te wartości, o które miałaby się Europa opierać, mają jakiekolwiek znaczenie w praktyce [...] powinno tu być państw 27” (translated by author).
politicians (and a high-level U.S. diplomat) argue that European diplomacy was not decisive altogether. The movement of Russian troops stopped progressing after U.S. President Bush announced at a press conference that the United States would send navy ships as humanitarian aid to Georgia (see Współpracownik Busha 2013; Interviews 30 and 36).

3.2 Divisions in Poland

Public opinion in Poland was largely sympathetic to Georgia and critical of Russia’s actions. According to the opinion polling institute CBOS, more than half (55%) of Poles shared the view of the Georgian government that Russia was preparing a military intervention in Georgia for a long time in order to punish the country for its pro-American orientation and to break off South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Only 15% of Poles believed that the Russian intervention was a spontaneous reaction to the Georgian army’s engagement in South Ossetia (Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej (CBOS) 2008). According to the same study, sympathies for the conflict parties were very similar among the electorates of the two dominant political parties. Among the electorate of the center right party Platforma Obywatelska (PO) 51% sympathized with Georgia and 3% with Russia, while the rest was either undecided or sympathizing with neither side. Among the supporters of the more conservative Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (PiS) the corresponding numbers were 58% and 3%. Only on the ‘left’ the numbers differed with 34% and 0% in the case of the agrarian Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe (PSL) electorate, and 20% and 7% among the post-communist Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej (SLD) supporters. Despite these differences between ‘right’ and ‘left’, sympathies for Georgia were undoubtedly higher than for Russia. It should be noted that not only in Poland but also in the Baltic states sympathies for Georgia were high throughout a wide spectrum of political views, which confirmed the similarities in the interpretation of the conflict (see Lašas 2012).

The Polish press was equally quick to pick a side. On August 9, the front-page headline of one of Poland’s largest daily newspapers, Rzeczpospolita, said: “Russia attacks Georgia” (Kościński 2008). The same newspaper wrote: “Moscow’s response is beyond the norms of civilized countries.” The Polish press also quickly linked the events in the South Caucasus to the relations between Russia and the West in general: “The reaction to Russian
aggression is a test to the credibility of the EU and NATO, to which Georgia is aspiring,” an article stated (Sadecki, Zalesiński, and Manys 2008). Even the left-leaning Gazeta Wyborcza criticized the West’s lack of appetite for action:

Old Europe isn’t listening to Poles, Lithuanians and Ukrainians. Old Europe doesn’t want to anger Russia, and doesn’t see the integrity of Georgia’s borders as something worth risking its relationship with Moscow over. (cited in Curry 2008)

Combining insights from opinion polls with an analysis of media discourses reveals that for most Poles – with the exception of the post-communist left (see Miller 2008) – the question whether the Georgian government was right or wrong in attacking the Tskhinvali region on the night of August 7 was not the most relevant. This stands in contrast to the main debate on the European level, which focused on the question on what basis Georgia fired its first shots and on the erratic character of the Georgian president (see Russia and Georgia a Scripted War 2008). Public debate in Poland showed that what mattered was the intention behind Russian actions. To the question “in your opinion, will Russia in the nearest future be striving to regain influence in our part of Europe?” over 60% of all main parties’ electorates answered “yes” (over 70% in the case of PO/PiS) (Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej (CBOS) 2008). The outpour of humanitarian aid immediately following the war and public expressions of solidarity with Georgia, for example demonstrations in front of the Russian embassy in Warsaw, showed that the Polish public was touched by the events. In the words of a Polish MP who organized humanitarian aid to Georgia, many Poles “had no idea where exactly Georgia was on the map but they were outraged by the idea that a small country was attacked by Russia” (Interview 29).

Despite the largely undivided public support for Georgia, there were significant differences within the political leadership on how Poland should respond to the events. These differences manifested themselves as a battle between the PO-PSL government headed by Prime Minister Tusk, and President Lech Kaczyński and his cabinet. Personal antipathy between the head of government and head of state undoubtedly added fuel to the dispute. However, the internal clash was, first and foremost, a manifestation of the earlier mentioned differences in Poland’s strategic outlook. The Russo-Georgian conflict revealed the pre-
existing differences in the approach towards Russia and relations with the West, notably with Poland’s European allies, between the government and the president. The crisis became a test for the two competing foreign policy strategies.

These differences became illuminated in the first days of the crisis when President Kaczyński made the decision to travel to Tbilisi. Initially, the prime minister was strictly opposed to the mission. According to Tusk, Poland should not take any actions that would create the impression that it is interested in straining relations between the EU and Russia, and contribute to an “atmosphere of conflict” (in Tusk 2008). The prime minister was also weary of creating the impression that Poland’s initiative was undermining Sarkozy’s diplomatic efforts. He stressed that “what is in the interest of the government is Poland’s partaking in the creation of a common mainstream European policy” regarding the crisis (in Tusk 2008). The government argued that the task of Polish diplomacy was to actively support European diplomacy, and to partake in the efforts towards a resolution of the conflict and an insurance of Georgia’s territorial integrity (Schuller and Thielbeer 2008). Moreover, Tusk and his camp criticized the president’s efforts to address the crisis as a group of former Soviet bloc states. A spokesmen of the PO party explained to the press: “I do not see any sense of forming alliances with countries outside of the EU,” referring to the Polish president’s strong cooperation with Georgia and Ukraine (in Präsident Kaczynski will Osteuropa-Block 2008).

The prime minister’s office at first refused to authorize the use of a government jet for the trip, explaining that it was a matter of concern about both security and logistics (Tusk 2008). However, members of the presidential cabinet felt that the prime minister was deliberately “torpedoing” the trip (Interview 29). Only when U.S. President George W. Bush endorsed Kaczyński’s plan and even offered him his Air Force Two jet, the prime minister gave in (Bielan 2008). In the end, the government sent Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski to join the delegation, as the president asked to be accompanied by a representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. At the same time, Sikorski’s presence was supposed to be a

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12 “To co leży w interesie rządu to aktywne współtworzenie przez Polskę głównego nurtu zdarzeń europejskich” (translated by author).
“guarantee” that the president’s journey would be without any “political surprises” (Schuller and Thielbeer 2008).

During the final days of the war and following the ceasefire, Poland showed greater internal unity. When the Georgian government and public received the visit of the five leaders enthusiastically, the domestic opposition in Poland initially softened. Georgian political elites emphasized the ‘high moral value’ of the visit as it showed Georgians that they are not alone (Interviews 30 and 34). The recognition which Poland received from Georgia raised the national self-esteem. Also, the war and Russia’s willingness to invade Georgia had shaken everyone in Europe, even the strongest advocates of a dialogue with Russia. Consequently, Poland’s Foreign Minister Sikorski told the press that it was “not worth arguing” whether the ceasefire was a success of Sarkozy or the five Eastern European state leaders and called the truce a mutual success of European politicians (Sikorski: Porozumienie Gruzji 2008). Although there were substantial voices in Poland saying that Kaczyński’s mission was an unnecessary provocation of Russia (e.g. Kuźniar 2008), they were quieter in the first days after the war. Even Adam Michnik, editor-in-chief of the left-leaning Gazeta Wyborcza, usually highly critical of Kaczyński and his political camp, wrote:

For the first time, I felt proud of the fact that the president of my country in Georgia, in such a dignified way, gave expression to the Polish, and my own, idea of the ethos of freedom, honor, historical tradition and political understanding. (Michnik 2008)

However, as the shock of the war faded, and it became clear that the EU was not interested in taking punitive measures against Russia, the Polish government’s soft policy towards Russia resumed. The U.S. also undertook no substantial actions in support of its Georgian ally. As a result, the internal divide in Poland deepened. This was, for example, evident in the critical reaction of the political opposition and the media to the Polish president’s visit to Georgia in November 2008 when his convoy encountered gun shots at the South Ossetian border (see Wizyta Prezydenta w Gruzji 2008). In general, his eastern policy was increasingly criticized for being ‘risky’ or even ‘belligerent’.

13 “Pierwszy raz poczułem się dumny z tego, że prezydent mojego państwa w tak godny sposób, a zarazem tak zgodny z polskim i moim wyobrażeniem etosu wolności, honoru, tradycji historycznej i rozumu politycznego dał temu wyraz w Gruzji” (translated by author).
3.3 EU reaction and media discourse in Europe

While in Poland itself there was much support for the initiative of the five Central and Eastern European heads of state or government, this was not necessarily the case in ‘old’ Europe. According to The Guardian, the French and the Germans were “scornful of east European ‘hysteria’ towards Russia […] German and French governments are striving to keep the Poles and the Baltic states well away from any EU-led peace negotiations” (Six Days That Broke One Country 2008). The French foreign minister, Bernard Kouchner, explained that the EU needed to invent a “new language with regard to Russia,” suggesting that the openly critical tone used by Kaczyński was unacceptable (Traynor and Harding 2008).

The language in the European media describing the mission of the five Eastern European leaders was largely critical. The discourse had striking parallels to the Iraq crisis. The response of the Central and Eastern European countries was described as ‘driven by emotions’ rather than ‘political reasoning’, and contrasted with the ‘temperate’ and ‘neutral’ approach of the French president. The discourse in the media also portrayed the countries’ actions as a consequence of somewhat unreasonable preconceptions regarding Russia, in a similar way that the Iraq policy of the CEECs was portrayed as a result of irrational pro-Americanism. The alleged irrationality of the response was also specifically tied to the personal qualities of the political leaders involved, including the Polish president and Georgian President Saakashvili. In Western European media the fault for the war was, among other things, attributed to Saakashvili’s ‘bad temper’ and ‘lack of sensibility’ (Besonnenheit statt Aktionismus 2008).

The foreign policy of the Central and Eastern European countries was also described as being driven by the past rather than political realities of the time. As one article argues, “nowhere in Europe does anti-Russian sentiment run as strong as it does in Poland […]. Since the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989, history has increasingly informed policy” (Curry 2008). This is also repeated in academic texts. Ainius Lašas (2012:1061–2) argues in the context of the Georgia war that “in the case of Baltic and Polish identities historical-psychological legacies vis-à-vis Russia are principally associated with traumatic and painful experiences immediately before and during World War II.” Russia’s actions and rhetoric
“generate hypersensitivity” among these countries, and events like the Russo-Georgian war can easily trigger a surge of political activism (Lašas 2012:1062).

Furthermore, the countries participating in the mission were blamed for the creation of disunity within the EU and the larger transatlantic West by building a regional bloc and contesting the French initiative. An article in Spiegel Online was entitled “Old Europe vs. New Europe: Will Poland Split EU Over Russia Policy?”, reminiscent of the Iraq War discourse (Curry 2008). Another German news article blamed the CEECs for limiting the chances of an effective common response of the EU. Paradoxically, although the countries and their actions are described as dangerous, they are also portrayed as insignificant:

In their discussions, France and Germany would be advised to ignore the voices of Poland and the three little Baltic states. They are threatening Russia, completely overestimating their own potential. They are an obstruction to a unified European foreign policy […]. Caution and sensibility is required. (Besonnenheit statt Aktionismus 2008)14

European media also reported on the internal divide in Poland and the fact that the Polish president “came in for criticism in Poland for anti-Russian comments he made during a trip to Georgia” (Poland and US Toast 2008). An article in The Times of Malta pointed out that the president’s “fiercely anti-Russian remarks on the Georgia crisis have further isolated him” not only abroad but also at home (Baczynska 2008). Prime Minister Tusk, who was portrayed more favorably, was also implicitly presented as having these ‘Western’ qualities resembling the temperate style of the French and Germans in his foreign policy. The “smooth, gently-spoken centrist” Tusk was contrasted with Kaczyński who “gets carried away by emotion” (Baczynska 2008).

Overall, the media discourse surrounding Poland’s response to the Russo-Georgian war largely reinforced Poland’s ‘latecomer’ stigma. This was particularly the case because the Polish initiative was directly contrasted with Sarkozy’s response, which represented an example of model European diplomacy.

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14 “Frankreich und Deutschland sind bei diesen Gesprächen gut beraten, die Stimmen Polens und der drei kleinen baltischen Staaten zu ignorieren. Sie drohen Russland und verkennen dabei völlig ihre Möglichkeiten. Sie sind eine Belastung für eine einheitliche europäische Außenpolitik […]. Behutsamkeit und Sensibilität sind gefragt” (translated by author).
IV. CONSEQUENCES: A WAR FORGOTTEN

On August 13, all remaining Georgian forces had retreated to Georgia proper in line with the ceasefire agreement. Russia, however, continued to occupy parts of Georgian territory for another couple of months. On August 25, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev recognized the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia arguing that the war had changed the political realities (*Krise im Kaukasus 2008*).

After the fighting in Georgia had stopped, there was little consensus in the EU on a common approach to managing the post-conflict situation. On September 1, an extraordinary summit of the EU convened at the request of several EU member states, including Poland and the Baltics (*Sarkozy Calls Crisis EU Summit 2008*). It was the first time that the EU’s heads of state or government met at a special summit since February 2003 at the beginning of the Iraq crisis. While Poland usually sent the head of government to European Council summits, this time both President Kaczyński and Prime Minister Tusk attended. Poland, the Baltic states, the Czech Republic, Sweden and, to a lesser extent, Britain demanded punitive measures against Russia. In contrast, Germany, France and Italy rejected sanctions and advocated dialogue with Moscow, arguing that only this way Europe could prevent the conflict from spreading geographically and preserve its interests vis-à-vis Russia and in the Caucasus (*Sarkozy Calls Crisis EU Summit 2008*). Whereas France and Germany wanted to present themselves as conveying a neutral position, other countries were more outspoken. For example, the Italian foreign minister, Franco Frattini, spoke against an “anti-Russia coalition in Europe, stressing that Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi was a close ally of Prime Minister Vladimir Putin of Russia” (in Bennhold 2008).

Eventually, the participants agreed on condemning Russia’s recognition of the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia for violating the principles of territorial integrity and sovereignty of Georgia. Nevertheless, the summit declaration stressed that cooperation with Russia is a key element of enforcing the ceasefire plan. The resolution accused both Georgia and Russia of evoking the conflict (*European Council 2008*). With a few exceptions, including Poland and the Baltic states, the tendency among EU leaders was to interpret the war in Georgia as an “isolated case” and an exception to the rule in relations
with Russia (Interview 31). Only minor sanctions were imposed, such as the suspension of the EU-Russia Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, but no economic sanctions. There was also no change in the general attitude towards Russia and the EU quickly resumed ‘business as usual’ in relations with Moscow.

While Poland was under the shock of the war in Georgia, the critical position towards Russia advocated by Lech Kaczyński dominated Poland’s foreign policy. The approach insisted on a harsh response to Russia, demanded support from Poland’s European allies, and contested the mainstream approach to Russia in the EU. For a moment, following the war, the more careful PO government also changed its tone towards Russia. The government and president manifested exceptional unity when taking actions within the EU and NATO. Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs Andrzej Kremer warned that Russian actions in Georgia should not be allowed to interfere with the MAP process; otherwise, the Euro-Atlantic alliance would reward Russian actions and encourage Russia to act similarly elsewhere in the region (Szymaniak and Lorenc 2010). State secretary in the defense ministry, Stanisław Komorowski, called for a strong North Atlantic Council statement condemning Russian actions in Georgia, warning that a wider regional conflict involving Ukraine could result (Szymaniak and Lorenc 2010).

The Polish foreign minister formulated the so-called Sikorski doctrine, which stated that “any further attempt to redraw borders in Europe by force or by subversion will be regarded by Poland as an existential threat to its security and should entail a proportional response by the whole Atlantic community” (Sikorski 2008). Only a few days after the war, the Polish government and the U.S. signed a deal to install an American anti-missile defense shield on Polish territory. Polish Foreign Minister Sikorski and U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice were said to have “toasted the pact with Georgian wine” (Poland and US Toast 2008). It almost seemed as if the hard-lined approach had won in Poland.

However, as time progressed, it was becoming clear that there was no appetite in the West to confront Russia. The Polish president’s critique of the return to ‘business as usual’ with Russia was contributing to Poland’s isolation in the EU. Also, the U.S. became less eager to get involved in the region and confront Russia, and in 2009 the Obama
Administration cancelled the anti-missile defense shield project again. Relations between Russia and the EU quickly normalized. In November 2008, EU leaders voted to resume the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with Russia. Only Lithuania protested the decision, whereas Poland ended up withdrawing its opposition. In the end, the Polish government did not want to go against the general sentiments in the EU and risk tensions in relations with its Western European partners over Georgia.

A few months after the war in Georgia had ended, Poland reverted to the ‘adaptation’ strategy in its foreign policy. This foreign policy approach can be described as often reactive in relation to leading EU states (see Światłowski 2015). Poland continued to pursue a reset with Russia imitating the foreign policy of Paris and Berlin. The Polish government abandoned the ambitious foreign policy of building a strong position through ‘regional’ cooperation in Europe and trying to shape affairs in the Eastern Neighborhood in a more autonomous way. Instead, Poland reverted to a so-called ‘minimalist’ approach in its eastern foreign policy and generally reduced its ambition of shaping European politics. This foreign policy vision followed the ideas of the politician Bartłomiej Sienkiewicz, who once famously assessed Poland’s strive for an ambitious Eastern policy: “marching towards the West, we have our head tuned towards the East” (Sienkiewicz 2001:18).  

This ‘doctrine’ criticized the pursuit of the Eastern dimension of Poland’s strategic culture as limiting Poland’s ability to pursue its Western dimension, and it promoted the need to change this. Instead, the government opted for an eastern policy that was closely oriented on the EU. The expression of this approach was the Eastern Partnership, discussed more extensively in the next chapter. The ending of the competition between the two opposing strategies was the tragic death of president Kaczyński, who along with 95 others, among them high-level Polish state officials and army generals, died in a plane crash in Smolensk, Russia. From 2010 until the Ukraine crisis the ‘adaptation’ strategy dominated Poland’s eastern policy.

The Russo-Georgian war was the first instance that post-Soviet Russia had waged war beyond its borders. After a few months, it became clear that Russia had effectively won the war. It became evident that the West had limited ability to control the situation in South

15 “Maszerując na Zachód mamy głowę odwróconą na Wschód” (translated by author).
Ossetia in the long run. The war resulted in Georgia de facto losing the two breakaway republics. The plan of the French president was never put into practice. As it turned out, the initiative of the five Central and Eastern European countries did little to raise the Euro-Atlantic community’s interest in the region and change the common Western approach towards Russia. Nevertheless, the newer member states were able to shape the EU’s politics towards Georgia to some extent. Among the most important achievements was the establishment of the EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia, which, according to a closely involved EU diplomat, would have been unlikely to happen without pressures from the CEECs (Interview 35).

V. CONCLUSION

The politics around the Georgia crisis reveal the different elements of Poland’s strategic culture. The Eastern dimension of Poland’s strategic culture is manifested in the prominence that the events in the Eastern Neighborhood region took in Poland’s foreign policy; the challenges of working together with the EU express its Western dimension. The crisis became a test for two competing strategies to overcome Poland’s stigma as a ‘latecomer’ European. Poland’s Prime Minister Tusk, in his ambition to demonstrate Poland’s maturity in the EU, wanted to show that Poland was ready to take a moderate tone and act in cooperation with the ‘official’ EU response. In contrast, the president wanted to counteract Poland’s ‘second class’ position by trying to actively reshape the EU’s approach to Russia and the former-Soviet space. Both approaches were highly conscious of the existence of hierarchies in the EU but favored different strategies of dealing with them. While one response tried to challenge these hierarchies by openly questioning the norms and assumptions on which they were based, the other accepted them, and thus tried to bring Poland closer to the decision center of Europe.

During the crisis the ‘contestation’ approach dominated Poland’s response. The war reinforced Poland’s traditional security concerns regarding Russia. Simultaneously, it offered the opportunity for Poland to play the role of a ‘regional’ leader. However, soon after the ceasefire in Georgia, Poland reverted to the ‘adaptation’ strategy. Under the PO government Poland moved away from an ambitious foreign policy in the East. One might argue that the experience of the Russo-Georgia war and its consequences affected Polish strategic culture in
this way. Poland’s elites realized that an autonomous eastern policy was not achieving the desired results because it was lacking support from the West, and that not even a significant event such as the Russo-Georgian war could change this. The U.S. had become less involved in the post-Soviet region and the EU refrained from actions that could antagonize Russia. Additionally, Poland’s assertive Eastern policy was straining its relations with its key European partners and was reinforcing Poland’s ‘latecomer’ stigma in the EU. The Polish government therefore reverted to a foreign policy of ‘minimalism’ regarding the Eastern Neighborhood and acted in strong coordination with the EU. In parallel, it continued to pursue a dialogue with Russia. However, as will be demonstrated in the next chapter, this change of strategy was not a ‘deep’ change in Poland’s strategic culture. In the light of the Ukraine crisis, Poland reverted to its traditional approach in the Eastern dimension.
5 MANAGING THE UKRAINE CRISIS: A TRIUMPH OF POLAND’S EU POLITICS?

“If it wasn’t already clear then, it certainly is now: Poland has firmly become a part of the West,” wrote one of Germany’s biggest news outlets, Spiegel Online, commenting on Polish Foreign Minister Sikorski’s diplomatic efforts during the Maidan Revolution in Ukraine (Puhl 2014). As mass demonstrations against the government were taking place in the Ukrainian capital in the winter of 2013/14, the Polish foreign minister emerged as a key figure in the EU’s attempts to mediate between the protesters and the government. Sikorski frequently travelled to Kiev during this time alongside other European politicians and diplomats, including the EU’s High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton, and the German and French foreign ministers, Frank-Walter Steinmeier and Laurent Fabius. The international press devoted particular attention to the role of the Polish top diplomat and applauded his leadership efforts (see Thornhill and Cienski 2014). Some argue that during the Maidan protests Sikorski became the “face of Europe” (Kaminska 2014:98). For Poland to be representing the EU during a major crisis aboard seemed an overwhelming accomplishment.

At the time the turmoil in Ukraine started, Poland was widely praised as the greatest success story among the newer EU member states (Puhl and Follath 2012). Apart from its impressive economic growth, Poland seemed to have finally transformed its foreign policy to fit within the EU framework (Vetter 2008). The government of Prime Minister Donald Tusk, which came to power in 2007, adopted a new foreign policy approach, which rejected the ‘confrontational’ politics of its predecessors. Poland’s politics during the Iraq crisis and the Russo-Georgian war had alienated its European partners and seemed to have further contributed to its stigmatization. Poland was seen as a ‘difficult partner’, which was attributed to its ‘latecomer’ status in the EU. The strategy of ‘adaptation’ pursued since 2007 was a reaction to this.

When pursuing ‘adaptation’, the stigmatized actor assumes that it can overcome his or her stigma through the proof of successful socialization to the larger society (see Zarakol 2011; Goffman 1963). The PO government attempted to show that a more ‘European’
foreign policy was possible; one that differed from the policy conducted, for example, by President Lech Kaczyński. The Tusk government’s approach emphasized rapprochement with Russia and the coordination of Poland’s foreign policy with leading EU states, notably Germany and France, to increase Poland’s credibility in the eyes of its Western partners (see Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Poland 2008). Treating Russia as a partner was regarded as a ‘norm’ among leading EU states. The new leaders also argued that Poland needed to depart from the ‘Jagiellonian’ foreign policy of autonomously trying to shape affairs in the Eastern Neighborhood (Sikorski 2011). Instead, Warsaw’s Eastern policy should focus on building relations with the neighborhood countries through partnership and as part of a larger EU approach. The new approach also stressed incremental change in the neighborhood to avoid antagonizing Russia. After the death of President Lech Kaczyński in 2010 the period of cohabitation ended, and with it the dualism of strategies towards the Eastern Neighborhood (2007-2010) described in the previous chapter.

In 2009, Poland initiated the Eastern Partnership (EaP) together with Sweden, an EU program aimed at supporting democratic processes in the Eastern Neighborhood countries and bringing them closer to the EU. After two failed attempts to influence its Western partners through ‘contestation’ during the Iraq crisis and the Russo-Georgian war, Poland seemed to have finally learned to act within a new frame, as an EU member and in line with ‘Western’ norms and rules. As the U.S. had become less active in the region, this mainly meant that Poland followed the EU’s rules and standards. The ‘troublemaker’ had become a ‘model student’. These developments seem to affirm the claims of social constructivist literature that an actor can become successfully established in an identity community through socialization (e.g. Checkel 2001; Gheciu 2005). Stigmatizing speech acts, such as the statement by Jacques Chirac during the Iraq crisis, were replaced by praises and symbols of approbation from its EU partners, which strengthened the motivation of the Polish leaders and their domestic support. In 2010, Poland’s Prime Minister Donald Tusk was awarded the prestigious Charlemagne prize for his “outstanding contributions to the cause of European understanding” (Brand 2010). His foreign minister, Radosław Sikorski, could be regarded the embodiment of this positive transformation. Radically conservative and pro-American in his youth, a ‘hawk’ as defense minister in the PiS government, he became, along with Tusk, one
of the main authors of the reset policy with Russia and the tightening of relations with Germany. Had Poland finally overcome its ‘latecomer’ stigma and had been accepted as one of the established ‘insiders’ who can partake in the formulation of a common EU foreign policy? Has it learned to realize the long-term goals of its strategic culture in a ‘European’ manner?

To answer these questions, this chapter analyzes Poland’s foreign policy towards Ukraine in the context of the Eastern Partnership and during the Ukraine crisis. As mentioned in chapter 2, Ukraine has a central place in Polish strategic culture, which is tied to the common heritage and legacy of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. In the light of a history of difficult relations between the two nations, Poland has come to see Ukraine as essential for its ontological security. It has become a central foreign policy goal for Poland to bring Ukraine closer to Western institutions and out of economic and political dependency on Russia, and to support democratic trends in the country. This goal is essential for Poland’s sense of security from Russia and its avoidance of becoming a NATO and EU ‘outpost’ (Wolczuk and Wolczuk 2003). Moreover, the ability to exercise its foreign policy in the Eastern Neighborhood in line with its strategic culture is crucial for Poland’s subjectivity as an international actor. However, its aims regarding Ukraine could not be easily reconciled with its ambition of becoming an ‘established’ European international actor. Poland’s accession into the EU meant the fortification of the Polish-Ukrainian border and the need for Poland to coordinate its foreign policy with its EU partners, some of which often prefer a ‘Russia first’ policy. This chapter therefore examines Poland’s attempts to reconcile its own approach towards Ukraine and the wider Eastern Neighborhood with its quest for belonging in the EU and becoming a fully acknowledged partner within the EU.

Until the Ukraine crisis the Polish government under Prime Minister Donald Tusk pursued the two-track policy of building relations with Ukraine through the EaP and rapprochement with Russia in close coordination with the EU, particularly with Berlin. However, the events in Ukraine starting in late 2013 revealed the limits of reconciling the aims of the EaP with a policy of cooperation with Russia. As it turned out, Ukraine’s president, Victor Yanukovych, was facing strong pressures from Russia against signing an
association agreement with the EU. Russia’s annexation of Crimea and the Russian-backed separatist war in east Ukraine further confirmed that Moscow was unwilling to tolerate Ukraine’s approximation to the EU. Not just Poland but the EU as a whole had to face this reality. As the crisis unfolded, Poland began to change its approach and reverted to its traditionally skeptical position regarding Russia, which considers Russia as a potential threat.

The Ukraine crisis gave Poland the opportunity of acting as a regional power and raising its profile in the EU as it has the relevant knowledge, networks and political weight in the region. However, despite its visibility, during crucial moments Poland missed opportunities of being a frontrunner in the EU’s response and shaping it based on its expertise in the region. This was, as I will argue, because ruling elites focused on fulfilling expectations of their European partners. Although Poland earned the reputation of Ukraine’s advocate, it acted as part of a rather reluctant and reactive EU response during the Maidan Revolution and the conflict in eastern Ukraine. While the ‘adaptation’ approach (temporarily) increased its positive image in the EU and allowed Poland to ‘upload’ some of its preferences onto a common EU policy, this approach constrained Poland’s ability to act as a supporter of Ukraine. Furthermore, the hierarchical relation between Poland as a ‘latecomer’ and leading ‘established’ member states remained. After Russia’s involvement in Ukraine became evident, the EU’s official foreign policy towards Russia became more in line with the approach traditionally envisioned by Poland. However, this shift was mostly the result of a change of politics in Berlin, whereas Warsaw’s earlier warnings had been ignored. Also, to its great disappointment, Poland was not included in the Minsk and Berlin negotiations between Ukraine and Russia alongside France and Germany.

I. UKRAINE’S ROLE IN POLISH STRATEGIC CULTURE
The significance of the Ukraine crisis for Poland has to be understood in the context of Polish strategic culture. Therein, Ukraine has a central role. Poland has much tighter relations with Ukraine than, for example, with Georgia, described in the previous chapter. Ukraine is the biggest and most important among Poland’s eastern neighbors, it shares close historical ties with Poland, and it geographically separates Poland from Russia. Despite the difficult history
between the two nations, the existence of a stable, independent Ukrainian state that is oriented towards the West has become crucial for Poland’s sense of security in both the physical and ontological sense.

1.1 Ukraine’s historical and contemporary role for Poland’s security

Ukraine, together with Poland’s other eastern neighbors that physically separate it from Russia, fulfills an essential role for Poland’s security. The emergence of the independent Ukrainian, Belarusian and Lithuanian states following the disintegration of the Soviet Union meant that Poland no longer shares a border with Russia, with the exception of the Kaliningrad area. This resolved one of Poland’s greatest security dilemmas of the past. Because Russia historically constituted an existential threat to Poland’s territorial integrity, and is still considered a potential adversary in Poland, Ukraine has the role of a ‘borderland’ between Russia and Poland.

The role of Ukraine in Polish strategic culture cannot be fully understood without considering the ‘Russia factor’ because Ukraine has been historically a ‘battleground’ between Poland and Russia. Competition with Russia over the region began already at the time of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and has continued in different forms until present day. The separation of parts of the Kresy from the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth after the Cossacks Uprising of 1648\(^{16}\) and the later incorporation of these territories into the Russian Empire are often considered the beginning of the Commonwealth’s decline as a major European power (see Snyder 2003:114). This, from the Polish perspective, tragic development destabilized the Commonwealth and led to the partitions in the eighteenth century. The idea that the ‘loss’ of Ukraine to Russia weakens Poland’s geopolitical position continues to influence Polish political thinking today.

For Ukraine, in contrast, Moscow sometimes constituted an alternative to Polish domination. This was the case for the Cossacks in the seventeenth century, who were divided over the question whether Ukraine should exist as part of the Russian Empire or seek full autonomy (Subtelny 1994). Similar questions regarding the role of Russia and later the

\(^{16}\) The first foundations of an independent Ukraine are often connected to the Cossack rising of 1648 against the domination of Polish landowners. The Cossacks were semi-military communities that inhabited the Kresy and protected the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.
Soviet Union also occupied Ukrainian nationalists in the nineteenth and twentieth century (Hrycak 2000). Presently, parts of the population and political elite see Russia as a more viable alternative for Ukraine than the ‘West’. Moreover, a powerful class of oligarchs capitalizes on business relations with Russia, particularly in the gas trade sector (Sakwa 2016:60–7). However, a significant part of the Ukrainian population and political elite sees Russia as a former hegemon and views Moscow’s current revisionist ambitions as a threat to Ukraine’s autonomy.

The threat of an expansionist Russia has been a unifying factor for Poles and Ukrainians at different points in history. In the interwar period, Józef Piłsudski pursued an alliance with the briefly existing independent Ukraine against Russia. He believed that an allied Ukraine could be simultaneously a common defense front against Russian aggression and a ‘buffer zone’ for Poland, which would serve Poland’s highest strategic goal of eliminating the Russian threat (Suleja 1995). Unfortunately, Piłsudski and the leader of the Ukrainian state, Symon Petlura, came to terms too late to prevent Ukraine’s defeat by Soviet Russia and its incorporation into the Soviet Union (Snyder 2003:139). In a similar manner, in the post-Cold War period Poland supported Ukrainian independence from the Soviet Union. Since the end of the Cold War Poland has been interested in limiting Russian economic and political influence over Ukraine.

1.2 A common heritage and ontological (in)security

In the Eastern dimension of Poland’s strategic culture Ukraine plays an essential role. In the region Poland sees itself, and is perceived, as a subject and has the most potential for agency. This is connected to the shared history and cultural heritage but also to Poland’s legacy as a great power.

The histories of Poland and Ukraine have been intertwined for centuries and the history of modern-day Ukraine emerged in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The territory of today’s Ukraine constituted parts of the Commonwealth at least since the Lublin Union of 1569, which transferred East Slavic lands from the Great Duchy of Lithuania to the Kingdom of Poland; this completed a long integration process of Poland-Lithuania, which had begun with the Union of Krewo in 1385 (Snyder 2003:105–10). The Kresy (Borderlands)
of the Commonwealth, which included territories of today’s Ukraine and Belarus, therefore constituted a significant portion of Poland’s national heritage. Parts of today’s Ukraine were Polish territory until the outbreak of the Second World War. The sense of attachment to the former Kresy continues to be an important element of Polish strategic culture. The ‘Jagiellonian’ idea of Poland’s role in Europe, according to which Poland’s heritage has influenced the culture of Ukrainians, Belarusians and Lithuanians, has shaped Polish strategic culture (see Klymenko 2009:259). Indeed, the sense of common heritage of Ukrainians and Poles is prevalent in the myths and cultures of both nations (Bialasiewicz 2002). From this common heritage derives a sense of responsibility for the former Kresy in Polish political thought, which continues to influence Poland’s contemporary foreign policy towards the region. Presently, a ‘Jagiellonian’ conception of Polish foreign policy refers to the idea of Poland having a strong role as a regional power that seeks to actively shape politics in its Eastern Neighborhood.

On Poland’s mental map ‘Europe’ as a cultural concept extends at least to the Dnieper River (see Bialasiewicz 2002; Troebst 2003). This idea about the extension of European civilization is important for Poland’s self-definition. Poland’s attempts of integrating Ukraine and other parts of the former Kresy with the rest of Europe have been largely motivated by the wish of escaping its own ‘peripheral’ status. This found expression in various foreign policy approaches, such as the Prometeist program in the interwar period, in which Poland sought to prevent the incorporation of the newly independent Ukrainian state into the Soviet Union (Suleja 1995; Nowak 2001; Wyszczelski 2016).

The continuation of these motives can be observed in Poland’s contemporary foreign policy. Poland strives to bring Ukraine and the other Eastern Neighborhood countries closer to the EU and NATO. Since its accession to Western institutions, Poland specifically hoped to avoid the emergence of divisions “between ‘ins’ and ‘outs’ in the EU and NATO enlargement process” (Wolczuk and Wolczuk 2003:77). This rationale has both a security-related and a normative aspect. On the one hand, supporting the development of a stable, democratic and pro-Western Eastern Neighborhood prevents Poland from becoming a NATO and EU ‘outpost’. At the same time, as Kaminska (2014:75) argues, Poland’s foreign policy
towards Ukraine was guided by a “national belief in the Polish mission of supporting its younger brother” in democratization and reform.

Despite the positive sense of cultural closeness, there is a degree of ‘Orientalism’ in the Polish attitude towards Ukraine. Some historians apply a postcolonial discourse to Polish-Ukrainian relations, arguing that Ukraine had been a type of colony for Poland (e.g. Hryckak 2000; Beauvois 2005). This relationship is also expressed in a sense of superiority towards Ukraine in Polish culture. The stigmatization of the ‘East’ in Polish intellectual thought applies not only to the countries in Poland’s Eastern Neighborhood but is also prevalent within Poland. As Zarycki (2010:73–4) argues:

A negative attitude towards “Easternness”, defined in a variety of ways, can be spotted in several dimensions of political discourse in Poland including that of the mainstream Polish national identity discourse. A deep-rooted stereotype of the “East” (defined both as the Eastern part of Europe as well as the Eastern part of the country) as a backward social world lagging behind European “normalcy” still persists among many Poles.

The Polish sense of cultural superiority in relations to Ukraine and other Eastern Neighborhood counties is based on a variety of aspects. Most notably, Poles or ‘polonized’ Ruthenians (proto-Ukrainians) constituted the ‘upper class’—the gentry and later landowners— in the Kresy (see Beauvois 2005). Moreover, Ukrainian identity developed comparatively late and in relation to Poland. In the nineteenth century, Western Ukrainian elites who strived for emancipation from Poland ironically often emulated the Polish lifestyle, especially as their social status improved (Subtelny 1994:239). There is also a perceived sense of supremacy of Roman Catholicism over Orthodox Christianity attributed to the more ‘Western’ roots of the former. Another source of established and culturally interpreted inequality stems from the legacy of Communism. The deeper degree of Sovietization of the former USSR as opposed to the Central Eastern European ‘satellite states’ has left visible marks until the present day, for example, in urban architecture. Another element is the difference in the degree of economic development, especially in the post-Cold War period. Poland’s stigmatization of the ‘East’ can be seen as a reflection of its own stigmatization in relation to the West. In other words, Poland projects its sense of ontological insecurity, which
stems from the internalization of not being ‘Western enough’, onto the Eastern Neighborhood countries, thus transferring a similar form of hierarchization.

This can be seen on the level of high politics as well as popular culture. The view of itself as ‘more Western’ in comparison to Ukraine is a source of self-affirmation for Poland that provides ontological security. At the same time, the myth of the Kresy and the ‘Jagiellonian’ conception of Europe constitute a memory of historical greatness. Poland therefore needs Ukraine as a source of self-validation as well as a sphere of cultural belonging.

1.3 Ukraine as challenge and threat

The shared heritage and cultural proximity implied a strenuous and problematic history of Polish-Ukrainian relations. A series of conflicts over national ideas and territorial disputes, and periods of bloodshed have created resentments on both sides, which have consequences to the present day. Unresolved disputes over historical memory severely strain the relations between the two nations.

The creation of a Ukrainian national identity was directly related to the separation from Poland. For Poland, the emergence of Ukraine went hand in hand with the decline of its own cultural and political influence in Eastern Europe. The Polish cultural realm, which had expanded since the fourteenth century, was gradually pushed back beginning with the Cossack Uprising in 1648, followed by the partitions in the late eighteenth century, and revolts of Ukrainian peasants against Polish landowners towards the end of the First World War. The decline of the Polish Kresy culminated in the ethnic cleansing by Ukrainian nationalists and the expulsion of Polish landowners by the Soviets during and after the Second World War (Jasiewicz 1997). As Orest Subtelny (1994:483) points out, the retreat of Poland’s socioeconomic dominance in the area concluded “when the Soviets ejected them [the Poles] from Galicia and Volhynia where 600 years earlier their advance into Ukraine had begun. Especially painful for Poland was the loss of Lviv, long a ‘bastion of Polish culture and dominance’” (Subtelny 1994:481). The development of a Ukrainian identity therefore constituted both a challenge and a threat to Poland. The view of Ukraine as a threat to Polishness – although not dominant – is still present in Polish political thinking.
Ukrainian national identity as an intellectual project and the idea of a sovereign Ukrainian state in the modern sense developed at a time when neither Ukraine nor Poland existed on the map. It was primarily a project of thinkers in Galicia, a region which had been part of Poland before 1773 and after 1918, and during the partitions came under the domination of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Ukrainians in Galicia demanded changes and reforms while most of the Polish leadership, which constituted the upper class, defended the status quo. “In short, the Poles were the ‘haves’ and the Ukrainians were the ‘have-nots’,” who were unwilling to accept their status any longer (Subtelny 1994:330). Subsequently, a fragile Ukrainian state briefly emerged in the interwar period in a highly unstable international environment. The attitudes towards Poland in the Ukrainian People’s Republic were ambiguous. Its leaders were uncertain whether to see the western neighbor as a potential ally and protector from Russia, or a former hegemon.

Within Poland there were also conflicting ideas on how to deal with both the Ukrainian state and with ethnic Ukrainians living on Polish territory. Piłsudski and his camp favored an alliance with an independent Ukraine against Russia, even though he could not come to an agreement with Ukrainian leaders regarding Lviv (Snyder 2003:138). On the other hand, National Democrats, like Roman Dmowski and Stanisław Grabski, imagined a compromise with Russia over the eastern lands (de facto dividing Ukraine). This camp envisioned a ‘Polish’ Poland, which would include only territories inhabited by ethnic Poles or those that could be assimilated into an ethnically Polish state, claiming that an ethnically homogenous Poland could be more easily defended (Walicki 1994:54). This had direct consequences for attitudes toward Ukrainians living in Poland. Especially after Piłsudski’s death, Polish authorities, closer in line with the ideas of the National Democrats, pursued an assimilation policy towards wide parts of the Ukrainian population (Hrycak 2000:189–194). In some way, the two competing approaches have influenced Polish thinking towards Ukraine today. There are those who follow the thinking of Piłsudski that Poland needs to build close relations with Ukraine. However, there are also voices, especially on the ‘far right’ and the ‘far left’, that see Ukraine as a threat.
Although in the 1930s greater liberties were given to Ukrainians living in Poland compared to those parts of Ukraine that had been incorporated into the Soviet Union, it was on Polish territory that nationalism — often with specifically anti-Polish sentiments — was growing among Ukrainian elites (Snyder 2003:142–3). These sentiments gave rise to the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), which ranged among the most radical groups. Seeing itself at war with the Polish state, the OUN collaborated with Nazi Germany during the Second World War. In an attempt to eradicate Polish presence on Ukrainian territory through ethnic cleansing, the OUN killed an estimated 60,000-80,000 Polish civilians between 1943 and 1944 in Volhynia (Klymenko 2009). The Volhynia massacre constitutes one of the main points of contention in contemporary Polish-Ukrainian relations. A significant fraction of Poles, especially among the political right, demand the official recognition of the incident as genocide (Marples 2007). Ukrainian governments, however, have rejected this label. Moreover, many Ukrainians consider Stefan Bandera, leader of the OUN, a ‘national hero’ (see Sakwa 2016:17–9).

The Soviet Union – as previously Russia – became an ‘arbitrator’ in this Polish-Ukrainian conflict, resolving it through terror, the displacement of people and strict separation. The events of World War II gave the USSR the opportunity to ‘unify Ukraine’. To achieve this, the Soviets had to defeat both Polish and Ukrainian nationalists (Motyka 2002:283). In 1947, as Poland’s borders were shifted westward, the new communist leadership of Poland ‘solved the Ukrainian question’ by forcibly resettling 150,000 Ukrainian civilians living on Polish territory as part of the Operation Vistula (Klymenko 2009).

During the communist period, no official relations between Poland and Ukraine existed independently from Moscow. However, the ideas that were developed during this period laid the groundwork for Poland’s Eastern policy approach after 1989. A prominent role in this played the ideas of the Polish political thinker Jerzy Giedroyć, the publisher and editor of the leading Polish-émigré literally journal Kultura (1947-2000) based in Paris. Similar to Pilsudski, Giedroyć stressed the importance of the nations ‘between’ Poland and Russia for Poland’s security. Giedroyć and other writers of Kultura, such as Ludwik Mierosławski, suggested that Poland should develop friendly relations with Ukraine, Lithuania and its other eastern neighbors while “Russia remained in its traditional role of the
‘other’ for Poland” (Klymenko 2009:259). However, the Kultura journal also stressed that in order to pursue this kind of policy, Poland needed to abandon all territorial disputes with the eastern neighbors. After the end of communism, the so-called ‘Giedroyć doctrine’ became a consensus among Polish foreign policy leaders (Wolczuk and Wolczuk 2003). All of Poland’s post-Cold War governments also agreed that Poland needed to actively support democracy and stability in its Eastern Neighborhood, and try to include those states into Western political and security institutions. The ideas promoted by the writes of Kultura became internalized in Polish strategic culture.

Reconciliation with Ukraine on the societal level could finally begin in the post-Cold War period. The 1990s experienced a large exchange of people, including migrants, vendors and seasonal workers, across the Polish-Ukrainian border (Wolczuk and Wolczuk 2003). The Orange Revolution in Ukraine in 2004 further contributed to the strengthening of Polish-Ukrainian relations. Polish citizens expressed a high degree of solidarity with the Ukrainian people’s demands for ‘fair elections’; Polish students demonstrated in front of the Ukrainian embassy in Warsaw, and numerous cities and universities adopted resolutions regarding the elections in Ukraine (Klymenko 2009:269). The Polish government and President Kwaśniewski also supported the democratic revolution and later built strong relations with Ukraine’s new ‘Orange’ government.

1.4 Western dimension in Poland’s politics towards Ukraine

Not only Russia but also the ‘West’ (in its different forms) has an impact on Polish-Ukrainian relations. Poland depends on the West as a security provider to be able to pursue its relations with Ukraine. The interwar period has shown how difficult it is for Poland to conduct a foreign policy towards Ukraine when it is facing an existential threat. Pilsudski’s Prometeist politics were not successful because the interwar leader did not have the support of Poland’s Western allies. Polish historians often attribute both the dissolution of the Ukrainian state and Poland’s ‘disaster of 1939’ to the unwillingness of the Western powers to recognize that Poland needed military protection from Russia (Interview 15). In the post-Cold War period, Polish leaders understood that for the pursuit of relations with the eastern neighbors and Russia, the West’s support was indispensable. Membership in NATO and the EU provided the necessary security conditions. While initially, particularly the transatlantic
West fulfilled this role, in the period covered in this chapter the U.S. had retreated to the background in the region and Poland increasingly relied on the European Union.

Poland’s embedment in the Western political and security structures has also helped to resolve historical disputes with Ukraine. Post-Cold War elites in Warsaw recognized that “Poland’s integration into the West was contingent […] on Poland’s ability to sustain normal relations with [its neighbors in] the East” (Prizel 1994:103). The pursuit of NATO and EU membership motivated Poland’s leaders to recognize the country’s eastern borders. Warsaw realized that if it wanted to enter the trajectory of becoming a member of Western institutions, there was no place for revisionism. However, Poland’s pursuit of embedment in the West has therefore also been a constraining factor for its policy towards Ukraine. Following Poland’s accession to the EU and entrance into the Schengen area, Poland was obliged to close its eastern borders and introduce visa requirements for Ukrainians. In a way, as Poland turns towards the West, it often turns away from Ukraine.

Both Ukraine and Poland have been, to some extent, victims of Western realpolitik towards Russia. The concern that the U.S. or EU member states might be willing to sacrifice the interests of smaller post-Soviet states for the sake of stability in the region has sometimes been a unifying factor in relations between Warsaw and Kiev. Although their relations with the ‘West’ differed historically and presently, the two countries share a certain suspicion that Western powers will come to terms with Russia ‘above their heads’, a concern that stems from their respective experience in the past. For example, during the Second World War, the Western Allies’ belief that maintaining close relations with Moscow was necessary to defeat Germany determined the fate of both Ukraine and Poland at the end of the war. The former was incorporated into the Soviet Union while the latter became part of its sphere of influence. Also, during the breakdown of the Soviet Union, there was a lack of agreement in the West whether to support the emergence of the newly independent states due to the fear of ethnic conflicts. By contrast, since 1989 Poland engaged with Ukraine and the other republics of the Soviet Union independently from Moscow at a time when few in the West thought or wished that the USSR disintegrates (Snyder 2003:257).
In Poland’s eyes, a similar prioritization of Russian interests over the rest of the countries in the former Soviet space dominates Western politics in the post-Cold War era. A prime example of this is energy security. In 2006, Radosław Sikorski, then defense minister in the Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (PiS) government, compared the Nord Stream pipeline project, negotiated directly between Germany and Russia, to the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact (Adomeit 2016). Warsaw expressed extreme discomfort about fact that the pipeline bypassed both Ukraine and Poland (Orenstein and Kelemen 2017:92). The project, for the first time, provided the possibility for Russia to cut off gas to both countries without affecting transits to Germany and other parts of Western Europe. Both Poland and Ukraine are transit countries of Russian gas to the rest of Europe, but Ukraine is much more dependent on this gas transit than Poland (Sharples 2012). The energy relationship between Moscow and Kiev since the 1990s has been characterized by “almost permanent negotiations and threats of shutdowns” (Sakwa 2016:54). Poland argued that the Nord Stream project was jeopardizing the energy security of both countries and vainly called upon the EU to veto the project in the name of solidarity (see R. Miller 2008:16–17). Another concern for Poland is that Washington and Brussels are willing to recognize Russian claims to the former Soviet space as a sphere of political and economic influence, which became apparent in the case of Georgia.

The Polish view that its own security is closely linked to Ukraine has made Poland a natural advocate for Ukraine’s approximation with the EU and NATO. This is related to the idea, propagated by many Polish political thinkers, that Poland can only be a subject in the West when it is strong in the East, which also shaped the policy of President Kaczyński (see chapter 4). These impulses gave rise to ideas such as the ‘Intermarium’ concept of a sub-regional political confederation of states reaching ‘from the Baltic to the Black Sea’ under Polish leadership (Troebst 2003).

However, the quest for deeper embedment in the West in Polish strategic culture has also triggered opposite impulses. Some strategic thinkers have concluded that Poland’s ambitious eastern policy negatively impacts on its position in the West (e.g. Sienkiewicz 2001). This idea has been around since the time of the partitions, propagated, for example, by a group of political thinkers called Stańczycy who blamed the decline and ‘backwardness’ of
the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in relation to the West on its eastern expansion (see Walicki 1994:32–3). Historians and political thinkers have since repeated this idea. Presently, the perception has grown among Polish political elites that, since Poland is part of the EU and NATO, an exclusive bilateral engagement in the Eastern Neighborhood, including Ukraine, is no longer advantageous for Poland. Especially, Poland should refrain from getting involved in local affairs in Ukraine (e.g. business relations with Ukraine might lead to the ‘spill-over’ of corruption) and avoid a clash of interest with Russia. These ideas, to some extent, guided the foreign policy of Sikorski prior to the Ukraine crisis who, then as foreign minister, called for the abandonment of the ‘Jagiellonian’ foreign policy (Sikorski 2009).

II. THE EU’S EASTERN PARTNERSHIP AND POLAND’S ADAPTATION STRATEGY
Since Poland’s entry into the EU all main political factions have agreed that one of the country’s main goals should be the promotion of an active EU engagement with Poland’s eastern neighbors. The goal of this approach is to “draw them more closely into the West’s orbit, even with the eventual prospect of accession to the Union for the most advanced such as Ukraine” (Szczerbiak 2014). However, significant differences emerged among political groupings on how this goal should be achieved, by working through the EU or by pioneering a policy approach. A main reason was that Poland’s visions in the Eastern Neighborhood were not always easily reconciled with those of its EU partners. Poland’s open support for membership in the EU and NATO of former Soviet Republics, especially Ukraine and Georgia, had antagonized Moscow, and had caused frequent tensions between Poland and influential member states, such as Germany and France.

2.1 Reset with Russia and consequences for relations with Ukraine
The perception of Poland as ‘irrationally Russophobe’ and insensitive to Moscow’s interests in the former Soviet space contributed to its image as a ‘difficult partner’ (see Vetter 2008). Especially the Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (PiS) government (2005-2007) and the presidency of Lech Kaczyński (2005-2010) received the reputation of damaging Poland’s relations with Russia and, in consequence, with its EU partners. Poland’s foreign policy regarding the
Eastern Neighborhood and Russia was often portrayed as deviant from European norms on foreign policy behavior. It contributed to Poland’s ‘latecomer’ status in the EU.

The Platforma Obywatelska (PO) government under Prime Minister Donald Tusk, which came to power in 2007, attempted to redefine Poland’s foreign policy. In accordance with its decision to work closer with the EU and orient its foreign policy on Berlin, the Polish government also had to reset its relations with Russia – Germany’s important strategic partner. The PO government claimed that under its predecessor, a coalition government led by PiS, Poland had not been able to pursue its objectives in the Eastern Neighborhood effectively because “poor bi-lateral relations with Moscow had reinforced the prevalent image among its EU partners of Poles as knee-jerk Russophobes” (Szczerbiak 2014). The policy goal of “the deepening of Polish-Russian dialogue” (see Platforma Obywatelska 2008) began with a number of high-level state visits, including Prime Minister Tusk’s visit to Moscow in early 2008 (Tusk rozpoczął wizytę w Moskwie 2008). The declared successes of this policy included the Russian President Putin’s visit to Westerplatte on the seventieth anniversary of the outbreak of the Second World War (Polish, Russian Press Welcome Putin Gesture 2009), the emergence of the bilateral ‘Committee for Difficult Issues’ and later the ‘Center of Polish-Russian Dialogue’ (Vetter 2008), and a common declaration of the Catholic Church in Poland and the Russian Orthodox Church. One of the leading Russian news outlets called Polish Prime Minister Tusk “our man in Warsaw” (Rosyjskie media o Tusku 2008). According to Foreign Minister Sikorski, Poland’s policy towards Moscow was based on ‘positive gestures’ and ‘reciprocity’, and aimed at the gradual ‘Europeanization of Russia’ (Sikorski 2011). This general policy direction continued despite the Russo-Georgian war, which temporarily strained Polish-Russian relations. Interestingly, the Smolensk catastrophe on 10 April 2010 intensified the mutual policy of rapprochement between the governments of Russia and Poland (Nowak and Kobrinskaya 2010). This happened despite contentious proceedings of the investigation – for example, due to Russia’s refusal to return either the back box or the plane wrack to Poland – and the fact that significant parts of the Polish population and the political opposition placed responsibility for the incident on Russia. Also, with the death of Lech Kaczyński the period of co-habitation (see chapter 4) ended, which meant that the new approach of ‘reset’ no longer had a contestant.
As described in an internal document of the ministry of foreign affairs (MFA) from 2008, which was only revealed to the public in 2017, the dialogue with Russia was supposed to “increase Poland’s credibility in the eyes of its Western partners” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Poland 2008:6).\footnote{\textit{``Dialog ten uwiarygodni Polskę w oczach naszych zachodnich partnerów’’} (translated by author).} Indeed, Poland’s EU partners, especially Germany, which became Poland’s main partner in the EU, positively received this new approach. According to Copsey and Pomorska (2014:433), the Brussels community welcomed Poland’s recognition that its role in the EU is highly conditioned by its relationship with Germany, which in turn is conditioned by Germany’s relationship with Russia.

This policy of rapprochement with Russia and emphasis on greater compromise with the EU had direct consequences for Poland’s relations with Ukraine. The abovementioned document of the MFA recommends that Poland takes actions towards “disenchantment” with Ukraine and departs from the “patriotic correctness of engaging on behalf of Ukraine” to replace it with a “pragmatic” approach (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Poland 2008:7).\footnote{\textit{``Należy zatem podjąć aktywność na rzecz ‘odezarowania’ takiego ‘patriotycznie poprawnego angażowania się na rzecz Ukraiiny’, zastępując go pragmatycznym i gdy trzeba – przyjaźnie krytycznym podejściem do tego kraju’’} (translated and abbreviated by author).} Although the Polish government still pursued Poland’s long-term goal of bringing Ukraine closer to the West, it wanted to do this in a way that would be seen as non-controversial by both Russia and within the EU. The EU’s vision of the European Neighborhood Policy as an alternative to enlargement contradicted the Polish aim of EU accession for Ukraine (Kaminska 2014). Poland therefore abandoned this issue. This change of direction in Poland’s foreign policy alarmed the ‘Orange’ leaders in Ukraine. Ukrainian leader Viktor Yushchenko raised his “concern” over what Poland’s policy towards Russian meant for Ukraine, for example, in an interview for the Polish newspaper Gazette Wyborcza (in Vetter 2008:160). According to Kaminska (2014:99–100), it was evident that “Poland was able to ‘adapt’ to the Brussels game [as] Ukrainian membership became a ‘quiet issue’ in Polish diplomacy.” Her analysis confirms that the change of strategy was fundamentally about the EU. By abandoning the pursuit of membership for Ukraine, Warsaw employed a strategy of ‘adaptation’, which aimed at proving its successful socialization to escape stigmatization.
2.2 The Eastern Partnership

In parallel to abandoning the pursuit of membership for Ukraine, Poland nevertheless attempted to follow its long-term objectives regarding the Eastern Neighborhood through other avenues. Jointly with Sweden, it initiated the Eastern Partnership (EaP) project, which was launched during the Polish EU Presidency in 2009. The EaP was an innovative program of cooperation between the EU and a group of designated Eastern Neighbors, i.e. Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. To these Eastern Neighbors the EU offered association agreements (AA) as tangible rewards for reform in areas of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. Branded most of all as a ‘modernization project’, the EaP intended to prevent the Eastern Neighbors from feeling isolated in the light of EU integration. According to an expert, while openly declaring that the EaP was an alternative to enlargement, Poland was trying to ‘smuggle in’ a very ambitious plan for Ukraine on the EU’s agenda, especially through the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA), which was part of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement prepared to be signed in late 2013 (Interview 4). The DCFTA would gradually reduce Ukraine’s economic dependency on Russia and disempower the class of oligarchs that benefitted from it.

Polish governing elites considered the EaP a big success of ‘uploading’ some of Poland’s foreign policy priorities onto the EU’s agenda. According to one Polish senior diplomat, it was an accomplishment that Poland proposed a project that was subsequently “internalized” by the EU as a whole (Interview 20). Poland had branded itself as an advocate for Ukraine and to a degree influenced the common EU narrative. As a former Polish MEP argued, Poland took part in the process of building a common European position towards Ukraine as it had been “influencing the EU to think about Ukraine as a fully sovereign country that has the right to develop in accordance with its own aspirations” (Interview 16).19

19 “[…] jeśli ma miejsce proces budowania opinii europejskiej w jakiejś sprawie, to Polska jest rzecznikiem patrzenia na Ukrainę, jako na kraj całkowicie suwerenny, który ma prawo do rozwoju zgodnie ze swoimi aspiracjami. I ten pogląd jest brany pod uwagę w budowaniu ogólnoeuropejskiego stanowiska wobec Ukrainy” (translated by author).
Instead of building political blocs with newer member states within the EU, Poland focused on alliances with ‘established’ members to ‘raise its credibility’. Copsey and Pomorska (2014:433) argue that the choice of Sweden as a partner for the EaP project was strategic since Sweden was a “member state with the reputation of being a reliable, honest broker, a solid advocate of deeper integration with the European Union.” As a consequence, the Polish idea for a new initiative towards the East “evolved over time and shifted from a highly ambitious project […] to being a more pragmatic proposal that could be launched together with the Swedes” (Copsey and Pomorska 2014:433). The new project particularly stressed incremental change. The program specified that partnerships are not exclusive and that the association agreements do not prevent the partner countries from entering other political or economic associations, which was specifically meant to appease Russia (Menon and Rumer 2015). Poland explicitly emphasized repeatedly that there was “nothing anti-Russian in the EaP” (Copsey and Pomorska 2014:435).

Meanwhile, the main opposition party in Poland criticized the government’s larger eastern policy arguing that by focusing on improving relations with Russia and promoting the Eastern Partnership, it “had downgraded developing bi-lateral ties with Kiev and treated the former Soviet republics as a uniform entity rather than building stronger links with more advanced ones like Ukraine” (Szczerbiak 2014). Had the Tusk administration abandoned the ‘Giedroyć doctrine’, as the opposition suggested?

At least on the surface, Poland de facto departed from what had been a central element within the Eastern dimension of its strategic culture, which is the prioritization of relations with Ukraine over soothing relations with Russia. One might argue, however, that even those among the Polish political elite who had designed and actively promoted the EaP maintained a degree of skepticism of the program’s official logic. Interviewed officials and diplomats engaged in the EaP suggest that it was a strategy to gain the support of its EU partners. One diplomat argues that Poland never fully abandoned the ambition of creating an EU foreign policy towards Ukraine and other eastern neighbors that is separate from a policy towards Russia (Interview 4). In comparison to other member states, many among Poland’s political elite were less convinced of Russia’s potential to reform and to give up claims to its
‘sphere of influence’. Instead, according to one politician, they secretly hoped that through the EaP Russia could be put in a position where it had no other choice (Interview 16).

Based on Poland’s own experience of post-communist transformation, its foreign policy leaders have often acted under the assumption that if Ukraine were given the chance to participate in Western institutional structures, it would undergo a positive transformation in areas of democracy and the rule of law. The chances of this diminished, however, after the fragmentation of the ‘Orange’ camp and the victory of Victor Yanukovych in the presidential elections of 2010. A ‘family’ of oligarchic groupings with close ties to Yanukovych swiftly increased their power and wealth following his election in 2010 (Sakwa 2016:61). Nevertheless, the preparations of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement offered some hope for Ukraine’s approximation to the EU.

III. THE UKRAINE CRISIS – DEFEAT OR VICTORY OF A NEW STRATEGY?
The so-called Ukraine crisis can be described as both “the most serious conflict in Europe since the brutal civil war in the former Yugoslavia, and the most significant confrontation between the West and Russia since the end of the Cold War” (Davis Cross and Karolewski 2016:4). The crisis was of particular significance for the European Union not only because of its geographical proximity to the EU’s borders. The EU itself was also – albeit unintentionally – a crucial factor leading to the crisis (see Krasnodębska 2018). After all, the crisis began with Ukrainian President Yanukovych’s sudden withdrawal from the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement (AA) in late 2013 and his declaration that Ukraine would join the customs union with Russia instead. The following section discusses Poland’s foreign policy in the context of a larger EU response during the different phases of the crisis beginning with the weeks leading up to the expected signature of the AA in late 2013.

3.1 Failure of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement
The EU’s Association Agreement with Ukraine (AA), which intended to “renew the EU-Ukraine common institutional framework, facilitate the deepening of relations in all areas and strengthen political association and economic integration through reciprocal rights and
obligations,” was expected to be signed at the Vilnius Summit in late 2013 (EU Ukraine Association Agenda 2010). The agreement had been under discussion since 2008. However, since the election of President Yanukovych in 2010, the state of democracy and the rule of law in Ukraine had deteriorated. Whereas in 2009 Ukraine had been the only country in the non-Baltic former Soviet Union that was ranked ‘free’ according to the Freedom House ranking, it was downgraded to ‘partly free’ a year later (Freedom in the World 2011: Ukraine 2011). The EU was therefore pressuring the Ukrainian government to conduct reforms before the agreement could be signed. A central issue of concern became the politically motivated convictions of members of the former government, in particular the arrest of Orange Revolution leader Yulia Timoshenko. Although there was a consensus in the EU that the AA would be advantageous, there was some disagreement on how to deal with the Yanukovych government. Some member states, including Sweden, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, urged against the signing of the association agreement based on Ukraine’s failure to commit to the EU’s guiding norms. Germany understood the strategic importance of Ukraine but was strongly concentrated on the Timoshenko case, and for this reason insisted on tough conditionality (Interview 22).

Despite these problems, Poland’s elites maintained high hopes for the AA. As a former Polish MEP argues, at that time, Polish leaders tended to believe that if Yanukovych could be diplomatically coopted into signing the agreement, this would eventually lead to incremental change in Ukraine (Interview 16). According to the former MEP, the hope was that Yanukovych would be ‘tricked’ into signing, and when the AA was formally in place, it would “help build a pro-European public opinion and slowly redirect the logic of Ukrainian politics from corruption towards the rule of law.” The AA would encourage civil society actors within Ukraine to exert pressure on the government towards the realization of the agreement’s provisions. This position was based on a practical consideration that Ukraine needed to be brought ‘on the right’ path before a positive transformation could take place.

Polish government officials and public figures therefore became highly involved in the preparations of the agreement, working both through the EU and bilaterally. Former Polish President Alexander Kwasniewski along with former President of the European
Parliament Pat Cox traveled to Kiev as EU envoys to attend sessions of the Verkhovna Rada (Ukrainian Parliament) and to convince Ukrainian politicians to conduct the necessary reforms. As one of the largest diplomatic initiatives of the European Parliament the Cox-Kwasniewski Mission organized several trips to Ukraine, mostly concerning the Yulia Timoshenko trial, but it also addressed the issue of selective justice more generally (Interview 22). Poland’s President Bronisław Komorowski, who was known for his good relations with the Ukrainian president, frequently met with Yanukovych during the period preceding the Vilnius summit, urging the Ukrainian president to comply with the EU’s demands so that the AA could be formalized.

Even when Yanukovych was becoming increasingly uncooperative, for example, at several occasions cancelling scheduled meetings with EU or member states’ officials, Poland continued to push for the agreement to be signed. Polish politicians argued that the EU should give a clear statement of support for Ukraine’s European path (EU Takes “Infantile Position” in Ukraine-Russia Conflict 2013). According to an official at the EU Delegation in Kiev, Polish diplomats even asked the EU to absolve Ukraine of some of its obligations at several points. Poland began to insist that there is a “war with Russia” over economic and political influence in Ukraine, and the primary goal of the AA should be to keep Russia away (Interview 8). At the same time, Poland’s strategy involved compromising with those states which insisted on harsher conditions for Ukraine in order not to lose their support for the agreement as a whole. Thus, in this phase, Poland played a ‘double game’ of trying to get the EU to sign the AA in any case while openly criticizing Ukraine for not fulfilling the criteria (Interview 8).

It was especially concerning for the EU that the Ukrainian president was holding parallel meetings with Moscow, which indicated that Putin was trying to change Yanukovych’s mind about the AA. Sensing that the AA was in great danger of not being signed, the EU, and especially Warsaw and Vilnius, “began to panic,” and were asking Germany and the U.S. to intervene. However, there was little incentive to get involved on either Washington’s or Berlin’s side – the only actors that could have changed Putin’s mind, as an EU official claims (Interview 22). Despite these warning sings, Yanukovych’s
withdrawal from the AA on November 21, 2013, came as a shock to most European leaders.

3.2 The Maidan Revolution as game changer

The night President Victor Yanukovych announced his withdrawal from the AA, protesters gathered on the Maidan Nezalezhnosti (Independence Square) in Kiev. They were waving EU flags and demanding for their government not to close the door on Ukraine’s “European future” (@ЄВРОМАЙДАН (Euromaidan) 2013). This was the beginning of what became known as the Maidan Revolution or Maidan (also referred to as EuroMaidan and the Revolution of Dignity). The manifestations of a few thousand people in the first days numbered a few hundred thousand by late November and early December. The increasingly brutal response of the government to the protests attracted even more supporters to the Maidan. Although the Maidan started off as pro-European demonstrations, after the government’s brutal suppression of the protests the demands for closer association with the EU retreated to the background. Reaching an estimated 800,000 protesters in Kiev, the Maidan focused on the protection of universal human and civil rights (Onuch 2015). The people increasingly demanded Yanukovych’s resignation.

Because the manifestations had begun with the AA, and because of the rhetoric of the protesters, the situation demanded a common EU response. One might argue that there had never been a crisis outside of the EU’s borders before that concerned the EU so directly. The question was just what an appropriate EU response would be. While member states agreed that the EU must act to stop the violence, there were disagreements on how to assess the Maidan. Experts in Western media voiced concerns that the Maidan (if successful) could lead to instability in the country, especially since Ukraine was portrayed as ‘deeply divided’ along ‘ethno-linguistic’ lines (e.g. Fisher 2014). Commentaries in Western media also communicated fears that the protests were led by ‘ultra-nationalists’ (e.g. Can Ukraine Control Its Far Right Ultranationalists? 2014). EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Catherine Ashton and Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighborhood Policy Stefan Füle visited Kiev several times after the outbreak of the protests. The European Parliament also sent a delegation to Ukraine.
Among the EU states, Poland stood out for its pro-Maidan position. Not only politicians, but also non-state actors, such as Polish journalists and NGOs, supported the protesters. Polish leaders began to change their approach after Yanukovych had withdrawn from the AA and the Maidan started. From playing Yanukovych’s advocate in the EU, Poland became one of the first member states that demanded sanctions against the Ukrainian government, especially as the first police attacks on protesters occurred (Ukraine Crisis: US and EU Move to Impose Sanctions 2014; Interview 12). Domestically, there was “extraordinary display of unity between the two main parties” regarding Poland’s foreign policy in the first few weeks of the Maidan (Szczerbiak 2014). Polish leaders across the entire party spectrum recognized the Maidan as a pro-democratic and pro-Western movement, and believed that Poland needed to support it. Due to cultural closeness and understanding of realities in the former Soviet space, Polish politicians and diplomats seemed to have a better grasp of the situation in Kiev than many of their colleagues in other EU member states. This was also related to exceptional press coverage and reporting. Polish journalists stood out as particularly engaged and knowledgeable in Ukrainian affairs (Interviews 1 and 3). This not only contributed to the quality of reporting but also strengthened citizen-to-citizen relations as some journalists became engaged during the protests, for example by helping to supply food and medication (Interview 18). Like previously the Orange Revolution, the Maidan awoke memories of the Solidarity movement in Poland. A majority among the Polish population (63%) sympathized with the protesting Ukrainians (Wybieralski 2014).

Given the intensity of Poland’s relationship with Ukraine, Polish political leaders saw an opportunity for their country to play an important role in the EU’s response to the crisis. Warsaw’s official line continued to follow the ‘adaptation’ strategy. Despite its pro-Maidan position, Warsaw wanted to use this chance to demonstrate that it could play the role of a ‘neutral broker’ and work through the EU. Poland’s foreign minister, Sikorski, travelled to Kiev along with other EU delegates. He declared support for the pro-democratic aspirations of the Maidan and condemned the government’s violence (Sikorski na Majdanie 2014). In late February, the Polish foreign minister engaged in negotiating a deal between Yanukovych and the parliamentary opposition. While Poland’s government leaders tried to preserve their
neutrality, support for the Maidan was more univocal among Polish journalists, who covered the events, and among politicians of the opposition. Opposition leader Jarosław Kaczyński also travelled to Kiev and stated that looking at the crowds of the demonstration, he was convinced that the “Maidan will be victorious”. He also assured the protesters “that Ukraine will be in the European Union, that you have already entered this path, because you are united and you are strong” (Jarosław Kaczyński do Ukraińców na Majdanie 2013).\(^{20}\) By contrast, while Sikorski talked to government and opposition leaders, he refrained from visiting the Maidan, most likely because this would have been perceived as an overly strong statement in favor of one side that could have threatened the anticipated success of the diplomatic efforts.

It was, however, Sikorski who received wide attention in the international media. As the *Global Post* reported, “Sikorski’s role was important not only for Ukraine, but his own country, which is emerging as an increasingly powerful player in European affairs” (*Ukraine Crisis Confirms Poland’s Rising Role in Europe* 2014). The same article cited Ryszarda Formuszewicz of the Polish Institute of International Affair who argued that Sikorski’s role “could not only strengthen the image of Poland as actively involved in the EU’s eastern policy but also contribute to Poland taking a more active role in foreign policy in general” (in *Ukraine Crisis Confirms Poland’s Rising Role in Europe* 2014). Yet although Sikorski became the ‘face of Europe’ during the crisis, he also became the face of a reluctant and torn Europe. The Polish foreign minister and other EU representatives continued to talk to the Ukrainian authorities even after brutal killings of protesters and until the last day of Yanukovych’s government. Sikorski himself encouraged a deal between the opposition and Yanukovych. “If you don’t support this [deal] you’ll have martial law, the army. You will all be dead,” he told the Ukrainian protest leaders regarding the offer of Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych to hold elections in December (cited in Oliphant and Strange 2014). This deal was signed on February 22, 2014, but it was never implemented. In the same night, Yanukovych fled to Russia in a private helicopter.

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\(^{20}\) “Mówił, że kiedy patrzy na wielkie tłumy […] to jest pewien, że zgromadzeni na niej zwyciężą. - (Jestem pewien), że Ukraina będzie w Unii Europejskiej, że weszliście już na tę drogę, weszliście, bo jesteście zjednoczeni, bo jesteście silni” (translated by author).
After Yanukovych’s downfall, politicians of the parliamentary opposition in Poland blamed Sikorski and the other EU ministers for having intervened too late and too hesitantly (Szczerbiak 2014). In the opinion of an EEAS official present at the time of the negotiations, the position of the Ukrainian president had already been so weakened that the deal only bought him time to prepare his escape and secure his family’s financial interests (Interview 8). Diplomats present in Kiev at the time indicated that Brussels and member state capitals in their response were always ‘a step behind’ the unfolding events. Diplomatic actions failed to match realities in Kiev in their timing (Interviews 8 and 41). Thus, although Poland had demonstrated its ability to cooperate with other EU actors, for which it was widely praised, it acted as part of a very reactive EU response. Acting as part of the larger EU response meant that Poland continued to engage with Yanukovych until the very end, which undermined its position in the eyes of the pro-Maidan opposition that subsequently became Ukraine’s new governing elite.

3.3 Russian involvement
Russia’s annexation of Crimea, which directly followed the change of government in Kiev, and the outbreak of a Russian-backed separatist war in the east of Ukraine made evident what had long been foreseeable. It revealed that the Ukraine crisis was not merely a domestic affair but that Moscow had its interests in Ukraine and was ready to defend them even with military means, disregarding international law and agreements. From this point on, the EU’s official rhetoric underwent a change. During the Maidan, the EU and its members had sought to act as impartial mediators and treated the events in Ukraine officially as a strictly internal crisis, while continuing ‘business as usual’ with Russia. Following the annexation of Crimea, the EU and other Western states, such as the U.S. and Canada, imposed sanctions on Russia, and Western leaders openly criticized Moscow for violating international law. Initially, the sanctions were restricted to individual persons and limited economic sanctions, even in the face of the outbreak of the separatist war in east Ukraine. However, following the downing of passenger plane MH-17 over east Ukraine in July 2014 by, as evidence suggests, separatists armed with Russian weapons, sanctions were sharpened. The EU also became openly supportive of the new pro-European government in Ukraine.
The shift was particularly driven by Berlin. Although, as Stefan Meister (2014) points out, German Chancellor Merkel had already taken a more critical stance on Russia than some of her predecessors, especially Gerhard Schröder, until 2014 this did not translate into a policy shift either at national or at EU level. Until the annexation of Crimea, Berlin had emphasized that Russia was an “important partner for overcoming regional and global challenges” (Meister 2014:3). However, following the events of early 2014, Germany became the driving force behind the EU’s response to Russia and the main actor on the part of the ‘West’ in the negotiations with Russia.

In the light of the events the EU and its members had to gradually realize that Russia did not accept the logic of the EaP, which was presented “as a high-minded venture aimed at promoting prosperity and stability to the benefit of all, Russia included” (Menon and Rumer 2015:114). The idea that it would have been possible to gradually ‘democratize’, ‘liberalize’ and ‘Westernize’ the countries of the EU’s Eastern Neighborhood without a confrontation with Russia proved to be illusionary. The EU therefore began to change its approach towards Russia, imposing increasingly restrictive measures, including cancelling the EU-Russia Summit and holding a G7 meeting in Brussels in June 2014 instead of a G8 summit in Russia. The EU also supported the suspension of negotiations over Russia’s joining the OECD and the International Energy Agency (Davis Cross and Karolewski 2016). Simultaneously, the EU focused its efforts on “de-escalating the crisis in Ukraine by further engaging Russia in diplomatic dialogue, and supporting Ukraine financially and organizationally” to prevent political and economic collapse (Davis Cross and Karolewski 2016:5). The EU’s initiatives included the creation of the EU Advisory Mission (EUAM) for civilian security sector reform in Ukraine and the European Commission’s Support Group for Ukraine. The European Parliament ratified the Association Agreement with Ukraine simultaneously with the Verkhovna Rada on September 16, 2014. However, the establishment of a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area, an essential instrument of the AA for economic approximation, was delayed.

In the official negotiations with Russia the EU, however, retreated to the background. In its place, other actors, such as NATO, the OSCE, and the United States, as well as
individual European states became involved. Berlin and Paris replaced Brussels in conversations with Russia to resolve the crisis in eastern Ukraine, both in the international trilateral Contact Group, which comprises envoys from Ukraine, Russia and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and with Russia directly. Unlike during the Maidan protests or during the war in Georgia, these two member states did not officially act as ‘representatives’ of the EU. According to an EU official, Germany and France have emerged as key decision-makers in dealing with Russia and it was according to their approach that the foreign policies of other EU member states would ‘shift’ (Interview 21).

On July 2, 2014, the first round of negotiations took place in Berlin between Russia, Germany, France and Ukraine – without the presence of EU officials. The foreign ministers of the four countries in a joint statement urged the Contact Group to work on an “unconditional and mutually agreed sustainable cease-fire […] monitored by the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine in conformity with its mandate […] and use their influence on the concerned parties with a view to achieving this goal” (Joint Declaration by the Foreign Ministers of Ukraine, Russia, France and Germany 2014) In general, the four-way conversation was based on diplomacy and attempted to include Russia as a partner nevertheless. The wording of the declaration did not, in any way, indicate Russia’s role in instigating the fighting in eastern Ukraine, which was criticized by Poland and the Baltic states.

Overall, Poland welcomed the change of the EU’s and the United States’ approach towards Russia. The events in Crimea and eastern Ukraine ‘validated’ Poland’s long-term concerns regarding Russia. Poland suddenly became the country that had ‘always known’. However, this also meant that the efforts of improving relations with Moscow, which Warsaw had pursued for several years before the Ukraine crisis, had suddenly become outdated. The Polish government had to abandon the rhetoric of rapprochement and revert to its traditional ‘hawkish’ policy towards Russia. Radosław Sikorski, who had previously guided the policy of rapprochement with Russia, suddenly became the symbol of Poland’s “realpolitik in Europe” (Puhl 2014).

Despite its familiarity with and ‘expertise’ on Russia and Ukraine, Poland became practically irrelevant to the high level diplomatic negotiations since the annexation of
Crimea. Being excluded from the Berlin group and the Minsk talks was a setback for Poland. It undermined Poland’s influence on a European policy in the Eastern Neighborhood despite the importance of the region for Poland. It is difficult to say with certainty why Poland was not included in the Minsk negotiations. One interpretation is that Poland was perceived to have a strongly pro-Ukrainian and anti-Russian position, and Russia would be less inclined to engage in negotiations with Poland (Interview 8). This would mean that despite Poland’s attempts to convince both its European partners and Russia of its ability to act as a ‘neutral broker’ and lead a constructive dialogue with Moscow, its image had remained unchanged. Another interpretation is that Poland was seen as lacking the necessary experience to participate in negotiations that concern such serious matters of security. This would imply that notwithstanding Poland’s image of a ‘good partner’ for the EU and Germany, and although Poland has worked closely with the EU during the Maidan crisis, it was de facto excluded from the decision-making process once the situation ‘became serious’. Regardless of the interpretation, this phase of the Ukraine crisis showed the limits of Poland’s adaptation strategy, which sought to shape European foreign policy. Not only did the Polish government not contribute to the high-level crisis management, it was completely ignored by Germany and France despite Poland’s involvement in the region.

IV. CONSEQUENCES OF THE CRISIS
The Ukraine crisis led to a significant paradigm shift in the EU’s and, more generally, the transatlantic West’s approach to Ukraine and Russia. Moreover, it renewed the engagement of the U.S. and NATO in the post-Soviet region. Thus, while with the war in eastern Ukraine a security nightmare had come true for Poland, Warsaw gained greater solidarity within the West. The crisis also brought the issue of Ukraine higher on the EU’s agenda, which meant that Poland could capitalize on its expertise, experience and familiarity with the wider Eastern Neighborhood region. So, was Poland’s foreign policy during the Ukraine crisis a success? And secondly, has Poland’s response to the crisis helped its quest for recognition as an ‘established’ member of the EU and the West, and has it thus contributed to overcoming its stigma as a ‘latecomer’?
4.1. Paradigm shift in the West

The Maidan Revolution and the subsequent Ukraine crisis created new realities in Europe. Russia’s involvement confirmed Poland’s traditional skepticism towards Russia, which assumed that Moscow would not tolerate closer links between the EU and the Eastern Neighborhood countries. This skepticism had been previously often portrayed as ‘irrational’, ‘paranoid’ and ‘outdated’. Unlike the Russo-Georgian war six years earlier, the Ukraine crisis led to changes in the attitude towards Russia among Poland’s European partners, most notably in Germany. Not only Berlin’s official line shifted but also public opinion in Germany (see Pew Research Center 2014). A similar change occurred in the United States. Whereas throughout most of its time in office the Obama Administration had sought to improve relations with Moscow, Washington took a harder line following the events in Ukraine.

This shift in the policies of key EU and NATO members resulted in several provisions that were discussed during the NATO summit in Warsaw in July 2015. The alliance agreed to station NATO battalion battle groups in Poland, Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia on a rotational basis by 2017 (Świerczyński 2014). At the summit, alliance members also reemphasized the importance of the security of these countries for the alliance as a whole and confirmed their solidarity (Świerczyński 2014). Additionally, plans to establish a U.S. missile defense shield on Polish ground, which had been proposed during the presidency of George W. Bush and initially abandoned under Barak Obama, were resumed. Poland as well as the Baltic states welcomed these initiatives as a sign that the Atlantic Alliance was making efforts to address these countries’ main security concerns. Nevertheless, doubts have remained in Warsaw and the Baltic capitals whether these steps are really sufficient to discourage Russia from making further advances in the region (Nougayrède 2015). Many security experts, including Marcin Zaborowski, head of the Polish Institute of International Affairs, argue that if Russia is undeterred in Ukraine, it may pose a direct threat to the Baltic states in the future (Nougayrède 2015).

The Ukraine crisis also altered the common Eastern policy of the EU. Russia came to be seen as a key security threat, and the security of Poland and the Baltic states became more
strongly associated with the security of the EU as a whole. According to Orenstein and Kelemen (2017:96), the EU demonstrated “unexpected power” when imposing the sanctions regime. One might also argue that following of the Ukraine crisis the EU began to divert from its identity as a ‘postmodern’ security actor and began to act as a more ‘traditional’ security actor in relations with Russia.

The EU also shifted its attitude to the Eastern Neighborhood countries. It became more widely accepted among EU members that bringing Ukraine and the other neighborhood countries closer to the West cannot be easily reconciled with a close strategic partnership with Putin’s Russia. With the exception of some ‘Trojan Horses’, i.e., countries with pro-Russian governments, such as Cyprus, Greece and Hungary (see Orenstein and Kelemen 2017), and pro-Russian fractions within key member states, such as France, it became a general consensus that the EU has to do more to attract Eastern Neighborhood countries. This rationale was adopted at the working-level in the EU institutions, especially in the European Commission’s Support Group for Ukraine and the Eastern Partnership division of the European External Action Service (Interviews 19, 21 and 24).

4.2. Assessing Poland’s role
As a consequence of the events of 2013/14, some central goals in Poland’s strategic culture have become more generally accepted and addressed in both the EU and NATO. These include the principle of deterring Russia, the reassurance and solidarity with Poland by both institutions, and the goal of bringing the Eastern Neighborhood countries, especially Ukraine, closer to the West. Moreover, although the actions of Yanukovych had revealed the limits of the EaP’s strategy of encouraging gradual reforms, the outcome was nevertheless a positive transformation in Ukraine. One might also argue that Poland’s foreign policy during the Ukraine crisis raised its international profile. Following the events, Poland’s role as an ‘expert’ on the region became more important in the EU. The EU’s engagement with Ukraine following the Maidan also gave Poland the opportunity to capitalize on its experience of post-communist transformation as well as on the similarity of language and cultural closeness. According to a senior official of the European Commission’s Support Group for Ukraine, “Poles or Estonians understand the culture better and can more easily go straight down to the working-level” (Interview 24).
The positive image of Poland in the European media and public sphere, which culminated during the Ukraine crisis, points to a success of the ‘adaptation’ strategy. The loss of negative labels and signs of recognition of the positive transformation of Poland’s foreign policy indicate that the country might have overcome its stigma as a ‘latecomer’ in the EU after all. Also, as argued above, the EU’s approach towards Russia following the Ukraine crisis fell more in line with ideas engrained in Poland’s strategic culture. However, as Daniel Keleman and Mitchell Orenstein (2017) point out, the shift occurred mainly when ‘core EU member states’ – Germany, France and the UK – hardened their stances against Russia: “Viewing Russia as a threat represented a major policy change for Germany and France […]. It was also a change for the EU as a whole, which had been sharply divided on Russia policy” (Orenstein and Kelemen 2017:89). Moreover, this shift occurred, one might argue, out of the necessity of the events. First, the EU could not ignore the Maidan protesters who, waving EU flags, demanded a ‘European’ path for Ukraine. The annexation of Crimea was a clear-cut violation of international law, and the downing of MH17 killed many EU citizens. Meanwhile, as the previous chapter had shown, Poland’s warnings regarding Russia had not been taken seriously. On the contrary, Poland’s position on Russia had been regarded as anachronistic and was contributing to Poland’s negative image. It was not Poland but first the protesters on the Maidan and later Russia’s actions that altered the assessment of the geopolitical situation in the EU.

The shift also exposed the weakness of the policy of ‘reset’ with Russia as a strategy of adaptation. Poland’s policy of dialogue with Russia prior to the Ukraine crisis had been motivated by the desire to escape Poland’s stigma and prove its ‘Europeanization’. As Zarakol (2014:317) argues, experiencing stigmatization is likely to lead to “overcompensation” by an actor attempting to correct the perceived blemish. Poland’s eagerness not to appear ‘anti-Russian’ prior to the Ukraine crisis reveals a preoccupation of the ruling elites with image and fear of ‘verbal punishment’. One might intervene that Poland’s soft approach on Russia was motivated by a fear of Russian power. This does not, however, explain why Warsaw changed its approach exactly when the Russian threat became more real than ever since the end of the Cold War.
The dramatic turn of Poland’s Russia policy during the Ukraine crisis indicates that its leaders had never fully internalized the logic of the aforementioned ‘reset’ policy, and that they were mainly guided by a quest for acceptance and by the expectations of their EU partners. In the changed international situation, the attitudes of Poland’s leaders reverted to the traditional skepticism regarding Russia. This reversion shows how ‘resilient’ this aspect of Polish strategic culture was. At least, political elites recognized that, in the light of the events, voters expected a hardline approach towards Russia and engagement on behalf of Ukraine. Indeed, polls suggested that during the Maidan 71% of those polled evaluated the government’s Ukraine diplomacy favorably. Although, interestingly, only 43% felt that the government’s actions were sufficient while 40% thought they were not (Szczerbiak 2014).

The sudden change, however, indicates certain instability and confusion in Poland’s foreign policy, characteristic for an international actor with a low degree of ontological security. The effects of stigmatization on Poland’s foreign policy had already been observable during its hesitant response to the Maidan. Warsaw was weary of repeating the Iraq and Georgia ‘scenarios’ – it wanted to preempt any negative expectations among its Western European partners of a ‘biased’ and ‘emotionally-driven’ policy towards Yanukovych and Russia. For the same reason, Poland also refrained from building a coalition with Central and Eastern European countries, as was the case during the Iraq and Georgia crises, but oriented itself mainly on Paris and Berlin.

Despite these attempts to prove itself as a ‘reliable partner’ in the EU, Poland was not included in the negotiations with Russia following the annexation of Crimea. The long-term goal of Poland’s foreign policy has been to gain subjectivity and participate as an ‘established’ member in the decision-making processes in the EU. However, the ‘adaptation’ strategy did not overcome, and possibly even reinforced, the hierarchical relation between Poland and the ‘core’ Europeans. Poland began to see its de facto exclusion from the high-level decision-making processes as evidence of “another German concession to Putin” (see Nougayrède 2015), but it came to accept this arrangement. Meanwhile, the Minsk negotiations revealed that diplomacy at the highest level was reserved to the most powerful member states of ‘core’ Europe. One might argue that this affected Radosław Sikorski on a
personal level. As the Ukraine crisis was unfolding, the EU chose new leaders for the European Council, Commission and High Representative. Sikorski hoped that he himself would be given the position of High Representative. Instead, the Italian Federica Mogherini was chosen while Poland’s Prime Minister Donald Tusk was appointed President of the European Council. It is telling that Tusk, who was rather passive during the Ukraine crisis, and not Sikorski, who emerged as a strong personality, was given a prominent EU post. Of the two Polish leaders, Tusk was seen as less confrontational. Sikorski was, after all, still perceived as too anti-Russian and too much of a ‘troublemaker’ to be a suitable candidate.

Despite its limited influence on a common EU response to the crisis, Poland’s foreign policy had significant effects for its relation with Ukraine. It shows that Poland has more potential for agency in relation with its eastern neighbors compared to its Western partners because it is not constrained by the struggle of overcoming stigmatization. The role of Polish politicians and non-state actors in support of the Maidan was positively received among the Ukrainian population and members of the new political elites. It strengthened Poland’s reputation as Ukraine’s ‘advocate in Europe’ (Interview 2). Most importantly, with the pro-European government in place, Poland gained an ally and a common ‘defense front’ against Russia. Since the Maidan, Poland’s leaders have been pushing for maximum Western solidarity towards Ukraine to prevent the country from economic collapse (Nougayrède 2015). Poland also accepted – and prepared to accept – many refugees from the war-affected areas of Ukraine, establishing institutions, such as the Ukraine Center in Warsaw. Poland’s solidarity therefore contributed to a reconciliation process between the two countries.

Many among Ukraine’s post-Maidan elite viewed Poland’s foreign policy more positively than that of the EU as a whole (Interviews 1, 3, 4 and 11). The EU’s slow reaction to Russia’s annexation of Crimea and the war in eastern Ukraine created disillusionment among even the most convinced Europeanists in Ukraine (Samokhvalov 2015). A political advisor to the pro-European government in Ukraine, interviewed in August 2014, noted: “there is disappointment in the position of the West. Ukrainians are dying for European values. But the ‘expression of deepest concern’ by the West has become an anecdote in Ukraine” (Interview 2). According to Samokhvalov (2015:1384),
Brussels’ refusal to provide Ukraine with military support, the piecemeal adoption of the economic sanctions against Russia and the deployment of the EU Assistance Mission with a limited budget and a very weak mandate have convinced Kyiv to reconsider its security approach.

However, this ‘weak’ support was usually associated with the politics of Berlin or Paris. By contrast, Poland’s absence in Minsk or the Berlin Group also meant that Warsaw did not officially affirm the “policy of compromise” with Russia (Interview 14). According to a Polish senior diplomat, this “strengthens our bilateral relations with Ukraine” (Interview 14), which began to take place outside and independently of the EU context.

V. CONCLUSION
The Ukraine crisis revealed Poland’s central dilemma of reconciling competing goals emerging from the two dimensions of its strategic culture. The first goal is Poland’s long-term foreign policy aim of bringing the Eastern Neighborhood countries, including Ukraine, closer to the West and out of Russia’s ‘sphere of influence’. The other goal is its quest for recognition as an established member of the EU and overcoming of its ‘latecomer’ status. The events presented an opportunity for Poland to shape the EU’s foreign policy in the Eastern Neighborhood in accordance with its long-term goals in the East. At the same time, it gave Poland the chance to prove its ‘maturity’ as an EU member and overcome its stigma as ‘latecomer’. Altogether, Poland’s aims were to gain subjectivity and influence the politics of the EU.

Prior to and during the Ukraine crisis, Poland pursued an ‘adaptation’ approach. The events in Ukraine revealed the limits of this approach. During the Maidan, Poland raised its international profile in the West and its ‘latecomer’ stigma seemed temporarily lifted, as shown by signs of approbation (e.g. positive media discourse, Tusk’s nomination for President of the European Council). However, having to adjust its foreign policy to the official EU-line, it missed some opportunities for agency. Poland’s political leaders became part of a rather ambivalent and indecisive response to the crisis – as seen by supporters of the
Maidan. Crucially, the crisis changed attitudes towards Russia in the West. As a consequence, Poland’s policy of ‘reset’ with Russia pursued prior to the crisis had become outdated. This policy was motivated by the desire to prove Poland’s ‘Europeanization’, its ability to lead a ‘Western-style’ foreign policy towards Russia. However, after Russia’s annexation of Crimea, Warsaw quickly reverted to its traditional policy towards Russia. Following these events the rapprochement was viewed critically in Poland. Political opponents accused the Tusk government of having led a foreign policy of ‘submission’ to Brussels and powerful member states, like Germany, instead of an autonomous policy. Moreover, despite these efforts to appear as a reliable partner in the EU, Poland was not included in the negotiations with Russia and generally ceased to play a central role in shaping the EU’s foreign policy towards Ukraine. Although Poland’s stigma seemed temporarily lifted, it was quickly restored. Following the elections of the new government under PiS in 2015, Poland again became viewed as a ‘troublemaker’, and its ‘positive’ transformation was questioned. In other words, Poland had remained ‘conditionally’ European – European only as long as it continues to perform a certain way.

Finally, the most serious problem that the crisis revealed is that Poland could not successfully influence the EU’s position on Russia. The warnings of Poland and other newer EU members, such as the Baltic states, were dismissed – or, one might say, verbally scolded – as ‘emotional’ and ‘irrational’. Only the realities of the Ukraine crisis led the West to change its approach. However, by then the situation in the region was highly destabilized. Despite increased reassurance of solidarity from the EU and NATO, Poland and the Baltic states were left in the most insecure situation since their entrance into Western security structures.

While not having achieved to be a pioneer for the EU’s policy towards Ukraine, and despite some frustration that came with it, Poland improved its bilateral relations with Ukraine during the crisis. Poland’s politicians and especially many non-state actors were noticed among European countries for their support for the Maidan and their solidarity with Ukraine during the conflict in eastern Ukraine. This strengthened relations between Warsaw and Kiev. Soon thereafter, however, Poland had again diverted its attention away from Ukraine. The European Commission’s allegations of constitutional violations under the new
PiS government meant that Poland has devoted its foreign policy capacities mostly towards fixing tensions with Brussels. This limits Warsaw’s ability to pursue its foreign policy in the east despite the continuation of the conflict in eastern Ukraine. Moreover, Poland’s relations with the post-Maidan government in Ukraine also suffered setbacks in 2016 after Poland’s lower house of parliament, the Sejm, under a PiS majority voted to declare the killing of Polish civilians in Volhynia a “genocide” (Poland’s Parliament Declares Volyn Massacres “Genocide” 2016). Historical memory and unresolved disputes still constitute a main factor constraining Poland’s active support for Ukraine. Beside positive attitudes towards Ukraine in Polish society, which were further enhanced by the Maidan, there are also sentiments of dislike and fear. These exist particularly among right-wing national movements but can also be found in all political groupings in Poland, including in the ruling PiS party, which helps explain why the Polish government became less active again.

By contrast, Poland has again become undivided regarding Russia. As opposed to other countries in the region, such as Hungary or Slovakia, where pro-Russian groupings have a strong influence, Poland does not see Russia as an alternative to the ‘West’. There are also no noticeable pro-Russian movements as in many Western European countries. On the contrary, virtually all political groups in Poland look for support from NATO and the EU. Moreover, political groupings blame one another for pursuing policies that could lead to the weakening of these institutions and expose Poland to the threat of Putin’s Russia. Meanwhile, the issue of Russia and Ukraine is gradually retreating to the background in the EU and NATO in the light of other problems that the community is facing and as the ‘shock’ of the Ukraine crisis is wearing off.
CONCLUSION

On the example of Poland in the European Union this dissertation has examined the attempts of an international actor to deal with concealed hierarchies in an international community, which are articulated, legitimized and perpetuated through discourse. In the European political discourse and the media Poland and other ‘newer’ members from the former Soviet bloc, which joined the EU later than the Western European member states, are often portrayed as still in the process of learning how to be ‘European’. International relations literature on ‘socialization’ underscores such claims. In the area of foreign policy, the deviation of Poland’s actions from what emerges as the dominant EU line, usually de facto represented by the position taken by the powerful member states, especially France and Germany, is attributed to its ‘latecomer’ status in the EU. I started with the observation that the negative perception or stigma of former Soviet bloc states is connected to an alleged lack of experience in the EU (and Western international institutions more generally), their communist past, but also certain qualities attributed to the wider region of Eastern Europe. The stigma is deeply rooted in historical narratives that portray the region as a late addition to European civilization. In both public and academic discourse, Poland and other new members from the former Soviet bloc are often depicted as ‘difficult partners’ who are ‘unwilling to cooperate’, as overly ‘emotional’ and ‘irrational’, and ‘driven by the past rather than the present’. As shown in three case studies ranging from 2003 to 2014, Poland’s ‘unreasonable’ attitude in the area of foreign policy was mainly attached to its position on specific issue areas, especially its relations with Russia, the Eastern Neighborhood countries, and the United States.

In three empirical case studies, I have examined Poland’s pursuit of overcoming its ‘latecomer’ stigma, becoming one of the established members of the EU and being recognized as a ‘Western’ international actor. The analysis of this pursuit is based on the concept of strategic culture. Strategic culture helps to understand the actions of Poland’s governing elites in dealing with stigma. It combines culturally shaped norms on foreign policy, ideas derived from historical experience, and interpretations on current challenges of
the international environment, which affect the choices of foreign policy elites. This ‘situated’ analysis of foreign policy helps to understand an actor’s policy choices, which may appear especially puzzling since some of these choices even reinforce stigmatization. As I argued in this thesis, Poland’s foreign policy actions can be better understood when considering that states pursue both physical and ontological security. The latter refers to a basic sense of safety in the international environment, which depends on a stable identity and recognition by others. The ideas, values and beliefs that make up national strategic culture are therefore as much concerned with ontological security as with physical security. Poland’s dependence on recognition as ‘Western’ and ‘European’ is connected to its relatively low ontological security, which is conditioned by its past experience of fragile sovereignty, foreign invasion and abandonment by its allies. Its ontological insecurity makes Poland especially sensitive to stigmatization in relation to the West. The Western dimension of Poland’s strategic culture is primarily about overcoming its persistent ‘latecomer’ status and becoming an established member of the ‘West’. In contrast, Poland has greater potential for agency in the pursuit of what falls within the Eastern dimension of its strategic culture. Especially in relations with its eastern neighbors, Poland does not have the kind of ontological insecurity as it has towards the West. However, the pursuit of the aims and ambitions that are part of the Eastern dimension is often constrained by policies in which it engages with the West.

The case studies illustrate how ontological insecurity and subjection to stigmatization shape foreign policy but also affect domestic politics and shape internal divides. An internal divide developed in Poland following the first ‘shock’ of the Iraq crisis. That is when Poland had to realize that although it had nominally entered the ‘club’ of Western states (through NATO and EU membership), it was not recognized as a full ‘insider’ in the EU. Although it was praised by the United States, Poland had to face the repercussions of ‘verbal punishment’ for its contestation of the policy line that was largely determined by France and Germany. Subsequently, the main political camps in Poland have come to represent two different responses to stigmatization. Both are highly conscious of existent hierarchies in the EU but favor different – one might say opposite – strategies of dealing with them. The ‘contestation’ strategy openly challenges the hierarchies and questions the norms they are
based on, while the ‘adaptation’ approach accepts them and tries to utilize them. Proponents of the latter strategy have tried to bring Poland closer to the decision-making center of Europe and demonstrate successful socialization. Both options have advantages and drawbacks, as the case studies indicate. However, neither directly leads to the overcoming of stigma. ‘Contestation’ is likely to lead to isolation and to trigger further stigmatizing discourses. In contrast, contrary to what most of the socialization literature contends, socialization or ‘adaptation’ does not automatically help an actor to become one of the ‘normals’, even after having been part of the community, i.e. the EU, for some time. The last case study, which depicted Poland’s foreign policy during the Ukraine crisis illustrates, in line with Zarakol’s (2014) argument, that by succumbing to the process of socialization, actors might (temporarily) improve their reputation but also affirm the existing hierarchies.

**Beyond the case**

The conceptual work developed in this dissertation is intended to provide insights beyond the case of Poland. This framework can contribute to a better understanding of the foreign policy actions of states that face ontological insecurity and stigmatization. It can be applied to countries that have a historically rooted stigma, in particular, when the stigma is in relation to the country’s main group of reference in the international arena, such as the ‘West’ and ‘Europe’ is for Poland. Understanding how an international actor’s foreign policy is shaped by its position within a hierarchical system requires identifying, first, the main points of reference of a country’s strategic culture, i.e. the main dimensions of its strategic culture, and second, the country’s place within the hierarchy in regard to these points of reference.

For example, the other members of the Visegard Group have a similar relationship with the West to Poland, which accounts for some resemblances in foreign policy behavior. Earlier, I have criticized academic or publicist work that unreflectively treats the Central and Eastern European ‘newcomers’ in the EU as a homogenous group without properly acknowledging the differences between them. Nevertheless, despite substantial differences in size, history and political culture, many – if not all – of the Central and Eastern European members of the EU experience a similar struggle for recognition.

To illustrate how the framework can be applied beyond Poland, I will briefly point to some similarities with Hungary and the Czech Republic. First of all, the three countries deal
with a double-stigma, which results, on the one hand, from their communist past and their late accession to Western international institutions in the twentieth century, and, on the other hand, from a serious decline in the development of the entire Eastern European region beginning around the turn of the fifteenth to the sixteenth century (see Berend 1986). Historically, all three entities became part of European civilization around the tenth century but later began to lag behind the western part of Europe (see Wandycz 2001). From this results a sense of ontological insecurity in relation with the West, the aspiration to ‘become fully Western’.

Secondly, the three have similar experiences of lost sovereignty, interrupted statehood, and incorporation into other state entities. In Czech historical narrative the battle of the White Mountain of 1620, which marked the end of the Bohemian period, can be compared to the partitions of Poland (Wandycz 2001). Although Bohemia thereafter continued to exist as part of the Holy Roman Empire, it began to gradually lose its Slavic language and identity. In the nineteenth century, a Czech national identity emerged eventually leading to the formation of a Czechoslovakian state in 1918. Similarly to Poland the reemergence of a sovereign polity after a longer period of absence called for a redefinition of national identity. The Czech philosopher Jan Patocka (1997) speaks of two Czech nations, a medieval one and a smaller modern one. In a somewhat similar way, Hungary’s history is shaped by periods of interrupted statehood and existential threat. Hungary’s ontological security was shaken by the traumatic battle of Mohács of 1526, in which the Kingdom of Hungary was defeated by the Ottoman Empire, and which signified the end of the kingdom as an independent and unified entity.

The time frame of these experiences was, of course, very different. For Poland, the sixteenth century was an era of expansion. By contrast, the second half of the nineteenth century, when partitioned Poland after the January uprising of 1863-1865 lost hope of regaining its sovereignty, is mostly positively depicted in Hungarian narratives. As ‘co-owner’ of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Hungary enjoyed a significant degree of autonomy. But whereas Poles and Czechs remember the end of World War I as a triumphant moment of regained independence, Hungarians view it as national catastrophe. By virtue of the Treaty of Trianon (1920), Hungary lost two thirds of its territory, leaving one third of the population
outside of the borders of the Hungarian state. These experiences of fragile statehood and territoriality, and the need for reinvention, account for continued ontological insecurity. For Hungary, an additional source of ontological insecurity is its ethnic distinctiveness as a Magyar nation in a region mostly populated by Slavic and Germanic peoples.

Another important similarity is the experience of ‘abandonment’ by the West. Following the end of World War II, and the decision of the Yalta conference of 1944, the fate of the three countries converged. Because, among the three, Poland had actively fought as part of the alliance against the Axis power (Hungary was even an ally of Germany), the narrative of betrayal and abandonment associated with Yalta itself is strongest in Polish national memory. However, for the other two countries the narrative of abandonment by the West was built around the Hungarian Uprising of 1956 and the Prague Spring of 1968, which were both defeated by Soviet forces in the absence of assistance from the Western bloc.

Thus, what connects the three countries is their history of ontological insecurity shaped by tragic events and instability, as well as their historically developed stigma of ‘backwardness’ in relation to the West and the aspiration to be an integral part of it. These experiences have shaped strategic cultures focused on the need of self-defense. This explains, for example, the common position during the Iraq war discussed in chapter 3, but also, more recently, the protective attitude against accepting refugees since the beginning of the European ‘migrant crisis’ in 2015. As Bulgarian scholar Ivan Krastev (2018) argues, the negative reaction to the EU’s migrant quota was less motivated by the fear of Muslim migrants among the populations of these countries as by the perception that the new member states are ‘told what to do’ by the EU and their Western neighbors. At the same time, in all three cases the memories of tragedy are accompanied by memories of historical greatness, which also has an impact on international behavior. Especially the bigger and more ambitious among the newer members, notably Poland but also Hungary, find it difficult to accept their position within existent hierarchies in the EU. For Czechs, who often portray themselves as the most ‘Western’ nation’ within Central and Eastern Europe, their ‘Western identity’ is especially important. This is connected to the earlier mentioned existence of Bohemia as part of the Holy Roman Empire and later Habsburg Empire. This heritage accounts for an even
stronger insistence of being ‘Western’ and need to ‘fit in’, as well as disassociation with ‘Eastern Europe’ in Czech identity today compared to Poland or Hungary.

Understanding the foreign policies of these countries is now more important than ever. In recent years, more attention in academic and media discourse is devoted to this group of states. The reasons are the Visegard countries’ negative reaction to the EU’s migration policy, and controversial media and judicial reforms by conservative governments in Poland and Hungary. In Poland, judicial reforms have sparked a bitter internal political fight between the government and the opposition, which accuses the government of centralizing power and violating the constitution. This has led the European Commission to enter the fray by invoking the threat of sanctions against Warsaw under Article 7 of the EU Treaty (Michta 2018). It would be the first time that a member is sanctioned under this article. However, the more external actors, such as the Commission, have become involved, the more the Polish government sees the need to conduct what it considers to be necessary reforms as a matter of self-determination and sovereignty.

Jacques Rupnik (2017) claims that recent developments in Central and Eastern Europe “have re-opened an East-West divide within the EU over the definition of national and European identity.” While the author suggests that the alleged East-West divide is a new phenomenon, this thesis intended to show that this perceived divide was never gone. At most, it was sometimes briefly forgotten. In contrast to its reputation, Poland’s foreign policy – to stick with the main example – nowadays converges with ‘core’ European countries on more issues than it diverges. This includes issues that had once been a point of contention, such as security and military cooperation within the EU, relations with Russia and with the United States. However, public discourse, including in academia, usually tends to focus on the divergences.

The relationship between Central and Eastern European countries and the more ‘established’ Western European members of the EU should be regarded in a universe of ‘nested’ hierarchies. Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic or Slovakia are considered – and see themselves as – more ‘Western’ compared to Russia or the Eastern Neighborhood countries. Maria Todorova (2009) illustrates on the example of the Balkans how peoples’
self-perception is shaped by historically developed mental maps, which convey hierarchies. She shows that ‘more Western’ is always perceived as synonymous with normatively superior. One might argue that Poland has so much agency in the Eastern Neighborhood, which is so important for Poland, because it can ‘feel Western’ compared to countries such as Ukraine that are the real ‘outsiders’ to Western institutions. Poland exports its stigma vis-à-vis the West further east. Ukraine’s relations with Poland can be considered to be based on a similar ontological insecurity as Poland’s relation with the West. For Ukraine, Poland is sometimes seen as a former occupant, and sometimes as a ‘window to the West’. Within the EU, the East-West hierarchy is significant, but it is one of many hierarchies; there are multiple layers of hierarchies, e.g. creditors versus debtors in the Eurozone where, at times, comparable discourses of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ behavior have been used. During the 2008 financial crisis, which brought about a North-South divide in the EU, most of Central Europe sided with Germany against the southern European countries.

Can stigma be overcome?
An ‘established’ member of an international community should have both autonomy to participate in the shaping of common norms and have the recognition of others. How then should an international actor react when faced with hierarchization and stigmatization? In this dissertation, I have illustrated that stigma is constantly reproduced and adapted to a new political order for two main reasons. First, an actor that has a stigma is ontologically insecure and therefore more sensitive to further stigmatization. Second, attempts to overcome stigma are often counterproductive and reinforce the stigma. A stigma that has been once established is therefore not easily overcome.

While there is no simple recipe for successfully dealing with stigma, my findings suggest that a combination of both strategies – adaptation and contestation – when carefully selected, would be the most viable option. It is important to consider which strategy foreign policy leaders attach to different issue area. For example, Poland’s contestation of the ‘core’ European vision on security by relying on a strong alliance with the United States and Britain could have strengthened Poland’s position in the EU. However, this approach was potentially ‘misplaced’ because Poland became too strongly attached to the Iraq war itself, which, as it later turned out, was not as successful as the Polish government had hoped. This significantly
undermined the Polish strategy. The ‘contestation’ strategy pursued by President Lech Kaczyński, especially the building of regional blocs, had strong advantages – although some of the confrontational language reduced its effectiveness. The advocacy of these countries for the diversification of Europe’s energy resources away from Russia and a tougher stance on Moscow in general, and the call for the West’s engagement with the Eastern Neighborhood countries could not be ignored.

However, as can be expected from the partially conflicting dimensions in Poland’s strategic culture, there is potential for domestic actors to promote competing approaches. The strategy of ‘contestation’ was internally undermined by the rapprochement towards Russia pursued by the government. Meanwhile, the ‘adaptation’ strategy of the PO government towards Ukraine and the Eastern Neighborhood was also beneficial in some respects. One accomplishment was the Eastern Partnership, which became a common EU policy towards the Eastern Neighborhood and raised Poland’s status in the EU. The election of Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk as President of the European Council was an additional sign of this. However, the ‘adaptation’ strategy was pursued ‘too consequentially’ as it was also reducing the potential for agency. Especially, as the Ukraine crisis started, Poland could have been more risk-taking in making use of the opportunity and pursuing a more individual approach towards Ukraine.

Other examples of dealing with stigma confirm that both timing and appropriate strategies were vital. However, successful overcoming of stigma also often involves radical measures. One of the most dramatic examples is Germany in dealing with its Nazi past. Only the second generation of Germans after the war actually took systematic measures to confront the stigma associated with its past and established a consistent memory culture (Evans 2018). The German coping strategy was to completely accept the guilt and neutralize the stigma through expiation rituals and an ideology of breaking with the past (see Adler-Nissen 2014b). One might say that the expiation rituals continue to this day. As Evans points out, “since 1945 no European country has been more pacifist in sentiment and opposed to military intervention outside its own borders” also, “no European country has been more welcoming to immigrants and refugees” including in the migration crisis since 2015 (Evans 2018:14). Nevertheless, even almost eight decades after the end of World War II, the stigma
occasionally resurfaces in political debates. The strategy of (over)compensation can also be regarded as a symptom of fear that the stigma could resurface.

Although Central and Eastern Europeans never pursued this kind of disassociation with the past, there have been somewhat successful attempts of redefinition. Such an example is the idea of ‘Central Europe’, which was propagated in the 1980s by intellectuals from that region to de-emphasize the old East-West divide. The attempt to redraw mental maps resembles Russia’s actions in the eighteenth century. As Iver Neumann argues, “[t]he Russian state formulated, disseminated and insisted upon a geographical definition of Europe as stretching to all the most populous parts of Russia. The idea that Europe ends and Asia begins at the Urals was first presented by a Russian geographer” (in Zarakol 2011:204). The practice of redrawing mental maps entails the ‘othering’ of what is beyond (e.g. ‘Asia beyond the Urals’). Somewhat similarly, during the Eurozone crisis, Poland’s Foreign Minister Sikorski commented that ‘Poland definitely belongs to Northern Europe’ (Rupnik 2017), thus implicitly ‘othering’ Southern Europe.

Finally, overcoming stigma is directly connected to gaining ontological security. After all, it is ontological insecurity that makes an actor sensitive to stigmatization. As argued earlier, this is a viscous circle that is hard to escape. However, an actor could, for example, consciously introduce rituals that provide ontological security, such as Germany’s Gedenkkultur (culture of remembrance). Also, perhaps the mere absence of serious crises and disruptions that evoke feelings of existential threat can help to overcome deeply engrained ontological insecurity. Over time, the Central and Eastern European members become necessarily more comfortable within the EU and other institutions, such as NATO, which may come with greater ontological security. Younger generations of political leaders, who have not experienced World War II and Soviet occupation as their parents did, also take their sovereignty for granted. An article in the German Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung entitled “Confident East” describes what could be called the phenomenon of gaining ontological security. The article claims that in the thirteenth year of their membership in the EU Poles, Hungarians, Czechs and Slovaks have regained their self-esteem. They “don’t vote as the West would like them to,” and “the new confidence in the eastern part of Central Europe has
a material and a ideational foundation” (Schwarz 2017:1). According to the author, the people in Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Hungary have become saturated in their strive for more market liberalism and ‘more Europe’. The article suggests that societies in these countries have abandoned the need to prove that they are Western, which has an impact on political elites. Yet such behavioral changes can stand in contrast to expectations, which triggers additional stigmatization, such as the European Commission’s decision to open proceedings against Poland under Article 7, which could lead to sanctions. As a consequence, political sentiments among the population could also change.

**Final remarks**

The theoretical perspective that I have taken here, which looks at strategic culture, allows for a better understanding of the differences in foreign policy choices of states in the international arena. It helps to understand the behavior of actors like Poland in a more complex manner than, as the socialization framework assumes, a sign of their ‘incomplete transformation’. This ‘situated’ account especially shows how and why Poland’s foreign policy sometimes deviated from guiding examples of the EU and ‘Western norms’, and that it stems from sensitivity to existing hierarchies and stigmatization.

However, this dissertation also omits certain issues, which require further investigation. The ‘situated’ analysis of Poland’s foreign policy based on strategic culture has its drawbacks. While I have analyzed the strategic culture of one actor in detail, including gradual changes of strategic culture, and differentiated between domestic actors, my work has largely treated other international actors as static and ‘monolithic’. Of course, these actors are also subject to internal dilemmas and undergo changes, which have not been covered in any detail in this study. The nature of this study makes it also difficult to address the question of agency of all the different actors involved, for example the role of EU institutions as agents and international actors.

Hierarchical relations are also changing. In the period discussed in this dissertation a shift occurred in the hierarchies within the ‘West’. The Iraq crisis expressed a mostly

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21 “[…]) dass die Ungarn und die Polen, neuerdings auch die Tschechen, nicht mehr so wählen, wie man es im Westen gern hätte. […] Das neue Selbstbewusstsein im östlichen Mitteleuropa hat eine materielle und eine ideelle Grundlage” (translated by author).
successful attempt of ‘core’ Europeans to emancipate Europe from the United States – a relation they perceived as strongly hierarchical. The Atlantic rift additionally complicated the situation for Poland and other new members. The EU and its old members increasingly become the main point of reference (i.e., the more important embodiment of the ‘West’) for these countries. Although I have frequently referred to the ‘West’ for reasons of simplification, the West is, of course, far from a monolithic entity. Similarly, European or Western norms on foreign policy are fluid and hard to define. I have argued that actors are stigmatized for violating certain norms despite the fact that these norms are fluid, or rather because they are fluid.

The insight generated in this dissertation can help further research on how hierarchies in international relations shape a state’s foreign policy. It applies to hierarchies in the ideational rather than the material space, which are exercised through discourse that articulates, justifies and ‘normalizes’ existing differences between actors. In this dissertation, I have mainly looked at Poland as an actor on the ‘receiving’ side of a power relation. Although I have also looked at Poland’s relationship with Ukraine and other eastern neighbors where the roles are reversed, I have focused on Poland’s relation with the West (the two ‘sides’ are obviously connected). However, this framework also applies to those actors that exercise power by setting the norms and discourse. The exercise of hierarchies in relationships within the EU is especially interesting. The use of discourse on norms as a form of power politics is particularly meaningful in communities, such as the EU, were all actors are horizontally organized and consensus-oriented, and where all actors subscribe to a common identity. Although EU member states nominally have the same status, some states more than others shape, for instance, a ‘common’ foreign policy approach. Because official hierarchies would be unacceptable and contradict the EU’s founding principles, they are concealed in discourses, which are explicitly normative and claim universality. This dissertation shows, among other things, that against high hopes European integration has not abolished hierarchies between its member states, and the power competition between European states using discursive tools, such as stigmatization, is not a phenomenon exclusively of the past.
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**Interview 2:** Ostap Kryvdyk, political expert, advisor to Andriy Parubiy, former Secretary of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine, Kiev, August 12, 2014.

**Interview 3:** Jevgenij Bilonozhko, journalist at *Polonest* and lecturer at Kiev National Economic University, Kiev, August 13, 2014.

**Interview 4:** *Anonymous* official of the Delegation of the European Union to Ukraine, Kiev, August 13, 2014.

**Interview 5:** Valentyn Gladkykh, chief adviser at the Department on Relations with Committees, Secretariat of Verkhovna Rada, Kiev, August 19, 2014.

**Interview 6:** Roman Kabachiyy, historian and journalist at the Institute of Mass Information in Kiev, Kiev, August 19, 2014.

**Interview 7:** Olexander Maslak, academic, Kiev, August 20, 2014.

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**Interview 9:** Lilia Hryniewicz, Member of Vekhovna Rada (Ukrainian Parliament), Kiev, August 22, 2014.

**Interview 10:** *Anonymous* official, Trade and Economic Section at the Delegation of the European Union to Ukraine, Kiev, August 26, 2014.

**Interview 11:** Mykola Yarmoluk, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Kiev, August 28, 2014.

**Interview 12:** *Anonymous* senior official, Political Department, Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany to Ukraine, Kiev, August 28, 2014.

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**Interview 16**: Paweł Zalewski, former Member of the European Parliament, EPP Group, Warsaw, March 17, 2015.

**Interview 17**: *Anonymous* official at Permanent Representation of Poland to the EU, Working Party COEST, Brussels, March 20, 2015.

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