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EU and Russian Hegemony in the 'Shared Neighbourhood'

Between Coercion, Prescription, and Co-optation

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Isabell Burmester

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To Annelies

Preface

This book is the product of more than six year of research. Much has changed in the years since the start of this endeavour in 2017 and the EU's Eastern neighbourhood looks very different today than it did then. Whilst the idea to compare the EU and Russian power projection in the region seemed unwarranted in 2017, it has become highly relevant in the context of Russia's escalated war in Ukraine and its ripple effects on the perceptions of Russia and the EU in the populations of the Eastern neighbourhood and beyond. Shedding light on the legitimacy of the parallel hegemonic orders and the respective exercise of hegemonic power by the two actors, it provides insights into the longer developments in this regional order that led to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022.

However, the tumultuous events of the last years have also complicated the research process. Extensive field research was essential for the completion of this project, but has been heavily impacted by travel restrictions amid the COVID crisis, the 2020 war in Nagorno-Karabakh and the Russian full-scale invasion. After conducting interviews in Brussels in 2019 and in Moldova in February 2020, I was unable to travel to Armenia and Russia as planned. Armenia had closed its borders to foreign tourists until September 11, 2020. Then, the second Nagorno-Karabakh War broke out on September 27, 2020. Russia had also closed its borders and was not issuing visas in 2020. I was awarded a doc.mobility grant from the Swiss National Science Fund (SNSF) in November 2020 for a

12-month stay at MGIMO University (Moscow State Institute of International Relations) in Moscow. Due to the closure of the Russian borders I was only able to start my stay in Moscow on September 1, 2021, which was interrupted six months later by the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Considering these difficult circumstances, I am all the more grateful for the support I received over these last seven years. I would like to thank the Swiss National Science Fund (SNSF), the NORTIA Jean Monnet Network, the Fondation Ernst et Lucie Schmidheiny, the Académie Suisse des sciences humaines, and the Société Académique de Genève for the financial support. This book results (in parts) from research conducted at the Global Studies Institute and the Department of Political Science and International Relations of the University of Geneva, the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences of Maastricht University, and the Centre for Eurasian and Russian Studies (CEURUS) at Tartu University. I am grateful to my colleagues and the administrative staff at these institutions for providing an excellent working environment. I'd also like to express my deepest gratitude to my interviewees in Brussels, Moscow, Moldova, and Armenia for their time and availability. Without their openness and willingness to answer my questions, this book would not exist. A special thanks goes to my friend Mariam for making my stay in Yerevan so productive and memorable. I would also like to thank Alina and Olga for being such excellent teachers and guiding me through the intricacies of the Russian language.

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Trento, Italy
July 2024

Isabell Burmester

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Ethics Approval This study was performed in line with the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki. Approval was granted by the Ethics Committee of the University of Geneva (4 September 2019/CER-SDS-18-2019). Informed consent to participate and to publish was obtained from individual participants.

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About the Author

Isabell Burmester is a post-doctoral researcher at the Sorbonne Nouvelle University in Paris. Currently, she is a researcher on the EU-funded REUNIR project investigating how the EU can strengthen its foreign and security toolboxes to bolster the resilience and transformation of (potential) candidate countries. For her next project (funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation) she will spend one year at Stockholm University to analyse the responses of International Organisations to Russian norm contestation. Her work is situated at the intersection of international relations and area studies with a focus on international and regional hegemony in Eastern Europe and Eurasia.

Abbreviations

AA	Association Agreement
AC	*Consiliul Audiovizualului* (Moldova's Audiovisual Council)
ANSA	*Agenția Națională pentru Siguranța Alimentelor* (Moldova's National Food Safety Agency)
AP	Action Plan
BSE	Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy
CAQDAS	Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software
CEE	Central and Eastern Europe
CEPA	Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSTO	Collective Security Treaty Organisation
CU	Customs Union
DCFTA	Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area
EAC	Eurasian Conformity Mark
EAEU	Eurasian Economic Union
EaP	Eastern Partnership
EEAS	European External Action Service
EFSA	European Food Safety Authority
ENA	Electric Networks of Armenia
ENI	European Neighbourhood Instrument
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy
EU	European Union

EUBAM	European Union Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine
FTA	Free Trade Agreement
GMO	Genetically Modified Organism
GOST	*Gosudarstvennyy Standart* (System of Government Standards)
GSP	Generalised Scheme of Preferences
GSP+	Generalised Scheme of Preferences Plus
HACCP	Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points
IR	International Relations
JCC	Joint Control Commission in Transnistria
LIO	Liberal International Order
MFA	Macro-Financial Assistance
MOC	Moldovan Orthodox Church
OGRF	Operational Group of Russian Forces
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PCA	Partnership and Cooperation Agreement
PMR	Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic
PTA	Preferential Trade Agreement
RASFF	Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed
ROC	Russian Orthodox Church
Rospotrebnadzor	Russian Trade and Sanitary Inspection Authority
Rossotrudnichestvo	Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States Affairs, Compatriots Living Abroad, and International Humanitarian Cooperation
SanPin	Sanitary and Veterinary Norms
SME	Small and Medium-Sized Enterprise
SPS	Sanitary and Phytosanitary
SVC	Scientific and Veterinary Committee
TBT	Technical Barriers to Trade
TR	Technical Regulation
VLAP	Visa Liberalisation Action Plan
WTO	World Trade Organisation

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Russia's War in Ukraine and the "Shared Neighbourhood" in a Historical Context

On the eve of 21 February 2022, I sat in my apartment in Moscow watching Russian President Vladimir Putin do the unthinkable: After eight years of military conflict, he recognised the "independence and sovereignty" (Putin 2022a) of the Donetsk People's Republic and the Lugansk People's Republic in Eastern Ukraine. Three days later, he announced a special military operation to protect the people living in the two republics and "defend Russia and our people" (Putin 2022b), launching the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. In Moscow, where I had arrived for a visiting fellowship six months earlier, this escalation of Russia's war in Ukraine had been inconceivable.

I had been studying the EU's Eastern neighbourhood for ten years, trying to understand the complex processes that were underway in the countries of the former Soviet Union, which had decided to pursue the path of European integration. When I visited Kyiv for the first time in April 2013 with a group of International Relations (IR) students, we met with Ukrainian and foreign officials, politicians, and civil society to discuss Ukraine's reform progress. After the Orange Revolution and the start of the negotiations of the Association Agreement (AA) with the European Union (EU), Ukraine had adopted a series of democratic and institutional reforms and our interlocutors were very optimistic about the conclusion of the AA. Seven months later, the president announced that Ukraine would not sign the agreement with the EU. Protests against

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this decision erupted across the country. The movement's demands—rule of law and democracy in their country—were not directly related to the signing of the AA but associated with European integration and the EU model. They were also defined in opposition to Russia. It became clear that different policies and forms of government were associated with the EU and Russia. On Kyiv's main square, the dominance of EU ideas and democratic values became visible during the protests. EU flags were prominently displayed, and the movement became known as *Euro*maidan. This influence stood in stark contrast to Russia's threats and financial incentives to get Ukraine to abandon its European ambitions.

Together with Ukraine, three other countries had negotiated an AA: the Republics of Moldova and Armenia, and Georgia. All three countries experienced similar pressure from Moscow to refrain from signing the agreement. The AA included a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) that was incompatible with joining the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). Russia had been advancing the Eurasian integration process with the establishment of a Customs Union (CU) in 2010 and in 2014 signed the Treaty on the EAEU with Belarus and Kazakhstan. If a country is member of a Customs Union, it agrees to abolish customs duties with the other members of the Union and to apply a common external tariff in its trade with third countries. This common external tariff means that the country cannot individually decide to reduce tariffs or form a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with countries or trade blocs that are not a member of the CU. That is why membership in the EAEU was incompatible with the EU AA/DCFTA. In an effort to get its Eastern and Southern neighbours to abandon the AA/DCFTA and to join the EAEU instead, the Russian government issued threats and incentives to these governments.

The Moldovan government also faced pressure from Moscow. This pressure came in the form of economic incentives and trade restrictions. But the government decided against complying with Russian wishes. When the AA with the EU was signed in 2014, Russia imposed retaliatory trade bans as a punishment. After its ratification by all EU member states and Moldova, the AA came into force in 2016. In 2017, under president Igor Dodon, Moldova also became an observer state to the EAEU. After Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the pro-European government submitted an application for EU membership. Moldova was granted EU candidate status in June 2022 and in December 2023 the EU decided to open accession negotiations. At the same time, the Moldovan government

withdrew from multiple treaties signed with the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and announced its intention to entirely withdraw from the organisation.

Armenia was in a more vulnerable position compared to Moldova. Due to its conflict with Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh, the country depended on Russia as a security ally. In 2013, Putin signalled Russian support for Azerbaijan in order to deter the Armenian government from signing the AA with the EU. Following a meeting in Moscow, Armenia's President Serzh Sarkisian announced the decision to join the EAEU, thereby effectively cancelling the signing of the AA/DCFTA. In 2017, in an effort to continue cooperation, Armenia and the EU signed a Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA). The agreement included provisions on political association similar to the ones that had been negotiated for the AA. But due to the incompatibility with Armenian membership in the EAEU CU, the CEPA did not include an FTA. After its defeat in the escalated war over Nagorno-Karabakh—during which Russia played the role as a mediator rather than an Armenian ally—the Armenian government announced its withdrawal from the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) and a potential application for EU membership.

Georgia's relations with Russia had been strained by the 2008 war in South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Efforts were made to normalise relations and in 2013 Russia issued positive incentives rather than threats to prompt the government to not sign the AA. Most notably, Moscow lifted an embargo on Georgian wine that had been established in 2006. Together with Ukraine and Moldova, Georgia signed the EU AA in 2014. However, since 2020, the country has regressed in terms of democratic principles and political commitments to the EU. The situation worsened after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. When Georgia submitted its EU membership application alongside Ukraine and Moldova in 2022, the EU raised concerns over Georgia's commitment to the EU's values and standards, in particular democracy and the rule of law. While the European Council expressed its readiness to grant Moldova and Ukraine candidate status in the June 2022 Council conclusions, Georgia's candidate status was made conditional on the fulfilment of twelve priorities. Ultimately, Georgia was also granted candidate status, but accession negotiations have not yet been initialled. At the same time, the Georgian government intensified its opposition to the EU and introduced a controversial law restricting foreign financing of NGOs. The law was inspired by

Russia's foreign agent law and, despite massive protests, was adopted in 2024.

These developments show that Russia's war against Ukraine is taking place in the broader context of a regional order in which the EU and Russia compete for influence. Both Putin's and Zelenskyy's discourse painted the picture of a systemic conflict between Russia and Europe (or "the West"), with Ukraine arguing that it belonged to the latter. In his addresses, Putin reiterated Russian concerns about NATO expansion and accused the "so-called collective West" of seeking "to destroy our traditional values and force on us their false values" (Putin 2022b). One day after Russia had launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Zelenskyy stated that "this is not just Russia's invasion in Ukraine, this is the beginning of the war against Europe. Against the unity of Europe. Against elementary human rights in Europe" (Zelenskyy 2022).

This competition for influence between the EU and Russia grew over time through the development of their respective region-building policies and integration initiatives (Delcour 2018). It also impacted the foreign policies of the countries in their "shared neighbourhood", presenting both constraints and opportunities. Some of them adopted a "multi-vector foreign policy" balancing EU and Russian influence, which became increasingly difficult over time. At least until 2014, the Ukrainian government strategically manoeuvered between cooperation with the EU and Russia (Gnedina 2015). The annexation of Crimea and the start of the war in the Donbas by Russia-led Kyiv to cancel the relations with Russia, thereby effectively ending Ukraine's multi-vector foreign policy. Until Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Moldova also pursued a "dual alignment strategy" in which the ruling elite extracted benefits from both actors (Morar and Dembińska 2021, 294). Thus, what is currently happening in Ukraine needs to be understood in the context of the longer developments in this regional order (Sasse 2022).

To be able to understand EU and Russian influence today, it is essential to look at the historical legacies that enable (or constrain) this influence. In the next sections, I discuss the historical context of EU and Russian influence in the region. The discussion shows how the end of Russian/Soviet imperialism left in place the structures that enabled Russia to continue to exercise influence. The EU, on the other hand, created the context for its power projection through its enlargement and neighbourhood policy.

1.1 Russia's Role in the "Post-Soviet" Space

Russia's relations with the countries in the region were marked by the history of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. The expansion of the Russian Empire established centralised control over the nations and (nomadic) peoples living in Siberia, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. This control continued during the Soviet Union, during which the periphery was subject to Moscow's political, economic, and cultural dominance. Thus, it is not surprising that Russian influence in the region today is analysed through the prism of (post-)imperialism (Buzgalin et al. 2016; Kushnir 2018) and Soviet legacy (Levada 2003). Moore (2001) even argued for an application of post-colonial theory to the *post-Soviet* societies.

Fig. 1.1 Map of South Eastern Europe in 1881 (*Source* Courtesy of the University of Texas Libraries, The University of Texas at Austin)

Fig. 1.2 Map of Central and Eastern Europe in 2003 (*Source* Courtesy of the University of Texas Libraries, The University of Texas at Austin)

Indeed, scholars argue that the Russians taking control in Eurasia was a form of settler colonialism (Schorkowitz 2019) that turned "the indigenous populations into "Fourth World" subjects" (Moore 2001, 118). Moore acknowledged that the Russo-Soviet coloniality differs from European colonialism in that it did not take place overseas. Nevertheless, he argued that the same dynamics in terms of "language, economy, politics, resistance, liberation and its hangover" (Moore 2001, 115) can be observed.

In fact, the identity movements (Mulcahy 2017) and nation-building processes (Moore 2008) in the periphery contesting the centralised rule were similar to the ones in Europe's former colonies. What was particular about Russian colonialism is that, in part, these processes also took place in the centre. The modernising reforms of Peter the Great were based on Western European models and are viewed by scholars as a form of *self-colonisation* attributing a double nature to Russia. According to Kujundzic , it was the Petrine reforms that "saved Russia from an actual colonisation on the part of the West" (2000, 894).

This complexity of colonialism in Eastern Europe is a wider phenomenon. For example, Fiut shows the "transformation of the colonising power into the victim of colonisation and *vice versa*" (2007, 37, emphasis in original) with the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. In Russia, the subaltern nature of its policy towards "the West" and the imperialism in its approach towards the post-Soviet states are observed simultaneously (Morozov 2013; Schorkowitz 2019). It is this liminality between East and West that forms the basis of Russia's imperial narratives towards the region (Oskanian 2018, 2021).

The long period of Russian and Soviet control of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia is deeply intertwined with how Russia defines "the Self". Russian state-building took place in parallel with Russian imperialism, which linked Russian identity to the idea of empire. Indeed, "the Russian Empire and the Russian state developed simultaneously, on the basis of acquisition and colonisation of contiguous territory" (Sagramoso 2020, 1). For a short period of time under the Bolsheviks, Russian colonialism was openly criticised (mainly to condemn the Tsarist regime) (Schorkowitz 2019). It was quickly rehabilitated when the Communist Party sought to rewrite Russia's colonial history as positive and liberating while also criticising Western colonialism (Schwarz 1952).

This self-identification with the imperial past has led to a foreign policy that seeks to re-establish a "sphere of influence" (Page 1994; Suslov

2018). Paradoxically, these foreign policy actions were often rhetorically justified on the grounds of the international normative framework, with Moscow reproaching "the West" for failing to uphold its own norms. This has led to the conceptualisation of Russian foreign policy as neo-revisionist, anti-revisionist, or imperialist subordination (Sakwa 2015; Matveeva 2018; Buzgalin et al. 2016).

Russian influence in the South Caucasus and Central Asia today takes place through these historical and cultural links (Davidzon 2022) and the construction of a supranational community (Kazharski 2019). The Eurasian integration efforts were a response to neoliberal globalisation and the changing distribution of power in the international system (Lane and Samokhvalov 2015; Molchanov 2016; Krickovic 2014). The fact that it is seen as a product of Russia's great power ambitions (Libman and Vinokurov 2012; Vinokurov and Libman 2011; Sergi 2018; Smith 2016) or leadership (Busygina and Krivokhizh 2023) shows the continued power asymmetry between Russia and the other countries in the region.

Russian influence in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) is also based on historical economic and cultural links. However, the experience of Russian *and* European imperialism in the region adds a layer of complexity compared to the South Caucasus and Central Asia. The territories of today's countries were part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire (Western Ukraine), the German Empire (Poland and Lithuania), and Romania (Western part of the Principality of Moldova, now Romania) instead of the Russian Empire (see Fig. 1.1 compared to Fig. 1.2). As a result, the countries in the region claimed to be European and, with their independence from the Soviet Union, manifested a desire for "a return to Westernness that once was theirs" (Moore 2001, 118).

The way to do that was through accession to the European Union. Accession meant, however, submission to another power and its rules. That is why Spivak et al. ask "whether this re-Europeanisation is, in fact, integration into an emergent empire of the European Union" (2006, 830). In fact, Russian influence in this region needs to be viewed in the context of European influence as well.

Examining foreign policy in a spatial context reveals how Russian understanding of specific geographical spaces—Europe and the post-Soviet space in particular—has shaped its foreign policy (Casier and DeBardeleben 2018; Zwolski 2017; Sakwa 2018; Nygren 2008; Ambrosio 2009). The deteriorating relations between Russia and "the West" led Moscow to counteract Western democracy promotion in the

post-Soviet space in an attempt to build a post-imperial Great Power identity (Babayan 2015; Spechler and Spechler 2021; Trenin 2009).

Because of the long period of Russian/Soviet imperial rule, state- and nation-building in the shared neighbourhood occurred in opposition to Russia. The negative perception of Russia as an oppressor informed the decolonisation process in these countries. However, the empires put in place structures that outlasted Russian rule, thereby enabling the continuation of Russian influence in the form of hegemony. In the cultural sphere, Russian culture and language continued to be a point of reference in the societies of the former Soviet countries (Fiut 2007; Annus 2017; Thompson 2000). The centralised economy put in place during the Soviet Union also created or strengthened interdependencies through infrastructure and trade flows, which persisted after its dissolution. Trade among the CIS countries remained high with a dependence on access to the large Russian market. With their independence, the CIS countries also developed their own systems of rules and standards. These were largely based on the Soviet *Gosudarstvennyy Standart* (System of Government Standards—GOST) standards that also persisted in the form of regional standards. Lastly, the dissolution of the Soviet Union saw a number of territorial and secessionist conflicts (i.e. in Transnistria, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Nargorno-Karabakh) in which the Soviet and later the Russian army played a significant role. These unresolved conflicts created a security dependence on Russia as well.

1.2 The EU's Role in Central and Eastern Europe

The EU's relations with the countries in the region were established at the end of the 1980s and during the 1990s. In 1988, official relations were established between the European Community and the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance that paved the way for the conclusion of bilateral agreements between the EU and countries in CEE. Five such agreements on economic and trade cooperation were signed with Hungary, Poland, the Soviet Union, Bulgaria, and Romania. After 1990, more ambitious "Europe Agreements" were signed with Poland, Hungary, Czechia, Slovakia, Bulgaria, and Romania. These agreements clearly stated full EU membership as the ultimate goal (Ramsey 1995). At the same time, the European Council "agreed that the associated

countries in CEE that so desire shall become members of the European Union" (European Council 1993). It also defined the criteria that a country has to meet to become a member (the Copenhagen criteria).

During the rest of the 1990s, European integration deepened with the Maastricht and Amsterdam Treaties and widened with the accession of Austria, Finland, and Sweden in 1995. The EU also developed its bilateral relations with the newly independent states that were formerly part of the Soviet Union. Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCAs) were concluded to enhance political and economic cooperation with a focus on strengthening the transition to democracy and market economy in the countries. The PCAs were considered an alternative to the Europe Agreements. Although similar in the way they were drafted, the two types of agreements established different types of relations between the EU and the partner country. The aim of the Europe Agreements was to prepare the countries' accession to the EU. The agreement set up an Association Council that was to take legally binding decisions. The PCAs, on the other hand, established a Cooperation Council without such power. Overall, the PCAs' aim was to foster and solidify the emerging relationship and to support the political and economic transformations within the countries in Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus. Hence, early on the EU differentiated between CEE and "former Soviet" countries and "by establishing different frameworks for cooperation, the Union drew a dividing line" (Ghazaryan 2010, 225).

The CEE applicants for accession to the EU undertook significant efforts to meet the EU's conditions for membership. This conditionality approach relied on the provision of a significant reward—EU membership—in exchange for democratic and economic reforms implementing EU norms and values (Schimmelfennig et al. 2003; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2004; Behr and Stivachtis 2016). As a result, eight CEE countries[1] joined the EU in 2004—including three countries that were part of the Soviet Union (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania).

With the 2004 Eastern enlargement, the concept of empire appeared in the debate on how the EU exercises influence. The end of communist rule in CEE set the stage for an expansion of the "liberal empire"—spreading liberalism and capitalism to the former socialist block (Colás 2007). Because of their recent historical experience under the socialist

[1] Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia.

empire that was the Soviet Union, these countries were viewed by the EU Member States as "inferior strangers" that needed to be incentivised to become more like the Western European states (Böröcz 2001). Nevertheless, Pourchot (2016) rightly points out that the CEE countries *voluntarily* applied for EU membership and that the EU was not the driver of this enlargement. In fact, the EU was not keen to enlarge but reacted to the countries' lobbying and political pressure.

In preparation for this enlargement, the EU also developed a common policy towards its new neighbours. The main aim was "to avoid drawing new dividing lines in Europe and to promote stability and prosperity within and beyond the new borders" (Commission of the European Communities 2003, 4). To this end, the EU offered "a stake in the EU's Internal Market and further integration and liberalisation" (Commission of the European Communities 2003, 4) in exchange for reforms. Thus, the same conditionality approach was used for neighbours and candidate countries. Only the reward differed significantly—full EU membership vs. access to the EU market—which reduced the EU's leverage and, hence, the effectiveness of this policy.

Initially, the Commission envisioned a policy addressed at Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, and the Southern Mediterranean countries (Commission of the European Communities 2003). The final strategy, however, included Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia but not Russia (see Fig. 1.3). Russia insisted on playing a role equal to that of the European Union that reflected the leadership's renewed sense of power. Hence, it did not agree with being on par with these other countries: "Instead of becoming part of the Union's neighbourhood, Russia has insisted that its relations with the European Union must rest on the separate basis of an equal and mutually beneficial strategic partnership" (Haukkala 2010, 166). That is why EU-Russia relations came to be guided by the four common spaces agreed upon in 2003. The Southern Caucasus was included in the new neighbourhood strategy—the ENP—because "the European Union has a strong interest in the stability and development" (Commission of the European Communities 2004, 10) of the three countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia). With each country, the EU was to define the priorities for reform that "will bring them closer to the European Union" (Commission of the European Communities 2004). These ENP Action Plans were jointly developed and monitored by the EU and the partner countries.

In 2008, the European Council decided to strengthen the Barcelona process for the Southern Mediterranean countries. In the same vein, it welcomed "the proposals for developing the Eastern dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy" (Council of the EU 2008, 19). And so, the Commission developed a proposal for an Eastern Partnership (EaP) that "should bring a lasting political message of EU solidarity, alongside additional, tangible support for their democratic and market-oriented reforms and the consolidation of their statehood and territorial integrity" (Commission of the European Communities 2008, 2–3). The EaP included new bilateral agreements—AAs—that provided for mutual market access through a DCFTA. In addition, the Commission proposed to offer visa facilitation, energy security, and multilateral cooperation through this new EaP.

Subsequently, the ENP was revised twice more in 2011 and 2015. The first revision was a response to the changes to EU foreign policy-making installed by the Lisbon Treaty[2] and to the Arab spring revolutions in the Southern Mediterranean. With this revised ENP, the EU sought to play a more important role in conflict resolution and the democratic transformation of the neighbourhood countries (European Commission 2011). However, there was a striking continuity in the EU's policy despite the changes in the neighbourhoods. This continuity manifested itself in the persistent use of the main accession tool—conditionality (Delcour 2017). It is striking precisely because of the inconsistencies and contradictions the crises in the neighbourhood revealed in the ENP (Natorski 2017).

A public consultation in 2015 was the basis for another revision of the ENP. Again, the review was a response to the new security challenges in the neighbourhood that hindered political transformation in the partner countries (European Commission 2015). At least discursively, it moved away from the accession-inspired methodology approach, emphasising the need for differentiation between engagement with the partner countries according to their aspirations and political will (Delcour 2017). Nevertheless, the enlargement legacy of the ENP persisted in practice (Schumacher 2018).

The persistence of the accession logic in the EU approach to its neighbourhood is also reflected in the scholarly research on the ENP. Because this literature developed from studies of EU enlargement—the

[2] Mainly the enhanced role of the European Parliament and the establishment of the European External Action Service (EEAS).

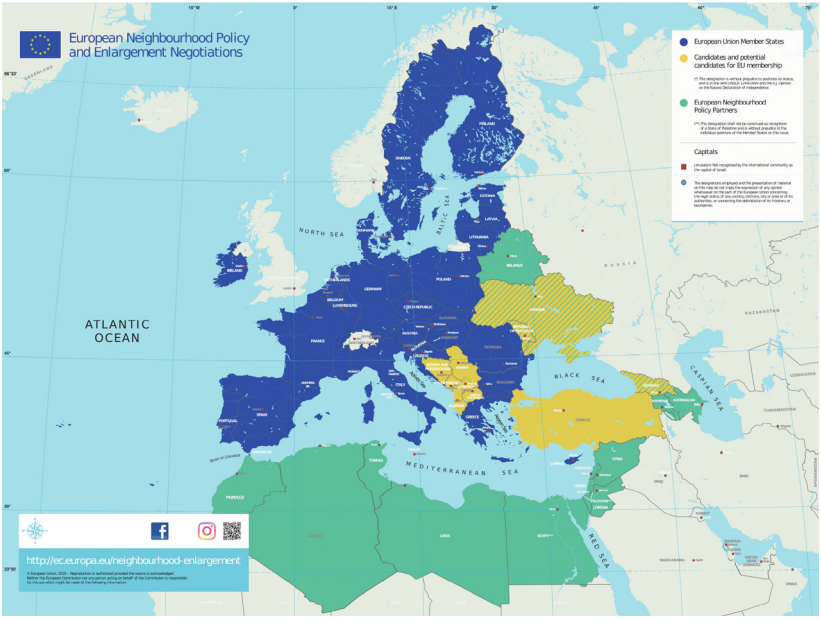

Fig. 1.3 Map of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) (*Source* European Union [2023] [https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu])

2004 Eastern enlargement in particular—subsequent research continued to apply the same logics and analytical categories. For example, *Europeanisation* was first used as a concept to analyse the effects of European integration on domestic processes in member states but was later applied to analyse the effects of integration dynamics that fall short of EU membership (Franke et al. 2010).[3] In fact, scholars viewed the phenomenon of change beyond EU borders as one "that sits on the fence between the EU's internal and external dimension and transcends the intergovernmentalism-supranationalism divide" (Schumacher 2018, 3).

This literature defined different mechanisms through which the EU takes effect beyond its borders. A rational-choice approach points to the fact that the EU can use external incentives to promote the adoption

[3] Europeanisation is, essentially, the idea of something non-European becoming European (similar to *Westernisation*).

of its rules. This was evident when the EU developed accession conditions (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2004). However, the effectiveness of this mechanism in neighbouring countries is limited by the absence of a credible incentive—a membership perspective (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2020; Gawrich et al. 2010; Maier and Schimmelfennig 2007; Börzel and van Hüllen 2014; Theuns 2017).

Informed by the literature on transnational diffusion, scholars also analysed socialisation mechanisms such as processes of learning and mimicry (Börzel and Soyaltin 2012). In the EU's neighbourhood, liberal norms were transmitted through institutions, lesson-drawing, and emulation (Schimmelfennig 2000; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005; Lavenex 2004). Emphasising socialisation processes over external incentives, Sasse (2008) even conceptualised the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) as a loose framework for socialisation.

Empirical analyses generally combined these mechanisms, arguing that both vertical power-based processes and horizontal diffusion were taking place in the EU's neighbourhood (Levitsky and Way 2006; Lavenex and Schimmelfennig 2009). Lavenex (2008) showed how the EU's external influence is also manifested in horizontal (as opposed to incentive-based vertical) inclusion of neighbourhood countries in governance frameworks, thereby shifting the EU's organisational boundaries. The result is policy coordination rather than rule transfer. For a literature that has been criticised for neglecting the agency of neighbourhood countries in these processes, this approach constitutes a first step away from the inherent Eurocentrism stemming from the shadow of enlargement (Nizhnikau 2017; Gstöhl 2016).

The fact that the EU is a unique polity is recognised and accepted as central knowledge within the discipline of EU studies. This canonical view of their object of study as *sui generis* led scholars to conceptualise and analyse not only the EU's inner workings but also its influence abroad as unique (Drieskens 2017). As a result, the view persists that the EU cannot be compared to other international actors or supranational organisations.

More critical approaches to the study of EU influence in its neighbourhood analyse it through the lens of imperialism and (post-)colonialism. However, these concepts of dominance have a negative connotation in the literature. In fact, they come with "considerable normative baggage" (Marks 2012, 2) that sits uneasily with the association of the EU with positive behaviour (i.e. civilian, normative, market). Even the EU's trade

policy is viewed as "destined to reduce and prevent harm in world politics" (Bailey and Bossuyt 2013, 561).

However, the EU does exercise power by getting non-member states to do something against their will or interest. The experience of non-Western regions in negotiating partnerships with the EU showed that the extreme economic differences created a power imbalance. In dealing with the EU, these countries and regions experience an "inter-play of both consent and coercion" (Williams 2015, 27). Even though the EU proclaims an "equal partnership" with these actors, the rules of these partnerships are set by the EU and not negotiable (Del Sarto 2016). There is a clear dissonance between how the EU sees its own actorness and how (non-Western) partners see the EU's actorness. Indeed, the EU "often struggles to reconcile its high-powered rhetoric of vision for "the Self" as a "credible force for good" with its daily practices, ridden by power asymmetries and the perception of its self-righteousness in driving the outside to its standards" (Korosteleva 2015, 275). This dissonance led Eriksen and Fossum (2015a) to claim that the EU is not a hegemon but that it *exerts hegemony*.

Engaging with the European imperial past (Sepos 2013), several scholars used the concept of empire to understand how the EU projects power internally and externally (Zielonka 2008; Gravier and Parker 2011). According to Pänke (2015), empires do this through Gramscian hegemony. Indeed, the concepts of imperialism and hegemony are closely related, the difference being that empires have mainly a negative impact on the targets (Sepos 2013). Hegemony, on the other hand, can—but does not have to—provide public goods (Snidal 1985). The Gramscian understanding of hegemony allows for the inclusion of both norms and interests—that is, the combination of material and ideational aspects of the EU's power. As a critical concept, it also contests the idea that "the EU is "a force for good" in international politics" (Diez 2013, 205).

EU scholars have applied the concept of hegemony to understand EU power projection within (Bulmer and Joseph 2016) and beyond its border (Eriksen and Fossum 2015b). Externally, the EU is able to project hegemonic power because of the lack of input legitimacy (Gstöhl 2015) and the existing power asymmetries (Eriksen and Fossum 2015a). Applications of the concept highlight the benevolent character of the EU and focus on the role of ideas and norms in the EU's influence. Janos (2001) analyses the dissolution of the end of the Soviet Union, showing how East Central Europe moved from the influence of the Eastern *Empire* to

Western *hegemony*. With regard to the ENP, Haukkala (2017) showed how the EU exerts regional *normative* hegemony. However, this type of influence is "not so innocent in the sense that the transmission of European norms and values is one way of shaping international order and serves as an alternative to economic and military means" (Stivachtis 2016, 81).

In sum, the end of Russian/Soviet imperialism meant a strong resistance to Russian dominance in CEE, the South Caucasus and Central Asia. At the same time, the structures that remained in place enabled a continuation of Russian influence. Russian (and Soviet imperialism) also had a profound impact on its relations with the countries in its neighbourhood. The EU, on the other hand, could not rely on historical structures for its influence and had to establish its hegemony in the region through its enlargement and neighbourhood policy. Yet, the EU's approach to its neighbourhood is also not void of coloniality and path dependency.

1.3 Towards a Systematic Comparison of EU and Russian Influence

Based on these historical legacies, the conceptualisations of EU and Russian influence discussed above were developed separately. Due to these separate conceptualisations, how the EU and Russia differed in the way they sought to extend influence over the countries in their "shared neighbourhood" has rarely been systematically compared.[4] This systematic comparison is the main objective of this book. In both academic and policy-oriented research, the competition between Russian and the EU is seen as one between two actors that differ significantly in their nature (post-imperial state vs. *sui generis* polity) and, therefore, their foreign policy approaches (revisionist use of hard and soft power vs. benign market and normative power) (Buzgalin et al. 2016; Kushnir 2018; da Conceição and Meunier 2015; Gebhard 2007; Radnitz 2018; Aktürk 2019; Goldthau and Sitter 2019; Lenz 2013). I argue that the fact of conceptualising Russia and the EU as completely different actors has prevented scholars from comparing them systematically.

The EU literature asked what the EU is—rather than "what it does or what it says" (Manners 2002, 252)—and analysed its international *power*

[4] See Tulmets et al. (2018) for a comparison of EU and Russian conditionalities.

using theories of empire, power, and hegemony. They developed EU-specific conceptualisations that highlight specific dimensions of the EU's external impact. The concept of Civilian Power Europe emphasised the European Community's potential to stabilise and foster peace by means of its civilian—and, therefore, non-military—nature (Duchêne 1973). Other adjectivisations of the actor concept included: Market Power Europe (Damro 2012), Ethical Power Europe (Aggestam 2008), and Normative Power Europe (Manners 2002). The latter produced a conceptual debate questioning its analytical value, the force-for-good connotation, and ignorance of the EU's military and economic power (Sjursen 2006; Pace 2007; Zutter 2010; Hyde-Price 2006). This debate showed how EU-specific these conceptualisations were. Scholars developed them on the basis of how they saw the EU and did not intend to apply them to any other international actor. The Normative Power Europe concept should be seen as an ideal type to which *the EU*—and no other actor—can be compared (Forsberg 2011). Furthermore, these conceptualisations only focus on the indirect, ideational exercise of power by the EU. Hence, they cannot be used to compare the EU to other types of actors or powers. Instead of only focusing on the normative dimension, the full range of the dimensions of the hegemony or power concepts needs to be applied to the EU to also capture its more direct, material exercise of power. Enlarging the conceptual application of hegemony in this way will enable a systematic comparison of EU and Russian influence in the region.

Contrary to the EU-specific conceptualisation, Russian actions in its neighbourhood are viewed through the lens of conventional statist foreign policy. They are defined in terms of the exercise of hard and soft power to advance Russian foreign policy objectives (Gvosdev and Marsh 2014; Thorun 2009; Allison 2017; Lankina and Niemczyk 2015; Sherr 2014). Authors have analysed Russian uses of hard power as coercion of neighbouring countries (Adamsky 2018; Allison 2017). Assessments of Russia's soft power showed that it failed to promote a positive image due to its use of force abroad, the domestic authoritarian system paired with economic stagnation, and the complexities of the Soviet past (Rutland and Kazantsev 2016). It needs to be said, however, that critical theorists attest the study of soft power a liberal democratic bias that led to the underestimation of Russia's soft power by IR scholars (Keating and Kaczmarska 2017). In the Russian interpretation, soft power is used to pursue state interests—rather than being follower-driven attraction (Kosachev 2012).

It is "discourse generated by Russian elites in pursuit of power and status for their country in international affairs" (Kiseleva 2015, 317).

There also exists a bias on the EU, Russia, and their shared neighbourhood beyond the concept of soft power (Gunitsky and Tsygankov 2018; Keuleers et al. 2016). This bias stems from the hegemonic position of Western knowledge production in international politics and academia. In fact, a large part of mainstream IR is an externalisation of national (American) social science generalising from local patterns and contexts (Hoffmann 1977). And because US and European universities and journals act as a point of reference in the discipline, Western theories claim to be universally applicable (Fonseca 2019; Acharya 2014). In addition, material inequalities lead to fewer publications of non-Western knowledge in these Western journals (Medie and Kang 2018). Post-Soviet scholars in Russia and its neighbouring countries also face these problems (Tlostanova 2015). And so, it is not surprising that Western perspectives dominate the analyses of the EU's and Russia's role in the region. As a result, potential commonalities as well as points of tension between the two regional actors have been underestimated in the Western literature.

The literature presumes different types of power partly because the EU's use of military capabilities through the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CSFP) is constrained by the requirement of unanimity and thus not associated with the EU's power. Also, the EU is often viewed as a benevolent hegemon due to the neoliberal bias in the literature (Keuleers et al. 2016). Yet, the EU's conditionality approach also has coercive elements, such as the threat to suspend benefits if candidate countries or neighbours do not adjust their domestic legislative and political framework (Börzel and Soyaltin 2012). This suggests that there are elements across the EU and Russian foreign policy tools that are similar and that the difference between the two lies in the scale and frequency with which they use these tools (Makarychev 2015; Tulmets et al. 2018; Busygina 2018).

Several authors sought to compare the EU and Russia and how they act in the shared neighbourhood (Averre 2005, 2009; Tulmets et al. 2018). However, these studies used different concepts or categories for the comparison. For example, the political norms promoted by the EU are juxtaposed with the diffusion of authoritarianism by Russia (Tolstrup 2013). Yet, a recent study showed that instead of promoting political authoritarian norms, Russia is externalising conservative ideas that "cannot simply be approached as the mirror image of the norms upheld

by the EU or the West" (Casier 2022, 12). Indeed, Moscow's soft power strategy includes the development of a national ideology that emphasises its own values distinctive from—but not opposite to—Western standards (Morozov 2008).

This book questions the overemphasis on difference that produced separate theorisations of EU and Russian influence and led to the omission of their similarities. Indeed, the EU has also been criticised for its interest-driven neighbourhood policy and Russia for the use of propaganda and hybrid warfare, suggesting that the EU is more than a normative power and the Russian policy is not only realpolitik-driven (Delcour 2018). Thus, these studies contest the prevailing view of Russia as a purely interest-driven actor on the one side and the EU as a normative actor on the other. To render a systematic comparison possible, I will use the more generic concepts of hegemony and power. By applying the same concepts to analyse EU and Russian influence, I am *not* suggesting that the EU and Russia are similar or even that they act in a similar way. The value in using the same concepts lies in being able to compare them and uncover their similarities *and differences*.

Theories and concepts from Foreign Policy Analysis provide a range of external and domestic explanatory factors to understand EU and Russian behaviour towards the neighbourhood countries (Smith 2016; Lantis and Beasley 2017). However, they do not include the perspective of "small states". In fact, the literature presented above has been criticised for neglecting the neighbourhood countries' agency (Bergmann and Niemann 2015; Schumacher 2018). The relational understanding of hegemony and power in the IR literature (Dahl 1961) includes both actors (the hegemon and the small state subject to hegemonic influence) in the analysis of regional powers and their influence. Conceptualising the relationship between regional power and small states as one of hegemonic power shows the importance of perceptions: In order to be effective, an exercise of power always needs to be perceived as such by the target. Hence, one contribution that this conceptual framework makes is that it takes into account the perspectives of the neighbourhood countries. Through concept-building, this book contributes to the research agenda on comparative neighbourhood policy studies, shedding light on the similarities and differences of regional powers' hegemonic influence in overlapping neighbourhoods (Schunz et al. 2018) and more broadly the processes of state hegemony (Ikenberry and Nexon 2019). EU and

Russian modes of influence are rendered comparable for empirical analysis, answering the following research question: *To what extent have the EU and Russia been employing different types of hegemonic power towards the countries in their shared neighbourhood?*

Progressing Eurasian integration and the establishment of the EAEU—modelled on the EU—meant that the Russian government was now able to prescribe rules and standards through sectoral economic integration. Due to its dominant position in the organisation (Sergi 2018), Russia could use the EAEU as an additional means in exercising its regional hegemony (Busygina and Krivokhizh 2023). The EAEU's ways of influencing the countries in the region cannot be seen as an actor equivalent to the EU because it was explicitly conceived as an *economic* and not a political union (Satpaev 2015). Thus, it does not have the same impact beyond its borders as the EU. Rather, it can be used by Russia to project its regulatory power, thereby adding another dimension to Russian hegemonic power in the region that was previously only associated with the EU.

On the EU side, economic competition and geopolitical confrontation shifted the EU's focus to security issues and the importance of effective communication with the neighbourhood countries' societies. It is likely that the EU approach changed over time using more coercive and ideological means. And so, the question arises of whether EU and Russian types of hegemony in the region converged over time to the use of similar means and thus types of hegemonic power. Therefore, the second research question of this book is the following: *How far did the exercises of the types of hegemonic power by the EU and Russia approximate over time?*

The originality of these research questions lies in applying the same categories to EU and Russian actions. I subsume the respective conceptualisations of EU and Russian neighbourhood strategies under one conceptual framework of hegemonic power, thereby rendering them comparable.

1.4 Structure of the Book

In this book, I first develop a conceptual framework of hegemonic power mechanisms that allows for the comparison of EU and Russian power relations with the small states in their neighbourhood. In its empirical application, I conduct a comparative qualitative case study between four of these power relations (EU-Moldova, EU-Armenia, Russia-Moldova,

Russia-Armenia). This case study aims to assess the extent to which the EU and Russia used different types of hegemonic power towards the neighbourhood countries. However, both their neighbourhood policies developed over time with the addition of new instruments (for example, the EAEU for Russia and cultural programmes for the EU) and changes in their approaches. To understand how their exercises of different types of hegemonic power changed between 2000 and 2021, I included a diachronic comparison in the research design.

The comparisons show how EU and Russian neighbourhood policies developed during the 2000s. Following the EU, Russia developed first co-optation instruments. After 2008, the EU institutionalised its approach in the form of the new EaP offering AADCFTAs. Russia promoted further Eurasian integration, which meant the development of a new instrument with the CU and later the EAEU. These developments produced a competition for influence during which Russia started constructing "the West" as its Other. After the start of the war in Ukraine, their strategies began to diverge more significantly across these countries.

My findings show that the EU and Russia used the same mechanisms, albeit through dissimilar activities. Over time, the EU's uses of hegemonic power mechanisms became more interlinked, whereas Russia developed its prescription and co-optation instruments separately. Lastly, there was a difference in the normative justification and legitimacy of their hegemonic power activities shown by the different perceptions in Moldova and Armenia.

This book is organised as follows: In Chapter 2, I develop three ideal-typical mechanisms of hegemonic power: *coercion, prescription,* and *co-optation* based on the hegemony and power literature. With this conceptual framework, the book makes a theoretical contribution to hegemony studies focusing on the logics and mechanics of hegemonic orders. The chapter also presents the research design. I used a qualitative comparative case study design with a double comparison for the empirical observation of these mechanisms. Each case was compared (1) to the ideal type and (2) to the other cases of hegemonic power using a dataset of 640 documents, 47 semi-structured interviews, and two observations.

Chapters 3–6 present the results of the empirical analysis. This analysis focused on the EU and Russian sides of the equation. It documents and examines the respective use of power mechanisms without engaging in the analysis of their effectiveness but taking into account how these uses were perceived in Moldova and Armenia. Chapter 3 shows that both the EU

and Russia coerced Moldova and Armenia, but the difference was in the institutionalisation of the mechanism. Whereas the EU used institutionalised and progressing conditionality, Russian coercion was informal and erratic. In Chapter 4, I present the analysis for the prescription mechanism. The EU and EAEU food safety regimes served as a nested case study for this mechanism. The results show that both the EU and Russia prescribed food safety rules and standards in Moldova and Armenia. Although this mechanism is associated with the EU (i.e. its market power and the Brussels effect), the progress in Eurasian integration provided Russia with a prescription instrument. The food safety rules prescribed through the EAEU were not incompatible with the EU ones because the organisation was partly an emulation of the EU model. However, the EAEU approach to food safety was still fundamentally different from the EU's focus on ensuring safe processes in food production. Chapter 5 shows that both the EU and Russia used co-optation in Moldova and Armenia. Here, Russia had a cultural advantage for co-optation, while the EU focused on co-optation through democratisation and liberal values.

Chapter 6 brings the synchronic comparisons for each mechanism together to examine how the mechanisms relate to each other and how they evolved over time. The diachronic comparison showed that the EU's uses of the three hegemonic power mechanisms became more interlinked, whereas Russia developed prescription and co-optation instruments separately. Instances of EU conditionality and sanctions increased over time and were linked to the diffusion of "European values" and the prescription of food safety rules. These developments took place as relations between the EU and Russia became more conflictual. This conflict was reflected in Russian co-optation activities that became more confrontational through practices of Othering the EU. Finally, in Chapter 7, I conclude by answering the two main research questions and providing recommendations for further research.

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CHAPTER 2

EU, Russia, and the Theory of Hegemonic Power

As shown in Chapter 1, EU and Russian influence in neighbouring countries has been theorised and conceptualised differently in the existing literature. As a result, there are no shared categories for a systematic comparison of their influence in neighbouring countries. That is why I use the more generic concepts of hegemony and power to develop a conceptual framework for the comparison of EU and Russian influence in their shared neighbourhood.

2.1 Exercising Hegemony

In this book, I aim to subsume the separate theorisations under more generic terms and concepts to render EU and Russian modes of influence comparable for empirical analysis. To understand how the two actors exercise hegemony, I develop a comprehensive conceptual framework of hegemonic power in shared neighbourhoods based on three ideal-typical mechanisms of hegemonic influence: *coercion, prescription,* and *co-optation*.

I. Burmester, *EU and Russian Hegemony in the 'Shared Neighbourhood'*,
The European Union in International Affairs,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-75488-3_2

2.1.1 *Regional Powers and Hegemony*

Regional powers are actors that "have the power resources and the capabilities to control—even the power to lead—region-building processes" (Godehardt and Nabers 2011, 10). They employ different strategies to exert influence defined by their goals and means (hegemony, empire, and leadership) or the extent of their control (hegemony, detachment, and domination) (Flemes 2010; Destradi 2010; Prys 2010). Conceiving of hegemony as a strategy of regional powers, this approach highlights the fact that hegemony serves the hegemon: "Its primary aim is the establishment of a stable environment *for itself*" (Destradi 2010, 915, emphasis in original). This implies a distinction between *hegemony* and *hegemon*, with hegemony being a "political order (whether global or regional) in which the hegemon's mode of thinking becomes dominant without regular reference to violence" (Showstack Sassoon 1982, 94).

The hegemon is defined as "a leading political community [that] uses its outsized military and economic capabilities to organise, at least in part, relations among weaker polities" (Ikenberry and Nexon 2019, 396). Thus, it is not a unitary actor, but a "social construct based around some form of ideology" (Worth 2015, 16). This construct can be a state but also other forms of political constellations. As the literature has shown, polities such as the Islamic State and the European Union constitute a power in international relations as well (Keukeleire and Delreux 2015; Manners 2006). Defining hegemony in this way brings together regional hegemons that operate in similar ways but so far have been separated analytically due to their different natures.

In IR theory, the concept of hegemony is situated between the two poles of direct and indirect influence and combines elements of coercion and legitimacy (Prys and Robel 2011; Flemes 2010). Acknowledging that both are important elements of hegemony, a distinction is made between hegemony through the manipulation of material incentives and through the alteration of substantive beliefs (Howson and Smith 2008; Ikenberry and Kupchan 1990). Shaping ideas and beliefs results in the consent of the other actor(s) for the hegemon's dominance. This reduces the costly use of material incentives to ensure acquiescence, thereby rendering hegemony more sustainable for the hegemon (Gramsci and Hoare 2007; Morgenthau 1948). The reliance on consent is a characteristic of hegemony:

> To the extent that the consensual aspect of power is in the forefront, hegemony prevails. Coercion is always latent but is only applied in marginal, deviant cases. Hegemony is enough to ensure the conformity of behaviour in most people most of the time. (Cox 1983, 164)

The differentiation between direct and indirect influence is not based on the instruments used-although the terms hard and soft power often suggest this. Rather, the distinction is made based on temporality: The shorter the time between the exercise of power and its effect, the more direct the influence. In a relational understanding of power, attention must be paid to the specificity of social relations, which can be direct and immediate or indirect and diffuse (Barnett and Duvall 2005). A causal link can be more easily established for direct influence because the number of other possible causes for a change in behaviour is limited by the short period of time. The fact that direct influence is more easily observed has led IR scholars to agree on the relevance of hard power. However, indirect influence is not less effective than direct influence—it is just less conspicuous: "Power can be at its most effective when least observable" (Lukes 2021, 6).

The degree to which power is observable depends on how actors form their preferences and interests. Generally, in research on social power, an actor's behaviour is seen as the consequence of a rational cost-benefit analysis (logic of consequences) and its normative orientation (logic of appropriateness). When it comes to power, Barnett and Duvall (2005) distinguish between relations of interaction and relations of social constitution. This distinction reflects the epistemological divide between rationalist and constructivist IR theories that conceive of social relations as either pre-constituted or constitutive. The former claims that actors' preferences and actions depend on rational cost-benefit calculations and thus are pre-constituted to the relation between A and B. The latter maintains that actors and structures mutually constitute each other and considers the relationship constitutive of the actors' position. Constructivist theories are interested in understanding how power determines actors' identities and capacities, whereas rationalist theories focus solely on the capacities of actors and see their identities as pre-given.

Hence, rationalist analyses of power focus on how A changes B's cost-benefit calculations. Interpretivists claim that it is not about what B does, given its interest, but how A was able to change B's interest and preference. In other words, B's compliance can be unwilling (against its own

interest/preference) or willing (in line with its own interest/preference) (Lukes 1974). When B does not want to comply but does so in response to outside pressure, we speak of force or coercion. This direct influence is easily observable. When B is willing to comply, we can say there was no power relation. But what if B's preferences were changed from the outside so that B would be willing to comply? This indirect influence works by modifying B's ideas and beliefs that, in turn, change its interests and preferences. B is not even aware of a power relation.

There is a spectrum of types of power and hegemony between the poles of direct and indirect influence. This spectrum ranges from a power relation characterised by an overt conflict between the actors' interests and the manipulation of material incentives to one defined by an unobservable conflict and the alteration of substantive beliefs (see Fig. 2.1). Existing concepts of power and hegemony can be placed on this spectrum.

IR debates about power most commonly take Dahl's definition as a starting point: "A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do" (Dahl 1957, 202–203). Nevertheless, it was Lasswell and Kaplan's *Power and Society* that constituted "a veritable revolution in power analysis" (Baldwin 2016, 2). For the first time, the authors stated specific definitions and implications for

Influence	Direct ⟵		⟶ Indirect
Relation between actors' interests	Overt conflict	Covert conflict	Unobservable conflict
Manipulation of	Material incentives		Substantive beliefs
Power	Decision-making (Dahl)	Agenda-setting (Bachrach & Baratz)	Ideas/preferences (Lukes)
Hegemony	(Neo-)Realist	(Neo-)Liberal	(Neo-)Gramscian

Fig. 2.1 Direct and indirect influence in power and hegemony concepts

the empirical study of power (Lasswell and Kaplan 1951). Their publication and conceptual approach to power provided the basis upon which Dahl (1961) conducted his study of political representation in the city of New Haven. His analysis set the foundation for a *relational* concept of power. As such, power is understood as a relationship of (actual or potential) influence.

The faces of power debate built on this relational conceptualisation and Dahl's definition by introducing a second and third face of power. Whereas Dahl focused on the manipulation of decision-making with an overt conflict between the actors' interests, Bachrach and Baratz (1962) showed that power has a second (less easily observable) face when the conflict between interests is not articulated. By keeping issues off the agenda, the conflict remains covert. Lastly, with his *radical* view of power Lukes (1974) adds a third face—the ability to affect ideas and preferences.

In IR, different concepts of hegemony also exist on the spectrum between direct and indirect influence (see Fig. 2.1). For neorealists, hegemony is a state of disequilibrium in the international system that emerges when the relative power of a state increases to the extent that it becomes dominant (Morgenthau 1948; Waltz 1979; Mearsheimer 2001). The powerful state dominates by "establish[ing] and enforce[ing] the basic rules and rights that influence their own behaviour and that of the lesser states in the system" (Gilpin 1981, 30). Acquiescence is secured by economic and military capabilities.

Contrary to this (neo-)realist understanding, (neo-)liberalists thought that the hegemon enables international cooperation rather than constrains it. Institutionalised asymmetrical cooperation enables the hegemon to maintain a dominant position without having to resort to the use of costly material incentives. In other words, institutions are set up in a way that favours the hegemon while at the same time providing a stable order, enabling other actors within the system to attain their self-interested goals. Lastly, (neo-)Gramscians conceive of hegemony as a social, economic, and political structure that remains largely unquestioned by the actors within the system (Cox 1987).

What is still missing in these theoretical debates is a clear understanding of the underlying mechanisms through which power and hegemony take effect (Ikenberry and Nexon 2019). In the next step, I use the spectrum influence present in both power and hegemony concepts to develop ideal-typical mechanisms of hegemonic power.

2.1.2 *Three Mechanisms of Hegemonic Power*

Mechanisms are a way to understand the logics and mechanics of a particular phenomenon. They "detail the cogs and wheels of the causal process through which the outcome to be explained was brought about" (Hedström and Ylikoski 2010, 50). In other words, they establish the causal chain between A's action and B's behaviour.

Here, the outcome of hegemonic power is the foreign policy behaviour of small states. Small states have several policy options when confronted with a regional or great power. These options are (a) alignment with the power for protection (i.e. bandwagoning), (b) seeking other alliances to balance against the power, and (c) nonalignment (Kassimeris 2009). There is no consensus on when states decide to bandwagon or balance, yet scholars agree that nonalignment is the small state's first policy preference (Kaufman 1992; Labs 1992). For small states between two competing powers, co-alignment becomes another policy option. This option is often referred to as multi-vector foreign policy. Small states pursuing co-alignment "chose to alternate cooperation with Russia and the EU while remaining on the margins of their regional orders" (Gnedina 2015, 1007).

Foreign policy decision-making is a complex process involving many actors and factors. Mechanisms allow us to open up the black box of hegemonic power that associates one regional power's resources, actions, and capabilities with small state behaviour. In order to do so Hedström and Ylikoski (2010) propose to identify the (1) situational, (2) action-formation, and (3) transformational mechanisms that bring about the phenomenon observed at the macro level (see Fig. 2.2).

The micro-level mechanisms generate this association at the macro level. They link the regional powers' activities to the formation of preferences among the domestic actors of the small state, then to the government decision, and finally to its foreign policy behaviour. Linking regional powers' activities to small state actors' preferences is a situational mechanism (1) that takes into account the social structures and the cultural environment in which actors form their preferences. The action-formation mechanism (2) describes how the small state domestic actors' preferences translate into governmental decisions, and the transformational mechanism (3) specifies how this decision generates foreign policy behaviour. It does not specify *which* foreign policy behaviour the small

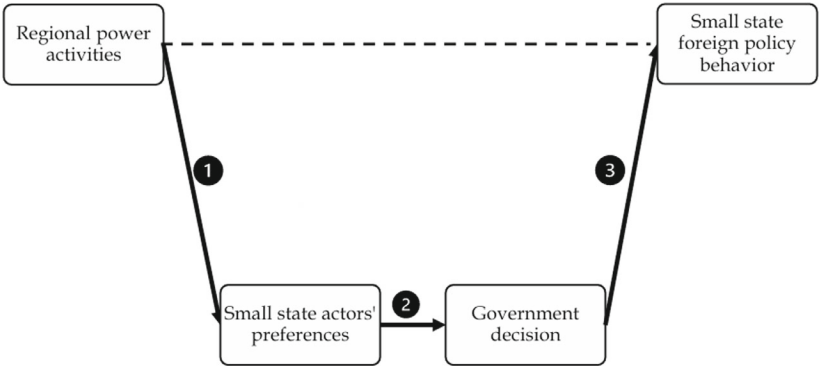

Fig. 2.2 Micro-level mechanisms of hegemonic power

state adopts because the same mechanism can lead to different outcomes depending on the circumstances.

In a hegemonic power relation, both actors' perceptions are essential to understanding the mechanism. For example, the threats and actions used by the regional power to coerce a small state depend on the (inter-) dependencies that the regional power perceives to exist with the target state and that the regional power uses to exert pressure. The decision to exert pressure also depends on what the hegemon thinks the small state values (i.e. what behaviour the target state would consider costly). On the other hand, the target state's preference for its behaviour is conditioned by what its decision-makers value, so how they perceive the costs of the regional power's coercive action and how they view the probability that the regional power carries out a threat (Jervis 1982).

What actors in the target countries value and how they assess the credibility of the regional hegemon are not the outcome of a rational-choice process. Rather, it is the cognitive biases that inform these positions. For example, humans experience the pain of losing something as greater than the joy of gaining the same thing (Kahneman and Tversky 2012; Kahneman et al. 1990). That is why they are more likely to accept risks when they are confronted with threats than with rewards. Perceptions also depend on the emotional response and cultural background of the actor perceiving a threat (Markwica 2018). Fear is the emotion that matters most with regard to threats. It "interrupts normal cognitive processes and

heightens attention to threat, which in turn can intensify the perception of threat" (Stein 2023, 411).

In addition, whether or not actors perceive a threat as credible is important for the preference formation and this decision-making (Jervis 1976; Mercer 2010). Castano et al. (2003) have shown that the general view of a country—as an ally or an enemy—impacts how that country's actions are interpreted. An ally's actions are more likely to be perceived as positive, whereas an enemy's actions are perceived as negative. However, the country's other actions also matter. If its behaviour shows norm-breaking and violation, its actions are more likely to be perceived as threats (Cohen 1978). Thus, to understand a hegemonic power relation, actors should not be seen as rational actors. Attention needs to be paid to their perceptions of the hegemonic structures and power activities.

To understand the mechanics of hegemonic orders in the making, my analytical framework focuses on the situational mechanism (1) that links the regional powers' hegemonic power activities to the small state actors' preferences. Thus, it seeks to understand how the regional power influences the preference formation of different actors within the small state. Taking into account the specificity of relations between actors, the framework differentiates between three different mechanisms ranging from more direct to more indirect influence. These mechanisms are *coercion, prescription,* and *co-optation*. These mechanisms are distinguished by the relation between the actor's interests, the structural aspect of the relationship, the means by which the structural aspect is exploited, and the level of interaction between the actors (see Fig. 2.3).

Coercion is defined in opposition to consent. Where there is consent or consensus, actors agree whereby they attribute legitimacy to the authority (Howson and Smith 2008). This, in turn, implies that coercion takes place in the absence of consensus "through the threat of violence or material depravation" (Haugaard and Lentner 2006, 5). An important characteristic of coercion—distinguishing it from other types of influence—is that it "always involves some cost or pain to the target or explicit threats thereof, with the implied threat to increase the cost or pain if the target does not concede" (Greenhill and Krause 2018, 5). The use of material incentives is considered a key element of coercion that—in the hegemon's view' incurs high costs on the target (Dobbin et al. 2007).

The hegemon seeks to get the target state to act against its interests. There is an overt conflict between interests. However, coercion does not

Mechanism	Direct ⟵		⟶ Indirect
	Coercion	Prescription	Co-optation
Relation of actors' interests	Overt conflict	Covert conflict	Unobservable conflict
Structural aspect	Dependencies	System of rules and standards	Ideology
Extension of	(Threat of) cost or pain	Jurisdictional authority	Ideas & beliefs
Level of interaction	Government	Regulators	Society
Dimensions	Threats Rewards Demands	Rules Obligations Authority	Language Culture Belief system

N.B.: These ideal types are not mutually exclusive so that actors may employ different constellations of these mechanisms.

Fig. 2.3 Ideal-typical mechanisms of hegemonic power

imply the absence of options for the target state. On the contrary, coercive actions aim to influence the cost-benefit calculations of governments when weighing different options. The threats issued by the hegemon are thought to increase the costs of the undesired options, which also increase the benefits of choosing the option desired by the hegemon (Lebow 2007). The absence of choices as a result of the use of force is encompassed in the definition of control (not coercion).

Control is the direct or sovereign rule that can be observed, for example, in colonisation processes. It is clearly distinctive from hegemony. The mechanism works directly through violence and is immediately observable because the controlled state typically changes its behaviour promptly and against its own will. B is forced to change its behaviour

through violence and against its actual preferences. Thus, there is no change in its preferences (the outcome of mechanism (1) in Fig. 2.2).

Existing dependencies are a structure that allows the hegemon to (potentially) create costs or pain for the other actor. When the small state depends on the regional power for its security and economic well-being, the costs of the regional hegemon withholding the benefits are high. This dependence provides the hegemon with enough leverage to wield power over the small state. In the absence of this structural aspect, the hegemon's threats are unlikely to have an effect because the targeted actor would not see its utility calculations significantly affected. Coercive threats or actions weaponise the asymmetry in the interdependent relationship and (threaten to) disrupt the relationship. They "aim to manipulate the calculus of the target in making a dis-preferred outcome more attractive than a preferred option" (Jaeger 2018, 17).

There are three dimensions to the ideal-typical mechanism of coercion: threats, demands, and rewards. Where a threat has been issued, the reversal of the action or not carrying out the threat is the target's reward for compliance. The coercer can also promise additional rewards or even use rewards as an incentive to induce compliance instead of threats. Threats are also accompanied by (explicit or implied) demands. A demand can be for the small state to adopt a new behaviour, thereby changing the status quo (compellence) or—on the contrary—preventing the small state from changing its behaviour to preserve the status quo (deterrence). Often, power is only associated with the former because it includes an observable event, i.e. a new action being adopted against the actor's interest. However, both are instances of coercion as they aim to get the target to act against its interests by threatening to inflict costs or pain (Lebow 2007; Greenhill and Krause 2018).

In international relations, coercion is a foreign policy tool and thus acted out at the level of government. The difference between coercion and control is that the latter leaves the target no other option than to comply and that it takes place on all levels of interaction. On the other hand, instances of conditionality can also fall under the definition of coercion because its "external incentives are expected to be able to change the utility calculations of actors by raising the costs of non-compliance or by offering additional benefits in order to change cost-benefit calculations" (Koch 2015, 98). Similarly, bargaining (Fearon 1998) and transactional politics (Puchala 1970) aim to render diverging interests compatible through manipulation of the rational calculations of actors. There is an

overt conflict of interests and the aim to increase the costs of the undesired options or the benefits of the desired options for the target. When these phenomena take place at the level of government, we can speak about coercion. It operates across policy areas linking different issues (Całus et al. 2018).

The ideal type of this mechanism is the positive pole of coercion. When all dimensions (threats, demands, rewards) are present, the empirical phenomenon comes closest to the ideal type. The further the phenomenon is from the ideal type, the closer it comes to the adjoining mechanism on the spectrum.

Prescription takes place through the process of setting the rules of the game that constrain other actors' behaviour. It is the hegemon's system of rules and standards that becomes dominant. Conflicting interests are not articulated within this structure (Lake 2009a; Bachrach and Baratz 1962). Therefore, this mechanism moves away from a logic of consequences towards a logic of appropriateness. The target state follows the hegemon's rules out of duty to comply and not a rational cost-benefit calculation.

The dimensions of prescription are the regulatory obligation to adopt and apply the hegemon's sectoral rules and the jurisdictional authority over rules and standards in that sector that enables their prescription. Authority is a social construct best understood as a bargain between the hegemon and the target. The target attributes the right to set the rules and standards to the hegemon in exchange for the provision of something of value to the target (i.e., social order, public goods, etc.) (Lake 2009b). This is the fundamental difference between prescription and coercion. However, the fact that the hegemon also enforces the rules it sets through the threat of the use of force makes it difficult to distinguish between both mechanisms empirically. Whereas coercion takes place between governments, prescription is directed at the regulatory administration in the target country.

The literature on market power attributes the ability to set these sector-specific rules to the relative market size and its scope and boundary (Kalyanpur and Newman 2019). Market participants and regulatory authority are increasingly mobile and can extend beyond the geographic space. Market scope is defined as the areas where market participants can undertake their economic activity. If participants and their assets are mobile (i.e., they can easily enter or exit the market), their threats to exit the market are more credible and wield power. Market boundary refers to

the jurisdictional authority that can expand beyond territorial borders, for example, when national markets are integrated. In the process of integration, a supranational regulatory authority is created to set common rules and standards. These common rules render the market more attractive to businesses "by diminishing the transaction costs associated with border effects and creating a focal point of authority" (Kalyanpur and Newman 2019, 2) hence increasing overall market power.

Market size and scope do not constitute sources of hegemony because this mechanism of hegemonic power, like the second face of power, implies a covert conflict of interests that is not articulated (Bachrach and Baratz 1962). The mobilisation of these sources of market power leads to acquiescence either through coercive threats to limit market access or exit the market (overt conflict of interests) or through competition when actors comply with rules to access the market and gain economic benefits (no conflict of interests).

Co-optation takes place by reshaping the ideas, values, and beliefs of actors in the small state, thereby rendering the conflict of interests unobservable. Cox defined international hegemony as "an outward expansion of the internal (national) hegemony established by a dominant social class. The economic and social institutions, the culture, the technology associated with this national hegemony become patterns for emulation abroad" (1983, 171). Actors have the ambition to imitate the hegemon's institutions, culture, and technology. In other words, actors seek to emulate because it is in line with their own beliefs and preferences. Hence, there is no observable conflict between the actors' interests.

This mechanism directs attention to the question of how preferences are formed and the extent to which actors are in control of their choices. Scholars use the notion of false consciousness to grasp the state in which actors think they are in control of their choices when actually these have been shaped by the dominant set of ideas: "Dominant ideology works its magic by persuading subordinate groups to believe actively in the values that explain and justify their subordination" (Scott 1990, 72). It follows that—just like coercion and prescription—co-optation and attraction can look the same, and it is difficult to distinguish between them empirically.

Attraction is the appeal of one actor's attributes (e.g. political or economic system, norms, and values). The attracted actors aim to emulate the attributes they are attracted by and change their behaviour to act in accordance with the actor that attracts them. Hence, attraction does not lead to an alteration of substantive beliefs because the attracted actor's

ideas and values are already aligned with the attracting actor's (Ikenberry and Kupchan 1990). The alignment of ideas and values is what leads to attraction in the first place. In the mechanisms of attraction, there is no change in preferences. Attraction is unintentional, not directed at another actor, and not exerted. B's preferences are pre-aligned with those of A, whereas co-optation is the "shaping of agent's desires and beliefs by factors external to those agents" (Lukes 1974, 134).

The structural aspect of the relationship that enables the use of co-optation is the set of ideas and beliefs dominant in the society—in other words, the dominant ideology. This ideology is defined by three dimensions: (a) a spontaneous philosophy contained in language (determined notions and concepts), (b) common and good sense (conventional wisdom and empirical knowledge), and (c) popular religion (system of beliefs) (Lears 1985, 570). Through the diffusion and popularisation of the three dimensions, the hegemon can reshape societal actors' ideas and beliefs so that these are co-opted into the hegemon's ideology (Bates 1975).

The processes of ideological hegemony are located in the countries' elites, but also its civil society—or the masses (Lukes 1974; Hopf 2013). Because of their prominent role in national decision-making, political elites have been the focus of ideational hegemony (Ikenberry and Kupchan 1990). Studies show how political elites act as gatekeepers for external ideas and how their own ideas shape the foreign policy behaviour of small states (Gvalia et al. 2013; Khakee 2022). However, previous research also shows how societal groups that have internalised external ideas and norms can play an important role in national policy-making processes. They can exert pressure on their leaders, hence shaping national preferences and interests (Baltag and Burmester 2022; Bakalov 2019). This is why co-optation takes place across the entire range of societal actors.

A hegemon differs from an empire or other type of dominator in its self-representation. Although the hegemon acts in its self-interest, it represents itself as cooperative (Destradi 2010). Because the hegemon can provide public goods (e.g. security, institutions), hegemony can have advantages for the countries that submit to it (Prys 2010). However, this does not have to be the case. There can also be discrepancies between the presentation as cooperative and the hegemon's actions (Destradi 2010).

The inclusion of how the hegemon represents itself in the definition suggests that hegemony is designed by strategic actors. Yet, the question of intentionality is a difficult one (White 1971). Does it matter for hegemony and its effects whether the hegemon *intends* to "dominate"? Whereas for some, intention is part of the power definition (Russell 1957), most scholars dissociate power from conscious intention (Lukes 1974; Dowding 2021; Oppenheim 1961). Thus, the regional hegemon is not necessarily a rational or strategic actor.

In fact, power is defined in terms of B doing something in response to A's action that it would otherwise not have done. Thus, A has the power to get B to adopt a certain behaviour that it would not have adopted in the absence of A's action. However, if B does something it would have done in any case (irrespective of A's action), it can be said that A had no power over B. It follows that A's intent is irrelevant to the existence of power, though it is necessary for the determination of the *direction* of its power: Power can be positive or negative depending on the response adopted by the coerced. *Positive* power is observed when B responds to A with compliance (i.e. a behaviour corresponding to the one A demands). However, if B resists A by adopting a new behaviour—for example, in order to reduce its dependence on A, even though it was not A's intention to provoke this—then B also did something that it would otherwise not have done. In that case, A can be said to have *negative* power over B. Thus, the mere absence of compliance and resistance (i.e. no change in behaviour) also implies the absence of power and power is observed through compliance and resistance. However, because perceptions matter, instances of self-deterrence can occur (Jervis 1982). The target state can perceive a threat that is not there and act on it. In such a case, A unknowingly and unintentionally coerces B, which, according to Dahl (1957), does not constitute a power relationship.

Whereas intentionality does not matter for the study of hegemony, it matters for how it is perceived. When a hegemon provides a public good that also benefits the states that are the "recipients" of hegemonic power, hegemony can be viewed as positive—even legitimate (Reus-Smit 2014). Rapkin and Braaten (2009) conceive of legitimacy as a social relationship between the actor seeking legitimacy and those who can attribute it. The exercise of hegemonic power is deemed legitimate when it is "consistent with our established beliefs about rightful agency and action" (Reus-Smit 2014, 345) Thus, attributing legitimacy is not rational but depends on actors' perceptions and preconceived, normative ideas.

Legitimacy figures prominently in the (neo-)Gramscian understanding of hegemony. This understanding emphasises the consent of the "dominated" to the exercise of hegemonic power. The question of legitimacy is indirectly addressed in (neo-)liberal concepts of hegemony through the provision of public goods that also serve the "targets" and can generate consent. It is not relevant for the realist understanding of hegemony as the preponderance of material resources. Destradi (2010) combines these different hegemony concepts in one framework. She distinguishes between full, partial, and pseudo-legitimation of hegemonic power.

This discussion on legitimate power and hegemony would suggest that co-optation is legitimate, whereas coercion is not. However, I argue that legitimacy should not be conflated with the third face of power. In other words, the absence of an observable conflict of interests does not render hegemonic power legitimate. Legitimacy can still be attributed when there is a conflict between actors' interests: "When a parent tells a child to go to bed or when the elected leader of a country gives an order, this may constitute legitimate power even if met with resistance" (Haugaard 2016, 126). Thus, legitimacy cannot be observed through consent or compliance. Following Haugaard (2016), I understand legitimacy as an agreement over meaning, not outcomes in the social interaction between two actors. An actor perceiving the exercise of hegemonic power as legitimate may not agree with what is asked but acknowledges that the hegemon "has a right" or "ought" to act this way. Even when there is an overt or covert conflict of interests, there can be legitimacy. Hence, we cannot use legitimacy to distinguish between different types of hegemonic power.

This conceptual framework and comparative research design allows for a more systematic assessment of differences *and* commonalities in the two actors' external actions and improves our understanding of the nature of competing foreign policies in general. The act of comparing the two actors does not imply that they are, in fact, similar. Rather, the comparison reveals how they differ in reference to the same category.

Three caveats need to be mentioned: First, hegemony and power do not take place in a vacuum (Baldwin 2016). They are observed not only by looking at a powerful polity but also the weaker states under its influence. The number of these weaker states varies, as do the states themselves. Therefore, when speaking about hegemonic power empirically, we need to clarify *how many* and *which* states (i.e. the scope) are under the hegemon's influence. Furthermore, the specific issue area(s)

(i.e. the domain) where a hegemon exerts dominance need to be defined. Empirically, hegemony can be observed in international trade regimes but also in other international regimes, such as financial, environmental, etc. The definition of scope and domain entails that more than one hegemony (and also hegemon) can exist at the same time but in different geographical and/or issue areas.

Shared neighbourhoods constitute a case where regional powers can be in conflict or compete over influence in the same scope and domain (Schunz et al. 2018). As a hierarchical order with a preponderant polity, hegemony is defined by its outcome—the acquiescence of weaker states. Without the weaker states acting in conformity, there is no hegemony. This has led to the study of international hegemony where hegemony is observed and thus the negligence of cases where more than one regional power seeks to establish hegemony in the same scope and domain.

Secondly, it should be noted that the ideal types are not mutually exclusive. Hegemony, by definition, implies coercion and consent. Thus, it combines the use of at least two mechanisms, albeit not always and not necessarily at the same time. The traditional distinction between hard and soft power has been commonly made on the basis of the resources employed (material vs. ideational). However, Bakalov in his discussion of soft power shows that typologies are more useful when based on a difference in degree: "Soft and hard power are poles on a continuum, whereby empirical observations of power relations can be located at unique distances from each pole using the measure(s) of differentiation" (2019, 5). It follows that material and ideational power resources do not exclude one another. Both can be employed at the same time and are often combined. By focusing on mechanisms, this framework addresses these dichotomies and allows for the comparative examination of different regional powers' hegemony in their shared neighbourhood.

Lastly, different actors can be associated with different mechanisms. For example, rules transfer and economic regulation (prescription) through transnational networks involve regulatory authorities specific to each sector, technocratic experts and business representatives. Material incentives (coercion) related to security may be issued by a foreign ministry or heads of government, but economic incentives are often dealt with in trade negotiations, including different economic and financial actors. Ideational dominance (co-optation) is principally concerned with cultural and media actors. These different actors constitute a single hegemon that exercises hegemonic power in different sectors and issue

areas, thus transcending the external-internal divide. The external-internal divide in IR distinguishes between the domestic and the international and sets the state as the analytical category. This is problematic for two reasons. First, conceiving the state as a singular actor obscures the many internal factors contributing to foreign policy-making and leads to the use of broad, undefined categories such as national interest. And second, it ignores non-state actors and hybrid polities, such as the EU. Izotov (2019) rightly asks research agendas in EU-Russia-neighbourhood relations not to treat the participants of these relations as unitary actors. This book aims to take up this call and go beyond the single-actor category.

2.2 Comparing Hegemonic Power Exercises

The main aim of this study is to critically examine EU and Russian modes of influence in their shared neighbourhood and to exemplify the theoretical and analytical value of the conceptual framework. Therefore, it is a concept-building exercise that does not test a theory or hypothesis. I am interested in observing the empirical variations of the logics and mechanisms of hegemonies (i.e., the power relation between the hegemon and the small state) and do not measure effectiveness. Rather, I seek to uncover the instances of coercive, prescriptive, and co-optative activities to compare them across regional powers and time.

2.2.1 Using Ideal Types as Standards for Comparison

The Weberian ideal type is not a description of reality but a theoretical simplification that allows for the comparison with empirical evidence. It is an analytical or mental construct (*Gedankenbild*) that "cannot be found empirically anywhere in reality. It is a *utopia*" (Weber et al. 1949, 90, emphasis in original). According to Weber, ideal types in their absolute pure form do not exist in reality. The advantage of using ideal types lies in the fact that their use shows the infinite number of concrete situations and variations in real historical contexts. Avoiding confinement in narrow categories and definitions allows the exploration of different connotations the mechanisms of domination or power can take in specific situations. The interaction with other factors and effects of the specific social conditions of a situation represents the singularity of each historical situation (Hibou 2014).

Methodological reflections on the use of concepts in social sciences conceive of ideal types as a standard for comparison. It is ideal because it represents the highest standard, one that cannot be attained in practice. The comparison with this ideal lays open important nuances and the actual complexity of the empirical situation that might otherwise be omitted (Hibou 2014). The model of multidimensional and multilevel concepts proposed by Goertz (2006) views them as a continuum with a positive and a negative pole. For example, the concept of democracy has a positive extreme pole (where all its dimensions are at maximum) and a negative pole ("not-democracy"). Most empirical cases find themselves somewhere on the continuum. Yet, this only becomes clear when comparing them to the extreme poles or the ideal type.

In this book, I used ideal types as a conceptual instrument for the comparison between the two actors' hegemonic power relations with small states in their shared neighbourhood. As such, the mechanisms do not describe the empirical reality but seek to underscore the specific traits of the three different mechanisms. The assessment of the empirical reality against the ideal types allowed for the observation of nuances and commonalities in the use of the hegemonic power mechanisms overlooked by focusing only on the most different traits. Moreover, through a comparison over time, tendencies of change or even shifts in categories were observed and described (Vigour 2005). The ideal types of hegemonic power mechanisms served as a standard (or positive pole) against which empirical cases were compared. Allowing for variations in empirical cases not only uncovered the differences between the specific situations in which hegemonic power mechanisms were used but also their similarities in relation to the abstract model.

The positive pole of the mechanism is constituted by the maximum of all the dimensions that define the mechanism (see Fig. 2.4). For coercion, these are threats, rewards, and demands. Threats or actions putting costs on the target and (explicit or implicit) demands to adopt a certain behaviour are an essential part of the definition of coercion. They can be complemented by a promise of rewards for compliance. Prescription is the extension of sector-specific rules and standards. The occurring shift in market boundary leads to the demand for the national application of extra-national sectoral regulations produced by a change in the jurisdictional authority. Thus, the small state is subject to sector-specific national regulatory obligations.

With regard to co-optation, the constitutive dimensions are—following the Gramscian definition of ideology—language, culture, and belief system. Gramsci defined language not only as grammar but in a broader sense in the same way that a system of beliefs can refer to religion but also includes other belief systems. Furthermore, he referred to conventional wisdom—or what counts as common sense—as a shared understanding of how to perceive, judge, and act upon everyday matters. As such, it is ingrained in the customs and common understandings regarding social behaviour that make up a society (i.e., its culture). Lastly, empirical knowledge-what Gramsci called "good sense"—is created and diffused to the wider society mainly through mass media (Lears 1985).

The main objective of this study is to trace and compare the mechanisms behind the hegemonic power relations in the EU-Russia shared neighbourhood. I apply a conceptual framework that brings together different theorisations of hegemony and power, focusing on the underlying mechanisms. Comparative case studies are well suited for this

Mechanism	Positive pole		Negative pole	
Coercion	Threats:	+++	Threats:	---
	Rewards:	+++	Rewards:	---
	Demands:	+++	Demands:	---
Prescription	Rules:	+++	Rules:	---
	Obligations:	+++	Obligations:	---
	Authority:	+++	Authority:	---
Co-optation	Language:	+++	Language:	---
	Culture:	+++	Culture:	---
	Belief system:	+++	Belief system:	---

Fig. 2.4 Positive and negative poles of the three mechanisms

undertaking as they allow for a reflection on empirical evidence in relation to concepts (Blatter and Haverland 2012). The research design I used in this book included three comparisons: (1) A Weberian comparison of the empirical data with the ideal-typical hegemonic mechanisms, (2) a synchronic cross-case comparison between cases of EU and Russian hegemony in two neighbourhood countries, and (3) a diachronic comparison between time periods.

The within-case comparison of the empirical data with the ideal type sought to address the ethnocentric preconceptions of meso-level conceptualisations developed in the two disciplines. Comparisons uncover ethnocentric preconceptions and prejudices by "creating some space with respect to what the researcher knows" (Vigour 2011). The European studies discipline, in particular, has been criticised for EU-centrism (Keuleers et al. 2016). Rooted in the assumption that the EU is a *sui generis* actor, theorisations in this field seek to explain empirical puzzles specific to the EU.

In this book, I contested the idea that EU influence beyond its own borders can only be captured with conceptualisations developed in the discipline of EU studies. Using more generic meta-level theorisations of hegemony, this comparison showed the differences *and* similarities between EU and Russian practices. In doing so, it broke with the cultural biases inherent in EU and Eurasian studies disciplines, thereby bringing together two separate epistemic communities (Romanova 2018). The aim was not to test the explanatory power of the theory. Rather, the ideal types deducted from the theory served as positive poles of the concept of hegemony. The comparison between empirical reality and ideal type served to reveal variations in regional hegemony due to specific historical contexts. In other words, if ideal type and empirical observations were not congruent, it did not follow that the empirical reality was not a case of hegemony. Rather, the conclusions drawn point to the variant of hegemony that emerged from this specific constellation of social and historical conditions.

To answer the first research question—*To what extent have the EU and Russia been employing different types of hegemonic power towards the countries in their shared neighbourhood?*—the empirical data was compared across the three dimensions of each ideal type (see Fig. 2.4). For each case, I compared first the regional power activities and then the small state perceptions of these activities with the ideal type. These comparisons are presented in Chapters 3–5.The within-case analyses produced

variants of each hegemonic power mechanism that were also compared to each other. This synchronic comparison across the different cases allowed me to uncover the differences and commonalities between the EU and Russia for each mechanism.

To answer the second research question—*How far did the exercises of the types of hegemonic power by the EU and Russia approximate over time?*—all cases were compared across three periods to account for the changes over time. The three time frames for this diachronic comparison were chosen for analytical and practical reasons. The starting point of this analysis was the beginning of Putin's first mandate as Russian president in 2000. As president, Putin continued the foreign policy doctrine previously established under Primakov. The aim was to be more assertive both in the region and in the international arena (de Haas 2010). Putin shifted the focus from multipolarity to multilateralism and paid more attention to economic concerns (Casier 2006). At that time, the EU was preparing for its Eastern enlargement that brought the countries in Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus to its borders and led to the development of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) (Bechev 2013).

2009 marked a first change in policy with the launch of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) that introduced the prospect of more integration through Association Agreements (AAs) including a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (DCFTAs) with partner countries. A year later, Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan established the Eurasian Customs Union (CU)—a significant step in the Eurasian integration process. The third period for comparison starts with the establishment of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and the coming into force of the AA/DCFTAs in 2015 and ends in 2021. This endpoint was chosen because Russia's aggression and the escalation of the war in Ukraine starting on 24 February 2022 signalled a significant change in the EU-Russia relationship and the regional order in their shared neighbourhood.

2.2.2 *EU and Russian Hegemonic Power Relations with Moldova and Armenia: Comparing Four Cases*

Case study research provides in-depth knowledge about a small number of cases. A case study is defined as "an intensive study of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of (similar) units" (Gerring 2004, 342). For the analysis of the mechanisms through which the regional hegemons wield power over other actors, the relation between

one regional power and one neighbourhood country constitutes a case. The population of cases for this study was, therefore, limited to the relationship between the hegemon (EU and Russia) and the countries in their shared neighbourhood (Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan).

Small-N research with a limited number of cases in the population leads to several problems in the selection of cases. To avoid selection bias and provide validity to the scientific claims resulting from case study research, the cases were selected on the basis of Omnibus criteria as well as methodological considerations regarding comparability and variation on relevant dimensions (Gerring and Christenson 2017). For a comparison between EU and Russian hegemony, at least one case per hegemon was needed. Yet, the countries' relations with both actors are diverse, and two similar cases are difficult to find. Increasing the number of cases to four (EU-Moldova, EU-Armenia, Russia-Moldova, Russia-Armenia) provided for the necessary variation in the aspects of interest.

Moldovan and Armenian hegemonic power relations with the EU and Russia are of intrinsic importance for understanding hegemony in the region because of their liminality. Unlike other countries in the region, they remained open to both EU and Russian hegemony even after the signing of an Association Agreement with the EU (Moldova) and the accession to the EAEU (Armenia) in 2014/15. Moldova has since acquired observer status in the EAEU, and Armenia signed a Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) with the EU, signalling their openness to the other regional power's hegemony after 2015. This means that Russian hegemonic power in Moldova and EU hegemonic power in Armenia could be analysed over the whole period.

Following military conflict in 2008 and 2014, Georgia and Ukraine effectively ended their diplomatic relations with the Russian Federation. The countries were set to pursue integration with the EU and turned away from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Georgia left the organisation, and Ukraine—which was never a member—stopped participating in CIS bodies. This was a clear foreign policy orientation away from Russia towards the EU that would be difficult to influence through Russian hegemonic power (the foreign policy behaviour being the outcome of the hegemonic power mechanisms (see Fig. 2.2)). Belarus, on the other hand, had a clear orientation towards Russia. The country was part of the Union State with Russia and the least active country in terms of engagement with the EU. Hence, there was little

possibility for the EU to influence Belarus' foreign policy behaviour. Lastly, Azerbaijan maintained independence from both regional powers in its foreign policy behaviour due to its natural resources and close alliance with Turkey.

In all four cases of hegemonic power relations (EU-Moldova, EU-Armenia, Russia-Moldova, Russia-Armenia), the neighbourhood country was a small state in relation to the regional power and of comparable size to the other small state. Ukraine was significantly larger than the other neighbourhood countries and thus not comparable. Both Moldova and Armenia were significantly smaller markets with a high asymmetric dependence on trade with both the EU and Russia. For both countries, the EU and the CIS (with Russia as the dominant market) were the main export markets (see Fig. 2.5). The share of other markets was higher for the other countries, which meant less dependence on access to the EU and Russian markets.

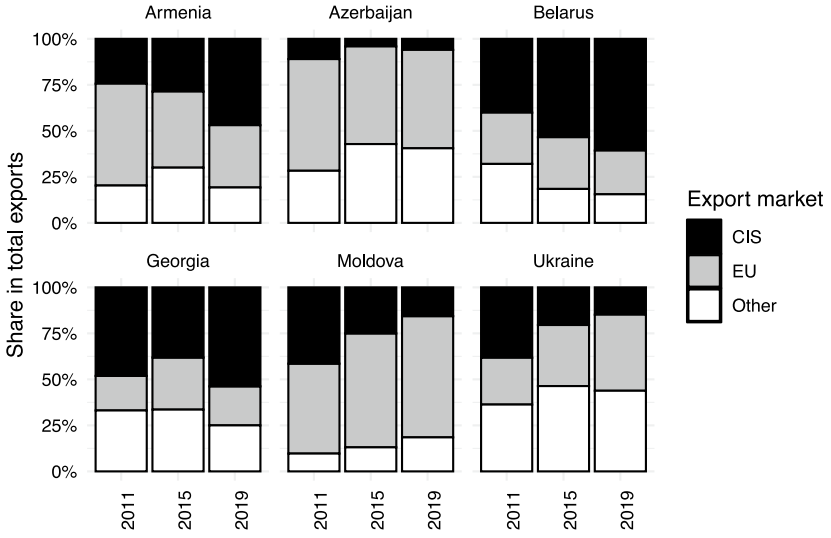

Fig. 2.5 Neighbourhood countries' exports by export market (*Source* Countries' National Bureau of Statistics Latest Ukraine data including CIS is from 2018)

Moldova, Armenia, and Georgia are most comparable with regard to a system of rules and standards. All three countries used the *Gosudarstvennyy Standart* (System of Government Standards—GOST) system inherited from the Soviet Union and undertook significant reforms with their accession to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) at the beginning of the 2000s. Subsequently, they harmonised their systems with the EU one through the ENP and the negotiations of AAs. But as explained above, because of its clear foreign policy orientation, Georgia was not a suitable case. In terms of ideologies, all countries are similar in their experience of Russian dominance through the Russian Empire and Soviet Union.

Methodologically, the selection of these four cases followed a most similar method (Seawright and Gerring 2008). The four cases were similar in all relevant aspects except the ones of interest to this study. These aspects of interest are the enabling conditions of EU and Russian coercive, prescriptive, co-optative activities—in other words, the structural aspects of the power relationship: (inter-)dependencies, system of rules, ideology (see Fig. 2.2). For coercion, it is the small state's (inter-)dependencies in relation to the regional powers that provide the enabling context for the hegemon to issue coercive threats. For prescription, a system of rules and standards applicable in the small state enables a shift in the market boundary, thereby allowing the regional power to prescribe rules and standards. Lastly, the existing ideologies in relation to the two regional powers are most relevant for the hegemon's capacity to co-opt. The four cases present a variation of these aspects in the relation between the small country and the regional power, thus producing four variants of regional hegemony.

Existing dependencies on a regional power were most strongly present in the Russia-Armenia case. In fact, Armenia's national and territorial security was the country's foremost priority. The Armenian government viewed the relations with Russia as friendly and acknowledged Russia's role in guaranteeing Armenia's security (Sovet Natsional'noi Bezopasnosti pri Prezidente Respubliki Armeniya 2007). The conflict that erupted between Armenia and Azerbaijan meant that Armenia's borders with both Azerbaijan and Turkey were closed in 1993, leaving the country isolated and in need of allies. Russia has been providing military support to Armenia since the early 1990s with three military bases in Gyumri (102nd base), Abovian (426th Air Base), and Meghri (border guards), regular joint military exercises, and arms supplies (Facon 2016).

In Moldova, Russia provided combat support to the forces of the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic (PMR) during its military conflict with the Moldovan government that led to the de facto independence of Transnistria (Lynch 2000). Although conflict settlement efforts are still ongoing in the form of the 5+2 talks, the conflict was, in fact, frozen, and the probability of military confrontation and violent flare-ups was low, which reduced its significance for the country's security.[1]

Economically, the EU and the CIS (first and foremost Russia) were the main markets for Armenian and Moldovan exports. The high employment of the population in the agricultural sector made the countries vulnerable to external shocks and dependent on access to the CIS and the EU markets (Popa 2015). Furthermore, Moldova was highly dependent on natural gas imports from Russia, which it used to operate the Cuciurgan power station that provided 80% of Moldova's electricity (European Parliament 2018). At the beginning of the 2000s, Moldova raised industrial and residential prices to market levels to be able to pay for its energy imports.[2] Armenia, on the other hand, decided against raising prices for residential and industrial consumers, which resulted in Russian companies taking over Armenia's energy infrastructure to keep prices low (Moshes and Rácz 2019). The relatively high economic and security dependence on Russia meant that the Russia-Armenia case had the most enabling conditions for coercion.

Secondly, a system of rules and standards enabling the use of prescription is most present in the EU-Moldova case. Moldova made significant efforts to approximate its national legislation to the EU *acquis communautaire* (the body of EU law) since the start of the ENP in 2004. With the signing of the AA/DCFTA in 2014, legislative approximation to sectoral rules became legally binding for the Republic of Moldova. The Moldovan government now had to apply EU rules that regulated not only external trade but all domestic production. Armenia's accession to the EAEU in 2015 shifted the jurisdictional authority in food safety matters to the Eurasian Economic Commission but without the preceding efforts observed in the EU-Moldova case. Thus, the enabling conditions favoured the use of prescription mostly in the EU-Moldova case.

[1] The 5+2 includes the Republic of Moldova, PMR, Russia, Ukraine, the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) + US and EU as observers.

[2] Domestic redistribution mechanisms are still in place in Moldova because a large part of the population cannot pay the high energy prices.

Thirdly, an ideology that could be mobilised through co-optation activities was most present in the Russia-Moldova case. Although the population in the Republic of Moldova identified largely as Moldovan (76.1% in 2004 and 75.1% in 2014), Moldova was an ethnically heterogeneous country with Romanian, Ukrainian, Russian, Gagauz, and Bulgarian minorities (National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova 2014). This is why the Russian language had an official status as "language of inter-ethnic communication" in Moldova, and schooling was offered in both Moldovan and Russian from kindergarten to higher education. Because Moldovans were largely proficient in Russian, Russian films and literature were widely available. Furthermore, the countries shared a religion and Church.

The Armenian population was more homogeneous, with 98% of the population identifying as ethnically Armenian. Ethnic minorities included Yezedi (1.2%) and Russians (0.4%) as well as a small number of Assyrians, Kurds, Ukrainians, Greeks, Georgians, and Persians (Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia 2011). Although the Russian language had no official status in Armenia and schooling in Russian was not as widely available, almost all Armenians reported that they had some knowledge of Russian (93% in 2019) (CRRC 2021). Furthermore, the Armenian National Church was independent from the Russian one. These structural conditions were most favourable for uses of co-optation in the Russia-Moldova case.

Due to this variance of the structural aspects, we could expect to observe most coercion in the Russia-Armenia case, most prescription in the EU-Moldova case, and most co-optation in the Russia-Moldova case.

For the prescription mechanism, I conducted a nested case study on food safety to be able to analyse the mechanism in-depth. Food safety rules are particularly important for countries with a large agricultural sector, such as the ones in the EU-Russia neighbourhood. As it concerns the provision of safe food products to consumers, it is a system of rules and standards that regulates the production of agri-food products. In international trade, food safety rules can constitute barriers to trade. The WTO allows the use of so-called sanitary and phytosanitary measures ensuring the safety of food products under certain conditions.

The EU developed and reformed its food safety system at the beginning of the 2000s. In line with international standards, EU food safety rules emphasised safe processes. This emphasis stood in contrast to the product-based system used in Russia. The GOST system—a highly

prescriptive system of product standards—was incompatible with market economy principles and international (and European) rules (van der Meer et al. 2007). Like the other countries in the region, Russia had to reform its food safety system in preparation for its WTO accession (Shamtsyan 2014). Because of its prominent economic role in the region, Russian WTO membership would have consequences for the wider CIS (including non-WTO members) (Mizik 2011). In practice, there was continued use of GOST standards in Russia and the region.

Agriculture was a key sector for the Moldovan and Armenian economies and, thus, concerned with the implementation of food safety rules. In Moldova, it accounted for 10% of its GDP in 2018, according to data from the World Bank.[3] Although the share of agriculture in Moldova's GDP has declined since its independence, vegetables and food products represented 29.54% and 15.16% of its exports in 2017. In the same year, the share of agriculture in Armenia's GDP was 14%, and 24.41% of Armenian exports were food products.[4] Hence, changing the system of food safety rules and standards would have important consequences for the small economies' foreign policy behaviour.

The extent to which EU and Russian businesses could credibly threaten to exit the Moldovan and Armenian agri-food markets would affect the adoption of their sectoral rules and standards. This fact was controlled because Preferential Trade Agreements (PTAs) were in place in all four cases. At the beginning of the 2000s, Moldova and Armenia traded with the EU under the Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP) and bilateral trade agreements with Russia. Because of the high share of agri-food products in Moldovan exports (35%) and in Armenian imports (21%) at that time, EU and Russian market participants were relatively mobile in all four cases. Furthermore, the size of the EU and Russian markets (measured in food consumption) was significantly bigger than the Moldovan and Armenian markets and constantly grew over time so as to be comparable (Eurostat 2022; Rosstat 2021).

I analysed the EAEU as an instrument of Russian hegemonic power. Similar to the EU, the EAEU envisaged deep economic integration based on regulatory harmonisation and common regulations. This ambition was sustained by common institutions modelled on the EU: the

[3] See World Bank Country Profile for Moldova.

[4] See World Bank Country Profile for Armenia.

Eurasian Economic Commission, the Intergovernmental and the Supreme Council, and a Court of Justice. According to economists, the progress in Eurasian integration was brought about by "growing trade and capital flows across the continent" (Vinokurov and Libman 2012, 61). However, the economic and military asymmetry between the member states led to the dominance of Russia in the EAEU (Libman and Vinokurov 2012a; Raik 2019). And so, the view of the EAEU as a result of functionalist spill-overs and economic interdependence (Libman and Vinokurov 2012b; Vinokurov and Libman 2011) is contested by those who see it as a product of Russia's great power ambitions (Sergi 2018; Smith 2016).

Indeed, studies show how the establishment of the EAEU was a response to neoliberal globalisation and the changing distribution of power in the international system (Molchanov 2016; Krickovic 2014; Lane and Samokhvalov 2015). Russian Eurasianism under Putin became about the unity of all former Soviet states to compete with the EU and China, making the EAEU a key objective of Russian foreign policy (Mostafa 2013; Abbas 2022; Adomeit 2012; Halbach 2012). Despite Russian dominance, authoritarian cooperation within the EAEU takes place as long as it serves the autocrats' interests (Roberts 2017; Roberts and Moshes 2016).

2.3 Observing Hegemonic Power Relations: Using Multiple Sources

This type of qualitative case study research necessitates a large number of varied empirical observations. To gain in-depth knowledge of the cases, this book adopted a multi-strategy approach employing multiple data sources and collection techniques. This approach produces a multi-perspective overview and "increases the strength, density and validity of theoretical ideas and concepts" (Layder 1998, 68). Accordingly, I used a variety of data forms combining quantitative (survey data and official statistics) with qualitative data (official documents, media reports, in-depth interviews, and participant observations). In a multi-strategy approach, creating a dialogue between the different data forms is essential to achieve the research objective. Thus, my field research occurred in tandem with the collection of documental data—both as a continuous process.

The combination of data types and sources (see Table A.1 in Appendix A.1) allowed for the analysis of different actors' perceptions and the structural and agential aspects of hegemonic power. By not solely relying on interviews as a tool for research, I also took the broader social conditions within which the subjective worlds of the actors are constructed into account (Richards 1996). Thus, documents and statistics served to illuminate the structural aspects of the hegemonic power relationship, whereas interview, observation and survey data were used to analyse actors' subjective understanding of the world.

Theoretical concepts are meant to represent empirical phenomena. Qualitative research is concerned with the meaning of the concept and specifying its characteristics. Thus, the objective is not to measure the dimensions of each ideal type with specific indicators. In fact, the dimensions are attributes of the concept and cannot be separated from it (Goertz and Mahoney 2012). Through an iterative coding process, I connected the empirical data to the dimensions of the ideal types (see Fig. 2.4).

In accordance with the regulations of the University of Geneva, I obtained the approval of the ethics commission of the Geneva School of Social Sciences (4 September 2019/CER-SDS-18-2019). The Commission ensured that the information provided to the interviewees and issues about data management were adequately planned. Persons who agreed to be interviewed were sent an information sheet and a consent form that briefly outlined the purpose of the study and the way data is handled to guarantee confidentiality. Most interviewees asked to remain anonymous, so the whole of the interview data was anonymised by removing all personal information from the interview transcripts. In the research output (this dissertation and related publications), only their official roles are displayed when referring to interviews (see Table A.2 in Appendix A.2). The data was not shared with third parties and was only analysed by me. This—together with the approval of the ethics commission—established trust between me and the interviewees.

Because interviewees provide fewer details in phone interviews, I privileged face-to-face interviews (Sturges and Hanrahan 2004). For these interviews, I conducted field research in Brussels from September until November 2019, in Moldova in February 2020, in Armenia in December 2021, and in Moscow from September 2021 until March 2022. Unfortunately, my field research in Moscow was ended by the Russian escalation of the war in Ukraine on 24 February 2022. Prior to that, the tensions

leading up to the escalation made it difficult to establish contact and to get potential interviewees to agree to an interview. Out of 19 contacted potential interviewees, three directly refused an interview, 15 responded but were reluctant to set up an interview, and only one agreed to be interviewed. The circumstances led me to leave Russia in mid-March. Overall, I conducted 47 interviews with officials, and civil society, think tank, business, and religious representatives in Brussels (N=14), Moldova (N=15), Armenia (N=17), and Moscow (N=1) (see Table A.1 in Appendix A.2).

A semi-structured interview technique was used to collect data on actors' perceptions. This technique provides more space for the participants' responses, thus being particularly useful when looking for meaning (Sarantakos 2017). Indeed, in non-standardised interviewing "the investigator is willing, and often eager to let the interviewee teach him what the problem, the question, the situation, is" (Dexter 2006, 19). This works particularly well with elite interviews, as the elite do not like to be confined to responding to closed-ended questions. At the same time, a structured approach is needed to produce focused responses and to be mindful of the participant's often limited time. I conducted the interviews in English or Russian, depending on the interviewees' preference. For the participants, the language of the interview was also their working language but not their native language (except for the interview conducted in Moscow). Together with the fact that I am also not a native speaker of either language, this meant that they were comfortable expressing themselves on the topics of the interview. However, at times, the use of the working language led to the reproduction of jargon.

It is important to note that "different interviewees make quite different and unequal contributions to the study" (Dexter 2006, 43). That is why I did not select participants solely based on their position (i.e. the higher, the better) but their privileged knowledge and ability to answer my questions (Rice 2010). Based on this criterion, I also interviewed civil society, think tank, business, and Church representatives.

A crucial aspect of (elite) interviewing is the positionality of the researcher. How the researcher presents themselves and is perceived by the participant is a relevant factor for the creation of data through interviewing (Morris 2009). The most useful position for elite interviews seems to be that of an *informed* outsider or *understanding* stranger (Welch et al. 2002; Dexter 2006). As such, the researcher can benefit from the cultural gap and maintain a critical view. Foreign researchers are

trusted more because they do not pose a threat to the interviewee's privileged position (Cunningham-Sabot 1999). Being affiliated with a Swiss University, most interviewees assumed I was Swiss, and unless asked, I did not disclose my nationality. This created a position of neutral observer or outsider to EU-Russia-neighbourhood relations.

In Moldova, I was invited to a meeting between the Moldovan Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry, DG SANTE, and Moldovan businesses where they discussed the changing sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) legislation in the course of the implementation of the AA/DCFTA. In Armenia, I attended a meeting between civil society representatives and foreign diplomats on the state of Armenia's civil society after the Velvet Revolution and the 2020 War. Both were direct non-participant observations, as I was not involved in the discussions and did not engage with the participants. I was present in the room where the meetings took place, taking notes. Hence, I adopted a relatively neutral position (as opposed to participant observations).

I used a Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) to assist in the management of the large amount of data and their organisation. This facilitated the different comparisons. The software served to code the materials, group the coded segments, and retrieve the data for comparison (see Table A.3 in Appendix A.3 for the codebook). Through coding "segments of data are identified as relating to, or being an example of, a more general idea, instance, theme or category" (Silver and Lewins 2014, 81). As such, codes served as "heuristic devices for discovery" (Seidel and Kelle 1995, 58), enabling me to revisit the data and continue to reflect on it. The main aim was "to facilitate developing a detailed understanding of the phenomena which the data were seen as representing" (Silver and Lewins 2014, 83). The software then provided information about the frequency of the codes in the data set and allowed me to easily access the coded data.

2.4 Conclusion

Both scholarly and policy-oriented research have often perceived the competition between the EU and Russia in shared neighbourhoods as a clash between two actors with distinct natures and differing foreign policy approaches. This book challenges the tendency to overly emphasise these differences while neglecting their underlying similarities.

For a structured comparison, I have developed a conceptual framework that employs the more general concepts of hegemony and power. This framework aims to elucidate the mechanisms behind the formation of hegemonic orders within a region by centring on the fundamental power dynamics within the regional context. Recognising the distinct nature of interactions between various actors, the framework differentiates between three key mechanisms: coercion, prescription, and co-optation.

Coercion is characterised by overt conflicts of interests between actors, compelling a target state to act against its own interests due to the imposition of threats and costs. This is enabled by pre-existing dependencies that provide the hegemon with the ability to potentially impose consequences on the small state. Prescription involves covert conflicts of interests and operates through the establishment of rules that govern other actors' behaviours. Preferences for this behaviour are formed based on a sense of obligation and not a rational calculation of gains and losses. Co-optation, on the other hand, takes place in the absence of observable conflicts of interests. Regional hegemons reshape neighbouring actors' ideas, values, and beliefs to secure consent, thereby relying on ideology rather than coercion.

This conceptual framework enables a structured assessment of differences and commonalities in the external actions of the EU and Russia. I explained how ideal types are wielded as a conceptual tool to facilitate the comparison of hegemonic power between the two actors. These ideal types do not mirror empirical reality; rather, they aim to emphasise the distinct characteristics of the three distinct mechanisms. Furthermore, this approach allows for the identification and description of trends of change or even shifts in categories over time. The ideal types of hegemonic power mechanisms serve as a reference against which empirical cases are measured.

The research design employs a qualitative comparative case study structure with a dual comparison. Each individual case is compared against the ideal type and against the other case. Four instances of hegemon-small state relations were chosen: EU-Moldova, EU-Armenia, Russia-Moldova, and Russia-Armenia. To investigate the prescription mechanism, I use the food safety sector for a nested case study. Comparative analyses of how the EU and Russia use hegemonic power mechanisms are conducted across three time periods: 2000–2008, 2009–2014, and 2015–2021. The analytical process involves a wide array of data formats, integrating

quantitative data with qualitative sources (document analysis, in-depth interviews, participant observations, survey data, and official statistics).

The following chapters will present the outcomes of the analyses for each individual mechanism (Chapters 3–5) and the diachronic comparison (Chapter 6).

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CHAPTER 3

EU and Russian Coercion: Manipulating the Cost-Benefit Calculations of the Moldovan and Armenian Governments

EU and Russian coercion made use of the existing economic and security dependencies of the neighbourhood countries to incentivise their governments to adopt a behaviour in line with the hegemon's own preferences. The EU focused on the provision of rewards tied to very specific demands. This approach was institutionalised in the EU's policy and bilateral agreements with the small states. Russia, on the other hand, emphasised the use of threats and reactive demands.

Through its enlargement and neighbourhood policy, the EU made use of the asymmetric interdependence with neighbouring countries and demanded democratic reforms in exchange for economic integration. After the 2004 enlargement, the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) provided a unified framework for the EU's relations with its new neighbours. The enlargement process was heavily based on material incentives and conditionality, with accession to the EU and its single market as the main rewards. With the ENP, the EU did not offer this reward that was the main incentive for candidate countries to comply with EU demands.

The new policy was meant to be more flexible and less based on conditionality. It included bilateral as well as multilateral instruments. Political conditionality was one of the policy instruments used to induce democratic change. The revised ENP of 2011 reinforced the use of rewards and

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punishments for the implementation of democratic reforms. Because the more trade-dependent actor receives greater benefits from market liberalisation, there has been much demand for integration with the EU's single market. This has put the EU in a position to impose political conditions (i.e., democratic reforms) on market access.

Russia, on the other hand, had a history of using the economic and security interdependence stemming from the Soviet past to sanction or punish governments' foreign policy behaviour across the region. Russia has consistently used its superiority in the energy sector employing "energy in coercive ways and to build patterns of dependence" (Lough 2011, 1). Even more prominent was the use of military power to prevent Georgia and Ukraine from joining NATO (Allison 2008; Karagiannis 2014) and to induce Armenia to join the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) (Ghazaryan and Delcour 2017). Examples include the raising of energy prices for Ukraine in 2006 and 2009, the ban of Moldovan and Georgian wine, the military involvement in secessionist conflicts (Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Transnistria, Nagorno-Karabakh, Donbas), and the annexation of the Crimean peninsula.

Tulmets et al. have shown that there is "an important difference between the EU (rather codified and comprehensive) and Russian conditional approaches, understood as 'fuzzy', 'ad-hoc', and often 'informal'" (2018, 13). Russia appears to mobilise its military and economic resources using informal security and economic conditionality on the countries in its neighbourhood.

3.1 The Coercion Mechanism

Coercive actions aim to influence the cost-benefit calculations of governments that weigh different options. The threats issued by the hegemon are thought to increase the costs of the undesired options, thereby increasing the benefits of choosing the option desired by the hegemon (Lebow 2007). The mechanism of coercion through which threats influence the political elite's preferences is displayed in Fig. 3.1. First, the regional power communicates the threat, which is then received by the small states' political elite. The members of this political elite define and weigh the different options to form a preference for the small state's behaviour.

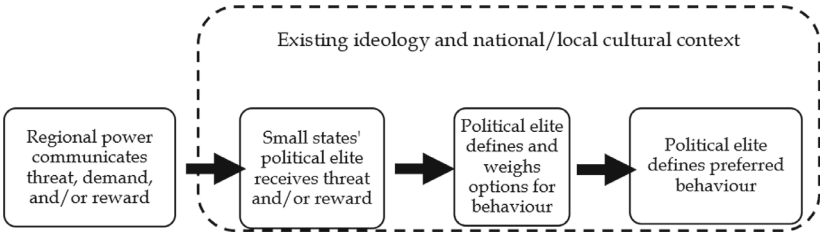

Fig. 3.1 Mechanism of coercion

Coercive activities of the regional power do not necessarily lead to compliance with their demands. This outcome depends on the communicated threats, rewards, and demands and how they were perceived and evaluated by the small state's political elite. The process is also impacted by the existing interdependencies with other powers and the national and local context in which the coercive activities are received.

The hegemon can use punishments or rewards to coerce. Punishments are negative coercive actions, whereas rewards are positive actions. The difference between positive and negative coercion is most visible in the target's immediate reaction. Whereas threats provoke fear and resistance, the promise of rewards leads to reassurance and attraction. This immediate reaction impacts the target's impression of the coercer and thus its own decision-making: "Whereas positive sanctions convey an impression of sympathy and concern for B's needs, negative ones tend to convey an impression of indifference or actual hostility toward B" (Baldwin 1971, 32). These impressions can spill over into other policy areas or scar future relations. Positive coercion enhances the target's willingness to cooperate, and negative coercion decreases it.

Generally, positive coercive action is the provision of actual or promised rewards, whereas negative coercion is actual or threatened punishment (Koch 2015). This distinction is more easily made in theory than empirically because these are relative notions that need reference points (Jaeger 2018). Baldwin suggests defining the target's baseline expectations at the moment the coercion attempt begins because these change over time: "Today's rewards may lay the groundwork of tomorrow's threat" (Baldwin 1971, 24). Threatening to not provide trade concessions is only a punishment if the target expects to receive these concessions. At the same time, the coercer can put in place trade restrictions and—once

the target's expectations have adapted to the new situation—use trade concessions as a reward.

These activities are issued with an implicit or explicit demand to adopt a behaviour desired by the coercer. Scholars differentiate between two different aims of coercion: compellence and deterrence. An actor seeking to change the status quo by getting the other actor to adopt a new behaviour is using compellence, whereas the actor wanting to preserve the status quo by preventing another actor from changing its behaviour is engaging in deterrence. Often, power is only associated with the former because it includes an observable event, i.e., a new action being adopted against the actor's interest. However, both are instances of coercion as they aim to get the target to act against its interests by threatening to inflict costs or pain (Lebow 2007).

Furthermore, scholars distinguish between sanctions and conditionality. Whereas the aim of sanctions and conditionality is the same (get the target to adopt the desired behaviour), they differ in the involvement of the target. Sanctions are unilateral actions imposed by one state (or a group of states) on the target without the latter's participation in the decision. Conditionality involves the target in the decision-making by negotiating the conditions under which rewards are provided or suspended (Schimmelfennig et al. 2003). The asymmetric interdependence between the coercer and the target means that the coercer has the power to impose conditions. These are then codified in an agreement between the parties (Koch 2015).

These kinds of coercion should be viewed as a continuum. Negative sanctions are the closest to the ideal type of coercion because they present a situation in which all dimensions (threats, rewards, and demands) of the mechanism are at maximum. They usually threaten to put high costs on the target and thus also provide high rewards for compliance. And because of the high costs for non-compliance, the coerce can impose high demands.

3.2 EU and Russian Coercion in Moldova and Armenia

Moldova and Armenia depended on Russia for their national security due to the threats posed by the territorial conflicts in Transnistria and Nagorno-Karabakh. Economically, both countries were dependent on the EU and Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) markets for exports

and thus interested in trade liberalisation and integration with these two (see Fig. 3.2). The two hegemons exploited these dependencies to exert pressure on the Moldovan and Armenian governments.

Russian coercion showed the most evidence in the threat dimension of the ideal type. The Russian leadership unilaterally threatened to impose trade bans, suspend gas supply, increase gas prices, and increase or decrease its military presence. Rewards and demands were less present in Russian coercive activities. Russia's historical dominance in the region meant that there were more interdependencies it could exploit to exert pressure. This dominance took place unilaterally and top-down, which made the continued use of sanctions more likely than the negotiation of conditions with target countries. Generally, the offered rewards were mainly reversing the threat or punishment, and the demands were reactive and lacked a clear goal. Because the structures in place—a lasting effect of Russian dominance through the Russian empire and the Soviet Union—were conducive to Russian exercises of hegemonic power, Russia sought to deter countries from changing the status quo.

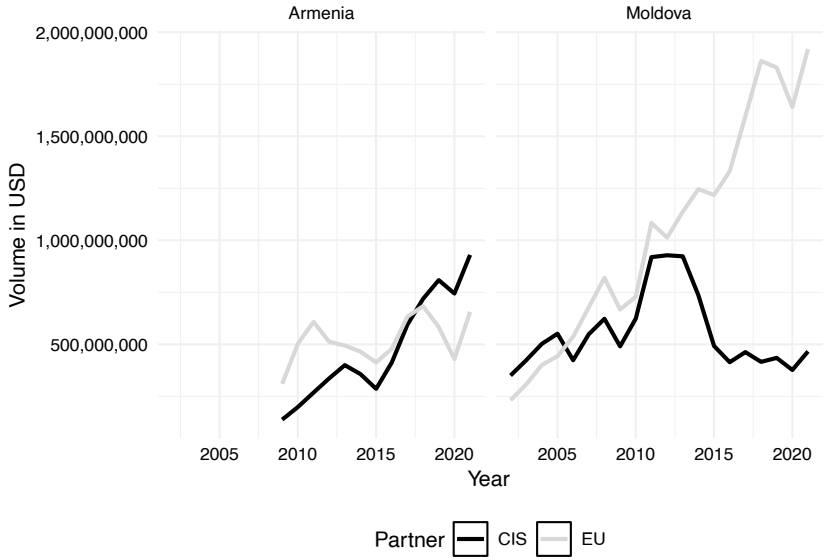

Fig. 3.2 Armenian and Moldovan exports to CIS and EU markets (*Source* Armenian Statistical Committee and Moldovan National Bureau of Statistics)

The EU, on the other hand, needed to create the structural interdependencies necessary for the use of coercion. That is why EU coercive activities, especially at the beginning, focused more on the reward dimension of the ideal type (positive coercion). Trade restrictions could only be used as a threat or punishment if the target countries expected or received trade concessions first. Furthermore, the historical legacy of the enlargement policy produced a continuation of the use of conditionality. Demands and rewards were primarily negotiated with the partner countries. The EU sought to change the status quo and get countries to implement democratic reforms (compellence).

3.2.1 EU Coercive Activities

EU coercive activities in Moldova and Armenia are characterised as positive conditionality and sanctions. They were positive because they mainly took the form of rewarding small countries with preferential market access, financial assistance, and visa facilitation (see Table 3.1). EU demands for democratic and sector-specific reforms were precise and an important part of its coercive activities. To get the countries to implement the demanded reforms, the EU threatened to withhold these rewards.

3.2.2 Threats and Rewards

The EU used more rewards than threats or punishments. It promised and provided preferential market access, Macro-Financial Assistance (MFA), and visa liberalisation as rewards. In addition, the EU promised financial and technical assistance to mitigate the costs of complying with its demands. Because EU reform demands implied a lengthy process of legislative adoption and implementation, rewards were given gradually. Thus, negative and positive conditionality were combined in the threat of not giving the next reward when reform progress was lagging. The emphasis was put on the rewards.

The threat to suspend preferential market access was implied in the negotiation process of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (DCFTAs) that were to be included in the Association Agreements (AAs). With the launch of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) in 2008, the EU started to offer this most far-reaching trade agreement to its Eastern neighbours. It sought to reduce non-tariff barriers to trade by approximating partner countries' national legislation to the EU ones. The agreements offered a

Table 3.1 EU coercive activities

Activities	*Target state*	*Threat*	*Reward*	*Demand*
Opening DCFTA negotiations	MD, AM	Not opening negotiations	Opening negotiations	Adoption of key recommendations
Concluding DCFTA negotiations	MD, AM	Not concluding negotiations	Concluding negotiations	Adoption of key recommendations
Trade under DCFTA	MD	Suspension of preferential market access	Preferential market access + financial and technical assistance	Legislative approximation, sectoral and political reforms
Trade under GSP+	AM	Suspension of preferential market access	Preferential market access + financial and technical assistance	Implementation of 27 international conventions
Macro-Financial Assistance (MFA)	MD, AM	Suspension of MFA	Disbursement of MFA	Sectoral reform, legislative approximation
Visa facilitation	MD, AM	Suspension of facilitated visa access	Facilitated visa access	Concluding readmission agreement
Visa liberalisation	MD	Suspension of visa-free regime	Visa-free regime	Sectoral reforms, legislative approximation

stake in the internal market without EU membership. At the time, both Moldova and Armenia exported more to the EU than the CIS market (see Fig. 3.2), which meant that they valued the offered rewards highly.

Several threats were issued during the period of the DCFTA negotiations. The EU set pre-conditions (called key recommendations) for the opening and conclusion of DCFTA negotiations. These conditions implied the threat of non-conclusion of the DCFTA, which would mean no preferential market access for Moldovan and Armenian goods. The final agreement (only signed by Moldova) also included the threat of suspension of the preferential treatment. It took the form of safeguard clauses that allowed for the (temporary) suspension of benefits if Moldova did not approximate legislation (Art. 410(7)) or if the full implementation and enforcement of the agreement were not ensured (Art. 462(4)). The costs on the Moldovan government of losing market access were viewed as high by the EU: "The huge leverage we have in Moldova is the

DCFTA [...] somehow business people think it's good to trade with the EU".[1]

The EU lacked the possibility to incur costs on Armenia by suspending market access. That is because trade concessions were not fully put in place to enable future uses of threats or punishments. In fact, Armenia did not sign the DCFTA because it joined the EAEU in 2015. It nevertheless concluded a Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) with the EU in 2017. The agreement was essentially the Association Agreement—that had been negotiated but not signed—without the DCFTA. It aimed to create trade by "enhancing the regulatory environment for businesses" and "remov[ing] barriers in trade in services"[2] but without any preferential market access for Armenian goods. The threat issued through the CEPA was the suspension of political and sectoral cooperation in case of non-compliance with the conditions.

Nevertheless, preferential market access was provided from 2014 until 2021 through the EU's Generalised Scheme of Preferences Plus (GSP+). This scheme eliminated or reduced import duties on 6200 categories of goods (European Parliament and Council of the EU 2012). The suspension of this preferential treatment for Armenian goods was a threat codified in the GSP+ Regulation.

In addition to the reward of market access, the EU offered financial assistance—most prominently its Macro-Financial Assistance (MFA). The EU agreed to provide 90 million EUR in 2010 and 100 million EUR in 2017 in the form of MFA. It did so to support Moldova's recovery from the global financial crisis and the bank fraud discovered in 2014 (where ca. 13% of Moldova's GDP disappeared from Moldovan banks).

In 2011 and 2012, the EU and Armenia also agreed on a EUR 40 million grant and a EUR 60 million loan to help the Armenian economy, which was struggling as a consequence of the 2009 financial crisis. Overall, the EU MFA to Armenia amounted to around 1.7% of the country's GDP. In both cases, the MFA was disbursed in several tranches, with each disbursement being conditional on a set of specific reform and legislative approximation demands codified in a Memorandum of Understanding (European Commission 2010).

[1] Interview with EU official LA12, 2019.

[2] See Website of the European Commission: EU Trade Relations with Armenia.

In Moldova, the EU actually carried out its threat to suspend the MFA. This suspension happened twice because of non-compliance with its demands. In 2010, the disbursement of the third tranche was temporarily suspended due to delays in the implementation of the conditions. In June 2018, the EU refused the disbursement of the first instalment because it found that the political pre-conditions had not been met after the Chisinau mayoral election results were invalidated by Moldova's Supreme Court. After the constitutional crisis in June 2019, a new pro-European government was established. And the EU—seeing that its demands had been met—approved the disbursement of 30 million EUR (European Commission 2019a). Thus, the EU rewarded the establishment of a *pro-European* government supporting the pro-European elite domestically. For the EU, this financial coercion was a success:

> Without the conditions, a lot of things would not have happened [...] the fact that the disbursement was put on hold was a very strong signal. Having a strong stance enhanced the EU's credibility in the eyes of the Moldovan population.[3]

Because of the high costs associated with legislative approximation and reforms, the EU offered additional rewards in the form of financial and technical assistance to mitigate these costs. As one EU official stated: "Conditionality works better when you provide financing and not just standards. Ultimately, the governments want to benefit from the financing available because they do not have a sufficient budget to implement all their plans".[4]

Even these additional rewards were given with an implied threat. In Moldova, financial and technical assistance was given through the ENP, which allocated 610–745 million EUR for the period 2014–2020 to support the implementation of the Association Agenda. Yet, when the bank fraud scandal was discovered in 2014, the EU put its assistance on hold. There was a realisation in the institutions that "the EU paid court to pro-EU governments for too long".[5] For the EU, carrying out the threat when its demands were not met was in line with its conditionality approach.

[3] Interview with EU official HA08, 2019.

[4] Interview with EU official ZA26, 2020.

[5] Interview with EU official AA01, 2019.

There was also the perception that compelling the government to implement reforms was in the interest of Moldovans: "Of course, it is difficult to do reforms under this leadership, so we put our assistance on hold. This is how conditionality works. And also, the civil society wanted us to do this".[6] When the pro-European Sandu government came to power in 2019, the EU saw its demands met and resumed its budget support assistance (50 million EUR) to support the implementation of the AA and the Visa Liberalisation Action Plan (VLAP).

Armenia received EUR 164.5 million through the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) between 2014 and 2019 (European Commission 2019b). Like in Moldova, EU officials saw a lack of capacity and the need for assistance.[7] In their view, this assistance "has been substantial because Armenia is a small country, so it has been very appreciated".[8]

Lastly, the EU provided facilitated visa access in exchange for the adoption of legislation that implements EU standards in the sector. In 2013, the EU put in place a visa-free regime with Moldova that—like the AA/DCFTA and the MFA—could be suspended if EU demands were not met. The threat of suspending visa-free travel was thought to bring significantly high costs for Moldovan decision-makers because Moldovan citizens regarded the visa-free regime as a considerable benefit.[9]

In Armenia, there was no visa-free regime in place, and there was, at the time of writing, no prospect for a Visa Liberalisation Agreement. The country signed a mobility partnership (2011), a Visa Facilitation Agreement (2012), and a Readmission Agreement (2013) to set the framework for EU-Armenian cooperation in migration and asylum issues. Visa facilitation and readmission agreements were negotiated in parallel as the former was generally viewed as an inducement to conclude the latter (Hernández i Sagrera 2014). Visa facilitation was offered to induce the signing of the readmission agreement.

[6] Interview with EU official LA12, 2019.

[7] Interview with EU official NB40, 2021.

[8] Interview with EU official BA02, 2019.

[9] A significant number of Moldovans also have Romanian passports and travel visa-free to the Schengen area. Citizenship statistics are no longer publicly available. For earlier statistics, check Gasca, Viorelia. 'Country Report: Moldova'. Fiesole, Italy: EUDO Citizenship Observatory, 2010.

Mobility was one of the thematic platforms of the Eastern Partnership, and the Council of the EU states that Visa Liberalisation Dialogues with the remaining EaP countries can be considered (Council of the European Union 2020). However, there was no demand from the Armenian side to further liberalise mobility. As one EU official observed "the prospect of visa liberalisation is used as an incentive, but not enough to induce reform".[10] This was not the case in Moldova, where the Visa Liberalisation Dialogue was perceived as an example of successful conditionality by Moldovan officials because it created "tangible benefits for Moldovan citizens".[11]

Overall, the EU focused more on rewards, laying the groundwork for later threats. Most EU threats in Moldova and Armenia were codified in agreements as the flip side of the rewards offered. The EU threatened to suspend or take away the rewards if the conditions were not met but only punished non-compliance in the case of the MFA in Moldova.

3.2.3 Demands

The demand dimension was very pronounced in the EU's coercive activities. These included very precise and specific demands to compel governments to implement democratic reforms. The EU demanded legislative approximation and sectoral and political reforms from the Moldovan and Armenian governments in exchange for facilitated market access. For the opening and closing of the DCFTA negotiations, the EU Commission developed key recommendations that the partner countries needed to fulfil in order to open and close the negotiations. These sector-specific reform demands were developed after missions to the countries to take into account the local context but were not negotiated with the partner governments (Füle 2010). The unilateral development of the key recommendations made them a form of sanctions. The AA, on the other hand, was a form of conditionality because demands included in the final agreement were negotiated. The EU demanded very specific sectoral reforms based on the approximation of Moldovan legislation to the EU *acquis communautaire*.

[10] Interview with EU official BA02, 2019.

[11] Interview with Moldovan official KA11, 2019.

The signed agreement included further approximation lists requiring the Moldovan legislation to be approximated to a large body of EU law. For example, the trade of goods in Moldova's most important sector (agri-food products) required the government to approximate its legislation to an extensive list of EU sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) laws and to reform its institutional and laboratory infrastructure. In addition to the sector-specific approximation demands, the EU put great emphasis on the respect for common values—democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law—to the extent that the Agreement itself could be suspended in case of grave violations of these.

With Armenia, the AA/DCFTA was not signed, and the CEPA did not include a free trade agreement. The GSP+ reduced or abolished tariffs if Armenia showed progress in implementing 27 international conventions on human and labour rights, good governance, and environmental standards. Compared to the DCFTA, the cost of reforms and the cost of non-compliance were lower, which reduced the EU's leverage. This was because, for the EU, the GSP+ is an "offer [for countries] that don't export too much to the EU".[12] As of 2022, Armenia was no longer eligible for GSP+ treatment because of its World Bank classification as upper middle-income country.[13]

The two grant and loan agreements of the MFA stipulated sector-specific demands. These demands were legislative convergence in public governance, financial sector governance, energy sector reforms and anti-corruption measures for each of the instalments (European Commission 2010). In the view of the EU, the MFA "is an effective instrument for reforms when there is real demand".[14] The perception of EU officials in Brussels was that "Moldova wanted the MFA to happen as soon as possible"[15] thus enabling the EU to set such clear conditions. MFA differs from other financial assistance in that it is designed to support Balance of Payment crises together with the IMF. Governments asking for EU assistance are constrained in their choices for quick and affordable financing,

[12] Interview with EU official RB44, 2021.

[13] See World Bank Data for Armenia.

[14] Interview with EU official IA09, 2019.

[15] Interview with EU official HA08, 2019.

which the EU can provide due to its good credit rating. This dependency allowed the EU to impose certain conditions on the disbursement of MFA.

Generally, the assistance was disbursed in two or three tranches. For each tranche, there was a list of conditions that needed to be fulfilled before disbursement. Conditions for the first tranche were more fundamental, whereas for the second, legislative approximation was needed. The last tranche was the most complex, demanding effective implementation and substantial reform progress.[16] Because it is a crisis instrument, the decision was made by the European Parliament and the Council, which meant that "the political element cannot be avoided".[17] In the case of Moldova, for example, the domestic political crises prompted the EU to set political pre-conditions on democracy and the rule of law.[18]

Armenia had to commit to public finance management reforms, improving public procurement and pension legislation, upgrading the tax administration, and complying with WTO tax and customs rules (European Commission 2013). After that, Armenia could not request any MFA from the EU because it was not borrowing from the IMF anymore. However, according to one EU official, this was also not necessary because "Armenia does not need money at the moment".[19] The EU's financial leverage in Armenia was thus strongest in 2011 and 2012.

EU demands in exchange for a visa-free regime were also sector-specific. With Moldova, the VLAP codified EU demands for a legislative framework to be adopted by Moldova regarding document security, migration management, public order and security, and external relations. Clear benchmarks for adoption (phase 1) and implementation (phase 2) were set and monitored by the EU (European Commission 2011).

3.2.4 Russian Coercive Activities

Contrary to the EU, Russian coercive activities were most pronounced in the dimension of threats and punishments. Russia unilaterally imposed trade bans, suspended gas supply or raised gas prices, and threatened

[16] Interview with EU official HA08, 2019.

[17] Interview with EU official IA09, 2019.

[18] Interview with EU official HA08, 2019.

[19] Interview with EU official IA09, 2019.

Table 3.2 Russian coercive activities

Activities	*Target state*	*Threat*	*Reward*	*Demand*
Trade bans	MD	Ban on agri-food exports	Lifting ban on agri-food exports	Non-conclusion of DCFTA with EU
Suspension of gas supply	MD	Suspending gas supply	Reversing suspension of gas supply	Alliance with Russia, no integration with EU
Raising gas prices	MD, AM	Suspending gas supply	Supply of gas	Alliance with Russia, no integration with EU
Military presence	MD, AM	Loss of territory	Territorial integrity	Alliance with Russia, no integration with EU

Moldovan and Armenian national security (see Table 3.2). Rewards were mainly the reversal of the punishments characterising Russian coercion mainly as negative sanctions. Russia did not issue any specific demands. Rather, demands were implied and mostly ad hoc in response to the adoption of a more Western-oriented foreign policy in Moldova and Armenia. Negative (and positive) sanctions were issued in 2005–2006, 2009–2010, and 2013–2014 and co-occurred with the neighbourhood countries' proceeding European integration.

3.2.5 Threats and Rewards

Russia put more emphasis on threats and punishments than rewards. On three occasions, the Russian government unilaterally issued import bans on Moldovan wine. In 2005, the Russian government imposed a ban on Moldovan meat exports and the following year on Moldovan wine exports invoking sanitary concerns (Foodnavigator 2005; Regnum 2006). In 2010, the *Rospotrebnadzor* (Russian Trade and Sanitary Inspection Authority) claimed that Moldovan wines showed a concentration of harmful ingredients (dibutyl phthalate and metalaxyl) and were not allowed to be sold on the Russian market (Amonte 2010). The following year, the export of Cognac from Transnistria was also banned (Regnum 2011).

The Russian punishments were linked to prescribed food safety rules. In 2013, another embargo on Moldovan wine was imposed again, invoking SPS rules in response to quality concerns (Semenova 2013). In April 2014, the Russian government imposed another ban on Moldovan imports—this time on processed pork meat, followed by canned vegetables and fruit three months later. In August, the Russian government cancelled the trade preferences for 19 categories of products under the CIS Free Trade Agreement (FTA) for Moldova (Cenusa et al. 2014). Although on all occasions the Russian argumentation was in line with international rules, there was little evidence presented for the claims to SPS measures (Całus 2014). Previously, the Russian ambassador to Chisinau had praised the high level of trade and economic relations in the wine and agri-food sector, suggesting that these trade bans were used as punishment (ITAR-TASS 2009).

These punishments concerned the country's most important export good and economic sector with the highest employment (Popa 2015; Wierzbowska-Miazga 2013). This asymmetrical interdependence in the agri-food sector meant that Russian restrictive measures incurred high costs for Moldovan producers and the government. Furthermore, they targeted a *pro-European* elite in Chisinau. In 2005, the Party of Communists and the Party of Socialists—two centre-left parties with a generally pro-Russian stance—were in power. However, they conducted a pro-European policy advancing Moldova's integration with the EU. In 2009, the pro-European political parties succeeded in forming a government and became the target of Russian deterrence.

The countries' dependence on Russian energy also enabled the use of Russian coercion. In 2006 and 2014/15, Russia credibly threatened to raise gas prices or to suspend supply. Up until 2006, gas supply and prices were set in annual contracts negotiated every winter between the heads of state. In 2006, the Russian parliament decided that CIS countries would pay world market prices for gas instead of the previously discounted prices (Stern 2006). All CIS countries were affected by the change in the Russian approach and had to pay similar prices (Nuryyev et al. 2021). Thus, opportunities for Russia to issue threats related to energy supply decreased, with contracts now being concluded for longer periods and with the use of pricing formulas (Moshes and Rácz 2019). This change of policy led to a dispute with Moldova, whose government refused to pay the now doubled gas price of USD 160/mcm. The failure to agree

on a new contract meant that Russian gas supply was suspended at the beginning of 2006 (RFE/RL 2006).

At moments when contracts were renewed and formulas agreed upon (generally every five years), disputes still arose with Gazprom bargaining for a higher price and asking governments to pay outstanding debts. Disputes occurred—more often than not—for commercial reasons, but these crises were exacerbated by (geo-)political factors (Moshes and Rácz 2019).

In 2014, there were reports of a politicisation of the gas contract negotiations with Russia. The Russian government made the signing of a new agreement conditional on Moldova not implementing the EU's Third Energy Package and leaving the Energy Community. In 2021, the dispute was about commercial issues only. Gazprom refused MoldovaGaz a deferral on their advance payment and threatened to halt gas deliveries. According to the Moldovan government, no political conditions were communicated (Całus 2014).

Gas disputes and price negotiations were also frequent in Armenia, where Russia raised electricity prices in the summer of 2015. Protests erupted in Yerevan. These were referred to as "Electric Yerevan", "No Robbery", or "ElectroMaidan" (Braterskii and Maetnaya 2015). In response, President Sargsyan mandated the audit of Electric Networks of Armenia (ENA)—hitherto belonging to the Russian company RAO UES—and decided to subsidise electricity to offset the price increase. Ultimately, the audit revealed that raising the prices was justified. Nevertheless, the Armenian government sought to reduce its dependence on Russia. ENA was sold to the Tashir Group to appease Armenian citizens. Although based in Russia, the Tashir Group is owned by the well-liked Armenian billionaire Samvel Karapetyan (Shahnazarian 2016).

Lastly, Russia used its military presence and countries' security dependence to threaten their national security. Armenia—involved in an interstate conflict with Azerbaijan and geographically isolated in the South Caucasus—relied on Russian military support to guarantee its security. Since the beginning of the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, the Russian government was keen to keep the delicate security balance in the South Caucasus. It supported Armenia but refrained from intervening directly in the conflict. Armenia served as Russia's outpost and guaranteed a Russian presence in the region (Minasyan 2013).

Thus, the threat that Russia issued was the suspension of the security rewards that it provided to Armenia. In 2010, Russia's right to use

the military bases was extended while at the same time guaranteeing Armenia military and technical assistance. The Protocol that was signed also guaranteed Armenia's security as one of the purposes in addition to safeguarding Russian interests (Kremlin 2011). And so, the Russian government provided its military ally with missiles since 2010 and even agreed on the establishment of a joint-air defence system in 2015 (SIPRI 2021; Reuters 2016). The provision of these rewards laid the groundwork for threatening to take them away at a later stage.

In 2013, there was evidence of Russian deterrence. With a rare visit by Vladimir Putin to Baku in August and a USD 4 billion arms deal with Azerbaijan, Russia threatened the country's national security (Wierzbowska-Miazga 2013). Previously, Russia had gradually increased its military support to Azerbaijan, supplying tanks, helicopters, and missiles to Armenia's adversary in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (SIPRI 2021). Russian arms supply to Azerbaijan constituted a serious threat to Armenia's national security.

Contrary to Moldova, Armenian domestic actors perceive their security vulnerabilities as extremely high. Once the AA/DCFTA negotiations with the EU were concluded and the signature of the agreement imminent, Moscow's coercive actions were heard in Yerevan. On 3 September 2013, after a meeting between the Russian and Armenian presidents in Moscow, Vladimir Putin announced that Armenia decided to join the EAEU (which rendered the DCFTA with the EU impossible). This was confirmed by Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan shortly after Putin's announcement (Ter-Matevosyan et al. 2017).

With regard to its military presence, Russia generally emphasised threats over rewards. These threats were based on Armenia's security dependence. This structural aspect was intensified when the outcome of the 2020 war in Nagorno-Karabakh further increased Armenia's vulnerability and security dependence on Moscow. Armenia's dependence allowed Russia to carry out a general extended deterrence for the foreseeable future. In November 2020, Russia brokered the ceasefire between Armenia and Azerbaijan that ended fighting and established a Russian peacekeeping force.[20] The agreed peacekeeping mission (without a UN or OSCE mandate) allowed for a deployment of Russian forces to Nagorno-Karabakh with no exact mandate. And because the Armenian forces had

[20] 1960 military personnel, 90 armoured carriers, and 380 automobile and special equipment for five years automatically renewed.

to leave, the region depended entirely on the security provided by the Russian peacekeepers (Rácz 2021).

The Russian military presence in Transnistria was perceived as a threat in Moldova, although it was not used to punish the Moldovan government. The Russian leadership stated that it was aware of its "great responsibility" as the "mediator of the Transnistrian settlement and the guarantor of the implementation of agreements within the framework of this process" (Ministerstvo Inostrannykh Del Rossiiskoi Federatsii 2015). Russia's position in the Transnistrian conflict—supporting Moldova's adversary—put in place structural security dependencies that could be exploited to coerce the Moldovan government.

In 1992, the Russian government assumed control over the (formerly Soviet) 14th Army stationed on the Moldovan territory and provided combat support to the forces of the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic (PMR) during its military conflict with the Moldovan government that led to the de facto independence of Transnistria (Lynch 2000). Russia became a guarantor of the ceasefire agreement that established the Joint Control Commission in Transnistria (JCC)—a peacekeeping force that includes Moldovan, Russian, and Transnistrian soldiers (maximum 500 each). In 1995, the 14th Army was reformed into the much smaller (1–500 troops) Operational Group of Russian Forces (OGRF) in Moldova that served to guard Soviet stockpiles of military equipment and ammunition in the Cobasna depot (Baban 2015). Thus, Moldova came to depend on Russia for its national security. Contrary to Armenia, Moldova did not view Russia as an ally or security guarantor. Rather, Russia's military presence constituted a threat.

Furthermore, the Russian government deepened the structural aspects of the security relation with Moldova, preparing the ground for possible future punishments. It provided support to Transnistria in the form of subsidised gas and social security (financing of pensions, health care, and education) for Transnistrian residents (Miarka 2020). There have also been reports of joint military exercises (Conley and Ruy 2018). Yet, Russia has not officially recognised Transnistrian independence, suggesting that the Russian leadership has not been interested in escalating the conflict until now (Lins de Albuquerque and Hedenskog 2016).

Overall, the rewards provided by the Russian government were the flip side of the sanctions. Generally, the punishments enabled the use of positive sanctions later when the government would promise to reverse the

punishment (i.e. lift the sanctions) if certain conditions were fulfilled. In 2006, for example, the ban on Moldovan wine was lifted, and Rospotrebnadzor issued authorisations for exports once Moldova complied with the demanded quality improvements (Chubashenko 2007). Gas deliveries also resumed after the parties agreed on the price of USD 110/mcm. Contrary to the EU, the Russian government did not issue additional rewards to induce compliance.

3.2.6 Demands

Russian demands were neither explicit nor specific. There was very little evidence of Russian demands, which suggests that demands were not communicated explicitly. For example, in 2013–2014, the demand to not sign the DCFTA with the EU was implied. The Russian government had issued warnings to EaP countries that were about to sign the DCFTA at the EaP Summit in November. It claimed that the trade deal would have catastrophic consequences for these countries (Walker 2013). The warnings were not limited to economic consequences. Russian officials also alluded to possible energy punishments, thereby issuing indirect threats. Two months before the planned summit, a Russian deputy prime minister reminded the Moldovan government of its reliance on Russian gas supply: "Energy supplies are important in the run-up to winter. I hope you won't freeze" (Tanas 2013).

Russian demands were also less specific than the EU ones. Russia did not promote a model of governance that it wanted the small states to adopt. Rather, it reacted ad hoc when it seemed that a small state was pursuing a foreign policy that was too Western-oriented. The demand to ally themselves with Russia and abandon integration with the EU was most pronounced in 2014. When the negotiated DCFTAs were ultimately signed in the summer of 2014, Moldova received a series of trade bans that were seen as punishment for signing the DCFTA. The trade embargoes were imposed on Moldova because of quality concerns. The Russian government stated that the ban would be lifted if the quality controls turned out positive (RIA Novosti 2013). This statement was in line with coercion because punishments usually imply the demand to reverse the undesired action. Upon the reversal, the punishment should be lifted.

In 2003, demands were communicated more explicitly. The Russian government exploited Moldova's security dependence and proposed a settlement of the Transnistrian conflict. The proposal foresaw a special

status for Transnistria in a united federal Moldovan state (the Kozak Memorandum). This solution was clearly against the Moldovan government's interests. The withdrawal of Russian troops from Transnistria was made conditional upon a settlement of the conflict: "Russian troops would leave when there are signs of progress in resolving Trans-Dniester's conflict" (Golea 1998). The settlement proposed by Moscow in the Kozak Memorandum was a federation consisting of the federal territory, Transnistria, and Gagauzia. The federation would be administered by the federal senate with representatives of Gagauzia (four), Transnistria (nine), and the rest of Moldova (13) (Regnum 2005). Without votes from Transnistria, Moldova would not be able to reach 75% of votes (20/26) to approve any bills.

There were also instances where no demands (explicit or implicit) were communicated. For example, the 2005–2006 restrictive measures against Moldova were viewed as a punishment for the failure of the Kozak Memorandum and the outcome of the parliamentary elections (Svoboda 2021). However, no warnings or demands were issued in this context, and the Russian government only referred to the violations of sanitary rules and threats to Russian consumers' health.

The ban quickly set up the circumstances for the future use of positive conditionality. The Russian and Moldovan leaders agreed that the sanctions would be lifted provided that additional quality control of Moldovan wines was organised by the inspectors of Rospotrebnadzor directly in Moldova. Later, the Russian chief sanitary official referred to the "draconian measures of 2005-2006" (RIA Novosti 2013) suggesting the coercive use of these trade bans.

3.2.7 EU and Russian Coercive Activities Compared

The comparison between EU and Russian activities (see Table 3.3) showed that EU coercion was most pronounced with regard to rewards and demands, whereas Russian coercion was most noticeable in the threat dimension of the ideal type. Thus, the EU used more positive coercion, and Russia used more negative coercion.

Compared to Russia, EU coercion was institutionalised and mostly negotiated. The EU used mainly positive conditionality that was negotiated in the framework of the DCFTAs, MFAs, and the visa dialogues. It used positive sanctions when it unilaterally imposed the demands for the opening and closing of the DCFTA negotiations. Russian coercion, on

the other hand, was erratic and unilateral. Russia mainly imposed negative sanctions that threatened to incur high costs on the Moldovan and Armenian governments.

In line with its neighbourhood policy, the EU's approaches towards Moldova and Armenia were similar. Both governments received the same conditional offer (DCFTA, visa facilitation, MFA), although there were differences in the specific reform demands. This difference was coherent with the EU's differentiation approach: Where there was more demand or political will for European integration, there were more far-reaching demands but also higher rewards. This is why the EU-Moldova relationship showed more coercive activities and rewards, such as a free trade area and visa liberalisation.

The Russian approaches towards the two countries were also similar. The Russian government used the dependencies resulting from the territorial conflicts and energy infrastructure that the countries inherited from

Table 3.3 Comparison of EU and Russian coercive activities across the four cases

	EU-Moldova	*EU-Armenia*	*Russia-Moldova*	*Russia-Armenia*
Threats	Not opening/ concluding negotiations; Suspension of preferential market access, MFA, and visa-free regime	Not opening/ concluding negotiations; Suspension of preferential market access, MFA, and facilitated visa access	Trade ban; Suspending gas supply Loss of territory	Suspending gas supply; Loss of territory
Rewards	Opening/ concluding negotiations; Preferential market access + assistance; Disbursement of MFA; visa-free regime	Opening/ concluding negotiations; Preferential market access + assistance; Disbursement of MFA; Facilitated visa access	Lifting trade ban; Reversing suspension of gas supply; Territorial integrity	Supply of gas; Territorial integrity
Demands	Adoption of key recommendations; Sectoral reforms and legislative approximation	Adoption of key recommendations; Sectoral reforms and legislative approximation	Non-conclusion of DCFTA with EU; Alliance with Russia/no EU integration	Alliance with Russia/no EU integration

the Soviet Union. Despite the fact that there were differences with regard to the role that Russia played in these conflicts, the issued threats were similar. Because of its support of the separatist regime in Transnistria, Russia was involved in the conflict and had adversarial relations with the government in Chisinau. The conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, on the other hand, was one between Armenia and Azerbaijan, in which Russia was considered an ally of Armenia. In both cases, however, the existing dependency allowed Russia to issue threats to the countries' national security by supporting the other party to the conflict.

Overall, there were more Russian coercive activities in Moldova than in Armenia. These additional activities (trade bans and suspension of gas supply) were punishments for Moldova's non-compliance with Russian demands.

Thus, both the EU and Russia used coercion to influence the neighbourhood countries. Although not as pronounced in the rewards and demands dimensions, Russian activities place it closer to the ideal type of the mechanism because of the unilateral nature of its threats. The EU demands and rewards were mostly negotiated with the partner countries, and there was little punishment. This difference in the degree of coercive activities is connected to the difference in the normative justification issued by the EU and Russia.

Generally, the EU did not perceive an overt conflict between EU and Moldovan/Armenian interests. Rather, EU actions were legitimised with the benefits that they provided. They were also seen as desirable for the two countries. EU officials thought that it was in the countries' interest to carry out these sectoral reforms. The EU was using the DCFTA—"the huge leverage we have"[21]—to "*help* them come closer to the EU regulatory model".[22] The single market was seen as the EU's main strength: "It is a vast, open, business-friendly climate with technical regulations that facilitate trade".[23] Thus, many countries sought preferential access for their goods, which the EU granted, asking for specific conditions to be met.

[21] Interview with EU official LA12, 2019.

[22] Interview with EU officials FA06, 2019.

[23] Ibid.

In the case of the DCFTA, the EU demanded extensive legislative approximation, which it did not perceive as coercion: "The approximation element that we have on top of the Free Trade Area is something that is normally an enlargement policy. But they [the partner countries] are interested in this and accepted to approximate, which is, of course, the overall idea of the Eastern Partnership".[24] Another EU official explained that the difference between the EU and the Russian policy towards the neighbourhood countries lay in "the democratic approach, the fact that the countries participate and conclude agreements voluntarily".[25] This is reflected in the difference between unilateral sanctions and negotiated conditionality. With the Eastern Partnership countries, the EU agreed on the conditions with the partner country (with the exception of the opening and closing of the DCFTA negotiations), thus using mainly conditionality instead of sanctions.

In sum, the EU claimed a normative goal that was to enhance the lives of Moldovan and Armenian citizens through democratisation. This would be beneficial for both the partner countries and the EU. Russia, on the other hand, acted purely in its own interest without any further normative justification.

3.3 Moldovan and Armenian Perceptions of Coercion

The coercive activities were perceived in similar ways in Moldova and Armenia. These perceptions were informed by the cognitive biases and emotions of the countries' elite. For a part of these elites, Russia was a former dominating power whose actions invoked fear. The perception of Russia as an adversary also brought about a negative perception of Russian coercive actions in Moldova. In Armenia, Russia was initially perceived as an ally. However, this perception changed after the 2020 Karabakh war. By 2021, Russian coercion was perceived as unfavourable and threatening in both Moldova and Armenia. The EU's positive coercion, on the other hand, conveyed sympathy. Its emphasis on rewards produced feelings of

[24] Ibid.

[25] Interview with EU official AA01, 2019.

Table 3.4 Moldovan perceptions of EU and Russian coercion

Moldovan perceptions	*Regional power*	*Threat*	*Reward*	*Demand*
Conditionality is positive	EU	Predictable because codified	Economic possibilities	Reforms are in Moldova's interest
Military deterrence and trade bans are negative	Russia	Unpredictable because unilateral		Unacceptable

reassurance and attraction. These feelings, paired with the normative justifications advanced by the EU, meant that its coercive actions were seen as less threatening.

3.3.1 Moldovan Perceptions

There was a difference in how Moldova's elite perceived the coercive activities of the EU and Russia. Generally, the pro-European elite's perceptions of Russia's coercive actions were negative. Interviewees mentioned the economic and security threats that were met with fear and resistance. The EU, on the other hand, was perceived as a positive and attractive model despite its use of coercion (see Table 3.4). For most of the analysed period, the pro-Russian political elite was in the parliamentary opposition (starting in 2009). Before that, the Party of Communists (together with the Socialists) was in government under Vladimir Voronin. However, the Voronin government pursued a largely pro-European policy, advancing Moldova's integration with the European Union.

3.3.2 Threats and Rewards

Even though the threats issued by the EU to not open or conclude the DCFTA negotiations were issued unilaterally, the Moldovan elite's perception was not negative. In comparison with Russia, the EU was viewed as a less threatening and more predictable negotiating partner:

> You know they have a protocol, the EU, and they follow it at all the stages. They are more professional, and they treat you, of course, not as an equal country, but if you have sufficient arguments, you can get what you want. Of course, it's difficult, but not like Russia. The Russians are not flexible at all.[26]

The way this member of the Moldovan negotiation team recalls the EU's approach is similar to the experiences of other non-Western governments in negotiating with the EU (Williams 2015). In fact, the extreme economic differences make a "partnership of equals"—as promoted by the EU—impossible. Nevertheless, EU coercion was viewed more positively than Russian coercion because it concerned mainly the provision of rewards.

In 2014/15, the Moldovan political elite saw the EU change its approach. The EU started to apply its conditionality more rigorously and actually suspended rewards when demands were not met. Large-scale corruption scandals involving the pro-European government were uncovered, and the EU halted its assistance. Moldova's political elite came to "feel the impact of conditionality"[27] without always assuming the responsibility. It is possible that the EU's previously laxer stance on Moldovan compliance with its demands lessened the credibility of its new approach. One Moldovan official thought that "the EU is also training itself; they use Moldova as a guineapig using more political conditionality".[28] Other interviewees saw the EU's threats as less credible:

> I wouldn't call them conditionalities, but there were some constraints or some very soft threats coming from the EU that if you will not respect some of the arrangements under the rule of law and fight against corruption, the visa-free regime may be suspended. For sure, this is not part of what the EU is willing to do, but it is part of the pressure that is put on the government.[29]

Other interviewees saw the EU's approach as legitimate because it was in line with international practices: "It's not only the EU that uses

[26] Interview with Moldovan think tank representative BB28, 2020.

[27] Interview with Moldovan official CB29, 2020.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Interview with Moldovan think tank representative RA18, 2020.

conditionality, also other actors, donors, organisations, and states use this".[30]

Russian coercive activities, on the other hand, were perceived more negatively. The 2006 trade ban, for example, was viewed as an attempt to compel political action (Baker 2023). Furthermore, most of Moldova's political elite opposed the Russian military presence in Transnistria and viewed this "as a way to bring Moldova under their influence".[31] The Russian military threat was combined with the support of the separatist regime for which Moldova was expected to pay the (energy) bill. According to a Moldovan politician, this constituted an "instrument of influencing choices of the Republic of Moldova" and "quite a sophisticated instrument of hard power which connects dots of the frozen conflicts with communities of Russian-speaking populations abroad".[32]

Another interviewee viewed the Russian military presence as less of an active threat issued by the Russian government but as a structural inheritance from the Moldovan Soviet past.[33] Not all Moldovans viewed this presence even as a threat. The socialist party leader and former President Igor Dodon actually viewed the Russian mission as a guarantor of peace (Alekseeva and Medvedeva 2019). Here, the EU also played a role because the European Union Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine (EUBAM) enabled the Moldovan government to decrease the security risk of not controlling part of its external border and "was instrumental in creating the good relations"[34] between Moldova and neighbouring Ukraine in this respect. Or, as the Moldovan government stated:

> A particular point has to be made about the EUBAM's valuable contribution in assisting the efforts aimed at advancing the Transnistrian conflict settlement both by monitoring the Transnistrian segment of the Moldovan-Ukrainian border and supporting various confidence-building measures between the two banks of the Nistru River. (Permanent Delegation of the Republic of Moldova to the OSCE 2014)

[30] Interview with Moldovan expert SA19, 2020.

[31] Interview with Moldovan expert TA20, 2020.

[32] Interview with Moldovan politician PA16, 2020.

[33] Interview with Moldovan think tank representative QA17, 2020.

[34] Interview with Moldovan official CB29, 2020.

Rewards in Moldova were only associated with the EU and resulted in a more positive view of EU coercive actions. Moldova's political elite saw above all the economic possibilities of the European market with 500 million consumers as a reward. According to the Prime Minister, EU integration "provides financial instruments and resources for our growth" (RIA Novosti 2014). This view was shared in Moldova's civil society: "This is how I see the Association Agreement: as a big box of standards and opportunities".[35] For pro-reform civil society, EU conditionality was also a way to put pressure on the government and to "oblige the government to deliver on some specific policies and to do what the EU requests".[36]

The additional incentives offered by the EU in the form of technical and financial assistance also played a role. For example, implementation of the DCFTA progressed much better in sectors "conditioned by the EU's budget support and macro-financial assistance programmes" (European Commission 2021). Or, as one Moldovan official stated "of course money is always welcome".[37] However, paired with a lack of political willingness, the provision of incentives could contribute to the fake compliance discussed above: "They would like to take money from the European Union but not pay the cost of approximation".[38]

Lastly, there was evidence that legitimacy was considered a benefit of EU conditionality: "Sometimes, the reward is not the most important. It gives you legitimacy in the eyes of the citizens, it gives you more electoral support for sure".[39] Here, the visa liberalisation process provided a good example. It was often mentioned by interviewees as an area where EU conditionality worked very well. According to a Moldovan official, this was because the visa liberalisation regime brought the most tangible results for citizens.[40] And because Moldova's political elite also needed to provide benefits to Moldovan citizens in order to get re-elected: "the

[35] Interview with Moldovan think tank representative QA17, 2020.

[36] Interview with Moldovan think tank representative RA18, 2020.

[37] Interview with Moldovan official KA11, 2019.

[38] Interview with Moldovan politician PA16, 2020.

[39] Interview with Moldovan think tank representative RA18, 2020.

[40] Interview with Moldovan official KA11, 2019.

EU legitimacy and what the EU can offer in terms of bilateral relations is very important".[41]

3.3.3 Demands

To the left-wing government, the Russian demands attached to the military presence were ultimately unacceptable. The settlement of the Transnistrian conflict, as envisaged by the Russian leadership, would give Transnistria too much power on the federal level (Löwenhardt 2004). Moldova's civil society also opposed this solution. They organised demonstrations asking Voronin to resign. After receiving a visit from the US ambassador and a call from Javier Solana (then EU High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy), he rejected the Kozak memorandum and stayed in power.[42] The costs of complying with Russian security deterrence were perceived as too high according to one interviewee: "Thank god Voronin did not sign this memorandum, which would have made our country very dependent on Russia".[43] The continued demands of a federal solution as a condition for the withdrawal of the Russian troops were met with resistance. Ultimately, "federalisation is not acceptable"[44] to neither a left nor a right-wing government and to large parts of its society.

Moldova's pro-European political elite also partly resisted the more general demand for a foreign policy that prioritised an alliance with Russia over integration with the EU. The most strongly communicated demand to not sign the AA/DCFTA was not met. The AA/DCFTA was signed in June 2014 and came fully into force in 2016. Even though there seemed to be a division in Moldovan society and government, the political elite generally agreed that Moldova as a small country needs a diversified foreign policy and to remain committed to the country's constitutional neutrality (RIA Novosti 2017).

Russian coercive activities of the early 2000s also seemed to have had an effect on the pro-Russian parties. According to one interviewee, "even the Party of Communists changed the rhetoric after 2005 because they

[41] Interview with Moldovan think tank representative RA18, 2020.

[42] Interview with Moldovan official CB29, 2020.

[43] Interview with Moldovan civil society representative OA15, 2020.

[44] Interview with Moldovan expert BA27, 2020.

realised the Russians would never act in the interest of Moldova".[45] Thus, the communist and socialist parties started to aim for cooperation with both Russia and the EU because they realised that "above all people want stability – economic and also political stability".[46] And so, there were different periods of Moldova-Russian relations, some colder than others, according to one interviewee.[47] Indeed, after becoming an observer member of the EAEU in April 2017, the coalition government of the democratic, socialist, communist, and liberal parties adopted a "series of anti-Russian measures" (RIA Novosti 2018) expelling Russian diplomats, journalists, and artists.

At the same time, the coalition government was committed to European integration. During the DCFTA negotiations, the ruling Alliance for European Integration stated that it "is committed to promote reforms that would bring Moldova closer to the EU" (Permanent Delegation of the Republic of Moldova to the OSCE 2010). An Action Plan for the Commission Recommendations was developed and implemented, and the DCFTA negotiations were concluded in 2013. However, internal divisions in Moldova's political elite became visible during the ratification process in the Moldovan parliament when the communist party left the room (RIA Novosti 2014). These divisions persisted after the DCFTA came into force.

Implementation of a DCFTA is a long and costly process. Initially, Moldova did very well in terms of legislative approximation. According to one Moldovan official "we are among the champions of transposing legislation".[48] Progress was made in primary legislation, but implementation was difficult. In part, due to a lack of sufficient capacities on the part of the economic actors: "Of course, implementation has to happen by economic agents, and we kind of have to force them because not all of them want to or have the capacities to adapt".[49]

Furthermore, the extent to which the standards inherent in the new legislation were adapted to the Moldovan context was questioned: "We do conform to EU standards, but how much these standards are adapted

[45] Interview with Moldovan think tank representative QA17, 2020.

[46] Interview with Moldovan expert SA19, 2020.

[47] Interview with Moldovan expert BA27, 2020.

[48] Interview with Moldovan official KA11, 2019.

[49] Ibid.

to Moldova and the Moldovan situation I don't know. Our legislation is very good, but as you will see, the practice may be different".[50] Another civil society representative stated this point more clearly:

> Very often, they are not adapted to our reality; they are just copied from Romanian legislation. It's fortunate that they have also Romanian legislation, and that's quite often how they implement the EU acquis by just copying but not really adapting to our [context]. And the implementation is also a problem. It's really a problem. All the secondary, normative acts are not there. You implement a law, but you don't have instruments to implement it, or you don't have a clear vision of how you have to do that. So, I would say the EU failed, in my opinion.[51]

This led to the perception of fake compliance in Moldovan society.[52] EU legislation was adopted on paper but not in practice: "We have these laws that are adopted, and they are on paper and that's it".[53] The EU was partly blamed for this because "they were not capable to monitor and to ensure that the reforms are really implemented".[54] This points to the importance of the credibility of the threats if demands are costly. It is important that the target state believes that the regional power will carry out the threat if demands are not met. This became evident when the EU hardened its stance and suspended the MFA disbursement. As one interviewee stated: "That was an important signal that the EU will not accept anymore any kind of wrong steps, especially in these areas, that it will not accept that kind of political discourse that was encouraging reforms but at the same time was very much capturing especially those areas.".[55]

Lastly, compliance with EU demands also depended on political willingness: "There needs to be a motivation of the state – a real motivation to do this – only then will conditionality work".[56] This can vary between different policy fields because, as one interviewee explained, "we advanced

[50] Interview with Moldovan expert SA19, 2020.

[51] Interview with Moldovan civil society representatives UA21, 2020.

[52] Interview with Moldovan civil society representative OA15, 2020.

[53] Interview with Moldovan civil society representatives UA21, 2020.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Interview with Moldovan think tank representative RA18, 2020.

[56] Interview with Moldovan expert SA19, 2020.

Table 3.5 Armenian perceptions of EU and Russian coercion

Armenian perceptions	*Regional power*	*Threat*	*Reward*	*Demand*
Conditionality is positive	EU	Predictable because codified	Economic possibilities	Reforms are in Armenia's interest
Military deterrence is negative	Russia	Incurring high costs	Security	Acceptable

very well in the fields where there was no political pressure, especially no vested interests, and were there was willingness from political actors to advance cooperation to the advantage of the Moldovan citizens of course".[57] Implementation was more difficult in other fields, such as justice, banking, or corruption. But again, motivation is a crucial factor, as one Moldovan official stated: "These are the big areas where we need to deliver and first of all, we should deliver for us".[58]

3.3.4 Armenian Perceptions

In Armenia, perceptions were similar to the ones in Moldova. Russian coercion also sparked fear in Armenia's political elite but less resistance due to the existing security dependence and perception of Russia as an ally. EU activities were perceived more positively, although compliance with EU demands was declaratory instead of substantial (see Table 3.5).

3.3.5 Threats and Rewards

The perception of Russian threats was filtered through the existing dependencies on Russia and the fact that Russia was Armenia's main ally: "It is just always there, we are in a region where we cannot afford to be on our own because of our neighbours, the history. For 70 years, we have been partners with Russia; this is a long time".[59] Thus, Armenia's room

[57] Interview with Moldovan think tank representative RA18, 2020.

[58] Interview with Moldovan official CB29, 2020.

[59] Interview with Armenian officials UB47, 2021.

for manoeuvre was limited, and its foreign policy was constrained by its security dependence on Russia. All interviewees mentioned "Russian hard power presence"[60] and security when asked about Russia's foreign policy towards Armenia.[61] This aspect also spread to other areas of cooperation: "Even when people speak about the EAEU they keep in mind the security agenda".[62]

The Armenian perception was that the country joined the EAEU because of Russian threats: "The Russian government decided to push on Armenia using the Karabakh factor and helped Azerbaijan [...] so ultimately the Armenian leadership understood that they will not have a chance to finalise the negotiations with the EU".[63] Although Russia was viewed as an ally, the perception was not positive. According to parts of Armenian civil society "democracy and human rights were weighted against national security" and "there is a need to diversify our foreign policy, to have a multi-vector foreign policy".[64]

The 2020 Karabakh war also changed Armenians' threat perception. Russia adopting the role of a mediator instead of Armenia's ally constituted a violation of the established norms for Armenians. The breaking of norms can significantly increase threat perceptions (see Chapter 2). Indeed, Russian military presence came to be viewed as a threat by these actors: "The recent war gave Russia the possibility to send troops to Nagorno-Karabakh under the disguise of peacekeepers".[65] According to one civil society representative, "society in general became wiser, they opened their eyes to see who the real enemy is [...] we need support from the EU to be stronger, to resist these attempts to capture us as part of this Union".[66]

The rewards offered and provided by Russia were important to Armenia's political elite and Armenian society. The most important reward was,

[60] Interview with Armenian civil society representative GB33, 2021.

[61] Interview with Armenian expert IB35, 2021.

[62] Interview with Armenian official QB43, 2021.

[63] Interview with Armenian think tank representative SB45, 2021.

[64] Meeting between Armenian civil society, diplomats, and representatives of international organisations, Observation 2, 2021.

[65] Ibid.

[66] Interview with Armenian civil society representative HB34, 2021.

first and foremost, the security provided by Russia: "The physical security of the people living in Nagorno-Karabakh—what we call Artsakh—is provided not by Europeans but by Russians".[67] As stated above, this perception changed slightly after the 2020 war. Some Armenians showed disappointment with Russia not providing the expected security through a Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) intervention.[68] Others highlighted the fact that "Russia mediated the ceasefire and sent humanitarian assistance after the war".[69] In terms of other rewards received from Russia, interviewees mentioned the remittances from seasonal workers going to Russia.[70] They also responded with the fact that "Russia is investor number one into the Armenian economy".[71] However, no benefits were perceived from accession to the EAEU it was rather seen as "a form of loyalty to Russia".[72]

Overall, the Russian security reward was seen to come at the price of democratic reforms associated with the EU: "Armenian society is very conservative in that it is willing to give up democratic values for security".[73] After the AA/DCFTA was abandoned, there was even fear: "Armenia lost momentum with the West because it prioritised security over democracy and human rights".[74] EU conditionality, on the other hand, was viewed positively as something good—even legitimate: "Out of all the [EaP] countries, Armenia is the only one in favour of it. We believe it is natural to have conditionality. We are now independent states and have to do this to get to another level".[75]

Whereas Russian rewards were its military cooperation, EU rewards were seen as democracy, human rights, and economy.[76] In fact, the

[67] Interview with Armenian think tank representative EB31, 2021.

[68] Interview with Armenian expert TB46, 2021.

[69] Interview with Armenian officials UB47, 2021.

[70] Interview with EU official NB40, 2021.

[71] Interview with Armenian expert IB35, 2021.

[72] Interview with Armenian think tank representative EB31, 2021.

[73] Interview with Armenian expert KB37, 2021.

[74] Meeting between Armenian civil society, diplomats, and representatives of international organisations, Observation 2, 2021.

[75] Ibid.

[76] Interview with Armenian expert TB46, 2021.

previous reforms were seen as an enabling factor for the 2018 revolution: "Indeed without these reforms, we couldn't have succeeded in 2018 during our revolution [...] so that is why from today's perspective [...] conditionality was really important".[77] Preferential market access under the GSP+ scheme was also seen as a reward. With Armenia graduating from the scheme at the end of 2021, one think tank representative stated that the scheme was good for Armenia and that the country "need[s] something like this"[78] for the future. EU investment programmes, such as the Economic and Investment Plan, were also perceived as useful for Armenia, especially because of the need for more infrastructure projects.[79] Generally, there was the perception that despite its limited integration with the EU, Armenia received important rewards from the EU. One Armenian politician extended this to the entirety of Armenia's cooperation with the EU:

> Everything! I mean, each and every article – if it is implemented correctly – is a benefit. All reforms – police, judiciary, anti-corruption etc. Bringing our standards and norms of services and products close to those in Europe – this is a benefit, isn't it? I mean, obviously, it is! The norms and standards in the EU are better, and not only that – quality of life is. When I say quality of life, I mean generally infrastructure, roads, etc. Everything is better in Europe! The EU standards and norms are better than the ones here in Armenia.[80]

3.3.6 Demands

Russian demands were the same as in Moldova, but contrary to the Moldovan government, the Armenian one did comply with the demand to abandon the EU DCFTA. The general perception was that "Armenia was forced to abandon the EU Association Agreement in 2013".[81] On 3 September 2013, Sargsyan was invited to Moscow, where he announced

[77] Interview with Armenian civil society representative HB34, 2021.

[78] Interview with Armenian think tank representative PB42, 2021.

[79] Interview with Armenian expert TB46, 2021; Interview with EU official RB44, 2021; Interview with Armenian think tank representative PB42, 2021.

[80] Interview with Armenian politician JB36, 2021.

[81] Interview with Armenian civil society representative GB33, 2021.

the decision to join the Customs Union (CU) and later the EAEU (The President of the Republic of Armenia 2013). This effectively cancelled Armenia's plans to sign the EU AA. Although it is not known what was discussed during the meeting, Armenia's decision is widely viewed as a result of Russian pressure (Giragosian 2019). One EU official recalled the event as follows:

> In 2013, in July, the agreement was ready to be signed, but in September, then-president Serzh Sargsyan visited Moscow and had a meeting with Putin. After that meeting—exactly two hours later—Russian media announced that Armenia was joining the Russia-led Customs Union, and Armenia was in shock because we learned this from Russian media. And only after that, a statement by the [Armenian] president followed.[82]

Generally, the demand to align its foreign policy with Russia and to refrain from EU integration was viewed in light of Armenian national security. "The Karabakh issue was shaping Armenian politics for a long time"[83] and so the Armenian government adopted a complementary foreign policy, which meant good relations with Russia to guarantee security complemented with some EU cooperation (Sovet Natsional'noi Bezopasnosti pri Prezidente Respubliki Armeniya 2007). An example is the conclusion of the CEPA agreement after the AA/DCFTA was abandoned. This was sometimes interpreted as a desire to reduce dependence on Russia (Balsyte 2017). Nevertheless, the Russian demand was taken into consideration: "Russia on its side did not contradict much though the Russians were not very glad".[84]

During the DCFTA negotiations, Armenia seemed to comply with EU reform demands. That period was the "most intensive in terms of reforms [...] Armenia made good progress in its EU-inspired reforms programme in most fields" (European Friends of Armenia 2014). In terms of GSP+, Armenia also made progress ratifying the 27 conventions, but implementation remained a concern (European Commission 2018). Thus, as in Moldova, changes were made on paper while implementation lagged. According to one civil society representative, this was "our non-democratic, autocratic authorities selling democratic reforms to

[82] Interview with EU official RB44, 2021.

[83] Interview with Armenian think tank representative SB45, 2021.

[84] Ibid.

the EU".[85] After the 2018 revolution, it seemed that the new government was more committed to democracy-building and modernisation as it "stepped up its efforts to reinforce and enhance its partnership with the EU" (European Commission 2019b).

3.3.7 Moldovan and Armenian Perceptions Compared

In both Moldova and Armenia, the EU was perceived as a benign actor despite its use of coercive activities. This was mainly due to the normative justification of the EU, which was echoed by Armenian and Moldovan actors. They even attributed legitimacy to the EU's conditionality approach. However, EU threats were not always taken seriously, and reforms were undertaken on paper to receive the promised rewards without bearing the costs of compliance. This view seemed to change in Moldova when the EU actually carried out its threat and suspended the MFA. Carrying out the threat enhanced the credibility of EU conditionality.

Russia, on the other hand, was perceived as threatening, and its coercive activities incited fear in Moldovan and, to a lesser extent, in Armenian actors. This was due to the EU activities being mainly positive and the Russian ones of negative dimensions. Also, the fact that the EU used mainly conditionality—which involved the Moldovan and Armenian governments in the determination of the conditions and specific demands—was viewed differently than the Russian unilateral imposition of sanctions. When it comes to conditionality, it was perceived as normal that an actor would set conditions for the rewards it offers. These findings show that perceptions are important for the study of restrictive measures and their effects.

3.4 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to assess the exploitation of existing economic and security dependencies (i.e., the structural aspects of the relation) by the EU and Russia. Thus, I systematically compared their uses of coercive actions towards Moldova and Armenia and analysed the perceptions of actors in these two countries.

[85] Interview with Armenian civil society representative HB34, 2021.

Coercion is characterised by the overt conflict of interests among actors, thereby standing in opposition to the notion of consent. Consequently, coercion operates within a context where consensus is absent, employing tactics such as threats and punitive measures. However, the concept of coercion does not presuppose a lack of alternatives for the targeted state. In fact, coercive manoeuvres aim to sway governments' decision-making calculations when evaluating different courses of action. The threats wielded by the dominant power are intended to increase the costs associated with unfavourable choices, thereby simultaneously enhancing the benefits of selecting the option desired by the dominant power. The pre-existing interdependence between the regional power and the target state is what grants the regional power the capability to incur substantial costs.

To understand this form of power, I looked at the perceptions of both the regional power and the small state. On the one hand, the threats and actions employed by the dominant power to enforce coercion depend on the perceived (inter-)dependencies between the dominant power and the target state, as well as the dominant power's interpretation of what the target state values (i.e., the potential cost). Conversely, the target state's own actions depend on the decision-makers' perceptions of the coercive actions and associated costs. The findings confirm the importance of perceptions for hegemonic power relations (see discussion in Chapter 2).

The analysis showed that the EU used mostly positive conditionality, whereas Russia used negative sanctions. This placed Russian coercive activities closer to the ideal type of the coercion mechanism than the EU. Russia issued threats exploiting the neighbourhood countries' economic and security dependencies. Demands were not clearly formulated but rather a reaction to the countries' Western-oriented foreign policies. The EU focused on offering institutionalised economic rewards with the threat of suspending the rewards codified in bilaterally negotiated agreements. Its demands were precise and often included several steps and conditions.

A significant difference was the normative justification that was present in EU coercive activities but not in Russian ones. Both regional powers' approaches showed only slight differentiation between the two target countries. In terms of perceptions, the analysis showed similar perceptions in Moldova and Armenia. The EU was viewed as a benign actor, and its coercive activities were perceived as less threatening. Russian coercion, on the other hand, was perceived as negative and threatening in both Moldova and Armenia.

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CHAPTER 4

EU and Russian Prescription: Setting Rules and Standards for Food Safety

The EU and Russia both prescribed food safety rules in the neighbourhood countries. After the end of the Soviet Union, the *Gosudarstvennyy Standart* (System of Government Standards—GOST) system remained in place as the regional system of standards applied in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries. However, this structural aspect of the hegemonic power relation between Russia and the small countries in the region was not exploited until the establishment of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) in 2015. Through the establishment of the EAEU, Russia also became able to prescribe such rules. However, the EAEU rules were still being developed and thus less coherent. The EU, on the other hand, needed to establish this structural aspect to be able to prescribe its food safety rules and standards. It was aided by the reform processes the countries undertook in preparation for their accession to the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Contrary to Russia, the EU had a very developed and coherent system of rules that it extended to Moldova and Armenia. Both EU and Russian activities took place across the three dimensions of the ideal type.

To ensure the health and safety of consumers, the food industry developed basic food safety and animal and plant health rules. In international trade, these sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures can become barriers to trade when countries use higher, more strict standards than others. The higher standards may not only protect consumers and ensure

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The European Union in International Affairs,
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food safety but also shield domestic producers from foreign competition. The WTO Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Agreement) ensures that SPS rules do not result in protectionism and unnecessary trade barriers. WTO members have the right to apply SPS measures they deem necessary to protect human, animal, and plant health as long as these are based on scientific principles.[1]

To harmonise SPS measures, member states should refer to the international standards and guidelines issued by the Codex Alimentarius Commission, the World Organisation for Animal Health, and the International Plant Protection Convention. These standards are not legally binding, yet scientific justification is needed if the WTO member states diverge from them. They aim to reduce the risks associated with additives and toxins in food products and the spread of pests and diseases by setting out specific product and processing standards, inspection procedures, residue limits for pesticides, and prohibition of additives.

Because WTO member states can still choose the level of protection they consider necessary and harmonisation only requires countries to base their national standards on the international ones, food safety rules diverge across countries. Therefore, they can constitute non-tariff barriers to trade and—along with Technical Barriers to Trade (TBTs)—are included in bilateral and multilateral trade agreements. Preferential Trade Agreements (PTAs) often refer to the WTO SPS Agreement and include provisions for consistency with international food safety standards. However, they can also go beyond the rights and obligations established by the WTO. Because consumer health and the provision of safe food are important, governments and regulatory authorities often impose strict SPS requirements on import products. For big markets, this leads to the extension of their own food safety regime beyond their border as export producers in other countries adopt their standards for greater economic gains.

In the EU's Eastern neighbourhood, the establishment of the Eurasian Customs Union (CU) and subsequently the EAEU meant the implementation of a system of rules in line with the broad WTO provisions but alternative to the more specific EU ones (Dragneva and Wolczuk 2012). The EAEU system constituted an alternative because it presented an amalgamation of the old (Soviet) food safety system and the WTO/EU

[1] See WTO Website for the SPS Agreement.

system. At the same time, the EU and EAEU integration offers to the EU and Russian neighbour countries have become mutually exclusive while their respective food safety rules and standards were potentially compatible (Petrov and Kalinichenko 2016). As a result, we observe differences between neighbourhood countries' macro-political integration choices (EU association vs. EAEU accession) and sectoral compliance (with EU or EAEU standards) (Delcour 2016; Buzogány 2016).

4.1 The Prescription Mechanism

The rules and standards of a given market are prescribed to actors beyond the market border by shifting the market boundary. A market boundary is shifted when a country decides to integrate the market, thereby moving the jurisdictional authority over rules and standards to the supranational level. In the prescription mechanism (see Fig. 4.1), the regional power extends its rules and standards by creating regulatory obligations for the regulator in the small state. The regulator receives this demand to apply and comply with the hegemon's rules and standards and perceives a duty to follow the obligation. Based on this perceived duty, the regulator defines the preferred behaviour.

The crucial aspect of the prescription mechanism—distinguishing it from the other mechanisms of hegemonic power—is the duty to follow the obligation created by the jurisdictional authority. The obligations to comply can look like the exercise of coercion if the regional hegemon seeks to manipulate the cost-benefit calculations of the small state government. However, if the demands are issued to the regulators in the course of market integration, we speak of prescription. In the process of integration, the market boundary is shifted, and the authority over rules

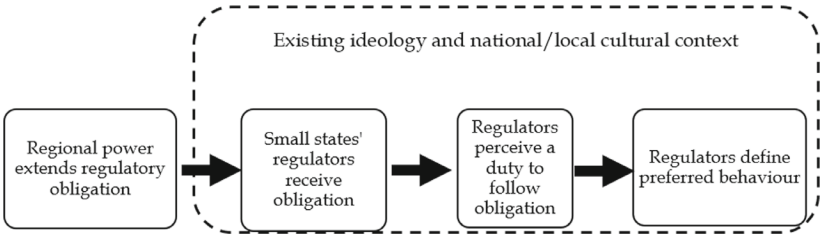

Fig. 4.1 Mechanism of prescription

and standards is moved from the small state to the regional power. In international trade, economic actors are required to adhere to the export market's regulations, yet this applies only to the goods destined for that market. With deepening economic integration, jurisdictional boundaries are shifted, and extra-national regulations are applied nationally.

For the exercise of prescription, the regional power needs to have a system of rules and standards over which it has the jurisdictional authority to create regulatory obligations and to shift the authority from the small state to itself through economic integration. These three elements constitute the positive pole of the ideal type. The further the empirical reality is from this positive pole, the further it is from the prescription mechanism.

4.2 EU and Russian Prescription in Moldova and Armenia

EU and Russian prescription was present across all three dimensions of the ideal-typical mechanism. The establishment of the EAEU served Russia as an instrument in the prescription of food safety rules. A system of rules and standards was developed with the Eurasian Customs Union. The old system was partly changed, and new rules—emulating EU rules and international standards—were introduced. However, the incomplete modification of the old system resulted in an incoherent new system. The EU system was more coherent, albeit fundamentally different from the old system many neighbourhood countries inherited from the Soviet Union.

Regulatory obligations were extended by both, and both had regulatory authority within the boundaries of their respective food markets. Their PTAs with third countries included SPS chapters. These set out import, labelling, and inspection requirements for foodstuffs to be exported to and sold on their markets. A shift in the EU and EAEU jurisdictional boundaries to Moldova and Armenia, respectively, occurred in 2015. Armenia's accession to the EAEU meant that the EAEU food safety legislation became directly applicable to Armenia's domestic market. Moldova's conclusion of the Association Agreement (AA) including a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) with the EU brought about a legal obligation to approximate Moldovan national legislation to EU food safety rules.

The shift in the boundary from Moldova to the EU and Armenia to the EAEU meant a differentiation in the hegemon's approaches to the

two countries. EU prescription became more pronounced in Moldova with the DCFTA, and Armenia's accession to the EAEU led to more prescriptions in the Russia-Armenia case. Nevertheless, the EU prescription continued in Armenia with the continuation of the approximation process launched by the DCFTA negotiations. As with coercion, the EU also provided a normative justification for its use of the mechanism, whereas Russia did not.

4.2.1 EU Prescriptive Activities

Historically, there was no common system of rules and standards that the EU could use for its prescription activities. This structural aspect was developed through the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). The EU prescribed food safety rules and standards for imported food products from Moldova and Armenia. With the new Eastern Partnership (EaP), the EU negotiated new trade agreements with the partner countries. These new agreements established a DCFTA between the partner country and the EU. Thus, economic integration took place through the legislative approximation of sectoral rules and standards to the EU ones. The aim of this harmonisation of standards was to reduce non-tariff barriers to trade. As a result, the new approximated laws covered all domestic food production, thereby attributing the jurisdictional authority over food safety rules to the EU (see Table 4.1).

4.2.2 Rules and Standards

This dimension was very developed on the EU side. Food safety rules and standards were comprehensive and amounted to a coherent system. This system was developed in the 1990s and 2000s. In the 1990s, the European Commission made consumer health a priority because of numerous food crises that led to the provision of unsafe food. The Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) epidemic in the UK provoked a reflection on how the EU can ensure the provision of safe food for its consumers. At the time, EU experts saw the BSE epidemic not as a human health crisis because it seemed unlikely that the disease could be transmitted to humans. Because it was considered an animal health issue, the epidemic was dealt with by the Directorate-General VI (DG Agriculture). The DG received advice from the Scientific and Veterinary Committee (SVC), which was chaired and dominated by experts from the UK—the place of

Table 4.1 EU prescriptive activities

Activities	*Target state*	*Rules and standards*	*Regulatory obligations*	*Jurisdictional authority*
SPS requirements for products imported to EU	MD, AM	Process specifications in horizontal legislation; Control: own HACCP check systems + nat. authorities + EU audit	Compliance with EU/ equivalent control system; Certificate of compliance for plant-origin products; Registration and pre-approval for animal-origin products	Only for imported products
Economic integration through DCFTA	MD	Process specifications in horizontal legislation; Control: own HACCP check systems + nat. authorities + EU audit	Legislative approximation to EU food law	For domestic market

the epidemic. The matter became politicised when France and Germany called for a ban on the import of British beef (Mathieu 2016).

As a result of the politicised and unsatisfactory handling of the crisis, the European Parliament established a Temporary Committee of Inquiry into BSE. The committee's report criticised the British government and the European Commission for their inefficiency and inability to deal with the epidemic. A new policy was designed with the aim of protecting public health and ensuring the safety of consumers. To achieve this goal, EU regulations would be backed up by scientific evidence and risk assessment. An effective system of control and enforcement would also be put in place. The Commission proposed a new food safety policy to "ensure a high level of human health and consumer protection" through a "comprehensive, integrated approach" (European Commission 1999).

The new approach to food safety relied heavily on independent and transparent scientific advice and risk analysis. Risk analysis meant evaluating possible hazards (assessment), making a political decision based on the scientific evaluation (management), and communicating these hazards and decisions to the EU citizens. The Commission also proposed the

creation of a European Food Authority that would carry out the risk assessment and communication (European Commission 1999).

In this new framework, the EU relied on the creation of safe *processes* to ensure the production and distribution of safe food products. The principles of risk analysis and transparency were applied to all stakeholders. This farm-to-fork approach covered all sectors of the feed and food chain. The main responsibility was placed on feed manufacturers, farmers, and food operators. Moreover, feed and food needed to be traceable so that they could be withdrawn from the market in case of consumer health risks.

Risk assessment and risk management were functionally separated. The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) was mandated to provide scientific advice, monitoring, and crisis support. EFSA was also tasked to communicate risks associated with food safety. EU institutions and member states were in charge of managing these risks through prevention and control (Mathieu 2016).

EU legal acts reflected the emphasis on safe processes. The General Food Law provided the basis for the EU's regulatory food safety system in which most legislation was adopted horizontally. Rules on contaminants and pesticide residues were prescribed for a broad range of food products instead of vertically for each product category. Through this horizontal approach, the EU emphasised safe processes. Unsafe food—defined as food not produced in compliance with EU provisions—was prohibited from being placed on the market (European Parliament and Council of the EU 2002).

Foodstuffs need to be authorised to be placed on the market. For plant-origin products, authorisation took the form of a phytosanitary certificate and for animal-origin products, the form of EU registration. Controls were carried out primarily by food businesses. They were required to implement own check systems based on Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) principles. National authorities ensured the functioning of food businesses' own check systems through their public control systems, which, in turn, were audited by the European Commission (European Parliament and Council of the EU 2002, 2004b, 2004c).

4.2.3 *Regulatory Obligations*

The EU obliged foreign companies that wanted to export their foodstuffs to the EU market to comply with its food safety rules. Their products had to comply with EU SPS requirements or with measures the EU considered to be equivalent. Following its risk-based approach, the EU put great emphasis on safe processes (i.e. implementation of the "hygiene package" setting out hygiene standards at all stages of production, processing, and distribution of foodstuffs based on HACCP). Due to the lack of jurisdictional authority, the EU had to rely on third-country authorities to show that its food safety control system complies with EU SPS requirements or is equivalent (European Parliament and Council of the EU 2004a, 2004b).[2]

Once the equivalence was formally recognised, EU importers could presume food products originating from that country to be safe. Otherwise, the importer was responsible for ensuring that SPS requirements were met. In that case, controls of compliance with EU SPS requirements were carried out in the country of export. In accordance with the HACCP system, exporters had to show documentary evidence of compliance upon request by the importer. Furthermore, there were inspection posts at the EU border where member states carried out controls by sampling and analysing the food products (European Parliament and Council of the EU 2004c, 2006).

For the export of products of plant origin to the EU market, exporters had to provide a certificate for compliance with the Plant Health Directive that is issued by the national authority after a phytosanitary inspection (Council of the EU 2000). Products of animal origin, however, were subject to stricter controls and the producer needed to be pre-approved and registered. For food businesses to receive this authorisation from the EU, the exporter's national authority had to guarantee compliance with EU SPS requirements or equivalent measures (European Parliament and Council of the EU 2004a).

EU importers could also require certification for compliance with private SPS standards and product requirements. All these SPS requirements constituted significant barriers to trade, especially for developing

[2] However, if a third country claims that its national food safety control is equivalent to the EU's, the European Commission can carry out official controls in the third country to verify that claim.

countries (Broberg 2009). Therefore, the EU provided technical assistance and expert training to developing countries and many other countries with which it concluded Free Trade Agreements (European Parliament and Council of the EU 2004c).

4.2.4 Shift in the Jurisdictional Boundary

The EU also obliged the regulators of partner countries to apply EU food safety rules to their entire domestic production. Legislative approximation with EU food safety law became legally binding for partner countries that signed the new AA/DCFTAs. Legislative approximation implied changes to national food safety laws and the application of EU SPS standards to all domestic production of foodstuffs (instead of only to those produced for export to the EU). Thus, the market boundary was shifted, attributing jurisdictional authority over sectoral rules to the EU.

Previously, legislative approximation had been voluntary for the neighbourhood countries. Thus, the EU was able to create the structural aspect of the relation that could then be used to prescribe its food safety rules. The Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCAs) included a provision for cooperation in the agriculture and the agro-industrial sector aimed at a voluntary approximation of national standards with EU SPS standards. As part of the ENP and in light of several post-Soviet countries' accession to the WTO, the EU concluded joint ENP Action Plans that included more specific priorities for—still voluntary—reforms of the sanitary and phytosanitary sectors.

The shift of the jurisdictional authority to the EU took place gradually. First, the EU issued key recommendations to be met before the signing of the DCFTA. The main SPS demands were the adoption of a national Food Safety Law in line with the EU's general food law, the establishment of a national Food Safety Authority, and the introduction of the HACCP system.[3] Once the AA/DCFTA was signed, the partner country submitted an approximation list specifying the relevant EU SPS legislation to be approximated. In the case of Moldova, this list included 235 EU directives and regulations to be approximated by 2020. The EU rules and standards to be adopted by Moldova related to product safety, veterinary

[3] Interview with Moldovan expert BA27, 2020.

and phytosanitary requirements, market placement, and specific rules for feed and Genetically Modified Organism (GMO).[4]

4.2.5 *Russian Prescriptive Activities*

Russian prescription through the EAEU developed after the EU had already put a coherent food safety system in place. Food safety in the post-Soviet space was closely related to food *security*, a problem that emerged in several countries with the disintegration of the Soviet Union in the 1990s. In Russia, for example, a decrease in domestic food production and an increase in the reliance on food imports led to the development of a Doctrine of Food Security. The provision of safe food products became closely related to the prevention of food scarcity (Dronin and Sveshnikov 2021).

The main aim of the Eurasian food safety system was to protect human health, the environment, and the life and health of animals and plants. It developed on the basis of the Soviet legacy found in the national systems of its member states. Yet, at the same time, the EAEU was institutionally modelled on the EU and took up many EU rules and standards. The result was a system with new legal acts seeking to change SPS rules top down by adopting new legislation approximating EU rules and persisting practices of the old system at the bottom. This made both the implementation and the analysis of the EAEU food safety regime a complex undertaking.

The EAEU prescribed food safety rules and standards for businesses wanting to export to the EAEU market through its SPS requirements. Economic integration took the form of accession to the EAEU, which meant the direct application of EAEU rules for the domestic market (see Table 4.2).

4.2.6 *Rules and Standards*

EAEU rules and standards were less coherent than the EU ones. This lack of coherence was due to the fact that the existing EAEU system was an amalgamation of two systems. In fact, the systems—the persisting hazard-based system inherited from the Soviet Union and the risk-based system

[4] An extensive list of EU legislation to be approximated is available in Annex XXIV-B of the EU-Moldova Association Agreement.

Table 4.2 Russian prescriptive activities

Activities	*Target state*	*Rules and standards*	*Regulatory obligations*	*Jurisdictional authority*
SPS requirements for products imported to Russia/ CU	MD, AM	End product specifications in horizontal and vertical legislation; Control: own check systems (HACCP for manufacturers) + nat. authorities	Conformity assessment + EAC labelling; Registration for specialised/novel food products; Registration of production premises for unprocessed animal products	Only for imported products
Economic integration through accession to EAEU	AM	End product specifications in horizontal and vertical legislation; Control: own check systems (HACCP for manufacturers) + nat. authorities	Direct application of EAEU TRs	For domestic market

introduced with EAEU member states' accession to the WTO—were not always compatible.

The Soviet food control system was codified in the GOST and the Sanitary and Veterinary Norms (SanPin). This system persisted for some time after the end of the Soviet Union. When the countries of the former Soviet Union joined the WTO, they reformed their national food safety system to be in line with the WTO SPS Agreement and not the GOST system.

The CU harmonised national rules and standards by adopting supranational Technical Regulations (TRs). This practice differed from the WTO context in two important ways. First, the WTO did not use the term *Technical Regulations (TRs)* in the SPS context. SPS requirements are by nature discriminatory non-tariff measures. The WTO prohibited the use of discriminatory measures such as Technical Barriers to Trade in the TBT Agreement. The SPS Agreement allowed the use of discriminatory measures so long as they "do not arbitrarily or unjustifiably discriminate

between Members."[5] This distinction was also reflected in the terminology used by the WTO: Technical regulations refer to TBTs whereas SPS requirements refer to food safety measures. But the EAEU continued to use the term technical regulations in the SPS context, thereby creating confusion between EAEU and international rules.

The second difference existed with regard to the concept of standards. The WTO referred to standards when producers could *voluntarily* adopt these. In the EAEU system, the legacy of the GOST system meant that standards were not voluntary.

These conceptual differences, paired with the adoption of regulations in line with the international system and the simultaneous continuation of the inherited system, created the complexities of the EAEU system. The system retained the approach based on the minimisation of hazards (not risks), focusing on safe *products* (instead of processes). The EAEU TRs defined the requirements for the end product (not the production process). For example, the TRs for specific product categories like milk and dairy products, juice products, and fat and oil products set out the requirements these products must meet to be placed on the market (Council of the Eurasian Economic Commission 2013).

At the same time, mandatory requirements regarding contaminants and residues, traceability, and hygiene requirements were set horizontally for all agri-food products in the main TR "On food products safety" (Commission of the Customs Union 2011b). Labelling requirements were established in the TR "On food products in terms of labelling" (Commission of the Customs Union 2011a) and the TR "On safety requirements for food additives, flavourings and technological aids" (Council of the Eurasian Economic Commission 2012) stipulated the requirements for food additives in food products. This combination of horizontal and vertical legislation also showed the complexity created by the introduction of the new and the persistence of the old system.

Further differences were the lack of supranational risk assessment and management mechanisms. Scientific advice was only provided at the national level. The primary responsibility for safe food was shared between business operators and the State. Producers needed to obtain authorisation for their products in the form of a conformity assessment and the single circulation Eurasian Conformity Mark (EAC) and state registration

[5] Art. 3 of the WTO SPS Agreement.

for specialised and novel food products and unprocessed animal-origin food production premises. Authorisation relied on assessing the conformity of the end product with the product requirements (instead of the process requirements).

Lastly, member states were in charge of management and control. The EAEU required food businesses to implement their own check systems. However, the use of a HACCP system was only mandatory for food manufacturers and not business operators. National authorities ensured the functioning of food businesses' own check systems through their public control systems. Unlike in the EU, there were no official controls or audits carried out by the EAEU.

4.2.7 Regulatory Obligations

The EAEU obliged businesses exporting to the EAEU market to show that their product complied with the EAEU food safety rules and standards. Products were subject to pre-market approval and SPS control at the customs border based on technical documentation regarding the production and laboratory testing of food samples. Unlike in the EU, products placed on the EAEU market must apply for the single sign of EAEU circulation (EAC). In line with the EAEU's hazard-based approach, any food products placed on the EAEU market had to undergo an assessment of conformity and be labelled with the single Eurasian Conformity Mark EAC. This assessment was carried out in the form of a Declaration of Conformity by the manufacturer, business operator, or importer.

EAEU state registration was mandatory for specialised and novel food products as well as unprocessed animal-origin food production premises. In order to be registered, the latter had to undergo a veterinary and sanitary examination. The EAEU established Single Registers for specialised and novel food products, unprocessed animal-origin food production premises, certification bodies, and testing laboratories. Controls were carried out according to the national legislative provisions of each member state with only limited harmonisation of operational principles. EAEU member states might carry out joint inspection missions upon request of third countries.

To further reduce barriers to trade with CIS member states (that are not EAEU Members), the Eurasian Economic Commission signed protocols with CIS Members to use EAEU Technical Regulations. Contrary to

the EU, it did not provide any technical assistance for the implementation of its food safety rules.

4.2.8 Shift in the Jurisdictional Boundary

When Armenia joined the EAEU, the country integrated the EAEU market. Thereby, Armenia shifted the jurisdictional authority over food safety rules to the EAEU. With its accession in 2015, the EAEU TRs became directly applicable in Armenia without any legislative changes.

During accession negotiations, a Road Map was designed that set out time frames and transition periods for the application of the TRs. The transition periods were important for Armenia because its national tariffs were lower than the common EAEU tariffs that Armenia had to apply as a member of the EAEU CU. The higher tariffs risked disrupting existing international trade, incurring higher costs for importers and exporters.

The accession negotiations were concluded quickly, and after only 16 months, Armenia became a member of the EAEU. From the moment of accession, Armenia had to fully apply EAEU SPS legislation and requirements with temporary exemptions for dairy products, grains, and cereals (Eurasian Economic Union 2014).

Thus, the shift occurred quickly without much preparation. In fact, the Armenian regulator had started to approximate national food legislation to the EU *acquis* in preparation for the AA/DCFTA. The sudden change in macro-economic integration policy and the direct application of the CU TRs made effective implementation difficult.

4.2.9 EU and Russian Prescriptive Activities Compared

EU and Russian prescription occurred through all three dimensions of the ideal type. However, EU rules and standards were more coherent. The two food safety systems were the result of different historical and institutional developments. They showed both differences and similarities in how they ensured the provision of safe food for consumers. In practice, the most significant difference was that the EU system was risk-based, whereas the EAEU had a hazard-based system. EU and EAEU legal acts reflected this emphasis on safe products vs. processes. Furthermore, EU and EAEU food safety systems differed somewhat in authorisation and control mechanisms (see Table 4.3).

Table 4.3 Comparison of EU and Russian prescriptive activities across the four cases

	EU-Moldova	*EU-Armenia*	*Russia-Moldova*	*Russia-Armenia*
Rules and standards	Process specifications (General Food Law + hygiene package); Control: own HACCP systems + nat. authorities	Process specifications (General Food Law + hygiene package); Control: own HACCP systems + nat. authorities	End product specifications (TR 021/2011, 022/2011); Control: own (HACCP) systems + nat. authorities	End product specifications (TR 021/2011, 022/2011); Control: own (HACCP) systems + nat. authorities
Regulatory obligations	Compliance with EU/equivalent control system; Certificate of compliance (plant origin products); Registration and pre-approval (animal origin); With DCFTA: legislative approximation	Compliance with EU/equivalent control system; Certificate of compliance (plant origin products); Registration and pre-approval (animal origin)	Conformity assessment + EAC labelling; Registration (specialised/novel food products, and production premises for unprocessed animal products)	Conformity assessment + EAC labelling; Registration (specialised/novel food products, and production premises for unprocessed animal products); With EAEU: direct application of TRs
Jurisdictional authority	With economic integration (DCFTA)	-	-	With economic integration (EAEU accession)

The shift in the food market boundary occurred through the integration of foreign markets with the EU or EAEU market. Signing an Association Agreement (that included a DCFTA) meant that partner governments were required to change national food safety legislation to approximate it to EU SPS laws. In the case of accession to the EAEU, TRs took direct effect, and national governments had to ensure effective implementation. Before this shift occurred, only Moldovan and Armenian export products had to comply with EU and EAEU rules as stipulated in their respective PTAs.

As for coercion, the EU and Russian prescriptive activities differed in their normative justification. EU officials acknowledged that legislative approximation to the EU SPS acquis was a difficult undertaking for partner countries. Yet, they also believed that it was "a long-term investment they [the partner countries] have to make not only to trade with the EU but also to upgrade their overall system to the EU level."[6] For this upgrade, they needed EU assistance.[7]

The view was that because the EU's food safety system and SPS requirements were at a "higher level"[8] approximating national standards to the EU ones "means that their standards are going up, but it's also building up their own capacity relating to food safety"[9]. The EAEU did not advance such a view.

The EU and EAEU systems differed in their approach (safe processes vs. safe products) and the regulatory obligations under the shift in the jurisdictional authority. Whereas the EU association meant changing national laws to approximate them to EU laws, EAEU accession led to the direct application of the law without any legislative changes.

4.3 Moldovan and Armenian Perceptions of Prescription

Both Moldovan and Armenian regulators perceived EU prescription as something positive and good for their countries despite the significant costs. This feeling of attraction was produced by the perception that EU standards were better than the Russian ones. Russian prescription, on the other hand, was perceived as positive in Armenia but not in Moldova. In Armenia, the close economic ties and familiarity with the system resulted in a positive perception. In Moldova, the previous use of trade bans punishing the Moldovan government (coercion) constituted a violation of norms, inducing fear. Hence, actors were weary of Russian influence in the food safety sector and perceived Russian prescription negatively.

[6] Interview with EU officials FA06, 2019.

[7] Interview with EU official CA03, 2019.

[8] Interview with EU official DA04, 2019.

[9] Ibid.

Table 4.4 Moldovan perceptions of EU and Russian prescription

Perceptions	*Regional power*	*Rules and standards*	*Regulatory obligations*	*Jurisdictional authority*
Positive	EU	Standards are higher	Difficult but good for Moldova	More of a cost-benefit calculation
Negative	Russia	Old, not as high	None	-

4.3.1 Moldovan Perceptions

Moldovan perceptions of EU prescription were more positive than those of Russia. The EU standards were seen as high, and their adoption was viewed as good for Moldovan producers and consumers. They stood in contrast to the old Soviet system that was associated with Russia and the EAEU. Moldovans perceived the regulatory obligations imposed by the EU as difficult to comply with, but they also saw the benefit in them. This was not the case for the EAEU from which no obligations were perceived. Lastly, Moldovans did not perceive a duty to comply with the EU obligations. Compliance was rather a result of a cost-benefit calculation (see Table 4.4).

4.3.2 Rules and Standards

The Moldovan food safety system—largely inherited from the Soviet times—relied mainly on control and certification of the end products and focused much less on safe processes. In the course of its WTO accession in 2001, Moldova failed to reform its food safety system in line with the WTO SPS Agreement and international standards. Some reforms were undertaken through the EU-Moldova ENP Action Plan, although these were voluntary and therefore yielded very little results. Due to the fundamentally different food safety systems, adaptation to EU SPS requirements incurred high costs for the Moldovan government and Moldovan producers. Although modernisation was a clear goal of the Filat government's European integration programme between 2009 and 2013, there was no strong preference for reforming the agri-food sector. Rather, the focus was laid on political reforms to ensure media freedom and the independence of the judiciary (Stratan 2014).

Nevertheless, there was a positive perception of the EU food safety rules and a negative one of the EAEU rules produced, in part, by the cognitive biases of the Moldovan regulator. Moldovans did not seem to grasp the complexity of the EAEU food system and perceived the difference with the EU to be one in degree (i.e. lower standards). The ambiguous use of the term standards obscured the difference between mandatory rules and voluntary standards: "they [the EAEU] are using different standards, they are still using the GOST standards and we have changed from GOST to EU standards."[10]

Whereas EU standards were voluntary, the GOST system was a full food control system with food safety rules and requirements—not just standards. This made the change from one system to the other more complex than it was perceived by the interviewee above. Moldovan businesses also perceived the EU standards as higher: "If a company obtains the European standards, they can export worldwide. The European Union standards are so high that you can export everywhere—one of the biggest benefits."[11] Yet, they did acknowledge the fact that Soviet standards were even stricter with regard to, for example, the use of pesticides.[12]

However, the two systems were not incompatible because one prescribed rules for production *processes* and the other for the *end product*. A producer could, in theory, comply with both if requirements on the use of pesticides and other substances were compatible. However, this double compliance is costly for businesses: "If they want to export [to the CIS market], they request these GOST standards because it's easier to obtain than the European [ones] – the requests and the standards of the European Union are much higher. And the European standards are more expensive; they are not so easy to obtain."[13]

[10] Interview with Moldovan official KA11, 2019.

[11] Interview with Moldovan business representative VA22, 2020.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid.

4.3.3 Regulatory Obligations

The regulatory obligations extended by Russia were not received in Moldova: "with the EAEU we have no obligation as there is no plan to become a member"[14]. EU obligations, on the other hand, were received and perceived as positive. Moldovan officials expressed the view that following the EU's regulatory obligations would benefit businesses and consumers.[15] During the AA/DCFTA negotiations (2010–2013), the government sought to reduce trade barriers and adopt EU rules not only for export products but for the entire domestic market in preparation for the DCFTA. The government undertook visible reform efforts and passed a large number of laws following EU recommendations. This was referred to as the "golden period"[16] of EU-Moldova relations by a government representative.

During this time, Moldova became the designated "poster child" (Rinnert 2013) of the Eastern Partnership. The main achievements with regard to SPS requirements were the adoption of the National Food Safety Strategy 2011-2015 based on an integrated farm-to-fork approach to "achieve the highest degree of protection of human health and consumer interests" (Government of the Republic of Moldova 2011) and the establishment of the *Agenţia Naţională pentru Siguranţa Alimentelor* (National Food Safety Agency). The Filat (2009–2013), Leanca (2013–2015), Filip (2016–2019), and Sandu (2019) governments' positive view of the EU rules and standards suggested that the adoption of these rules did not incur an overt conflict of interests.

Despite the rhetoric and efforts of the Moldovan governments, these did not always comply with the obligations. According to the EU, the implementation of these laws was significantly hampered by Moldova's limited institutional capacities (European Commission 2019). Moldovan interviewees also viewed the country's "low capacity"[17] and difficulty in changing practices following institutional changes as reasons for the slow progress in changing national regulations. Furthermore, there was a lack of understanding of the difference and (potential) compatibility of the logic of the EU and EAEU food safety systems. Considering that even

[14] Interview with Moldovan official KA11, 2019.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Interview with Moldovan official CB29, 2020.

[17] Interview with Moldovan think tank representative RA18, 2020.

government and industry representatives failed to understand the EU food safety system, the regulatory and implementation problems are not surprising.[18]

Moldovan businesses also viewed the obligations as positive because they would provide access to "a very big market" with "much better conditions."[19] They were also aware of the challenges that come with exporting to the EU. Complying with EU rules and obtaining the necessary certification was only the first step. Moldovan businesses also needed to cooperate to produce large enough quantities and to market their products in the EU.[20] The fact that the EU market was large also meant that Moldovan products had to compete with more products: "it's not only about opportunities for Moldovan businesses but also the demand of this market for our products. Actually, the competition is extremely high."[21]

4.3.4 Shift in the Jurisdictional Boundary

Following the coming into force of the AA/DCFTA and the shift in the jurisdictional boundary, the Moldovan regulator continued to reform its food safety sector and to approximate the legislation as stipulated in the AA/DCFTA. In 2016, the government prepared legislation to create the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) and testing laboratories were established and accredited (European Commission 2017). From 2014 until 2019, over 2'000 European standards related to the food sector were adopted (European Commission 2021).

The positive perception and response could be mistaken for the attribution of authority to the EU. However, it seemed that Moldovan regulators ultimately acted on the basis of cost-benefit calculations. Although the Moldovan government prided itself on being "among the champions in transposing legislation,"[22] it was only passing laws to fulfil the EU conditions and benefit from EU assistance without putting these

[18] Interview with Moldovan business representatives XA24, 2020.

[19] Interview with Moldovan business representative VA22, 2020.

[20] Interview with Moldovan think tank representative QA17, 2020.

[21] Interview with Moldovan business representatives XA24, 2020.

[22] Interview with Moldovan official KA11, 2019.

into practice.[23] By 2019, the EU remarked that there were substantial delays in legislative approximation and that laboratory capacities as part of official controls were weak (European Commission 2019). Pressure was not only exerted by the EU. Big Moldovan companies also pressured the government to progress with the approximation and to address the problem with national laboratories.[24]

Businesses and consumers perceived a positive effect of the boundary shift. Moldovan agri-food exports to the EU grew significantly and overtook exports to the CIS market in 2014. Over time, the volume of agri-food imports from the EU quadrupled as well (Fig. 4.2). At the same time, trade with the CIS market, both in terms of exports and imports, declined. This decline suggests that integration with the EU produced a trade diversion effect.

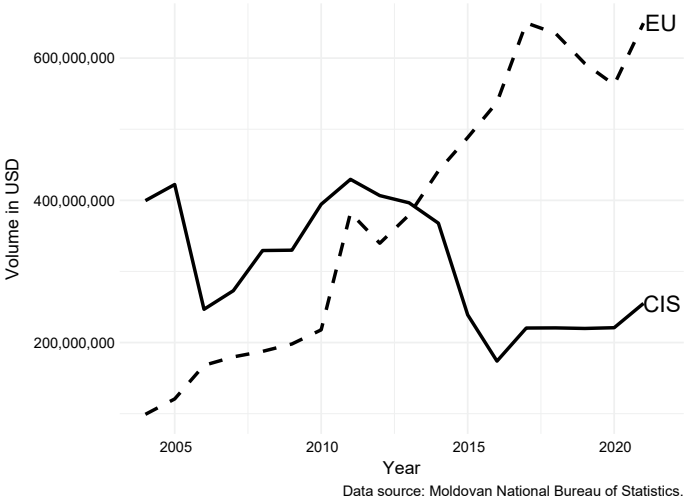

Fig. 4.2 Moldovan export of agri-food products to CIS and EU markets (*Source* Moldovan National Bureau of Statistics)

[23] Interview with Moldovan think tank representative QA17, 2020; Interview with Moldovan civil society representatives UA21, 2020.

[24] Meeting between Moldovan businesses and government and EU officials, Observation 1, 2020.

The implementation of EU food safety rules occurred because of the negative consequences of the Russian trade bans. In part, the legitimacy attributed to EU prescription resulted from Russian coercive activities perceived as illegitimate. Thus, rather than out of duty, the Moldovan food regulator and industry applied EU rules as a means to achieve economic gains and avoid losses from the unpredictability of Russian actions. Most Moldovan interviewees explained the trade diversion from the CIS to the EU market with the instability and unpredictability of "the business with the East."[25] Following the 2013 trade bans on Moldovan wine and other food products by Russia, Moldovan businesses perceived their activities in the Russian market as dependent on political factors. One business representative observed that "the economic relations with Russia depend a lot on the political will of the Russian Federation and our political activities here in Moldova."[26] As a result, economic actors "learned their lesson and became more flexible and now, as we see, more than half of our exports go to the EU."[27]

Taking a closer look at the type of products that are exported to the EU (see Fig. 4.3), the export growth concerned mainly vegetable products and foodstuffs. Exporting animal-origin products remained difficult for Moldovan producers. According to a Moldovan business representative, the trade in animal products was not yet business-driven because, for some products, such as poultry, domestic production does not even satisfy domestic demand.[28] Despite this lack of interest from businesses, the right to export animal products—meat and dairy in particular—to the EU was a priority for the Moldovan government.[29] Nevertheless, businesses perceived the export of animal products to the EU as difficult and costly: "The problem is not to complete the requirements of the certificates and standards, but with the high costs to obtain these certificates because all the laboratories are abroad"[30]. Indeed, there was a lack of EU-accredited laboratories in Moldova that significantly hampered trade in animal-origin products.

[25] Interview with Moldovan think tank representative QA17, 2020.

[26] Interview with Moldovan business representative VA22, 2020.

[27] Interview with Moldovan business representatives XA24, 2020.

[28] Interview with Moldovan business representative VA22, 2020.

[29] Interview with Moldovan official KA11, 2019.

[30] Interview with Moldovan business representatives XA24, 2020.

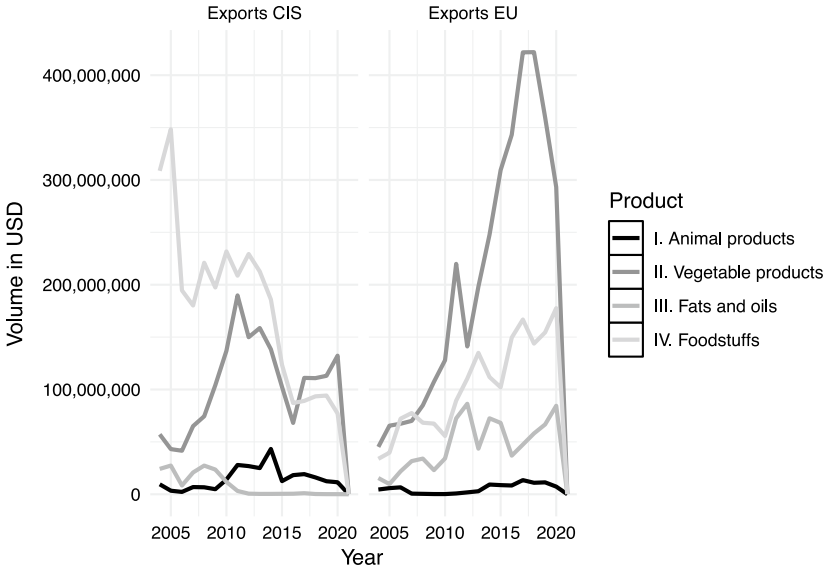

Fig. 4.3 Moldovan export of agri-food products to CIS and EU markets by product type (*Source* Moldovan National Bureau of Statistics)

4.3.5 Armenian Perceptions

In Armenia, both EU and Russian prescriptions were perceived as positive. EU standards were viewed as higher and trustable. This attraction resulted in positive perceptions of EU prescription. Fulfilling the regulatory obligations was difficult but good for Armenia. EAEU standards were considered lower but easier to fulfil because they were familiar to Armenian agri-food actors. The historical links and absence of trade coercion in this sector created a positive perception in Armenia. The shift in the jurisdictional boundary also did not produce a sense of duty to follow the EAEU rules. Rather, the Armenian regulator and businesses saw the economic benefit of implementing EAEU rules (see Table 4.5).

Table 4.5 Armenian perceptions of EU and Russian prescription

Perceptions	*Regional power*	*Rules and standards*	*Regulatory obligations*	*Jurisdictional authority*
Positive	EU	Standards are higher, rules are trusted	Difficult but good for Armenia	-
Positive	Russia	Standards are lower, but familiar	Easier to fulfil than EU ones	More of a cost-benefit calculation

4.3.6 Rules and Standards

Armenia inherited its food safety system from the Soviet Union. The continued hegemony through the GOST system persisted for some time. Armenia joined the WTO in 2003 but, like Moldova, did not immediately reform its food safety system. Some reform efforts were undertaken later in the framework of the ENP. With the ENP AP, Armenia started to amend its legislation in line with the EU SPS rules (e.g., adopting its law on Food Safety in 2006). However, it was only at the end of the 2000s that the Armenian government sought to modernise the food sector as a way to increase food security and reduce poverty (Pravitel'stvo Respubliki Armeniya 2008).

The EU food safety rules were perceived as "better than the ones here in Armenia."[31] This positive perception was reflected in the trust Armenian consumers put in products coming from the EU. One Armenian business representative affirmed that "if it is from Europe, it means that the level of trust is much higher."[32] Like in Moldova, I observed that Armenians did not understand the two systems and perceived a difference in degree between the rules. EU rules were viewed as simply stricter than the EAEU ones: "European standards and norms are stronger, I mean stricter than the Eurasian ones. If you fulfil these European norms, you can also automatically fulfil the Eurasian ones."[33]

[31] Interview with Armenian politician JB36, 2021.

[32] Interview with Armenian business representatives MB39, 2021.

[33] Interview with Armenian civil society representative HB34, 2021.

EAEU standards, on the other hand, were seen as familiar and thus easier to apply.[34] Parts of Armenian civil society were also aware that EU food safety rules did not always contradict EAEU ones. They proposed that Armenia applied the EU rules even without having signed the AA/DCFTA.[35] The business representatives and politicians I interviewed in Armenia also advanced this view. They were, however, aware that this could create problems when implementing both sets of rules. For example, businesses complained that Armenian tax and customs officers often did not understand the compatibility of the two systems and how to apply both at the same time.[36]

4.3.7 Regulatory Obligations

The Armenian government received the EU obligations during the negotiations of the AA/DCFTA and carried out a legislative approximation to the EU SPS *acquis*. From 2010 until 2013, efforts were undertaken to comply with EU key recommendations on the adoption of a national Food Safety Law, a national Food Safety Authority, and the HACCP system. The government established a State Service for Food Safety, developed a food safety strategy and Action Plan, and adopted a number of laws in line with, inter alia, EU hygiene, product quality, and hazard analysis standards.[37]

The EU regulatory obligations were perceived as difficult to fulfil but generally good for Armenian producers and consumers. Compliance with the obligations would allow Armenian businesses to export to the EU market. Although Armenian products were thought to not be as competitive there, the EU market had its advantages.[38] Like in Moldova, Armenians appreciated the stability of the EU environment, albeit not for the threat of trade bans from Russia. Rather, the Russian business and legal practices were viewed as unpredictable:

[34] Interview with Armenian expert OB41, 2021.

[35] Meeting between Armenian civil society, diplomats, and representatives of international organisations, Observation 2, 2021.

[36] Interview with Armenian business representatives MB39, 2021.

[37] Interview with Armenian expert OB41, 2021.

[38] Interview with Armenian think tank representative PB42, 2021.

> It's safer because the EU has high standards of doing business. Once you get all these certificates and licenses, you have an agreement with your partners, and you are protected. With Russia, it's much more difficult because if your partner does not pay, it's more difficult to deal with the Russian court system.[39]

Nevertheless, Russian obligations were perceived as "much easier"[40] to fulfil. Armenian producers and businesses were familiar with the EAEU system and used to the GOST standards. They were also fluent in Russian and could read the TRs more easily than EU regulations in English.[41] Thus, preparations for EAEU accession were much easier.

Under Armenian law, an international treaty took precedence over national legislation where there was a conflict. Hence, the Armenian government did not have to amend national SPS laws to harmonise them with the EAEU food safety rules and standards (Sedik et al. 2016). The biggest change for Armenia would be the higher tariffs the regulators were required to apply. That is why Armenia adopted a Road Map setting out time frames and transition periods for the application of the CU TRs (Customs Union 2013).

4.3.8 Shift in the Jurisdictional Boundary

In 2015, Armenia integrated the EAEU and shifted the jurisdictional authority over food safety rules to the EAEU. Nevertheless, a legislative approximation to EU rules continued where possible, and only "certain regulations which are contradicting with the EAEU they [the Armenian government] should leave aside."[42] The continuing regulatory changes to adopt EU rules and the application of EAEU TRs meant that there were "some amendments of the law, but the principle and idea were still European."[43]

[39] Interview with Armenian business representatives MB39, 2021.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Interview with Armenian expert OB41, 2021.

[42] Interview with EU official RB44, 2021.

[43] Interview with Armenian expert OB41, 2021.

Armenian businesses perceived a positive impact of the boundary shift for producers exporting food products.[44] Indeed, after a decline in the first year, agri-food exports to Russia grew significantly (Fig. 4.4). This positive effect suggests that economic integration created opportunities for more trade with Russia. The trade volume increased fivefold between 2015 and 2021. Exports to the EU only saw a minor increase during the DCFTA negotiation phase (2010–2013).

Like in Moldova, it seemed that Armenian regulators and businesses acted more on a cost-benefit calculation seeking to increase economic benefits. In fact, agri-food trade with Russia was much easier, creating lower costs for businesses. Producers did not have the capacity to produce for both markets. They chose to produce for the Russian market because they could obtain the required authorisation more easily. The Western sanctions against Russia also created opportunities for Armenian products to substitute Western products like Mozzarella on the Russian market.

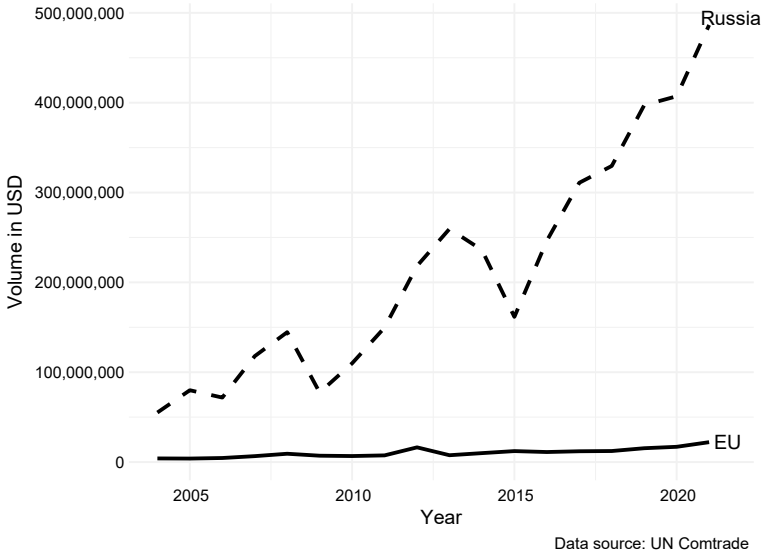

Fig. 4.4 Armenian export of agri-food products to Russian and EU markets (*Source* UN Comtrade)

[44] Interview with Armenian business representatives MB39, 2021.

These new opportunities in the Russian market were appreciated by Armenian businesses because they considered the prices for their products on the EU market too low.[45]

The product categories most exported to Russia were foodstuffs and vegetable products, followed by a significant amount of animal-origin products. Armenian businesses exported mainly foodstuffs to the EU but in much smaller quantities than to Russia (see Fig. 4.5). In Armenia, more laboratories were accredited by the EAEU than the EU. In line with the EAEU TRs, conformity assessment was mandatory for agri-food products in Armenia. This assessment was carried out by national laboratories which were familiar with the process. For the scientists in the laboratories, it was also easier to read the EAEU TRs in Russian than the EU regulations in another language. Often, they did not understand the EU system, which created problems for producers.

Producers that sought to export their agri-food products to the EU had to show that these were produced in line with the methods of safe processes (i.e. HACCP) prescribed by the EU. However, the laboratories—familiar with the hazard-based system—asked for the quality standards (i.e. residue limits) of the product to carry out a conformity assessment. This assessment was, of course, not compatible with the EU system, preventing the producers from providing the required certificate for exports to the EU.[46]

Furthermore, the interviews in Armenia showed that other factors—such as information, mobility, language, and logistics—contributed to the trade effects. Like in Moldova "some big producers do well" whereas others "don't have the quantity that is required."[47] Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) also reported a lack of information and an unfamiliarity with the EU system. They were not able to find partners in the EU and design effective export strategies. Big companies had the advantage that "they can afford English speaking specialists, they can afford to hire foreign specialists and professionals, have their representation in the EU, et cetera."[48]

[45] Interview with Armenian business representatives MB39, 2021.

[46] Interview with EU official RB44, 2021; Interview with Armenian expert OB41, 2021.

[47] Interview with Armenian business representatives MB39, 2021.

[48] Interview with EU official RB44, 2021.

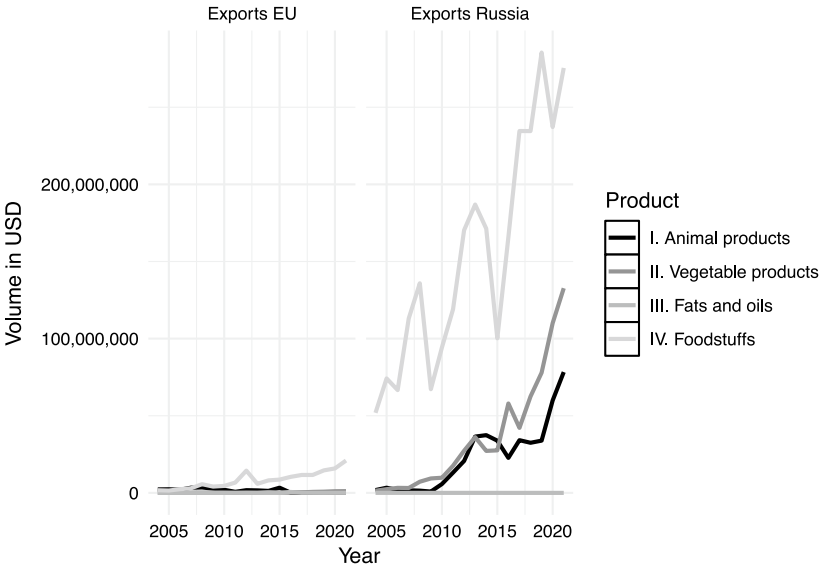

Fig. 4.5 Armenian export of agri-food products to Russian and EU markets by product type (*Source* UN Comtrade)

4.3.9 Moldovan and Armenian Perceptions Compared

The Armenian regulator and businesses perceived both EU and Russian prescription of food safety rules as positive. EU standards were seen as higher and thus difficult to fulfil. Nevertheless, the feeling of attraction resulted in a positive perception. Agri-food actors thought complying with the EU's regulatory obligations would be good for Armenian businesses and consumers. EAEU standards were seen as lower, but the actors were more familiar with them. Due to this familiarity produced by Russian/Soviet coloniality, they found it easier to comply with them. In Moldova, on the other hand, Russian prescription was viewed negatively. The EAEU rules were considered old and not as high as the EU ones. Moldovan actors did not feel obliged to follow the EAEU rules (except for the companies exporting to this market). EU standards were viewed as higher, and the obligation to apply them was seen as difficult but good for the country.

In the two cases where the market boundary was shifted (EU-Moldova and Russia-Armenia), regulators and businesses did not perceive a duty to follow the obligation. The interviewees in both countries pointed to the costs and benefits of applying EU or EAEU rules. Many Moldovan companies adopted EU rules in their agri-food production to export to the EU market. They wanted to benefit from the economic opportunity and to reduce the costs of exporting to the unpredictable Russian market. This compliance with EU rules was reflected in a change in the country's overall trade structure in this sector. Armenian businesses complied with EAEU rules to export agri-food products to Russia, which was also reflected in the trade data. However, a simultaneous prescription was also observed with EAEU rules applied by Moldovan producers and EU rules by Armenian producers. The main problem was the lack of understanding of the fundamental difference between the two systems.

4.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I compared the prescription of EU and EAEU food safety rules in Moldova and Armenia. Prescription, as defined here, involves covert conflicts of interest and is accomplished by shaping the rules of the game that govern the behaviour of other actors. In this context, it is the rules and standards established by the hegemon that dominate. This process involves the hegemon prescribing authoritative sector-specific rules and standards. This authority, attributed collectively, averts the need to vocalise conflicting interests.

The ability to prescribe is derived from the hegemon's jurisdictional control over rules and standards in a specific sector. Authority as a social construct is best conceived as a reciprocal arrangement between the hegemon and the target, in which the target endows the hegemon with the right to set rules and standards, reciprocated with the provision of something valuable to the target (such as social order or public goods). The extent of the hegemon's jurisdictional authority in a particular economic sector is evaluated through the rules and standards it prescribes via sectoral integration. In the realm of international trade, economic actors must conform to the regulations of export markets, albeit exclusively for goods intended for those markets. As economic integration deepens, jurisdictional boundaries shift leading to the application of supranational regulations at the national level.

Eurasian integration advancing with the CU and then EAEU provided Russia with an instrument of prescription. However, EAEU rules and standards were still being developed to modify the pre-existing system. As a result, the prescribed rules were incoherent and obligations difficult to follow. On the other side, EU rules were fundamentally different from the old system but more coherent with more specific obligations.

The jurisdictional boundary of the two food safety markets shifted with Moldova's signing of the EU AA/DCFTA and Armenia's accession to the EAEU. The findings showed that the EU and Russia prescribed food safety rules in Moldova and Armenia, respectively. Although this mechanism is associated mainly with the EU, Russian prescription took place through the EAEU. The boundary shift resulted in regulatory and structural changes in Moldova and Armenia. National food safety regulations were changed with EU integration and EAEU accession in Moldova and Armenia, respectively. However, they differed in their approach (safe products vs. safe processes) and legitimisation (only by the EU).

These results show that macro-level competition does not have to lead to competition at the sectoral level. Indeed, the differences in EU and EAEU sectoral rules and practices were not irreconcilable, and Moldovan and Armenian agri-food businesses adhered to both EU and EAEU SPS standards. Rather, the fundamental difference between the EU and EAEU food safety systems and the lack of understanding thereof hampered legislative adoption and implementation in both countries. Furthermore, changes in food safety practices and external trade structures occurred only in part due to the market boundary shift. Other factors, such as the Russian trade bans on Moldovan agri-food products in 2013/2014, production capacities, and personal and linguistic ties impacted economic practices in Moldova and Armenia.

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CHAPTER 5

EU and Russia Co-Optation: (Re-)shaping the Ideas and Beliefs in the Moldovan and Armenian Societies

Due to Russian/Soviet coloniality, Russian co-optation was more pronounced in the three dimensions of the ideal type than EU co-optation. Russia sought to co-opt societal actors through a common language, culture/media, and religion. The EU only used some cultural and media programmes, and its co-optation activities through the belief system focused solely on Civil Society Organisations (CSOs).

The EU's ideology into which it sought to include neighbourhood societies was based on the claim to the universal validity of its principles (democracy, human rights, rule of law) codified in the Copenhagen criteria for EU membership. The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) was the most far-reaching EU policy in terms of extension of EU core principles to non-member states because it relied on mechanisms that were also used for the enlargement process (political conditionality, democracy support, domestic reforms based on the EU acquis communautaire). This practice created a potential We in which neighbourhood countries were included (Gänzle 2009; Vieira 2021). Emphasis was put on the common or shared values as an identity marker of the collective We.

By openly contesting the universality of EU principles, Russia externally reinforced the construction of this European identity (Morozov and Rumelili 2012). With Putin coming to power, the dominant (post-colonial) discourse became that of a great power that was culturally

I. Burmester, *EU and Russian Hegemony in the 'Shared Neighbourhood'*,
The European Union in International Affairs,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-75488-3_5

European but—due to historical legacies—still enjoyed a special influence in the countries that were part of the Soviet Union (Tsygankov 2007). "The West" neglecting Russia's role and great power status in the post-Cold War international system reinforced Russian ressentiment and obsession with status (Malinova 2014). Hence, Putin sought to be recognised by the collective West while at the same time safeguarding Russian dominance in the post-Soviet space (Morozov 2015). Russian identity construction under Putin came to rely on Othering "the West" and counteracting Western democracy promotion in the post-Soviet space (Malinova 2018; Babayan 2015). In its discourse towards these countries, the Russian leadership created a We that was based on "historical, cultural and simply human ties" (Putin 2021).

5.1 The Co-Optation Mechanism

Through co-optation, the hegemon aims to include the societal actors of the small state in the dominant ideology. Actors are included when they redefine their ideas and beliefs so that these align with the hegemon's. Because of this alignment, there is no observable conflict of interests. The fact that there is no observable conflict between the actors' interests directs attention to the question of how preferences are formed and the extent to which actors are in control of their choices (Lukes 1974).

The state in which actors think they are in control of their choices when actually these have been shaped by the dominant set of ideas is called *false consciousness*. It is observed when the "dominant ideology works its magic by persuading subordinate groups to believe actively in the values that explain and justify their subordination" (Scott 1990, 72).

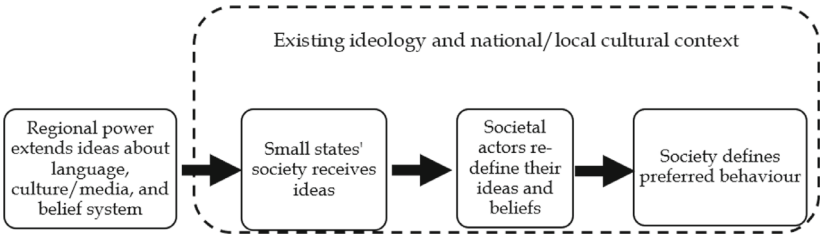

Fig. 5.1 Mechanism of co-optation

Ideology is a spontaneous philosophy contained in language (determined notions and concepts), common and good sense (conventional wisdom and empirical knowledge), and popular religion (system of beliefs) (Lears 1985). To empirically observe co-optation, regional powers' activities and domestic actors' perceptions regarding a shared language, culture—in terms of conventional wisdom and empirical knowledge in its information space—and system of beliefs need to be analysed. The latter can refer to religion (in the strict sense) but also to other sets of beliefs and values.

The regional power extends its ideas about a shared language, culture, and belief system, which are, in turn, received by the societal actors in the small state (see Fig. 5.1). These societal actors comprise political and economic elites as well as civil society in the broader sense (Lukes 1974; Hopf 2013). In this analysis, the focus is put on the co-optation of the small countries' civil societies.

This mechanism takes into account the complexity of social actors and the fact that they "do not have unitary or dual, but multiple and conflicting interests" (Lukes 1974, 145). Gramsci called this contradictory consciousness emphasising that consent is "a complex mental state [...] mixing approbation and apathy, resistance and resignation" (Lears 1985, 570). In fact, the literature points to the different degrees of resistance or contestation that enable researchers to look for traces or elements of the hegemon's beliefs and ideas that are woven into local identities (Hannah et al. 2017; Wiener 2014; Zimmermann 2016).

5.2 EU and Russian Co-Optation in Moldova and Armenia

Both the EU and Russia co-opted Moldova and Armenian societies. Russia used all three dimensions of the ideal type, whereas the EU focused on using culture and the belief system. The latter emphasised cultural diversity and democratisation efforts combined with liberal values. Russia's post-coloniality created a cultural advantage for the mechanism. It enabled Russia to promote its language and culture as *common* elements.

Table 5.1 EU co-optation activities

Activities	*Target state*	*Language*	*Culture*	*Belief system*
Promotion of cultural diversity	MD, AM	–	Cultural projects (Creative Europe)	–
Promotion of universal European values	MD, AM	–	Media and mobility programmes (Erasmus+, visa facilitation)	Civil Society Development

5.2.1 EU Co-Optation Activities

The EU's co-optation activities took place in the dimensions of culture and belief system. Although Romanian—an official EU language—was widely spoken in Moldova, the shared language was not part of EU co-optation. Rather, the EU used cultural and media programmes to co-opt Moldovans and Armenians into its culture and democracy support to promote European values (see Table 5.1).

5.2.2 Culture

The EU promoted a common culture characterised by diversity in which the partner countries were included. It also promoted universal European values through its media and mobility programmes. Through its activities in the area of culture, the EU externalised a construction of its Self in terms of diversity. The amalgamation of the different cultures of its member states was reflected in the EU's cultural projects. They were promoting "European culture and its links to the local culture".[1] Through these projects, the EU promoted the idea of a culturally diverse space where Moldovan and Armenian societies can present their own local and national cultures.

As a result of the diversity narrative around this cultural space, European culture was presented through a national lens. For example, at the European Film Festival, organised in Moldova in the framework of Europe Day, Moldovans "learn the European cultural values through the diversity and beauty of their identity" (IPN 2011)—according to the

[1] Interview with EU official NB40, 2021.

EU representative. Nevertheless, the institutional co-optation of non-EU member states into its cultural programmes, such as Creative Europe, suggested the discursive inclusion of these countries in the European Self: "They feel European [...] and the EU sees them as European as well".[2]

These activities took place under the modernisation paradigm. The EU viewed "the development of culture as an engine for growth and social development"[3] and "a force for reform" (European Commission 2012). Its activities were linked to the externalisation of its core principles by supporting independent media outlets to ensure access to information for the whole society and to provide checks and balances on the government in power:

> Media is important when a country struggles with democracy. Freedom of expression gives a voice to the people and is, of course, also one of the founding principles of the EU. It is also an instrument to bring society forward: You need media and investigative journalism to uncover, for example, corruption.[4]

One EU official also mentioned mobility through visa liberalisation and the Erasmus+ programme as being "of great value for the exchange of culture and values".[5] Both Moldova and Armenia joined the EU's Erasmus+ programme, facilitating academic mobility. Armenia was an active participant in the programme and received the third largest amount of funding (12%) among the six Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries (after Ukraine and Georgia) between 2015 and 2019 (European Commission 2020b). During the same period, Moldova received the lowest amount of funding for the EaP region (7%) (European Commission 2020a).

However, there was more mobility between Moldova and the EU than this data could account for. This mobility can, in part, explain the low Erasmus+ funding Moldova received. Many Moldovans have a Romanian passport that they use for travelling and studying in the EU. In addition, the EU liberalised its visa regime with Moldova in 2014. Since then, more than 2 million Moldovan citizens travelled visa-free to the Schengen area with a Moldovan passport (European Commission 2019).

[2] Interview with EU official BA02, 2019.

[3] EU4Culture description on website of the Goethe Institut.

[4] Interview with EU officials MA13, 2019.

[5] Interview with EU official GA07, 2019.

5.2.3 Belief System

The EU sought to co-opt Moldovan and Armenian societies into its system of beliefs by promoting European values. Activities in this dimension focused on the co-optation of (Western-oriented) CSOs. The EU claimed that its values—or its interpretation of them—were universal and that their adoption was a way for other countries to modernise: "We want them to develop and work on democracy and rule of law because these are the core values of the EU. And we want them to be reflected because we believe that they are good for the people".[6]

The EU extended these values to the Moldovan society through its CSO support aimed to ensure "a better knowledge and understanding of the EU in the Republic of Moldova [...] with a non-exclusive focus on the values on which the EU is founded".[7] According to the EU, civil society should play an important role in democratic processes (Council of the European Union 2020).

Moldovan CSOs were co-opted into institutional processes such as the monitoring of the EU association implementation. Here, CSO support was combined with coercion. Through conditionality, the EU pressured the Moldovan government to put in place structures for civil society participation in policy-making processes (i.e. the National Council for Participation). However, the operation of these structures was hampered by the same government.

In Armenia, CSOs were also co-opted into various consultations and regular bi-monthly meetings. The Armenian government was incentivised to put into place structures and institutions for CSO participation. The EU viewed these activities as successful:

> Assistance to civil society and young people has helped to create a vibrant civil society [...] these people have been exposed to the West, often undergone Western education, and have now come to power. Civil society has proven to be a good investment for the EU, and it is not even the largest part of the assistance.[8]

[6] Interview with EU official LA12, 2019.

[7] Art.134c of the EU-Moldova Association Agreement.

[8] Interview with EU official BA02, 2019.

To sum up, EU co-optation of Moldovan and Armenian society took place by including them in EU media, cultural, and mobility programmes and projects. Despite the existence of a shared language (Romanian), the EU did not use this to co-opt Moldovans. It focused on civil society and culture instead. Culturally, the EU sought to co-opt the societies into a culture that valued and promoted diversity and democracy. The main co-optation efforts were concentrated on the system of beliefs. These efforts were based on the EU's self-proclaimed universal democratic values. The EU supported the development of an independent civil society and media to act as a watchdog and to play a relevant role in domestic policy-making processes.

5.2.4 Russian Co-Optation Activities

Russian co-optation activities took place across all three ideological dimensions (language, culture, and belief system), placing it closer to the ideal type than the EU. In Moldova and Armenia, Russian/Soviet coloniality meant that linguistic, cultural, and religious structural aspects existed and could be mobilised by Russia in its co-optation attempts. There were some differences in the activities compared to the EU. Firstly, the Russian government sought to co-opt Moldovan and Armenian societies by constructing Russian as a shared language—something the EU did not do. Secondly, co-opting those societies into its culture, Russia used media, cultural, and mobility programmes but, in addition, emphasised its historical ties with the two countries. Lastly, Russia extended its belief system through the promotion of traditional values and existing religious ties with Moldova and Armenia while also framing European values as a threat (see Table 5.2).

5.2.5 Language

In both Moldova and Armenia, the Russian government promoted the use of the Russian language. In Moldova, the Russian language was constructed as an essential part of Moldovan civic identity. In Armenia—ethnically more homogenous than Moldova—it was promoted as a language of communication without touching on questions of national identity.

In Moldova, a large minority used Russian in their daily communication. Russian was attributed the official status of "language of inter-ethnic

Table 5.2 Russian co-optation activities

Activities	*Target state*	*Language*	*Culture*	*Belief system*
Promotion of a shared language	MD	As part of Moldova's national civic identity	–	–
Promotion of a shared language	AM	As means of communication for Armenians	–	–
Promotion of unity	MD, AM	–	Media, cultural, and mobility programmes	Shared religion/ Church
Promotion of traditional values	MD, AM	–	Media programmes	Shared religion/ Church
Othering of "the West"/ EU	MD, AM	–	Media programmes	Shared religion/ Church

communication" in the country.[9] As a result, Russian language education in Moldova was carried out within the public education system, and Russian co-optation efforts focused on enhancing the quality of teaching of the Russian language in Moldovan schools.

In the Russian leadership's view, Moldovans should be bi-lingual because Russian was not just one of the minority languages in Moldova but has a higher status: "Russian culture and language are an integral part of the Moldovan multinational culture" (ITAR-TASS 2009). The problem was thus elevated to the level of integration in the multi-ethnic Moldovan state, to which the use of Russian was presented as a solution.

To enhance the quality of Russian language teaching, the *Rossotrudnichestvo* (Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States Affairs, Compatriots Living Abroad, and International Humanitarian Cooperation) regularly organised international workshops on modern methods specifically developed to enhance the teaching of the Russian language (Rossotrudnichestvo 2016).

In Armenia, Russian did not have an official status, but the Russian minority was allowed to organise general education in Russian. Russian

[9] Transnistria came to recognise Russian, Ukrainian, and Moldovan as official languages. The Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia also has three official languages (Gagauzian, Moldovan, and Russian).

was taught as a foreign language in all Armenian secondary schools. Thus, Russian co-optation focused on the promotion of the Russian language outside of the public education system through free Russian language and history courses taught in its cultural centres. However, the Russian-speaking minority in Armenia was much smaller than in Moldova, and so only 350 children in 21 Armenian cities were reported to attend these classes in 2021 (Dom Moskvy 2021).

5.2.6 Culture

Russia used the culture and media dimensions of the ideal type more than the EU. The other difference was that Russia promoted unity instead of diversity. It mobilised the cultural ties that existed as a result of Russian colonialism and promoted the *shared* Russian culture through media, cultural, and mobility programmes.

Russian co-optation activities towards the two countries were similar—with the exception of the media dimension. Russian mass media played a more important role in Moldova, where 10 out of the 15 most-watched TV channels broadcast programmes in Russian. Only three Russian TV channels were available to Armenians (Chyzhova 2018; Freedom House 2021).

Mass media was used to disseminate Russian TV programmes and movies as well as foreign movies dubbed in Russian. These included narratives discrediting the Western-led liberal international order and framing European values—in particular LGBTQ rights—as a threat (Zakem et al. 2018; The Editors 2017). The most-watched Moldovan channel for both political information and entertainment was fined by the country's *Consiliul Audiovizualului* (Audiovisual Council) for rebroadcasting Russian propaganda in 2014. Even after that, the channel remained the most-watched (55%) and the most-trusted (32%) channel for news (Puiu 2015).

In Armenia, the law on the Armenian language limited the distribution of TV programmes in languages other than Armenian. Russian narratives discrediting "the West" were still amplified because Armenian news outlets used Russian media sources when covering international events (Freedom House 2021).

The Russian government also facilitated mobility through scholarships and quotas for foreign students at Russian higher education institutes. Overall, there were 37,000 Armenian and 35,000 Moldovan students

studying in Russia in 2020 (Rosstat 2022a). The number of scholarship recipients per country was not published. However, the Russian government stated that the number of scholarships for Moldovan students amounted to ca. 450 in 2015 (ITAR-TASS 2009). For Armenia, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that in 2021, 2000 Armenians were studying in Russian higher education with a federal scholarship. Students could also study at the Russian-Armenian University or one of the six branches of Russian universities in Yerevan (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2021).

Lastly, the Russian government emphasised the countries' historical ties with Russia. The promotion of a specific interpretation of historical memory created unity by celebrating the defeat of a common enemy and the "shared heritage of our nations" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2021). The most prominent example was the celebration of Victory that commemorated the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany. Representatives of the Russian government regularly congratulated Moldova and Armenia on Victory Day, organising events and restoring monuments (Ministerstvo Inostrannykh Del Rossiiskoi Federatsii 2015).

Only the Russian interpretation of the events of WWII was accepted. When Moldova declared the Day of Soviet Occupation in 2010, the Russian leadership considered this "blasphemy to be another attempt to distort our common history with the Moldovan people" (Postoyannoe Predstavitel'stvo Rossiiskoi Federatsii pri OBSE 2010). "To prevent attempts to deliberately distort historical facts and review the results of World War II"[10] Rossotrudnichestvo promoted the Russian historical (re-)interpretation of the Soviet role in the second World War. Its activities included celebrations of the "Day of Victory in the Great Patriotic War" in Moldova and Armenia and the employment of a discourse emphasising the common historical experience. For example, in 2021, the Russian foreign minister congratulated

> the people of Armenia and all our friends in this country on our upcoming Day of Victory in the Great Patriotic War. This is a sacred date and a shared heritage of our nations, of all nations of the Soviet Union. Together, we hold dear and sacred the memory of the Red Army, which saved the

[10] See Website of Rossotrudnichestvo.

> world from the Nazi plague. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2021)

In Moldova, the Russian embassy restored a number of monuments to Soviet soldiers who fell in Moldova and commemorated the 70th anniversary of Victory in the Great Patriotic War.

This view was also promoted through historical conferences and courses, which were considered important to bring the truth about the events (Pol'skikh 2013). In Armenia, the Centres for Science and Culture offered free Russian history courses for children covering Russian history from the Ancient Rus to modern history (Dom Moskvy 2021).

5.2.7 Belief System

This third dimension of co-optation was directed at the religious communities in Moldova and Armenia. Co-optation into the Russian system of beliefs took place through the emphasis on existing religious ties and the promotion of traditional values.

The Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) served as an important instrument for the Russian government. In Moldova, 91.1% of the population identified as Orthodox (National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova 2014). There were two Orthodox Churches in the country. One was the self-governing Moldovan Orthodox Church (MOC) under the Patriarchate of the ROC, and the other was the Bessarabian Orthodox Church under the Romanian one. The MOC had six dioceses and united around 85% of the Moldovan Orthodox believers (Grigore 2018).

Orthodoxy was also the predominant religion in Armenia, but the country was not part of the canonical territory of the ROC. The national church in Armenia—the Armenian Apostolic Church—united 92.6% of Armenians (Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia 2011).

The discourse employed by the ROC in Moldova emphasised spiritual unity with "our Moldovan flock" (The Russian Orthodox Church 2017). This unity was based on the "spiritual and moral principles which every generation of the Moldavians has taken in with their mothers' milk" (The Russian Orthodox Church 2011). This emphasis on traditional values was linked to the practice of Othering "the West" framing liberal values as a threat. According to the ROC representatives, the peoples of the post-Soviet space were united by the ROC and stood in contrast to "the West" where "a systemic destruction of family values is happening […]

under the banner of liberalisation, the emancipation of people, and the democratisation of society" (The Russian Orthodox Church 2013).

However, the ROC made a distinction between "new ideas like these, which are primarily aimed at destroying the traditional foundations of life in a very militant way" and the "main European values [that] are also adherence to Christian faiths and [...] those traditions and those values of morality that we have".[11] These "new or neo-liberal values"[12] were associated with the "Western" Other but detached from Christianity. For example, in response to Biden's election as US president, the ROC stated:

> We know what the Catholic Church teaches regarding the value of human life, regarding abortion and regarding sex-change operations. Mr. Biden has often expressed views that do not correspond to this teaching. I would like to hope that, now that he has become president, he will act according to the teaching of the religion to which he belongs, that he will come to the defence of human life, that he will not publicly support abortion and that he will re-examine his stance regarding sex-change operations. (The Russian Orthodox Church 2020)

Despite the existence of an independent Church, the ROC also co-opted Armenians into its belief system based on traditional values. According to the ROC, "Armenian believers [were] united with the believers of the Russian Orthodox Church by profound spiritual and value bonds" (The Russian Orthodox Church 2010). One interviewee from the ROC noted that the common faith that they shared with the Armenian and the Moldovan people had "penetrated the cultural stratum of these societies as shown by their commitment to the traditional fundamentals of life".[13]

5.2.8 EU and Russian Co-Optation Activities Compared

Russian co-optation activities took place across all three dimensions, whereas the EU only used two dimensions, and that to a lesser extent than Russia. This difference was due to the Russian/Soviet coloniality that created the structural aspects that could be used by Russia in its exercise of hegemonic power. Both actors sought to co-opt Moldovan and

[11] Interview with representative of the Russian Orthodox Church DB30, 2021.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid.

Armenian societies into their culture and belief system through different activities (see Table 5.3).

Russian was constructed as a language of communication for multi-ethnic states. Russia sought to co-opt Moldovan and Armenian societies by promoting Russian as a shared language. In Moldova, where Russian served as the language of inter-ethnic communication, Russia externalised an ethnic-linguistic understanding of diversity, making Russian part of the construction of a collective civic identity in Moldova. This was not the case in Armenia. Here, Russian was a minority language and taught to most Armenians as a foreign language. As such, it could serve as a means of communication outside of the national identity construction. The language element was not used by the EU.

The EU's cultural activities promoted diversity and democracy. Russian efforts, on the other hand, centred around unity through the shared (Russian) culture and history constructed in opposition to "the West". There was no difference between EU co-optation activities in Moldova and Armenia. It reinforced local and national identities as part of its

Table 5.3 Comparison of EU and Russian co-optation activities across the four cases

	EU-Moldova	*EU-Armenia*	*Russia-Moldova*	*Russia-Armenia*
Language	(Existence of shared language not used)	–	Promotion of shared language as part of national civic identity	Promotion of shared language as means of communication
Culture	Promotion of diversity and democracy through media, cultural, and mobility programmes	Promotion of diversity and democracy through media, cultural, and mobility programmes	Promotion of unity (+ Othering of "West") through Russian media, cultural, and mobility programmes + emphasis of historical ties	Promotion of unity (+ Othering of "West") through Armenian media, cultural, and mobility programmes + emphasis of historical ties
Belief system	Promotion of universal European values through CSO support	Promotion of universal European values through CSO support	Promotion of traditional values (+ Othering of "West") through shared Church	Promotion of traditional values (+ Othering of "West") through shared religion

culture of diversity. In order to do so, it provided a platform for international exchange through cultural programmes and projects. The EU also provided assistance to develop an independent media sector—an essential part of the shared democratic values. Russian promotion of cultural unity and narratives Othering the EU took place through Russian media. It directly (re-)broadcasted Russian TV programmes in Moldova and indirectly informed national media outlets in Armenia that (re-)used the Russian narratives in their own reporting.

Co-optation into a shared system of beliefs took place through CSO support (European values) and a shared Church/religion (traditional values). Russia promoted its traditional values through the Russian Orthodox Church—in Moldova as part of its canonical territory and in Armenia as part of the Orthodox religion. In both countries, Russian practices of Othering "the West" emphasised the difference (and even threat) of Western liberal values. The EU supported the development of civil society in Moldova and Armenia to promote its liberal democratic values, co-opting CSOs into democratic processes and institutions.

5.3 Moldovan and Armenian Perceptions of Co-Optation

EU activities were perceived positively in both countries. The perception of Russian co-optation, on the other hand, was mixed. The decolonisation processes that occurred in the neighbourhood countries in the course of their (regained) independence took the form of state-building in opposition to Russia. In Moldova, this process was intertwined with the questions of national identity, resulting in negative perceptions on the part of the Moldovan majority. In Armenia, perceptions were positive because Russian coloniality was not perceived as a threat to Armenia's national identity. In fact, there was more difference between Moldovan and Armenian perceptions of EU and Russian co-optation activities than between the activities themselves.

5.3.1 Moldovan Perceptions

Moldovan perceptions of the hegemonic power relation with the EU and Russia suggest that their respective ideologies co-existed in Moldovan society (see Table 5.4). On the one hand, there was still an attachment and a certain familiarity with Russia due to the experience of

Table 5.4 Moldovan perceptions of EU and Russian co-optation activities

Perceptions	*Regional power*	*Language*	*Culture*	*Belief system*
Positive	EU	–	Historical links with Europe, quality of life	CSOs committed to European values
Mixed	Russia	Contested by Moldovan speakers	Dominance of Russian media	Importance of traditional values

Russian/Soviet dominance. According to one interviewee, "they understand us better [...] because you have all these symbols and myths, for example, everyone in the whole region watched the same movies for New Year's".[14] However, another interviewee saw similar links with the EU: "I believe that the soft power of the European Union is very strong. That means identity, culture, affinities, history, and the fact that the Romanian language is an official language of the European Union".[15]

5.3.2 Language

The role of the Russian language as a result of Russian coloniality was mentioned by four out of 14 Moldovan interviewees. They pointed to the long history of Russification in Moldova during which "locals were forced to switch to Russian, to learn Russian" and "a culture was developed so that if you didn't speak Russian, you would be left out of opportunities because the Russian-speakers would have access to the decision-making processes".[16] This historical experience of Russian colonialism informed Moldovan perceptions. With Moldova's independence, the idea of Russian as a language of inter-ethnic communication became interwoven with questions of national identity.

In fact, language politics were at the heart of Moldovan national identity construction. This politicisation was particularly visible in the discussion over the name of the official state language. Although, in 2013, the Moldovan constitutional court decided that Romanian was the name

[14] Interview with Moldovan civil society representatives UA21, 2020.

[15] Interview with Moldovan politician PA16, 2020.

[16] Interview with Moldovan think tank representative QA17, 2020.

of the official language of the Republic of Moldova (Constitutional Court of the Republic of Moldova 2013), the debate continued in Moldovan society. One interviewee's response was in line with the opinion of the constitutional court: "There is really no distinction between Moldovans and Romanians—we speak the same language".[17] Another stated that due to the separation of Moldova and Romania for most of the twentieth century, the languages evolved separately. In the 1990s, Moldovans then discovered that "they could speak neither Romanian nor Russian—it was a mixture of the two".[18]

Generally, there was an increase in the number of respondents declaring Romanian their native language and a decrease in the ones that declared it to be Moldovan between 2004 and 2014. Yet, the majority of Moldovan citizens still stated that Moldovan was their native language (National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova 2014). According to one interviewee, this was closely related to the question of identity: "We don't know the name of the language yet, we don't know how to identify ourselves".[19]

In light of these perceptions, it is not surprising that the Moldovan and Romanian native speakers rejected the idea of a shared language with the Russian Federation. They did not understand why non-Russian native speakers would use Russian to communicate: "Why don't they speak Gagauz in Gagauzia? They don't speak Romanian at all, but they all speak Russian!".[20] The language question polarised Moldovan society: In a 2010 opinion poll, 48% of the respondents thought that Russian should be a second official language compared to 45% thinking it should not (IRI 2010).

This division was also reflected at the political level, where the socialist party was in favour of strengthening the Russian language in opposition to the liberal parties. At the end of 2020, the socialist majority in the Moldovan parliament passed a law enhancing the status of the Russian language. It required the names of goods and services on the Moldovan market to also be indicated in Russian language. However, the law was ultimately revoked by the constitutional court (Tanas 2021).

[17] Interview with Moldovan politician PA16, 2020.

[18] Interview with Moldovan think tank representative QA17, 2020.

[19] Interview with Moldovan civil society representatives UA21, 2020.

[20] Ibid.

5.3.3 *Culture*

The co-optation activity most discussed by Moldovan interviewees was the Russian cultural and media outreach. According to them, the narratives that the Moldovan public received through these channels were propaganda, disinformation, and fake news. These narratives were about "the decay of the West, the aggressive expansion of the West, [and] the Americanisation of European societies".[21] Interviewees mentioned how European values were portrayed as negative, and the European emphasis on LGBTQ rights was framed as a threat. According to civil society representatives, the prevalence of these Russian narratives was due to two factors: The failure of the Audiovisual Council (*Consiliul Audiovizualului*) to impose harsher sanctions to curtail Russian influence and the lack of EU communication.[22]

The Russian dubbing of foreign movies was especially important in Moldova. The Cyrillic alphabet was abandoned in the 1990s, and Moldovan returned to the Latin-based Romanian alphabet. The Romanian TV channel broadcasted foreign movies and series only with subtitles in the Romanian alphabet—which a majority of Moldovans could not read. They only knew the Cyrillic alphabet. This lack of knowledge remained a problem in rural areas, where the consumption of Russian channels remained high.[23] Furthermore, interviewees mentioned the adjustment of jokes in Russian dubbing as an important factor contributing to the popularity of Russian channels. One Moldovan speaker stated that they prefer to watch Russian original and dubbed movies because "Romanians are not very good at entertainment. I mean, I really don't get the Romanian humour".[24]

Moldovans also viewed historical links with Russia as important. Interviewees mentioned the "heroisation of the past"[25] and the Russian narrative about the Second World War, the long history starting with the Russian Empire in 1812, and the Russian investments and development of the capital Chisinau as drivers of pro-Russian sentiments in Moldova.

[21] Interview with Moldovan politician PA16, 2020.

[22] Interview with Moldovan think tank representative QA17, 2020; Interview with Moldovan civil society representatives UA21, 2020.

[23] Interview with Moldovan think tank representative QA17, 2020.

[24] Interview with Moldovan civil society representatives UA21, 2020.

[25] Interview with Moldovan politician PA16, 2020.

At the same time, the EU's cultural activities were viewed as incommensurable compared to the Russian ones.[26] However, they were valued by Moldovan political leaders because they served as a platform for the promotion of national and local culture. They were perceived as an opportunity to "bring to the EU citizens the culture of the EaP countries that can show that they are not that different" and that "Europe doesn't end with the EU".[27]

Moldovan interviewees thought that the lack of effective communication from and about the EU contributed to anti-European and pro-Russian sentiments in the country. One interviewee questioned how much Moldovans actually understood the EU and European integration: "The issue is not a lack of information – they inform about numbers, and legislation, and other details, but for someone who does not understand the EU, this is difficult".[28]

When asked about a cultural attachment with the EU, Moldovan interviewees only mentioned (labour) mobility and the diaspora as drivers of a potential attachment.[29] According to a representative of the Moldovan government: "We have more than 1.2 million citizens abroad [...] it's about a third of the population which means that this mobility is creating a different perception about the external world".[30] Interviewees from the civil society also mentioned that most Moldovans view the EU model as attractive because of the higher living standards that they—or their migrant family members—experienced in the EU. Indeed, in a 2013 survey on what the EU means to them, most Moldovans responded with—liberty to work anywhere in the EU followed by travel and economic prosperity. Only 6.1% answered with "cultural diversity" (Institute for Public Policy 2013).

[26] Ibid.

[27] Interview with Moldovan official KA11, 2019.

[28] Interview with Moldovan expert SA19, 2020.

[29] Interview with Moldovan civil society representatives UA21, 2020; Interview with Moldovan think tank representative QA17, 2020.

[30] Interview with Moldovan politician PA16, 2020.

5.3.4 Belief System

The majority of Moldovans supported the traditional values promoted by the ROC thinking that the Church strengthened morality in their society. The Church as an institution enjoyed a high level of trust (70%) among Moldovan citizens, although religion was important to less than half of Moldovans.[31] For Moldovans, being Orthodox meant, first and foremost, personal faith (followed by national culture or family tradition). Almost all Moldovans thought that homosexuality should not be accepted in society, and very few were in favour of same-sex marriage and legal abortion. The Othering of "the West" was a practice shared with more than 50% of Moldovans thinking that there is a conflict between Moldovan traditional values and Western values (Pew Research Center 2017). Only one Moldovan interviewee associated these values and Moldovan opposition to the adoption of laws to prevent sexual discrimination with the Russian narrative.[32]

At the same time, a commitment to European values was mentioned by eight Moldovan interviewees. One expert stated that young Moldovans support European integration because "they look to the European model, the European values – democracy, human rights, rule of law".[33] Moldovan CSOs also subscribed to democratic values and advocated for institutional and political reforms to enhance the state of democracy in Moldova. The ones that were institutionally co-opted by the EU believed that they should play a role in domestic policy-making processes to strengthen democracy.

However, it was difficult for these CSOs to diffuse these democratic values to the rest of Moldovan society. The 2014 bank fraud investigation led to the arrest of members of the Moldovan pro-European elite for corruption, which, in turn, led to disillusionment in Moldovan society: "The message of European integration became overused and was associated with the messengers".[34] And so, citizen trust in CSOs remained low (24% in 2017 [European Commission 2018]), and organisations were reporting citizens' indifference as one of the main difficulties in their work (Chiriac and Tugui 2014). In response, Moldovan CSOs had to change

[31] See Public Opinion Barometer of the Institute for Public Policy.

[32] Interview with Moldovan civil society representative OA15, 2020.

[33] Interview with Moldovan expert SA19, 2020.

[34] Interview with Moldovan think tank representative QA17, 2020.

their communication strategy: "We don't do EU propaganda directly, we just promote certain values which are ok for the EU – transparent government, lack of corruption, and so on".[35]

Nevertheless, the promotion of these values stood in contrast to the promotion of traditional values. The fact that Moldovans perceive a conflict between its own traditional and "Western" values is due to the fact that "civil society in Moldova failed to explain these [European] values"[36] which, in turn, allowed the Russian negative framing of European values to gain traction in Moldovan society. This became evident in an interview when two civil society representatives were asked about European values, and one associated them with (sexual) minority rights as promoted by the Russian narrative:

> *UA21a*: Like minority rights?
> *Author*: For example.
> *UA21a*: I think you have young people who feel attached to it, but I think the older generation is still much more traditional.
> *UA21b*: But it's interesting that when you asked about European values – that is basically universal human rights – [UA21a] thinks right away...
> *UA21a*: ...yes, I know [laughs] I am a victim of the socialist propaganda
> *UA21b*: And I think a lot of people would do exactly the same – think about that and not think about the basic human rights, all these freedoms and so on.

5.3.5 Armenian Perceptions

In Armenian society, ideological ties with the EU and Russia also co-existed (see Table 5.5). Russia was largely viewed as Armenia's security guarantor—"Russia has been the saviour for Armenians since 1828 at least"[37]—and a place for work—"where people go and send money from".[38] Indeed, most Armenians saw Russia as the main friend of the country, although this number has declined since 2013 (CRRC 2021). According to one interviewee, this is due to the feeling of betrayal in

[35] Interview with Moldovan civil society representative OA15, 2020.

[36] Interview with Moldovan civil society representatives UA21, 2020.

[37] Interview with Armenian civil society representative LB38, 2021.

[38] Interview with Armenian think tank representative EB31, 2021.

Table 5.5 Armenian perceptions of EU and Russian co-optation activities

Perceptions	*Regional power*	*Language*	*Culture*	*Belief system*
Positive	EU	–	Importance of cultural projects, quality of life	CSOs committed to European
Positive	Russia	Russian as foreign language	Importance of diaspora and historical links	Importance of traditional values

Armenian society: "We chose Russia, we declined the EU offer to sign the Association Agreement and somehow say goodbye to our efforts or chances to modernise, but why did we do all of this? […] To have full Russian support against Azerbaijan".[39]

Another interviewee explained that there was the expectation that Armenia could count on its Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) ally during the war because, in the Armenian view, the war constituted an attack on Armenians (whereas the Russian leadership did not consider Nagorno-Karabakh a part of the Republic of Armenia).[40] And so, in the absence of this full support in the 2016 and 2020 wars, perceptions changed. The EU, on the other hand, was considered an important economic partner for Armenia (31% [Center for Insights in Survey Research 2019]) and viewed as something good in Armenian society.[41]

5.3.6 Language

Armenians viewed Russian as a minority or foreign language. Hence, the language question was much less polarising than in Moldova. Despite the fact that 81% considered speaking Armenian important for being part of the Armenian nation (Pew Research Center 2017), communicating in Russian was not politicised in Armenia. Or as one interviewee stated:

[39] Interview with Armenian civil society representative GB33, 2021.

[40] Interview with Armenian expert TB46, 2021.

[41] Interview with Armenian expert IB35, 2021.

"We learn Russian in school, everybody speaks Russian".[42] Another interviewee pointed to Russian/Soviet coloniality and the role of the large Armenian diaspora in Russia:

> One of the reasons for independence was to strengthen the Armenian language, which was being affected by the imposition of the Soviet Russian language. But over the years, you can see that not much has changed here because there are so many Armenians who either live in Russia seasonally or permanently and only visit Armenia, or they have relatives there, or they work in Russian companies here, etc. You can now hear Russian in Yerevan's streets no less than during the Soviet times.[43]

Unlike in Moldova, the We constructed through the idea of Russian as a communication language never gained traction in Armenian national identity construction. The Russian language was closely tied to the idea of the Russian Self perceived as distinct from the Armenian one also because the imposition of the Russian language by the Soviet Union and the resulting need to strengthen the Armenian language was one of the reasons for Armenian independence. One interviewee noted that the Russian efforts promoting language and culture have increased over time, but they were not very effective because Russia lacked an attractive image: "With the EU it's more or less clear, you are making reforms to live like people in Europe [...] with Russia it is not clear – to have what?".[44]

5.3.7 Culture

Although the Russian co-optation attempts to mobilise historical links focused on the shared experience of World War II, the evidence points to different shared historical memories. One expert stated that the shared Soviet history created some form of attachment between the "post-Soviet" societies through identity markers such as food, traditions, and architecture. Another one pointed to the role of ancient cultures in the complex nation-building and self-determination processes. Overall, these historical links significantly shaped the relationship of the Armenian society with Russia:

[42] Interview with Armenian expert KB37, 2021.

[43] Interview with Armenian civil society representative LB38, 2021.

[44] Interview with Armenian expert TB46, 2021.

> This is a 200-year-long relationship of symbiosis. We wouldn't be sitting here now if, in 1828, Russia had not conquered certain territories from the Persian empire and established this area as the area of Armenian habitation – even if it didn't have a status until 1918. This is a very important, very different type of relationship [than with the EU].[45]

Mass media was less prominent than in Moldova: Only two Armenian interviewees mentioned the Russian media, whereas all Moldovan interviewees highlighted the role of Russian media in Moldovan society. In 2019, 89% of Armenians used Armenian TV as a source of political information compared to 32% using Russian TV (Center for Insights in Survey Research 2019). Armenians considered international TV channels (along with national and local radio) to be the most reliable and independent source of information. They were particularly satisfied with the professional reporting in Russian newspapers (72%) and Russian TV (56%) (CRRC 2019). Thus, the perception among Armenians is that the media is not an important instrument of Russian influence, and so most Armenians are not aware that they are consuming Russian narratives.

Like in Moldova, there was no mention of the Russian mobility programmes, but interviewees mentioned the large Armenian diaspora in Russia. The three million Armenians living and working in Russia maintained close personal and economic ties with their home country, driving the continued familiarity with the Russian language and culture (Rosstat 2022b). Armenians also viewed the EU's cultural and mobility programmes as important. The EU's Erasmus+ programme promoting academic mobility was viewed as more competitive than the Russian programmes. According to one interviewee, this was mainly because the Russian programmes are not as well advertised as Erasmus through the organisation of the Erasmus days and its own office.[46] As a result, many Armenians in mid-level and higher management positions received a Western education.

Since 2018, Armenia has participated in four cultural projects financed by the Creative Europe programme. Like in Moldova, these projects promoted the diversity narrative, emphasising the importance of national and local culture. Armenian leaders valued these projects as a way to develop and promote their national culture abroad. One interviewee

[45] Interview with Armenian civil society representative LB38, 2021.

[46] Interview with Armenian civil society representative LB38, 2021.

mentioned the "possibilities for young writers to speak loudly about Armenia, making Armenia recognisable, speaking about ourselves, who we are" as important "for a small country with a rich culture and history but with poor resources".[47]

In terms of cultural attachment, interviewees reported that Armenians generally had a positive view of the EU associating it with quality of life but observing also "some worrying trends with regards to traditional values".[48] This position was reflected in the latest Caucasus Barometer survey. Most respondents who would support Armenia's EU membership thought it would improve people's economic conditions. However, the respondents who did not support accession to the EU did so because they thought it would harm Armenia's culture and traditions (CRRC 2021). One civil society representative cautioned that the association of Europe with prosperity produced a fallacy in Armenians' mindsets. When they "see that Europe is more developed, richer, cleaner, better organised"[49] they think it is because of the EU's current policies and try to import them to Armenia. This, however, means ignoring the long history of economic and political development that took place in Europe.

5.3.8 Belief System

In Armenia, trust in the Church was also high (74%), but rather than personal faith, religion meant national identity and national culture/family tradition to most Armenians (Center for Insights in Survey Research 2019). They also thought that there was a conflict between their traditional values and Western values. Yet, although almost all Armenians opposed homosexuality and same-sex marriage. More than 50% were in favour of legalising abortion (Pew Research Center 2017). Some civil society actors stated that conservative groups linked with the Church were opposing non-discrimination measures and associated it with LGBTQ rights in order to discredit the EU and that they were "partly paid by

[47] Interview with Armenian official FB32, 2021.

[48] Interview with Armenian civil society representative GB33, 2021.

[49] Interview with Armenian think tank representative EB31, 2021.

Russia".[50] Although Armenians viewed both Russia and Europe as Christian, there was the perception that the EU went too far from these traditional values.[51]

A part of Armenian civil society was committed to fight for European values which already existed in Armenian society: "There were a lot of civil society people here who were fighting for these values anyway, but […] the EU somehow forced the government to hear them".[52] However, their ability to co-opt citizens into the European value system was limited. The fact that CSOs had to rely predominantly on external funding meant that CSO activity became donor-driven and detached from the local population. 54% of Armenians thought that CSOs were not able to effectively address social issues, and 58% were of the opinion that they were not able to influence policy-making (Paturyan 2014). Even after the Velvet Revolution in 2018, only 52% of Armenians had a positive opinion about CSOs (Center for Insights in Survey Research 2019). Communication and terminology, however, distort the polling data. One CSO representative pointed out that "this NGO-speak is a very foreign thing for the Armenian society" and "even the word civil society is not liked, but if you ask who is the change-maker in your community they will usually mention an NGO leader".[53]

5.3.9 Moldovan and Armenian Perceptions Compared

There was more difference between Moldovan and Armenian perceptions of EU and Russian co-optation activities than between the activities themselves. Co-optation through a shared language was perceived differently in Armenia than in Moldova due to the homogeneity of the Armenian population. The Russian language was used by Armenians as a foreign language that did not touch on questions of national identity, whereas it became central to the discussion on national identity in Moldovan society. This discussion also included the Romanian language, which was shared but not associated with the EU.

[50] Interview with Armenian civil society representative LB38, 2021.

[51] Interview with Armenian expert KB37, 2021; Interview with Armenian civil society representative GB33, 2021.

[52] Interview with Armenian civil society representative LB38, 2021.

[53] Ibid.

In both Moldova and Armenia, cultural attachment to the EU was produced by the quality of life associated with the European model. This was supported by the EU's mobility and cultural programmes. Russian cultural attachment was perceived as the result of historical links other than the one promoted by Russia. In Moldova, the presence of media and pop culture played a significant role, whereas in Armenia, it was the large diaspora in Russia.

Lastly, traditional values stood in contrast to Western values in both societies. Nevertheless, Moldovan and Armenian CSOs committed to European values but were unable to diffuse them in the wider society because of a lack of trust. In Moldova, this was due to the association of the pro-European elite with corruption, whereas in Armenia, the concept of CSOs in general was perceived as alien.

5.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I compared the uses of co-optation as a mechanism of hegemonic power by the EU and Russia in Moldova and Armenia. The four cases were compared across the three dimensions of ideology—shared language, culture, and belief system—revealing the differences between EU and Russian co-optation.

Co-optation is characterised by the lack of outwardly apparent conflicting interests. In this context, regional hegemons alter the ideas and beliefs within neighbouring countries to secure agreement. This process hinges on ideology—an inherent philosophy embedded within language, culture, media, and belief system. Through this mechanism, the hegemon has the capability to reshape the ideas of societal actors, effectively integrating them into the hegemon's ideological framework. Consequently, these entities aspire to emulate the hegemon's preferred behaviour, as this aligns with their own convictions and, consequently, preferences.

The findings showed that Russian activities placed it closer to the ideal type of the co-optation mechanism. Firstly, the shared language element was only used by Russia. Secondly, a shared culture based on the unity with Russian culture was promoted by Moscow, whereas Brussels reinforced Armenian and Moldovan national cultures through diversity. Lastly, Russia used the shared Church and Orthodox religion to co-opt Moldovans and Armenians into a belief system based on traditional values, whereas the EU sought to co-opt CSOs into its belief system based on

liberal democratic values. Russian co-optation activities were designed partly in reference to the EU with practices of Othering of "the West".

The findings also show that regional power activities are perceived differently in the neighbourhood countries. Whereas Russian as a shared language was contested by parts of Moldovan society, this was not politicised in Armenia. Furthermore, positive images of the EU and Russia were not necessarily linked to their co-optation activities but to the perceptions about lifestyle and economic prosperity created through the diaspora and mobility. The traditional values reinforced by Russian activities were perceived as standing in conflict with "Western" values, and the promotion of democratic liberal values through CSOs did not reach the broader society because the concept of civil society was perceived as foreign. These findings suggest that both academic and policy-oriented scholarship need to pay more attention to local and national contexts when examining and comparing external actors' influence.

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CHAPTER 6

EU and Russian Hegemonic Power Over Time: From a Common Neighbourhood Policy Towards Differentiation

The previous three chapters showed that Russia and the EU employed all three mechanisms of hegemonic power towards Moldova and Armenia. In terms of coercion, Russian uses were closer to the ideal type because the Russian leadership unilaterally issued threats or punishments. These actions were ad hoc reactions to a Western orientation in the neighbourhood countries. EU coercive actions focused mainly on rewards and included elaborate demands to implement democratic and institutional reforms.

The EU's hegemonic power was closest to the ideal type of prescription. It prescribed food safety rules that were fundamentally different from the existing rules in the former Soviet countries. They were, however, coherent in their focus on safe *processes* in food production. The EU extended these rules through regulatory obligations for export products and—with the shift in the market boundary—also for the entire Moldovan food production. The Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) enabled Russia to also develop its uses of prescription. Its rules and standards partly emulated EU and international ones but fundamentally remained focused on the provision of safe *products*. Due to the incompatibility between the two approaches, it was more difficult to prescribe the rules. Nevertheless, Moldovan exporters were obliged to comply, and Armenia—after its accession to the EAEU—had to apply the rules to its entire domestic food production.

I. Burmester, *EU and Russian Hegemony in the 'Shared Neighbourhood'*,
The European Union in International Affairs,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-75488-3_6

For co-optation, it became clear that Russia had a cultural advantage due to the historical links with the neighbourhood countries. That is why Russian co-optation was closest to the ideal type using all three dimensions. Russia promoted the use of the Russian language as a means of communication and the Russian culture as a means to unify the societies. Traditional values were promoted through the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) and used to create a common identity in opposition to "the West". The EU only used cultural programmes to promote a diverse culture and civil society support to extend its values.

There was a difference in the normative justification of the uses of all three mechanisms. The EU, in its discourse, legitimised the exercise of hegemonic power and argued that it was actually in the small states' interests to comply with EU demands. Russia, on the other hand, did not advance any legitimising arguments.

This chapter brings the evidence for the uses of the three mechanisms together to answer the second research question: *How far did the exercises of the types of hegemonic power by the EU and Russia approximate over time?* The diachronic comparison between the uses of all three hegemonic power mechanisms across three periods reveals how the mechanisms relate to each other and how EU and Russian hegemonic power activities in their shared neighbourhood evolved over time.

I argue that there was an approximation in terms of the mechanisms used by the EU and Russia. With time, the EU developed and used more co-optation instruments and strengthened its conditionality approach. Russia, on the other hand, was enabled to use prescription as a mechanism of hegemonic power through the EAEU. Thus, they both came to use all three mechanisms to exert their hegemonic power. This does not mean that they also came to use them in the same way. There were still differences in *how* they used these mechanisms—as shown in the previous chapters. Furthermore, there was a difference in the institutionalisation and interconnectedness of the three mechanisms.

In fact, the EU's hegemonic power activities became more institutionalised and interlinked over time. The EU used conditionality in connection with prescription and co-optation—first with the Eastern Partnership (EaP) in 2009 and then with the revised European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) in 2015. In these policies, conditionality was used to ensure the implementation of its values and food safety rules. The Russian government, on the other hand, exercised hegemonic power

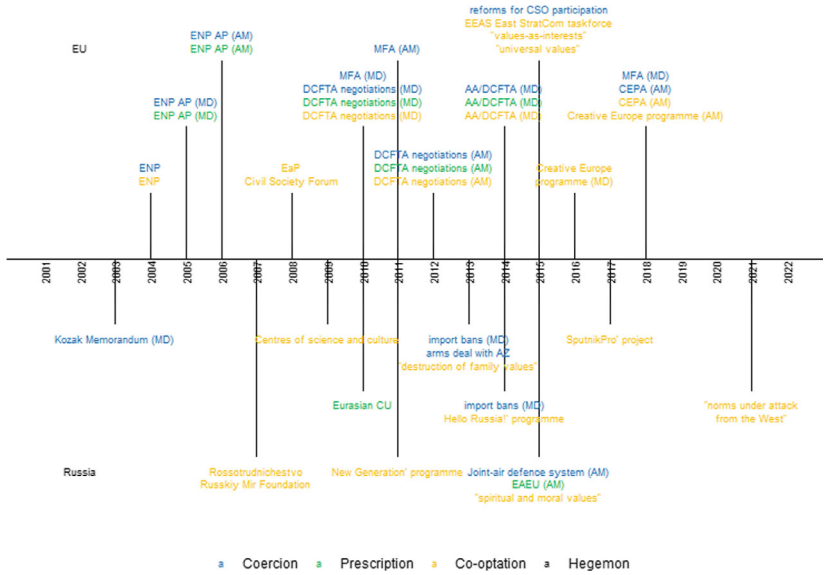

Fig. 6.1 Timeline of EU and Russian hegemonic power activities

through the three mechanisms separately. Coercive activities, such as military deterrence or energy and trade bans, were not used in conjunction with the prescription of food safety rules or the diffusion of Russian culture and traditional values. The values element was introduced to Russian co-optation activities in 2013 and used to clearly define the EU as the Other. These practices of Othering started when the relations between the EU and Russia had significantly deteriorated leading up to the start of the war in Ukraine in 2014.

6.1 EU and Russian Hegemonic Power Activities in Moldova and Armenia from 2000 Until 2021

During this time, both actors came to use all three hegemonic power mechanisms, especially after 2015. In the early 2000s, both actors developed their policies. The EU established a common policy and started to institutionalise and consolidate the use of the three mechanisms. Russia

was using coercion mainly in the form of military deterrence and started to develop its co-optation instruments in 2007.

2009 was the first turning point when the EU inaugurated the EaP that included more comprehensive bilateral Association Agreements (AAs) and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (DCFTAs). This new policy was a further institutionalisation of the EU's approach. At the same time, Russia furthered the Eurasian integration process with the establishment of a Customs Union (CU)—a first step towards the development of a prescription instrument.

The second turning point was 2014/2015 when the EU signed AAs with three neighbourhood countries, and Russia started the war in Ukraine. After that, EU and Russian policies became more differentiated between the two neighbourhood countries. Moldova—having signed the AA—received more prescription and also coercion and co-optation from the EU. Armenia, who joined the EAEU, was subject to more uses of prescription and coercion by Russia.

The retrieval of the coded data by period served as the basis for this qualitative analysis. In addition, a non-exhaustive timeline (Fig. 6.1) shows the main events (i.e., introduction of a new policy instrument) for the EU (top) and Russia (bottom). The events are coded in three different colours that correspond to the code family (i.e., the mechanism; see also Table A.3 in Appendix A.3) of the coded data. Because I am most interested in how the regional powers' exercise of power changed, the analysis focuses on EU and Russian activities and not on Moldovan and Armenian perceptions.

6.1.1 From 2000 Until 2008: A Common Neighbourhood Policy

During this first period, both the EU and Russia developed their policy instruments towards the neighbourhood countries (see Fig. 6.1). The EU developed and implemented a common policy for all neighbourhood countries (South and East) combining coercive and co-optative activities in its new ENP. Russia also developed a common policy by adding an external dimension to its cultural policy but using coercion and co-optation separately. The two approaches differed in so far as that the EU negotiated its coercive activities with the neighbourhood countries, whereas Russia imposed them unilaterally (see Table 6.1).

In 2002, the EU started to develop its new Neighbourhood Policy in anticipation of a significant shift of its external borders with the Eastern

Table 6.1 EU and Russian hegemonic power activities between 2000 and 2008

Case	*Mechanism*	*2000–2008*
EU-MD	Coercion	Positive conditionality (ENP AP)
EU-MD	Prescription	Legislative approximation (ENP AP)
EU-MD	Co-optation	Civil society support to promote values
EU-AM	Coercion	Positive conditionality (ENP AP)
EU-AM	Prescription	Legislative approximation (ENP AP)
EU-AM	Co-optation	Civil society support to promote values
RU-MD	Coercion	Positive/negative conditionality, negative sanctions
RU-MD	Prescription	–
RU-MD	Co-optation	Cultural programmes (Rossotrudnichestvo, Russkiy Mir)
RU-AM	Coercion	Negative conditionality (general deterrence)
RU-AM	Prescription	–
RU-AM	Co-optation	Cultural programmes (Rossotrudnichestvo, Russkiy Mir)

enlargement (to take place in 2004). The aim was to develop a unified approach towards the new neighbours. It was devised to offer neighbouring countries the possibility to participate in EU activities, which would, in turn, strengthen stability and security at the EU's borders. A significant change in the EU's approach to these countries was to offer a stake in the EU's internal market in exchange for the approximation of countries' legislation and regulations to the EU ones (Commission of the European Communities 2004). Thus, the EU came to use a form of positive conditionality—an approach previously used for accession candidates.

There was a co-occurrence between codes for the different mechanisms in the coded data, showing that the EU started to combine them in its new policy. The EU demanded partner countries' governments to carry out political and economic reforms through legislative and regulatory approximation. In exchange, the EU promised preferential access to its market. The specific conditions were negotiated with the partner countries and codified in ENP Action Plans so that they reflected the "level of ambition of the relationship".[1] These ENP APs were signed with Moldova and Armenia in 2005 and 2006 and defined the countries' approximation and reform commitments.

[1] See EU/Moldova Action Plan.

Prescription was linked to the EU's conditionality approach using the perspective of economic and political integration. A stake in the internal market was offered as inducement for reforms. Thus, market access was made dependent on the countries' capacity to implement their commitments. The ENP APs stipulated the negotiated reform and modernisation commitments for the SPS sectors that would apply not only to export products but also foodstuffs produced and sold on the domestic market (e.g., the implementation of EU requirements on animal health and for the processing of animal products). However, this prescription was not strong because the ENP APs were not legally binding and did not include a clear timetable for approximation and reform.

Coercion through conditionality was also difficult because the costs of compliance (domestic reforms) were higher for Armenian and Moldovan governments than the costs of non-compliance (no preferential access to the EU market), although the EU tried to mitigate the costs with financial and technical assistance.

Lastly, the ENP was also based on a mutual commitment to common values. This discourse was a first attempt at co-opting neighbouring societies into the EU's belief system. By supporting civil society actors, the EU sought to co-opt them into their belief system of "European values". According to the EU, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) should play an active role as a watchdog and participant in decision-making processes in liberal democracies. The perception of the EU was that civil society development would ultimately lead to democratic reforms, thereby diffusing its liberal democratic values. However, this was not negotiated with partner countries. Rather, the EU imposed its own—but perceived as universal—view of civil society unilaterally through its projects (Commission of the European Communities 2007).

Compared to the EU, there was less evidence of hegemonic power mechanisms on the Russian side between 2000 and 2008. This is partly due to the lack of documentation but also the fact that Russia was mainly concerned with the threats that the military conflicts in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) region posed to Russia's internal security (Nicole 2003). As the CIS moved from being an internal matter during the Soviet Union to a matter of foreign policy, the "development of good-neighbourly relations and strategic partnership with all CIS member states" (Kremlin 2000) was defined as a regional priority.

And although "practical relations with each of them should be structured with due regard for reciprocal openness to cooperation" (Kremlin 2000), the foreign policy concept did not define priorities for relations with individual states.[2]

Nevertheless, there was some evidence of Russian co-optation and coercion activities. Existing societal and cultural ties were acknowledged, and policy instruments were designed to reinforce these ties. During this time, the Russian cultural policy started to be more outward-focused with the creation of the Russkiy Mir Foundation in 2007 and *Rossotrudnichestvo* (Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States Affairs, Compatriots Living Abroad, and International Humanitarian Cooperation). The aim of Rossotrudnichestvo was to support compatriots living abroad and to provide international development assistance (Prezident 2008). Yet, the concept of compatriots—as defined in the 1999 policy on compatriots—had a broad definition and included not only Russian citizens living abroad but also "those who have made a free choice in favour of spiritual, cultural and legal ties with the Russian Federation" (Rossiiskaya Federatsiya 1999).

Russian coercion in Moldova took place through its military and energy presence in Transnistria. In 2003, the Russian government proposed a settlement of the conflict with a special status for Transnistria in a "united federal Moldovan state" (Regnum 2005). The reward of withdrawing its troops from Transnistria was made conditional upon a settlement of the conflict, which, in Russia's view, should provide a special status for the region (Human Rights Watch 1993). In the long term, this provided the Russian government with significant leverage over the Moldovan government and set up a situation of general extended deterrence—a long-term military balance protecting the Transnistrian territory (Greenhill and Krause 2018). Due to the military context, the Russian government was able to use negative conditionality. It threatened to escalate the conflict with Transnistria as a punishment should the government in Chisinau adopt a behaviour that was not in the interest of the Russian government.

In Armenia, Russia used positive conditionality that guaranteed Armenian security with the implied demand to act in line with Russian interests. The complex military balance in the South Caucasus provided Russia with

[2] With the exception of Belarus, which is mentioned because of the Union of Belarus and Russia project.

some leverage over Armenia. The Russian government was keen to keep the delicate security balance in the South Caucasus. It supported Armenia but refrained from intervening directly in the conflict because Armenia served as Russia's outpost in the region (Minasyan 2013). Armenia viewed Russia as a security guarantor and "acknowledge[d] its role in the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict" (Sovet 2007) without specifying what role Russia played in the conflict settlement. According to an Armenian official "Russia is our main ally - and vice versa".[3]

6.1.2 From 2009 Until 2014: From Cooperation to Competition

In 2009, there was a first shift in EU and Russian hegemonic power activities with the deterioration of the EU/West-Russia relations and the EU's new EaP. Overall, EU uses of the three mechanisms converged in the new Eastern Partnership approach, whereas Russian uses remained relatively separate (Table 6.2).

Russia deepened economic integration in Eurasia with the CU that enabled the use of prescription. Russian co-optation and prescription efforts developed but were not linked to coercion. The uses of hegemonic power mechanisms remained relatively detached from one another. The EU, on the other hand, further institutionalised its relations with neighbourhood countries by offering bilateral AAs (including a DCFTA). The uses of the three mechanisms were integrated into a coherent strategy in this policy.

The EU linked its use of positive sanctions to co-optation and prescription activities. The prospect of opening negotiations of a DCFTA was offered as a reward for more reforms and legislative approximation. The EU demanded the implementation of certain SPS rules as well as "sufficient progress towards common values and principles" (European Commission 2011). Contrary to the ENP APs, EU demands for the opening of negotiations (its so-called key recommendations) were imposed unilaterally and not negotiated with the partner countries (Fule 2010).

The negotiations of the AAs were concluded in 2013, and the agreements were to be signed at that year's EaP summit in Vilnius. The DCFTAs meant a change in the EU's approach to prescription and a

[3] Interview with Armenian officials UB47, 2021.

Table 6.2 EU and Russian hegemonic power activities between 2009 and 2014

Case	*Mechanism*	*2009–2014*
EU-MD	Coercion	Positive sanctions, positivel/negative conditionality
EU-MD	Prescription	Legislative approximation (DCFTA)
EU-MD	Co-optation	Common values (DCFTA), civil society support
EU-AM	Coercion	Positive sanctions, positive/negative conditionality
EU-AM	Prescription	Legislative approximation (DCFTA negotiations)
EU-AM	Co-optation	Common values, civil society support
RU-MD	Coercion	Positive/negative conditionality, negative sanctions
RU-MD	Prescription	SPS requirements for Eurasian market
RU-MD	Co-optation	Cultural/language programmes, Othering of "the West"
RU-AM	Coercion	Negative conditionality (general deterrence)
RU-AM	Prescription	SPS requirements for Eurasian market
RU-AM	Co-optation	Cultural/language programmes, Othering of "the West"

shift of the jurisdictional authority from the partner countries to the EU. Signing an Association Agreement (that includes a DCFTA) meant that partner governments were legally required to change national legislation regulating its domestic market to approximate it to EU legislation. During the AA negotiations, the EU defined conditions to be fulfilled before the signing of the DCFTA. The main SPS demands were the adoption of a national Food Safety Law in line with the EU's general food law, the establishment of a national Food Safety Authority, and the introduction of the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) system (Delcour 2016).

Lastly, the AA/DCFTA also included attempts of co-optation through the emphasis on the *common* or *shared* values as an identity marker of the collective We. The Association Agreement signed with Moldova in 2014 referred to common values as the basis for cooperation.

With the negotiation and conclusion of AAs, the EU's coercive conditionality approach was linked to its efforts to co-opt Moldovan and Armenian societies into its belief system. Civil society development was one of the EU objectives, and institutional reform to allow CSOs to play an active role in the policy-making process was among the EU demands. It was also linked to its prescription efforts. For example, the conditions for trade in plants, plant products, animals, and products of animal origin required Moldova to approximate its legislations to an extensive list of

EU Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) laws and to reform institutional and laboratory infrastructure.

Apart from these policy changes, there were also changes in the use of coercion. Between 2009 and 2014, the EU started to use negative conditionality, for example, when it came to the provision of Macro-Financial Assistance (MFA). After the 2009 financial crisis, both economies were struggling, and so the Moldovan and Armenian governments asked for MFA. For the first time, the EU carried out a threat that was codified in an agreement when its demands were not met. Thus, between 2009 and 2014, the EU started to also use (positive) sanctions. EU uses of the three mechanisms converged in its Eastern Partnership approach.

Russia, on the other hand, unilaterally prescribed food safety rules. Its uses of the three mechanisms remained separated. During this period, the Russian government developed new co-optation and prescription instruments but did not consolidate the three mechanisms. In 2013, the Russian leadership used negative sanctions to coerce the Moldovan and Armenian governments not to sign the agreement and to join the EAEU instead. The threats to Armenia's national security and low energy prices rendered prescription possible. Following Armenian acquiescence to Russian coercion, the government signed a treaty on its accession to the EAEU, which brought about a shift in the jurisdictional authority. As an EAEU member, Armenia was obliged to implement the TRs of the CU including the ones on SPS measures (Eurasian Economic Union 2014, Art. 53).

In Moldova, Russian coercion was purely based on Moldova's trade and energy dependence, although a security dependence also existed. The Russian leadership resorted to a number of trade bans using the SPS clauses of the CIS FTA to ban imports of Moldovan wine and other agri-food products. The Russian government's perception of the Moldovan and Armenian ontological security was in line with the countries' own views: Moldova put more emphasis on its economic security, and Armenia prioritised its territorial security.

The deepening of Eurasian integration with the establishment of a CU in 2010 marked a first step in the shift of the jurisdictional authority towards a supranational level, thereby constituting a prescription instrument for Russia. Although harmonised rules already existed in the form of the *Gosudarstvennyy Standart* (System of Government Standards—GOST)—a set of regional technical standards originating from the USSR

and used in the CIS countries—the jurisdictional authority for sectoral rules and standards was now conferred to the CU.

After its inception, the CU adopted a number of Technical Regulations (TRs) on food safety that laid the foundation for a Eurasian food safety system (Commission of the Customs Union 2011a, b). Although still a hazard-based system, the new TRs mention some of the EU's principles, such as traceability and transparency and the use of the HACCP system. Moldovan and Armenian products sold on the CU market needed to comply with the TRs by undergoing conformity assessment and using the Eurasian Conformity Mark (EAC) labelling.

Evidence for Russian co-optation of both Armenian and Moldovan societies increased significantly during this period. In 2009, centres of science and culture were opened in the Moldovan and Armenian capitals. The Russian Centres of Science and Culture act as representative offices of Rossotrudnichestvo in countries around the world. They provided "information support of the foreign policy actions of the Russian Federation" and "support of the Russian language and culture abroad" (Prezident 2002). In both countries, they offered Russian language courses and access to other educational material on Russian history and culture through their libraries.[4] In addition, the Russkiy Mir Foundation sought to promote the Russian language abroad "which is the national treasure of Russia and an important element of Russian and world culture" (Prezident 2007).

Furthermore, Rossotrudnichestvo established cultural programmes such as *Novoe Pokolenie* (New Generation) in 2011 and *Zdravstvui, Rossiya!* (Hello, Russia!) in 2014. The former allowed foreigners between 25 and 35 to visit Russia on "short-term study trips"[5] The latter organised cultural and educational trips for 14- to 19-year-old compatriots to "get acquainted with the modern life of their historical homeland"[6] These programmes were open to youth from any country in the world. However, in Moldova, the head of the Russian Centre suggested to organise trips specifically for Moldovan youth to educate them about their common history during World War II (Alena Pol'skikh 2013).

[4] See VK page of the Russkiy Dom.

[5] See here: https://en.rwp.agency/news/242/.

[6] See here: https://en.rwp.agency/programmy/news.php?ELEMENT_ID=53.

Apart from these new instruments, there also was a change in the Russian co-optation approach. Russia started to discursively construct a Western Other that threatened the moral and spiritual values of the Orthodox people in the post-Soviet space. The discourse was first used in 2013 by Russian President Vladimir Putin at the Valdai Forum that took place that year under the theme "Russia's Identity in the Rapidly Changing World". ROC representative Metropolitan Hilarion took up the discourse on his talk show on Russia's Vesti-24 RV channel. There, Hilarion referred to Putin's speech and the processes taking place in "the West":

> Indeed, a systemic destruction of family values is happening there today. It is done under the banner of liberalisation, the emancipation of people, the democratisation of society. [...] The President said that in the West today, religion is altogether passed over in silence; they seek to drive it to a ghetto. Even such feasts as Christmas and Easter are given other names allegedly to avoid bringing enmity in the inter-confessional society. The President said Russia will not take this path. It is a very important statement. (The Russian Orthodox Church 2013)

6.1.3 From 2015 Until 2021: Towards Differentiation

The data for this period show a more differentiated approach towards the two countries by the EU and Russia. The most significant change took place in the use of prescription. With the EU-Moldova DCFTA coming into force and Armenia joining the EAEU, there was a shift in the agri-food market boundary. This shift attributed jurisdictional authority in food safety rules to the EU and the EAEU respectively. Rules and standards were prescribed more in the country where a boundary shift had taken place.

There was also a differentiation in the use of the other mechanisms. The EU's bilateral agreements with Moldova (AA) and Armenia (CEPA) reflected the ambition and possibilities of engagement with each country. The EU also started to take a more pronounced stand on the adherence to European values and linked them closer to its conditionality.

For coercive activities, the Russian leadership concentrated its efforts on Armenia's security and Moldova's economic dependence. Only co-optation efforts were not differentiated but significantly increased towards

Table 6.3 EU and Russian hegemonic power activities between 2015 and 2021

Case	*Mechanism*	*2015–2021*
EU-MD	Coercion	Positivel/negative conditionality tied to CSO support
EU-MD	Prescription	Legislative approximation (DCFTA)
EU-MD	Co-optation	Universal values, communication, cultural programmes
EU-AM	Coercion	Positivel/negative conditionality (CEPA)
EU-AM	Prescription	SPS requirements for EU market
EU-AM	Co-optation	Universal values, communication, cultural programmes
RU-MD	Coercion	Positivel/negative conditionality
RU-MD	Prescription	SPS requirements for Eurasian market
RU-MD	Co-optation	Culturall/language programmes, Othering of "the West"
RU-AM	Coercion	Negative conditionality
RU-AM	Prescription	SPS rules directly applicable with EAEU accession
RU-AM	Co-optation	Culturall/language programmes, Othering of "the West"

both countries. Russia continued to emphasise the importance of traditional values and intensified its Othering of "the West" (see Table 6.3).

The EU-Moldova AA that had been provisionally applied since 2014 came full into force. It represented a further institutionalisation of the consolidated EU approach using all three mechanisms. EU coercion in Moldova was now codified in the extensive AA/DCFTA stipulating more specific conditions and the threat of suspension of benefits. In terms of prescription, the shift in the jurisdictional authority with the coming into force of the AA/DCFTA with Moldova was expanded. The Moldovan government approximated its national legislation to the SPS list, whereas, in Armenia, EU rules were only prescribed for export products.

The EU also increased its civil society support in both Moldova and Armenia and combined it with conditionality directed at their governments. EU reform demands stipulated in the AA/DCFTA with Moldova and the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) with Armenia included institutional changes to provide CSOs with a formal role in policy-making processes.

In the MFA, the EU also combined co-optation with coercion. Whereas the MFA disbursement had previously been suspended because the Moldovan government failed to meet the sector-specific demands, the second MFA demands were more focused on political developments related to the EU's democratic values. Following the discovery of the

large-scale bank fraud in 2014, the EU emphasised adherence to European liberal democratic values. In June 2018, the EU refused to disburse the first instalment in response to the political developments that took place in Moldova. It found that the political pre-conditions had not been met after the Chisinau mayoral election results were invalidated by Moldova's Supreme Court. After the constitutional crisis in June 2019, a new "pro-European" government was established, and the EU—seeing that its demands had been met—approved the disbursement of 30 million EUR (European Commission 2019).

In 2015, the EU reviewed and revised its neighbourhood policy and adapted it to the perceived changes in the European security environment. European values became "universal", and their promotion was defined as an interest that the EU needed to pursue in order to guarantee its own security:

> The EU will pursue its interests, which include the promotion of universal values. The EU's own stability is built on democracy, human rights, the rule of law, and economic openness, and the new ENP will take stabilisation as its main political priority in this mandate. (European Commission 2015)

This discursive construction of values-as-interests was also employed in the 2016 Global Strategy:

> Our interests and values go hand in hand. We have an interest in promoting our values in the world. At the same time, our fundamental values are embedded in our interests. Peace and security, prosperity, democracy and a rules-based global order are the vital interests underpinning our external action. (External Action Service 2016)

In line with this revised policy, the EU used more co-optation instruments in both Moldova and Armenia to enhance its strategic communication and public diplomacy. In the EU's view, the European External Action Service (EEAS) East StratCom task force created in 2015 was "instrumental in making the EU's communication and branding in the region strategic and impactful" (Council of the European Union 2020). In Moldova, the EU provided 5 million EUR to enhance communication about the EU and EU assistance. The stated reason for supporting the development of independent media in Moldova was that "there is limited

independent, neutral journalism and […] no means of countering misinformation/disinformation, including anti-EU propaganda" (Commission of the European Communities 2015). A similar project in Armenia was funded by the EU with 2 million EUR because "Armenia, engaged in a process of democratic transition, needs an independent, plural, reliable and responsible media sector"[7] According to this interviewee, the EU also realised that communicating with Moldovan and Armenian societies was important to "improve the perceptions of the EU".[8] The Moldovan media environment was particularly concentrated and influenced by Russian narratives. And so, the EU "started a campaign to positively communicate about our values and less directly fighting it [Russian narratives] because this they can use".[9]

The EU's use of cultural programmes as a co-optation instrument also increased during this time period. Both Moldovan and Armenia became associated countries to the EU Creative Europe programme, and each country participated in four projects.[10] According to one interviewee, the aim of these projects "is the promotion of European culture and its links to the local culture".[11]

This approach was paired with the EU's conditionality approach. Moldova, for example, became an associated country with the Creative Europe programme in 2016. Yet, until the EU Audio-Visual Directive is transposed into Moldovan law, the country does not have the right to participate in the media sub-programme. In the Moldovan view, this cultural instrument "is an important tool because it created ties that in times of conflict can smoothen the atmosphere".[12] However, according to one EU official, conflict also makes EU cultural support more difficult: "with the geopolitical situation, it may be difficult to streamline support.

[7] EU Neighbours East. 'EU to Support Independent, Plural, and Reliable Media in Armenia', 27 September 2021. https://euneighbourseast.eu/news/latest-news/eu-to-support-independent-plural-and-reliable-media-in-armenia/.

[8] Interview with EU officials MA13, 2019.

[9] Interview with EU official WA23, 2020.

[10] See Creative Europe Website of the European Commission.

[11] Interview with EU official NB40, 2021.

[12] Interview with Moldovan official KA11, 2019.

But in the future, there will be support of national identity in Eastern partnership countries".[13]

Russia also differentiated its approach to the two countries. Russian coercive activities continued and even increased in Armenia. Armenia—having complied with Russia's demands—joined the EAEU. Armenia's accession meant that there was less need for a deterrence strategy from the Russian leadership. The two countries even agreed on the establishment of a joint-air defence system in 2015 (Reuters 2016). When asked about Russia's foreign policy approach to Armenia, all Armenian interviewees mentioned hard power and military presence as the main source of Russian power along with Armenia's economic dependencies.[14] According to one interviewee, the Russian policy is to issue threats to the Armenian political elite: "[Russia] will continue to work with top officials by simply making them understand that you are dependent on us and that those [dependencies] are existential".[15]

The outcome and subsequent events of the 44-day war with Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh in 2020 deepened Armenia's security dependence on Russia. Armenia incurred significant territorial losses with the Russia-brokered ceasefire agreement which "Pashinyan was pushed to sign"[16] and which also led to a Russian military presence in Nagorno-Karabakh.

There have also been reports of a politicisation of the gas contract negotiations with Russia (Całus 2014). In 2021, Gazprom refused MoldovaGaz a deferral on their advance payment and threatened to halt gas deliveries. However, according to the Moldovan government, no political conditions were communicated, and the dispute was about commercial issues only (Całus 2021).

In terms of prescription, Armenia's accession to the EAEU rendered the CU TRs directly applicable. The direct application of CU TRs occurred simultaneously with the continuation of regulatory changes to adopt EU rules where possible (i.e. not in contradiction to EAEU laws). As one food safety expert explained, there were "some amendments to

[13] Interview with EU official GA07, 2019.

[14] Interview with Armenian civil society representative GB33, 2021; Interview with Armenian expert IB35, 2021; Interview with Armenian expert TB46, 2021; Interview with Armenian officials UB47, 2021.

[15] Interview with Armenian expert IB35, 2021.

[16] Interview with Armenian think tank representative SB45, 2021.

the law [to ensure coherent application of CU TRs] but the principle and idea were still European".[17] However, the resulting legal uncertainty paired with a lack of understanding of the fundamental difference between the EU and EAEU food safety systems hampered the effective implementation and application of both EU and EAEU rules.

The biggest change was observed with regard to co-optation. After 2014, the Russian discourse framed the EU and its values as a threat and sought to co-opt Moldovans and Armenians into the Self that was constructed through the Othering of "the West". Its 2015 cultural policy showed a confrontational discourse:

> The conflict develops at the level of civilisations between ideas about the right and wrong way of life. And in this kind of confrontation, the main trump card is the civilisational identity, expressed in our historical and cultural heritage and in our system of values. […] Accordingly, the preservation of this unique identity in the face of global confrontation is the most important task. (Prezident 2014)

Previously, Russian foreign policy had been mainly interest-based without references to values. In the 2009 National Security Strategy, these interests were defined as democratic and economic development, territorial integrity and sovereignty, and great power status (Prezident Rossii 2009). However, one of the stated objectives of the new strategy adopted in 2015 was the "preservation and enhancement of traditional Russian spiritual and moral values as the basis of Russian society" (Prezident 2015). These spiritual and moral values (*duxovno-nravstvennyj cennosti*) were defined as

> the priority of the spiritual over the material, protection of human life, human rights and freedoms, family, creative work, service to the Fatherland, norms of ethics and morality, humanism, mercy, justice, mutual assistance, collectivism, historical unity of the peoples of Russia, continuity of the history of our Homeland. (Prezident 2015)

Thus, the Russian culture and value system moved to the centre of the Russian identity and foreign policy discourse. In the multi-ethnic and multi-religious state of the Russian Federation, the Russian language and the "great Russian culture" (Prezident 2014) played a unifying role.

[17] Interview with Armenian expert OB41, 2021.

Subsequently, the discourse became more outward-looking and defined Russian values in opposition to "the West".

The 2021 National Security Strategy stated that Russian basic moral and cultural norms, religious ethos, the institution of marriage, and family values are under attack from the US and its allies. Furthermore, a lack of moral leadership was seen as the reason for the crisis of the Western liberal model and Russian spiritual and moral ideals and cultural and historical values as fundamental to the further development of the country (Prezident 2021). This development was also reflected in Russian uses of co-optation instruments. In Armenia, the number of free Russian language courses was increased (Moskvy 2021c). In Moldova, teachers were trained to enhance the quality of teaching in Russian (Rossotrudnichestvo 2016).

The Russian narrative also became more confrontational and claimed the discrimination of Russian speakers in both Armenia and Moldova:

> Reducing Russian language teaching in a number of countries causes serious problems, and it is a violation of the rights of those who speak Russian. These countries are the Baltic States, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan and many other countries, which deprive children of the opportunity to learn Russian. (ACGRC 2019)

Even the EU perceived language as the most important element of Russia's soft power.[18]

In addition to promoting the Russian language, cultural programmes through Rossotrudnichestvo and Russkiy Mir were also expanded. Four more branches of the Russian Centre of Science and Culture were opened in Armenian regions, and the Centre started to give free courses on Russian history (Moskvy 2021b). The Centre also started to cooperate with the Armenian Ayb Education Foundation on "the popularisation of the history and culture of Russia and Armenia, the preservation of the historical heritage and cultural values of the two peoples, [...] the preservation of the truth of interpretations of Russian-Armenian historical events" (Moskvy 2021a).

Russian media continued to dominate the Moldovan and Armenian news environment and was now used to distribute narratives discrediting the Western-led liberal international order (Zakem et al. 2018)

[18] Interview with EU official AA01, 2019.

and framing European values—in particular, LGBTQ rights—as a threat (The Editors 2017). Thus, the shifting boundaries of the Self disseminated through mass media relied on the Othering of Europe (and "the West"). Emulating the EU approach, the MIA *Rossiya Segodnya* international news agency launched the "SputnikPro" project in 2017. An agency representative stated that they "saw an interest among the professionals from the Far and Near Abroad to see the work of Russian media and learn something from us" (Rossotrudnichestvo 2019).

The ROC also constructed the EU and the West as the Other, emphasising the "community of values" (The Russian Orthodox Church 2017) it shared with Moldovans and Armenians. According to an EU official, this value-focused discourse was a reaction to the success of the DCFTA:

> It started in around 2013/2014, even before the signature, and is mainly related to religion. You know they are saying that the EU will force you to renounce your Orthodox religion, you won't be able to eat pork for Christmas and so on. So, Russia very much started this traditionalism versus modernism dichotomy that the EU has no real values; they promote LGBTI. And Russia is saying that basically you will become gay, or somehow it's like contagious, I mean, this is really the core of their message. And this is [...] effective because of the Church.[19]

6.2 Changes in EU and Russian Hegemonic Power Activities Over Time

Over time, EU and Russian uses of the three hegemonic power mechanisms gradually converged, and both came to use all three mechanisms (see Table 6.4). First, Russia developed its co-optation instruments to complement its coercive activities in the neighbourhood countries. The establishment of the CU and then the EAEU added a prescription instrument to the Russian approach.

EU uses of hegemonic power also evolved over the three time periods. They became more institutionalised and interlinked. The EU adopted a stronger stance in its conditionality approach and carried out threats and punishments. It also further developed its co-optation instruments. The EU's new neighbourhood policy (ENP) and its ENP APs were the main

[19] Interview with EU official WA23, 2020.

instruments used in Armenia and Moldova. The negotiated agreements combined elements of coercion, prescription, and co-optation.

Russia used its coercion and co-optation instruments separate from each other. In both Armenia and Moldova, Russia was able to establish a form of general extended deterrence through long-term military balance. Co-optation only started in 2007 when the Russian government changed its cultural policy and established Rossotrudnichestvo and the Russkiy Mir Foundation. Their programmes focused on commonalities and sought to transmit the Russian understanding of this shared history and culture.

EU co-optation, on the other hand, sought to diffuse democratic values by supporting civil society development. In 2009, the EaP introduced the prospect of closer cooperation through AA/DCFTAs. At the same time, Eurasian integration progressed, and the Russian government promoted the inclusion of Moldova and Armenia in the new EAEU. In 2013/14, at the time of the conclusion of the negotiations of these agreements, Moscow sought to coerce Moldova and Armenia with negative sanctions. Moldova was confronted with import bans, whereas Armenia had to face security threats to deter their governments from signing the agreement with the EU.

There was also a change in the Russian discourse reflecting the conflict with "the West". The emphasis on traditional family values and Othering of the West emerged as a practice. Nevertheless, the Russian activities remained detached from one another, and foreign policy instruments did not show combinations of mechanisms. The only exception was SPS rules that were used coercively when Russia imposed import bans on Moldovan wine and other food products, arguing that Moldova did not comply with the SPS rules.

Starting in 2015, the uses of prescription became more prominent in both hegemon's approaches. The EU-Moldova AA/DCFTA and Armenia's accession to the EAEU in 2015 constituted a shift in the jurisdictional authority and meant that EU and EAEU rules and standards were prescribed to Moldovan and Armenian national markets. As a result, national food safety regulations were changed. However, the fundamental difference between the EU and EAEU food safety systems and the lack of understanding of this difference in Moldova and Armenia hampered legislative adoption and implementation in both countries.

Lastly, both the EU and Russia increased their co-optation efforts. European values came to be defined as interests and universal in the

Table 6.4 EU and Russian hegemonic power activities across time

Case	*Mechanism*	*2000–2008*	*2009–2014*	*2015–2021*
EU-MD	Coercion	Positive conditionality (ENP AP)	Positive sanctions, positive/negative conditionality	Positive/negative conditionality tied to CSO support
EU-MD	Prescription	Legislative approximation of SPS rules (ENP AP)	Legislative approximation of SPS rules (DCFTA)	Legislative approximation (DCFTA implementation)
EU-MD	Co-optation	Civil society support to extend democratic values	Common values (DCFTA), civil society support	Universal values, communication, cultural programmes
EU-AM	Coercion	Positive conditionality (ENP AP)	Positive sanctions, positive/negative conditionality	Positive/negative conditionality (CEPA)
EU-AM	Prescription	Legislative approximation of SPS rules (ENP AP)	Legislative approximation of SPS rules (DCFTA negotiations)	SPS requirements for EU market
EU-AM	Co-optation	Civil society support to extend democratic values	Common values (DCFTA negotiations), civil society support	Universal values, communication, cultural programmes
RU-MD	Coercion	Positive/negative conditionality, negative sanctions	Positive/negative conditionality, negative sanctions	Positive/negative conditionality
RU-MD	Prescription	-	SPS requirements for Eurasian market	SPS requirements for Eurasian market
RU-MD	Co-optation	Cultural programmes (Rossotrudnichestvo, Russkiy Mir)	Cultural/language programmes, Othering of "the West"	Cultural/language programmes, Othering of "the West"
RU-AM	Coercion	Negative conditionality (general deterrence)	Negative sanctions	Negative conditionality
RU-AM	Prescription	-	SPS requirements for Eurasian market	SPS rules directly applicable with EAEU accession
RU-AM	Co-optation	Cultural programmes (Rossotrudnichestvo, Russkiy Mir)	Cultural/language programmes, Othering of "the West"	Cultural/language programmes, Othering of "the West"

revised ENP. As such, they were more clearly linked to EU prescription and coercion efforts. The EU tied its support and inducements to institutional reforms that ensure CSO participation in domestic policy-making processes. EU reform demands in both the Moldovan AA and the Armenian CEPA included institutional changes to provide CSOs with a formal role in policy-making processes. Furthermore, the EU relied on Moldovan and Armenian CSOs for the monitoring of the implementation of EU-demanded reforms and agreements (European Union 2014; Cukrowski et al. 2003).

There was a further increase in co-optation activities with the EEAS EastStratCom taskforce and the inclusion of the two countries in the Creative Europe programme. In particular, the EU started to emphasise the importance of effective communication with Moldovan and Armenian societies and countered Russian narratives. In fact, Russian co-optation through the practice of Othering continued to intensify after 2015. "Moral and spiritual values" entered the Russian foreign policy discourse, and its diffusion and externalisation were defined as an objective.

The Russian government developed its co-optation and prescription instruments, mimicking some of the EU's media and integration projects. At the same time, the EU's approach towards the neighbourhood countries became more coercive with the use of actual punishments. The revised ENP aimed to respond to the perceived instability at the EU's borders with a stronger emphasis on reform progress—a reinforcement of its conditionality approach. Hence, the EU used sanctions when reform progress was lacking to impose its demands more strongly.

The 2015 ENP review was carried out after the conclusion of the AA/DCFTA negotiations and the following annexation of Crimea and war in Ukraine. The new policy emphasised ownership and flexibility, which were reflected in a return to the EU's negotiated approach to coercion and the development of a differentiated approach to Moldova and Armenia. Thus, the changes in the EU approach might be explained by (perceived) changes on the ground.

This explanation is in line with the theory of hegemony that supposes that coercion is only used ephemerally to sustain consent. Coercion rarely leads to sustainable consent and is thus only used when it seems that consent is waning. This assumption seems to hold true for both the EU and Russian approaches.

Russia gradually developed its prescriptive and co-optative approach to complement its coercive activities. Furthermore, Russia used coercion

prominently when Moldova and Armenia were about to sign the EU AA/DCFTA signalling non-acquiescence to Russian hegemony. The EU combined all three mechanisms early on in the development of the ENP. Its coercive activities were based on positive and negative conditionality and became unilateral when the EU perceived a lack of reform progress. Thus, it seems that the perceived lack of consent on the part of the neighbourhood countries could account for the changes observed over time.

6.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I assessed the nature of EU and Russian influence in the shared neighbourhood through a comparison of the respective hegemonic power mechanisms used in Armenia and Moldova over time. EU and Russian coercion, prescription, and co-optation activities were compared across three periods: 2000–2008, 2009–2014, and 2015–2021. These periods were defined by two turning points in EU-Russia-neighbourhood relations. First, the establishment of the EaP and Russian assertiveness in Georgia signalled a change in the EU's and Russia's approach to the region (and each other). Second, the conclusion of the AAs and the start of the Ukraine war marked a confrontation between the two regional hegemons and their neighbourhood policies.

The analysis showed that EU and Russian uses of the three hegemonic power mechanisms approximated over time. The progress in Eurasian integration with the establishment of the CU and EAEU enabled Russian uses of prescription (in addition to coercion and co-optation). The EU further developed its co-optation mechanisms and intensified its conditionality approach. Both actors came to use all three mechanisms of hegemonic power, notwithstanding differences in *how* they used these mechanisms.

Both actors developed and implemented a common policy towards their neighbours at the beginning of the 2000s. Russian efforts took place after the EU ones, mainly with regard to co-optation. After 2008, both actors' activities were further institutionalised with the AAs on the EU side and the CU on the Russian side. With the start of the AA/DCFTA and the EAEU, both their approaches differentiated more between the countries.

Over time, EU hegemonic power mechanisms became more interlinked, whereas Russia developed prescription and co-optation instruments separately. Instances of EU conditionality and sanctions increased over time and were linked to the diffusion of "European values" and the prescription of SPS rules and standards. Russian uses of co-optation became more confrontational through practices of Othering. It seems that the perceived lack of consent on the part of the neighbourhood countries was the most likely driver for change.

These findings suggest that the difference between EU and Russian hegemonic power should be viewed as one in degree rather than in kind. Just like the EU approach can be categorised as geopolitical (Siddi 2019) seeking to extend its influence over the neighbourhood countries, the Russian one should not be solely viewed as a modernist geopolitical one (Browning 2018) as evidenced by the development of the other mechanisms.

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CHAPTER 7

Conclusion and Way Forward: What Future for the Region and How We Study It?

In this book, I questioned the overemphasis in the literature on the difference between the way the EU and Russia exert influence in their shared neighbourhood. On the basis of their presumed nature, different conceptualisations of their influence were developed. To systematically compare EU and Russian neighbourhood policies in Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus, I developed a conceptual framework with three ideal-typical mechanisms of hegemonic power.

The most direct way a regional power can exert hegemonic power is through *coercion*. To coerce a small state means manipulating the cost-benefit calculations of its government using existing dependencies. The use of this mechanism is costly for the hegemon. Regional powers also need to generate consent for its dominance to render it sustainable. This consent is generated through less direct influence. The regional hegemon can externalise its system of rules and standards by authoritatively *prescribing* sectoral rules and standards so that small state regulators comply out of duty. Lastly and most indirectly, the regional power can *co-opt* the societies of small states into its ideology, reshaping their ideas and beliefs to be in line with its own.

I then traced the concept in empirical case studies, showing the different expressions the phenomenon of hegemonic power can take in practice. Four cases of hegemonic power relations were analysed: EU-Moldova, EU-Armenia, Russia-Moldova, and Russia-Armenia. These

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cases were compared to (1) the ideal type of each mechanism, (2) between each other, and (3) over time to reveal the differences and similarities in the different dimensions of each mechanism. The data set used for this analysis consisted of 640 documents, 47 interviews and two observations (conducted during fieldwork in Brussels, Moscow, Moldova, and Armenia), and official statistics and survey data. This way, I could take into account how the regional powers and also the small states perceived the power relation and hegemonic power activities.

To answer the first research question—*to what extent the EU and Russia have been employing different types of hegemonic power towards the countries in the shared neighbourhood*—I conducted the analysis for each mechanism in chapters four, five, and six. The analyses showed that both the EU and Russia used all three mechanisms, albeit with some differences.

Both the EU and Russia *coerced* the Moldovan and Armenian governments, but Russia's actions were closest to the ideal type. The Russian government unilaterally imposed sanctions exploiting the small states' security and economic dependencies, demanding that the countries refrain from European integration. Coercive actions took place in an erratic and ad hoc manner, sanctioning a perceived "rapprochement" of the countries with the EU. EU coercion was institutionalised in the form of bilateral agreements. Most of the time, the threats and demands were negotiated with the target countries. Over time, EU conditionality progressed, and the EU actually carried out its threats to ensure compliance.

Both regional powers also *prescribed* food safety rules and standards. Although this mechanism is mainly associated with the EU because of its regulatory nature, the establishment of the Customs Union (CU) and subsequently the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) created the conditions for Russian prescription. The EAEU food safety system was an amalgamation of the old product-based system and the international process-based one. This complexity confused the small state regulators that did not understand the fundamental difference and potential compatibility between the EU and EAEU systems. Russian prescription through the EAEU was hampered by incoherent rules and obligations. Thus, the EU remained closer to the ideal-typical mechanism with clearly defined rules and obligations that facilitated implementation.

Lastly, the two actors also sought to *co-opt* Moldovan and Armenian societies. Russian uses were closest to the ideal type of co-optation present in all three dimensions—shared language, culture, and belief system. The

Russian language was promoted as a language of communication in both Moldova and Armenia. Cultural cooperation and media outreach took place in parallel to the extension of the Orthodox religion and traditional values. The EU, on the other hand, focused on the transmission of European values. Cultural and communication instruments were added after 2015.

In addition to the differences in instruments, I also found a difference in how Russia and the EU legitimised these actions. The EU normatively justified the use of these mechanisms, whereas Russia did not. Thus, the EU sought legitimacy from the "target states", and Russia did not. However, legitimacy as a social relationship also needs to be attributed. EU coercion, prescription, and co-optation were generally perceived as positive and good for the countries. Even though EU conditionality was not always effective, societal actors in the small states did not question the fact that the EU would ask for something in return for the market access provided. In other words, they thought the EU *legitimately* exercised conditionality.

Generally, the EU demands were even seen as something that Moldova and Armenia would benefit from. Russian sanctions, on the other hand, were viewed as threatening and unpredictable because they were issued ad hoc and focused on punishment.

EU prescription was also perceived as positive because the EU standards were seen as higher and, therefore, beneficial for Moldovan and Armenian consumers as well. EAEU standards, on the other hand, seemed lower and easier to achieve. But because Russia had used economic sanctions against Moldova, exporting to the EAEU market was viewed as risky. That is why most Moldovan producers made an effort to adhere to the EU standards despite those being more costly. Armenia started to prepare for a shift in the jurisdictional boundary to the EU during the DCFTA negotiations but ultimately joined the EAEU in response to Russian coercion.

Co-optation was perceived differently by different parts of Moldovan and Armenian societies. Most CSOs viewed EU democracy promotion as positive and tried to transmit European values to the broader society. The beliefs of the broader society, however, were more closely aligned with the Russian-promoted traditional values and wary of "Western" liberal values. Russian co-optation through language and media was perceived negatively by parts of the Moldovan society. Moldovan speakers contested the

use of Russian as a language of communication and criticised the dominance of Russian media in Moldova. Neither the Russian language nor Russian media were viewed as problematic in Armenia.

To answer the second research question—*how far the exercises of the types of hegemonic power by the EU and Russia approximated over time*—I compared EU and Russian uses of the three mechanisms between three periods in chapter seven. This diachronic comparison showed some convergence in the uses, especially with the AAs in the new EaP and Eurasian integration in the form of the CU and EAEU. The EU also developed its cultural and media co-optation instruments under the 2015 revised ENP and intensified its use of conditionality.

At the start of the 2000s, the EU's ENP already showed traces of all three mechanisms, whereas Russia mainly used coercion in the form of security and economic threats. In 2007, Rossotrudnichestvo and the Russkiy Mir Fund were established for cultural co-optation. These instruments were further institutionalised between 2009 and 2014. The legally binding DCFTA combined all three mechanisms to create a more coherent EU approach. Russia established the Eurasian Customs and Economic Union together with Kazakhstan and Belarus but continued to use the three mechanisms separately. They now both used all three mechanisms in competition because the DCFTA and the CU were not compatible for the neighbourhood countries. Thus, this approximation also led to competition between the two regional powers. Russia was now promoting an alternative to EU integration and clearly demarcated its model by defining it in opposition to "the West". This Othering was most visible in the new discourse promoting traditional values.

The signing of the DCFTAs and the start of the war in Ukraine brought about a new context for all actors in the shared neighbourhood. This context made it more difficult for Moldova and Armenia to pursue a policy of co-alignment balancing EU and Russian hegemonic power exercises. After 2015, both regional powers differentiated their approach to the neighbourhood countries. The EU-Moldova AA provided a framework in which the EU could provide better rewards for its demands, prescribe its rules and standards, and externalise its values. Hence, the EU approach to Moldova became more ambitious than the one to Armenia. Russia exploited different dependencies for coercion (security in Armenia and economy in Moldova). Co-optation efforts were not differentiated but increased to oppose "the West" more strongly in both countries.

In light of these findings, Russia's start of the war in Ukraine in 2014 should be seen as a critical juncture (Ikani 2019) not only for the EU's policy but for the geopolitical contest between the EU and Russia (Cadier 2019). As such, it represents a moment in which EU and Russian hegemonic power projections started to clash in the shared neighbourhood as both actors used all three mechanisms. Seen through the prism of regional hegemony, the Russian escalation of the war in Ukraine in February 2022 represents a further intensification of this geopolitical contest. In this book, I did not look at the interaction between the EU and Russia because the objective was to compare them. However, the coexistence of two empires (or hegemons) in the same region raises the question of their relations (Gravier and Parker 2011). Delcour (2018) has shown that the EU's actions in the neighbourhood did, in fact, lead to a growing competition with Russia.

Whereas there is no ambiguity regarding the nature of this competition, constructivist and rationalist scholars disagree over its causes. Constructivist analyses of the relationship point to diverging images and (mis-)perceptions as a reason for the conflictual relations between the EU and Russia (Casier et al. 2018; Gomart 2008). Rationalists conclude that the EU's attempts at increasing its influence in the post-Soviet space and the simultaneous alienation of Russia resulted in the deterioration of EU-Russia relations (Haukkala 2010; Maass 2017). Other authors examined the nature of this competition on the geopolitical, regulatory, and ideational levels and showed that conflict is most pronounced at the level of values and normative discourses (Moga and Alexeev 2013; Tumanov et al. 2011; Buzogány 2016; Noutcheva 2018; Raik 2019). Future research could examine the use of the hegemonic power mechanisms as potential explanatory factors of this competition. There can, indeed, be conflict when the interests of the two hegemons are in opposition (Deyermond 2009). Looking at the interaction through the lens of hegemony, further studies could examine whether the uses of the hegemonic power mechanisms over time showed a growing conflict between EU and Russian interests.

Furthermore, my concept-tracing through comparative case studies showed how the EU and Russia exerted influence in their shared neighbourhood in reference to the ideal types but also each other. In other words, the empirical application of the conceptual framework revealed that the two actors differ in their nature but not in the way they

exercise power over small states. We have seen that both actors used coercion, showing that different instruments—such as military deterrence, sanctions, and conditionality—follow the same underlying mechanism. Manipulating the rational cost-benefit calculations, these instruments coerce the targets by increasing the costs of non-compliance and the rewards of compliance.

This finding suggests that the literature on sanctions employs a narrow focus, restricting the empirical analysis to a specific phenomenon defined by the policy-makers. Only policies that decision-makers adopted as sanctions—economic, multilateral, targeted, etc.—are analysed in this literature (Portela and Charron 2023). Focusing on the conceptual definition of coercion, as I did in chapter four of this book, enlarges the spectrum of phenomena that follow the same underlying logic. Something that has also been suggested in the literature on sanctions (Fürrutter 2020).

Another interesting finding was that the prescription of food safety rules overlapped, and EU standards continued to be implemented in Armenia to the extent possible after the country's EAEU accession. This coexistence confirms earlier findings on the difference between neighbourhood countries' macro-political integration choices and sectoral compliance (Delcour 2016). Regional powers seeking to establish hegemonic regimes might compete with each other for power over the neighbourhood countries, yet their sectoral regimes are likely to not be competing on the micro-level.

The findings for the co-optation mechanism could, in part, explain the public support for cooperation with both the EU and Russia in neighbourhood countries. In fact, identification with Europe is a strong predictor for respondents' support for cooperation with the EU, whereas the subscription to traditional values predicts support for cooperation with Russia (Dimitrova et al. 2018). Consequently, the coexistence of both value sets in neighbourhood countries' societies leads to support for cooperation with both regional powers.

There is also a need for more nuance and attention to social complexities when analysing ideational mechanisms of influence. The fact that traditional values coexist, in part, with European values means that a differentiation between political (democracy, human rights) and cultural values (same-sex relations, family bonds) is needed (Arynov 2022). Especially because Russia started to rely more on political and social values than a common language and culture for its influence (Matveeva 2018).

Lastly, this study highlighted the importance of perceptions. How actors perceived the structural aspects of the power relation and the actions of the other actors mattered in how they evaluated the situation and formed their preferences. A regional actor issuing a coercive threat needs to take into account what the target values and which costs the small state's government is willing to bear. Conversely, small state governments need to receive a threat and view it as credible for the threat to have an effect. The prescription of rules and standards also relied on how the rules and obligations were perceived by the small state regulators. Thus, studies of inter-state hegemony and power need to pay more attention to the different actor categories involved and take into account their perceptions. In order to do so, a serious engagement with an interpretivist research methodology and rigorous field research is necessary. However, Russia's war in Ukraine rendered this endeavour more difficult. Academics in the area studies have faced challenges in terms of access to the field and data documentation, but also had to grapple with ethical questions of knowledge creation during times of war (Sasse 2023). More broadly, the war has provoked a critical introspection in the epistemic community leading to efforts of decentring from the dominance of Russian history and language to other countries (Byford et al. 2024). A continuation of these efforts, in terms of diversifying field research locations and objects of study will provide us with a richer and more nuanced understanding of the region.

Highlighting the importance of perceptions and the national/local context, the case-specific findings presented in this book are not generalisable. They did provide insights into the EU and Russian neighbourhood policies more generally and the enabling conditions (structures) of the uses of hegemonic power. How and when these structures were exploited was, however, dependent on the actors' perceptions of the situation. Hence, further analysis is needed to assess the specific hegemonic power dynamics with other countries in the region. With this book, I provided a conceptual framework applicable to these other cases.

The framework allows scholars to compare the ways in which two actors act in their shared neighbourhood. It can, therefore, be applied to other actors and regions. Russia and China's interaction in Central Asia displays no aspects of competition despite China's growing economic influence in Central Asia (Bossuyt and Kaczmarski 2021; Samokhvalov 2018). It is thus similar to the first period of EU-Russia relations I analysed, during which both actors developed their neighbourhood policies

until they became mutually exclusive, rendering the relations competitive. The ongoing institutionalisation processes through the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) and Belt and Road Initiative render an analysis of Russian and Chinese hegemonic power in Central Asia all the more relevant. Using the proposed framework would also shed light on the often neglected local perspectives of the region (Kazantsev et al. 2021).

It is, of course, possible to move beyond Russia's neighbourhood and analyse regional hegemony in other regions. In South Asia and the Indian Ocean, China and India are competing for power (Freeman 2018; Roy-Chaudhury 2018) and present a relevant universe of cases. The institutionalisation of these power relations is also ongoing and overlapping in this region (Rüland and Michael 2019). In Latin America, the coexisting and competing interaction between Brazil and the US could be analysed with the framework of hegemonic power mechanisms (Long 2018). However, attention needs to be paid to the fact that the US play a double role as regional but also global hegemon.

In fact, another area for future research is to take the analysis of regional hegemony to the international level to better understand the context of the war in Ukraine. The Russian practices of Othering that I observed in the region served to demarcate its identity as a great power from that of the EU and "the West". And Russian actions since 2007 served to contest "Western" hegemony and the Liberal International Order (LIO).

The LIO—a hegemonic ideology present in many multilateral institutions—is expressed through the promotion of human rights and democratic governance (Voeten 2021; Tallberg et al. 2020). Russia has been contesting these liberal norms (David and Deyermond 2021) and the Liberal International Order (Romanova 2018) since 2007. At the Munich Security Conference that year, Putin openly criticised the American dominance of global politics. What followed were the provocation of the 2008 war in Georgia, the annexation of Crimea, and the start of the war in Ukraine in 2014. Finally, the invasion of Ukraine in 2022 constituted a severe and open violation of (liberal) international rules. The findings presented in this book showed that legitimisation efforts mattered for the hegemonic power relations in the region. Russia did not legitimise its exercise of hegemonic power to the small states, and so its use of the three different mechanisms was perceived as a form of contestation of the LIO. Future research should further explore the role of legitimacy and perceptions for the effective exercise of regional and international power.

In conclusion, this book has offered a comprehensive analysis of how the EU and Russia exert hegemonic power in their shared neighbourhood. It demonstrated that while their natures differ, the mechanisms they employ—coercion, prescription, and co-optation—are similar. Through the use of a robust conceptual framework and detailed case studies, I have shown how the two regional powers manipulate cost-benefit calculations, set rules and standards, and shape societal values to maintain influence. The findings not only challenge the existing literature's overemphasis on the differences between EU and Russian influence but also underscore the complexity and nuance involved in these power dynamics. They open avenues for further research into regional hegemonic interactions in other geopolitical contexts and invite scholars to explore the broader implications of hegemonic power at the international level, particularly in relation to the Liberal International Order. Ultimately, this study highlights the importance of perceptions, local contexts, and the need for rigorous, context-sensitive analysis to fully understand the intricacies of regional and global power relations.

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Appendix

A.1 Data Types and Sources

See Table A.1.

A.2 Interviews

See Table A.2.

I. Burmester, *EU and Russian Hegemony in the 'Shared Neighbourhood'*,
The European Union in International Affairs,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-75488-3

Table A.1 List of data types and sources

Type	*Actor*	*Source*	*Quantity*
Interviews	EU institutions	Field research in Brussels (Sep–Nov 2019)	14
Interviews	Moldovan government, regulator, society	Field research in Moldova (Feb 2020)	15
Interviews	Armenian government, regulator, society	Field research in Armenia (Dec 2021)	17
Interviews	Russian Orthodox Church	Field research in Moscow (Sep 2021–Mar 2022)	1[a]
Total			*47*
Observation	Moldovan Ministry/DG SANTE (regulators)	Field research in Moldova (Feb 2020)	1
Observation	Armenian CSOs (society)	Field research in Armenia (Dec 2021)	1
Total			*2*
Documents	EU institutions	EUR-Lex, DG NEAR, DG SANTE, DG Trade websites	289
Documents	Russian government	Official Portal of Legal Information, Website of Rossotrudnichestvo	117
Documents	EAEU institutions (regulator)	EAEU website	12
Documents	Armenian government	Unified Website for Publication of Legal Acts' Drafts	5
Documents	Moldovan government	State Registry of Legal Acts	7
Documents	Russian Orthodox Church (society)	Official website	81
Documents	Other	Civil Society Organisations, Media	129
Total			*640*
Statistics	EU institutions	Eurostat	
Statistics	Russian government	Rosstat	
Statistics	Armenian government	Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia	
Statistics	Moldovan government	National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova	
Survey data	Moldovan and Armenian society	World Values Survey	
Survey data	Moldovan and Armenian society	International Republican Institute	
Survey data	Moldovan society	Republic of Moldova Public Opinion Barometer	
Survey data	Armenian society	Caucasus Barometer	

[a] Field research in Moscow was interrupted by the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022.

Table A.2 List of interviews

ID	*Interviewee*	*Date*	*Place*
AA01	EU official	31 July 2019	Phone
BA02	EU official	10 September 2019	Brussels
BA27	Moldovan expert	13 February 2020	Chisinau
BB28	Moldovan think tank representative	21 February 2020	Chisinau
CA03	EU official	16 September 2019	Brussels
CB29	Moldovan official	21 February 2020	Chisinau
DA04	EU official	10 September 2019	Brussels
DB30	Russian Orthodox Church representative	2 December 2021	Moscow
EA05	EU official	11 September 2019	Brussels
EB31	Armenian think tank representative	9 December 2021	Yerevan
FA06	EU official	19 September 2019	Brussels
FB32	Armenian official	10 December 2021	Yerevan
GA07	EU official	8 October 2019	Brussels
GB33	Armenian civil society representative	14 December 2021	Yerevan
HA08	EU official	24 October 2019	Brussels
HB34	Armenian civil society representative	14 December 2021	Yerevan
IA09	EU official	24 October 2019	Brussels
IB35	Armenian expert	15 December 2021	Yerevan
JA10	EU official	4 November 2019	Brussels
JB36	Armenian politician	15 December 2021	Yerevan
KA11	Moldovan official	7 November 2019	Brussels
KB37	Armenian expert	16 December 2021	Yerevan
LA12	EU official	7 November 2019	Brussels
LB38	Armenian civil society representative	16 December 2021	Yerevan
MA13	EU official	28 November 2019	Brussels
MB39	Armenian business representative	17 December 2021	Yerevan
NA14	EU official	29 November 2019	Brussels
NB40	EU official	20 December 2021	Yerevan
OA15	Moldovan civil society representative	3 February 2020	Comrat
OB41	Armenian expert	20 December 2021	Yerevan
PA16	Moldovan politician	7 February 2020	Chisinau

(continued)

Table A.2 (continued)

ID	*Interviewee*	*Date*	*Place*
PB42	Armenian think tank representative	20 December 2021	Yerevan
QA17	Moldovan think tank representative	7 February 2020	Chisinau
QB43	Armenian official	21 December 2021	Yerevan
RA18	Moldovan think tank representative	7 February 2020	Chisinau
RB44	EU official	21 December 2021	Yerevan
SA19	Moldovan expert	10 February 2020	Chisinau
SB45	Armenian think tank representative	22 December 2021	Yerevan
TA20	Moldovan expert	11 February 2020	Chisinau
TB46	Armenian expert	22 December 2021	Yerevan
UA21	Moldovan civil society representative	12 February 2020	Chisinau
UB47	Armenian official	23 December 2021	Yerevan
VA22	Moldovan business representative	12 February 2020	Chisinau
WA23	EU official	12 February 2020	Chisinau
XA24	Moldovan business representatives	14 February 2020	Chisinau
YA25	Moldovan think tank representative	17 February 2020	Chisinau
ZA26	EU official	18 February 2020	Chisinau

A.3 Codebook

See Table A.3.

Table A.3 CAQDAS Codebook

Case	*Code*	*Code family*
EU-AM	AM commits to meet EU demands	Coercion—Demands
EU-AM	AM does not meet EU demands	Coercion—Demands
EU-AM	AM does not need EU rewards	Coercion—Rewards
EU-AM	AM does not receive EU rewards	Coercion—Rewards
EU-AM	AM meets EU demands	Coercion—Demands
EU-AM	AM needs EU rewards	Coercion—Rewards
EU-AM	AM perceives EU threat	Coercion—Threats
EU-AM	AM receives EU rewards	Coercion—Rewards
EU-AM	AM receives financial and technical assistance from the EU	Coercion—Rewards
EU-AM	AM views EU leverage as limited	Coercion—Threats
EU-AM	EU demands stability from AM	Coercion—Demands
EU-AM	EU extends conditions to AM	Coercion—Demands
EU-AM	EU extends legislative approximation demand to AM	Coercion—Demands
EU-AM	EU extends reform demands to AM	Coercion—Demands
EU-AM	EU extends threat to AM	Coercion—Threats
EU-AM	EU monitoring of demands in AM	Coercion—Demands
EU-AM	EU provides financial and technical assistance to AM	Coercion—Rewards
EU-AM	EU provides inducements to AM	Coercion—Rewards
EU-AM	EU provides rewards to AM	Coercion—Rewards
EU-AM	EU sees demands met by AM	Coercion—Demands
EU-AM	EU sees demands not met by AM	Coercion—Demands
EU-AM	EU sees need for political will for demands to be met	Coercion—Demands
EU-MD	EU demands stability from MD	Coercion—Demands
EU-MD	EU extends conditions to MD	Coercion—Demands
EU-MD	EU extends legislative approximation demands to MD	Coercion—Demands
EU-MD	EU extends reform demands to MD	Coercion—Demands
EU-MD	EU extends threat to MD	Coercion—Threats
EU-MD	EU monitoring of demands in MD	Coercion—Demands
EU-MD	EU provides financial and technical assistance to MD	Coercion—Rewards
EU-MD	EU provides inducements to MD	Coercion—Rewards
EU-MD	EU provides rewards to MD	Coercion—Rewards
EU-MD	EU sees demands met by MD	Coercion—Demands
EU-MD	EU sees demands not met by MD	Coercion—Demands

(continued)

Table A.3 (continued)

Case	*Code*	*Code family*
EU-MD	MD commits to meet EU demands	Coercion—Demands
EU-MD	MD does not meet EU demands	Coercion—Demands
EU-MD	MD does not receive EU rewards	Coercion—Rewards
EU-MD	MD meets EU demands	Coercion—Demands
EU-MD	MD needs EU rewards	Coercion—Rewards
EU-MD	MD perceives EU threat	Coercion—Threats
EU-MD	MD receives EU rewards	Coercion—Rewards
RU-AM	AM commits to meet RU demands	Coercion—Demands
RU-AM	AM does not meet RU demands	Coercion—Demands
RU-AM	AM does not receive RU rewards	Coercion—Rewards
RU-AM	AM meets RU demands	Coercion—Demands
RU-AM	AM needs RU rewards	Coercion—Rewards
RU-AM	AM perceives RU threat	Coercion—Threats
RU-AM	AM receives RU rewards	Coercion—Rewards
RU-AM	RU extends demands to AM	Coercion—Demands
RU-AM	RU extends threat to AM	Coercion—Threats
RU-AM	RU rewards in AM	Coercion—Rewards
RU-MD	MD does not meet RU demands	Coercion—Demands
RU-MD	MD does not receive RU rewards	Coercion—Rewards
RU-MD	MD meets RU demands	Coercion—Demands
RU-MD	MD needs RU rewards	Coercion—Rewards
RU-MD	MD perceives RU threat	Coercion—Threats
RU-MD	MD receives RU rewards	Coercion—Rewards
RU-MD	RU extends demands to MD	Coercion—Demands
RU-MD	RU extends threat to MD	Coercion—Threats
RU-MD	RU rewards in MD	Coercion—Rewards
RU-MD	RU sees demands met by MD	Coercion—Demands
EU-AM	AM follows jurisdictional authority of EU standards	Prescription—Jurisdictional authority
EU-AM	AM follows regulatory obligations of EU standards	Prescription—Regulatory obligations
EU-AM	AM trusts SPS standards of EU	Prescription—Jurisdictional authority
EU-AM	EU extends SPS rules to AM	Prescription—Rules and standards
EU-AM	EU imposes SPS certificates	Prescription—Rules and standards
EU-AM	EU provides technical assistance for SPS implementation in AM	Prescription—Regulatory obligations
EU-AM	EU supports AM to fulfil regulatory obligations	Prescription—Regulatory obligations
EU-MD	EU evaluates SPS standards in MD	Prescription—Regulatory obligations

(continued)

Table A.3 (continued)

Case	*Code*	*Code family*
EU-MD	EU extends SPS rules to MD	Prescription—Rules and standards
EU-MD	EU provides technical assistance for SPS implementation in MD	Prescription—Regulatory obligations
EU-MD	EU SPS certification in MD	Prescription—Rules and standards
EU-MD	MD approximates SPS legislation to EU	Prescription—Jurisdictional authority
EU-MD	MD follows jurisdictional authority of EU standards	Prescription—Jurisdictional authority
EU-MD	MD follows regulatory obligations of EU standards	Prescription—Regulatory obligations
EU-MD	MD implementation of EU SPS rules	Prescription—Regulatory obligations
EU-MD	MD TAIEX SPS	Prescription—Regulatory obligations
RU-AM	AM follows jurisdictional authority of RU standards	Prescription—Jurisdictional authority
RU-AM	AM follows regulatory obligations of RU standards	Prescription—Regulatory obligations
RU-AM	RU extends SPS rules to AM	Prescription—Rules and standards
RU-MD	MD applies RU SPS rules	Prescription—Jurisdictional authority
RU-MD	MD does not apply RU SPS rules	Prescription—Jurisdictional authority
RU-MD	MD follows jurisdictional authority of RU standards	Prescription—Jurisdictional authority
RU-MD	MD follows regulatory obligations of RU standards	Prescription—Regulatory obligations
RU-MD	RU extends SPS rules to MD	Prescription—Rules and standards
	EU SPS system	Prescription
	RU SPS rules	Prescription
EU-AM	AM commits to European values	Co-optation—Belief system
EU-AM	AM CSOs are unable to promote democratic values in society	Co-optation—Belief system
EU-AM	AM CSOs depend on financial support from the EU	Co-optation—Belief system
EU-AM	AM CSOs play a limited role in democratic processes	Co-optation—Belief system
EU-AM	AM CSOs promote democratic values	Co-optation—Belief system
EU-AM	AM views cultural and mobility programmes with the EU as important	Co-optation—Culture
EU-AM	AM views EU as something positive	Co-optation

(continued)

Table A.3 (continued)

Case	*Code*	*Code family*
EU-AM	EU extends cultural programmes to AM	Co-optation—Culture
EU-AM	EU extends media and communication programmes to AM	Co-optation—Culture
EU-AM	EU extends mobility programmes to AM	Co-optation—Culture
EU-AM	EU promotes European values in AM	Co-optation—Belief system
EU-AM	EU supports CSOs to promote democracy in AM	Co-optation—Belief system
EU-MD	MD views cultural and linguistic links with Romania as important	Co-optation—Language
EU-MD	MD views cultural and linguistic links with Romania as important	Co-optation—Culture
EU-MD	EU extends cultural programmes to MD	Co-optation—Culture
EU-MD	EU extends media and communication programmes to MD	Co-optation—Culture
EU-MD	EU extends mobility programmes to MD	Co-optation—Culture
EU-MD	EU promotes European values in MD	Co-optation—Belief system
EU-MD	EU supports CSOs to promote democracy in MD	Co-optation—Belief system
EU-MD	MD commits to European values	Co-optation—Belief system
EU-MD	MD CSOs are unable to promote democratic values in society	Co-optation—Belief system
EU-MD	MD CSOs depend on financial support from the EU	Co-optation—Belief system
EU-MD	MD CSOs play a limited role in democratic processes	Co-optation—Belief system
EU-MD	MD CSOs promote democratic values	Co-optation—Belief system
EU-MD	MD's lack of understanding of EU	Co-optation
EU-MD	MD views EU as something negative	Co-optation
EU-MD	MD views EU as something positive	Co-optation
EU-MD	MD views EU cultural and media outreach as important	Co-optation—Culture

(continued)

Table A.3 (continued)

Case	*Code*	*Code family*
EU-MD	MD views EU cultural and media outreach as unimportant	Co-optation—Culture
EU-MD	MD views mobility programmes with the EU as important	Co-optation—Culture
RU-AM	AM Church emphasises religious ties with RU	Co-optation—Belief system
RU-AM	AM commits to traditional values	Co-optation—Belief system
RU-AM	AM views historical links with RU as important	Co-optation—Culture
RU-AM	AM views mobility and diaspora in RU as important	Co-optation—Culture
RU-AM	AM views RU as a place of work	Co-optation
RU-AM	AM views RU as something negative	Co-optation
RU-AM	AM views RU cultural and media outreach as important	Co-optation—Culture
RU-AM	AM views Russia as security guarantor	Co-optation
RU-AM	AM views Russian as a foreign language	Co-optation—Language
RU-AM	RU emphasises historical ties with AM	Co-optation—Culture
RU-AM	RU emphasises religious ties with AM	Co-optation—Belief system
RU-AM	RU extends cultural programmes to AM	Co-optation—Culture
RU-AM	RU extends media to AM	Co-optation—Culture
RU-AM	RU extends mobility programmes to AM	Co-optation—Culture
RU-AM	RU frames European values as a threat to AM	Co-optation—Belief system
RU-AM	RU promotes traditional values in AM	Co-optation—Belief system
RU-AM	RU promotes the use of Russian language in AM	Co-optation—Language
RU-MD	MD Church emphasises religious ties with RU	Co-optation—Belief system
RU-MD	MD Church promotes traditional values	Co-optation—Belief system
RU-MD	MD commits to traditional values	Co-optation—Belief system
RU-MD	MD feels connected to RU	Co-optation

(continued)

Table A.3 (continued)

Case	*Code*	*Code family*
RU-MD	MD views historical links with Russia as important	Co-optation—Culture
RU-MD	MD views RU as something negative	Co-optation
RU-MD	MD views RU cultural and media outreach as important	Co-optation—Culture
RU-MD	MD views Russian as communication language	Co-optation—Language
RU-MD	RU emphasises historical ties with MD	Co-optation—Culture
RU-MD	RU emphasises religious ties with MD	Co-optation—Belief system
RU-MD	RU extends cultural programmes to MD	Co-optation—Culture
RU-MD	RU extends media to MD	Co-optation—Culture
RU-MD	RU extends mobility programmes to MD	Co-optation—Culture
RU-MD	RU frames European values as a threat to MD	Co-optation—Belief system
RU-MD	RU promotes traditional values in MD	Co-optation—Belief system
RU-MD	RU promotes the use of Russian language in MD	Co-optation—Language
	AM perceives competition	EU-RU competition
	EU characterises its influence	
	EU perceives competition	EU-RU competition
	MD perceives competition	EU-RU competition
	MD perceives RU approach	
	RU perceives competition	EU-RU competition

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