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Not so unique after all? Urgency and norms in EU foreign and security policy

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ABSTRACT

The EU Global Strategy puts ‘principled pragmatism’ at the core of EU foreign and security policy. This has also been promoted as away of closing the gap between talk and action. Still, the concept has been widely criticized and interpreted as away of making the Union’s ‘organized hypocrisy’ less glaring. By exploring key EU foreign and security policy strategies and policies implemented over the past decade, this article suggests that a certain pattern for when the EU acts normatively and when it acts strategically can be identified. While the overall ambition is still to promote a more normative policy, also when it comes at a considerable economic cost, there is a limit to how it is willing to go. Evidence suggests that when faced with a situation perceived as urgent, the EU becomes more prone to implement policies that are at odds with its own principles.

KEYWORDS

Crisis; EU foreign and security policy; interests; norms; principled pragmatism; security

1. Introduction

Studies have variously described the EU as a ‘normative’ (Manners 2002), ‘civilian’ (Diez 2005; Orbie 2008), ‘ethical’ (Aggestam 2008) or ‘humanitarian power’ (Eriksen 2009; Sjørusen 2015). Despite the considerable differences among the concepts as regards operationalization, these concepts imply that EU foreign and security policy differs from national foreign policies in consistently emphasizing norm-promotion, also when this entails certain short-term costs. However, more recent studies argue that this understanding of EU foreign and security policy no longer fits with reality (Dijkstra 2016). In particular the handling of the migration crisis indicate that the EU may also ignore its own principles (Cusumano 2019; In Riddervold, Trondal, and Newsome 2021).

Since the Global Strategy of 2016 the EU has tried to combine principles and interests by introducing concepts such as ‘principled pragmatism’ and ‘resilience’. Foreign and security policy analysis has tended to see these behavioural logics as mutually exclusive. Therefore, the EU’s ‘principled pragmatism’ has been seen as highly problematic, as a contradiction in terms and a concept that might render EU foreign and security policy less coherent (Giusti 2020; Juncos 2017; 2018). Further, it has been argued that, in the long

term, this might also undermine the EU's objective of having an integrated approach (Joseph and Juncos 2019). In the end, the question is whether principled pragmatism is simply what Nils Brunsson (2007) labels 'organized hypocrisy' – a foreign and security policy response to a world in which values, ideas, or people are in conflict, and where decisions in one direction can counterweight actions in the opposite direction – or whether there is a systematic pattern to how the EU balances between norms and interests.

Wagner and Anholt (2016) argue that the EU, in a changing and increasingly uncertain international policy environment, is trying to find a middle ground between its desire to continue its transformative, normative agenda and the need for stability in its 'near abroad'. In this article, we follow their line of argument, adding an important clarification concerning when and under what circumstances the different logics have been at play over the past five years, since principled pragmatism became the EU's overall strategy. Is there a systematic pattern in how the EU promotes interests and norms in its foreign policies?

Without assessing the normative validity or the effectiveness of such a policy, we argue that there is empirical evidence for introducing a dimension of *urgency* in studies of EU foreign policy and that this is linked to the type of policies adopted in response to crises and events. Following Cross (2021) a crisis is a socially constructed perception of a threat, most often following a particularly challenging or abrupt event, or what in the literature is often referred to as a critical juncture (also see Ansell 2021). We build on this not only to argue that such perceptions are key to explain 'why various events evolve into crises, while others do not' but that this can also help us distinguish how the EU behaves in its foreign policies more broadly. In fact, the EU seems to have developed a pattern of behaviour where its immediate crisis response has become increasingly focused on interests, whereas in its overarching strategies it continues to promote a norm- and value-based policy. Of course, the argument that norms and interests are not necessarily mutually exclusive is not new. Manners – the father of the 'Normative Power Europe' concept – also argued that the EU, like all other foreign and security policy actors, promotes its interests as well as norms on the international stage (Manners 2002). However, introducing an aspect of urgency or perception of threat, we suggest that there is a systematic pattern to this behaviour, one that can be captured analytically by different behavioural logics in different parts – or at different levels – of EU foreign and security policy.

Basically, we hold that while the EU continues to promote and safeguard the rule-based international order in its foreign policy strategies and overarching policies, these concerns tend to be overlooked when there is a widely felt perception that there is a security related threat that must be handled rapidly. Main examples include the priority accorded to stability measures in response to developments in Ukraine and to the migration crisis in 2015. In both cases, security concerns were prioritized over normative concerns, as these crises were perceived as a severe threat to the security of the EU itself.

We suggest that this shift – towards a more interest-driven policy for dealing with pressing perceived or real security threats to the EU, while simultaneously trying to uphold a principled foreign and security policy objective – is at the core of EU's foreign and security policy formation in today's changing world. Further, that the EU, when faced

with increased international uncertainty and crises on many fronts that may have more immediate negative security implications, tends towards focusing on resilience rather than norm diffusion (Giske 2020; Joseph and Juncos 2019).

To substantiate this argument, we begin by presenting our argument in more detail, discussing the existing EU foreign and security policy literature, before presenting a foreign-policy model that systematically captures the combination of interests and norms seen in contemporary EU foreign and security policies. This model distinguishes between the overarching foreign and security policy objectives and more immediate crisis responses, clarifying how and when different behavioural logics apply.

Then we move on to present empirical evidence for this argument by systematically exploring both the Union's overarching foreign policy strategies and its more immediate crisis response. Our analysis combines findings from a number of studies conducted by the authors over the past five years on EU conflict resolution and peacebuilding (see McGinty, Pogodda, and Richmond 2021; Rieker and Gjerde 2021) and on EU maritime foreign and security policies (see Riddervold 2018a, 2018b). We also triangulate our own findings with other studies. Drawing on empirical evidence gathered as part of these research projects and on secondary literature, this article argues that a systematic pattern between the promotion of interests and norms can be found in the implementation of the Union's foreign policies and that it is linked to shared perceptions of urgency.

2. Urgency and EU foreign policy

The EU is facing not only an increasingly uncertain regional and global environment, but also a range of crisis and threats with rather immediate potential consequences. At the time of writing, the Covid-19 pandemic is still the number one crisis facing both the EU and the rest of the world. This crisis has come on top of a series of other threats such as growing Russian aggression, the risk of a new wave of uncontrolled migration, social unrest, radical extremism and terrorist attacks.

From the late 1990s until 2014/15, the literature on EU foreign and security policy was largely dominated by scholars who argued that EU foreign and security policy differed from foreign and security policy as conventionally perceived in the International Relations (IR) literature (for an overview, see, *inter alia*, Jørgensen 2015). Despite the many differences between these models of EU foreign and security policy, they all share the theoretical constructivist assumption that norms may have an independent effect on actor behaviour, also at the international level. External Europeanization through enlargement and neighbourhood policies were often seen in this perspective (Manners 2010; Sjørusen 2002). Analyses of EU development policies have also shown how human rights considerations influenced this area of EU foreign and security policy (Scheipers and Sicurelli 2008). Similar conclusions have emerged regarding EU missions and the EU's approach to the abolition of the death penalty (Manners 2002). Further, a specific perspective on multilateral cooperation and global environmental policies has featured in many descriptions of the EU as a humanitarian/normative actor. As Falkner (2007) summed up in his study of the EU as a 'green normative power', 'the central role it played in creating the climate change regime (...) arguably lends support to the claim that a commitment to global environmental norms is integral to the EU's unique foreign and

security policy identity.' Studies of EU behaviour in the UN have often also seen the promotion and protection of multilateral cooperation and international institutions as central to EU policies (Kissack 2010; Laatikainen and Smith 2006; Orbie 2008; Smith 2018).

Many scholars have attempted to explain this behaviour by drawing on March and Olsen (1998, 2006) historical institutionalist concept of the 'logic of appropriateness': that international actors do not act solely on the basis of a 'logic of consequences' – as rational choice-based perspectives assume (Krasner 1999a; March and Olsen 1998, 2006). Rather than simply seeking to maximize particular interests, actors seek to fulfil the obligations encapsulated in a role, an identity, membership in a political community or group, and the ethos, practices and expectations of its institutions. In line with this argument, studies have indicated that a reason why the EU conducts a 'normative foreign and security policy' is that the member states share a particular role-conception of the EU as a foreign-policy actor, defining appropriate EU foreign-policy behaviour in any given situation (see, e.g. Elgström and Smith 2006). Others have held that such norms are internalized at both the EU and the member-state levels through processes of socialization and Europeanization, which, together with patterns of path-dependency, result in the EU developing and conducting such policies almost automatically (Beyer 2010; Juncos and Reynolds 2007). Thus, if the EU remains true to this normative image and acts according to an internalized logic of appropriateness, we expect it to continue to seek to live up to and promote certain norms – also in a changing, less certain environment, and even in the face of crisis. The key test of the EU's normative or humanitarian power is precisely that it can remain true to its proclaimed norms, also when this involves costs or conflicts with interests. The 'big bang' enlargement is often cited to confirm this, as it came at considerable economic cost to the EU and its member states (Sjursen 2015).

Always challenging the constructivist view of the EU as a normative actor (see, e.g. Hyde-Price 2008; Posen 2006; Toje 2011), realist perspectives have attracted renewed attention in the literature since 2014/2015, due not least to the Russian annexation of Crimea and the war in Ukraine (Macfarlane and Menon 2014; Mearsheimer 2014; Posen 2006). A core realist assumption is that strategically rational foreign-policy actors operate in an anarchical environment where they engage in a zero-sum game, striving to increase their relative security by all available means. Structural factors and relative power relations shape the policies of states (Walt 1998; Waltz 2000), which, depending on the expected consequences of their actions, choose policies deemed most effective for achieving specific strategic or instrumental aims. Although states can hardly be expected to relinquish their sovereignty, they may have an incentive to cooperate and form alliances with other states, if structural factors make this necessary, to balance other powers, to shape their external environment, or to be better able to enforce common security interests – which is how the Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) is explained according to this perspective (Hyde-Price 2006; Posen 2006). Moreover, despite major differences between various realist perspectives, they all hold that norms are always secondary to material interests. Thus, they explain the EU's focus on norms as a pursuit of the 'second-order normative concerns of EU member states' (Hyde-Price 2008, 32) or by the fact that the EU is, in the end, merely a 'small power' (Toje 2011). Strategically rational foreign-policy actors promote non-security goals only as long as this does not conflict with other, more important, economic or strategic interests (Hyde-Price 2008; Mearsheimer 2001, 2014).

In line with this logic, and contrary to expectations under a logic of appropriateness, in a less-certain geopolitical environment the EU would then be expected to develop into a more traditional, interest-based foreign-policy power. It would increasingly seek to balance other (emerging) powers (Russia in particular, in light of Ukraine), in alliance with its hegemon, the USA, and would focus on better protecting and promoting the member states' security-related interests in various operations and specific actions (also see Riddervold and Rosén 2018). Today, with the Covid-19 pandemic crisis, the health of European citizens is likely to be the top priority for the EU and its individual member states. Does that mean that Hylke Dijkstra was right in claiming: 'Whereas the EU previously sought to remake the world in its own post-modern image, the times of norms, values and democracy promotion are over (...) normative power Europe is perhaps dead' (Dijkstra 2016, 370)?

Contrary to this claim, we argue that while the EU appears to have become increasingly trapped in the same dilemma experienced by most foreign-policy actors that try to balance between the promotion of norms and securing interests, empirical evidence indicates that there is a pattern as to when the EU operates according to its normative foundation, and under what conditions more interest-based logics kick in. More precisely, drawing on Cross (2021), we introduce the perception of *urgency in response to a crisis or threat* as a key dimension to argue that both of these assumptions are right, but at different levels of EU foreign and security policy. At one level, the realists seem to be correct in predicting that EU policies will be more strategic in a more volatile environment. At the same time, we find that the member states still consistently support the EU in continuing to play a key role in promoting a multilateral order and the liberal normative foundations on which the EU itself is built.

Thus, we propose an alternative approach, arguing that neither a realist strategic-actor model nor a normative foreign-power model can fully capture the characteristics of EU foreign policies in today's changing international environment. *Principled pragmatism* can be seen as an attempt by the EU to capture this duality. However, it has been challenged and criticized by academics as it incorporates liberal *and* realist concepts normally deemed mutually exclusive (Juncos 2017).

To be sure, these approaches cannot be combined at the same time – but they can be combined at different levels or in different contexts. The underlying logic of such a model lies in the fact that the EU continues to be principled in its overarching foreign and security policy agenda – but that it has increasingly become more interest-based and strategic in dealing with situations that are perceived as immediate crises, in particular in its neighbourhood, described by Sven Biscop as 'Realpolitik with European Characteristics' (Biscop 2016).

Rather than seeing this change as simply a result of shifting national and European interests in a less-certain world order (Moravcsik 1998, 2009; Moravcsik 2018), we argue that EU's foreign and security policy in such an environment is systematically shaped by two distinct logics of action. At the overall level – the overarching policies expressed in strategies and behaviour in international organizations – the EU continues to behave in a principled manner, consistently promoting multilateral rule-based cooperation, also in today's more volatile context. Moreover, it does so with the blessing of its member states. This resembles behaviour in line with the 'logic of appropriateness' discussed above, supporting the argument that there are certain norms in the EU that have become

institutionalized over time and are therefore followed more or less automatically in its foreign and security policy (March and Olsen 1998, 2006; Riddervold 2018a). In this sense, multilateralism and the promotion/protection of the liberal world order continues to be an integrated the Union's DNA (Smith 2011, 2018), or 'the *raison d'être* of the EU's foreign and security policy' (Joseph and Juncos 2019, 1001).

This also explains why resilience has increasingly emerged as a key aim in EU foreign and security policy discourse, often referring to the ability to withstand and rebound from shocks and crises (Giske 2020). It is seen as a response to today's more volatile international environment (Juncos 2017; Tocci 2017). As argued by Joseph and Juncos (2019), resilience is also integral to the EU's long-term aim of securing a rule-based order and is thus also compatible with its more normative approach. From the EU perspective, such an order is the best way to secure a stable international context.

On the other hand, the quest for resilience has had a different impact on many of the EU's crisis responses and country strategies – especially in its own neighbourhood. In these areas, the EU conducts policies and actions that are increasingly focused on reducing migration and preventing terrorism – even if this sometimes happen at the expense of human rights. And the reason why this logic kicks in, we argue, is a perception of *urgency*. When an event or situation is perceived as a threat to the EU's more immediate security, the EU is more likely to abandon some of its core principles. As argued by Cross (2021), an event must be constructed and defined as a crisis or a threat by social actors for it to be recognised as such. We however move on from this argument to show that these perceptions of urgency are key not only to understand why certain events are defined as crises, but also why the EU sometimes acts less normatively in its foreign policies: Only when a situation is perceived as urgent in terms of the EU's immediate security – geographically and temporally – will we expect the EU to prioritise interests over norms. This perception of urgency would thus also explain why longer-term crises such as the climate crisis, economic disputes or territorial conflicts in the South China sea, do not necessarily have the same effect on the balance of interest and norms in EU foreign policies as the migration crisis or Russia's annexation of the Crimea.

3. Combining overarching principles with strategic action

While March and Olsen (1998) also have argued that the two logics of action are not mutually exclusive and therefore most actions have elements of both, they also argue that one logic may prevail under certain conditions. For instance, they argue that a logic of consequences is likely to prevail when rules are unclear or ambiguous. Finnemore and Sikkink (1998), who also discussed the relationship between norms and interests, introduced a time dimension and emphasized the importance of socialization of norms. In both cases, however, there is an underlying assumption that norms will prevail in the end (through socialization) or at least if the rules are improved. But is this necessary the case when there is an element of urgency or threat involved and policies and actions are adopted to deal directly with a particular threat or challenge?

In the remaining part of this article, we aim at substantiating our argument by systematically analysing EU foreign and security policy over a range of cases across the two levels: *EU foreign overarching policy objectives, and particular crisis response operations*. To grasp the overarching policy objectives, we explore several key EU foreign and security

policy strategies that cover both global and regional foreign and security policy issues: the recent Global Strategy, the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and several key declarations made by the President of the Commission and the High Representative, but also a strategy that covers a specific policy area: the EU Maritime Strategy. Comparison of these overarching priorities as set out in the strategies with how the EU responds to a number of serious crises that have occurred over the past decade shows that while the focus on multilateralism and human rights remains strong, there is a tendency towards a stronger interest-based, security-oriented logic also in the overall strategies. But in cases where the EU is faced with a certain level of immediate urgency or threat, we find foreign and security policy decisions that are in direct breach of the Union's normative ideals.

3.1. Long term policies and immediate threats

Up until 2014, several studies showed that the EU's foreign-policy approach and discourse were very much in line with a normative approach, as discussed above. This is also evident from the first *European Security Strategy* (2003), starting out with the argument that 'Europe has never been so prosperous, so secure nor so free [...]. The creation of the European Union has been central to this development' (HR/CFSP 2003). Since 2014 – and after the Ukraine crisis – this dominant belief in near-automatic external Europeanization and the spread of norms has become increasingly challenged. Indications of a more interest-driven focus in response to a changing geopolitical context are evident, for example, in the 2016 *Global Strategy*, which describes the world and the Union's role thus: 'Our Union is under threat. Our European project, which has brought unprecedented peace, prosperity and democracy, is being questioned', and then moves on to argue: 'principled pragmatism will guide our external action in the years ahead' (EEAS 2016).

While this indicates a shift in focus – from primarily promoting the EU as a normative actor to a more strategic focus – the Global Strategy still highlights that the EU foreign and security policy *will be guided by clear principles*. It states plainly that the EU's main foreign-policy objective is to 'support cooperative regional orders worldwide' in line with the EU's own model and to 'strive for a strong UN as the bedrock of the multilateral rules-based order', and that this approach is a key aspect of the EU's external 'strategic autonomy' (EEAS 2016, 10; Tocci 2017). It also details how this approach will be pursued in various multilateral global and regional institutions as well as in the EU's neighbourhood. In a world where these liberal norms are increasingly under pressure, this is an important signal that clarifies what kind of actor the EU wants to be in a changing environment.

This dual approach is also well reflected in the statements and speeches of EU leaders. Commission President Ursula von der Leyen has pledged to lead what she refers to as a *geopolitical Commission* – 'a Commission with a political agenda in which reinforcing the EU's role as a relevant international actor, trying to shape a better global order through reinforcing multilateralism, is to become a key priority' (von der Leyen 2019). And Josep Borrell, the current HR/VP, has argued along the same lines in stating that he is in favour of 'a stronger Europe, one that defends European values and interests the world over in the face of threats that affect all Europeans – a Europe that exercises international solidarity and upholds peace and security in the world' (Borrell 2019).

Moving one level down, looking at the strategies of some specific, but still broad, foreign and security policy frameworks, such as the ENP and Maritime Security Strategy (EUMSS), we see a similar shift in the framing of these policies. With regard to the neighbourhood, there has been a shift towards more strategic approaches in response to the increasing instability in the South and the more aggressive Russian behaviour in the East. Both changes have led to what could be termed a securitization of the Neighbourhood Policy. We note a similar shift regarding the maritime domain, as European security topped the EU agenda amid the making of the Maritime Strategy in 2014. Whereas EU maritime foreign and security policies have remained cross-sectoral¹ (Council 2014; Riddervold 2018a), the security focus was much stronger in the EUMSS than in the EU documents on maritime security produced just before the crisis: 'The Union stresses the importance of its assuming increased responsibilities as a global security provider, at the international level and in particular in its neighbourhood, thereby also enhancing its own security and its role as a strategic global actor' (Council 2014, 8).

Thus, at first glance, the impact of both increased instability in the South and the Russia/Ukraine crisis on the ENP and the EUMSS process would appear to be in line with realist explanations as to why states cooperate and conduct specific policies in the security domain – by responding to increased threats by security means, as discussed above. However, rather than focusing on territorial security threats and military responses, as might be expected of a traditional realist actor, the main aims and tools mentioned in the EU's overall foreign-policy strategies have remained the institutionalization of international cooperation and the promotion of common rules and norms.

In line with these overall objectives, *the EU's neighbourhood policies* have remained committed to supporting neighbouring countries on the path towards stable democracy and respect for international liberal norms, through a range of projects, as it is seen as a long-term policy of stabilization. However, the approach has been adjusted to appear less provocative in the eyes of Russia. The chief aim is to avoid a confrontation with Russia that could threaten the security of the EU, its member states and its citizens. As Batora and Rieker have shown, the underlying objective of EU policy towards Ukraine remains the same, whereas the promotion of a European Neighbourhood Policy with the explicit goal of incorporating certain post-Soviet states into the European integration process has been toned down, replaced by a more low-key approach involving a fairly loosely organized framework connecting the reform capacities of not only the EU institutions but also EU member-state governments (Batora and Rieker 2018). In the South, the increased focus on security has been even more obvious, given the various regional and national conflicts, violent extremism and increased migration. However, this has not resulted in abandoning the long-term ambition of strengthening the regional security community; and recent initiatives for building a partnership with Africa² or for strengthening the Mediterranean partnership are both examples of that.³

Further, several other recent studies indicate that the EU has remained true to its overall aim of defending the liberal multilateral order even in the face of rising geopolitical uncertainty. In cases that range from discussions of future international trade and climate negotiations, to how to deal with international conflicts and threats such as the Iran nuclear potential, the EU is still multilateralist, actively promoting cooperation and binding regulation (Cross 2018; Riddervold 2018a; Smith 2018, 2020). Cross (2018) notes how the EU has consistently exported a unified vision of climate policy abroad, promoting

a strict, enforceable international regime. Similarly, the EU has actively promoted multi-lateral solutions to more remote territorial challenges, as in the South China Sea, searching for answers within the ASEAN network (Riddervold and Rosén 2018), and in the Arctic (Riddervold 2018a). Thus, the EU has continued to promote a multilateral agenda, in protection of the liberal world order, despite evidence that this approach may entail high costs, by potentially contributing the weakening of EU–US relations with regard to for instance Iran or China, as was the case during the Trump presidency (Riddervold and Newsome 2018).

3.2. Adapting the EU crisis response to urgency and threats

Turning to the more immediate crisis response, several recently conducted case studies (Bátora et al. 2021; Bøås 2021; Debuysere 2019; Ivashchenko-Stadnik, Petrov, and Russo 2018; Loschi, Raineri, and Strazzari 2018; Loschi and Russo 2020; Mac Ginty 2018; McGinty, Pogodda, and Richmond 2021; Osland and Peter 2019; Rieker and Blockmans 2019, 2021; Rieker and Gjerde 2021; Strazzari and Raineri 2019) all indicate that, when responding to crises that are perceived as more immediate security threats to the EU and its citizens, in particular in its neighbourhood, the Union is more willing to act in contravention of its principles. Let us take a closer look at changes in response to some recent crises in the EU neighbourhood.

The EU is active in crisis response in many parts of the world, but still gives priority to engagement in its immediate (enlargement area), near (neighbourhood area) and wider neighbourhoods (Central Asia, Africa/Sahel and Middle East). Studies undertaken across a range of crisis-response cases within the framework of an H2020 research project coordinated by the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (EUNPACK),⁴ find that EU crisis-management operations have increasingly focused on how best to secure European borders, reduce the risk of mass migration and terrorism, and establish better relations with Russia, sometimes at the expense of promoting norms like democracy and human rights in the Eastern and Southern Neighbourhoods (Ivashchenko-Stadnik, Petrov, and Russo 2018; Loschi, Raineri, and Strazzari 2018) and beyond – not least in the Sahel (Bøås et al. 2018). A web-scraping study of the language used in relations to these various crises in EU documents confirm these findings. At the turn of the millennium, institution building and good governance dominated the justifications given for EU policies; since 2014, there has been a clear shift towards a distinctly more security-related language, focusing on issues such as the importance of counterterrorism, border control and Russia (Rieker and Gjerde 2021). The crisis in Ukraine and the instability in Libya and Mali have pushed security concerns higher on the EU agenda – a trend intensified with the migration crisis and various terrorist attacks in Europe (Bøås et al. 2018).

In the East, the EU is increasingly concerned that, if the European integration agenda were promoted too actively, the already tense relations between Ukraine and Russia could negatively impact the broader European security context, potentially also representing a more immediate threat towards the EU itself. The EU has adapted its policies, accordingly, seeking to balance between support for democracy building and good governance on the one hand, and overall relations with Russia and geopolitical stability and resilience on the other. Batora and Rieker (2018) show empirically that the European Neighbourhood Policy based on the enlargement dynamics of norm diffusion through

external Europeanization has gradually been replaced by a policy aiming for more low-key support for societal transformation without provoking the overall European security context. The EU's traditional 'conditionality approach', with closer integration as the reward for democratic reforms, has been toned down. Although particularly evident in Ukraine (Ivashchenko-Stadnik, Petrov, and Russo 2018), this trend can also be seen in the EU's policy vis-à-vis all ENP countries in the region in the aftermath of the Ukraine crisis in the East and the failure of the democratic revolutions in the South (see Rieker and Gjerde 2021).

In the South, findings from several empirical studies also show that initiatives for democratic reforms and support for NGOs are increasingly replaced by strategies for bilateral cooperation on preventing illegal migration through measures aimed at improving resilience (Bøås et al. 2021; Loschi and Russo 2020; Strazzari and Raineri 2019). Regarding the EU's southern neighbours, priority is now accorded to preventing a new migration crisis and/or to countering terrorism in the region. This has resulted in new security measures, various third-country agreements, and border control – rather than an emphasis on institution building, good governance and human rights (McGinty, Pogodda, and Richmond 2021). We see this in the EU's approach to Libya and its handling of migrants (Cusumano 2019; Loschi, Raineri, and Strazzari 2018); but it has also led to the implementation of a new, more strategic type of Neighbourhood Policy, where priority is given to security concerns (Loschi and Russo 2020; Rieker and Gjerde 2021).

The instability in Libya illustrates the EU's tendency to prioritize immediate security threats before longer-term solutions such as development and state-building through administrative capacity-building with local ownership. The EU has run the naval operation 'Sophia' in the south-central Mediterranean (EUNAVFOR MED) and an EU Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM) in Libya. In different ways, both constitute a short-term security approach to the immediate migration challenge through EU naval operations, at the expense of the protection of human rights. Operation EUNAVFOR MED Sophia ('EU Sophia'), conducted in international waters off Libya, proved particularly challenging for the EU's normative self-image (Cusumano 2019; Loschi, Raineri, and Strazzari 2018; Riddervold 2018a). It was launched 'in record time' in 2015 in response to the migrant crisis in the Mediterranean, as more and more people were dying at sea while trying to reach Europe. In the Council's decision to launch a naval mission, the chief aims were stated as preventing further loss of life at sea and tackling the root causes of the ongoing emergency situation in line with the relevant provisions of international laws, the immediate priority being to prevent more migrant deaths at sea (Council 2015). In line with this, studies have suggested that the mission was initially launched in response to the tragedy in October 2013, when a boat carrying migrants capsized off the Italian island of Lampedusa (Bosilca 2017; Riddervold 2018a). However, in practice, Sophia has become increasingly focused on limiting the number of migrants coming to the EU, even if in breach of several key human rights and other international conventions, including the 1951 UN Refugee Convention (Cusumano 2019; Loschi, Raineri, and Strazzari 2018; Riddervold 2018a). In an in-depth report prepared for the UN Refugee Agency, and drawing on several studies, Berry and colleagues find that the EU 'fails migrants by predominantly focusing on the challenges posed to the EU, rather than on those faced by the human beings whose lives continue to be lost at sea' (Berry, Garcia-Blanco, and

Moore 2016, 4). Similarly, Cusumano (2019) refers to Sophia as an example of ‘organized hypocrisy’: while communicating a focus on saving lives through search and rescue, the EU’s actions have in reality focused more on limiting migration to the EU.

4. The EU foreign and security policy – not so unique after all?

EU foreign and security policy has changed. The Global Strategy of 2016 refers to this shift as principled pragmatism. Does this mean that the EU has simply institutionalized what Brunsson (2007) termed ‘organized hypocrisy’? Or has it moved closer to what Krasner (1999b), Nye (2004, 2019) and others define as a fully-fledged foreign and security policy actor where balancing norms and interests is the name of the game? Without discussing the normative challenges or validity of such an approach, our analysis supports the latter perspective. We, however, add to this debate by making a first attempt at showing what seems to be a systematic pattern to how the EU balances between norms and interests in its foreign policies in a changing international context. By drawing on Cross (2021) to introduce a perception of urgency dimension to EU policies, we show that the EU has developed a pattern of behaviour where it has become increasingly interest-based and security oriented in its immediate crisis response, in particular in its neighbourhood, while remaining true to a more principled approach in its longer-term, overall policies.

As shown in this analysis, it thus seems to be a systematic pattern to when the different behavioural logics work in the case of the EU: while overarching policies are based on principles that are deeply embedded in the Union’s treaties and its *raison d’être*, the EU becomes more strategic, willing to compromise on some of these core values when faced with urgency or a perceived threat. As seen with enlargement or in the EU’s climate policies, the EU can be ready to accept considerable economic costs to promote certain principles. But when serious and immediate security concerns are involved, data suggests that the priority changes in favour of EU security, also if it involves a breach of human rights.

By putting emphasis on this pattern, our study contributes not only to a better understanding of what the EU’s concept ‘principled pragmatism’ implies empirically, but also to a better conceptual understanding of how various policies based on different analytical behavioural logics may play out at different levels or in different contexts, and thus also to how crisis affects not only EU integration but also the type of policies the EU conducts externally. While the claim that foreign policy actors promote both interests and norms is not new, the insight that EU foreign and security policy seems based on different behavioural logics in different contexts, helps us better grasp both the empirical and the analytical foundations of the Union’s ‘principled pragmatic’ foreign and security policy. In this article we thus also add to the discussion between perspectives focusing on the continued importance of some version of ‘normative power Europe’ (Aggestam 2008; Diez 2005; Eriksen 2009; Manners 2002; Orbie 2008; Sjursen 2015), and the literature that claims that such a ‘normative power Europe’ is dead (Dijkstra 2016; Hyde-Price 2006). Instead, perceptions of security urgency seem key for understanding when the EU abandons its principles and when it does not. Although not studied systematically in this article, the same pattern will probably be observed with regard to the EU’s response to the Covid-19 pandemic, where securing Europe and the lives of European citizens seems to have been a first priority precisely due to the perceived urgency of the crisis. If

we are right, when there over time is less of a perception of urgency, the EU may thus change its policies to become more focused on long-term multilateral cooperation and increased global solidarity.

Notes

1. These cover, *inter alia*, fisheries, port-state control, maritime training, environmental protection, and a substantial foreign and security component including defence. Examples of foreign and security actions include border control and information exchange systems, maritime surveillance, maritime capabilities, naval operations, and defence industry cooperation.
2. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/FR/TXT/?qid = 1583753318333&uri = JOIN%3A2020%3A4%3AFIN>
3. <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/french-foreign-policy/civil-society/news/article/summit-of-the-two-shores-jean-baptiste-lemoyne-s-participation-in-the>
4. For details about the project and its findings, see McGinty, Pogodda, and Richmond (2021).

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