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**CONSTRUCTING BRIDGES AND FOSTERING GROWTH:  
 INTERDISCIPLINARY INSIGHTS  
 INTO EUROPEAN UNION ROLE CONCEPTIONS AND PRESCRIPTIONS**

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**Natalia Chaban, Ole Elgström. Constructing bridges and fostering growth: Interdisciplinary insights into European Union conceptions and perceptions.** This article studies the EU's role conceptions and projections towards its Eastern Neighbourhood, and Ukraine specifically. Informed by the novel focus on narratives and emotions in International Relations (IR) theory and in EU foreign policy studies, we propose an innovative interdisciplinary synergy between IR's role theory [Harnisch *et al.* 2011; Holsti, 1970] and cognitive linguistics' conceptual metaphor theory [Lakoff and Johnson 1980]. Using the tool of conceptual metaphor, we systemically explore the EU's role conception (self-image) as well as its perception and expectations of the Eastern partners (role prescriptions). In doing so, we put forward a new method to systemically analyse cognitive and emotive elements in the EU's foreign policy roles based on the notion that conceptual metaphors reveal fundamental cognitive and emotional traits central to the roles actors play. Empirically, we analyse the EU Global Strategy (June 2016) and the EU Eastern Partnership (EaP) Summit's Official Memorandum (November 2017), as well as 12 interviews with EU practitioners dealing with Ukraine (conducted in 2017).

**Key words:** the EU, Ukraine, the EU Global Strategy, Eastern Partnership, conceptual metaphor, role conception, role prescription.

**Наталія Чабан, Оле Елгстрём. Наводимо мости та сприяємо зростанню: міждисциплінарний підхід до розуміння та сприйняття Європейського Союзу.** У цій статті розглядаються концептуалізації ролей ЄС та їхня проекція на його політику Східного сусідства, зокрема на відносини з Україною. З огляду на нові акценти, які з'явилися у студіюванні нартивів та емоцій в рамках теорії міжнародних відносин (МВ) та досліджень зовнішньої політики ЄС, ми пропонуємо інноваційне міждисциплінарне поєднання теорії ролей у МВ [Harnisch *et al.* 2011; Holsti, 1970] та теорії концептуальної метафори, розробленої в когнітивній лінгвістиці [Lakoff and Johnson 1980]. Послугуючись інструментарієм концептуальної метафори, ми пропонуємо системний аналіз розуміння ролей ЄС (розуміння ним самого себе), а також сприйняття ЄС (його ролей) східними партнерами, супроводжуване їхніми очікуваннями. При цьому ми започатковуємо методику системного дослідження когнітивних та емотивних складників ролей, виконуваних ЄС у реалізації його зовнішньої політики. Ця методика спирається на припущення, за яким концептуальні метафори експлікують основоположні когнітивні та емотивні ознаки, якими наділені виконувані актантами ролі. Емпіричною базою дослідження є Глобальна стратегія ЄС (червень 2016) та офіційний меморандум саміту Східного партнерства (листопад 2017), а також 12 інтерв'ю з посадовцями ЄС, задіяними у розбудові відносин між ЄС та Україною.

**Ключові слова:** ЄС, Україна, Глобальна стратегія ЄС, Східне партнерство, концептуальна метафора, розуміння ролей, сприйняття ролей.

**Наталья Чабан, Оле Элгстрём. Строим мосты и способствуем росту: междисциплинарный подход к пониманию и восприятию Европейского Союза.** В данной статье рассматриваются

концептуализации ролей ЕС и их проекция на его политику Восточного соседства, в частности, на отношения с Украиной. Принимая во внимания новые акценты, появившиеся в исследовании нарративов и эмоций в рамках теории международных отношений (МО) и в рамках студий, посвященных внешней политике ЕС, мы предлагаем инновационный междисциплинарный синтез теории ролей в МО [Harnisch *et al.* 2011; Holsti, 1970] и теории концептуальной метафоры, разработанной в когнитивной лингвистике [Lakoff and Johnson 1980]. Использование инструментария теории концептуальной метафоры позволяет предложить системный анализ понимания ролей ЕС (понимание им самого себя), а также восприятия ЕС (его ролей) восточными партнерами, сопровождаемого их ожиданиями. При этом мы вводим в обиход методологию системного исследования когнитивных и эмотивных составляющих ролей, исполняемых ЕС в реализации его внешней политики. Эта методика опирается на предположение, согласно которому концептуальные метафоры эксплицируют основополагающие когнитивные и эмотивные характеристики, присущие ролям, исполняемым актантами. Эмпирической базой исследования является Глобальная стратегия ЕС (июнь 2016), официальный меморандум саммита Восточного партнерства (ноябрь 2017), а также 12 интервью с должностными лицами ЕС, задействованными в развитии отношений между ЕС и Украиной.

**Ключевые слова:** ЕС, Украина, Глобальная стратегия ЕС, Восточное партнерство, концептуальная метафора, понимание ролей, восприятие ролей.

## 1. Introduction

Informed by the novel focus on narratives and emotions in International Relations (IR) theory and in EU foreign policy studies, this article studies the EU's role conceptions and projections towards its Eastern Neighbourhood, and Ukraine specifically. Analysing the EU Global Strategy (June 2016) and the EU Eastern Partnership (EaP) Summit's Official Memorandum (November 2017), as well as 12 interviews with EU practitioners dealing with Ukraine (conducted in 2017), we propose an innovative interdisciplinary synergy between IR's role theory [Harnisch *et al.* 2011; Holsti 1970] and cognitive linguistics' conceptual metaphor theory [Lakoff and Johnson 1980]. Using the tool of conceptual metaphor, we systematically explore the EU's role conception (self-image) as well as its perception and expectations of the EaP (role prescriptions). In doing so, we put forward a new method to systematically analyse cognitive and emotive elements in the EU's foreign policy roles based on the notion that conceptual metaphors reveal fundamental cognitive and emotional traits central to the roles actors play.

The choice of our empirical case – EU role conceptions and prescriptions in relation to the EaP, and to Ukraine in particular – is not accidental. Relevant literature argues that the problematic future of the EaP (with visa-free entry regimes, Association Agreements and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements (DCFTA) in place, yet with no promise of EU membership in view) and the Ukraine crisis together pose a challenge to the EU's foreign policy and the EU's exercise of power in this geopolitical region (see the 2017 Special Issue “Europe's Hybrid Foreign

Policy: The Ukraine - Russia Crisis” edited by [Davis Cross and Karolewski 2017]). David Cross and Karolewski [2017: 3] specifically argue that the Russia-Ukraine crisis serves as a “critical juncture and catalyst for shaping the EU's power” – “constraining or enabling the EU's exercise of power”. One way to understand the EU's “intentional exercise of power ... in the international system..., especially during times of crisis” [David Cross and Karolewski 2017: 10] is to analyse how the EU formulates and projects its self-visions as a foreign policy actor who reacts to an “unpredictable and uncertain international system” [David Cross and Karolewski 2017: 3]. Thus our focus on the EU's official EaP-related key foreign policy discourses post-Maidan.

Our main findings show that authors of the EU's official discourses resorted to a limited set of conceptual metaphors, and these revealed a confined set of role conceptions prescribed to the EU. Conceptual metaphors of personification compared the EU to an ARCHITECT, a NURTURER and TEACHER/BENEVOLENT AUTHORITY as well as an IMPOSING/DICTATING AUTHORITY. All these compared the EU to a capable and knowledgeable person who exercises power in its relations with the EaPs. Another row of metaphors compared the EU to a PARTNER in the

relationship. In these descriptions, the EU comes through as a committed, attractive and close co-operator. This conceptual metaphor is of particular interest, as it suggests a certain parity in relations and potential to learn from each other, not just to the EU setting the agenda. Importantly, our analysis discovered a certain confusion in *role conceptions* traced through incongruent mapping of the conceptual metaphors. Specifically, our analysis demonstrates that the EU's self-images oscillate between the role of a *state- and region-facilitator*, an authority who is in charge and tells you what to do, and a *partner* who respects, listens and co-creates. Importantly, while there may be a cognitive incongruence on role conceptions, there was no emotive incongruence. In all roles that came through the analysis of metaphorical categorizations, the EU described itself, rather predictably, in positive terms. However, in the conclusion, we ask if a similar positive reaction is to be expected among the EaP recipients of the EU's formulations and communications.

The paper proceeds in the following way. We start by describing the empirical context and by introducing our theoretical framework where we link role theory to conceptual metaphor theory. After presenting our material and methodological approach, we analyse the conceptual and linguistic metaphors found in the three different data-sets. In the following section, we translate this pattern of metaphors into roles, discovering the existence of two major EU role conceptions in its relationship with the EaP. We conclude with a summary of our main findings and a discussion of their implications for EU diplomacy.

## 2. Contexts

The EU outlined its Eastern Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) in 2003, with a subsequent update in 2011, with a goal to create a “ring of friends” who will serve a buffer zone of stability and security for the EU. From its inception, it has been directed towards six post-Soviet states – Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. In the rich and voluminous literature on the EaP, there is a growing critical analysis of the policy. In one such reflection, Howorth [2017] outlines three oversights of the ENP policy. Firstly, he claims that the policy offered an “one-size-fits-all” approach towards the group of six very different countries. Secondly, the policy came with demands of conditionality, yet it never promised a prospect of accession. Thirdly, the EU member states did not have a well-developed strategic approach towards the EaP region and its members [Howorth 2017: 126-127]. Scholars have also pointed out that the policy has underestimated the hostility it would elicit from Russia [Howorth 2017; Orenstein and Keleman 2017]. In addition, the policy spelt out a particular “either/or”-vision for trading agreements, challenging the EaP countries to make a choice between the EU and Russia and provoking Russia to approach the six countries with its own proposals and deals. These flawed policy choices were aggravated by the EU's “deep Euro-centrism that never doubted which way the partners would turn” [Howorth 2017: 127] – an argument that our analysis finds particularly interesting. Assuming that post-Maidan key official discourses of EU foreign policy would reflect on the flaws and aim to rectify them, will role conceptions formulated and projected in them avoid the trap of Euro-centrism?

The oversights in the EaP policy are argued to feed into the Ukraine crisis. The crisis provides a chance for the EU to revisit how it can and will exercise power. It is also a critical test for the EU's foreign policy post-Lisbon – it has a chance to enable the EU's exercise of power or constrain it [David Cross and Karolewski 2017]. In this paper, we examine how EU foreign policy discourse, and the role conceptions and prescriptions it conveys, can be instrumental in enabling or containing the EU's exercise of power.

## 3. Theoretical framework

Role theory has in recent years been heralded as a useful instrument to scrutinize foreign policies of international political actors, not least because its capacity to link actor-centred and structural approaches [Harnisch *et al.* 2011; 2015; Thies and Breuning, 2012; Klose, 2018]. In this paper, we combine role theory with theoretical and empirical inputs from the study of conceptual metaphors.

We do so as we believe a focus on metaphors provides novel insights to role analysis, being able to detect nuances and subtleties in actors' role conceptions and role prescriptions, including key emotional elements.

Roles refer to “patterns of expected or appropriate behaviour” [Elgström and Smith, 2006: 5]. They are shaped by an actor's role conception – its perception of appropriate behaviour, given a certain context – but also by its expectations of external actors, role prescriptions [Harnisch 2011]. Role conceptions refer to images that state representatives hold concerning the general function (“what they should do”) and performance (“how they should behave”) of the state in a certain context or situation. They reveal the intention and motives of foreign policy actors [Aggestam 2006]. An actor's role conception tends to be persistent, but is reshaped through confrontations with others' expectations [Aggestam 2006: 16]. Anticipated attributes of a social role are constantly re-interpreted in interaction with external actors at the same time as external expectations are influenced by the actor's role performance. States tend to conceive of several roles, which may be complementary but also sometimes competing, potentially leading to role conflict.

Metaphors – interpreted in this paper in terms of “conceptual metaphors” [Lakoff and Johnson 1980] – are utilized to comprehend a complex reality. Conceptual metaphors are devices which help us understand complex events with the aid of more familiar concepts, and by providing us with concrete and easily understandable images of abstract notions [Opperman and Spenser 2013; Chilton 1996; Drulak 2004; Musolff 2010]. They help us to interpret “reality” by “understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another” [Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 5]. Thus, “humans communicate what they perceive as reality through metaphorical representation” [Marks 2011: 18].

Conceptual metaphors – “figures of thought” – can be traced through linguistic metaphorical expressions [Lakoff and Johnson 1980]. A complex political event can thus be represented by a number of different linguistic metaphors, with linguistic metaphors indicative of the conceptual metaphors underlying them. The choice among these linguistic expressions, often subconscious and implicit, reveals fundamental underlying mental pictures of the target domain, as some aspects are highlighted and emphasized while others are downplayed [Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 1, 10].

Importantly, metaphors offer not only a cognitive shortcut of how to understand an actor or a relationship, but also convey emotions. The affective salience [Flanik 2011: 4] of a metaphor varies with an actor's emotional ties to an event, situation or actor. Some metaphors are “hot”, with high affective salience, and are then likely to effect the emotive status of the sender: being scared, angry, proud or guilty, etc. [Holland and Chaban 2011].

Lakoff and Johnson [1980: 454] argue that “Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature”. Role conceptions are no exception. We therefore argue that a study of the metaphors utilized in a certain context – in this case the EU's relations to Eastern European neighbours – is an effective and innovative tool for unravelling the conception of complex foreign policy roles. Metaphors – in descriptions of self and of others, and of relations between self and others – reveal how an actor understands its roles in a particular context. By examining metaphorical expressions chosen in texts or speeches, and by tracing deeper conceptual metaphors underlying linguistic expressions, a nuanced and detailed picture of role conceptions will appear. Furthermore, studying metaphors is a way of systematically probing the emotive elements of roles. As metaphors are associated with emotions, they assist us in linking roles to underlying emotional traits. Our use of partly subconsciously chosen metaphors goes beyond the usual identification of role conceptions that relies on direct self-identification by an actor.

#### **4. Method**

The fields of politics and media have attracted particular attention in the study of metaphors, as their ability to influence the structuring of one domain to another can determine the way in which

large audiences conceive sensitive and controversial aspects of their reality [Jansen and Sabo 1994; Lakoff 1991; Rohrer 1995].

The EU's role conceptions, as revealed by conceptual and linguistic metaphors, were traced in the text of EU Global Strategy [EUGS 2016] released in June 2016, Joint Declaration of the Eastern Partnership Summit (Brussels, 24 November 2017), and through the EU elites' responses to the questions about the EU's relations with Ukraine. Specifically, our analysis focused on EU metaphors traced in the EUGS' sections that outline EU foreign policy priorities towards "our South and East", "our neighbours" and "surrounding regions".

Interviews with 12 EU practitioners involved individuals who are engaged in developing and/or implementing EU policies in the neighbourhood, and specifically those who deal with EU-Ukraine relations on a daily basis. The interviews took place in Brussels, within the framework of the research project "Crisis, Conflict and Critical Diplomacy: EU Perceptions in Ukraine and Israel/Palestine", between December 2016-July 2017<sup>1</sup>. These face-to-face semi-structured in-depth interviews (lasting on average around an hour) were conducted by pre-trained researchers and produced rich narratives. This paper focuses on the analysis of responses to the questions that deal with practitioners' opinions on the EU-Ukraine relations:

*In your opinion, who would be the three most important international regions and countries for Ukraine? In what policy areas?*

*How would you describe the relations between Ukraine and the EU?*

- *Does the EU have an open agenda with Ukraine?*
- *Is the EU agenda-setter?*
- *Is the EU showing ability to compromise?*
- *Does the EU understand Ukraine?*
- *Is the EU ready to learn from Ukraine?*

*In light of Ukraine's aspiration towards EU membership, how do you see the EU's openness and readiness to accept Ukraine as its member? As a candidate?*

Responses are fully anonymized, following the Human Ethics requirements and practice.

Subsequently, the sentences presenting the EU and its institutions in the context of the "neighbours to the East" were singled out of the texts, scrutinized in terms of metaphorical categorizations employed and coded according to the source and target domains if metaphorical categorizations were detected. This approach is informed by cognitive linguistics methods. It addresses the call in relevant literature that linguistic approaches profiling "*detailed* attention to linguistic usage in its respective contexts" should be taken seriously in the analysis of policy and political events [Cienki and Yanow 2013: 167, emphasis added].

### **5. EU Global Strategy 2016: EU self-images through metaphors**

We contend that the tool of conceptual metaphor is useful to trace the EU's self-images informing the EU's foreign policy projections towards the EaP countries. Here we present a brief overview of the metaphorical categorizations employed by the EU Global Strategy released in June 2016.

Among the most prominent EU metaphors in relations to the 'neighbours to the East' was the image of the EU as a NURTURER – a benevolent authority that is there to foster growth, to support and guide and to relieve fragility and crises in the neighbourhood. While the document spells that 'positive change can only be *home-grown*<sup>1</sup>, and may take years to materialise' [EUGS 2016: 2], the EU is committed to '*nurture* societal resilience also by *deepening* work on education, culture and youth to *foster* pluralism, coexistence and respect' in the surrounding regions [EUGS 2016: 2]. The EU promises to '*foster* an enabling environment for new economic endeavours, employment and

the inclusion of marginalised groups' [EUGS 2016: 27], '*seek to enhance* energy and environmental *resilience*' [EUGS 2016: 27], as well as to '*support* these countries in implementing association agreements' [EUGS 2016: 25]. This '*nurturing*' is justified as the counterparts are often described as '*fragile*' and in need of becoming more '*resilient*'. For example, the EU intends to '*support* different paths to resilience, targeting the most *acute cases* of governmental, economic, societal and climate/energy *fragility*' [EUGS 2016: 9]. In the eyes of the EU, '*fragility* beyond our borders threatens all our vital interests. By contrast, *resilience* – the ability of states and societies to reform, thus *withstanding* and *recovering* from internal and external crises – benefits us and countries in our surrounding regions, *sowing the seeds for sustainable growth* and *vibrant* societies. Together with its partners, the EU will therefore promote resilience in its surrounding regions.' [EUGS 2016: 23].

The EU is also presenting itself as an ARCHITECT who is actively engaged in the construction of links/bridges to the neighbours (including Ukraine) and paving paths towards future cooperation. The EU is ready to be '*building* physical and digital connections' [EUGS 2016: 25] with its neighbours. Or '*societal links* will also be strengthened through enhanced mobility, cultural and educational exchanges, research cooperation and civil society platforms' [EUGS 2016: 25]. The neighbours are also up to for a full participation in EU programmes and agencies which '*will be pursued alongside strategic dialogue with a view to paving the way for these countries*' further involvement in CSDP' [EUGS 2016: 25].

An idea of the EU as a CAPABLE PERSON in relation to its neighbours is also communicated through metaphors – the EU as an actor who can start and advance the movement, penetrate deeply, catalyse and fight. The EU plans to '*fight* poverty and inequality, widen access to public services and social security, and champion decent work opportunities, notably for women and youth' [EUGS 2016: 26]. The EU's development funds should '*catalyse* strategic investments through public-private partnerships, *driving* sustainable growth, job creation, and skills and technological transfers' [EUGS 2016: 26]. Through long-term engagement, the EU plans to '*persistently seek to advance* human rights protection' [EUGS 2016: 26]. It '*can spur* transformation' [EUGS 2016: 25] and '*think creatively about deepening* tailor-made partnerships further [EUGS 2016: 25].

Another typical metaphor is of the EU as engaged in a personal relationship where the EU portrays itself as ATTRACTIVE and COMMITTED PARTNER: 'Under the European Neighbourhood Policy, many people wish to build *closer relations* with the Union: our *enduring power of attraction* can spur transformation in these countries' [EUGS 2016: 25]. Moreover, 'The ENP has *recommitted* to eastern Partnership and southern Mediterranean countries wishing to develop stronger relations with us [EUGS 2016: 25]. Also, 'many people within the scope of the European Neighbourhood Policy both to the east and to the south wish to build *closer relations* with the Union' [EUGS 2016: 25].

The metaphors that appear in the context of EU relations with Russia (mentioned in particular) reveal specific EU visions. Russia is presented as CHALLENGER to the EU's security and as FORCE/IMPACT that destabilizes Ukraine: 'Russia's violation of international law and the *destabilization* of Ukraine, on top of protracted conflicts in the wider Black Sea region, have *challenged* the European security order at its core' [EUGS 2016: 33]. Consider also, '*managing* the relationship with Russia represents a key strategic *challenge*' [EUGS 2016: 33]. In relation to Russia, the EU sees itself as a CONSTRUCTOR/ENGINEER/ARCHITECT who will '*strengthen* the EU, enhance the resilience of our eastern neighbours, and *uphold* their right to determine freely their approach towards the EU' and '*stand united in upholding* international law, democracy, human rights, cooperation and each country's right to choose its future freely' [EUGS 2016: 33]. Importantly, a '*consistent and united approach must remain the cornerstone of EU policy towards Russia*' [EUGS 2016: 33].

## 6. Joint Declaration of the Eastern Partnership Summit 2017

This document includes a variety of metaphorical categorizations. Many of them are found in the General Strategy, but there are also subtle differences and elaborations. When interpreting the metaphors used in the Joint Declaration, it should be borne in mind that it is not a unilateral EU text but a product of negotiations between the EU and its eastern partners. This may obviously affect the type of metaphors used as the document arguably reflects the priorities and images of both parties.

The metaphor of the EU as a NURTURER and SUPPORTING AUTHORITY is found in several places. The EaP countries are portrayed as needing help and assistance to become more *resilient* – a core concept in the Global Strategy – and the EU is presented to be there to “strengthen” and “bolster” resilience [Council of the EU 2017: 8] of the EaP partners in a range of issue-areas and as ready to step in “where relevant and applicable” [Council of the EU 2017: 18]. The EU is thus depicted as the stronger partner in the relationship and comes through as a nurturing, benevolent authority who is supporting, bolstering, facilitating and developing the EaPs. The existence of this metaphor can be illustrated with examples from various issue-areas: regarding security, it is claimed that “through *support* ... partners will be more resilient to hybrid threats” [Council of the EU 2017: 15]; in economic matters, the EU will “*unlock the growth potential*” through EU4 Business programs with “*support*” to client-oriented businesses [Council of the EU 2017: 12]; regarding climate change, the EU will be “*fostering* research-industry partnerships” [Council of the EU 2017: 19] and in gender equality, the EU will “*boost* economic prospects for women entrepreneurs” [Council of the EU 2017: 12].

The metaphor of the EU as a COMMITTED, NON-IMPOSING PARTNER is also found in the document. It is then presented as a partner who is committed to the relationship and who is there to discuss and exchange opinions, rather than to impose its will. Echoing the self-categorizations of the EU in the EUGS, the EU of the Joint Declaration “*remains committed* in its support to the territorial integrity, independence and sovereignty of all its partners” [Council of the EU 2017: 2], and the EU and its partners “*underline their firm intentions to carry forward the commitments* taken at previous Summits and in bilateral relations” [Council of the EU 2017: 2]. As a committed partner, the EU does not frame itself as imposing or pushing – “the EU will continue jointly discuss with each to the *partner* countries... attractive and realistic options...” [Council of the EU 2017: 14]. Developing strengthened relations between the EU and partners leads to stronger links – “*bonds forged* through the Eastern Partnership make the European Union and partner countries stronger together, better able to deal with common challenges” [Council of the EU 2017: 2].

The notion of resilience – in itself a metaphor – that pervades the EUGS and is used widely in the Joint Declaration also frames a set of other metaphors related to the EU. Referencing resilience as a term used in construction, the EU is compared to an ARCHITECT, aiming for a better support of the EaP structures. The EU is furthermore portrayed as a SKILLFUL CONSTRUCTOR, possessing the know-how and the tools and instruments necessary to carry out this task. Importantly, while the “blue prints” for the future EaP structures might be offered by the EU, the revision of architectural designs during the building process is described to involve both the EU and the EaP partners.

To illustrate, the EU’s on-going support to the EaP “through a full and targeted use of the European Neighborhood *Instrument*... and other available financial *instruments*” [Council of the EU 2017: 7] was welcomed by the Summit participants, “while *leveraging* efforts of the European Union and International Financial Institutions will help create a *conducive* environment for the development of competitive, green, digitalized and innovation-driven economies” [Council of the EU 2017: 7]. In the issue-area of good governance and rule of law, the EU pledges to support “development of legal framework and *mechanisms* for recovery and management of assess and effective *tools* for financial investigations” [Council of the EU 2017: 14]. “*Tailor-made* strategic communication ... will lead to better understanding of the European Union among the citizens across the Eastern neighbourhood, as well as a better understanding of partner countries and the

Eastern Partnership among the EU citizens” [Council of the EU 2017:12]. This is stated to help to improve “resilience against disinformation” [Council of the EU 2017:12].

The text also talks about the 20 deliverables for 2020. These are “conceived as a *working tool designed* in an inclusive manner with all stakeholders. A *streamlined architecture* for the multilateral cooperation within the Eastern Partnership will closely and regularly monitor the implementation of the agreed deliverables...” [Council of the EU 2017: 11]. The cooperation is seen to be intensified “in the revised multilateral *structure* of the Eastern Partnership, which will better *support* the political objectives pursued in the Partnership, including cooperation among the partners” [Council of the EU 2017: 5]. The Eastern Partnership aims at “*building* a common area of share democracy, prosperity, stability and increased cooperation” [Council of the EU 2017: 3].

Finally, we discover metaphors related to MOVEMENT. The EU is still a distant partner for the EaP, and these countries need to make efforts to move closer. In this context, the EU is perceived as a CATALYZER of the movement of the EaPs, as well as a COMPANION in the pursuit of closer relations and shared resilience.

Thus, “Sustained and effective reform *progress* is key to the continued success of the Eastern Partnership – it will bring the EaPs “*closer* to the European Union” [Council of the EU 2017: 1]. The example includes suggested moves for the EaPs in the areas of the rule of law and anti-corruption mechanisms (e.g. “*steps towards* implementation of application international recommendations on political party funding” [Council of the EU 2017: 14]); transport connections (e.g. “*steps forward* on the Common Aviation’s Area Agreements”); energy (e.g. “*progress*” in the field of electricity interconnectedness [Council of the EU 2017: 16]), environmental protection (e.g. “*key steps*” [Council of the EU 2017: 17]) or climate change (“*Decisive steps* will be taken to pursue climate resilient, low carbon growth pathways... in line with the Paris Agreement on Climate Change” [Council of the EU 2017: 17]).

The scope and depth the EU’s cooperation with the EaPs is formulated to depend on “*pace* and quality of reforms [Council of the EU 2017: 5]. Importantly, *resilience* is again in the frame – it is now the goal of the movement of both the EU and the EaPs, as they are both chasing this goal: it is about the “*joint pursuit* of stability and resilience in the European neighborhood” [Council of the EU 2017: 7]. Importantly, the desired end goals refer to the EaP – not to the EU, even though earlier the EU is presented as being in search of resilience inside the EU too.

## 6. Metaphors in interviews with EU officials

Perhaps unsurprisingly, metaphors observed in the responses of the EU officials dealing with EU Eastern Neighbourhood (and Ukraine in it) revealed visions of the roles that to a large degree paralleled the visions formulated and projected by the two key policy documents. The interviews came with multiple metaphors that delivered a view on the EU as a COMMITTED PARTNER and the EU as a NURTURER and SUPPORTING AUTHORITY and perhaps a TEACHER. However, these views, while not rare, were significantly less frequent than visions of the EU as an IMPOSING AUTHORITY who is an agenda-setter. In contrast, conceptualization of the EU as a CONSTRUCTION was not used by the respondents.

Elite actors who deal with Ukraine (as well as other Eastern neighbourhood actors) saw the EU as a COMMITTED PARTNER in relations with Ukraine – an attractive, committed open, embracing, close and important partner. The two are seen to be intimately linked – Ukraine was noted to have “*deep cultural ties*” with the EU (2) while “we [the EU] are *closer* than any other region in the world” to Ukraine (4.7). Ukraine is seen to be attracted to the EU – “the whole process of reforms in Ukraine started with this *attraction* of the EU” (4.7). The EU is recognized to be “definitely...by far the most *important partner* for Ukraine, especially after the Association Agreement” (4.8). The EU is believed to have “the most *open possible relationship* with Ukraine for mutual benefit, up to, but not including, membership”. (8a.3), with “the Commission and the Parliament ... really very *open* and *want to embrace* Ukraine as soon as possible” (8c.10). The

interviews did stress the openness – “we are quite *open* on our agendas with other countries and I think this is the case with Ukraine. It is open, of course, to the extent possible” (8a.4).

Linked is the vision of the EU as a NURTURER and SUPPORTING AUTHORITY in this relations. The EU “*stays very committed to support* Ukraine now in the modernization aspects, in the reforms they are undertaking” (4.7). In the eyes of the EU elites, EU supports Ukraine by providing technical assistance, as well as political and financial support. From this perspective, the EU is seen to set the priorities while Ukraine remains vulnerable. Interviewees shared, “we are open what we would like *to support* Ukraine with, but we are also rather open in *setting priorities* and working together in various processes” (8a.7): the EU provides “quite a lot of technical *assistance*. Roughly one billion euros per year, this is above the macro-economic *assistance* by European Central Bank. ... – administration, fighting with corruption, assistance in legislation, and so on and so on” (4.8). The EU also provides “political *support*, as well as financial *support*” (4.9). Ukrainians on the other side “say where they need to invest more and they *ask for further support*, financial *support*, from our side” (8a.7).

Sometimes, the EU is seen as an authority who may be flexible and understanding. The images of a CARING AUTHORITY also came through in the following statements: “We try to *listen and to understand* what is important for Ukraine” (XX); or “we should be *very flexible and understanding*, because the situation and the circumstances are so much different” (8b.9). One commentator states, “It is rather a one-way street – we *advise* Ukraine what to do, but, of course, we *listen* to what Ukraine wants. They first reach out to us and *ask for help* (8e.2).

In many responses, the EU was compared to a TEACHER who has certain expectations of Ukraine, while Ukraine was seen as a good student who listens well and performs up to the expectations (echoing similar images formulated in the text of EU Global Strategy). While an overall agenda for Ukraine is seen as “open”, it is “obviously, *according to our rules, according to the EU rules*” (8a.5). The EU is noted to “have set the agenda to some degree ... *drawing up the list* of reforms and things that are needed and implemented” (8b.9). An EU official notes, “what we have observed, and that is a very positive development, is that Ukraine is very much *meeting our expectations* at the level of the government” (8a.7). Another interviewee shares, “more and more in Ukraine [are] saying “Here are our problems, this is what we have *learned* from you, this is what we still need in order to move in that direction” (8a.7): “we [the EU] see them *indicating what are their problems* and *identifying them very correctly*. (8a.7), “at least this area of *analysis* of the situation and existing problems is much better now than it was in the previous years” (8a.7).

One of the most visible metaphorical descriptions was the image of the EU as an IMPOSING, DICTATING AUTHORITY, who sets the agenda and had limited understanding of Ukraine. The EU is seen to be a rightful agenda-setter – “the bigger power is usually the *agenda-setter*” (8b.4). In this relationship, the “Ukrainian government does listen, so the EU is certainly an *agenda setter*” (8b.3) – “at the end of the day, it is the EU that more or less *dictates*, I think, it is normal” (8b.4). Another elite adds, “they [Ukrainians] have to *follow the rules of the stronger one*, and that, of course, is us” (8b.5). Another one elaborates, “because we are a big funder of Ukraine, therefore, we see it as opportunity to *push them* [Ukrainians] a little bit to some directions” (8c.7). The EU is seen on a different (better) ground that Ukraine – it will “have to adapt, because Ukraine wants to come to the level of the EU at one stage” (8b.5)

The interviewed EU elites agree that agenda of EU-Ukraine relations “is going to be *dominated* by the EU” (8c.8). Views that the EU can learn from Ukraine – like a true relationship would prescribe – are very limited. One respondent stated that “we do not learn from Ukraine – there is little appetite for that in general.” (8e.2). Another noted, “I do not see that many positive examples that we can borrow to be honest, from my experience. So, I am not sure what positive we can learn (8e.4)”. Yet, some interviewees are more self-critical: “The EU doesn’t want to learn from anybody. It thinks it has all the answers, I am afraid to say.” (8e.3). The same interviewee

continues, “We are the dominant partner, we have the model Ukraine wants to follow, so Ukraine should just follow, we haven’t made much attempt to really deeply understand Ukraine” (8d.3).

### 7. Linking metaphors and role conceptions

The linguistic metaphors – and the conceptual metaphors underlying them – used by the actor in its public discourse are, we argue, excellent indicators of an actor’s role conceptions. The producer of the discourse draws from the “pool” of available linguistic metaphors. These linguistic metaphors, e.g. ARCHITECT, have their roots in conceptual metaphors, in this case CONSTRUCTION. Note that conceptual metaphors exist irrespective of the EU discourse; they belong to all users of the language. The task of the analyst is to distill from the material at hand the linguistic metaphors used by the actor, to determine what conceptual metaphor(s) they belong to, assess their internal congruence and, finally, to ‘translate’ the metaphors into roles.

When a role is unambiguous, we would expect the selection of linguistic metaphors derived from a certain conceptual metaphor to be congruent, that is, they should all reinforce each other, thus consistently reflecting the actor’s self-image: “congruent mapping provides evidence of understanding of an IR actor or situation through the use of more coherent metaphors within one cognitive scenario” [Chaban and Kelly 2017: 699]. If an actor’s role conception is unclear and confused, on the other hand, we would expect to find partially incongruent linguistic metaphors in our material. In a case of incongruent metaphorical mapping [Chaban and Kelly 2017], more than one role conception may be derived from the discourse, indicating role competition [Bengtsson and Elgström 2012] and potential role conflict.

When analyzing the metaphors employed in EU documents and by EU officials, describing the EU’s relationship with the EaP, we find that the linguistic metaphors are mainly clustered around three conceptual metaphors: CONSTRUCTION (architect, co-constructor), GROWTH (nurturer, supporter) and RELATIONSHIP (equal partner, authority). From these over-arching metaphors, which all carry positive connotations for EU authorities, linguistic metaphors can be chosen that indicate for example various degrees of pro-activeness and different types of relationships. When translating the metaphorical landscape into role conceptions, distinct patterns emerge that indicate the existence of two competing role conceptions: that of a benevolent, non-imposing *partner* (more prevalent in the Joint Declaration), and that of a stronger but committed *state- and region-facilitator* (dominating in the Global Strategy and, not least, in the interviews).

The partner-image is indicated by linguistic metaphors such as CO-CONSTRUCTOR (taking an active part but indicating relative parity), NON-IMPOSING PARTNER (indicating an equal relationship) and COMPANION (sharing the same goals and travelling together). The state- and region-facilitator role conception stems from the same conceptual metaphors but expressed with linguistic metaphors that indicate a quite different type of role for the EU. Here we find the metaphor of an ARCHITECT (a pro-active agent with authority; leading the building-process), a NURTURER and a SUPPORTER (a stronger party that can help a weaker partner in need of assistance; that can foster growth and resilience) and IMPOSING AUTHORITY (the strongest expression in our material of an unequal relationship).

The two role conceptions are cognitively incongruent. According to the partner-image, the EU and the EaPs are equals; they all strive for increased resilience and for an improved partnership, and they are committed to work together on an equal footing to reach these goals. According to the state- and region-facilitator image, the EU is the stronger party, while the EaP are dependent on support from its more powerful partner. It is the EU, the “architect” with the blueprints for the future, that gives, and the EaP who takes, the orders. This role carries vestiges of a well-entrenched “Euro-centric” mentality – an EU approach to its neighbours described by Howorth [2017: 127] as “a deep Euro-centrism that never doubted which way the partners would turn”. The two roles attach different degrees of authority to the EU. As they co-exist in EU discourse, role confusion is, sooner

or later, likely to be one reaction. EaP countries may react negatively to Euro-centric messages, especially when they also hear a rhetoric that stresses partnership and equality.

The roles that the EU plays in its relationship with the EaP are associated with certain *emotional traits*. Both roles present the EU as a CONSTRUCTIVE and CAPABLE actor, clearly very positive characteristics that endow the EU with the tools and the competence required to reach the goals of regional co-operation. In its state- and region-facilitator role, the EU portrays itself as a SKILLFUL ARCHITECT, also a depiction with positive connotations. The EU has the knowledge needed to construct a resilient Europe and to assist its partners in their efforts to reach the same goal. The idea that the EU is a PARTNER on equal footing should also send positive and encouraging signals to its eastern associates. Conversely, the competing image of the EU as an AUTHORITY and unequal partner may carry with it negative associations in this context. Both roles thus seem to evoke positive feelings within the EU itself, while they send confusing or even conflicting signals, linked to contrary emotional responses, to the EaP countries.

## 8. Conclusions

This paper, we contend, breaks new ground in three respects: theoretically, methodologically and empirically. Theoretically, we have introduced the innovative idea of an interdisciplinary synergetic interplay between IR's role theory and cognitive linguistics' conceptual metaphor theory. Methodologically, we have demonstrated that patterns of linguistic and conceptual metaphors are eminent indicators of an actor's foreign policy role conceptions. We have also argued that as conceptual metaphors mirror fundamental emotional traits, a study of metaphors also reveals basic emotive elements in foreign policy roles. These insights add a previously unnoticed and sophisticated instrument to the tool-box used to uncover international role conceptions.

Empirically, we have discovered the existence of two predominant roles in the EU's relationship with the EaPs: that of a benevolent, non-imposing *partner* and that of a stronger but committed *state- and region-facilitator*. Importantly, these role conceptions are cognitively incongruent. The partner image refers to an equal relationship, while the state-and region-facilitator role implies a picture of the EU as an authority and a teacher, an actor that gives orders and expects compliance. While both role conceptions are associated with positive emotions within the EU, it may be expected that EaP countries receive the authority-imposing state-and region-facilitator role with negative feelings.

The three data-sets in our material differ in their emphasis on the two roles, though they co-exist in all of them. The Joint Declaration is dominated by metaphors indicating the partner role. As the declaration is a negotiated document, it is not surprising that it reflects the perspectives of all parties, thus including the self-images of the EaP countries as independent and equal partners – an image that is easy for the EU to subscribe to as it forms a part of its own role perceptions. On the contrary, the state-and region-facilitator role predominates in the Global Strategy and, even more so, in the interview material. In this regard, the interview responses indicate that while official rhetoric may play with the image of partnership and the EU's role conception of an equal partner, the dominant internal self-image is that of the EU as a stronger counterpart who can and will exert power while seeing little to learn from the other side.

The co-existence of incongruent roles may, we argue, lead to role conflict as the target countries, the EaPs, experience two simultaneous but contradictory signals. The EaPs could be expected to react negatively to messages that they interpret as patronizing and condescending, and this reaction is arguably reinforced by simultaneous signals that paint a vision of an equal partnership. The ensuing role conflict probably means that the EU in the end will be forced to take a decision: what role conception should it deliver? While at least some “domestic” audiences appreciate an image of the EU as a teacher and architect, EaP audiences would be more inclined to welcome a partner role conception. On the other hand, with the Ukraine crisis posing a test to the EU's foreign policy and its ‘exercise of power’ in the EaP neighbourhood, it is only natural to

expect that EU discourses will again resort to the authority-related role conception. Obviously, any chosen role conception should also be coherent with the EU's role *performance* – what practices it in fact enacts in its eastern relationship. The existence of role incongruence creates a challenge to EU public diplomacy as juggling competing images may in the end produce opposition and critique, that could ultimately constraint the EU's dialogue with Ukraine.

## NOTES

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2. Emphasis in all quotes from the EUGS is added by us.

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