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De-bordering and Re-bordering the European Union After the Russian Invasion of Ukraine

Abstract

This article seeks to grasp the current dynamic of the European Union's enlargement policy as shaped by the exogenous shock of the Russian full-scale military invasion of Ukraine. It argues that external pressures matter as windows of opportunity, but the precise nature of the EU's response to this geopolitical push is shaped by internal factors. Building on a recent work by Frank Schimmelfennig (2021), it further argues that the new enlargement dynamic can be usefully illuminated by the concept of bordering. More concretely, this research highlights external de-bordering and re-bordering strategies pursued by the relevant political actors within the EU, as they purposefully seek to use the geopolitical window of opportunity to transform existing bordering constellations in line with their preferences. Empirically, this article sheds light on Europe's border-based games while drawing an analytical line between de-bordering and re-bordering strategies. The analysis reveals the limits of de-bordering, even under geopolitical and security emergency, but also underlines opportunities for agency.

Keywords: European Union, Ukraine, Russia, Enlargement, Neighbourhood, Geopolitics

Introduction

“24th February 2022 marks a turning point (Zeitenwende) in the history of our continent” (Bundesregierung, 2022). “This historic turning point is even more serious than during the fall of communism” (Chancellery of the

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Prime Minister, 2023). “World peace cannot be safeguarded without the making of creative efforts proportionate to the dangers which threaten it” (Élysée, 2022). These words from German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki, and French President Emmanuel Macron respectively, citing the famous 1950 speech made by Robert Schuman, certainly reflect and relate to the “geopolitical emergency of re-designing the European Union’s relationship with its neighbourhood” (Mayer et al., 2022, p. 1) in response to the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine. They have also ignited the hope that the European Union (EU) and its Member States will finally stand up to the challenges of the rapidly changing and increasingly hostile international environment, while fostering the transformation of the EU into a “real geopolitical actor” and embracing “enlargement as a geopolitical necessity” (Dionysiou, 2023, p. 15).

Undoubtedly, the war has brought about a mental shift for many European decision-makers along with significant policy change with regard to the EU’s enlargement. One obvious symptom is that the once-pronounced line between enlargement and neighbourhood policies, or between candidate and associated states, has become blurred. Those previously without formal accession prospects have procured them at an unprecedentedly fast pace. Within a few months, the subject of enlargement has returned to the top of the European agenda, and old debates on differentiated integration, staged accession, and widening versus deepening have gained new momentum.

But is this exogenous shock enough to substantially transform the European integration process? Geopolitics and security matter as external push factors, but the actual response to this push is shaped by internal factors. As argued elsewhere, policies are not formulated exclusively in reaction to external challenges, but external challenges rather provide a window of opportunity that allows one to respond to internal needs of the EU at the systemic, institutional, and actor levels (Cianciara, 2020, p. 9). What is clear, however, is that the war highlighted the need to put the EU’s international environment and external borders at the heart of reflection on European integration and European politics.

Building on a recent work by Frank Schimmelfennig (2021), it is argued here that the current dynamics related to the EU’s enlargement can be usefully illuminated by the concepts of external de-bordering and re-bordering. The latter are understood not so much in terms of phases or stages of the European integration process, but rather in terms of strategies used by relevant political actors seeking to shape the EU in line with their own preferences and interests. Accordingly, a major exogenous

shock does not determine a united and uniform de-bordering strategy at the eastern (or southern) borders of Europe, but rather constitutes an important push factor and a window of opportunity for relevant political actors aiming at a transformation of the existing bordering constellations. However, the result – in terms of the extent and scope of de-bordering and re-bordering – is far from certain.

The article proceeds as follows: firstly, the author proposes a re-conceptualisation of EU enlargement policy in terms of de-bordering and re-bordering strategies, while critically drawing on existing theoretical literature. Secondly, the author analyses empirical manifestations of external de-bordering strategies in response to an exogenous shock, as constituted by the Russian full-scale military aggression on Ukraine, but also highlighting that the geopolitical push factor for de-bordering was present even before the invasion, and exploited (rather unsuccessfully) in relation to the Western Balkans. Thirdly, empirical manifestations of external re-bordering strategies in response to exogenous shock are analysed. The analysis is based on both primary (namely, selected official documents and statements) and secondary sources (scholarly literature and think-tank analyses).

Re-conceptualising the EU's Enlargement Policy

This article proposes to both broaden and nuance the recently reinvigorated conversation about European Union enlargement. It does so by conceptualising and theorising European integration in terms of internal and external bordering. It follows and expands on a recent publication authored by Schimmelfennig (2021), who has drawn attention to the processes of external boundary formation that are largely neglected within the mainstream theories of European integration. The latter mainly discuss EU external borders as a side effect of EU internal policies, rather than as a driver of or constraint on integration in its own right. Thus, implicitly, they subscribe to the assumption that the international environment provides a relatively benign and stable external context for European integration. Meanwhile, exogenous pressures and geopolitics have not been included systematically into mainstream theorising on the European Union. Rather, the EU's external environment has been typically framed as a subject of inside-out policy diffusion and Europeanisation, and not as a source of change for European integration. As a result, relations with candidate and associate countries, as well as other neighbours, have been predominantly analysed as part of EU (external) policies (enlargement policy, the European Neighbourhood Policy), and

not as a factor that defines or transforms the integration process itself. This is also reflected in the terminology used by political actors and often reproduced by scholars; enlargement is about absorption (of new members by the existing EU), and not about transformation (change) of the new polity that emerges in the process. The abundant literature on Europeanisation (Cianciara, 2013; Cianciara et al., 2015; Börzel et al., 2017; and Džankić et al., 2019) fits perfectly well in this framework, where, in principle, the EU acts, or fails to act on its external environment, but the environment does not shape or constitute the Union. Accordingly, the environment can only interact to some extent, while eventually affecting the EU's behaviour – this is more and more evident from the emerging literature on de-Europeanisation (Aydın-Düzgüt, Kaliber, 2016), but not the EU's nature.

Meanwhile, recent challenges that the European Union has faced – be it the global financial crisis, the migration crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic or Russian acts of military aggression – originated outside EU borders. The eurozone crisis, migration crisis, Brexit, and the pandemic also put EU internal borders at stake, while threatening Schengen or risking Grexit and a restoration of other national currencies. All this highlights the importance and transformatory impact of exogenous shocks on the European integration process, but also draws attention to two directions of bordering: de-bordering and re-bordering, and to the interplay between the two dimensions of bordering; that of the internal and external. Bordering is defined by closure, or how much the rules for boundary transactions limit exits and entries, and control, i.e., the legal competence and resource-dependent capacity to enforce these rules (Schimmelfennig, 2021, p. 315).

Schimmelfennig frames de-bordering and re-bordering in terms of stages of European integration. In the early years of the European Communities, we could talk about “effective integration”, characterised by internal de-bordering and external re-bordering, with high levels of control and closure, and with enlargement progressing very slowly. But in the post-Cold War period this changed profoundly, and the European Union has embraced “dilutive integration”, characterised by pervasive internal and external de-bordering (Schimmelfennig, 2021, p. 318). Accordingly, the EU removed internal boundaries by establishing the single market, a common currency, and the Schengen free-travel zone (all examples of internal de-bordering). It also expanded its membership considerably, constructed a dense network of graded association arrangements with neighbouring non-members, and lowered external barriers to global trade and capital mobility (i.e., external de-bordering). The process of external

differentiated integration via enlargement and neighbourhood policies (Milenkovic, 2022; Reptova, 2022) thereby constitutes a manifestation of external de-bordering, as do other models of external differentiation, as exemplified by the EU's arrangements with member states of the European Economic Area, Switzerland and/or the (post-Brexit) United Kingdom (Leruth et al., 2019; Trondal, Kuhn, 2020).

As the post-Cold War international order has undergone a profound transformation, it is no longer viable to explain European integration and European politics without putting its international environment and external borders at the heart of reflection. Also, significantly more attention has to be paid to exogenous pressures and geopolitics. What Schimmelfennig studied in his article published in 2021, before the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine which was launched on 24th February 2022, was how the EU responded to the internal and external backlash against its post-Cold War de-bordering; by means of re-bordering. Internal re-bordering is a resurrection of barriers between Member States and their exit from common policies or even the EU altogether. Meanwhile, external re-bordering essentially means an effective stopping of enlargement, but can be also traced in an ever more restrictive asylum policy or unprecedented investment in the control of EU's external borders as well as in Brexit negotiations, where the EU has preserved a rigid and united stance on protecting the integrity of its internal market and regulatory level playing field. Whereas external re-bordering coupled with continuous internal de-bordering implies more consolidated integration, external de-bordering coupled with internal re-bordering equals disintegration. In general, Schimmelfennig claimed that the openness of the EU's external boundaries was decreasing, enlargement has slowed down considerably, and the Union began to strengthen its boundary control capacity (Schimmelfennig, 2021, p. 321).

Building and expanding on the above framework, this article argues that an exogenous systemic shock (i.e., Russia's full-scale military aggression in Europe) leads to major disruptions and uncertainty, but does not necessarily need to result in external re-bordering. It is, in fact, quite to the contrary; we can see that the previously-stalled enlargement process accelerated considerably in 2022. The boundaries drawn between associated neighbours and candidates for accession – that for so many years felt insurmountable – have fallen within the space of just a few months. Scholars have argued that the Russian invasion has already put an end to the EU's strategy of external differentiation, in which the post-Soviet countries of Eastern Europe were to pursue flexible issue-specific integration below the threshold of EU membership. As

a result, the EU engaged in external de-bordering *vis-à-vis* Ukraine, but also in simultaneous re-bordering towards Russia (Freudlsperger and Schimmelfennig, 2023).

But the picture appears to be even more complicated than that. That is why this article conceptualises de-bordering and re-bordering not so much in terms of phases or stages of the European integration process, but rather in terms of strategies pursued by relevant political actors seeking to shape the EU in line with their own preferences and interests. In fact, already prior to the Russian invasion, some European actors had pursued external de-bordering strategies, while seeking to reinvigorate enlargement to the Western Balkans and bringing the trio of Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia closer to the EU, beyond the framework outlined by their association agreements. This was a strategy adopted in response to already-mounting geopolitical pressures posed by external actors such as Russia and China, but also in pursuit of institutional (European Commission) or political and security interests (Poland). Other actors (France) embraced re-bordering strategies, while seeking to hamper external de-bordering. Although France experienced a strategic shift with regard to both EU and NATO enlargement as a result of Russian military aggression (Pedder, 2023), as did many other EU Member States albeit to a varying extent, this major exogenous shock does not determine a united and uniform de-bordering strategy at the eastern borders of Europe. Even in the case of Ukraine, both external de-bordering and re-bordering strategies have been pursued by various actors since February 2022.

What we can thus identify are complex constellations of re-bordering and de-bordering strategies, either coupling or de-coupling the external dimension to/from the internal one. Crucially, the aforementioned exogenous shock constitutes an important push factor and a window of opportunity for relevant political actors willing to transform existing bordering constellations. But the result, in terms of the extent and scope of de-bordering and re-bordering, is far from certain. In the remaining parts of the article, the author outlines the empirical manifestations of external de-bordering and re-bordering strategies, as they have been pursued both before and after the Russian full-scale military aggression on Ukraine.

Strategies of De-bordering in Response to an Exogenous Shock

The geopolitical push for an external de-bordering of the European Union pre-dates the full-scale aggression on Ukraine. In fact, a significant turn in the EU's institutional thinking on enlargement can be traced back

to 2017, when both national leaders and European officials increasingly voiced concerns about the EU's declining influence in the Western Balkans – much to the benefit of Russia, China, and Turkey (Markovic Khaze, Wang, 2021; Jaćimović et al., 2023). In response, the European Commission sought to adopt a more geopolitical approach to enlargement policy in early 2018, while hoping to advance the Western Balkans' accession more decisively (European Commission, 2018). But this transformation in the EU's institutional thinking failed to translate into concrete results, due to a lack of support from EU Member States, which either did not share the Commission's sense of urgency, or were eager to exploit the accession process for national gain (Petrovic, Tzifakis, 2021). Despite positive recommendations from the Commission, the European Council rejected the opening of accession negotiations with Albania and Macedonia in 2018 and again in 2019, even though the long-awaited resolution of the name dispute between Greece and (now) North Macedonia was agreed in June 2018.

The de-bordering strategy of the Commission clashed with re-bordering strategies of some Member States, including France, that has long insisted on “reform before enlargement” (The Economist, 2019). In November 2019, France circulated a non-paper that suggested changes to enlargement methodology, notably the reversibility of the process and grouping of accession chapters into thematic clusters, paving the way for gradual integration (Milenkovic, 2022). In an attempt to pursue de-bordering, the Commission incorporated most of the suggestions from the French non-paper, while also highlighting the non-technical nature of accession negotiations: “It is time to put the political nature of the process front and centre, and ensure stronger steering and high-level engagement from the Member States” (European Commission, 2020, p. 3). As a result, France withdrew its reservations in March 2020 and the European Council endorsed the opening of accession negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia. The enlargement process might have progressed slightly, but Member States established themselves more firmly within the process, creating ever more room for possible re-bordering.

Nevertheless, since the window of opportunity for both advancing and transforming the accession process was opened, other actors, including think-tanks, proceeded with ideas of de-bordering, notably in the form of a so-called “staged accession” – a regime of progressive participation by states aiming at obtaining full membership, and an alternative to the current binary “in or out” model (Emerson et al., 2021). This proposal featured four stages of accession: initial; intermediate; a new Member State stage; and conventional membership. Accession to each stage was

conditional upon a pre-defined level of progress across thematic clusters of negotiation chapters and was linked to an increasing level of funding, as well as growing institutional participation. For instance, whereas the initial accession stage only offered an observer status within the EU institutions, the intermediate stage already provided speaking (but not voting) rights.

The staged accession model received some attention and became part of the revamped debate, but a resolute push for external de-bordering only came with the exogenous shock of Russia's full-scale military aggression. Indeed, the year 2022 saw unprecedented acceleration in terms of external de-bordering; accession negotiations were opened with North Macedonia and Albania, and candidate status was granted to Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina that were previously qualified as potential candidates, with the same happening to Ukraine and Moldova, countries that had never formally been recognised as candidates for EU membership. Moreover, the decision to grant candidate status to Ukraine and Moldova came within 4 months of their applications for membership. This is in huge contrast to the Western Balkan countries that had to wait between two and six years.

The decision of the European Council to proffer candidate country status to Ukraine and Moldova clearly stems from the geopolitical imperative of firmly anchoring the victims of the Russian aggression within the EU. However, European Council conclusions from June 2022 also show the limits of de-bordering, or more precisely, the continuous struggle between de-bordering and re-bordering, even in the face of a major exogenous shock. Accordingly, once the candidates fulfil the conditions specified in the Commission's opinion on their respective membership applications, "the Council will decide on further steps once all these conditions are fully met" (European Council, 2022). The latter is a disappointingly empty statement that does not even mention the formal opening of accession negotiations as "further steps". What it does very clearly mention is that all conditions must be met and met fully – there will be no shortcuts due to Russian aggression. This is confirmed by yet another traditional formula contained in the conclusions, stipulating that the progress of each country towards the EU will depend on its own merit in meeting the Copenhagen criteria, taking into consideration the EU's capacity to absorb new members.

Still, after years of stasis, a major shift in EU policy-making occurred, thrusting the subject of enlargement back to the top of the EU's agenda. External de-bordering is underway due to the geopolitical push, and there are reasons to believe that ever stricter accession criteria applied to prospective

members could be relaxed slightly. At first sight, the decision to grant candidate status to Ukraine and Moldova might seem somewhat puzzling and unprecedented, but in reality the EU has shown quite a lot of flexibility with its own criteria and benchmarks in the past. The enlargement process has always been a series of reactions to events, security-related events in particular. As the geopolitical imperative for EU enlargement increases, the requirements for entry tend to decrease and the EU may find itself looking the other way on issues it originally deemed important (Anghel, Jones, 2022). Related precedents are quite numerous. A divided Cyprus joined after the failure of the peace process and the EU chose to ignore this frozen conflict. Bulgaria and Romania entered into a special, post-accession conditionality track; they are still undergoing the monitoring process, and still trying to qualify for Schengen. Even post accession, a number of countries have failed miserably to deliver on their treaty-based obligations, with Sweden, Poland, Hungary, and Czechia literally ignoring joining the single currency due to domestic political reasons. Thus, the pattern of European enlargement fails to conform either to the original goals set out by the Member States or to a fixed understanding of what EU membership is. Long transition periods, derogations, permanent safeguard clauses, and other forms of internal differentiated integration constitute the already tried-and-tested toolbox of reconciling externally-driven de-bordering with internally-driven re-bordering.

Strategies of Re-bordering in Response to an Exogenous Shock

The exogenous shock of the Russian full-scale military aggression and the resulting geopolitical push towards external de-bordering of the European Union do not preclude usages of re-bordering strategies aimed at hampering or delaying enlargement. Three distinct strategies of re-bordering can be identified. The first of which is about imposing stringent rule-of-law conditions on candidate states that aim to balance their relatively advanced economic integration and the geopolitical imperative. The second links de-bordering to a prior or simultaneous achievement of greater absorption capacity by the EU via means of institutional reform. Finally, the third strategy is about creating loose pan-European formats of dialogue that should inspire we-feeling among both candidate and Member States, while making the long years in the EU's waiting room somewhat more acceptable to the former.

As regards the rule of law reform, it is worth examining the Ukrainian case, as it is the most likely case in which the geopolitical push factor

can play a role. Ukrainian authorities are conducting reforms and adopting necessary legislation, while being *literally* under fire from the Russian aggressor. When issuing an opinion on Ukraine's membership application in June 2022, the Commission gave the green light to the country's candidacy, but formulated seven recommendations in the rule of law area that are to be addressed before any further steps, or a launch of accession talks, can occur. Initially, Ukraine committed to the fulfilment of all the conditions by the end of 2022, but the matter proved much more complicated.

On 22nd June 2023, the European Commission presented its preliminary oral assessment of the progress Ukraine had made over the previous year. A full report regarding the level of Ukraine's preparedness for the launch of accession talks was foreseen for October 2023, with the decision on further steps to be taken by the European Council possibly in December 2023 (Paul, Taran, 2023). According to the initial assessment, Ukraine has "completed" two out of seven recommendations related to media legislation and the judicial governance bodies, while achieving "good progress" as regards the Constitutional Court reform. Only "some progress" was noted by the Commission on the remaining four recommendations, namely anti-corruption reform, anti-money laundering and law-enforcement-sector reform, anti-oligarchic law, and legislation on national minorities.

Whereas addressing all seven recommendations constitutes a prerequisite for opening accession talks, it is up to the Commission (and the Member States) to determine what exactly qualifies as sufficient reform. It is also their political decision whether to focus on strict rule of law conditionality or follow the geopolitical imperative. Meanwhile, the Ukrainian government is keen to invoke geopolitics and security, while hoping for a more relaxed EU approach under extenuating circumstances. Reform of the legislation on national minorities provides a case in point. Ukrainian decision-makers try to convince their EU partners that the existing provisions are necessary for preventing various forms of separatism, which was one of the reasons behind the Russian invasion. But this issue has clear re-bordering potential, while provoking tensions with Ukraine's neighbours who are EU members, especially Hungary. The latter has, for many years, been demanding changes to Ukrainian legislation and has made its support for Ukraine's accession conditional on Kyiv's decision to grant comprehensive rights to the Hungarian minority in Ukraine (Nieczypor, Całus, 2023).

The formal opening of accession negotiations with Ukraine by the end of 2023 is likely, but not certain. If it happens, the opening could be conditional, but it also constitutes the easy part of the process, while not

guaranteeing swift progress or even any progress at all, as evident from the Turkish case. Subsequent re-bordering during the actual negotiations would be easier if the EU had not committed itself to setting a target date for Ukraine's accession at the December 2023 European Council.

The abovementioned Hungarian example also highlights how re-bordering can be pursued by individual Member States of the EU when unanimity is required. This brings us to the heart of the de-bordering and re-bordering games within the enlargement policy. On the one hand, the veto right has been used as a tool of re-bordering by various Member States, including France, Greece, Bulgaria, and Hungary. But on the other hand, the idea of linking progress in the accession process to prior or simultaneous EU reform (internal de-bordering), including the expansion of qualified majority voting (QMV) to more policy areas, can also result in re-bordering. Compromise on EU institutional reform currently seems difficult to reach, even by means of the *passerelle* clauses and without treaty change, with many EU members remaining sceptical to QMV extension, either in principle or in given policy areas (Koenig, 2022). In particular, the Polish government – a principal supporter of EU enlargement – fervently opposes QMV extension in any area. According to Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki, freedom and equality among EU members can only be guaranteed if consensus-based decision-making is preserved and even extended to areas where treaties currently permit the use of QMV. The EU should “accept new countries, but also, in the face of a larger community, limit some of its competencies” (Chancellery of the Prime Minister, 2023). In this vision, external de-bordering should go hand-in-hand with internal re-bordering. This is in contrast with French and German reform vision, where external de-bordering is conditional on securing the EU's absorption capacity, understood as internal de-bordering in the form of QMV extension. It is not entirely clear whether and how the Polish position on QMV might change after the liberal majority seized power in parliamentary elections in October 2023.

Finally, the creation of the European Political Community (EPC), a pan-European dialogue forum invented by the French president Emmanuel Macron in May 2022, can be seen in terms of a re-bordering strategy. It was certainly viewed this way in Poland, and in Central-Eastern Europe more broadly – as an eternal waiting room, where candidates were offered the illusion of being included on an equal footing in a high-level diplomatic shop talk that was, in fact, designed as a low-key substitute for any lack of progress towards membership. According to E. Macron, “we feel in our heart that Ukraine (...) is already today a member of our Europe”, yet “we all know perfectly well that the [accession] process would, in reality, take

several years, and most likely several decades” (Élysée, 2022). As a result, the Polish understanding was that the EPC constituted a yet another attempt to foster relations with EU’s neighbours based on the *status quo* rather than on credible enlargement policy, towards which France remained sceptical (Kozioł, Maślanka, 2022).

Thus in Poland, a proponent of external de-bordering, the EPC was not seen as an adequate nor resolved response to the historic exogenous shock constituted by the full-scale military aggression of the Russian Federation, but rather in terms of traditional French re-bordering – *plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose* (EN: the more things change, the more they stay the same), as the French might say. From the Polish perspective, the EPC aimed at counter-balancing or watering down accessions promise for Ukraine and Moldova, while leaving them in a yet another grey zone between the EU and NATO and an increasingly aggressive Russia. Decisions taken by the June 2022 European Council have not dispelled those doubts. The Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs may have expressed satisfaction with the evolution of the French position on enlargement, especially regarding Ukraine, but distrust persisted as to France’s policy towards Russia and the EPC being designed as an obstruction to enlargement in disguise (Szymanek, 2023). Progressively, a de-coupling of the EPC idea from enlargement is already under way, although this does not mean that some kind of re-coupling, whether in terms of facilitating or hampering accession, could not take place in the future. This is why Polish officials and analysts continuously stressed, even after the EPC’s inaugural summit in Prague, that the decision to grant candidate status to Ukraine and Moldova should not be watered down by other cooperation formats and the EPC should not become a pretext for delaying the start of accession negotiations (Cianciara, 2023). But it remains to be seen whether and to what extent the EPC could be transformed into a tool of de-bordering rather than re-bordering.

Conclusions

In this article, the author attempted to grasp the current dynamic of the EU’s enlargement policy, shaped by the exogenous shock of the Russian full-scale military invasion of Ukraine. It was argued that the invasion might have constituted an important geopolitical push factor towards transformation of the European integration process and its borders, but the precise EU response to these external pressures depends on internal factors. It was further argued that the new enlargement dynamic can be usefully illuminated by concepts of the EU’s de-bordering and re-

bordering. The analysis highlighted external de-bordering and re-bordering strategies pursued by relevant political actors within the EU that seek to exploit the geopolitical window of opportunity to transform existing bordering constellations in line with their preferences.

Empirically, the article shed light on the bordering games being played, while seeking to draw an analytical line between de-bordering and re-bordering strategies. This analysis has shown the limits of de-bordering, even under geopolitical and security emergency, but also opportunities for agency that may transform an initial re-bordering tentative into a de-bordering result and vice-versa. It has also made clear that there is nothing automatic or straightforward about the impact of the radically-changing international environment on EU policies and politics. The EU is not bound to become a geopolitical actor, nor is it bound to significantly expand, either externally or internally.

This research was exploratory in nature; it focused on a new conceptualisation of the enlargement dynamic and identified the main strategies of the relevant political actors that shape this dynamic in terms of de-bordering and re-bordering. This seems to be a promising area of research and a promising conceptual lens. Yet more systematic research is needed in order to better understand the drivers behind external de-bordering and re-bordering strategies and their linkages to internal bordering strategies. Also, it would be useful to relate evolving constellations of de-bordering and re-bordering strategies to changing power relations within the EU.

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