



UNIVERSITETET I AGDER

# **The Making of EU Foreign Policy Strategy. The case of Central Asia.**

TERESE BIRKELAND

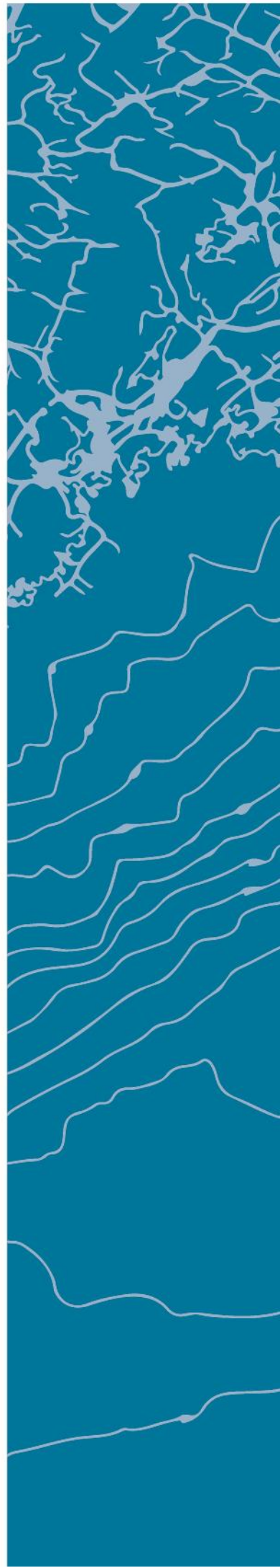
## **SUPERVISORS**

Stefan Gänzle  
Stina Torjesen

**University of Agder, 2019**

Faculty of Social Sciences

Department of Political Science and Management





## Summary

This thesis examines the EU foreign policy agenda-setting with regards to the drafting of the Union's new Central Asia strategy. The EU Strategy for Central Asia was eventually released May 2019. The thesis adopts the analytical framework of Europeanization and seeks to explain the coordination between the EU institutions on the one hand and how member states influence EU foreign policy strategy-making on the other. Analytically, the Europeanization framework subscribes to exploring the EU's impact on member states ('down-loading') and the capacity of member states to shape the direction of the EU ('up-loading'). The down-loading dimension includes the coordination of the EU institutions, the EU delegations in Central Asia and the headquarters in Brussels (EEAS and the Commission), as the degree of centralization in these processes affect EU's abilities of influencing the member states. The up-loading dimension examines small member state literature, and by that looks at the differences between small and larger member states when it comes to influencing EU's agenda in these types of processes.

Thus the research question is: Who sets the agenda for the making of EU foreign policy in the context of EU drafting its new Central Asia strategy? And how can we explain this pattern? This thesis addresses these questions by examining two propositions:

- 1) *The EU headquarters play the leading role in EU foreign policy strategy-making, while the EU delegations contribute with on the ground support and coordination as per instructed by the headquarters.*
- 2) *Smaller member states exercise a disproportionately strong influence in the formulation of EU foreign policy strategy-making.*

These questions are discussed based on empirical findings from 29 semi-structured interviews which have been conducted in three Central Asian capitals (16), Brussels (12) as well as on Skype (1). This thesis shows that EU foreign policy-making has become fairly 'normal' with a centralized agenda-setting and where the influence by the member states comes mainly from the member states with the resources to do so. By combining the two dimensions of down-loading and up-loading in the Europeanization literature this thesis contribute to a more comprehensive way of studying EU foreign policy-making.



## Foreword

This thesis has been part of a project involving KIMEP University and University of Agder. I want to thank KIMEP for welcoming me to their campus in the fall of 2018. Here I took some classes while working on my thesis. This was my first time visiting Central Asia, and I had a great 4 months living in Almaty, Kazakhstan. During that time I also got to visit Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Central Asia is to me an underestimated region, and I would recommend anyone who has the chance to visit.

I also want to take the opportunity to thank all my informants. When I stated working on this project I was afraid nobody would want to talk to me. I am very grateful that I was wrong, and that I was able to have so many great conversations with the respondents both in Central Asia and Brussels.

My supervisors, Stefan Gänzle and Stina Torjesen, deserve a thank you as well. All your support and constructive inputs along the way has been truly appreciated.

Lastly I want to thank my friends and family for their support and encouragement during this time. Especially a thank you to Ben, Erin and Jamie for your valuable feedback.

Terese Birkeland  
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## **List of abbreviations and acronyms**

CFSP: Common Foreign and Security Policy

CSDP: Common Security and Defense Policy

EAEU: Eurasian Economic Union

EC/Commission: The European Commission

EEAS: European Union External Action Service

EP/Parliament: The European Parliament

EPCA: Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement

ESS: European Security Strategy

EU: The European Union

EUGS: European Union Global Strategy

EUSR: European Union Special Representative

OBOR: One Belt One Road Initiative

PCA: Partnership and Cooperation Agreement

# 1.0 Introduction

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This thesis examines the European Union (EU)'s foreign policy towards the five Central Asian Republics - Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan - in light of the evolving new EU Central Asia Strategy recently released by the Commission. The strategy was released on May 15, 2019 as a joint communication by the European Commission to the European Parliament and the Council (European Commission 2019). Recently released, it can be expected to be high on the EU foreign policy agenda.

The EU has been engaged in a process of drafting a new strategy towards the region since 2017, and the new strategy is set to replace the former Central Asia Strategy of 2007. Interestingly, the Central Asia Strategy is one of the first regional strategies to be produced after the EU Global Strategy was released in June 2016. The main objective of the thesis is, however, not to assess the final outcome of the strategy, but rather to use the strategy-making process as a case to further understand how EU formulates and develop its foreign policy strategies. With a view to the EU's character as a complex and highly dynamic multi-level system of governance, the EU's foreign policy is here understood as the 'sum' and interactions of the national foreign policies of the member states on the one hand, and the EU Commission's external trade relations and development policy, and the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) of the EU on the other (Wong and Hill 2011).

Against this backdrop of the 'strategy-making' process, the thesis is particularly interested in disclosing the driving forces behind this process. How do EU-level institutions such as the European Commission, the European External Action Service, and the EU delegations coordinate? This includes, in particular, the relationship between the EU delegations in Central Asian Republics and the headquarters based in Brussels, and in addition how the coordination has evolved with regards to the member states. This means exploring topics such as the impact of smaller EU member states vs. larger EU member states in the policy-making processes as well as the distribution of decision-making power within the EU institutions.

Methodologically, this thesis draws on 29 semi-structured interviews conducted between November 2018 and March 2019. Interviewees include several EU delegations and EU member states' embassy staff in the capitals of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan (November & December 2018), member states permanent representation and EU institutions representatives in Brussels, Central Asian embassy staff in Brussels and an assistant professor via Skype (February & March 2019).

## 1.1 Multi-level EU foreign policy and Europeanization

EU foreign policy is a policy field in which the EU member states have started significantly increased cooperation in recent years. The road to where the EU foreign policy is today has however been long due to the sensitive matter of nation states sovereignty. The Lisbon Treaty, for example, removed the pillar-structure from the Maastricht Treaty, helping institutionalize EU foreign policy. The implementation of the Lisbon Treaty has brought about closer integration and cooperation within this still rather intergovernmental policy field. This is seen by all the missions, both military (only conflict prevention) and civilian, and by the setting up of the European diplomatic service called European External Action Service (EEAS) (Keukeleire & Delreux 2014).

The Lisbon Treaty was a result of the failure of the EU to create an EU constitution in the early 2000s. It was signed in 2007 and came into force in 2009 when the EU had significantly expanded after integrating ten new member states into the Union during a moment of high optimism and opportunities. This optimism, however, faded soon after the treaty came into force. Keukeleire and Delreux (2014) view the accession of ten new member states as foreign policy. This expanded the external borders of the EU and affected the foreign relations to EU's new neighbours. The treaty therefore brought with it several changes that would influence how EU foreign policy is conducted.

Firstly, the Lisbon Treaty formally abolished the pillar system from the Maastricht Treaty. Even though the division between the policy-making remained the same, the Lisbon Treaty managed to bring all dimensions of EU foreign policy under one treaty title (Keukeleire &

Delreux 2014). Secondly, the position as High Representative of the Common Foreign Affairs and Security policy merged with the position as Vice President of the Commission and the Commissioner for external relations. This created a new hybrid position, bridging the Council and Commission closer together in the realm of foreign policy. The full name of the new position is High Representative of the Union for foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission (HR/VP). Thirdly, it formalized the set-up of the CSDP and changed its name from the European Security and Defence Policy to the Common Security and Defence Policy (Keukeleire & Delreux 2014).

Overall the Lisbon Treaty institutionalized the foreign policy of the EU. This is most evident with the establishment of the External Action Service (EEAS) in Brussels, and the EU delegations abroad organized under the EEAS. The delegations in place today are a combination of former Commission representations abroad and the set-up of new institutions. The staff of the EEAS and the EU delegations include both EU career diplomats and national career diplomats. The EEAS is a bridge builder between the intergovernmental and supranational decision-making organs in the EU system (Balfour, Carta & Raik 2015). This hybrid institution has the objective of improving linkages between the Commission and member states (Henökl 2015 and Murdoch, Trondal & Gänzle 2014).

The 2019 EU strategy replaces the EU's Central Asia strategy from 2007. The previous strategy was adopted under the German Presidency and was seen as a breakthrough for EU - Central Asian relations<sup>1</sup>. The new strategy takes place in a more uncertain time for EU foreign policy. It will align with EU's Global Strategy (EUGS) from 2016, where the focus is on citizens and local ownership in EU's missions. The strategy also talks about building resilience in the neighborhood and principled pragmatism (EU Global Strategy 2016). The EUGS is an attempt to facilitate more geopolitically focused thinking into an EU strategy that applies in addition to traditional normative approaches.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> After the enlargement process, EU expanding in terms of number of member states, did also the foreign neighborhood shift eastwards making Central Asia the neighbor of the neighbors (Keukeleire & Delreux 2014).

<sup>2</sup> Principal pragmatism in this context is about respect for democratic values within the EU and the Member States' institutions, but with a more pragmatic relationship between the EU and other

After securing peace within its borders, the member states have recently realized the importance of expanding this peace outside of the Union's border. There remains, however, a discussion regarding EU foreign policy existence and definition. In policy fields where the EU has demonstrated higher levels of competence in (i.e. trade), have the European Union established a common external policy where decisions are taken by using the community method. The same goes for policy fields where internal decisions have external impacts, like the agriculture policy. In addition is it important not to forget that all member states have their own foreign and security policy, including bilateral and multilateral agreements with other countries. This is also the case in Central Asia. It is here the complexity of the multi-level foreign policy comes in play.

The two layers - member states foreign policy and EU foreign policy - do not operate separately from each other but are rather mutually affect each other. This is where the analytical approach Europeanization comes in. The drafting of the 2019 EU strategy towards Central Asia is a part of EU foreign policy but is additionally influenced by member states as they make up the European Union and are the foundation of EU's presence abroad. The 2019 EU strategy currently being drafted is an European Union strategy, and not an EU member states strategy. However, the EU's work, and in this case strategy-making, can again influence the member states positioning and foreign policy goals towards the region.

Europeanization is here looked upon as an analytical approach rather than a theory. This approach illustrates how the two levels of EU foreign policy – EU and member states - can shape and be shaped by each other. Since the EU consists of several prominent layers in its structures when dealing with foreign relations, is it important to examine the vertical and horizontal effects this may have on European foreign policy-making. The down-loading dimension relates to the coordination and centralization on the EU level (horizontal), while the up-loading dimension relates to how the different member states can impact the EU foreign policy strategy-making (vertical).

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international actors. This gives the EU more flexibility when dealing with external actors than when dealing with internal institutions.

Defining large and small member states is difficult as there is no commonly agreed upon definition. Here however, larger member states are understood as those who are able to fundamentally change EU's foreign policy alone. All other member states are seen as 'somewhat' smaller member states, who are unable to change the basic contours of EU foreign policy on their own regardless of their relation to EU foreign policy strategy-making. For more information on how to define small member states see Thorhallson (2006) and Thorhallson and Wivel (2006).

## 1.2 Contemporary Central Asia

This project follows the same definitions as the EU when determining the states constituting the region of Central Asia (European External Action Service 2017). These countries are Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan. The people from Central Asia originate from Turkmens, except the Tajiks who originate from the Persians. All countries share the fact that they have been under the rule of the Soviet Union. However, they were impacted by this differently.<sup>3</sup>

Today the five Central Asian countries differ in terms of size of economy and sources of economic income (natural resources or cotton dependence), degree of Russian influence, openness towards the rest of the world, and membership in regional and international organizations. In other words, each country faces different economic and societal challenges within their state.<sup>4</sup> The differences between the countries can also be seen through the key features in table 1 below. Especially interesting to note is the relatively low GDP and high percent of remittance for Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan compared to the other Central Asian

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<sup>3</sup> The region was referred to as Middle Asia and Kazakhstan. For more information about the different Central Asian countries political and cultural history see Hiro (2009).

<sup>4</sup> The relations between the five countries is to this day not frictionless. The borders between the countries, and the rulers throughout history have made this area experienced in invasions and governance changes. Until recently the border divisions between the five countries have been relatively fluid and ever changing. Today's borders have roots in the divisions made by the Soviet Union, and these borders are not without tensions as people from the different ethnicities have been split. Like for example at the creation of Tajikistan 60 % of Tajiks were living outside of their newly constructed country and the cities Samarkand and Bukhara was "lost" to Uzbekistan (Spaiser 2018). In comparison to Europe, the region has been referred to as the "Asian Balkan" (ibid.).

states. Hence, talking about Central Asia as a region is contested (Central Eurasian Studies Review 2004).

*Table 1: Key features of the Central Asian states.*

Country	Population (2018)	Official language(s)	GDP per capital in USD (2017)	GDP total in million USD (2017)	Area (2014)	Remittances as a share of GDP in 2018
Kazakhstan	18,403,860	Kazakh (Turkic) & Russian	8837	162,886.87	2,724,900 km <sup>2</sup>	0,24 %
Kyrgyzstan	6,132,932	Kyrgyz (Turkic) & Russian	1220	7,564.74	199,949 km <sup>2</sup>	35,09 %
Tajikistan	9,107,211	Tajik (Version of Persian)	801	7,146.45	142,550 km <sup>2</sup>	32,19 %
Turkmenistan	5,851,466	Turkmen (Turkic)	7356	37,926.29	488,100 km <sup>2</sup>	0,02 %
Uzbekistan	32,364,996	Uzbek (Turkic)	1504	49,677.17	447,400 km <sup>2</sup>	8,48 %

Sources: United Nations Association of Norway (2019) and The World Bank (2019).

### 1.3 Summary and outlook

This thesis examines the drafting of EU's new Central Asia strategy by connecting the process to the coordination literature and small state literature as this is seen as a part of the down-loading and up-loading dimensions in the Europeanization framework. These two dimensions are here viewed as interconnected and reinforcing in EU foreign policy strategy-making.

Subscribing to this thesis' goal of presenting a 'EU foreign policy analysis', the central research questions are: **Who sets the agenda for the making of EU foreign policy in the context of EU drafting its new Central Asia strategy? And how can we explain this pattern?** Here setting the agenda means controlling and/or being a driver of the process. In some more detail, this means that we will inquire along the following two 'dimensions'. The horizontal dimension relates to how the EU-level institutions coordinate between the headquarters in Brussels and the EU delegations in Central Asia. The vertical dimension relates to how the coordination evolves with regards to the member states.

It will also bring together two distinct literatures in foreign policy analysis: the literature on coordination in EU foreign policy and small states literature. The first is concerned about legitimacy, processes and effectiveness of EU foreign policy. With the remodeling of the EU's institutions in this policy area, some scholars, such as Diez, Manners & Whitman (2011) expected that the new EU delegations may come to assume a more active role in shaping EU foreign policy. However, as exemplified in this thesis and by other scholars, like Pardo (2012), the EU foreign policy is not so unique. The EU is acting rather 'normal' as is expect in a classical foreign policy analysis. The latter has positioned that smaller member states are often in a position, under conditions such as strategically positioning themselves, creating a niche for themselves etc., to punch above their weight thus leaving a trace on EU foreign policy.

Towards this backdrop my two theoretical assumptions addressing the above-mentioned questions and issues are:

- 1) *The EU headquarters play the leading role in EU foreign policy strategy-making, while the EU delegations contribute with on the ground support and coordination as per instructed by the headquarters.*
- 2) *Smaller member states exercise a disproportionately strong influence in the formulation of EU foreign policy strategy-making.*

The rest of this thesis is structured as follows; first, a chapter contextualizing Central Asia in EU foreign policy; second, the presentation of available literature on coordination and small states; third, the presentation of the analytical framework Europeanization and this thesis's theoretical assumptions; fourth, an explanation of the methodology; fifth, the presentation of the interviews' empirical findings; sixth, the discussion connecting the analytical framework and the theoretical assumptions with the empirical findings; and finally, the conclusion.



## 2.0 Central Asia in context

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Central Asia in context contains background information about Central Asia's relations to the EU and other external actors. First this chapter offers a review of EU's foreign political ties to the region, and then a short outline of other external players active in the region.

### 2.1 The making of EU foreign policy towards Central Asia: a historical perspective (1991-2019)

Since the fall of the Soviet Union and the Central Asian countries' independence, the EU has sought to establish good relations with each Central Asian states (European Union External Action 2017). While these collaborations were originally weak, they have grown stronger over the past two decades. This is illustrated by the Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCA) the EU currently has negotiated with four of the Central Asian countries. The last Central Asian country in this regard, Turkmenistan, this agreement has been signed, but it has not entered into force yet. Kazakhstan has expanded this agreement into an Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (EPCA) in 2015, and both Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan are now in formal discussions with the EU to follow suit (European Commission 2019).

The EU is represented in the region through their EU delegations. As mentioned in the introduction, the Lisbon Treaty from 2009 institutionalized and intensified the EU's foreign policy and relations (Keukeleire and Delreux 2014). The EU currently has delegations in four of the Central Asian countries, and a fifth one will be opened in Turkmenistan next year as was decided at the November 2018 EU – Central Asia ministerial meeting (EU Liaison office in Turkmenistan 2018). This is yet another sign showing that the EU is increasing their cooperation with the region. Keukeleire and Delreux (2014) are however convinced that the EU's involvement in the region is dominated by realpolitik at the expense of upholding its values.

As said will the new strategy towards Central Asia replace the EU's strategy towards Central Asia from 2007. The strategy from 2007<sup>5</sup> was adopted under another political framework than the new strategy will be adopted in. This strategy was drafted under the Maastricht pillar system and after the European Security Strategy (ESS) was released, a time when EU foreign policy was considered to be dominated by intergovernmental decision making. The EU had a relatively good internal and external image as well at that time. Now, however, Morillas (2019) argues that the new framework has transitioned EU foreign policy making into external action.

Due to several changes happening in the region during the past eleven years, the EU decided to update their strategy towards the region (European Union External Action 2017). This was announced at a meeting in Samarkand, Uzbekistan in 2017 (Delegation of the European Union to Uzbekistan 2017). The 2019 EU strategy is supposed to be a commitment to develop a strong and durable relationship, which will be in line with the EU Global Strategy from 2016 and the joint commitment to the United Nations Sustainable Developments Goals (European Union External Action 2017). The framework under which the 2019 EU strategy will take place can be expected to have a more supranational design. The institutionalizations from the Lisbon Treaty and overall focus given in the Global Strategy presents a different political climate for the drafting of the 2019 EU strategy. The EU's actorship or the perception of the EU abroad is different, and the focus from the EU's side is supposed to be more pragmatic and concerned with building resilience according to the EU Global Strategy (EU Global Strategy 2016). These institutionalizations also bring with them a more supranational design, connecting the strategy with European foreign policy, or creating an EU external action.

The 2019 EU strategy was under construction when this thesis was written, but again this thesis focuses on the process of drafting the strategy and not the end results.<sup>6</sup> Since this is a strategy towards a region representing five countries, the EU Special Representative for

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<sup>5</sup> For more information about the 2007 strategy see Warkotsch (2011).

<sup>6</sup> EU's interests towards the region so far has been focused on security, trade, education, rule of law, energy and transportation, environment and water, and threats and challenges that affect both sides (European Union External Action 2016). It is expected that the 2019 EU strategy will have a similar focus.

Central Asia has been highly involved in the strategy making process. The EU delegations in each Central Asian state mainly work only with that country, while the Special Representative's work is supposed to have a more regional focus.

This shows that the EU has bilateral relations with the different Central Asian countries, as well as an overarching regional strategy. This regional approach can be seen as a way for the EU to intensify and push for more regional cooperation among this previously mentioned constructed region. One needs to consider whether this makes sense depending on how the Central Asian countries view their region and what they want. Additionally, one must ask if the different EU member states have strong bilateral cooperation with the different Central Asian countries. Some Central Asian governments prefer to work directly, bilaterally with the member states over working with the EU. There are several reasons for these perceptions of the EU, but this is a discussion for another time.<sup>7</sup>

## 2.2 The 'great game' - other external players

The EU is not the only actor showing an interest in Central Asia. Given Central Asia's geopolitical location and potential economic prosperity, the 'region' is becoming increasingly important for the major economic players in global affairs. Central Asia has developed into one of the hot-spots of contemporary international relations. After gaining independence from the Soviet Union, has it been important for the Central Asian countries to maintain their independence. However, these countries remain dependent on foreign investment and involvements. Multi-vector foreign policy has been a way for the Central Asian republics to balance all these global powers. However, it is important to note that the different Central Asian countries do this differently and have different relations with the different global players, hence the contested 'region' concept (Central Eurasian Studies Review 2014 and Starr & Cornell 2018).

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<sup>7</sup> It can also be mentioned that the different member states have different reasons for their presence in the region. Some share the fact that they have all been part of the Soviet Union, something that plays into culture, history and language, in essence a stronger shared understanding. Others share strong and long economic, trade and/or investments between them and Central Asian state(s).

Russia has close historical and cultural relations to the Central Asian countries. Its geographic proximity and historical influence have made it the strongest external actor in the region. Russia play an important stability and security role in the region, partially due to its maintained military presence.<sup>8</sup> Russia's economic ties have recently strengthened due to scattered regional membership in the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU).<sup>9</sup>

China, in turn, has recently increased their Central Asia investments, becoming an important player in the region. China's involvement in the region is mainly economic, driven primarily through the One Belt One Road initiative (OBOR). Announced by China in Kazakhstan in 2013, the project will connect Asia to Europe via a land route that will cross multiple Central Asian states (Zimmerman 2015). It must also be mentioned that the US and other actors, like India, Iran and Japan, are showing an interest in the region as well (Cooley 2012).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> This is evident with the military alliance called Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), where Russia and three Central Asian states among others are members.

<sup>9</sup> In 2015 the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) entered into force, where Russia is the most developed country and the driver of the cooperation (Eurasian Economic Union). It currently has 5 members, and of the Central Asian countries are only Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan members. The EAEU's work is economic, aimed at removing trade barriers between the countries. There is also talks on creating a common oil and gas market within the union (Kazinform 2018). If successful, will this make the economic ties between these countries even stronger. Membership in the EAEU might, therefore, limit the members ability to strengthen their relations with the EU, or other external powers, as the EAEU have agreed on a customs union (Kembayev 2016).

<sup>10</sup> The US's involvement has been quite tied up with stability and the security of Afghanistan. It can therefore seem as if they are stepping down their efforts in Central Asia. They are also physically quite far away from the region. For information about the US and EU's strategy for Central Asia see Starr & Cornell (2018)

## 3.0 Literature Review

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This chapter presents available literature about coordination of EU institutions and small member states. First, it will offer a presentation of literature on coordination inside the EU foreign policy machinery and how it relates to the EU's impact in its relations with the member states. Second, it will review the literature on small (member) state – in particular with regards to the EU – and how small states may go about to punch above their weight.

### 3.1 Impact of the EU

This section deals with the role of the EU delegations and how the EU institutions feed into the process of strategy making, the horizontal coordination. Since the EU has less competences in foreign policy, does this coordination have to do with softer coordination. In other words, this is about how the EU brings the member states into the process while coordinating between the headquarters in Brussels and the EU delegations on the ground. Is Brussels taking the lead, speaking with one voice, or do the EU delegations take on a more steering function? This is about the dynamics of the process.<sup>11</sup>

The way EU conducts its foreign policy today is more consistent with a hybrid model in-between the supranational and intergovernmental institutions. This change raises two questions; how much power and influence does the EU delegations have *vis-à-vis* the headquarters in Brussels, and how does the coordination between the EU delegations and the EEAS play out in practice? The rest of this section is based on literature concerning the EU's diplomatic system and coordination between EU institutions.

Maurer and Raik (2014) examine if and how the EU delegations in Moscow and Washington can contribute to a common EU foreign policy. They found that the delegations have been successful in representing the Union towards third countries, coordinating and providing

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<sup>11</sup> This is relevant in the context of the institutional changes that came with the Lisbon Treaty in 2009. The EEAS was established and the EU delegations took over from the former Commission delegations. The EU delegations became an integrated part of the EEAS (Article 221 TFEU). The EU delegation also took on some of the rotating presidency of the Council of Ministers tasks, like representing the Union politically and coordinate the member states diplomatic representation on the ground.

services to the member states, and contributing to EU policy-making (ibid.). It must, however, be mentioned that the two delegations researched are the largest of the EU delegations and their respective countries of station are rather contested countries for the different member states.

Maurer and Raik (2014) found that the EU delegations have tried to find a balance between being useful to the member states while simultaneously not overstepping any boundaries. After the Lisbon Treaty, meetings take place on a regular basis at different levels. Maurer and Raik (2014) found coordinating these meetings to be the most visible regular activity of the delegations. They also found that "the level of ambition is rather low when it comes to the goal of promoting foreign policy coherence and unity on the ground".

When it comes to representing the Union, Maurer and Raik (2014) find that the delegations try to be visible in the host country, without portraying a political stance. Bi-lateral ties, however, remain incredibly strong since the member states<sup>12</sup> prioritize bi-lateral contact and cooperation through EU remains secondary. While the EU acts as an umbrella and amplifier for smaller member states, this does not lessen those states' prioritization of bi-lateral ties. The EU delegations try to find their way of being an added value for the member states.

Finding synergies and efficient cooperation has been important for the delegations. In fact, Maurer and Raik (2014) found that burden sharing between the delegation and member states are increasing. The EU has also been taking up more technical work, and more work considered more controversial. For example, have the member states appreciated that the EU takes on the work of human rights as they do not want to complicate bi-lateral political and economic relations (Maurer & Raik 2014). This change in diplomatic practice also

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<sup>12</sup> Regarding the added value a delegation can provide a member state embassy, it was the small and medium sized member states that felt a higher gain from this. The delegations for the most part treat the member states equally according to them, and this is related to trust. The political sections are now expected to share as much information that they deem possible with the member states on the ground. This is however one dimensional and a challenge for some as it can be limited what the member states wish to share with the others (Maurer & Raik 2014).

includes more in-depth analysis and reporting, coordinating various actors on the ground and promoting sectoral interests like trade and investment (ibid).<sup>13</sup>

Maurer and Raik (2014) assume that the link between the delegations and the EEAS headquarters should be improved both top-down and bottom-up. They state that the delegations are not always well informed about relevant Brussels processes, and that the delegation's contribution to EU policy-shaping are weak but improving (ibid.). "Top-down instructions and strategic guidance and bottom-up provision of ideas and expertise will need to become more systematic and balanced in the years to come" (Maurer & Raik 2014:15-16). In other words, the institutional set-up between the EU delegations and the EEAS have come a long way, but improvement is needed, especially if the EU delegation is to take a more active role in EU foreign policy shaping. The EU delegation's role should not be exaggerated (ibid.).

How does this fit into the bigger picture or in other words the coordination between the institutions? Diez, Manners and Whitman (2011) understand the EU as a regional international society. They argue that there has been a change in the international order and that the EU challenges the modern political order of the nation-state. The argument is made through contesting Hedley Bull's five institutions of international society. The first of which concerns the balance of power which has undergone a radical transformation according to Diez, Manners and Whitman (2011). Through the goals set out by integration and enlargement, the balance of power has transformed into a pooling of resources. The system that also benefits the stronger states, as they are no longer seen as a threat (ibid.).

Further, Hedley Bull's understanding of diplomacy has been substituted with multi-managerialism. Diez, Manners and Whitman (2011:129) go beyond Bull's shift towards multi-

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<sup>13</sup> The EU delegations are providing the eyes and ears for shaping EU policy according to Maurer and Raik (2014). The setting up of the delegations, however, came with very little instructions. The contact was at first not institutionalized and may have been dependent on personal links between the involved staff (ibid.). It became "up to the EU ambassadors and their staff to define and implement new working processes in cooperation with the member states" (Maurer & Raik 2014:10). The Lisbon Treaty did however task the EU delegations with "informing the EEAS, Commission services and other EU actors such as MEPs" (Maurer & Raik 2014:14). It is the EU delegations that take the lead in drafting joint reports, but the member state representations can still take part.

lateral diplomacy and management by stating that "multi-managerialism goes further than these shifts in that it encapsulates a growing multitude of actors and a multiplicity of forms and forums of communication beyond those of the society of states". When focusing on the behavior of diplomats, embassies and foreign ministries; the foreign ministries and diplomats are more focused on policy coordination than involved in the policy-making. This focus on the policy-coordination relates to the coordination between prime ministers, domestic ministries and the ministries of other member states (ibid.). The multitude of actors involved as greatly increased, an increase that has been of importance to the way formal diplomacy is conducted. Even if member states maintain their individual foreign policies, all are connected to the context of the EU foreign policy (ibid.).

"The accelerating shift from bilateral to multilateral diplomacy, accompanied by an increase in the number, types and levels of interactions, lead to multiplicity. The increasing replacement of diplomacy by international technical management, particularly through policy coordination, reorganization and timing, leads to managerialism." (Diez, Manners & Whitman 2011:130).

Lastly of importance in this context is the substitution of great power to member state coalitions. Here, some member states may have a perceived role *vis-à-vis* the others, and this might also be related to the member states sizes even if the Lisbon Treaty introduced some changes in this respect. Even so "small states are still relatively privileged in many respects" (Diez, Manners & Whitman 2011:132). However, "there is a discursive recognition that large member states still play a role as regional great powers" (ibid.:133). In relating this to the pooling of resources, the member states try to avoid conflicts with each other, resulting in a fluid pattern of member states coalitions (ibid.).

It should also be mentioned that international law radically transformed into *Acquis Communautaire*, and war obsolete into pacific democracy. Together, these changes resulted in a multiperspectivity, an innovation of a new regional order, "the regional order of the EU is one where a multiplicity of perspectives from different locales come together" (Diez, Manners & Whitman 2011:133). What stands out for the European regional international society in this regard is that "it is also an explicit institution, enshrining a generally



acknowledged norm of diversity and cooperation, rather than power politics" (ibid.:133-134).

Ramon Pacheco Pardo (2012) contrasts the perspective above that distinguishes the EU as something unique. He starts by presenting literature on EU as a civilian, normative and ethical power. All three views that "seeks to attain goals that implicitly or explicitly move beyond self-interest and are deemed to be beneficial to other actors and the international system as a whole as well" (Pardo 2012:5). According to Pardo (2012), the EU is not special in this sense but rather a 'normal' power that has the same goals as other actors and who also uses different procedures to achieve these goals as other actors do as well. More specifically, he focuses on the goal of maximizing the security in EU foreign policy.

The EU conducts its foreign policy similarly compared to other actors. Here actors usually refer to other states. The EU also tries to convince the behavior of other actors in order to attain the highest level of security. The EU is just another actor committed to work towards their own self-interests. The way in which the EU differs from a state "does not affect the substance of its foreign policy" (Pardo 2012:2). EU has, as states do, different instruments when it comes to executing their foreign policy as well as "legally recognized instruments in charge of implementing them" (Pardo 2012:2).

There are different ways of defining what a normal power is, but a commonly agreed upon characteristic is that actors, most often states, "seek to influence the behavior of other actors in order to increase their own security" (Pardo 2012:6). Therefore, maximizing security through influencing other actors is a priority of a normal power. Pardo (2012) offers the European Security Strategy (ESS) from 2003 as an example of EU foreign policy as a normal power as it is here EU's security threats are presented. Pardo (2012) also recognizes that the EU will be reinforced as a normal power with the Lisbon Treaty. When it comes to the means on how to achieve those goals are there however no clear differences between a civilian, normative, ethical or normal power (Pardo 2012). Therefore, is the set-up of the EU delegations any different than setting up embassies or other representations abroad?

## 3.2 Impact of member states

This section reviews how the member states can have an impact and will draw on the relevant literature available on small member states possibilities of influencing the EU. This is because it reflects the differences between the smaller and larger member states when it comes to influencing the EU. Some of the strategies presented regarding how smaller member states can compensate for their size can also be used by the larger member states. These tools or strategies are however more useful for the smaller member states as the larger member states have other advantages the smaller member states do not have. More specifically will this section draw on literature by Fabienne Bossuyt, Skander Nasra, Caroline Howard Grøn & Anders Wivel and Diana Panke.

The smaller member states are differently placed when contributing in EU policy making than larger member states. Diana Panke (2010) notes that small states structural disadvantages in EU policy-making and provides counter-strategies on ways smaller member states deal with these disadvantages. First some of the disadvantages. The smaller member states have according to Panke (ibid.) limited bargaining power and constrained financial resources that hinders them in building up policy expertise and exerting influence. They lack political power and have lower voting capacities. Panke (ibid.) also finds that small member states differ in their responses to these structural disadvantages.

Small states are more active in negotiations if they have a non-interrupted administrative work environment, motivated staff and balanced systems for the development of national positions (Panke 2010). This concerns the coordination within the member states. A member state is more active if it is prepared early in the process as that makes it easier to be able to negotiate. It is also easier for the member states to influence EU earlier on in the process. The quality of these positions depends on the administrative working conditions. Motivation and no brain drain regarding civil servants plays a role here (ibid.).

Smaller states are also more active in negotiations if they have experienced a learning curve through long membership duration and through holding the office of the presidency (Panke

2010). This is connected to the learning curve. Longer membership in the European Union has a higher activity score. The effects of having held the Council presidency are strong as the member states build up network and experiences that they can continue using afterwards (ibid.). Regarding legitimacy Panke (2010) finds no significant support for member states being more active if they support European integration to some degree.

There are other ways smaller member states can actively do something about these structural disadvantages. Grøn and Wivel (2011) for example looks at how small member states can maximize their influence in the European Union post-Lisbon. They present the structural changes that came with the Lisbon Treaty, and how the small member states need to adjust to these changes in order to best be able of influencing the EU. Grøn and Wivel (2011) presents three ideal types of smart behavior in this regard. These are the state as lobbyist, the state as self-interested mediator and the state as norm entrepreneur (ibid.).

The state as a lobbyist means influence through knowledge. Here the member states draw on different knowledge they have, like expert knowledge, knowledge on European interests and on domestic preferences. This is best aimed at the Commission and the Parliament (Grøn & Wivel 2011). The new Central Asian Strategy is a joint communication between the Commission and the EEAS. This means that it is relevant to look at how the member states can lobby the Commission or the EEAS. In order to do that does the member states need to know the Commission and/or the EEAS, both their agenda and timing.

The state as self-interested mediator is mostly hinted at influence the general interest of the Union through the Council. Here the member states can prioritize some issues that they try to gain influence over. That way they can be looked upon as an honest broker by the larger member states. Grøn and Wivel (2011) found that the changes of using more qualified majority voting in the Council mattered less to the smaller member states than expected, but that they benefit from focusing on the pre-decision making phase. Smaller member states have to identify where their resources are being put, and they need to have their administrative capacity in the areas that they want to influence. Grøn and Wivel (2011) are also of the opinion that the revised rotating presidency will provide small states with a good opportunity to gain influence.

The state as norm entrepreneur is about a smaller member states convincing the other member states about a position or policy direction. Grøn and Wivel (2011) identify two ways of doing this; the member states can either play into dominant discourses or become the benchmark in a particular policy area. Either way, this is related to member states making priorities.

Other scholars have tried to categorize how smaller EU member states contribute into EU's foreign policy. Skander Nasra (2011) applies governance to EU foreign policy. By doing that he presents four elements that explains how small member states can influence the EU foreign policy. These are commitment, network capital, immaterial resources and deliberation. Commitment means that the member states that are most willing to commit to EU policies will be in the driving seat when it comes to defining and executing the policies. Network capital means that the actors will create unformal self-organized groups or networks. By doing that they create a political dynamic for a specific policy area. Immaterial resources build on these networks. The actors with political relevant resources will be in a preferable situation within these networks. Lastly, deliberation says that the influence a state has will be tied to its ability to justify, explain and convince other actors instead of using threats and promises (Nasra 2011).

There are different ways to go about categorizing ways for smaller member states to up-load their preferences to the EU foreign policy making. Fabienne Bossuyt (2017) uses Europeanization in her analysis of smaller member states possibilities of up-loading to the EU. She as well assumes that the processes of bottom-up projection, up-loading and policy convergence through down-loading happens in a circular relationship (as does Hill & Wong 2011). Bossuyt (2017) also recognizes that the competences in EU foreign policies are still low, and that the member states still conduct their own foreign policies in parallel. This happens either separately or in opposition to EU foreign policy.

Bossuyt (2017) uses a rational institutionalist approach by assuming that EU member states will act strategically to attain their preferences. More specifically she looks at how Latvia and Romania have been able to up-load their positions to the EU level regarding EU's policy

towards Central Asia. By doing that she lays out four conditions under which member states are likely to up-load their national foreign policy preferences to the EU level. These are perceived importance of a policy goal, member states creating a niche for themselves, member states perceived capabilities and the level to which a member states national foreign policy have been Europeanized.

The perceived importance of a policy goal is the first condition. This means that member states will invest in policy issues that they consider as largely of importance, and opposite if a policy issue is not seen as a priority will the member state most likely not put too much resources and energy into this issue when trying to influence EU. The second condition regards member states creating a niche. According to Bossuyt (2017) does up-loading tend to occur when the member states have been able to create a niche for themselves. This means that they are able to provide specific expertise and experiences.

The third condition say something about how member states perceived capabilities depends on which member states that will pursue national foreign policy goals through the EU. If the member state feels like they cannot go about it alone and that they better can achieve their goals by running it through the EU are they more likely to attempt up-loading to the EU level. The fourth condition is the level of Europeanization of the member states national foreign policies. Here Bossuyt (2017) state that the more a member state's national foreign policy is Europeanized the more likely they are to project national foreign objectives onto the EU level. This includes governmental structure, bureaucracy and organizational infrastructure of the member state's foreign policy institutions.<sup>14</sup> Drawing on these two sets of literature, the analytical framework and theoretical assumptions for this thesis will be presented.

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<sup>14</sup> In her findings Bossuyt (2017) found that Latvia scored better on all four conditions than Romania. Both Latvia and Romania have become more involved in Central Asia since their accession in 2004 and 2007 respectively (ibid.). One of the explanations for Latvia scoring better than Romania is their different accession history and their immediate historical links with Central Asia. Another explanation is Latvia holding the Council Presidency in the first half of 2015. One of the goals for the Latvian Council Presidency was to revitalize the EU strategy for Central Asia. By trying to up-load their national preferences to the EU, Latvia teamed up with what is considered a major player in the region, Germany. In addition the Latvian Presidency organized several events in Brussels, Latvia plus other European and Central Asian capitals. Latvia also offers their transition and reform experiences through EU assistance programs in Central Asia. Romania wants to contribute with their specific expertise to these EU assistance initiatives as well (ibid.).

## 4.0 Analytical framework

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Since the early 1990s, the concept of Europeanization (Ladrech 1994) has developed into a buzzword of EU-related studies in political science. In a nutshell, it refers to the EU's impact on EU member states' domestic policy, politics and polity. Naturally, it has been expected that the EU's 'influence' is significantly higher in those areas where the EU is competent in terms of regulation and law-making (e.g. competition policy). With the growth of EU activity, albeit in a more strictly intergovernmental frame, in foreign and security matters, the concept has also been applied to study EU impact on member states' foreign policy as well as the growth of EU capacity itself.

The framework for analysis applied in this thesis analyzes the EU's effects on member states as well as EU member states effects on EU institutions with regards to the formulation of foreign policy *vis-à-vis* Central Asia. In terms of a theoretical or perhaps more appropriately, analytical approach, this can be captured by the term of "Europeanization". This theoretical approach is used as it illustrates how the different levels can shape and be shaped by each other. The concept of Europeanization is closely linked to the idea of the European Union as a prime example of a multi-level governance (MLG) system. The term MLG is here understood as the dispersion of authority across multiple levels of political governance in accordance to Hooghe and Marks (2003). This idea has also been applied to the study of EU's foreign policy (see Smith 2004).

Since the EU consists of several prominent 'layers of governance' when dealing with foreign relations, is it useful to examine the vertical and horizontal effects this may have on European foreign policy strategy-making. The scope and depth of horizontal coordination between the EU headquarters and the EU delegations as well as member states embassies is being considered as proxy for the EU's capacity of down-loading. And the vertical dimension is considered as the different member states abilities of up-loading to their national preferences to the EU level. First some information about Europeanization and EU foreign policy, and the down-loading and up-loading dimensions. Then follows a more detailed presentation of literature regarding coordination with the EU institutions, and secondly a

presentation of small state literature to show the differences between the small and larger EU member states. Third, the theoretical assumptions based on this literature is presented.

## 4.1 Europeanization

Europeanization is explained by Graziano and Vink (2013) as a third step in a European-based regional integration theory. It moves beyond the classical integration theories of neofunctionalism and intergovernmentalism, therefore widening the research spectrum. The analytical approach's primary focus is on the domestic level, or on how the EU 'downloads' to the domestic level and how the domestic level, i.e. the member states can upload to the EU (ibid.). Here, down-loading relates to policy convergence - how governmental ideas, policies and structures are adapted to the EU level - while up-loading relates to the projection of national ideas, policies and structure to the EU level. The down-loading and up-loading dimensions will be revisited later.

The definition of Europeanization is contested, but Graziano and Vink (2013:37) explain the concept as a process of domestic adaptation to European regional integration. ".. Europeanization generally refers to interactions between the EU and its member states or third countries." (Börzel & Panke 2016:111).

### *4.1.1 Europeanization and EU foreign policy*

This thesis focuses on the up-loading and down-loading dimensions<sup>15</sup> in accordance with Wong & Hill's (2011) understanding of Europeanization of EU foreign policy. This concept is relatively new in the field of European integration and relies on the existence of a common European foreign policy. This thesis has already mentioned that there has been several institutional changes within this policy field building EU's perception as an international

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<sup>15</sup> Analytically, the Europeanization approach in EU foreign policy distinguishes between three aspects – which, ultimately, draw on different theoretical traditions and understandings of integration (Balfour, Carta & Raik 2015 and Wong & Hill 2011). These dimensions are up-loading, down-loading and cross-loading. This thesis will only focus on the up-loading and down-loading dimensions as that is of relevance in order to answer the research question.

actor. The EU is however "... not a unified state actor, nor does it have clear and consistent external objectives" (Wong & Hill 2011:3). This means that Wong & Hill (2011:3) understand and analyze EU foreign policy "...as the sum and interaction of the 'three strands' of Europe's 'external relations system.'" These three stands consist of (Wong & Hill 2011:3):

- (a) the national foreign policies of the Member States;
- (b) EC external trade relations and development policy; and
- (c) the common Foreign and Security Policy of the EU

Europeanization of EU foreign policy illustrates both how EU institutions can have an effect on member states (down-loading), and how the member states can affect the EU (up-loading). The convergence between EU institutions' supranational approach to the field and the member states' intergovernmental approach means that while these effects can be looked at in isolation, they can also interact with each other. They could and should be studied in this regard as well.

#### *4.1.2 Down-loading: Impact of EU and the coordination in EU*

Down-loading is a top-down approach which examines how EU institutions influence its member states' foreign relations institutions through different incentives. Member states can also contribute to these incentives. EU institutions' influence on national foreign policies ranges from policy adaptations to member states' institutional changes. This can be seen either through changes in the national foreign ministry directly or coming from the national embassies in Central Asia and/or member states permanent representation in Brussels. This thesis works with information and data collected from the latter two.

Amongst other things, the down-loading dimension tells us something about the centralization of EU foreign policy. The decision-making power lies with the headquarters in Brussels. Some literature, however, suggests that there have been some fundamental changes to how diplomacy is conducted (Diez, Manners & Whitman 2011), which could strengthen the EU delegations' role. Combined are they the ones with knowledge of the region, each responsible for their own country. The question here is if each EU delegation's



mandate extends beyond the tasks of sharing information and coordinating member states present in their respective countries. Has their influence increased in matters relating to their country of representation, thereby shifting the degrees of centrality in these types of processes? Or is the setting up of the EU delegation a more similar procedure as a state setting up an embassy abroad? In other words, is the EU only acting as a normal actor? (Pardo 2012).

This thesis examines a regional strategy. Each EU delegations is responsible solely for their respective countries, and not the neighboring ones. This responsibility lies with the Special Representative for the region of Central Asia (EUSR for CA). The Special Representative's role is to talk to all the EU delegations in the region and coordinate their work. The Special Representative is connected to the EEAS as well, but in an independent role (European Union External Action 2018). In sum, this dimension will in this context look at the level of autonomy and influence the EU delegations in Central Asia have *vis-à-vis* the headquarters in Brussel. Here the headquarters are mainly targeted at the EEAS and the Commission.

#### *4.1.3 Up-loading: Impact of member states, small vs. large member states*

Up-loading has on the other side a bottom-up approach. Here the different national institutions - in this case the different EU member states embassies - influence EU foreign policy by up-loading their positions and preferences. This influence can come from either small or big member states, as all states should be treated equal. In this context, EU foreign policy decision making is seen as dominated by rational inter-state bargaining. The up-loading dimension, therefore, explains the ability of small and larger member states to influence EU foreign policy.

In a policy field historically dominated by intergovernmentalism, each member states' relative strength is paramount. This is portrayed in the organizational set-up of the CFSP/CSDP (Keukeleire & Delreux 2014). When dealing with foreign policy issues, member states have been reluctant to give up their powers of influence as this threatens their national sovereignty. The size – or rather the resources - of the member states influences

this inter-state bargaining. There is an idea that smaller states will benefit from taking part in multi-lateral organizations as this provides them with more leverage and support when operating abroad (Steinsson & Thorhallsson 2017). However, in order to have an influence the smaller states must act strategically and position themselves (Grøn & Wivel 2011).

This interplay between the small and larger member states is dependent on the institutional set-up and its legal framework. Here again the post-Lisbon changes have proven influential. This hybrid organizational set-up affects the organizational landscape within which member states operate. An historically intergovernmental dominated policy area that relies heavily on the resources of each individual state. A more integrated framework provides a possibility of a more equal treatment between the member states regardless of size and resources, because then the smaller member states can more easily rely on a shared pool of resources and focus its work on positioning themselves. This is connected to the down-loading dimension as the interplay between the member states are influenced by the organization of EU's foreign policy. This again is connected to the degree of centralization, as this also will have an effect on how the different member states positions themselves.

## 4.2 Theoretical assumptions

Based on the literature presented above, the theoretical assumptions for this thesis relates to both the impact of the EU and the impact of the member states. The first theoretical assumption reflects the literature presented on the impact of the EU. Here it was made clear that the Lisbon Treaty brought with it several institutional changes to remedy the coordination issues in EU foreign policy by linking the EU level and member states through a hybrid institutional framework. This framework resulted in the EEAS with the EU delegations organized as a part of this institution. The second theoretical assumption reflect the small member state literature presented under the impact of member states.

### *4.4.1 Theoretical assumption I*

Maurer and Raik (2014) argue that the EU delegations are expected to take over a more leading role in the policy and strategy-making, but at the time being their role should not be exaggerated. Through the multi managerialism perspective the diplomacy as we know it has changed (Diez, Manners & Whitman 2011). Several actors are now intertwined, and there is a need for a strong coordination leader between these actors. In linking this up to the changing of the international order, could it be anticipated that the EU delegations' coordination capacity would contribute significantly to the formulation of EU foreign policy and strategy-making. On the other hand, it can be argued that EU foreign policy strategy-making is not that unique. The EU's foreign policy seemingly looks as a normal power, meaning that the EU act similar to other actors in trying to maximize their interests by influencing others (Pardo 2012). This thesis assumes that the foreign policy is highly centralized, with the EU delegations acting as an embassy for the Union and conducting on the ground tasks ordered by the headquarters. This leads us to the first theoretical assumption:

The EU headquarters play the leading role in EU foreign policy strategy-making, while the EU delegations contribute with on the ground support and coordination as per instructed by the headquarters.

This thesis will argue that two factors help explain why this is the case instead of the fact that the EU delegation play a much more influential role as assumed by Diez, Manners and Whitman (2011). First, it is believed to be a high degree of policy consensus by the member states regarding Central Asia. Maurer and Raik (2014) examined the EU delegations in Washington DC and Moscow, two countries that are more contested and contains a higher degree of policy divergence by the different member states. It can be expected to find a higher degree of consensus between the various member states when working on issues related to Central Asia. This need for coordination diminish when there is a higher degree of consensus. This relates to the Central Asian countries being lower on the EU foreign policy agenda compared to the countries in the Eastern partnership and my second factor.

The second factor relates to the relevance of Central Asia in EU foreign policy. EU foreign policy has been mainly targeted on the neighboring countries of the EU. Seeing that Central

Asia is the neighbors of the neighbors can one expect that Central Asia is not highly prioritized in EU foreign policy. The gross domestic product (GDP) rate as shown in the introduction is also relatively low. It is expected that Central Asian countries are of importance to the Union mostly because of maintaining security in Europe, in addition to trade relations (Keukeleire & Delreux 2014). Here internal security means energy security, diversification of energy supply, and the negative consequences the collapse of the regional stability can spread to Europe, for example in the sense of various types of trafficking and the spread of terrorism and violence.

Is the EU acting first and foremost in its own interest when trying to build a stronger relationship with the Central Asian countries? The foreign policy of the EU can in that case be expected to function as 'business as usual'. This means that there is a strong central power in EU's foreign policy and the EU delegations do as they are told by the central power. The idea here is that EU's policies towards Central Asia is important for the EU, but not decisive. In other words, greater relevance towards a country or region will lead to an increasing role for the EU delegations. This is in line with the literature on 'normal' states as one can expect a high degree of centralization in states relations with other states of less relevance. This also relates to EU actorness and a possible third factor that could have helped explain the first theoretical assumption.<sup>16</sup>

#### *4.4.2 Theoretical assumption II*

Regardless of the normalization of the coordination in the EU institutions the relationship between Brussels and the national capitals have been altered in the new institutional framework post-Lisbon. The smaller member states have some structural disadvantages compared to the larger member states, but in theory all states are treated equal in the EU and as presented above there are several ways for small member states to compensate or think strategically about it in order to maximize their influence on certain issues. Some of these ways was to prioritize certain issues, creating a niche where the member states can

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<sup>16</sup> EU actorness: How does the Central Asian as well as other external players in the region perceive the EU? As one unified actor or a multitude of actors? This has not been the focus of the thesis and there are therefore not enough findings to substantially explore this factor here.

provide unique expertise of value to the other member states, working through network, teaming up with other member states or even a large member states to mention some. The second theoretical assumption is therefore as follow:

Smaller member states exercise a disproportionately strong influence in the formulation of EU foreign policy strategy-making.

Previously this thesis presented different authors small state suggestions of counter strategies, smart state behavior, elements and conditions for how the smaller member states could compensate for their size *via-a-vis* larger ones. This thesis draws on this literature when analyzing small state influence in the strategy-making process. It does so by using three factors based on these frameworks when examining if smaller member states under the current institutional framework exercise a disproportionate strong influence.

This first factor builds on the commitment and immaterial resources by Nasra (2011) and the perceived importance of a policy goal by Bossuyt (2017). The factor is if member states have allocated enough and the right resources to produce a desirable outcome. This relates to member states making the right prioritizations and actually wanting to influence the policy area or process in this case. This can as Grøn and Wivel (2011) suggests, include member states' lobbying initiatives, act as self-interested mediators or as a norm entrepreneur. This also relates to the member states having motivated staff and a non-interrupted administrative work environment (Panke 2010), even if this thesis does not examine this specifically.

The second factor is about having unique assets. It is about how the member states can stand out in order to offer something of value that the other member states cannot offer to the same extent. This is closely related to Bossuyt's (2017) condition of creating a niche and the deliberation element of Nasra (2011). It is about member states being able to offer some unique form of knowledge or expertise of value to the other member states. This means offering something that is needed, and that others cannot offer to the same extent. As there is no colonial ties between the member states and the Central Asian countries it is interesting to examine if there is anything else that connect these countries that will give

them an advantage. This can be historical, language and cultural knowledge, as well as post-Soviet transition knowledge.

The third factor is about member states relative position inside the EU, and how they use various actors, both other member states and international organizations, when trying to up-load their national preferences. Panke (2010) found that the learning curve, longer membership duration as well as holding the Council Presidency, had a significant advantage for the member states. This is also related to Nasra's (2011) network capital and Bossuyt's (2017) condition of perceived capabilities and level of Europeanization of the member states foreign policies. This thesis will not dwell on the different member states length of memberships, but rather focus on how the member states can form networks and team up with other member states when maximizing their influence in EU foreign policy strategy-making. Other external ties, for example through international organizations, can be connected to this as well.

Below is a table that sums up the two theoretical assumptions and their respective factors. The method for how the data collected to answer the research question and theoretical assumptions will be explain next.

*Table 2: Theoretical assumptions and factors trying to explain these assumptions.*

<b>Theoretical assumption 1:</b> The EU headquarters play the leading role in EU foreign policy strategy-making, while the EU delegations contribute with on the ground support and coordination as per instructed by the headquarters.	
Factor 1	High degree of consensus on the policies towards Central Asia among the EU member states
Factor 2	The relevance of the region
<b>Theoretical assumption 2:</b> Smaller member states exercise a disproportionately strong influence in the formulation of EU foreign policy strategy-making.	
Factor 1	Making prioritizations through allocation of enough and the right resources
Factor 2	Having unique assets
Factor 3	Internal positions in the EU

## 5.0 Methodology

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Since the 2019 EU strategy towards Central Asia is only recently been made public, this project is limited to examine the process rather than the end result. Due to this limitation the project focuses on the scope of coordination and agenda-setting during the drafting of the strategy. This is important in terms of understanding which actors have an influence on EU foreign policy strategy-making and how. The project, therefore, seeks to find out; how and which member states have contributed with input, what the role of the European External Action Service (EEAS), the role the Commission and the EU delegations have had in the process, how the coordination between the EEAS and the EU delegations as well as the EU member states have been.

### 5.1 Why a qualitative case study?

A common separation within methods used in research is between qualitative and quantitative approaches. According to Bukve (2016) is this separation not clear, as there are several methods and overlaps between them. Regardless, there are some common features for qualitative methods that can be made (ibid). Qualitative method is used when one wants to examine the depth of a phenomena in order to describe what happens in the specific situation (Jacobsen 2005). This is according to Gerring (2004) also the biggest advantage, the ability to go into depth and being able to give a detailed description of what is being analyzed.

This project uses a qualitative case-based method, and this choice is made as it is believed to best answer the research question; *Who sets the agenda for the making of EU foreign policy in the context of EU drafting its new Central Asia strategy? And how can we explain this pattern?* This thesis it not trying to trace the strategy-making, but rather examine the actors involved in the process and the links between them. The thesis, therefore, needs to go into depth on the actors positions and roles. In these types of processes qualitative expert interviews are the best option of being able to get these answers. However, it is important to note that this data from the respondents offers a description of how stakeholders in EU

institutions have perceived the process of the making of the 2019 EU Central Asia strategy, and that we do not learn about the process itself.

## 5.2 Interviews

This project has used expert interview for data collection. The collection consists of interviews with EU member state officials and officials working for the EU institutions. An interview with a Central Asian representative and a researcher have also taken place. Expert interview is used as these people have information regarding how the process of drafting the strategy has developed. This project used semi-structured interviews to explore the dynamics of both policy- and strategy-making *vis-à-vis* Central Asia. Semi-structured interviews are relatively flexible, as they do not require the interview questions to necessarily be full sentences (Leech 2002). This also allows for the questions to be more open and allows for the possibility of taking the questions in a new direction based on the interviewees responses, enabling for a broader understanding of the phenomenon.<sup>17</sup>

The flexibility of semi-structured interviews allows for creating themed-based questions. An interview guide was created with four overall themes. These were general questions on the 2019 Central Asia strategy: state-of-play, scope and actors, member states' involvement, the role of the EU institutions and the approach *vis-à-vis* other major players in the region (China, Russia, the US and others). This helped structure the interviews and allowed for the flexibility to adjust the questions asked and to alter the order of the questions based on the interviewees' responses. Creating these themes makes it easier to get the answers one is looking for. It is also helpful when categorizing the findings afterwards.

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<sup>17</sup> Research and collection of data does not happen in a vacuum, and it is important to be aware of the role one plays when conducting interviews. It is important to build up trust, both to get people to agree on meeting you and for them to open up during the interview. Leech (2002) mentions presence as an advantage. I spent one semester in Almaty, Kazakhstan as an exchange student to KIMEP University. That allowed me to learn more about the region and travel to three Central Asian capitals. I had been in the region for over three months when I conducted the interviews. That also contributed to me being comfortable traveling around and easier establishing a connection to the interviewees. Some practice interviews were however conducted in Almaty beforehand to be better prepared.



The interviews lasted in length from approximately half an hour to two hours. The interview process started by first getting permission to record them, all but four said yes. One interview took place over Skype and was not recorded. The guidelines for the interviews were stated in advance and how they could at any time withdraw without any reasons. All interviewees were contacted via email, and more information about the project and guidelines were attached to that email. This information letter also stated how the study has been notified and approved by the Data Protection Official for Research, NSD - Norwegian Centre for Research Data. All the interviewees accepted these terms, but some required more anonymity than others. Therefore, all the informants have been anonymized in order to comply to everyone's wishes. They will be referred to as Key informants 1, 2, 3 and so on in the analytical section. This might be a disadvantage for the reader to not know who said what, but this does not make any drastic changes to the presentation of the empirical findings. The interview guides for both Central Asia and Brussels are attached to this thesis.

### *5.2.1 Interviews in Central Asia*

The interviews conducted can be divided into two sets. First, 16 interviews were done in three Central Asian capitals; Nur-Sultan<sup>18</sup> in Kazakhstan, Bishkek in Kyrgyzstan and Tashkent in Uzbekistan. These took place in November and December of 2018. The interviewees consisted of EU member state representatives and representatives from the EU delegation. All member states' embassies as well as the EU delegations in these three capitals were emailed with a request to participate in this project (Croatia was not asked as they opened up their embassy in Nur-Sultan in the fall of 2018). Out of these did 16 of them agreed to meet with me during the designated time I had in each capital. Most interviews took place in Nur-Sultan as this is also the city with most member states present. Here 11 interviews were conducted in one week. In Bishkek only one interview took place. The reason for this might be that only three member states have an embassy in Bishkek, and for several of the member states are the embassies in Nur-Sultan are also responsible for Kyrgyzstan. There are more member states present in Tashkent, and 4 interviews were conducted there in

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<sup>18</sup> The capital of Kazakhstan was called Astana when the interviews were conducted there. It was renamed Nur-Sultan in March 2019.

mid-December. The timing, close to Christmas, made it difficult to get more interviews in Tashkent. All but one agreed to be recorded.

### *5.2.2 Interviews in Brussels*

Secondly, 12 interviews took place in Brussels in February and March of 2019, six with representatives working for the EU institutions, and five interviews with representatives from member states permanent representations took place. In addition one representative from a Central Asian embassy was interviewed. The member state representatives requested for an interview were strategically chosen based on findings during the first set of interviews in Central Asia. They were chosen to be able to follow up on what was learned in Central Asia, and to further explore the division between small and large member states possibilities of influencing the drafting of the new Central Asia strategy. It can also be mentioned that one Skype interview took place in March as well. This respondent is listed under Brussels interviews in order to make sure that this informant's identity remains anonymous as well.

## 5.3 The quality of the data: validity and reliability

One cannot force people to participate in data collection and interviews, and that is why the findings of this project are based on the information given from individuals who agreed to participate and who had time to meet within the given timeframe I visited their respective cities. One can, therefore, argue that this data is based on a random set of respondents. This is related to the discussion on the validity and reliability of this project as it tells us something about the strengths and weaknesses of the data collected.

The project is investigating a process at a time where the final result are not available to the public. There is also little information about the process that is made public. This means that there is a potential for my findings to be unrepresentative of the strategy that some states are pursuing, and may in fact not represent the final agreement or approach that will ultimately be adopted. If someone were to do the same kind of interviews, that person may

gather a different set of findings. It is, however, not the first time that the EU has worked on relation building in the region, and by talking to different types of member states and EU institution representatives, it should allow for the different respondents to say something about their understanding of the EUs involvement of member states in the region and their experiences of their own contribution to the process of drafting the strategy at the time.

Based on information from the interviewees in Central Asia were all work and input coming from Central Asian finished at the time that the interviews were conducted there. However, when conducting the interviews in Brussels the first draft was still a work in process. The member states had not seen a draft of the strategy yet and, therefore, it had not been discussed in the COEST Council working group at the time. The analytical section of this thesis builds on findings from the EU member states and EU institutions. The author of this thesis chooses to believe what they themselves tell me about the process and situation to the extent that this is their knowledge and understanding of the process.

The findings of the project builds on relevant and credible sources that voluntarily has agreed to meet with me. Concerning the validity does this have to do with what the data actually measure and if it measures what the thesis set to find out. Does the case - the EU drafting their 2019 EU strategy towards Central Asia - represent what the project seeks to find out: the coordination between the EU institutions and the involvement of the different member states when forming EU foreign policy? This strategy is expected to be the guiding document regarding the EU's policies towards the region, and the process of drafting this strategy is examined as it is believed to say something about EU foreign policy strategy-making. Next the empirical findings based on the interviews conducted are presented.

## 6.0 Empirical findings

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This chapter presents and analyzes the findings based on the interviews conducted both in Central Asia and Brussels. This analysis is organized as follows: First, it starts by presenting the findings, and then secondly comes a few paragraphs commenting on the data. This is an interpretation of the compilation of the data to say something about how to understand the findings. These findings will be further analyzed and discussed against the factors presented under the analytical framework in the discussion chapter.

In order to respect some of the respondents wishes to remain anonymous will the interviewees be referred to as "Key informant xx" as explained in the method chapter. Some places where it is possible however, the respondents are referred to as a representative of a group. These groups include EU member states in Central Asia, EU institutions and EU member states in Brussels. The chapter is divided into two main sections, the impact of the EU and the impact of the EU member states. The two sections are further divided into sub-sections.

### 6.1 Impact of the EU

The EU institutions, such as the Commission, the Council and the European External Action Service (EEAS), both with its delegations 'on the ground' and the headquarters located in Brussels, assume different roles and tasks. This holds also true with a view to the drafting process of the new Central Asian strategy of the European Union. This first section presents and analyzes the findings regarding the EU institutions roles and functions. This also includes the involvement of external actors when drafting the strategy, and their acceptance.

#### *6.1.1 Role of the EU delegations*

This sub-section deals with the EU delegation's role and function. How the different member states, EU institutions and Central Asian embassy in Brussels view their relations to the EU delegation and the EU delegation's involvement in drafting the strategy.

Some of the EU institutions in Brussels report daily contact with the EU delegations (Key informant 17 and 26). The delegations are part of the EEAS's eyes and arms on the ground (Key informant 17). The drafting of the strategy has been more headquarter-driven, and they report more to the EEAS (Key informant 26). The delegations provide updates and are contacted when meetings are to be arranged (Key informant 19). Other EU institutions report less contact with the EU delegations seeing that it is the EEAS, Commission and the EUSR for Central Asia that are the main institutions when it comes to drafting the strategy (Key informant 23).

The different member state representatives in Brussels report little direct contact with the EU delegations. According to one member state representative it is the EU delegations who coordinate locally and they are part of the EEAS (Key informant 21). One member state representative said that they brief them when they come to Brussels and contact them when they, for example, need something from the ground. This can be if they do not have an embassy or representation in that country, the interviewee did however state that it is more natural for them to contact their own embassies present in the region if possible (Key informant 22). Others also report that contact with the EU delegations occurs by way of the national embassies located in Central Asia (Key informant 20). In Brussels in general does the member state representatives report more contact with the EEAS and national capitals (Key informants 20, 25).

The EU member state representatives in Central Asia report good and regular contact with the respective EEAS delegations (Key informants 4, 9, 14, 16). The EU delegations host regular meetings at different levels (Key informant 14), and the delegations are open with all the invitations. They share information and invite all member states (Key informant 7). Another respondent said that they were very good partners with EU and others active in town (Key informant 1). Other words to describe the relations are fruitful (Key informant 11), informal and on a personal and content level (Key informant 8), as well as referring to the EU delegation as colleagues (Key informant 5). Even if the relations are described as good, it is also mentioned that sometimes the EU delegations could be expected to do more as they are not able to fulfil all of their requests (Key informant 5).

The EU is a creator of a platform and are opening up opportunities in the region (Key informant 4). Another respondent said that EU member states performing as a collective unit is an important aspect of the perception of the EU as an actor in the region. This respondent also called upon more investment in creating a European unity, as this is a challenge and the biggest weakness (Key informant 6). National interests come first, but this needs to change. Another interviewee viewed this differently. According to him are the bi-lateral ties and member states self-interests most important (Key informant 14). When it came to the drafting of the strategy did one member state representative report that the inclusion and investment when drafting the strategy had been good (Key informant 5).

The EU delegations contributed through request regarding the drafting of the strategy (Key informants 13). Informal and formal discussions, as well as several events with relevant stakeholders organized by the delegation took place during the consultation period (Key informants 28). One respondent said that the EU delegations was asked to give input, but that they were not that much involved (Key informant 10). The delegations talked to people there, including consultations with representatives from the member states embassies in the region. The delegations also helped organize bi-lateral events in all Central Asian countries together with the EU special representative for Central Asia. They helped with the booking and choosing of speakers and participants. The EUSR for Central Asia relied on the delegations in setting this up as they know the countries from the ground (Key informant 28).

One interviewee involved in some of these events reported that the EU delegations took an active role in these events. If the EU ambassador could not attend, the second in line was sent. The EU ambassadors also chaired a session at these events. There was usually more than one representative from the respective delegations that was present. They got involved and took it seriously, but the mandate of hosting the events came however from the EUSR for Central Asia (Key informant 29).

One respondent stated that the process with the role of the EUSR made sense as the strategy has a regional approach. They are however also relying on the EU delegations since

this is not a classical region but a region consisting of different countries (Key informant 10). An EU delegation respondent said that the regional cooperation has improved, and the cooperation between the different delegations in Central Asia is regular and close. That is the case due to many factors and developments happening in the region and includes regular exchange of information between the delegations. This is natural as the EU sees the region as one region (Key informant 12).

The same respondent also stated that the relations with member states have been strengthened with the Lisbon Treaty. After this the delegation took over a more coordinating role. It has been more institutionalized, and this helps for their relations according to the interviewee (Key informant 12). Some of the delegations are well staffed, and report that they are intensifying the cooperation year by year, other EU delegations are less staffed (Key informants 12 and 13). According to the plans will an EU delegation open up in Turkmenistan during 2019 (Key informants 10, 18 and 22), and when this happens will the EU have a delegation in all five Central Asian states.

The EU delegations are in regular contact with the main EU institutions in Brussels. More with some than others, but this is only natural considering the roles of the different EU institutions. A large amount of the process takes place in Brussels, and the strategy is rather headquartered driven. The delegations are however the ones with the on the ground knowledge and contacts. Their competence is of value to both the EU institutions and member states and are used by them when needed. Reaching out to the EU delegations usually happens through the institutionalized channels. The member states in Brussels for example goes through either the EU institutions in Brussels or the national embassy in Central Asia when getting in contact with the EU delegations. Even then, they are more likely to contact their own embassy on the ground if possible.

The EU delegations operates as a point of contact in the Central Asian countries and are of value to the member state embassies. They are important for creating a neutral meeting ground between like-minded countries. They do this by coordinating and arrange different events where all are included and invited. This plays into the pooling of resources where some member states can rely on the works of either the delegations or other member

states. It is however up to the member states if they wish to participate, and even then how much they want to contribute with. Some talk about a desire to work on breaking down the strong bi-lateral ties, and by that cooperate closer on facilitating for different national companies. Others value EU as a contact point and flow of information exchange, but at the same time are determined to keep their bi-lateral ties close to their chest.

The fact that the regional cooperation is growing both between the Central Asian countries themselves and between the delegations in the region is a good sign for the EU. The strategy has a regional approach, meaning that the EU is pushing for stronger regional cooperation, especially in cases that needs a regional solution like water management and border security. The EUSR for Central Asia is important in uniting the delegations and functions as a regional focused bridge builder between the different delegations and the EEAS in Brussels.

### *6.1.2 Role of the EU headquarters in Brussels*

Findings on the role of the EU headquarters in Brussels are presented next. Several of the respondents in Central Asia made it clear that their involvements when drafting the new EU - Central Asia strategy were limited to consultations (Key informants 3, 8, 15). Decisions are taken in Brussels but they give advice when asked (Key informant 3). One respondent even said that colleagues are glad to work on the draft and finalization of the strategy in Brussels where they have extensive discussions (Key informant 15). The contact with Brussels varies: Some member states are in contact with colleagues in Brussels (Key informant 14), while others report that they have been consulted by the ministry in their respective countries (Key informants 16, 9 and 2).

In regard to this consultation process that took place in Central Asia are EUSR for Central Asia mentioned several times (Key informants 8, 11, 14 and 16). A great deal of the work has been done in Brussels and it is still a work in progress (Key informant 12). Some of the member states mentions some contact with the EU institutions, but this can also be due to previous work in the city and other personal contact (Key informants 7 and 8). Most of the contact goes through the EU delegations, capitals or the permanent representations as already mentioned. The EEAS is an instrument to work with capitals (Key informant 12), and



their job is to coordinate the complete set of the EU's external relations with 3rd parties (Key informant 17).

The EU institutions and the member states present in Brussels view their relations as good. The EU institutions listen to the member states (Key informant 26). There also seems to be a great deal of consensus and agreements regarding EU's policies towards the region as it is not a highly contested region for the different member states (Key informants 19, 22 and 25). The priorities of the member states are more or less the same, but sometimes member states have a different order of priority that needs to be coordinated (Key informant 22). The EU institutions are open for input from the member states. One member state interviewee told me he was in regular contact with EEAS and DG DEVCO, and that he had to consult them to get anything on the agenda as Brussels are all about contacts.

“[W]e see the EEAS every week because they are you know preparing the agenda of COEST, so you know we have to deal with them anyway and also because of the very fact that if you want to you know just put something on the agenda so we have to consult it with EEAS so we are just in a constant contact with them” (Key informant 18).

The EU institutions have the leading role, but the member states can give input. All the member states are participating, the permanent representation is discussing with other member states and participate at various events. This is a comprehensive process (Key informant 21). Other representatives from the member states permanent representations in Brussels gives similar answers. They talk about indirect involvement as they are not involved in the drafting but have had opportunities to give their views (Key informant 22). The EEAS regularly visit and set the agenda for the COEST Council working group where they have several discussions where everyone can come with their priorities (Key informant 18 and 20). The member state representatives in COEST have not seen the draft of the strategy yet but will discuss it once it is ready (Key informant 18). One member state interviewee also pointed out that “the institutions work for us”, it is a service - an external action service (Key informant 22).

This 2019 EU strategy is a joint communication of the EEAS and the Commission to the Council and the Parliament on elements of the EU strategy for Central Asia (Key informant 18). The European Parliament is not formally a part of the process, but they are kept informed and the other EU institutions know their position (Key informant 19, 27). Currently this is a document that the EEAS and the Commission is working on, and the member states have as already mentioned not seen it yet.

The EEAS, in close collaboration with the Commission, is working on the draft of the 2019 EU strategy (Key informant 26). Currently they are working on finalizing the draft after several rounds of consultations and formal discussions with some of the Commissions DGs (Like for example DG Move, DG Energy, DG Environment etc.). DG DEVCO have the co-lead and will have to comment on the draft (Key informant 26). When this is ready, it will be discussed by the member states in the Council Working Group on Eastern Europe and Central Asia (COEST). It is the Council's job to make sure that the member states are heard, and to facilitate for a smooth process. The Council also operates by consensus (Key informant 23). People working on Central Asia related issues in Brussels know each other and are in close contact. It is a restrictive circle; Central Asia is more limited in terms of players and that is helpful for the relation (Key informant 19).

The main contact point is the EEAS as they write the strategy and are the coordinators. They coordinate both with the delegations, which functions as a contact point on the ground in Central Asia, as well as with the EU institutions and member state representatives in Brussels. EEAS chair the COEST working group in the Council, and the Commission is active and involved in the process of drafting the 2019 EU strategy as well. This is especially true for DG DEVCO. The Commission is important to have on board as they are responsible for the financing and the budget. It seems to be a tight and good working relationship between both the EU institutions and the member states.

This 2019 EU strategy is an EU strategy, which puts the EU headquarters in the driving seat but in regard to the process of drafting this new strategy does it seem like the EU headquarters have been open for input and contributions for whoever wishes to jump on board. The different positions are then taken into consideration when creating a unified

document, as it should be considering that the EU institutions work for the member states. The institutions in Brussels have a clear and well defined role that they are aware of and are happy to work within the framework of.

### *6.1.3 Reaching out to other actors*

The consultation process, getting input from various actors, have been unusually comprehensive when drafting this strategy (Key informant 28). The EUSR for Central Asia has been in charge of collecting these inputs. There have been events organized in both Europe and Central Asia taking place. In Central Asia, there was for example organized an event in each of the five Central Asian capitals that the local EU delegations helped facilitate. Various stakeholders have been included, but there has also been talks with the government themselves (Key informant 28).

"And precisely this was the approach we were trying to apply in developing the new strategy, closely interacting not only with governments and officials, but also with the private sector, non-governmental organisations and a wider public, both in Central as well as in the EU. Several regional, national and thematic workshops have been organized in this consultation process. The Key objective of these workshops was to get important feedback from our partners how they see the role of the EU in the region, how the EU can best support transformation and modernization processes in individual Central Asian countries and help addressing Key challenges for strengthening stability, resilience and advancing sustainable development in the region (main objectives of our strategy)." (Key informant 28)

In order to make sure the 2019 EU strategy follows up on what it set out to do, have the process been inclusive and open to relevant stakeholders;

"We welcome valuable contributions and ideas generated by all partners and EU Member States during those consultation. The way the new Strategy has been prepared, I believe, will secure greater ownership of our partners and EU." (Key informant 28)

It has been important for the EU to make sure that the strategy has a link to the relevant stakeholders, as the last strategy have been criticized for lack of implementation (Key informant 5). The new strategy will be shorter and focus more on implementation, and it will do so by focusing on a few clusters as agreed upon in COEST (Key informant 25). Wide consultation periods in both Europe and Central Asia have taken place as it is important with a buy in and making relevant stakeholders feel an ownership in the strategy (Key informant 17).

People talk and meet at various events. The EUSR for Central Asia travels a great deal, and the new Central Asian strategy has been up for debate and discussion by others. Third countries are aware about parts of the process, this is especially true for likeminded countries (Key informant 28). They wanted to see how the EU can work closer with external actors as well as international actors. Other respondents mention a desire to work on finding synergies as well (Key informant 8, 10 and 12).

The EU is ready to collaborate with anyone provided they agree on a shared agenda which brings benefits to the region as such (Key informants 17). EU wish to be a reliable partner and do not see itself as a great game player in the region. It is also a wish from Central Asia to strengthen the cooperation with EU. The EU is seen as an alternative, a force of good (Key informant 17). Not all the inputs from national governments and international organizations will be reflected in the new strategy, but they have been reached out to during this process. This includes participation at various consultation events and possibilities of submitting non-papers (Key informants 26). The respondents are clear on the fact that this however still is an EU strategy, a strategy for the EU. The 2019 EU strategy is therefore expected to be in compliance with the Global Strategy, and will take note from the affected partners;

"We want to have a strategy which is fully compatible with our Global Strategy and which reflects new developments in the region, expectations and needs of our partners in Central Asia, including more ambitious economic presence of the EU in the region."  
(Key informant 28).

The EU have included a variety of actors during the consultation process. They are open to cooperate with others active in the region to try and find synergies, but this needs to be done in accordance with EU's principles. More specific when it comes to the new strategy have the contact with the Central Asian governments and international organizations been more substantial. External players are however kept informed as people talk, and express interest in the progress. It is after all an EU strategy, but the drafting of the 2019 EU strategy, as with EU's presence in the region, does not happen in a vacuum. Reaching out to external actors as well as Central Asian governments have therefore been important to give the strategy a proper foothold and have been an attempt to help strengthen the implementation when it comes to that phase. This is especially important since the previous strategy has been criticized for focusing too little on the implementation.

#### *6.1.4 Feeding into the process of strategy-making*

Parts of the process have already been presented, but this sub-section will try to give a more comprehensive view of how this took place and how the different actors could have an influence. The consultations started already back in 2016, and the last consultation event took place in the beginning of 2019 (Key informant 26 and 28). From then on the process of making a draft started. Once the first draft is ready will it be shared with the member states in the Council working group for discussions. While working on the draft the Commission can make comments to it, but it is however expected that things that have not already come up will.

“And after that's quite smooth, it just needs time. Once this is agreed, it needs to be translated into the so-called procedure languages. It's written in English, so it will be translated to French and German. And then there will be college meetings, the College of Commissioners, in the middle of May, when it's going to be adopted. And then, it will go through the Council and culminate at the end in the Foreign Affairs Council, to the 17<sup>th</sup> of June in Luxembourg. And then the last point, it will be presented formally to the Central Asia countries, in Bishkek, for which we don't have a date, but probably very late in June or early July. So, that is the timeline” (Key informant 26).

The interviewees in Central Asia pointed out that most of the process takes place in Brussels (Key informant 3, 12 and 15). The member states and EU delegations were included in the consultation process, but the drafting and the final processes took place in Brussels. The member state embassies and EU delegations in Central Asia provided expertise, evaluation and suggestions (Key informant 15) The EU delegations participate on request and provide the headquarters with on the ground information. As this is a regional strategy, does the process make sense. The delegations do provide certain input; feedback from other actors in the respective Central Asian state, organizing of conferences, meetings with EU ambassador, as well as collective exercise with member state representatives (Key informant 10). One respondent also stressed that they did not view this work on the new strategy isolated, but that it is part of their everyday work tasks (Key informant 13).

In Brussels the member states report a high degree of consensus when working on these issues (Key informants 19, 22 and 25). There are no big controversies towards the region, and they agree on what should be EU's focus. There might be some small disagreements on the order of the prioritized areas, but they agree on what they should prioritize (Key informant 22). One member state respondent said that all member states participate equally in these processes (Key informant 21). Another member state respondent was however of the opinion that it was in fact the larger member states that had pulled the weight in this process (Key informant 20).

The EU institutions are as already mentioned a service for the member states. The EEAS together with the Commission are responsible for coordinating the consultation and getting input from the various actors. They, the headquarters, are also the ones responsible for producing a draft. The member states are involved by being consulted and giving inputs. They will also take part in discussing the draft once this is ready. The actors in Central Asia participate when asked by their superiors, but other than that is their role rather limited to consultations. It is in Brussels most of the designing and shaping of the strategy takes place by the EU headquarters. The member state representatives will then discuss the draft in a consensus driven environment.

In theory all member states have equal opportunity to provide inputs into the process of drafting the 2019 EU strategy. There are many factors as to why this however is easier said than done. How much or little each member states have been able to influence this process is also hard to say as the draft is not discussed at the time the interviews were conducted. There seemed however to be some disagreement on member states involvement in the process. More on member states impact in the next section. The important thing to take out from this sub-section is that the member states have had several opportunities to take part in the process; participating at various events and in discussions in both Central Asia and Brussels, or submission of non-papers.

#### *6.1.5 Acceptance by Central Asian authorities and relations with external actors*

The EU's interest in the region has increased significantly over the last year, with around twice as many member states now showing an interest in the region (Key informant 28). EU is open for collaboration with other countries active in the region, and they are not trying to take anyone's place (Key informant 17). They collaborate more with likeminded countries and are interested in finding synergies when working on various projects and policy areas (Key informant 12).

The member state respondents are of the understanding that the Central Asian countries has been consulted. They have been consulted through opportunities of participating at various events and have had the opportunity to submit non-papers. In November 2018 was there held a ministerial meeting between the Central Asian countries and the EEAS. It was in connection to this meeting that Mogherini confirmed that EU will open up an EU delegation in Turkmenistan in 2019 (Key informant 10).

The EU work on having a high political dialog with the Central Asian countries, and this is seen as important (Key informant 12). The EU feel a little bit alone in Central Asia. It is not easy to do something with the others active in the region when there is limited dialog with both Russia and Turkey. China is a competitor, but open for the possibility of cooperating with them and the US is hard to understand at the moment without a consistent Central Asian strategy as the EU tries to have. The same respondent also questions if this regional

approach is finally paying off in reference to the changes currently happening in the region (Key informant 22).

The Central Asian countries have usually preferred bi-lateral relations. An EU institution representative could share that when they started out with the process Central Asian governments expressed that they did not want to do so much regional work again. "I mean EU and all the others have for a long time pushed for this regional thing, and the countries are like stop doing that". They are individual countries and like to cooperate bi-laterally. There have however been some changes to this approach. Uzbekistan started linking these regional things and are now more enthusiastic suddenly about this (Key informant 28).

Both Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan submitted non-papers (Key informant 18 and 22). The Central Asian embassy representative interviewed confirmed this. They state that this is an internal document for the EU institutions and member states. They were given the opportunity to participate in the consultation process and submit their ideas. They were however not given any guidelines on how to do this (Key informant 24).

They see EU's approach towards the region as consisting of three layers. These are bi-lateral country to country cooperation, Central Asian countries cooperation with the EU institutions and the regional cooperation with the EU. It is under the last layer that the new Central Asian strategy falls under. This layer is dependent on member states interests, and there has been an increasing interest in the region leading to more activity (Key informant 24).

The Central Asian respondent expressed an openness towards cooperating within all layers seeing that they are already present. They want to get the maximum out of the relation, mutual beneficial cooperation where both find it to be profitable without necessarily increasing the integration. This can be to develop trade, beneficial connections etc. They are also open for EU including more countries into the regional cooperation, but this has to be done gradually. EU does not plan to be a Key player in the region but work more on supporting sustainable development. Other external players are closer and work differently. They suggest looking for synergies, finding a balance and make the big players work together, but this is again dependent on the various players (Key informant 24).



The Central Asian respondent want the EU to use what worked in the previous strategy, listen to the member states and shift towards a little more pragmatic approach. There was also expressed a desire for more local ownership in the projects. They want the EU [delegations] to be more visible in the region, for example promoting Erasmus opportunities (Key informant 24).

It is hard to make any conclusions regarding Central Asian authorities' acceptance of the 2019 EU strategy since this material is based on only one Central Asian embassy respondent. The perception from the EU institutions and member states is that the consultations have been comprehensive and included the Central Asian countries as well as relevant stakeholders. It seems like the regional approach is gaining momentum, as more countries show an interest in it. It can also be noted that there has been an increased interest in Central Asia from the member states, but that the EU can do more to be more visible in the region.

Based on what the Central Asian respondent told me does the multi-vector policy still stand strong in the region. The EU is not the most important external player in the region, but still welcome. They are open for regional cooperation, also beyond the borders of Central Asia, but not that interested in regional integration. These countries relatively newly gained their independence, and sovereignty of the state, the state as an individual, is essential. Due to this it might seem like the bi-lateral ties still are the strongest and most important. They are a prerequisite for EU's approach towards the region. The Central Asian wish for local ownership in the projects and a more pragmatic approach also fits well into the goals stemming from the Global Strategy, a parent strategy that the new Central Asian strategy are expected to be in line with.

## 6.2 Impact of member states

The impact of the member states varies. More capacities/resources provide some states with advantages, but there is, according to the answers from the interviewees, also a number of ways for smaller member states to have an impact in these processes. This

section will first look at the findings supporting the fact that larger member states are the main drivers. Then the latter half of this section will then move to present the findings on different ways smaller member states still can have an impact in shaping strategy-making in EU foreign policy.

### *6.2.1 Large member states' advantages*

When asked about the different member states involvement the respondents in Central Asia highlight the importance of resources, capacities, and manpower. Capacity is important when it comes to detail influence. All member states collaborate and in theory all have the same possibility to influence the EU. However, capacity plays an important role in being able to do that (Key informant 2). The biggest players, Germany and France, are noticeably active (Key informant 14). Bigger member states have more possibilities, being perceived as the heavy weights. It depends on attitude, but also on resources (Key informant 16).

Bigger member states are more active. They, Germany, France and the Netherlands, have more companies/businesses and more resources (Key informant 4). Another member state respondent also said that it is the bigger countries, like Germany and France, that are more active. The Uzbek president has visited France, and there are talks about him visiting Germany and Brussels also. After the visit to France there was a memorandum of understanding (MOU) signed between the two countries (Key informant 14).

Several more of the interviewees in Central Asia mentioned priorities in relation to member states involvement. Different member state involvements are dependent on priorities (Key informant 5, 14 and 15). Some countries like Germany, the Netherlands, France and the UK are more active, but the involvement is also dependent on priorities (Key informant 6). The Netherlands, Germany, France and Italy are more active, but Romania are also quite busy in cases they prioritize (Key informant 1). The member state respondents in Central Asia also mention that they cannot always send people to all meetings (Key informants 4 and 6). One of them talked about how they could get much more done if they were given more resources (Key informant 16).

Different member states' involvement in drafting the strategy depends on embassy, staff and so on. Capacities matter, people matter, if not priorities have to be made (Key informant 7). As capacity matters France has huge influence and Germany has long-lasting trade relations. Smaller member states are still able to express themselves, but it is character dependent (Key informant 3). Bigger countries like Germany and France have more manpower that leads to more input, but also open for small member states. It is dependent on willingness (Key informant 8). The negotiation process has generally been quite fair (Key informant 5).

Representation in the region is also important. There is a common European approach through connectivity and security. Each country is promoting their own national companies, but the EU will remain as the practical advantages are too big (Key informant 8). One of the larger member states also mentions the fact that they collaborate with their other representatives in the region (Key informant 1). They have representation in all five of the Central Asian countries.

Another member state respondent from one of the larger member state countries recognized them and the other major players as the main trading partners, but also stated that the involvement has been quite equal. Some are more structured, but everyone is quite present in the meetings (Key informant 11). The member states involvement has been a formal process where all who wanted to be involved were included and the EU delegation consolidated the whole thing (Key informant 10).

One EU delegation respondent talked about having good relations with all the member states, and that this had been strengthened with the Lisbon Treaty. The same respondent said that their relations with the member states physically present in the country was closer, but that also small member states have considerable interests. This is for example shown in participation at various events like country day (Key informant 12). Another respondent in Central Asia said that member state involvement is a question of resources. Large member states have more varied interests (Key informant 13).

In Brussels the member state representatives find it harder to tell if some are more active than others, since the strategy has not been discussed yet (Key informant 18). Some are, however, of the opinion that all member states are participating. Some member states take leads in projects, but it is an EU strategy and all the member states are interested and take part in this (Key informant 21). Others are of the opinion that it is the larger member states that are pulling the load (Key informant 20). One respondent also mentioned that there are some countries with a better knowledge of the region. Germany for example has got embassies in all Central Asian countries, while the respondents' country only has two. The same respondent also stressed that this is an EU strategy and not a member state strategy (Key informant 22).

Germany and France have submitted two or three non-papers together. There might have been some from other countries as well, but the member state respondent has not seen them (Key informant 25). Germany and France started already last year thinking about input for the strategy and wanted to work together on this (Key informant 29). Both contacted a researcher taking part in some of the events during the consultations process, but they reached out separately. Germany takes this seriously, and there was an expert meeting arranged in Berlin where all experts on Central Asia in Germany were invited. This might have been the biggest event organized by a member state under this process (Key informant 29).

One respondent also mentions that larger member states like Germany, France and Italy are being more active together with the Baltic states. Some took the opportunity to send in non-papers, but the EU institutions cooperate and meet with all member states (Key informant 17). Another respondent mentions Germany as the most present and active, but others are also present. 'Game of actors' is easier in Central Asia due to no former colonial ties etc. (Key informant 19). Some countries have stronger bi-lateral ties and ambitions. The interest for Central Asia is generally high (Key informant 23).

Another EU institution respondent talked about some member states lobbying where Germany and France were mentioned. Some countries perceived self-interests are economically driven. Diversifying of energy sources is important, for example the

Turkmenistan pipe line. The same respondent did, however, also mention that the Baltic states are punching above their weight (Key informant 26). There is a lot of involvement from all member states, but some of them have more resources. Traditional players like the UK, Germany and France have better insight due to capacities and representation (Key informant 28).

Larger member states have some advantages over smaller countries when it comes to the representation in the region. Their representation and presence are more comprehensive as France, Germany and the United Kingdom are the only member states that have an embassy in all five Central Asian countries. This plays into the pooling of resources and helps make the larger member states more independent. This means that these countries are not dependent on other countries or the EU for intel as they can be the provider of information themselves.

Capacity and resources are mentioned several times in connection to larger member states advantages when it comes to influence. Having more resources to spend can strengthen the bi-lateral ties between the member state and the Central Asian country. It has been shown in the previous section of this thesis that strong bi-lateral ties are a prerequisite for a strong EU presence in the region. Having more manpower also means that you can attend more meetings and be more present. This again can make it easier to create a comprehensive network of relevant contacts. Networking and building relations with contacts is highly important in countries such as the ones in Central Asia.

The advantage of larger representation and capacity/resources leads to the larger member states having a more comprehensive approach towards the different Central Asian countries. The large representation and high degree of resources combined leads to the larger member state countries being able to cover all fields when cooperating with the Central Asian countries. They do not necessarily have to make priorities but can take part in a wide variety of activities. However, as this section also has shown, this is a strategy-making process where all member states are included equally by the EU institutions and not only the larger member states are active in the process.

### *6.2.2. Small member states priorities and positioning*

There are ways for smaller member states to be heard and to take a more active role in strategy-making in EU foreign policy. Based on the answers from my respondents have these possibilities been placed into three categories. This has been done to make the findings clearer and easier to understand, even if there is some overlap between them. The first category is about capacities/resources/manpower and how priorities can remedy this disadvantage. The second one deals with historical and cultural ties. The third category deals with different representations/ties the different member states may have. These three categories coincide with the three factors for smaller member states to up-load to the EU level as presented under the analytical framework.

#### *6.2.2.1 Compensating for lack of resources by making prioritizations*

The previous section presented how several of the different respondents are of the opinion that capacity/resources/manpower is of advantage to the larger *vis-à-vis* smaller member states. After stating this, several of the respondents moved on to say something about how the smaller member states can have an influence. One smaller member state respondent mentioned that they are also active, but in other areas. It is related to priorities (Key informant 15). All member states collaborate well in general, and in theory all have the same possibility to influence the EU. However, capacity plays an important role in being able to do that.

The findings in sub-section 6.2.1 found that capacity was mentioned several times in regards to member states involvement. One respondent said that capacity matters, but that they are still able to express themselves. It depends on character (Key informant 3A). Small member states are also doing things here, such as Poland and Lithuania (Key informant 4A).

Capacities matter, people matter, and if not priorities have to be made (Key informant 7). Another member state respondent mentioned that it is based on priorities, and that they are pretty active themselves as a big trading partner. The same respondent also talked about how they trusted the other member states work on issues such as human rights, and due to capacity reasons decided to leave this field up to them (Key informant 6). It was also

mentioned that countries involvement is a result of obligations from the last strategy (Key informant 14).

The EU institutions are clear on the fact that this was a process where all who wanted to be included were included (Key informant 17, 28). One respondent added, however, that their involvement depends on their interests and priorities (Key informant 10). The EU institutions interviewees also mention that small member states show considerable interest (Key informant 12). The member states have different interests, but less controversies between the member states as there is a strong degree of consensus regarding the policies towards Central Asia (Key informant 19). The EU institution representatives meet with everyone, also before the process started to know their positions. In addition some of the member states took the opportunity to send in discussion papers.

One member state respondent in Brussels could share that the EEAS knows their priorities (Key informant 22). Another member state respondent in Brussels mentioned some areas that was a priority for them, and that they will pursue them once the strategy is being discussed (Key informant 18). All member states are interested in the strategy as it is an EU strategy, but some countries might take lead in projects (Key informant 21).

Capacities/resources/manpower does, as the previous section showed, play a role when it comes to influence in these kinds of processes. Most of the time things do not happen in a vacuum. Therefore, taking the lead in projects, specializing in fewer fields, and being strategic about representation at various events are some of the ways smaller member states are able to better position themselves. Allocating resources to submitting non papers is another way. Submission of these papers can also be done in cooperation with other member states as a strategic choice. This is what making prioritizations is all about, and demonstrates the advantage of membership in an organization like the EU.

When the resources are not sufficient to cover all aspect of certain issues, one has to positioning themselves strategically. Pooling of resources and taking advantage of the platform created by EU's presence and competence in the region, but also in Brussels. The smaller member states use and talk to each other by attending meetings where information

is shared and focus is on a specific area or field. By doing this the member state puts themselves in a position where they can take advantage of the competence that already exist compared to just having a small detailed overview of the case in question.

### *6.2.2.2 The strength in historical and cultural ties*

Another thing that some respondents have mentioned as an advantage when it comes to being able to influence the process is the historical and cultural ties, as well as language. Even if the contact between the member states is good, some member states more in contact with others due to these ties. Contact is related to groupings (Key informant 1). Another member state respondent present in Central Asia talked about how they meet more often with countries from the same region. The same respondent also shared that they are the ones paying attention to the Russian factor due to their former ties (Key informant 6).

Former Soviet-friends plays a role, and this leads to more trust (Key informant 4). Another member state interviewed talked about how they have a long background in the Central Asian country, and a shared historical past (Key informant 15). Baltic countries are more involved due to historical reasons. A member state respondent talked about how Germany is the largest trading partner, and how they are connected through Kazakh Germans. The same respondent stated that some countries are more connected due to Soviet legacy (Key informant 9).

Latvia is in a special position here because of the Soviet area and Sea port in Riga among other things (Key informant 14). Poland, Latvia, Czech Republic and Hungary are also active due to historical reasons (Key informant 16). The Visegrad group can be mentioned here. A member states respondent mentioned Latvia as being the only northern European country with an embassy in Uzbekistan. Latvia with its post-Soviet experiences has been taking an active role in helping Uzbekistan making their transition post-Soviet. This is done through various EU and other international organizations projects that they are involved in (Key informant 15).



Small member states have shown a considerable interest in the Central Asian countries. Latvia for example has a good logistical network, and Poland and Estonia are quite big in the country too. The links between the country and the Soviet block is mentioned. Other member states are increasing their presence here, and there is an increase in activity the country (Key informant 12). Involvement is a question of resources, but small member states are also active. For example Latvia is a main trading partner. This is explained through historical reasons, and these two countries are still developing further cooperation (Key informant 13).

The EU institutions in Brussels mention that former communist member states have ties and cultural connections. For example Romania and Bulgaria has experts and competences other member states does not have, and they also speak the language (Key interview 19). The Baltic states are punching above their weight because of this. They share history and language (Key informant 26). Soviet links are also mentioned in connection to the Latvian Council Presidency having a big focus on Central Asia (Key informant 27).

The member states are connected to Central Asia differently as some member states share the fact that they were also tied to the Soviet bloc. This is of advantage to the member states this applies to such as having competence and knowledge of the language Russian that other member states might not have. These member states might have more knowledge or expertise about the region, including knowledge on transitioning post-Soviet. This is knowledge that the Central Asian countries seem to be interested in according to the member states present there. This is the closest one gets to certain member states having a niche towards the region as there is no colonial ties between the two regions.

Smaller member states group together. This might be connected to historical and cultural ties between them as well. Regardless of the reasons for why some countries are more connected to the EU member states, it can be a way for smaller member states to strategically take advantage of each other's resources as some of the member states have different competences and language knowledge others might not have. This connection and competences are not necessarily limited to smaller member states. Germany has, as mentioned previously, a strong historical and cultural connection to the region. This

connection borne of shared history through the Soviet Union is a way for member states, regardless of size, to have an advantage but are mentioned more extensively in connection to the smaller member states.

### *6.2.2.3 Different representations and ties of the member states*

Other ties and positions the member states may have are also mentioned by the respondents as having some advantage on influencing the drafting of the strategy. This is related to positions within the EU, for example holding the Council Presidency and the nationality of the EU personnel. Ties to international organizations can also be mentioned here but are of less relevance in this case. It can be included that national companies' presence in the region is mentioned when it comes to countries representation. Each country is promoting their own companies, but there is also a common European approach focusing on connectivity and security (Key informant 8).

One member state respondent stated that countries with the Council Presidency in the last years are more involved in the region. This is related to changes post-Lisbon (Key informant 8). It was Latvia through their Council Presidency during the first half of 2015 that put Central Asia on the EU agenda again. They pushed for the region to be more prioritized by the EU, and for updating the last strategy (Key informant 7). At the time some of the interviews and several of the consultation events took place when the Council Presidency held by Austria (second half of 2018). Austria co-organized an event on how to involve private sector actors in the 2019 EU strategy in Brussels at the time they held the presidency (Key informant 8). The location of the OSCE headquarters in Vienna is also mentioned as an advantage for Austria (Key informant 25). It can also be mentioned that Central Asia has been on the agenda for the Estonian and Romanian EU Council Precedency as well (Key informant 4).

It was also mentioned that nationality still matters in the EU institutions. This was stated by a member state respondent, pointing out the different nationalities of some of the people working for the EU institutions. For example, the head of the EU delegation in Tashkent is Latvian, and this helps support Latvian influence in the country (Key informant 16). One

respondent even mentioned that a Slovakian EU representative prominent in this process pushed for the Visegrad countries to hand in a joint position (Key informant 29). It can also be mentioned that the contact between the member states are related to groupings (Key informant 1).

Member state positions like the Council Presidency seem to have some positive repercussions for the member states. Chairing the Council Presidency helps the member states build up competence and train more personnel. It can also function as a platform for the smaller member states to put something on the agenda like the Latvian presidency did with the focus on EU's Central Asian relations back in 2015. Latvia did so however with support from Germany. Location and connections to international organizations is of importance when working with these types of issues. International organization has as previously touched upon been relatively involved in the consultation process, so having a link to them could be of benefit to the smaller member states.

Nationality, both in the form of national companies present in the region and contacts based on connections through the same citizenship, still matters as well. The importance of national companies indicate that bi-lateral ties currently stand strong in the region. The fact that national contacts frequently were brought up to help support the argument that all member states cooperate well is evidence of this. However, national ties and own national relations are viewed as more important. Because of this, national connections to international organizations and other institutions, in addition to holding various positions in the EU institutions, impact member states involvement. Relations to the Central Asian region through strong bi-lateral ties are not a major issue as there is a high degree of consensus on the priorities when working on tasks like drafting a new Central Asian strategy. This will be furthered discussed in the next chapter.

## 7.0 Discussion

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This chapter will discuss the research question by actively using the theory presented and the findings as analyzed in the previous chapter. It will discuss who sets the agenda for the making of EU foreign policy in the context of EU drafting its new Central Asia strategy and how we can explain this pattern. It does so by following two dimensions. The first one is about the coordination in EU foreign policy. Here also follows a discussion on the first theoretical assumption and the two factors used to build up around that. The second dimension looks at how coordination evolves with regards to the member states. Here the second theoretical assumption with the three factors trying to explain the differences between smaller and larger member states are discussed. There will then be a brief summary over the findings from the two theoretical assumptions. Lastly some concluding remarks regarding the research question will be presented.

### 7.1 Impact of the EU

This first sub-section will discuss coordination in EU foreign policy. This involves the horizontal coordination between the EU delegation and the EU headquarters in Brussels, mainly the EEAS and the commission in this case. It will do so along the line of the first theoretical assumption. In other words, that the EU headquarters play the leading role when it comes to EU foreign policy strategy-making and that the EU delegations contribute when requested with on the ground support and coordination. The findings will be discussed against the theory presented earlier. Then follows some remarks regarding the two factors, high degree of consensus and their relatively lower importance within the EU. This sub-section ends with some concluding remarks to the first theoretical assumption.

Regarding the role of the EU delegations the data presented in the previous chapter suggests that the EU delegations have participated in the drafting of the strategy through requests made by the headquarters in Brussels. The EU delegations and the headquarters in Brussels, mainly the Commission and the EEAS, have daily contact. They are, as stated by one respondent, the eyes and arms on the ground for the EU institutions in Brussels. The EU

delegations being the eyes and ears of the headquarter is in line with what Maurer and Raik (2014) found about the EU delegations in Moscow and Washington DC. How much this has helped shape the EU policy on the other hand is a bigger question. Of course there might lie some influential power in the reports that the headquarters are receiving but these documents could simple be more technical reporting.

Maurer and Raik (2014) also stated in their article that the EU delegation's ambitions were rather low when it came to promoting foreign policy coherence on the ground. That the bi-lateral ties still are profoundly strong, but that the EU delegations were of an added value to the member states. In Central Asia the respondents did talk about strong bi-lateral ties. Some of them called for working towards a more unified EU approach, while others expressed a desire of maintaining the relations as they are. Regardless of what people think should be the case, it seems like the bi-lateral ties in the region still are relatively strong and that they will be so in the near future at least. This can be seen as a hinderance in the EU delegations taking up a political stance. It limits the delegations as they ultimately works as a service for the member states.

In addition to writing reports, the EU delegations coordinate between the member states embassies on the ground. They have also arranged for various events in connection to the drafting of the new Central Asia strategy. Their coordination role seems to have been strengthened with the Lisbon Treaty, at least they report so themselves. They are important for the member states in creating a platform, a place to meet and exchange ideas and information. This is also in line with what Maurer and Raik (2014) found. However, the mandate to organize these events seems to have come from the headquarters together with the EUSR. Even the representatives interviewed in Central Asia admitted that a great deal of the process of drafting the new Central Asian strategy takes place in Brussels and that the involvements from their side was limited to consultations.

This addresses the question if the EU delegations role has been substantially altered and improved to gain a different role than national embassies. The coordination has, as already mentioned, been strengthened after the Lisbon Treaty, but the data points towards the EU delegations still getting their orders from the EEAS and the EUSR. With the representatives'

roles limited to consultations and participating at events requested by the headquarters, it does seem like there is no support for the diplomatic change to a more multi managerial role as suggested by Diez, Manners and Whitman (2011). At least not to the EU delegations in Central Asia when it comes to drafting the new strategy towards the region.

The EU Special Representative (EUSR) for Central Asia functions like a link between the EU delegations and the EEAS. This thesis has been looking at the process of drafting a regional strategy, and so the EU delegations are tasked to work within one country whereas the EUSR are hired to work with the EU's regional approach towards Central Asia. Since the case studied is a regional strategy, and the empirical findings did show that the EUSR was quite involved in the consultation process when drafting the strategy, can this be seen as an alteration in how normal foreign policy is conducted, but again the line of command remains the same.

The Central Asian countries themselves as well as international organizations have also been a part of this rather comprehensive consultation process. Based on the findings does it seem like international organizations have played an more influential role than other external state players when it comes to drafting the strategy. The external players affects EU's position in the region and that is needed to be taken into consideration when drafting the strategy, but when it comes to this process have they not played any prominent role. The EU does, however, show openness when it comes to working on finding synergies as long as it is in compliance with EU standards.

The fact that relevant stakeholders have been consulted and part of the process as well as the EU looking for synergies coincides with the radical shift towards pooling of resources as suggested by Diez, Manners and Whitman (2011). It is however important not to overstate EU's role in the Central Asian 'Great game'. This is something that the EU is open for and willing to work on, but it also requires some more actions taken before one can talk about a real change taking place. This is again also dependent on willingness and actions taken by the external players.

Relevant partners and stakeholders have been important to have on board when drafting this strategy for the ownership in it. This is a step, together with focusing on a few clusters, made in order to ease the implementation of the strategy. This indicates that a better and more open coordination process has taken place when drafting this strategy compared to the previous one from 2007. The respondents also state that the strategy will be in compliance with the Global Strategy. This might include a stronger focus on resilience and principled pragmatism. This falls in line with the Central Asian respondents desire for EU's policies towards the region as well.

In Brussels there is a restricted circle working on Central Asia related issues. They all know each other as contacts, and networks are an important part of the working life in Brussels. The EU institutions have the leading role, but the member states can give input. The process of drafting the strategy, at least the consultation process, has been open and inclusive to the relevant stakeholders but at the end of the day is this an EU strategy. Even if the consultations were open, drafting the strategy is a process that follows the line of command as mandated through the EU Treaties. This is, as already mentioned, a joined communication of the EEAS and the Commission, meaning that these two institutions are in the lead with the member states being able to come with their inputs.

There is report of an increased interest in the region by the member states, which is a prerequisite for EU's increased interest in the region. Both the member states as well as the EU institutions report that there is a great deal of consensus when working on Central Asian related issues. The member states seem to agree on the prioritization towards the region even if there can be some minor disagreements on the order of the prioritizations. This means that there is evidence for the first factor regarding Central Asia being a region with a high degree of consensus between the member states if we are to take their word for it.

The second factor explaining why EU's foreign policy is not so unique but acting rather normal is the relevance the region has in EU foreign policy. This factor is harder to measure based on the available data. Everyone interviewed was related to the process one way or another and was therefore concerned about Central Asia related issues. Keukeleire and Delreux (2014) are, however, as mentioned in the context chapter, of the opinion that EU's

involvement in Central Asia is dominated by realpolitik at the expense of upholding its values. This coincides with the issues that the EU delegations as well as the member states report that they are working on in Central Asia. These issues are mostly related to trade and investments and in particular oil and gas. The case of Afghanistan and regional stability was also discussed several times. The region is relevant to the EU for their own internal security and interests. This relates to both energy security in Europe and maintaining the regional stability and resilience of the Central Asian states. The EU tries to maximize their own security through influencing the behavior of other actors. They are acting as rather 'normal' actors using their available means to achieve their security goals.

There is, therefore, various degrees of support for both factors used to measure the uniqueness of EU foreign policy towards Central Asia. In other words, there is a strong consensus among the member states when working on Central Asian related issues and the Central Asian region seems to be of less priority compared to other regions closer to the European neighborhood. The picture is however a little more nuanced. The regional focus and the position of the EUSR contribute to a new approach of conducting EU foreign policy strategy-making. Regardless, this thesis finds support for a strong centralization in EU foreign policy in order to consolidate its actorness. The EU delegations seem to play a less significant role as assumed by several corners from the respective literature.

## 7.2 Impact of member states

This sub-section discusses how the coordination evolve with regards to the member states. The different member states vary in terms of size and resources, but in theory all member states are supposed to be treated equally. This leaves room for smaller states if they wish to use their capacities in the process of study. This thesis expected to see smaller member states exercise a disproportionately strong influence in the drafting of EU's new Central Asia strategy. It discusses if this is the case by looking at the three factors presented under the analytical framework. These are allocation of resources, offering unique assets that others cannot offer to the same extent and member states positions and networks. Member states involvements relates to the horizontal dimension regarding how member states are included



into the process, but also vertically how the member states can up-load their ideas and positions to the EU level.

The first factor trying to explain why smaller member states exercise a disproportionate strong influence was allocation of resources. The data showed that the larger member states was mentioned often as having a strong influence in the region. They have more resources and can be more detailed in their work. For example more manpower leads to more specialists and always having enough people to attend the desired meetings. On the other hand was it also mentioned that some smaller member states contributed, and that they did this through making prioritizations. For example, physical presence, having an embassy or other representation in the region, was reported as having an impact. Participating in various projects and events organized by the EU is another way in for the smaller states.

Panke (2010) found for example that member states are more active in negotiations when they have a non-interrupted administrative work environment. This means that the member states needs to allocate resources also to the national administrations as well in order to support the embassies in Central Asia and the permanent representations in Brussels. None of the member states' national foreign services were studied this time. It can however be noted that it seems important to allocate resources to the representations in Brussels as it is here most of the action takes place. By making prioritizations, there are several ways for the member states to go about doing this. One need to be committed (Nasra 2011), it needs to be a perceived important policy goal (Bossuyt 2017), or in short the member states have to see the value in allocating these resources and to maximize it they need to act strategically. This can be lobbying, acting as a self-interested mediator or a norm entrepreneur (Grøn & Wivel 2011).

The second factor touched upon is how smaller member states could stand out to offer unique assets of value to the EU. This can be knowledge or expertise of various kinds. There is no colonial ties between the member states and the Central Asian republics but some of the member states share the fact that they were part of the Soviet bloc. Several of the respondents brought up historical, cultural and language knowledge as an advantage for

some of these states. For example it was mentioned that Latvia is offering their expertise in helping the Central Asian countries transitioning post-Soviet.

This is related to one of the conditions by Bossuyt (2017). Member states creating a niche for themselves by providing specific expertise and experiences. She used this as a measurement when looking at member states up-loading to the EU. It seems as if the Soviet link is the best measured option when it comes to member states having a historical and cultural tie to the region. This is therefore in line with the findings. The value of having a historical as well as cultural and linguistic link to the region offers these member states an advantage they can use when working on issues related to Central Asia. These states do however also need to allocate enough of the right resources so that they are able to use this advantage to produce valuable expertise and experiences to the EU. It is not enough to share these things and expect to have a huge influence in EU foreign policy strategy-making.

The third factor dealt with is the member states' position in the EU and other networks. Here it can be mentioned that the respondents found an advantage for smaller member states through having held the Council Presidency or having the same nationality as someone working in the EU institutions. Having national companies present in the region, as the bi-lateral ties are still quite strong, as well as having access to various international organizations have also been seen as an advantage. This does not mean that having these positions or special access to various officials in the EU institutions automatically give that member state a huge influence in EU foreign policy strategy-making. Rather, this is seen as various channels that the smaller member states can use in order to exert influence.

Panke's (2010) findings on the learning curve can be mentioned here. Membership duration as an advantage relates to the building up of this network, especially within the EU. The positioning of national officials in relevant EU positions therefore seems like a strategic move. Having held the Council Presidency is also an advantage (Panke 2010, Grøn & Wivel and Bossuyt 2017). Nasra (2011) talk about the importance of network capital. Actors wishing to influence create an unformal network and may work through several available channels. Since the member states brings these things up as an advantage, it look like creating a network capital is preferable to the member states. This also relates to immaterial

resources as it is important to know the right people. This again connects with the first factor, making the right prioritizations, and show how this is all connected. For the smaller member states it is all about making prioritizations and then there are a few ways one can strategically go about to maximize their influences in these types of processes.

Can however all of these advantages make up for the comprehensive influence by the larger member states? When asked about member states involvement the largest member states was usually mentioned first. Some respondents were also of the opinion that it was the larger member states who were the main drivers in this process. The second theoretical assumption is that smaller member states exercise a strong disproportionate influence drafting its 2019 EU strategy towards Central Asia. There is not enough evidence to support this assumption. The larger member states seem to have a structural advantage over the smaller member states, but the smaller member states can still have an influence if they play their cards right. These factors can be seen as a necessity, but not sufficient for playing a significant role in EU foreign policy strategy-making.

### 7.3 Summary of factors and theoretical assumptions

The two theoretical assumptions presented under the analytical framework tried to examine the coordination between the EU institutions as well as the smaller member states possibilities of influencing the EU level. The horizontal coordination between the EU institutions relates to the down-loading possibilities the EU institutions have on the member states. On the other hand is the vertical dimension related to member states trying to up-load their positions to the EU foreign policy strategy-making.

This thesis finds support for a strong centralization of the coordination between the EU institutions. This means that there is support for EU acting as a normal power as described by Pardo (2012). There were not any major changes to the line of command after setting up the EU delegations. The role of the special representative is an interesting development in EU foreign policy-making. However, the power lies in Brussels and it seems as if it is also the EU institutions there who have the better possibility of down-loading their positions to the member states.

When it comes to the member states up-loading to the EU institutions during the process of drafting the new Central Asia strategy is there not enough empirical proof to support the second theoretical assumption. The smaller member states can have an influence in the process even if they are of structural disadvantages but this is dependent on the member states prioritizing this by allocating enough and the right resources, offering valuable expertise and working through a network with the right capital. Regardless, they cannot outperform the larger member states. Below is a table summarizing the findings for the theoretical assumptions and factors.

*Table 3: Theoretical assumptions and factors findings*

<b>Theoretical assumption 1:</b> The EU headquarters play the leading role in EU foreign policy strategy-making, while the EU delegations contribute with on the ground support and coordination as per instructed by the headquarters.		<b>Sufficient support in the empirical findings</b>
Factor 1	High degree of consensus on the policies towards Central Asia among the EU member states	The empirical material indicate that there is sufficient support for a high degree of consensus
Factor 2	The relevance of the region	The empirical material partially indicate that relevance may be of importance
<b>Theoretical assumption 2:</b> Smaller member states exercise a disproportionately strong influence in the formulation of EU foreign policy strategy-making.		<b>Not sufficient support in the empirical findings</b>
Factor 1	Making prioritizations through allocation of enough and the right resources	The empirical material indicate prioritization as a necessity for being able to up-load
Factor 2	Having unique assets	The empirical material indicate unique assets as an advantage but not necessary for up-loading
Factor 3	Internal positions in the EU	The empirical material indicate internal positions in the EU as an advantage but not necessary for up-loading

## 7.4 Agenda-setting in EU foreign policy strategy-making

The research questions this thesis has attempted to answer have been: Who sets the agenda for the making of EU foreign policy in the context of EU drafting its new Central Asia strategy? And how can we explain this pattern? This thesis has done this by examining two theoretical assumptions as described above. These assumptions are based on available literature about coordination in the EU and small member state literature and have analytically been put in an Europeanization framework. The coordination literature representing the down-loading dimension and the small member state literature representing the up-loading dimension.

Based on the available literature and the data collected for this thesis is it EU headquarters, EEAS and the commission, with the resource heavy member states as drivers, who sets the agenda for the making of EU foreign policy in the context of EU drafting its new Central Asia strategy. This pattern has been explained by looking at the horizontal and vertical dimension in EU foreign policy-making. The coordination between the EU institutions and down-loading of EU foreign policy has been explained through the horizontal dimension. On the other hand has the differences between larger and smaller EU member states been described through the vertical dimension.

The EU foreign policy strategy-making in the context of EU drafting the new Central Asia strategy has been highly centralized with member states putting more resources into the process have been more involved. The EU delegations contribute and take part, but leaves the agenda-setting up to Brussels as Central Asia is a region of less relevance and with a high degree of consensus in EU foreign policy-making. With regard to the member states; they have all been included and technically they have had the same opportunity to contribute and influence the process. However, member states with more resources stand out as bigger contributors in this process. This relates to larger member states having more resources available, but smaller member states may also allocate more resources where it is considered appropriate to do so by the smaller member states. Having unique assets and positions within the EU is helpful, but not sufficient.

## 8.0 Conclusion

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This thesis has studied the process of the EU's Central Asia strategy-making. It has done so by looking at the coordination between EU institutions and the differences between the smaller and larger member states. It found that EU foreign policy-making in the context of the EU drafting of the Central Asia strategy is highly centralized, and that it appears as if it is the member states that have the most resources available who are driving the process. In other words, the agenda is set in Brussels by the headquarters, but with a possibility for all stakeholder to contribute with inputs that are in line with Brussels agenda.

The strategy, or the joint communication for the Council and the European Parliament, was as mentioned in the introduction released May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019. By taking a quick look at it, one can see that it is focusing on a few clusters, and is relatively short in length. This is in line with what the respondents stated in the interviews, and, therefore, validated the information they provided as being reliable. These clusters are partnering for increased resilience, partnering for prosperity and working better together. Without going into depth on the 2019 EU strategy, it seems however as if it is in line with the Global Strategy. This 17 page long strategy focuses only on these three interconnected and mutually reinforcing priorities (European Commission 2019).

This thesis examined a process of drafting a regional EU foreign policy strategy. The first regional strategy expected to be in compliance with the EU Global Strategy, and a strategy that will set the frame for EU foreign policies towards that region. It is a unique region in its own way, but this process of strategy-making may tell us something about the processes of shaping regional EU foreign policies in the years to come.

EU foreign policy is, as previously mentioned, a different policy field than other policy fields. The EU has less competence in foreign policy than in other policy areas, such as trade, and the member states continue to maintain their strong bi-lateral ties. It is, however, a policy field with rapid developments in the EU over the last years. The changes made by the Lisbon Treaty demonstrate this. Even if the integration in this policy field is intensifying, one can

expect the EU to act as a fairly 'normal' actor. The perception of the EU must be taken into consideration. For the EU to be able to act as a unified actor they must first be seen as 'one' single actor by others. This thesis has not focused on this aspect. It can, however, be noted that the empirical findings suggest that the Central Asian countries appear more open to collaboration directly with the EU now than previously considered. This is something that would strengthen the normalization argument. However, there is a need to look more into the perceived role of the EU by other actors when examining EU foreign policy strategy-making to further enlighten as to whether this is a general trend going forward

The agenda-setting and creation of EU foreign policy strategy in the context of the EU drafting its new Central Asia strategy has been explained through the coordination between the EU institutions and the differences between large and small member states. By doing that this way, it has shown that EU foreign policy strategy-making is fairly 'normal' with a centralized agenda-setting, where the influence by the member states comes mainly from the member states with the resources to do so. By combining the two dimensions of downloading and up-loading in the Europeanization literature this thesis has tried to contribute with a more comprehensive way of studying EU foreign policy. The two dimensions are interconnected and need to be studied more in this respect as well. This help to gives a more comprehensive picture of EU foreign policy strategy-making.

Naturally, my findings and analysis also offer ideas on further research. A more detailed analysis of the different member states is needed. For example the national foreign services of the member states was not examined here. Here one could explore how their attempt of exerting influence in the agenda-setting of the strategy-making through their coordination of the embassies on the ground in Central Asia and the permanent representation in Brussels fit into this process. This being a regional strategy, and the EUSR for Central Asia being particularly active in the consultation process, it would be interesting to examine the roles of special representatives more in depth as well. More specifically to examine their role in foreign policy making, the value of having someone working with a regional focus and also what implications that might bring.

## 9.0 References

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## 10.0 List of interviews

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Key informant 1, capital city in Central Asia, November/December 2018  
Key informant 2, capital city in Central Asia, November/December 2018  
Key informant 3, capital city in Central Asia, November/December 2018  
Key informant 4, capital city in Central Asia, November/December 2018  
Key informant 5, capital city in Central Asia, November/December 2018  
Key informant 6, capital city in Central Asia, November/December 2018  
Key informant 7, capital city in Central Asia, November/December 2018  
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Key informant 12, capital city in Central Asia, November/December 2018  
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Key informant 16, capital city in Central Asia, November/December 2018  
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Key informant 21, Brussels, February/March 2019  
Key informant 22, Brussels, February/March 2019  
Key informant 23, Brussels, February/March 2019  
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Key informant 25, Brussels, February/March 2019  
Key informant 26, Brussels, February/March 2019  
Key informant 27, Brussels, February/March 2019  
Key informant 28, Brussels, February/March 2019  
Key informant 29, Brussels, February/March 2019

## 11.0 Attachments

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### 11.1 Attachment 1: Interview guide Central Asia

#### EU – delegations/ Member states embassies

##### **General questions on the 2019 Central Asia strategy: state-of-play, scope, and actors**

- What is the state-of-play of the Central Asia strategy-making thus far?
- What is the level of interplay with the Global Strategy?
  - Principled pragmatism: Has the focus from the EU's side become more 'pragmatic' (if compared to the 2007 Central Asia strategy)?
    - How has the strategy focused on areas such as human rights and rule of law?
  - Resilience: How has the strategy focused its work on building resilience in the region?
    - Is there more or less focus on building resilience in the region now than previously?
- Has there been any changes in the way the EU approaches the region?
  - What role does Brexit play with regards to the UK's involvement and engagement?
- Actors' involvement in the making of the Central Asia strategy
  - How have you been involved in drafting EU's new strategy towards Central Asia?
  - How do you view your own [EU institutions, EU MS] involvement in the drafting of the strategy?

##### **Member states' involvement**

- How do you view your [institution's/embassy's] relations with the different member states present in the region?
  - Are you more in contact with some than others?
    - And if so: why do you think that is the case?
- How do you view the different member states involvement with drafting the strategy?
  - Did you expect/would you like to see more/less involvement from some states?

##### **The role of the EU institutions**

- How are your [institution's/MS embassy's] relations with Brussels (European External Action Service, the commission and the HR/VP)?
  - How often are you in contact with them, and how do you perceive their role in the process of drafting this strategy?
- How are your relations with the other EU-delegations in the region?
  - How often are you in contact with them?

- How have their involvement been relating to [your delegation/MS embassy]?

**The approach *vis-à-vis* other major players in the region (China, Russia, the US and others)**

- Have you been in contact with local authorities regarding drafting this strategy?
  - Or have any other states (e.g. China, Russia, USA) had an influence in this regard?
  - What are the topics that you address?

**Other questions**

- Is there anything that you would like to add?

## 11.2 Attachment 2: Interview guide Brussels

### EU Institutions/ Member states permanent representations

#### **General questions on the 2019 Central Asia strategy: state-of-play, scope, and actors**

- Could you start by saying something about [institution/representation], what is the key themes that you work on in regards to EU's relations with Central Asia?
- What is the state-of-play of the Central Asia strategy-making thus far?
- What is the level of interplay with the Global Strategy?
  - Principled pragmatism: Has the focus from the EU's side become more 'pragmatic' (if compared to the 2007 Central Asia strategy)?
    - How has the strategy focused on areas such as human rights and rule of law?
  - Resilience: How has the strategy focused its work on building resilience in the region?
    - Is there more or less focus on building resilience in the region now than previously?
- Has there been any changes in the way the EU approaches the region?
  - What role does Brexit play with regards to the UK's involvement and engagement?
- Actors' involvement in the making of the Central Asia strategy
  - How have you been involved in drafting EU's new strategy towards Central Asia?
  - How do you view your own [EU institutions, EU MS] involvement in the drafting of the strategy?

#### **Member states' involvement**

- How do you view your [institution's/representation's] relations with the different member states when working on issues related to Central Asia?
  - Are you more in contact with some than others?
- How do you view the different member states involvement with drafting the strategy?
  - Did you expect/would you like to see more/less involvement from some states?

#### **The role of the EU institutions**

- How are your relations with the EU-delegations in Central Asia/ Are you in any contact with the EU delegations in Central Asia? [EU institutions/MS representations]
  - How often are you in contact with them?
  - How have their involvement been relating to [your institution/MS representation]?
- How are your [institution's/MS representation's] relations with the other EU institutions in Brussels (European External Action Service, the commission and the HR/VP)?
  - How often are you in contact with them, and how do you perceive their role in the process of drafting this strategy?

**The approach *vis-à-vis* other major players in the region (China, Russia, the US and others)**

- Have you been in contact with local authorities regarding drafting this strategy?
  - Or have any other states (e.g. China, Russia, USA) had an influence in this regard?
  - What are the topics that you address?

**Other questions**

- Is there anything that you would like to add?