**Title:** Wider Europe, Greater Europe? David Mitrany on European Security Order

**Running head:** David Mitrany on European Security Order

**Abstract**

How should the structure of European security be reorganized following the conflict in Ukraine? Some respond that the European Union should not bend to Russia’s acts of aggression. Others blame the allegedly exclusionary and expansive nature of the Euro-Atlantic organizations for the conflict. This paper embeds these competing narratives in the functional approach of David Mitrany, specifically in his two distinctive forms of regional integration, one exclusive and one inclusive. At the same time, however, the paper cautions against drawing simplified conclusions based on the parallels between Mitrany’s ideal types of regional integration and contemporary arguments about the place of Russia in European security governance. Indeed, a more inclusive approach to Russia can potentially be beneficial for European security order, but there are more problems with this vision than simply the short-sightedness of western institutions. Unfortunately, Mitrany’s functional approach does not offer immediate solutions to these problems.

**Acknowledgements**: An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 3rd European Workshops in International Studies in Tübingen and I thank Tomas Kucera for his comments. I also thank Lucian M. Ashworth for help with accessing archival documents on David Mitrany, three anonymous Referees for their helpful comments and the Editors for their work on this paper.

**Introduction**

Following the outbreak of the conflict in Ukraine, International Relations as a discipline has returned to its original purpose: to describe and explain, but also to prescribe. Empirical and normative modes of theorising are intrinsically linked in most of the discussions of the conflict. By uncovering the ‘real’ causes of the confrontation, we hope to understand what should be done differently in the future. By identifying long-term solutions, we point to what we think went wrong in the past. We seek to understand in a hope to find answers for the future. Since 2014, scholars coming from different theoretical backgrounds have presented their own take on the conflict. Many of those divergent voices can be grouped into one of the two broad categories. On the one hand there are those who associate the conflict with Russia’s authoritarianism and imperialistic foreign policy, prescribing a resolute Euro-Atlantic response. On the other hand there are those who ascribe most blame to the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) for expanding membership and influence closer to Russia’s borders.

The exchange is interesting and important in itself. There is a possibility to obtain an even more insightful perspective, however, if we reinforce this discussion with an overarching theoretical layer. To this end, the paper suggests that the competing narratives of the conflict in Ukraine can be embedded in a much older theoretical argument advanced by David Mitrany, in his distinction between two models of regional integration. Mitrany contrasted regional integration in the form of closed unions, exemplified by Coudenhove-Kalergi’s Pan-European idea, with regional integration in the form of devolution of global authority to the regional level, in order to help the implementation of universal principles such as peace and economic co-operation. Naturally, Mitrany’s taxonomy is stylized to fit his argument about a universal ‘working peace’ system, but it can nonetheless offer a new perspective on the conflict in Ukraine, and particularly EU relations with Russia in this context.

When applying Mitrany’s framework to the competing narratives of the Ukrainian conflict we may be tempted to simply conclude that indeed, the EU and NATO are to blame for replicating the model of closed, exclusive regional unions, for expanding their ‘sphere of influence’ towards Russia’s borders, and for excluding Russia from their security governance system.[[1]](#footnote-1) By extension, we may also conclude that a ‘devolution’ integration model would be superior, by diminishing the role of the Euro-Atlantic organizations and by fully integrating Russia into a new European security architecture, more directly embedded in the United Nations (UN) system. The paper argues, however, that the obstacles preventing this more inclusive vision of European security order are more complex and that Mitrany’s functional approach[[2]](#footnote-2) fails to offer immediate solutions.

The first problem concerns the required separation, both in method and in time, of measures intended to end hostilities from those intended to build lasting peace. In order to move from one step to another, some form of reconciliation is necessary between the aggressor and the victim – a process which has not yet taken place between central and eastern European (CEE) countries and Russia. The second problem concerns the exact nature of the universal principles underpinning a more inclusive model of regional integration. For Mitrany, states must not allow their ideological differences prevent them from seeking practical solutions for economic co-operation and peaceful order, but this raises the problem of reconciling a normatively dense European integration project with the requirements of a thinner greater-European security order involving states like Russia.

**Competing narratives of the conflict**

The impact of the Ukrainian conflict on the International Relations scholarship has been significant. Of all the aspects of the conflict discussed to date, one is particularly relevant for the argument of this paper. It concerns the normative vision of the EU’s role in international security vis-à-vis Ukraine and Russia. At the risk of slight simplification, two competing positions can be clearly distinguished in this debate. One considers Europe to be, once again, threatened by expansionist Russia, and advocates a more coherent and more assertive EU response to this threat. Sakwa (2015) associates this position with the idea of wider Europe, involving a Brussels-focused vision of the European continent, *de facto* subsumed in a wider Atlantic community. We can further specify this vision to entail a ‘wider and deeper Europe’, as it is equally concerned with the coherence of member states in response to external threats. The other position calls upon the EU to become more inclusive towards Russia, recognising it as an equal partner rather than a disobedient recipient of European norms and values. This position, in contrast, can be associated with the idea of greater Europe – a more pluralistic vision, treating the EU, Russia, but also Turkey and Ukraine as concentric circles in their own right (Sakwa, 2015). This story of the two competing narratives is, naturally, as elegant as it is simplified. For example, it overestimates the degree to which the west is indeed ‘hermetic’ in rejecting non-western (i.e. Russian) ideas about European co-operation, and thus it underplays the actual distinctions in this regard, both geographical (between countries) and temporal (within countries) (Blockmans, 2014). Nonetheless, it serves well as a general framework for categorising the two broad visions of European security order, which are now discussed in greater detail.

In the first narrative, Russia, over the years, has become dangerously expansionist. In spite of long-standing efforts by the EU and NATO to develop closer ties with this country, Moscow has chosen the path of authoritarianism domestically, and territorial revisionism in Russia’s ‘close neighbourhood’ (McFaul, 2014; Snyder, 2015). The EU cannot stand idle when Russia continues bullying neighbouring countries under the pretext of protecting Russian minorities. Instead, the EU must stand for the values it is based on (Ash, 2014). It must not reward Russia with a ‘business as usual’ approach, and, at the same time, it must create the space for countries like Ukraine, which seek closer association with the EU. The arguments of this kind were expressed, for example, in the 2015 House of Lords review on the future of EU-Russia relations. Ian Bond from the Centre for European Reform offered analysis and advice along these lines, urging the EU to mirror the United States in the severity of sanctions imposed on Russia (House of Lords, 2015, pp. 7–18). Tomila Lankina, in a similar fashion, urged the EU to ‘more forcefully counter Russia’s security narrative with a counter-narrative of the EU’s own legitimate security concerns about the kinds of political regimes it finds in its eastern neighbourhood’ (House of Lords, 2015, p. 191). A stream of recent publications and conference papers focusing on the EU’s ‘actorness’ in response to the Russian aggression in Ukraine reinforces this narrative. Matthijs and Kelemen, in a tellingly-titled article ‘Europe Reborn’, observe that ‘a resurgent Russia on Europe's doorstep has finally spurred the EU to action’ (2015, p. 100). Auer (2015) advocates that the EU adopts a more ‘muscular liberalism’ to more effectively confront Russia. Howorth and Menon (2015) urge EU member states to ‘wake up’ by overcoming their anachronistic commitment to sovereignty and grasping the reality that only when unified, the EU can stand for its interests effectively.

In the second narrative, Russia is seen either as a victim of the European and Euro-Atlantic expansionism, or, while its aggressive foreign policy is condemned, some of the motives behind it are met with a degree of understanding (Kissinger, 2014; Mearsheimer, 2014; Milne, 2014). The EU, it is argued, must abandon its narrative of moral superiority, underpinned by its self-understanding as a normative power (Headley, 2015). Russia does not accept the role of a passive recipient of European norms and values, and it does not accept the continuous expansion of western institutional frontiers. The EU must become more receptive to Russia’s legitimate security concerns, and respond more constructively to Russia’s initiatives for more equal partnership with the EU (Sakwa, 2015). In the aforementioned House of Lords discussion, for example, Tom Casier advocated the idea of two concentric circles: one revolving around the EU and the other one around Russia. While the circles would overlap in the countries like Ukraine, it would not be a problem because the two integration projects would not be mutually exclusive (House of Lords, 2015, pp. 56-75). Similarly, Charap and Shapiro (2014) urge the west to supplement punitive measures with new, co-operative institutional arrangements. In this context, they refer to the proposal by the former Russia’s President Medvedev for a new European security framework. Sakwa takes this argument further, blaming western Europe for systematically ignoring Russia’s attempts to create a new, more inclusive institutional co-operative framework, and instead relying on the United States for protecting the Cold War-era Euro-Atlantic structures, from which Russia remains excluded. In that sense, for Sakwa, Europe is ‘dead’. The two contrasting metaphors – that of Europe being ‘reborn’ and that of Europe being ‘dead’ – serve as a symbolic illustration of the radically different perspectives represented by the two narratives.

**Embedding the narratives in early integration theory**

Following the sharp deterioration of EU-Russia relations over Ukraine, it is not unreasonable to ask whether international/European integration theory may be able to offer some insights into the European security predicament. To date, however, the theoretical discussion has been largely shaped by the realist-liberalist exchange, with which the two narratives of the conflict correlate. Early integration theory, such as functionalism, has been absent. In fact, functionalism has been absent not just from this particular discussion, but from International Relations and security studies in general (Long and Ashworth, 1999, pp. 23-24). This is odd for a theoretical perspective which once held such a prominent position. Developed after World War I (WWI), functionalism proved resilient enough to survive, relatively unharmed, the storm caused by E.H. Carr’s *The Twenty Years’ Crisis*. In fact, the most famous statement of international functionalism, Mitrany’s *A Working Peace System*, was published in 1943. Not only did functionalism emerge as the only international progressivist alternative to federalism, but it was actually endorsed by the father of post-World War II (WWII) realism, Hans Morgenthau. In the introduction to *A Working Peace System*, Morgenthau discarded nationalism as obsolete (*sic*) and linked the future of civilization to the progress of international functionalism. If that was not enough, soon after WWII it became apparent that functionalism, not federalism, would have to be the method of choice for building peace among two arch-enemies, Germany and France.

How did the approach lose its prominence? Two factors in particular are likely to have determined the fate of functionalism. Empirically, it was the nature of international integration in western Europe. Whilst the method pursued, at least initially, was indeed functional, the overall objective was federal – to create *European* unity (Burgess, 1989). The European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) and Euratom, praised by Mitrany as hallmarks of functional integration, turned out to be the first steps in an increasingly centralized *European* integration process. The European Economic Community’s (EEC) territorial delineation and exclusivity were the very features associated with regional integration which Mitrany opposed as *un*-functional. Theoretically, the functional approach was stripped of its primary concern with international order and security after it had been reformulated by Ernst Haas into a regional integration theory (Haas, 1964; Groom, 1978). Haas’ narrative has become dominant to the extent that functionalism is no longer associated with the empirical-normative aspects of building international order and security. Instead, it is mainly associated with the empirical-explanatory focus on regional integration among actors who already enjoy peaceful relations (Long and Ashworth, 1999, pp. 23-24).

There are at least three characteristics of functionalism which make it worthwhile to re-examine it in the present context. *Empirically*, some of the security dilemmas facing Europe in the 1920s–1950s can be perceived as not that different from the dilemmas expressed in the contemporary narratives. The most desirable model for international integration in Europe was hotly debated, as was the place of Russia in any European integration scheme (e.g. Coudenhove-Kalergi, 1931; Hobson, 1929; MacKay, 1940; Mitrany, 1930). *Theoretically*, Mitrany was primarily concerned with the problem of establishing an effective ‘working peace’ system. This core functionalist focus on building international order and security, as noted, had subsequently been somehow forgotten. It is thus sensible to revisit functionalism in the context of the current conflict. *Meta-theoretically*, the empirical-normative epistemology embedded in early integration theorising seems particularly relevant to produce more practical knowledge (Reus-Smit, 2013; see also Mitrany, 1931; 1971; 1975). As the aforementioned House of Lords hearing demonstrates, the important questions are not only why and how the Ukrainian conflict erupted, but also how the international community should react. Or, how the EU should behave towards Russia in this context.

**Mitrany’s competing visions of regional integration**

Mitrany’s functional approach is best known for its proposed system of positive, ‘working’ peace, as opposed to the traditional, negative peace associated with diplomacy and the balance of power. In his envisaged structure, authority would be linked to specific transnational activities, rather than territory (Mitrany, 1966, p. 27). The activities selected for supranational administration would be specific, addressing some of the most pressing economic and social problems of ordinary people in different countries. They would also be organized separately, reflecting their specific nature. It is the very needs and activities required to address these needs which would shape the form of international organization. Power would not be attached to territorially-defined units, such as states or continental unions, but to specific tasks, or functions. The question would thus be where power should be exercised, based on the specific requirements of the task, rather than who should exercise it, i.e. who the authorities are (Mitrany, 1966, p. 84). Mitrany envisaged the international system as gradually, yet spontaneously, evolving towards a thick web of transnational practices of co-operation without any conscious effort to formally codify it. Directly related to the ‘working peace’ system was Mitrany’s argument concerning the desirable and undesirable forms of regional integration – an argument which put him in direct opposition to the school of international federalism.

*Regional integration as closed unions*

Mitrany was highly critical of regional integration in the form of exclusive unions, such as the Pan-European union advocated by Coudenhove-Kalergi, or the European federal union proposed by French Prime Minister Aristide Briand in 1929. He saw the prospective United States of Europe as an attempt to create a closed-door system of preferential economic relations which would have only hampered economic integration globally (Mitrany, 1930). Mitrany also argued that regional unions would operate on the same territorial basis as nation-states. Thus, while promising to establish peace within such unions, they would not contribute one bit to peaceful relations with other parts of the world. In fact, they would reinforce the old system of alliances, only at a different level:

Here is the undiluted spirit of the thing [Pan-European union]. It is the policy of the balance of power which, happily shelved in politics, for the time being, the Pan-Europeans and their kin would apply to economics. In international relations, individualism leads, with the fatality of cosmic law, to alliances, and alliance to a struggle for the balance of power. (Mitrany, 1930, p. 468)

Expectedly, Mitrany was also suspicious of the post-WWII European integration project. Speaking at the Grotius Conference on the ‘limits and problems of European integration’ in 1961, he asked whether any particular regional union would be closed and exclusive, and whether such regional unions would be linked, at a subordinate level, to a wider common authority (Mitrany, 1963a, p. 40). The direct link of regional unions to some form of central authority would naturally entail that they work, above all, towards an effective implementation of universal principles, and that they do it within the same, overarching political and legal framework. Otherwise, a European union would only adhere to a ‘sectional code’, with a motto ‘Pan-Europa, right or wrong!’ (Mitrany, 1930, p. 477). Mitrany also feared that since European states were historically well-established and divergent, any effort at uniting them into a continental union would require ‘inventing’ shared values which did not naturally exist. The ‘European soul’ would have to be distinguished from the ‘American soul’ and the proclaimed European identity would have to be constantly reinforced by differentiating it from the outside world. Mitrany reiterated his position in a seminal *JCMS* article, but he also directed his criticism more specifically against the EEC, while at the same time commending the ECSC and Euratom:

The ECSC and Euratom are straight functional bodies and can get on with their allotted task without offending the position of other countries, while remaining open to link up with them. The scope of EEC is by comparison diffuse and subject to a continuous temptation to self-inflation (which the ‘Europeans’ deem a virtue); with a bureaucratic tendency because it is diffuse, and an expansionist tendency because it is bureaucratic (Mitrany, 1965, pp. 141-42).

Already at this early stage of integration, Mitrany was critical of what he called the repulsion by the ‘inner Six’ of some European states (‘outer Seven’) into forming the European Free Trade Association – a clear sign that the EEC was in fact a closed and exclusive initiative. He argued that while it was beneficial for the ECSC and Euratom to link with other agencies on a global scale (according to the functional logic), the EEC, by expanding its sphere of control, could only behave according to an increasingly competitive logic, triggering all the undesirable consequences which Mitrany associated with exclusive regional organizations.

*Regional integration as devolution*

It may come as a surprise after what has been said about Mitrany’s views on regional integration that he in fact did not oppose continental unions. On the contrary, he thought there were numerous advantages to such groupings: regional organizations can deal with regional issues quicker than central bodies; states may be more active within regional organizations than in the central ones; the rule of unanimity is likely to be less destructive if fewer states are involved in addressing a problem at the regional level (Mitrany, 1933, pp. 111-14). Of course, what Mitrany talked about was regional devolution within the legal and organizational context of the League of Nations. Organizations such as the League were created to enforce certain universal principles. Because of their universal nature, these principles must not be confined to exclusive, regional organizations, just like the Ten Commandments were not qualified territorially (Mitrany, 1933, p. 116). Mitrany was not very precise in explaining these universal principles, but we can assume that the two most important ones included economic co-operation leading to improved individual welfare and international peace (Mitrany, 1933, p. 116). Although it is unclear how ‘thick’ these principles would have to be in order to serve as effective ‘fundamental rules of conduct’, available evidence suggests that Mitrany rejected a ‘solidarist’ approach, to borrow the term from the English School.

Notably, Mitrany did not seem to understand these universal rules to imply the principled homogeneity of domestic political and economic systems. He made it clear in *A Working Peace System*, stressing that what matters in international relations is the performance of states which directly affects the sphere of international relations (1966, p. 49). Consequently, states should not be excluded from what they are willing to do internationally because they are not willing to do everything else domestically. For Mitrany, ‘what matters is a readiness to co-operate for avoiding conflict and for advancing the task of common well-being’ (1966, p. 50). There are already significant differences within states and federations, so there are no grounds to expect homogeneity in international society. As a result, Mitrany explicitly rejected ‘the ideological criterion of selection’ as ‘invidious in operation’ and ‘irrelevant in principle’ (1966, p. 51). Finally, when it comes to the operationalization of universal principles, Mitrany suggested a dialogue of equal parties, rather than an assumption of normative superiority of one party over the others. He hinted at this in the context of resentments experienced by newly-born nation states after the break-up of Empires: ‘nothing would do more to change that atmosphere than a habit of trashing out those grievances round a table in search of a practical solution’ (Mitrany, 1933, p. 112). Once again, practical arrangements bringing states and societies closer in a ‘working’ relationship are prioritized over principled discussions about domestic systems and values.

**Regional integrations and conflict narratives**

Before determining how well the competing visions of European security order fit with Mitrany’s competing visions of regional integration, one clarification is in order. It is true that Mitrany opposed international federations, which put him on one end of the functionalist-federalist debate (Navari, 1996). He contrasted a relatively rigid and fixed constitutional system, exemplified by international federations, with a more pragmatic and adaptive functional system (Mitrany, 1963b). The distinction has to be made, however, between European federalists, exemplified by the majority of British inter-war internationalists, and the advocates of Europe as a global power, exemplified by Coudenhove-Kalergi. Granted, the distinction between the two became blurred with the progress of the European integration project (Forsyth, 1967). It must be noted, however, that Mitrany’s criticism was most forcefully directed at closed regional (continental) unions *à la* Coudenhove-Kalergi, rather than the idea of international/world federation (which, under certain conditions, he accepted (Mitrany, 1966, p. 83)).

*The EU as a closed, regional union*

Beginning with the ‘wider and deeper Europe’ narrative, advocating a more assertive, coherent position of the EU towards Russia, the EU in this narrative appears to fit well Mitrany’s criteria of closed, regional unions. In fact, it could be argued that, applying Mitrany’s criteria, the EU has *already* become an example of such a union. According to Long (1999), who undertook a rare effort of assessing the security policy of the EU through the functionalist lens, the CFSP is increasingly conceived in traditional terms, with the policy dynamics associated with nation states being elevated to the level of the EU, even if the process is still in infancy. There was even a noticeable shift in European security discourse, with the EEC/EU conceived as a civilian power since the 1970s until late 1990s, when a new, strategic discourse emerged, framing the EU’s security role as that of a global power (Rogers, 2009). The outcome of this shift is easily predicted from the perspective of the functional approach; the territorial and exclusionary model of security will inevitably lead to a paradox, whereby the CFSP

must look for problems and threats in order to justify itself. But, as it concentrates on security interpreted as defence against outsiders, the implied exclusiveness and territoriality jeopardizes the EU’s openness and the prospects for international cooperation and thus (ironically) the EU’s own security! (Long, 1999, p. 127)

If we revisit Mitrany’s two questions about the nature of the early stages of European integration, the answers would still be negative. The EU remains a relatively closed and exclusive union, and it is not linked, at a higher level, to a wider common authority. It is closed and exclusive because its membership is not open to all countries interested in joining in. The history of consecutive enlargements demonstrates how cumbersome the process of admitting new members has been. The exclusion of countries like Turkey, Ukraine and Russia further reinforces the image of the EU as a closed union. European integration process is also not an outcome of the devolution of the universal authority of the UN to the regional level. Quite the opposite is the case: it is the EU which struggles to gain more comprehensive recognition as an autonomous actor within the UN system (Basu *et al*., 2012). From this perspective it can be argued that the way the European integration project was actually designed, beginning with the Monnet’s ‘functional federalist’ approach, moved it much closer to the ‘closed union’ ideal than to the opposite end, discussed in the next section. Mitrany’s warning, therefore, seems to apply: if the ‘closed union’ model is consistently pursued, it can result in undethsirable dynamics associated with inter-state power politics reproduced at the inter-regional level. In fact, the critics of the EU’s policy towards Russia argue that this is exactly what has already happened (Mearsheimer, 2014).

*The EU as part of greater Europe*

The idea of greater Europe is more reminiscent of Mitrany’s preferred model of regional integration, taking the form of regional devolution. There are three features which make the two fit together. They were all highlighted in President Medvedev’s Berlin speech in 2008, which was a rare occasion when the ‘greater Europe’ proposal was spelled out in some detail (Medvedev, 2008). First, the idea of greater Europe envisages that the whole of the European continent is unified in the pursuit of peace and economic co-operation. In this narrative, the commitment to protect these fundamental principles unifies states and societies, bringing them closer together. Second, the UN system is at the centre of international security order, before any regional groupings.

Third, none of the states or international organizations is superior to another. The loyalty to any sub-continental groupings, such as the EU or NATO, cannot come before the loyalty to the institutional structures entrusted with protecting and pursuing peace and economic co-operation for the whole continent. Of course, there is a spectrum of possibilities related to the ‘greater Europe’ idea. On one end is the Mitrany’s ideal type, whereby all European organizations are legally and organizationally subordinate to the global authority (UN system). The main purpose of regional integration in this case is to apply universal rules more effectively and without the unnecessary involvement of countries less concerned with European matters (Mitrany, 1933, pp. 111–14). The EU, in this vision, is reversed back to its original, purely functional form, so that it becomes a collection of functional supranational agencies open for countries to participate in as they please (Majone, 2016).

President Medvedev did not go as far. He did, nonetheless, propose to fundamentally reform the philosophy underpinning the European security order. Rejecting Euro-Atlanticism as a geopolitical strategy, Medvedev proposed the unity of countries stretching ‘from Vancouver to Vladivostok’. He accused western countries of entrusting their security to the exclusive, Cold-War-era organizations reproducing ‘bloc’ dynamics over more inclusive organizations, such as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). As an alternative, he proposed a European security treaty for the whole continent. He stressed that all countries should participate, but not as members of NATO or the EU, but as individual states. He also, indirectly, addressed the issue of devolution from the global authority, stressing the critical role of the UN system for international security.

For the advocates of the ‘greater Europe’ idea, such as Sakwa, it is regrettable that western leaders have never taken these and similar proposals seriously, continuing instead to rely on the organizations which exclude Russia. Institutions such as NATO and the CFSP, in their view, only reinforce the undesirable dynamics which have always led to conflicts in the past; they also obscure the opportunities for reforming continental relations enabled by the end of the Cold War. Returning to Mitrany’s criteria, we can thus conclude that this alternative vision of European security order is closer to the ‘devolution’ ideal type of integration. It identifies the UN system as the ultimate authority for maintaining international security and it prioritizes the principles of universal peace and economic co-operation over regional allegiances. The ‘greater Europe’ idea entails that these principles are translated into the specific circumstances of the European continent.

**The dilemmas of greater Europe as a political strategy**

When Mitrany contrasted the two models of regional integration – one in the form of closed regional unions and the other one in the form of regional devolution – he, of course, preferred the latter. Its geographically-unrestricted character promised to break with the centuries-old pattern of disputes over contested spheres of influence. Modern-day advocates of the ‘greater Europe’ idea echo these sentiments. The cause of international security will be much better served, they argue, when the Euro-Atlantic organizations abandon their expansionist logic, and instead take seriously Russia’s proposals for building a truly pan-European zone of international security and economic co-operation. Mitrany’s functional approach offers a helpful theoretical framework for grounding these contemporary discussions in early international integration theory. Its empirical-normative epistemology allows to develop precisely the kind of theoretical propositions which can combine explaining causes with prescribing solutions. There is a problem, however. While the functional approach offers a useful framework for distinguishing between two contrasting forms of regional integration, it proves less helpful when adopted as a guideline for moving towards a more inclusive European security order in the current context. The challenges associated with the ‘greater Europe’ idea, together with the corresponding limitations of the functional approach, are discussed in the reminder of the paper.

*Closing history in a black box*

Functionalism calls for separating measures necessary for ending hostilities from measures intended to building lasting peace. Carr underlined the importance of this principle in his *Conditions for Peace* published in 1942, recalling the experience of legally linking the League of Nations with the Versailles Treaty, which eventually had led to the collapse of both. Mitrany expressed similar views in *The Road to Security*, praising the UN Charter for ‘wisely separating’ war settlement from peace-building measures (Mitrany, 1944). The two processes should be separated in method and in time. The measures necessary for ending hostilities must be implemented quickly and, inevitably, involve some form of compensation to the victors. The measures intended to building long-term peace, on the other hand, must be developed over time, with great care, and – most importantly – not carry a baggage of the past conflict.

From this (functionalist) perspective, fundamental caveat needs to be added to the narrative in which Euro-Atlantic institutions are blamed for expanding their membership and ‘spheres of influence’ eastwards. Notably, the agency of CEE countries is often underestimated in this narrative. Sakwa (2015), for example, rightly observes that some of the CEE countries, particularly Poland and the Baltic states, have been utilising the Euro-Atlantic institutions in an effort to undermine Russia’s position in Europe. He blames this ‘obstructive’ behaviour on an insufficient EU effort to ‘socialize’ these countries into the post-Cold War peace project. The EU’s neglect or ineffectiveness may be a factor here, and in that case we have to ask about the EU’s capacity for conflict transformation, the EU as a peace project and indeed, the EU’s normative foundations.[[3]](#footnote-3) Regardless of these considerations, however, there is also the question of the time separating the end of the Cold War and the launching of the ‘greater Europe’ integration project. While not experienced as the actual war by the western societies, the Cold War felt much more ‘physical’ in the CEE countries, occupied and terrorized by the Soviet Communist regime. The end of the conflict had thus profound geopolitical, political, economic and psychological implications to those countries, in many ways comparable to the end of a war.

The processes affecting the socialization of CEE countries into the ‘greater Europe’ initiative are well known, so it will only suffice to briefly recall the key factors relevant to the functionalist temporal separation argument. Geopolitically, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, most of the CEE countries interpreted their position as that of suddenly being located in a power vacuum, or, to use Brzezinski’s metaphor, a black hole (Brzezinski, 1997). Neither the EU nor NATO were keen to expand membership to include these countries early in the 1990s, so to say that Euro-Atlantic organizations simply *pushed* into the former territory of the Soviet Union is not entirely accurate.[[4]](#footnote-4) A more accurate image would be that of CEE countries *pulling* the EU and NATO to gain the security guarantees and economic co-operation associated with the membership in the western organizations (Kirschten, 1995; Rudolf, 1996; Goldgeier, 1998). In a similar manner, it is important to understand how countries like Poland have been *pulling* the west towards Ukraine, as well as Ukraine towards the west. Most of the time, Polish political elites have in fact been frustrated with the perceived indifference of the EU towards Ukraine and the priority given to Russia (Roth, 2007). When the EU eventually developed a more ambitious programme for Ukraine through its Eastern Partnership initiative, it was only because Poland’s pro-Atlanticist Foreign Minister Radek Sikorski was persistent and successful in introducing this idea to the EU in the first place (Copsey and Pomorska, 2014; Iordache, 2015). Conversely, the success of the consistent Polish diplomacy in the East may have contributed to Russia’s perception of being excluded from discussing the issues of significant concern to it (House of Lords, 2015, pp. 228–238).

If only countries like Poland can be socialized by the EU into the ‘greater Europe’ peace project, it can be argued, they will adjust their foreign policy priorities. Possibly, although CEE countries have had the most tragic and complicated histories on the European continent (Snyder, 2003). Possessing sovereign statehood is still a new-found luxury for many of those countries, hence democratic processes there are not yet fully-formed. Economically, the hegemonic narrative in countries like Poland is that their lagging behind the west stems directly from the decades of Soviet occupation and enforced centrally-planned economy. Psychological considerations were ‘extremely cogent’ for Carr, and they also appear important in the current context. Based on their centuries-long historical experience, CEE societies remain suspicious about Russia’s foreign policy intentions. Reconciliation which was possible among CEE countries and Germany is much harder with Russia because its leadership is not always consistent in its condemnation of the Soviet legacy and because of Russia’s aggressive behaviour towards its neighbours, including its annexation of Crimea.

The argument here is not that the ‘greater Europe’ idea will not be possible because of the historical grievances of the CEE countries. It must be noted, however, that the length of time necessary between the end of hostilities, marked by the withdrawal of the Soviet army for CEE countries, and the possible launching of the ‘greater Europe’ peace project, will depend not just on the policies of the EU and NATO. It will, equally importantly, depend on historical reconciliation between CEE countries and Russia. Russian leadership and political class have an important, yet still unfulfilled role to play in this process. They should first become consistent in acknowledging that while the Soviet Union elevated Russia to a superpower status, its political system was built on oppression and exploitation, and then – looking forward – they should persistently seek ways to establish new and positive ways of bringing Russian and CEE societies closer, but without implying zero-sum choices against the west.

In his functional design for the post-WWII reconstruction, Carr argued that historical experience must be relegated to the background in the interest of building lasting peace. Mitrany also called upon European states to separate ending the war and building positive peace through the joint control of strategic resources. Closing history in a metaphorical black box was possible for France and Germany, however, not only because of the ingenious vision of Jean Monnet, but also because Germany, under the leadership of Konrad Adenauer, was ready for reconciliation and integration. Consequently, while the temporal separation argument can explain the forging of functional links when there is mutual political will and determination for post-conflict reconciliation, it seems to be less applicable when historical grievances persist and no genuine efforts at reconciliation are undertaken.

*Opening the black box of principles*

The second problem which affects the implementation of the ‘greater Europe’ idea stems from the functionalist principle-oriented vision of international relations. For Mitrany, the fundamental difference separating regional integration in the form of closed unions from regional integration in the form of regional devolution lies in their approach to the principles of international peace and economic co-operation. While both forms of regional integration appear to work towards the achievement of these principles, only one is true to their universal nature. Closed unions, by their very nature, must prioritize peace and economic co-operation within the union’s frontiers. Critics of the ‘wider and deeper Europe’ idea point to this very problem when they stress the exclusive character of the EU and NATO, arguing that peace in Europe is impossible without Russia. If Euro-Atlantic organizations are honest in their pursuit of international peace and economic co-operation, the argument goes, they must give place to a more inclusive, pan-European security governance structure.

This postulate, however, inevitably raises the question of principles on which the greater-European security architecture could be based. For Mitrany, devolution-oriented regional integration was superior because it promoted the two most important universal principles for international order: economic co-operation and international peace. He took the differences in domestic political and economic systems as given and insisted that they should not prevent common international work towards peaceful order and economic well-being. When applying these functionalist principles to the post-Cold War European security order, both co-operative and confrontational tendencies can be easily identified. Andrei Tsygankov divides this period into a number of stages and explains the change in Russia’s international behaviour by applying Mitrany-style approach to the principles of international co-operation.

The first stage marked the period immediately after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, during which President Boris Yeltsin and Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev were fully committed to a pro-western course, including the ambition to join the key Euro-Atlantic organizations. Kozyrev’s own experience in the Soviet Foreign Ministry’s Directorate of International Organizations arguably influenced his view about the utility of international organizations for resolving conflicts (Tsygankov, 2016, p. 64). This course came under increasing domestic pressure when the western-recommended ‘shock therapy’ contributed to new poverty and when it became clear that Russia would not be granted access to the western institutions anytime soon. At the same time, ‘westernizers’ were criticized for neglecting Russia’s interests in the former Soviet space. While all these issues contributed to the shift in Russia’s foreign policy, symbolically marked by the appointment of Yevgeni Primakov as Foreign Minister in 1996, it was the decision to expand NATO eastwards and exclude Russia from the process which mostly prompted the second stage in Russia’s foreign behaviour, affecting the prospect for the new, pan-European security order. Tsygankov (2014) calls this stage ‘defensiveness’.

The third stage, when defensiveness turned into co-operation again, followed the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and President Putin’s decision to offer the United States pragmatic help in the war against terror. Russia and NATO developed new functional links, including the NATO-Russia Council in 2002. While Putin did not subscribe to the western model of liberal governance, he did not consider it an obstacle to co-operate on issues of mutual concern. Nonetheless, co-operation soon turned into assertiveness in Russia’s foreign policy, marking the fourth stage in an evolving European security order. Among the contributing factors Tsygankov (2016) lists the coloured revolutions in the former Soviet countries, the invasion of Iraq, the prospect of further NATO enlargements and – most recently – the attempt by Russia, the EU and the United States to pull Ukraine in opposing geopolitical directions. An important exception to this otherwise tension-filled period constituted some attempts at reconciliation undertaken during the presidency of Dmitry Medvedev. From the perspective of European security governance, the most significant was the aforementioned proposal of the Russian President for the new European security governance structure. Medvedev’s proposal did not lead to any significant initiatives, not least because of Russia’s military intervention in Georgia only two months after the Berlin speech. It does, however, provide an important point of reference for the advocates of a more inclusive European security governance system.

Naturally, Tsygankov’s narrative, although based on solid historical research, is bound to raise objections among those who see the primary source of Russian conduct in the country’s inability and/or unwillingness to eschew its arguably ‘imperial identity’. The discussion is likely to continue on why the prospect of a more inclusive European security order evolved from promising early in the 1990s to highly unlikely in the years following the Ukrainian crisis. If we return to the Mitrany’s perspective on the role of universal values in forging a more peaceful and prosperous regional order, however, some tentative observations can be drawn. The first one is that the west, including the United States and particularly the EU, have not been able to accept Russia’s initiatives for co-operation without simultaneously raising questions about Russia’s domestic politics and its behaviour in the former Soviet space. The disciples of Mitrany would likely respond that western policy-makers have displayed unrealistic expectations about the universal adherence to the western-style liberal democratic values, which led them to exclude Russia from what it was willing to do because it was ‘not doing everything else’ (Mitrany, 1966, p. 50).[[5]](#footnote-5)

The second observation, related to the first one, is that the EU and Russia have struggled to focus on practical and ‘working’ solutions to the problems of European order because, to the frustration of Moscow, the co-operation has never been based on the principle of full equality. There may be justified reasons for this fact, most notably the historically-conditioned fundamentally-normative character of the European integration project. Nonetheless, Mitrany-style functionalists can argue that without the assumption of the equality of parties it is impossible to advance towards working out practical solutions which can contribute to a peaceful and more prosperous European security order. This, again, points to a limitation of the functionalist argument, as Mitrany did not (and could not) offer much guidance on how to reconcile the inherently thickly normative European integration project with a considerably thinner, more pluralist vision of greater Europe.

**Conclusion**

The paper has argued that the Mitrany’s functional approach, representing one of the major early international integration theories, can offer an original perspective on the dilemmas associated with the contemporary European security predicament. The distinction Mitrany made between regional integration in the form of closed and exclusive unions, and regional integration in the form of inclusive groupings of states unified by the fundamental universal principles, represented certain ideal types. His taxonomy was simplified and can hardly be considered to accurately reflect a variety of forms of international integration. By deliberately making such a stark contrast between the two forms, however, Mitrany’s framework can serve as a useful starting point for a more insightful perspective on the competing visions of EU-Russia relations following the conflict in Ukraine.

It is only a starting point, though. It should not lead straight to conclusion that a particular narrative of European security order is superior simply because it corresponds more closely with Mitrany’s preferred integration form. Granted, more inclusive arrangements in politics are generally more desirable than exclusive ones, and principles such as international peace and economic co-operation, ideally, should not be territorially-delineated. There are some complex challenges which shed a different light on this seemingly clear-cut dichotomy, however, and Mitrany’s functional approach unfortunately cannot offer immediate solutions. One concerns the problem of reconciliation between CEE countries and Russia, required for closing their tragic history in a metaphorical black box and focusing on forging mutually-beneficial functional links, which could then potentially lessen the CEE countries’ opposition to involving Russia more closely in a European security order. The other challenge concerns the discrepancy between the degree to which the European integration project has become underpinned by norms like liberal democracy and human rights, and the requirement for a much thinner, pluralist normative order to suit a greater variety of states involved in a ‘greater Europe’ system.

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1. I thank the anonymous reviewer for pointing out that while the EU and NATO are separate organizations potentially serving different functional purposes (military security vs. economic co-operation), Russia tends to treat their consecutive enlargements as part of the same process. This perception is reinforced by the links between the EU’s Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and NATO. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. ‘Functionalism’ and ‘functional approach’ are used interchangeably in this paper, although Mitrany himself didn’t use ‘functionalism’ in reference to his own theory (Long and Ashworth, 1999, p.3). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. I thank the anonymous reviewer for this insight. If we accept Sakwa’s (2015) argument that the CEE countries have been instrumental in obstructing the development of new and peaceful EU-Russia relations, we would be required to re-examine some basic assumptions about the EU’s normative and socialising capacities in CEE. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. There were, of course, individuals in the US Administration, notably Madeleine Albright, who strongly favoured NATO enlargement. This particular example may reinforce the argument of the paper, however, considering Albright’s close personal links with the Czech Republic and Central Europe. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The additional charge here may be that the west itself has breached some of the values which it expects of other countries, such as the respect for the international rule of law in the case of the American intervention in Iraq in 2003. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)