



## **“Learning the Language of Power”: The Geopolitisation of EU Trade Policy**

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### Abstract

This Master's thesis aims to map out the recalibration of the EU's trade policy toolbox in reaction to the geopolitisation of trade. In the context of major geopolitical and economic shifts in international trade, with the rise of trade-based, geopolitical, big power rivalry, this thesis assesses the extent to which the EU has successfully acquired 'open strategic autonomy' in the recalibration of its unilateral, bilateral and multilateral trade policy. The geopolitisation of EU trade policy is understudied, and by adapting a SWOT analysis framework, this thesis shows that in the last decade the EU has, by and large, successfully recalibrated its trade policy to respond to geopolitical trade threats and opportunities.

The SWOT analysis demonstrates that the success mainly lies in the EU's more assertive unilateral tools, based on reciprocity, and strengthening the EU's trade defence tools to respond to the threat of non-WTO compliant trade practices. The EU has also embraced the opportunity to establish new bilateral and multilateral alliances with likeminded trading partners to counter the threat of an unlevel international playing field. However, this SWOT analysis demonstrates that a weakness in the recalibration of the EU's trade policy is that it risks undermining the liberal trading system. The EU's 'open strategic autonomy' will also depend on the effective enforcement of the EU's trade policy and the extent to which it strategically leverages its market power to deter illiberal trade practices.