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**Post-Vilnius European Neighborhood Policy:
The Case of South Caucasus**



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Abstract

This study attempts to analyze the evolution of the ENP in Southern Caucasus during post-Vilnius era. With contributions of the recent history, it aims to find out how these evolving policies affected the region from the competing theories perspective. It's seeking an answer to whether or not "initially neoliberal" strategy of ENP is designed to transform the region into a space with stability. While doing this, effectiveness of the ENP and multidirectional contributions it brought to the region is discussed. Neorealist and neoliberalist assumptions made for assessing the ENP's practices in the region. The thesis is methodologically supported with Congruence Analysis, which qualitatively enables us to observe theoretical developments based on multiple cases. Drawing on the main challenges to ENP's initial strategy, main hypothesis argue that neorealist assumptions are prevailing over neoliberalist assumptions, which can be shown as an outcome of the ENP's evolving policies in post-Vilnius era.

Keywords

European Union, Southern Caucasus, Transcaucasia, Eastern Partnership, Eastern Europe, Russia, Eurasian Union, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, energy, Southern Gas Corridor

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Declaration of Authorship

1. The author hereby declares that he compiled this thesis independently, using only the listed resources and literature.
2. The author hereby declares that all the sources and literature used have been properly cited.
3. The author hereby declares that the thesis has not been used to obtain a different or the same degree.

Prague 21.05.2020

Enes Akdemir

List of Abbreviations

AA – Association Agreements

CBC – Cross Border Cooperation

CEPA - Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement

CFSP – Common Foreign and Security Policy

DCFTA – Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area

EAEU – Eurasian Economic Union

EaP - Eastern Partnership

EEAS – European External Action Service

ENI – European Neighbourhood Instrument

ENP – European Neighbourhood Policy

ENPI – European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument

EU – European Union

FTA – Free Trade Agreement

INTERREG – European Regional Development Fund

MEDA – MEsures D’Accompagnement (French for accompanying measures)

MEP – Mediterranean Partnership

NAM – Non Alignment Movement

NPE – Normative Power Europe

PCA – Partnership and Cooperation Agreement

SGC – Southern Gas Corridor

TACIS – Technical Aid to the Commonwealth of Independent States

INTRODUCTION

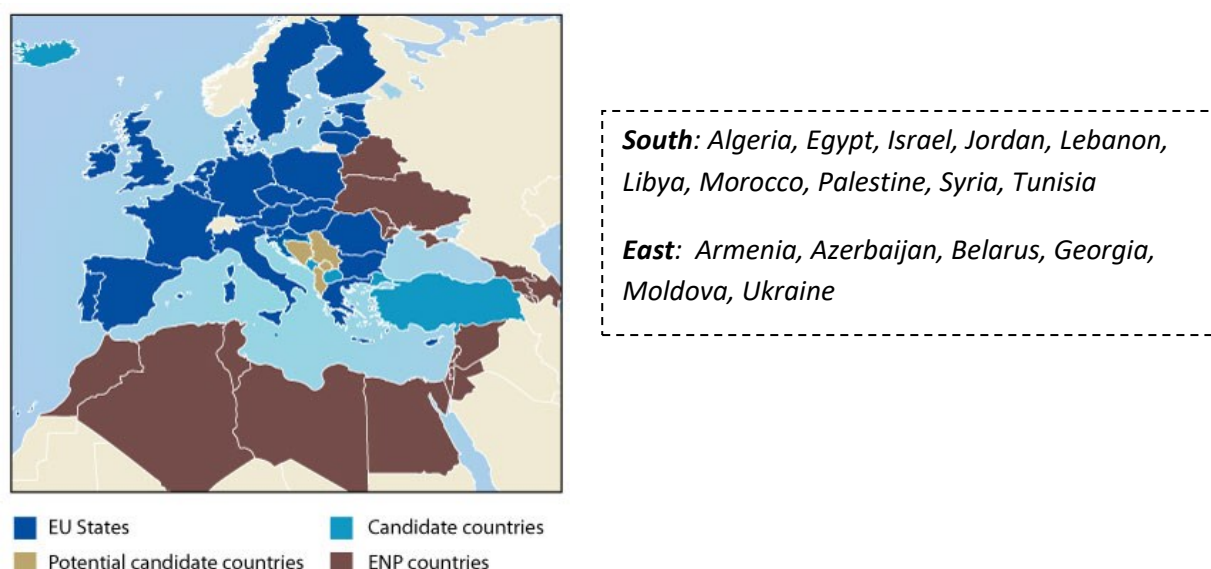
Construction of the European Union is emerging from a dream to create a coherent political, social, and economic space within a clearly defined multinational community. While completing over 60 years since the Treaty of Rome, external governance can be shown as one of the most challenging and unpredictable policy-making areas of the EU. Ever since its initiation, the EU has been using enlargement tools to settle the challenges in its external area. As a result of successful enlargement attempts, EU's ever-changing borders and new neighbors are offering new opportunities and challenges. Specifically, the "big bang enlargement" of 2004 brought such dynamics into the EU along with 10 new countries. The EU attempted to foster regional dialogue to translate these dynamics into gains and minimize the challenges for the region. This change led to the initiation of the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) in 2004, which comprises sixteen countries in Eastern Europe and the Southern Mediterranean region (See Fig. 1).

Arguably ENP should be considered as enlargement of the EU without membership commitments. The most obvious difference of the ENP is that member countries are not candidates for accession, and most of them will never be. As this is one of the major determinants for the scope of ENP, countries in the enlargement agenda were not included. However, criteria and conditionalities of the ENP have many similarities with the enlargement process.

Under the framework of the ENP, it's aimed to focus on dealing with three main challenges: "(1) to guarantee the security and stability of the Union along with its new external border. (2) to avoid the emergence of new "dividing lines" between the enlarged EU and its neighboring countries. (3) to strengthen relations with those countries who -although not EU members nor candidates for accession- are of strategic relevance for the geopolitical and geoeconomic reconfiguration of 'EU'rope as a global actor" (Celata & Coletti, 2015).

Given the focus areas, it can be concluded that ENP was established to serve EU's security and stability concerns in the region, and avoid clashes emerging in the region with non-EU countries as a result of enlargement. The relevance of this topic is linked to the EU's regional interests and values that are making it a global normative actor.

Figure 1.¹: ENP countries are outside the EU geographical borders.



This thesis makes a contribution to the research in characterization of the ENP during recent years. Following the Vilnius summit (2013), the development of the policies are drawing a pragmatist ENP picture, which eventually causes an emergence of interests vs. values dilemma. The great debate theories of neoliberalism and neorealism has different assumptions on explaining this ENP's evolution. Therefore, the main **research question** is as following:

“from the competing theories of the IR, which one is better in explaining the ENP's post-Vilnius ambitions and why?”

Southern Caucasus was specifically picked due to following reasons: First, as it will be shown in the literature review part, there is a lack of literature based on the post-Vilnius ENP. Except a few significant contributions, existing literature include controversial assumptions or lacking the analyses on competing theories perspective. Second, Southern Caucasus have always been an interesting region for students of the European studies due to the dynamics it include. After the fall of SSCB, there are diverging interests for various actors in the region. The three countries are coming from very similar backgrounds in the recent history. However, their approaches towards relations with major actors of the region (EU, Russia or Turkey) and domestically their policies have been quite different than each other. Their difference of

¹ Figure 1. European Commission Migration and Home Affairs, available on: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/international-affairs/european-neighbourhood-policy_en (accessed 19 May 2020)

approach naturally reflects on their relations with EU and this requires an individual focus for each country. Third, my personal choice has been on this region due to their geopolitical significance. Southern Caucasus countries are located on a strategic location inbetween the regional major actors. Despite these countries do not have a direct territorial connection with the EU, their geopolitical significance is recognized ever since the fall of Soviet Union. Substantially, it's crucial to study this region with it's diversified dynamics in order to have an impression on EU's external relations to the East.

The structure of the thesis will be as following: Methodology chapter is describing the design of the study and the method used with references from the conception. Theoretical framework is following next, dedicated to create a theoretical outline for this study. Due to the design of this study, theoretical framework is described in detail. Afterwards, the first chapter will present the EU's regional cooperation initiatives throughout the history and the origins of the ENP from EU elements. Second chapter is dedicated to the EU's interests vs. values dilemma, an essential subject in discussing ENP's effectiveness and creating a basis for the research goal. Third chapter is an analysis of the ENP following the Vilnius summit and it's geopolitical concerns. The final chapter is dedicated to the individual countries of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. Thesis is concluded with analytical chapter and final implications.

METHODOLOGY

In a very broad perspective, this study concerns the role of EU in creation of cross-border cooperation (CBC) outside of its borders, specifically with the Eastern partners. For this purpose, framework of the study focuses on how to explain the regional tensions in this region from theoretical perspectives. Especially following the Vilnius Summit of 2013, overall assumption on the concept of *normative power Europe* (NPE) is highly contested. Following the geopolitical outcomes of the regional relations, further alternative concepts on explaining Europeanization and CBC are being reviewed. In this research, countries are not compared with each other according to datas; but are compared with theoretical assumptions. Therefore, variation across the cases are not required. What is essentially required is their degree of fit (match, congruity) between our theoretical assumptions and empirical observations. (Haverland, 2010). This method, as defined by Blatter and Blume (2008), George and Bennett

(2007) and Haverland (2006, 2007) is being called as **congruence analysis**. It's a feasible method where conception on how a single case or small number of cases can be used for theory development. The purpose here is not to test such theoretical development directly, but to refine them in a possible way, so that they can be tested.

In the design of this study, it is believed that there are enough similarities across and over the ENP countries to maintain the research design on congruence method. EU's regional initiatives and their overall assessment are carried out by contractual relations. In terms of contracts, Association Agreements and DCFTA's are analyzed. Furthermore, public records – official implementation documents of the EU, reviews of the summits and a rich literature are analysed. Hence, examination of the research questions and theoretical framework are maintained by qualitative content analysis of respective documents. Moreover, role of financial cooperation and assistance programmes from 2000 are analyzed -TACIS, MEDA, ENPI, ENI- respectively. Although the examination was done only for Southern Caucasus region, main goal has been kept as an overall theoretical assessment of EU's agenda towards its neighbourhood. Three criteria were taken into account while conducting the design of the study: *purposes, methods and outcomes*. These criteria were defined as procedure to research in order to simplify our design while collecting information, and posit the outcomes into the observation on competing theories.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

European experiences of regional integration and external governance should be seen as a unique phenomenon in modern politics. As the main tools for these experiences, practices such as regional integration and neighbourhood policy do not comprise a homogenous theoretical research agenda. Rather, European practices comprehend a wide range of theoretical approaches that differ based on their starting points, focuses and assumptions. In order to understand the external policy of the European Union towards its neighbors, it is important to briefly review these ranges from the perspectives of defining theories in international relations. Hence, in this study, it's aimed to review ENP's effectiveness in the post-Vilnius era through the lenses of neoliberalism versus neorealism. Assumptions made for these theories were extracted from general debates of international relations.

Neoliberalist Theory

Within the neoliberalist perspective, European neighborhood practices are explained through the rational preferences of the national states. This theory claims that integration is a consequence of “rational decisions made by national actors” (Moravcsik, 1998). Several factors influence those decisions. Cooperation can emerge through the cultivation of mutual trust, economic interdependencies, the building of norms, regimes, and institutions. In a similar way, we can argue that preference formation of the states is playing a significant role in ENP’s formation.

Following the end of the Cold War, the EU ensured peace within its borders, while major threats were coming from the transitional democracies and authoritarian countries of Central and Eastern Europe. “Soft power” concept gained a vital position in representation of EU’s international actorness while holding onto no military power. As proponents of neoliberalism claim, even without military aspects, the EU may settle global issues with democracy, trade, and assistance for development (Nye, 2004). Throughout successful enlargement attempts and positive outcomes in the political and economic sphere, the EU’s magnetic attraction grew higher. As the most important EU tool, enlargement was diplomatically used for settling conflicts and for promoting economic and political policies in the neighboring countries (Moravcsik, 2010). ENP’s creation and formation hence developed by imitating enlargement and its success was expected to bring positive economic and political outcomes. ENP’s processes weren’t entirely identical to enlargement, and there were crucial differences. In essence, ENP was created to avoid new division lines emerging after enlargements, based on its soft power and engaging states through its common values. Manners (2002) defined the EU as a “normative power,” stating that “power over opinion” or “ideological power” is the main feature that is creating the EU’s international identity. This normative character is defined by core norms (peace, democracy, human rights, rule of law, liberty) and minor norms (social solidarity, good governance, sustainable development, and discrimination) (...) these norms are facilitating EU to present and legitimate itself as being more than the sum of its parts. Today, Manners’s normative power concept is a core concept to be used, as it represents one way of approach for the evaluation of the EU’s external behavior. From the EU’s perspective, the neighborhood policy describes a “circle of friend countries,” where

further cooperation is aimed. EU offered various incentives to the ENP countries in the action plans (Kelley, 2006):

- Deepening trade and economic relations
- Support for the legislative approximation to meet EU norms and standards
- Financial support
- Reduction of trade barriers, opening of economies
- Intensified political co-operation, visa liberalisation, etc.
- Added values: interconnected infrastructure for energy and transport, enhanced trade preferences (Fantini & Dodini, 2005)

Following the ENP's main incentives offered to the member states, what are the main elements that were aimed to envisage by neighborhood policy? We can make our assumptions for the neoliberalist approach under a few main elements.

Neoliberalist Assumptions

Given the main characteristics of the neoliberalist perspective for European integration, member states are expected to come closer to cooperation within ENP's sphere. In fact, relations with neighbor countries were already in force through partnership agreements like TACIS (for the Eastern partners) and MEDA (for the Mediterranean partners). These initiatives targeted to support the EU's neighbor countries through funding and specific action plans. Through INTERREG, the EU supported numerous local and transnational cooperation projects. Looking back on the EU's cross-border cooperation with its neighbors, consistently developing new interregional and transnational working relationships shows us how the EU has contributed significantly to cross-border co-operation (Perkmann, 2002). Given the general characteristics of the neoliberalist IR theory, we can assume that the EU's cross-border relations are likely to grow, through the *spillover effect*.

Another assumption can be made on the common values. EU's normative power aspect is an accepted way of EU to "present and legitimate itself as being more than sum of its parts" (Manners, 2002). Despite slight improvements of a few, the majority of the ENP states have worsening records on values such as human rights and democracy. Within the neoliberalist IR,

democratic peace theory claims that democracies are hesitant to engage in an armed conflict with other democracies. Therefore, promoting democracy and common values will have an outcome of decreasing war and other conflicts. Depending on the commitments from the partner countries, conditionality has been adapted to the ENP. It includes sanctioning or rewarding partner countries, as well as creating and applying leverage (e.g., legal reform in return for visa liberalization or financial support on the basis of 'more for more'/'less for less') (Kostanyan, 2017). Hence, a successful cooperation is highly dependent on incentives offered by the ENP and the effectiveness of conditionality. Prodi (2002) noted that 'the goal of accession is certainly the most powerful stimulus for reform we can think of. But why should a less ambitious goal not have some effect?'. Although it cannot be an as strong incentive as accession, country action plans have numerous motivations for improvement, also as given in the incentives throughout the history of cross-border relations. ENP has substituted previous EU programs and incentives offered by EU administration are feasible opportunities for ENP states to improve their scores on common values. Thus, we can assume that as the cross-border cooperation grows, ENP states will bring more optimistic results compared to their past.

The third assumption of the neoliberal perspective is based on socialization. Moravcsik (1998) believes that the EU seeks to integrate threatening states rather than excluding them, following the assumption that economic cooperation will lead to their ideological norms. He further adds that only if the threat of exclusion undermines the substantive interest of the excluded state, the coercive threat may bring about an agreement at the level of integration. The threat of exclusion or opportunity of inclusion is not based on conditional demands or any coercion measures. EU uses several linkages, leverages, and functional cooperation with the neighboring countries. According to Kostanyan (2017), these linkages are likely to be successful if there is substantial support for civil society and the modernization of a targeted country. For this reason, target countries shouldn't be isolated, and the pro-democratic civil society must be supported through legitimate tools. Socialization is a process which governments or decision-makers go through by learning their interests to be better served by seeking an international institution's solution, rather than national ones (Pace, 2007).

Neorealist Theory

According to neorealist perspective, international system is anarchic and states are the primary actors. Given the anarchic structure of the international system, likelihood of war and conflict is a constant concern for the states. Hence, all states themselves are primarily concerned with their survival and security (Mearsheimer, 2001). Their strategically planned rational calculation of costs and benefits define their actions (Hyde-Price, 2006). These costs might make states to revise their strategies in the face of changes in external constraints and opportunities, negative experiences of their own, and observation of both the successes and failures of other states (Grieco, 1997). In this anarchic “self-help” system, security maximization of the states is best assured by power maximization to be able to eliminate or neutralize all potential rivals and establishing hegemony over one’s region (Kissinger 1957; Mearsheimer 2001). For this reason, within the international relations, power competition is a fundamental reality between the states. According to neorealism, the states are not the only international actors but are the most important actors. As Waltz (1979) puts, it is states which set the context and establish the rules for other actors, including the EU. Nonetheless, this does not mean that all states are aggressively seeking to maximize their power at all times. If they are behaving rationally, states continuously look for opportunities to increase their *relative power*. According to Hyde-Price (2006):

“States’ focus on the relative gains is placing limits on co-operative enterprises. The states will only engage in cooperation if they benefit as much or more than other major powers. Small powers can be more concerned with absolute gains... Nonetheless, under some conditions, concerns with relative gains are relaxed. This tends to occur in conditions when security competition is muted or weak, and when states do not face an immediate interstate threat...”

Relative gains theory hence explains how the existence of international cooperation is maintained in an anarchic self-help system. Within the EU, the main point of the realist argument stems from common European interests. These include realpolitik elements of territorial integrity, political and strategic security, prosperity, and economic well-being of the members (Gnosetto et al., 2004). States within the EU, transmitting their sovereign rights and

make them common with the other EU member states. In the ENP, member states had a strong geopolitical interest in avoiding political instability in these regions.² The ENP was initially designed as a policy at the community level that has been directly influenced by the interests and actions of the EU member states (Mocanu, 2013). Therefore, from a neorealist perspective, milieu shaping and cross-border policy cooperation of the EU constitutes a collective attempt within the ENP policies. Following the end of the Cold War, the disappearance of a bipolar world and the security motives that deepen European cooperation represent the rise of the neorealist approach as a result (Collard-Wexler, 2006). For this reason, it's crucial to present our neorealist perspective regarding the ENP.

Neorealist Assumptions

Given the international self-help system where a constant threat of war and conflict exists, the EU's measures are to be maintained through principled pragmatism³. These measures can still include promoting common values, but not at the expense of its interests. Moreover, due to costs of democratization in several ENP countries, there is a possibility that the promotion of stability and security will be prioritized against common values. As mentioned previously in this chapter, the calculation of costs and benefits define states' actions (Hyde-Price, 2006), and states might be sensitive to costs (Grieco, 1997). Hence, during a geopolitical crisis where the EU's interests are threatened, a response from the EU is expected to be towards protecting its pragmatic needs.^{4 5}

² "Polish experts and politicians have always emphasized that one of the most important goals of Poland is to enhance European co-operation with eastern neighbours" see more on Lapzcynski (2009).

³ European Union External Action Service, on June, 2016 "Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe – A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy": https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/un-new-york_en/36116/Shared%20Vision,%20Common%20Action:%20A%20Stronger%20Europe (accessed 17 May 2020)

⁴ European Parliament on 24/06/2019 "While there is no EU army and defence remains exclusively a matter for member states, the EU has recently taken big steps to boost defence cooperation. Since 2016, there has been significant progress in the area of EU security and defence with several concrete EU initiatives to encourage cooperation and reinforce Europe's capacity to defend itself." see more online on: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/security/20190612STO54310/eu-army-myth-what-is-europe-really-doing-to-boost-defence> (accessed 17 May 2020)

⁵ Eurobarometer survey issued on 2018, "68% of Europeans said they would like the EU to do more on defence" see more on: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/at-your-service/files/be-heard/eurobarometer/2018/delivering_on_europe_citizens_views_on_current_and_future_eu_action/report.pdf (accessed 17 May 2020)

Due to the success of its integration model, it's been claimed that EU can follow its example with the ENP countries too. However, the regional environment of its neighborhood has many challenges that might offer a different case at this time. Additionally, incentives offered to the ENP countries are not as attractive as it was for the accession countries. Most importantly, it's missing the membership prospects. Even though the incentives include visa liberalization agreements, and several trade conveniences, societal pressures towards tangible results might require tangible benefits as well (Dirdala, 2013). For these reasons, within the neorealist perspective, boosting support in regional cooperation is needed. This can happen by revision of ENP's conditionality and what is offered to the countries, whether these are attractive incentives for reform to happen. Within the ever-changing regional environment, the EU is not the only major power, and the ENP countries are influenced by several external actors. For this reason, creating an impact might become more challenging as there are conflicting interests with these external actors.

Another assumption can be made on the relative gains concept of the neorealist perspective. As each state is an independent actor in the international system, they are interested in their relative gains compared to the other states. Despite the EU-centric logic of region-building often clashes with diverging interests among EU member states (Tassinari, 2011), in the regional level, EU as well pursues a self-interested "Machiavellian" foreign policy, which prefers *realpolitik* goals, also called as "Kantian agenda" (Bressand, 2011). Even under an environment where an interstate threat is not highly likely, major powers remain concerned about their relative gains (Grieco, 1993). Hence, it's legitimate to ask to what extent the EU can afford to compete with other major powers in the ENP regions? Take Russia, due to its privileged interests, it presents a direct threat to the security of the EU. Moreover, even though the EU tries to pursue its policies along neoliberal lines, Russia has maintained a robust, realistic approach (Kapitonenko, 2015). The assumption from the neorealist approach suggests that there is a constant possibility of war and conflict in the ENP sphere, therefore EU's policies to be drawn along neorealist lines.

Neoliberalist Assumptions	Neorealist Assumptions
Growing cooperation is likely due to the spillover effect.	Within the self help system, EU is protecting its pragmatic needs.
Promoting democracy and common values will have an effect on decreasing conflicts.	Tangible results require tangible benefits. Conditions aren't attractive to the partners.
Threatening states will be integrated rather than excluding.	Relative interests and gains are the most essential elements for EU's policy making.

Due to the fact that we are conducting the study design on a theoretical framework, an outline of these theories will make it simpler for us to observe given process. An overview of contrasting theoretical approaches on ENP brought us three assumptions made for each. Depending on the areas, assumptions made are highlighting different assets of the subject. Neoliberalist perspective is drawing an ENP image that is focusing on growth through promotion of the common values, creation of a socialization structure via economic cooperation incentives offered, and social pressure. Whereas the neorealist perspective is offering an image of ENP to be drawn by considering geopolitical tensions and aiming to bring tangible results via tangible policies. From the neorealist lenses, policies are to be focused on terms such as relative gains, costfulness, and principled pragmatism. None of the theoretical perspectives can be perfectly enough to grasp and fundamentally illustrate the ENP processes. By focusing on different bodies of evidence, they shed light on their research purposes. This study will be focused on “what it does” rather than “what it is”, with a specific focus on the post-Vilnius era.

Why is this study specifically focused on the post-Vilnius era? Things have changed not only since the initiation of ENP in 2004 but also since the Vilnius Summit in 2013. Following the ENP summit in Vilnius, it gave way to major breakthroughs in several ENP countries. While in the EU, it was a complete reshaping of the European security system. Hence, the original design of the ENP was no longer in use, and radical amendments were required due to the significant changes in the neighborhood environment (Kapitonenko, 2015). Tocci (2016) illustrates this change:

“ (...) In 2003 the international liberal order seemed unchallenged—9/11 notwithstanding—and EU soft power was at its peak with the eastern enlargement approaching the finishing line and the European Neighbourhood Policy about to be launched. In 2015 that world was gone. The strategic assessment described the world as more connected, contested, and complex. The world has become more connected, with greater connectivity bringing about both challenges and opportunities. The world has become more contested and conflictual, notably within the EU and its surrounding regions to the east and south. (...) ”

Under the impact of the recent regional challenges, EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) moved away from being solely “soft power” to “hard power”, which lend a hand to achieve implementation of foreign policy (Archer, 2008). Although remains closely related to intergovernmental cooperation, Scrinic (2014) states that EU agreements “give up more free space in favor of the supranational institutions, even if it's the member states that have the last word to say in the area”. Notwithstanding, ENP represents one of the main instruments of the CFSP (Scott, 2015), serving the Union's engagement in the region motivated by the need to promote its interests and ensure stability⁶. This change happened throughout time due to the demands of the states. ENP focused on developing tailor-made programs for each country and offering them choices which they can make to achieve the desired level of interest. Mogherini (2018) believes that it fits into a more pragmatic and detached engagement in the region, signaling that the EU's prioritization of interests over norms and values.⁷

As a result, primarily ENP and external governance of the EU is suffering from a strategic dilemma, which is likely to become typical in the given circumstances. EU's normative considerations are requiring long-term strategies and support for those who are willing to transform their policies. Even if that jeopardizes their interest concerns, the normative agenda

⁶ European Commission 04/03/2015 'Joint Consultation Paper – Towards a new European Neighbourhood Policy' available on: <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/neighbourhood/consultation/consultation.pdf> (accessed 17 May 2020)

⁷ European Union External Action 01/06/2018, 'Remarks by High Representative Mogherini at the joint press point' available on: https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/45706/remarks-high-representativevicepresident-federica-mogherini-joint-press-point-wang-yi-state_en (accessed 29 Apr 2020)

shouldn't be replaced for short term gains. That is why ENP's conditionality tool -based on AA's and DCFTA's- cannot become a sticks and carrots experiment. On the other hand, more practical and short term interests for the EU are always available. As the realist argument suggests, if ENP's scope will stay focused on the pragmatic gains, the EU's interests will maintain the future of its policies. Therefore, the current image of ENP shows that there is a clear dilemma between concerns of interests and values (Kostanyan, 2017). Throughout the study, analysis of this dilemma will help us to address our theoretical concerns on EU's neighborhood relations in an efficient way.

ORIGINS OF THE ENP

To the date, European integration has been an evolutionary process that has promoted a post-national system built upon commonalities. Under concrete forms of shared sovereignty and community policies, the integration process requires local and cross-border cooperation (CBC). Scott (2015) states, "CBC within the EU is embedded in "Cohesion Policy" and highly territorialized; spatially defined indicators, goals, remits, and responsibilities create their own barriers to interaction." Barriers of interaction and national implementation of Cohesion Policy is being guided by physical investment and development through the utilization of CBC. In this manner, the roles played by Association Agreements (AA) and Deep Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (DCFTA) are fundamental. AA's are legally binding agreements between the EU and third countries. It's aimed to foster close relationships between the sides on a wide range of topics. They include incentives specific for each country, such as economic cooperation, investment areas, visa liberalization, etc. EU is offering privileged relationship to partner countries based on their commitments to pursue "*common values*" including:

"Rule of law, good governance, the respect for human rights, including minority rights, the promotion of good neighborly relations, and the principles of market economy and sustainable development. (...) The fight against terrorism and the

proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, as well as abidance by international law and efforts to achieve conflict resolution.”⁸

In the ENP, due to the *spillover effect*, the signing of AA and DCFTA’s are seen as intermediary tools for the advancement of Europeanization (Scrinic, 2014). According to the comprehensive analysis from Celata et al. (2015), “the approach is based on partnership, joint ownership, and differentiation. “*Partnership*” between EU and recipient countries is the foundation of EU/neighborhood cooperation as is the “*joint ownership*” of the process between recipients and donor countries based on the awareness of shared values and common interests. “*Differentiation*” among partners is a pivotal principle In the ENP aimed at recognizing the specific needs, inclinations, and aspirations of each country and tailoring cooperation to such specificities. Furthermore, all the strategies are aimed at the imperative of sustainable socio-economic development.”

There is a rising consensus that ENP can be seen as the new enlargement step of the EU. This claim is highly connected to the *enlargement fatigue* experienced within the EU integration process. In general, enlargement has been considered as a success story. However, since the enlargement of 2007, overall skepticism emerged about this process (See Fig. 2). The main concern on the enlargement fatigue is the weakening of the ‘magnetic attraction’ of the EU that is related to its political and economic model towards non-member countries. Furthermore, the unstable economic and political situation has forced the EU to take an indefinite pause in the enlargement process in order to strengthen its security and domestic consolidation. Hesitation from Brussels about potential membership, in particular for Eastern partners, was another factor that weakened the EU’s magnetic attraction (Johansson-Nogues, 2011). Given these facts, it’s clear that EU’s geopolitics of Southern and Eastern borders highly depend on regional institutions like ENP and its sub-units Eastern Partnership (EaP) and Mediterranean Partnership (MEP). These institutions are focused on stabilization of the regions in political, socio-economical, and security-related terms. They offer sustainable regional and bilateral programs and projects under four priority areas: Good governance,

⁸ European Union Law (Eur-Lex), document 52004DC0373: ‘Communication from the Commission - European Neighbourhood Policy – Strategy Paper’ available on 12/05/2004: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52004DC0373> (accessed 17 May 2020)

economic and social development, cooperation in the security sector, energy security, and climate action.⁹

Figure 2.¹⁰:



Together with plans of including large countries like Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey in the future, accessing seven countries from former Eastern bloc and two Mediterranean island countries prompted EU to reassess its borders in terms of security.

Regional Cooperation Initiatives

With the formalization of the ENP, first regionalization process, a new geographical entity was introduced. The neighborhood is further divided into two sub-regions: Eastern European and Mediterranean. In parallel to the ENP membership, countries in these regions have been included or reinforced into *meso-regional* entities. Already existing meso-regional strategies such as the Northern Dimension and the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership were re-launched (in 2006 and 2008 respectively), while Black Sea Synergy (2007) and the Eastern Partnership (2008) were created. The renewed attention given to regionalization strategies in the same period should be considered as part of an overall strategy of the EU towards its neighborhood (Celata et al., 2015).

Relations between the EU and Southern Mediterranean countries go back up until the 1970s. Longstanding affairs began within the areas of trade and development. Set aside its geographical proximity and historical relevance to Europe, relations with Mediterranean countries were inevitable after enlargement to Greece (1981), Spain and Portugal (1986). During the mid-1990s, security concerns after the end of Cold War led into the establishment

⁹ European External Action, available on 21/12/2016: https://eeas.europa.eu/diplomatic-network/european-neighbourhood-policy-enp/330/european-neighbourhood-policy-enp_en (accessed 29 Apr 2020)

¹⁰ Figure 2, extracted from Wikipedia, last edited on 27 Apr 2020: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2007_enlargement_of_the_European_Union (accessed on 19 May 2020)

of Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (Euromed), also known as Barcelona Process (1995). With the initiation of France, re-launched MEP in 2008 the framework of the partnership have developed into an array of trade policies together with a wide security agenda and democracy promotion (Tömmel, 2013). The idea was to create a multilateral framework for dialogue and cooperation, defined as a close partnership. Within the framework of MEP, the EU developed wide migration tools. Those tools included migration dialogues, visa facilitation and readmission agreements, visa liberalization dialogues, and mobile partnerships. Most of these instruments have been designed specifically for the Mediterranean neighbors (Delcour, 2013). In addition to the wide security agenda, migration management and democracy promotion in the region, economic and cultural relations were aimed to be intensified as the AA's and DCFTA's require. MEP initiative comprises of ten countries that are already under the ENP: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria (suspended), Tunisia.

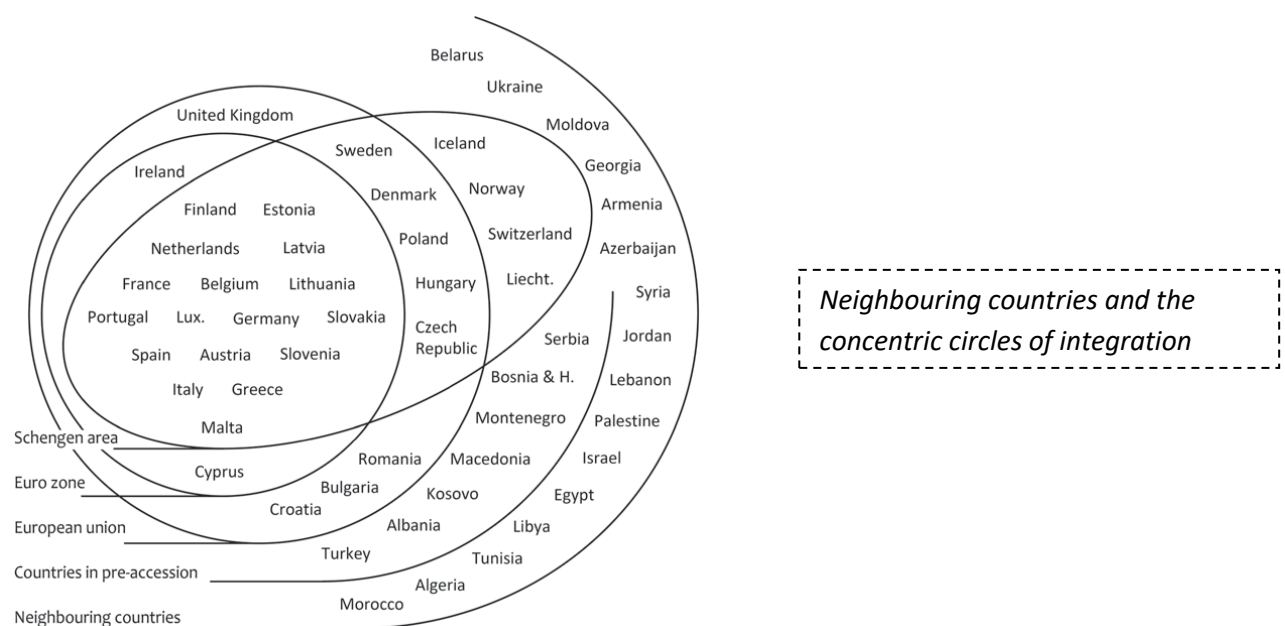
EaP gradually became a prominent project for the EU. Despite worth mentioning geopolitical importance of the Eastern Partnership countries, this region never has attracted the attention of the EU until the 1990s. Since then, European countries pursued a *policy of exclusion* to stay away from the backyard of the Soviet Union (Moga & Pascariu, 2014). With the disintegration of the Soviet Union, EU changed its policies towards *policy of inclusion* (Smith, 1996). By turning of the millennia, EU's realization of geopolitical interests in the Eastern borders have started to become more clear. To avoid the possibility of a *security vacuum* in the ex-Soviet neighbors, the EU introduced the *Wider Europe* concept of 2002, which was further complemented by the establishment of ENP (Scrinic, 2014). Within the ex-Soviet countries, big bang enlargement and the initiation of ENP influenced the geopolitical image of EU as a political and economic actor. Ongoing regional conflicts in Georgia and Ukraine have brought Russia into the research domain of ENP.

These developments served as a triggering factor for the establishment of the Eastern Partnership (EaP). The EU has launched the EaP with the initiation of Poland and Sweden in 2009. EaP designed as a complementary foundation to the ENP for the aims of achieving necessary political and economic reforms, increasing stability, prosperity, and democracy in the Eastern countries (Samadashvili, 2015). Free trade areas entailed, the visa-free travel perspective, enhanced bilateral cooperation and development of multilateral components were introduced. Aligned to the realities of a geopolitical fight in the ex-Soviet space and

following a Russian-Georgian armed conflict, EaP attempted to extend the EU's influence and breathe a new life into the ENP (Scrinic, 2014). The EaP initiative comprises of six countries which were already under the ENP umbrella: Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia.

These two institutions have developed separate projects with specific and ambitious corporation goals specifically for their region (Monacu, 2009). Each neighborhood has different challenges, hence different priorities: "In the Eastern programme, funds are concentrated on the creation, or the improvement of networks, on environmental protection and on good governance and stability. In the Mediterranean, most of the resources are dedicated to sustainable economic development. Overall, these priorities reflect those identified in the national bilateral programmes in each of the two sub-regions. (Celata & Coletti, 2015)"

Figure 3.¹¹:



Arguably, following the big bang enlargement of 2004, the establishment of the ENP was inevitable. Given the new borders of the EU and candidate countries in the enlargement agenda, the EU's potential neighborhood was expected to bring along fears of mass

¹¹ Figure 3. available on Celata F., Coletti R. (2015), Neighbourhood Policy and the Construction of the European External Borders, GeoJournal Library

immigration and terrorism. “ (...) The Neighbourhood consists of very disparate countries, each wanting to be judged on its own, widely differing objectives and merits. (...) Among these countries, some are budding democracies and others harsh dictatorships; and, finally, some have excellent relations with neighbors while others are effectively at war with them.” (Gylfason & Wijkman, 2012) (See Fig. 3). Fundamentally, the EU has always had the geography and power at the center of its design. Not only does its membership have a strong geographical component, but its foreign policy tends to address different geographical areas around the world through distinct policies. EaP and MEP can be shown as key examples of this argument (Nitoiu & Sus, 2019). In a policy area characterized both by interdependence of states’ migration policies and the lack of an international migration regime (Betts, 2011), ENP represents one of the main instruments of CFSP (Scott, 2015). Within the CFSP of the EU, the neighborhood plays a pivotal role in the EU’s influence on global migration patterns and other security threats worldwide¹².

INTERESTS VS. VALUES DILEMMA

EU is creating a distinct normative identity while legitimizing itself for being more than the sum of its parts. In this way, the EU’s geography has been dubbed with an universal character, the basis for its claims to authenticity in the world order. Values and norms that have originated the EU hence gave it right and the duty for representation in the other geographical spaces of the world (De Zutter, 2010). EU is distinguished from other actors because of its role in the international system on civilizing or ethical power. “Traditionally, the EU has disposed of only non-military instruments in international relations and is considered to have a preference for ‘carrots,’ rather than ‘sticks’ in dealing with third countries. It tends to promote multilateral solutions, to aim for conflict prevention and negotiation rather than enforcement; it encourages regional co-operation and stresses the importance of principles of democracy and human rights. (Sjursen, 2006)” Therefore, within the ENP privileged relationship offered to the countries depending on their commitment to the “*common values*.”

¹² Council of the European Union, ‘Presidency Conclusions of the Brussels European Council’, available on 30/01/2006: <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-15914-2005-REV-1/en/pdf> (accessed 24 Apr 2020)

Notwithstanding the precision of the EU on common values and the importance of their promotion, the 2015 ENP Review demonstrates that the EU is shifting towards a more realist, pragmatic, and flexible approach towards its neighbourhood. After all, ENP is a stabilization instrument, and its effectiveness is dependant on several incentives and obstacles. For pursuing the EU's pragmatic interests, the majority of the authoritarian leaders in the ENP countries are viewed as undesirable but necessary partners. EU prefers *functional cooperation* with these states rather than taking a firm stance on their compliance with common values¹³. Such a stance proves that interests are prevailing over values, and it's serving the EU's normative actor title to be replaced by a pragmatic actor (Kostanyan, 2017). As a result, ENP is suffering from an *interests vs. values dilemma*, which is a result of recent foreign policy. On the one hand, EU's normative considerations are present. These require a long-term approach and support for the countries that are willing to do reforms. Even if this means making compromises in several cases, a normative-oriented EU must be constant in its stance. On the other hand, there are always new opportunities which are more practical and better for short-term interests. This might mean cooperation with authoritarian leaders in democratically failed countries and have no willing for reforms. Within the ENP, this dilemma explains the lack of consistency between its self-defined role of value promotion and pursue of interest¹⁴.

Geopolitical concerns play one of the most crucial roles in the ENP's dilemma. In the case of Southern Mediterranean, ENP is counted as an actor on shaping the relationships between EU and these countries. The strategies remind more of an "external assistance" approach, with the general aim of creating an area of peace, prosperity, and security. Commission's emphasis on democratic norms is an appropriate choice to build consensus among the member states as a firm base for a common policy (Tömmel, 2013). The creation of a normative basis is essential for the legitimacy of the actions and the security interests of the EU. Within the Mediterranean, democracy promotion and EU's interests are highly interrelated. Issues such as border security, migration flows, and market liberalization are a few of the outcomes of non-democratic regimes in the region. During the Arab Spring

¹³ Leigh Phillips, article on 01/03/2011, EU Observer, "Europe 'should have backed democrats not dictators, 'commissioner says'" available on: <http://www.euobserver.com/news/31894> (accessed 29 Apr 2020)

¹⁴ Tony van der Togt, article on 31/012018, Clingendael Institute "EU's Eastern Dilemma: Prioritising interests over values?" <https://spectator.clingendael.org/en/publication/eus-eastern-dilemma-prioritising-interests-over-values> (accessed 12 Apr 2020)

upheavals, the EU quickly reacted and reformulated a new policy approach for the countries with overthrown authoritarian regimes (Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya)¹⁵. In this approach, more effective and efficient implementation, particularly in the area of democracy promotion, was promised. However, despite the promises, changes were rather modest in crucial terms (Bauer, 2011). Most of the progress has been made in fields of implementation for intensified political security, cultural relations, and financial assistance.

On the Eastern side of the neighborhood, policies mainly focused on promotion of major European values. Compared to the Mediterranean, the strategies in the East are more influenced by the approach and narratives of “enlargement methodology” (Gawrich et al. 2010). Even though ENP made it clear that there are no membership prospects anyhow, Eastern partners have an expressed aspiration about European initiatives. However, there is almost no visible improvement in the participant Eastern countries. Most countries in Eastern Europe are ranking at or near the bottom of the ratings for political rights and civil liberties. While a few –such as Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine- have struggled to democratize and pursue European integration in recent years, they faced strong resistance from Russia and antidemocratic elements in their borders¹⁶.

Especially the role of Russia is being highlighted as a crucial factor for the success of political reforms in the region. “Ukraine, which voluntarily gave up of its nuclear weapons in 1994 in exchange of security guarantees from the United States, Great Britain and Russia, has now lost part of its territory to one of its security guarantors. (Kapitonenko, 2015)” Unfortunately, the EU failed to provide Ukraine any support in this tragic crisis with Russia. The same for Georgia in 2008 war. Attempts to integrate the Eastern side of the neighborhood have been limited so far. The majority of the EaP countries see the ENP and other European initiatives with suspicion. They believe that the EU is promoting it’s self-interests that would be contradicting with their “traditional” values (Scrinic, 2014). Partner states perceive the EU’s efforts as insincere, and they usually have financial expectations from the relations. For this reason, strategies of the EU in regional crises are crucial factors in its geopolitical image. It’s

¹⁵ European Commission, joint communication on 08/03/2011 ‘Joint Communication to the European Council, the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions’: https://ec.europa.eu/research/iscp/pdf/policy/com_2011_200_en.pdf (accessed 24 Apr 2020)

¹⁶ Freedom House, yearly report, 2019, ‘EURASIA: A breakthrough in Armenia as Other Regimes Harden Authoritarian rule’ article, available on: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2019/democracy-retreat> (accessed 29 Apr 2020)

highly likely that hard security, such as national security and migration, will continue to play a critical role in defining the agenda of the external policies of the EU. The EaP summit took place in Vilnius (2013) confirmed these assumptions, proving weaknesses in the neighborhood policies and the importance of the external factors:

“Ukraine’s last-minute decision not to sign the Association Agreement (AA) while particularly significant, was not a singular setback: Armenia had already chosen to seek membership in the Russian-dominated Custom Union, despite an initial interest in the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA) included in the AA. As for the two authoritarian post-Soviet regimes that participate in the EaP, Azerbaijan opted for a low-level type of cooperation with the European Union (EU), while Belarus maintained its usual distance. The fact that Moldova and Georgia initialed their AAs, while positive in itself, could not alter the overall unsatisfactory outcome from an EU perspective (Dirdala, 2013)”.

It marked a serious moment of a breakaway from ENP’s originally designed functioning. It is proven that the EU’s effectiveness in exporting its reforms is not only depending on internal factors but also on the external factors. Following the summit, Russian troops deployed towards the separatist regions of the pro-European group of countries (Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine) which makes remaining EaP countries (Azerbaijan, Armenia and Belarus) to rethink about their priorities about ENP and other European ambitions (Scrinic, 2014).

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

There is a strong geopolitical dimension of ENP, which Moscow cannot ignore. Not a long time ago, Russia’s resistance against the expansion of the EU towards Central Europe was a failure, and it resulted with the big-bang enlargement. This time Moscow is replying with a bigger resistance towards EaP, as reading the situation that one day Ukraine and other EaP countries would end up leaving their fronts as well. Within the Eastern neighborhood, it’s known that the future of the neighborhood is based on the relations with Russia and Russia’s role in the region. “However, from the very beginning, ENP lacks a key component: a policy towards Russia. Given the clash of interests and deep differences in perception, it’s highly

potential that the EU-Russia debate will carry a high tension in the future of the region. The deepening of economic interests and security has been perceived in Kremlin as a direct threat to Russia's *privileged interests*. Although EU spent high efforts on advancing the policy in neoliberal lines, Russia's sentiment towards the EU initiatives has always been interpreted by the realistic approach (Kapitonenko, 2014)". In fact, the EU attempted to generate commitments with Russia over the common neighborhood. Since the initiation, ENP's framework is complemented by a *strategic partnership* with Russia. At the very beginning, the country was supposed to join the ENP but refused to become a member of the ENP, only accepted participating to some cross-border policy activities. Whereas in 2003, strategic partnership relations with Russia were defined under four "*common spaces*": the common economic space, the common space of freedom, security and justice, common space of external security, and common space of research and education¹⁷. This language of common spaces was an attempt for proliferation of the fuzzy (Emerson, 2005). After almost two decades from creation, common spaces had moderate progress only in the fields of fight against migration and border management. There is no progress in sensitive areas such as security, human rights, and other freedom-related areas (Hernandez & Potemkina, 2013).

Active Player: Russia

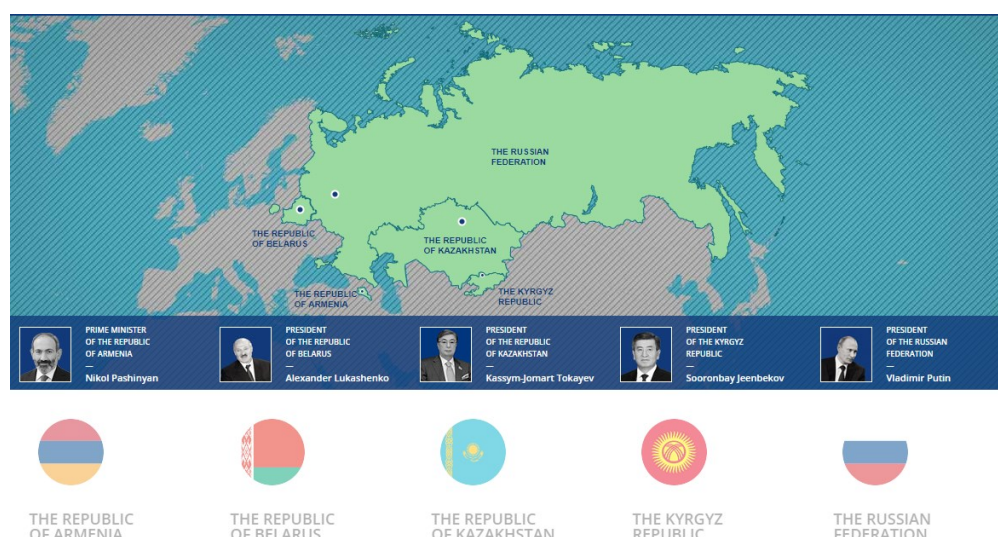
The role of Russia must be seen as a key factor for an efficient ENP. There are unclarities on Russian presence in the region and on domestic policy preferences. While some scholars argue that Russia has developed an active foreign policy based on their strategic interests, others see it simply as a response to the European influence in the region (Kostanyan, 2017). EU's further enlargement to the East and cross-border initiatives encouraged Russia to change its role of "*reluctant observer*" towards "*active player*" in its geopolitics (Delcour & Kostanyan, 2014). Especially during the presidency of Putin, Russian administration paid special attention to the EU. Currently, Russia is viewing the EU's influence in the Eastern neighborhood as a threat towards its policy goals. The opinions about EaP are mainly claiming that the EU has a hidden agenda designed to undermine Russian dominance in the Eastern Europe and

¹⁷ European Commission, on 18/03/2005, 'EU/Russia: The four Common Spaces' available: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/MEMO_05_103 (accessed 23 Apr 2020)

Southern Caucasus region. With the third term of Putin on the beginning of 2012, Ukraine crisis marked the portrayal of the EU as an enemy in the context of the geopolitics of Russia (Foxall, 2019). As a part of their geopolitical prospect, they created Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) in 2014.

Russia's EAEU differs from the European Union in its essence, and it requires a lot of work to be done. As part of their geopolitical strategy, Kremlin is offering to join to EAEU as an alternative to EU for the Post-Soviet countries. Foxall (2019) views this creation as a result of the resurrection of Russian 19th-century ideology of *Eurasianism*. Russia's hegemonic power ambitions are back into the reality of today's politics. As a tool basis for their geopolitical and political aspirations, Putin decided to adopt this ideology, which was re coined by Alexander Dugin (2005). It's likely to state that EU-EAEU rivalry is turning into a zero-sum game for the geopolitics of the region (Foxall, 2019). Russia is compelling Post-Soviet states for joining into EAEU as a part of their strategy for their political, economic, and strategic interests (for current members of the EAEU see Fig. 4). As a result of these policies, EaP countries Armenia and Belarus decided to join EAEU instead of EaP. Today, in total, there are five members of EAEU; alongside there are FTA's with numerous countries around the world; and ongoing negotiations for further memberships.

Figure 4. ¹⁸:Eurasian Union



¹⁸ Figure 4. extracted from Eurasian Economic Union website, <http://www.eaeunion.org/?lang=en#about-countries> (accessed 19 May 2020)

It's likely to say that Russian soft power (shared Orthodox heritage) with carrots (energy dependency, access to a large market) and sticks (trade sanctions and regional conflicts) offered were efficient in this decision of Armenia and Belarus. Armenia's decision was highly affected by Russia's economic and military protector role in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Whereas Belarus is highly dependent on Russia in terms of their imports (%59) and exports (%35) (Pasquale, 2015).

Countries choosing to cooperate with European initiatives faced with various Russian deterrence strategies (sticks): In Moldova, which is a predominately agricultural economy with wine its most important product, Russia imposed an embargo on Moldovan wine, fruits, and vegetables¹⁹. Additionally, supporting the separatist movements in Transnistria and Gagauzia and compelling Moldovan workers to leave Russia (Delcour & Kostanyan, 2014). Similar cases happened in Georgia dating back to the signing of AAs and DCFTA's in Vilnius. The Russian government imposed an embargo on Georgian wine and agricultural products. In a similar way, Russia abused the unsolved conflicts in South Ossetia and Abkhazia by enhancing armed forces as a threat for cooperating with European initiatives²⁰. Officially proposed reasons for these embargoes were heavy metals found or falsified alcoholic products. However, no proof was provided by Russians. In Ukraine, Russia played the same game over disputed lands. Their ambitions to restore dominance over EaP countries were revealed here. The Russian foreign minister framed the confrontation between Russia and the West over Ukraine as the Russian struggle to defend the traditional, Orthodox society from attempts by the West to impose alien, Western values on them²¹. Russia plays the same game on Azerbaijan and Armenia for over twenty-five years to keep them away from European ambitions. In Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Russia is hoping to keep Azerbaijan away from Europe by keeping their soldiers in the Armenian border. With security concerns influencing the majority of the policies, Armenia became Russia's main ally in the frozen conflict²². Russia's threat to withdraw support from

¹⁹ Tessa Dunlop, article on 21/11/2013, BBC News 'Why Russian wine ban is putting pressure on Moldova':

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-24992076> (accessed 4 May 2020)

²⁰ CNN Editorial Research last updated on 31/03/2020 '2008 Georgia Russia Conflict Fast Facts':

<https://www.cnn.com/2014/03/13/world/europe/2008-georgia-russia-conflict/index.html> (accessed 24 Apr 2020)

²¹ Paul Goble, article on 10/06/2014, The Jamestown Foundation, 'Moscow Draws a Religious Line in the Sand in Ukraine':

<https://jamestown.org/program/moscow-draws-a-religious-line-in-the-sand-in-ukraine/> (accessed 24 Apr 2020)

²² European Council on Foreign Relations, article on 07/08/2019 'Paradox of Power: Russia, Armenia, and Europe after the Velvet Revolution': https://www.ecfr.eu/publications/summary/russia_armenia_and_europe_after_the_velvet_revolution (accessed 17 May 2020)

Armenia and to increase sales of arms to Azerbaijan played a significant role in Armenia's U-turn from the DCFTA of Europe (Samadashvili, 2014).

Figure 5.²³:

Table: Eap countries exports/imports by country 2018

Armenia	Exports: Russia 27%, Switzerland 14%, Bulgaria 9.1%, Iraq 6.4%, Germany 5.7%	Imports: Russia 26%, China 14%, Iran 5.6%, Turkey 5.2%, Germany 5.0%
Azerbaijan	Exports: Italy 31%, Turkey 9.7%, Israel 7.0%, Czech Republic 5.0%, India 4.4%	Imports: Russia 16%, Turkey 14%, China 10%, Germany 5.8%, U.S 4.6%
Belarus	Exports: Russia 40%, Ukraine 13%, U.K 9.5%, Germany 4.5%, Lithuania 3.6%	Imports: Russia 60%, China 8.0%, Germany 4.8%, Ukraine 3.7%, Poland 3.2%
Georgia	Exports: Azerbaijan 15%, Russia 13%, Armenia 8.3%, Bulgaria 7.7%, Turkey 7.0%	Imports: Turkey 16%, Russia 10%, China 9.1%, Azerbaijan 6.5%, Ukraine 5.6%
Moldova	Exports: Romania 30%, Italy 12%, Germany 8.3%, Russia 8.3%, Turkey 4.0%	Imports: Romania 15%, Russia 13%, China 10%, Ukraine 10%, Germany 8.4%
Ukraine	Exports: Russia 7.8%, Poland 6.9%, Italy 5.6%, Turkey 5.0%, Germany 4.7%	Imports: Russia 14%, China 13%, Germany 11%, Belarus 6.7%, Poland 6.4%

Source: <https://tradingeconomics.com/>

Given the multiple instances from EaP states, this can be concluded that Russia is not interested in solving conflicts in a peaceful manner. It's interested in maintaining the status-quo in conflict areas for pressuring these states to be dependent on them economically, politically, and even militarily. In these conditions of being highly dependent and without alternatives, for EaP countries Russia's EAEU serves easy and favorable conditions to access and participate (Vilpisauskas & Alisaukas et al., 2012).

There are several features about EAEU, proving that it's an *attractive* integration model for post-Soviet countries: Firstly, Russia is an essential market for exports and imports of these states (see Fig 5.). Members of EAEU experienced growth in their trade turnover since the joining of the union (Bayramov, 2013). FDI rates from Russia consists of 62% in Belarus, 49% in Armenia, 22% in Moldova, 7% in Ukraine, 5% in Georgia, 4% in Azerbaijan²⁴. Secondly, EAEU doesn't require anything in terms of reforms. In contrast, the EU's AA's and DCFTA's require additional commitments by adopting nearly 400 EU regulations and directives (Emerson, 2014). While EU initiatives have such a high number of conditions opposing the authoritarian rules in these countries, authoritarian ruling elites are not interested in any sort of reform.

²³ Figure 5. created with the data extracted from <https://tradingeconomics.com/countries> (accessed 24 Apr 2020)

²⁴ Financial Times, data extracted on access date: <https://www.ft.com/content/ad076a54-efbc-11e3-bee7-00144feabdc0> (accessed 29 Apr 2020)

Thirdly, Russia and these states have a long history of cultural and religious bonds. It's worth reminding that, except Azerbaijan, Orthodox Christian religion is playing a crucial role in the daily lives of these states. While ENP is criticized for *one-size-fits-all approach* (Borzel & Risse, 2009), Russia is well aware of the needs and values of these countries and is able to treat each of these states accordingly. There are further other benefits from EAEU, such as free movement of labor and goods, increasing number of free trade partners such as China, Iran, or Vietnam. It seems clear that EU's propositions against EAEU are financially and politically insufficient, which makes the post-Soviet states vulnerable against Russia (Delcour & Kostanyan, 2014). Given all these dynamics, even in its early years, Russian EAEU became more successful in bringing tangible results. Here the question is: to what extent European integration serves as a substitution for the local businesses and people in the post-Soviet countries? The future of the ENP is therefore dependent on result-oriented policies towards the regional conflicts and creating economic incentives for these states.

European Energy Security

Security is playing the most determinant role in the interplay between EU and Russia. And it's not only implying hard security issues like 'frozen conflicts'. Another critical issue is the security of Europe's energy supplies (Kapitonenko, 2015). Except for Azerbaijan and partly Georgia, EU and EaP countries are highly dependant on Russia's energy resources. 54% of EU's energy consumption is coming from imported sources²⁵, and Russia is the main supplier. In the future of relations, EU-Russian energy policies will be playing a key role. Furthermore, Russia has always used the energy dependency of states as leverage for pressuring the governments, such as in Moldova, Ukraine, and also towards EU partners (Woehrel, 2014). By the emerging crisis with Ukraine in 2014, Russia signed a 30-years gas deal with China, seeking alternative markets and sending clear messages to the EU²⁶. On the other side of the interplay, the European energy agenda experienced a shift towards a search of alternatives. The conflict

²⁵ Eurostat, last updated on 07/2020, 'Energy production and imports' article available on EC website: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Energy_production_and_imports#Main_statistical_findings (accessed 17 May 2020)

²⁶ Jane Perlez, article on 21/05/2014, NY Times, 'China and Russia Reach 30-Year Gas Deal': https://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/22/world/asia/china-russia-gas-deal.html?_r=0 (accessed 29 Apr 2020)

between Russia and Ukraine have proven the EU's vulnerability and urgency towards alternative gas and oil reserves. EU put a significant effort into establishing Southern Gas Corridor (SGC), which was already initiated in 2008²⁷ (see Fig. 6). For this project, the European Investment Bank handed out one of the largest loans in its history, EUR 1.5 Billion²⁸.

Figure 6. ²⁹: Southern Gas Corridor



EU identified the partners for this project as Azerbaijan, Turkey, Georgia, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Iraq, Egypt. Additionally, Iran and Uzbekistan should provide support as well, when the conditions require. It remains unclear if the EU achieves to secure its energy supplies by this project. There are concerns regarding the supporting projects of SGC, whether they are economically viable, and investors are willing to take risks. It's also advocated that the EU should eventually adopt a market-based approach with its suppliers. This view was supported by the signing of the partnership agreements (Siddi, 2019). By signing partnership agreements with several countries which are controversial for EU's common values, it seems to be confirmed that pragmatic geopolitics will dominate the EU's energy polity. This approach might help the EU to diversify its strategies towards the Eastern Partnership and limit the monopoly countries (Russia) and companies (Gazprom) for the EU's crucial needs. Questions regarding the geopolitical reconfiguration of the Eastern Partnership seems to be unanswered

²⁷ European Union Law (Eur-Lex), European Commission, article on 13/11/2008 'Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - Second Strategic Energy Review : an EU energy security and solidarity action plan': <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52016DC0705> (accessed 17 May 2020)

²⁸ David O'bryne, on 08/02/2018, Eurasianet, 'European Bank Approves 1.5 Billion Euros For Azeri Gas Pipeline': <https://eurasianet.org/european-bank-approves-15-billion-euros-for-azeri-gas-pipeline> (accessed 7 May 2020)

²⁹ Figure 6., extracted from Trans Adriatic Pipeline website on: <https://www.tap-ag.com/resource-library/media-library/maps> (accessed 19 May 2020)

yet. Nonetheless, with the initiation of SGC, the EU introduced a new way of policy-making with these states. We will likely experience a rise of pragmatic geopolitics in this era, especially regarding the energy security. This turn in the European policy-making was also made clear in the document from European External Action Service:

“We will partner selectively with players whose cooperation is necessary to deliver public goods and address common challenges. We will deepen our partnerships with civil society and the private sector as key actors in a networked world. We will do so through dialogue and support, but also more innovative forms of engagement.³⁰”

Especially for the Southern Caucasian countries with no land connection to the EU, the initiation of SGC is an opportunity to connect.

SOUTHERN CAUCASUS

Southern Caucasus, also known as *Transcaucasia* region, contains the three Eastern Partnership countries which do not share any border with EU (Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia). The total area of this region measures about 186,100 square kilometers. Southern Caucasus is literally “*the lands in between*.” Geographically, the region lies in between Europe, Asia, Middle East, and Russia. Culturally, it’s located where Islam and Christianity meet; and it’s located where democracy meets authoritarianism³¹.

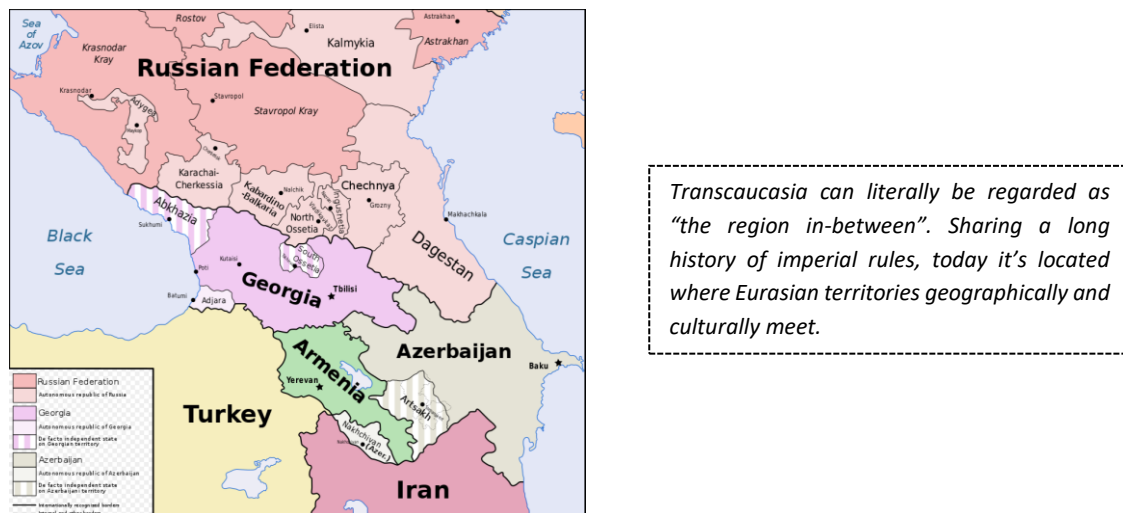
Throughout the past decades, especially since these countries declared independence from the Soviet Union, attention on this region has increased considerably. This region has been widely regarded as a single regional group by external actors, including the EU. Taking in mind diverse landscapes, regional disputes, and cultural differences, it’s fair to admit this region has a confusing borderland structure (see Fig 7). Another thing to admit is that this region was long under the influence of imperial powers like Persia, Ottoman Empire and the Soviet Union.

³⁰ Council of the European Union, on 28/06/2016, ‘A global strategy for the European Union’s Foreign and Security Policy: <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-10715-2016-INIT/en/pdf> (accessed 29 Apr 2020)

³¹ Thomas De Waal, on 11/02/2019 ‘A Brief Guide to Understanding the Countries of the South Caucasus’: <https://carnegieeurope.eu/2019/02/11/brief-guide-to-understanding-countries-of-south-caucasus-pub-78306> (accessed 17 May 2020)

The habit of being regarded as a single regional group has roots from their history of imperial rule. Policymakers and analysts of international relations should recognize the long-standing differences among these nation-states, as such regional perceptions are unprogressive ways of policy-making.

Figure 7.³²:



De Waal (2018) suggests, we must think of its own terms but also as a region while thinking of the Southern Caucasus. Alongside Russia, there is Iran, Central Asia, Turkey and the EU in the region. In terms of ethnicity, the region is very diverse. Each nation has its own ancient languages and alphabets. There are two ancient Christian nations. Dating back to the early fourth century, the kingdoms of Georgia and Armenia were the first two nations to convert into Christianity, and their people have been Christian ever since. As a distinctive feature, the importance of religion is very high in these nations. Conversely, Azerbaijan is ethnically Turkic and predominantly Shia Muslim. And like the others, they were *Russified* by the Soviet Union.

The context of the Southern Caucasus requires a high level of interdependence in political, economic, security matters. Alongside the fact three nations have commonalities in their cultural heritage and customs, there are matters related to regional conflicts, migration, ethnicity, and economic aspects, particularly energy assets and transport routes (Simao & Freire, 2014). Regional actors often reveal shared concerns, discourses on cooperation and

³² Figure 7. extracted from Wikipedia, last edited on 10 May 2020, available on: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caucasus> (accessed 19 May 2020)

competition, and demanding a regional approach. The potentiality of the region for the EU is doubtless, taking into account rich energy sources and geopolitical location.

Georgia – optimistic integration

To the date, Georgia can be regarded as one country with closest relations with the EU. Over the past decades, Georgia had an increasing drive for stronger ties with the EU. This drive gained speed especially in the aftermath of 2003 Rose Revolution when Mikheil Saakashvili came to power. He determined Euro-Atlantic integration as a main foreign policy for Tbilisi. *Sandwiched* between powerful external players in a volatile region, this was where the country finds itself best, because of their geopolitical position (Andguladze, 2017) but also for their desire to strengthen democracy and their sense of a shared European identity. Georgians believe that the only way to guarantee a secure, stable and prosperous future is through Euro-Atlantic integration.

EaP was welcomed by Georgians when it was officially launched, due to the fact that it was after the war with Russia in 2008. They saw EaP as a reaction of EU against Russian aggression. But maybe the most important step taken in bilateral relations was when the AA initiated in 2013. When Tbilisi signed AA and DCFTA, it was highly appreciated by Georgian people as their effort finally paid off. And most recently in 2017 the country received visa liberalisation. Recent nature of the EU with its *fatigue* makes it hard to believe in possibility of membership for Georgia yet. This truth was also proven in the recent EaP summits. Nonetheless, Georgia is determined in their pragmatic relations with the EU. While membership remaining the main policy goal, Georgia is looking forward for more ambitious declarations and long term goals with the EU. 2017 survey shows that 80% of the population are in favour of joining to the EU³³. This common sense seems to be also reflected into Georgian parliament. Cross-party consensus on Euro-Atlantic integration and strong support from population made it easier to put difficult reforms into operation. Ambition for closer ties with the EU helped Georgia to

³³ Laura Thornton & Koba Turmanidze, on December 2017, 'Public attitudes in Georgia, results of December 2017 survey carried out for NDI by CRRG Georgia' available on: https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/NDI%20poll_December_2017_POLITICAL_ENG_final.pdf (accessed 24 Apr 2020)

transform itself from *deeply corrupted quasi-failed state* into a functioning one in a short period of time (Andguladze, 2017).

With the implementation of DCFTA, trade rates inbetween has increased dramatically. The EU is the main trading partner of Georgia with around %27 of its trade, followed by Turkey (13.6%) and Russia (11%)³⁴. Most ambitious improvements between two actors recently been in the field of energy. In May 2017, the country became a member of European Energy Community. This update enabled Georgia to integrate into the European energy market, hence strenghten their energy sector. Georgia also plays an important role in SGC as a transit state.

As the other EaP states, Georgia has faced with significant pressure from Russia. Threat of military aggression from Russia is the main concern of the Georgians. None of the frozen conflicts (Abkhazia - South Ossetia) had any solution ever since. The pressures further also included trade embargoes and employing the narrative of Russia as the only main protector of Orthodox Christian values. There is no doubt that Eastern Partnership is an asset, but it also feels that their security concerns are ignored (Shapovalova, 2010). As stated previously, one of the main weaknesses of EaP is it's incapability of dealing with geopolitical conflicts and developing a policy against Russia.

Armenia – paradox of power

Bilateral relations between Armenia and EU dates back until signing of The Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) in 1996. Together with ENP and EaP, Armenia is also member state of various European programs and treaties such as European Cultural Convention and European Court of Human Rights. To the date, Armenian administrations and people always valued on strenghtening of bilateral relations with EU, especially in relation to democracy, fighting with corruption and civil society engagement (Smith, 2011). Renewed relations between both sides were welcomed after the participation to EaP in 2009. Following the participation, Armenia and EU began negotiations on AA and DCFTA in July 2010 for replacing

³⁴ European Commission, last updated on 23/04/2020: <https://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/countries/georgia/> (accessed 29 Apr 2020)

PCA as other Southern Caucasian members. While two months remaining for the finalization of negotiations on September 2013, Armenia unexpectedly announced their decision to join the EUEA.

Decision of Armenia to join Russian-led EUEA have met with dissatisfaction from the EU side. EU administration concluded, Armenia cannot sign the EU pact and Russian-led customs pact at the same time³⁵. In response, President Sargsyan stated, Armenia is ready to sign AA in Vilnius without DCFTA that is incompatible for EUEA³⁶. However, EU Commissioners opposed to this idea. At the end of the summit, no AA's were signed between Armenia and EU in Vilnius. Alternatively, sides decided to sign an agreement without trade provisions. In respect to that, in 2017 Armenia and EU signed Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) to deepen the relationship.

Armenia's double-sided game within Russia - EU sphere has its implications from domestic and external factors. First and foremost, vulnerability in security concerns are playing the biggest role in decisions. Dispute over Nagorno-Karabakh has still not been solved since over 30 years and there is always a likelihood of another clash. This dispute with Azerbaijan is a very sensitive security concern for Armenian policymakers and there is a broad consensus among the leadership that their security partnership with Russia has a vital importance (Terzyan, 2019). Russia is dubbed as a '*security provider*' for Armenia against Turkish-Azerbaijani threats, pointing out the troops located across the Turkish border (Terzyan, 2018). President Sargsyan, along with other officials, justified their turn towards Russia in terms of security concerns and necessity of strengthening economic ties³⁷. Russia, being aware of sensitivity on this issue, suppressing Armenia's European foreign policy pursuits. Shortly before Armenia's last second decision to join EUEA, Russian president Putin paid a visit in Azerbaijan. This visit was mainly about security in the Caspian sea. Azerbaijan's leader Aliyev noted that the "defense industry collaboration" with Russia totals \$4 billion and continues to

³⁵ Andrew Rettman, article on 03/09/2013, EU Observer, 'Armenia to join Russia's Union, surprises EU': <https://www.euroobserver.com/foreign/121304> (accessed 17 May 2020)

³⁶ ArmeniaNow, article 'President Sargsyan says Armenia to continue cooperation with EU' available on: https://www.armenianow.com/news/48880/armenia_president_serzh_sargsyan_strasbourg_pace_speech (accessed 17 May 2020)

³⁷ ArmenPress article on 03/09/2013 'Serzh Sargsyan announced about Armenia's decision to join Customs Union': <https://www.armenpress.am/eng/news/731583/> (accessed 17 May 2020)

grow³⁸. Clearly, Russia is aware that their alliance with Azerbaijan is Armenia's fiercest fear. As we've seen previously in the case of Georgia, Russia is not interested in solving the regional conflicts. Instead, these conflicts are used as *coercion tools* against European rapprochement of EaP countries.

Armenia's dependency on Russia is not only regarding to the security matters. Another crucial matter -maybe equally important- is in the field of energy. According to 2013 agreement, Russian Gazprom became the *sole energy provider* of Armenia with 100% share at least until 2044. Despite the strong opposition and resistance, this agreement was ratified. It's considered as a serious blow to national sovereignty of the country. Russian gas is used widely in Armenia. Almost all Armenian households have access to gas. It's used by one-third of country's electricity, heating systems, and majority of the vehicles use the liquidified or pressurized form³⁹. With this agreement, Russian leverages against EU initiatives are much stronger. Just as in April 2013, if necessary, Russia is able to use the energy card as another coercion tool. In this date, gas prices were suddenly increased by 50% and ironically went down as Armenia decided to join the EAEU⁴⁰. Paralelly, Armenian officials admitted that their decision to join EAEU will shield them from unwelcome surprises and economic repercussions.

Given the energy dependence, main picture is no different in the other sub-fields of economy. As Terzyan clarifies in his 2019 article, Russia is the main trading partner of Armenia with 27% of exports⁴¹ and 70% of remittances⁴². According to World Bank (2016), Armenia was 21st worldwide among the most remittance-dependent countries, with personal remittances received making up 13,1% of GDP⁴³. Over one-fourth of all economic entities are

³⁸ Joshua Kucera, article on 14/08/2013, Eurasianet, 'In Baku, Putin Brings Gunboats Along With Democracy': <https://eurasianet.org/in-baku-putin-brings-gunboats-along-with-diplomacy> (accessed 17 May 2020)

³⁹ Asbarez, article available on 17/01/2014, 'Gazprom Completes Armenian Gas Takeover': <http://asbarez.com/118554/gazprom-completes-armenian-gas-takeover/> (accessed 17 May 2020)

⁴⁰ Asbarez, article available on 08/10/2013, 'Gas Price Reduced as Armenia Joins Customs Union': <http://asbarez.com/114797/gas-price-reduced-as-armenia-joins-customs-union/> (accessed 17 May 2020)

⁴¹ Data extracted from Trading Economics website, 'Armenia Exports by Country' report on: <https://tradingeconomics.com/armenia/exports-by-country> (accessed 29 Apr 2020)

⁴² Data extracted from World Bank, 'Armenia Monthly Economic Update' report available on 03/2015: <http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/eca/armenia/armenia-economic-update.pdf> (accessed 29 Apr 2020)

⁴³ Data extracted from World Bank, 2019, 'Personal remittances, received (% of GDP)' available on: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.TRF.PWKR.DT.GD.ZS> (accessed 29 Apr 2020)

with involvement of foreign capital, and there are over 1400 enterprises with Russian capital. Moreover, over 2.5 million Armenian migrants are living in Russia, who are highly likely to suffer from Russia's policies in case of a conflict. This assumption is based on what happened before: During 2008 war, discriminatory measures were employed by the Russian police against Georgians, following their decision to sign Association Agreement (Emerson & Kostanyan, 2013).

Under these circumstances, Armenia is offering the most challenging case among Southern Caucasian countries. It's apparent that Russia have been powerful enough to steer Armenia's external and internal policies and linked its survival concerns towards herself. In these conditions Armenia's capability for an EU approximation beyond signing of AA's is highly questionable. However, post-Velvet Revolution (2018) atmosphere in Armenia is promising improvement in bilateral relations. Newly elected Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan advocated that they would deepen their relations with the EU and they want to hold a neutral position between Eurasian Union and EU⁴⁴. Although EU yet had a modest progress in their relations with Armenia, there is an optimistic atmosphere for the improvement in the relations. 62% of Armenians have positive image of the EU. 92% of Armenians feel relations with EU are good. 61% of people in Armenia trust the EU compared to 48% trusting the Eurasian Union. With these results, it's proven that EU is the most trusted international institution in Armenia. All these rates are above regional average, and favorable opinions are increasing each year⁴⁵.

Recently signed CEPA brought a new framework into the bilateral relations. This 2017 agreement creates the basis of bilateral relations with a comprehensive agenda. It provides framework for Armenia and EU to work together in priority areas of (1) strengthening institutions and good governance; (2) economic development and market opportunities; (3) connectivity, energy efficiency, environment and climate action; and (4) mobility and people to-people contacts⁴⁶. EU High Representative Federica Mogherini noted that CEPA is one of

⁴⁴ Georgi Gotev, article on 25/04/2019, Euractiv, 'EU applauds peaceful ousting of Armenia's Sargsyan': <https://www.euractiv.com/section/armenia/news/eu-applauds-peaceful-ousting-of-armenias-sargsyan/> (accessed 17 May 2020)

⁴⁵ EU Neighbours, on 03/07/2019 'Opinion Survey 2019: Armenia': <https://www.euneighbours.eu/en/east/stay-informed/publications/opinion-survey-2019-armenia> (accessed 17 May 2020)

⁴⁶ European Union Law (Eur-Lex), on 25/09/2017: 'Joint Proposal For a Council Decision on the conclusion, on behalf of the European Union, of the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Armenia, of the other part': <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52017JC0037> (accessed 29 Apr 2020)

its kind, as its concluded with a partner country which is at the same time a member of Eurasian Union:

“... It will now be important to implement it in full, so it can deliver its full benefits. We will work together on implementation and on monitoring the implementation we will bring forward. The agreement also supports the peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The European Union firmly believes that the conflict needs an early political settlement in accordance with the principles and norms of international law ...”⁴⁷.

Compared to AA, CEPA is a significantly edited and sacrificed version. However, it's a functioning one as it broadens the scope of dialogue, and includes the EU acquis in legally binding provisions across a range of sectorial areas of cooperation (Kostanyan & Giragosian, 2017). Despite the challenges of regional conflicts and Russian oppression, recently signed CEPA and post-revolution atmosphere promising Armenia to open a new page with the EU for deeper and more ambitious framework of cooperation where tangible results are aimed. For this purpose, action plan for visa liberalisation were introduced in 2017. In a very near future Armenian citizens will enjoy visa-free travel to Schengen states as Georgian and Ukrainian citizens.

No doubt, the effectiveness of CEPA is depending on institutional implementation under the given circumstances of the region -specifically resolution in Nagorno-Karabakh. Moreover, ability of EU to monitor and enforce the agreements depends on their presence in the region while other competing *governance providers* are there. (Lavenex & Schimmelfennig, 2013). Therefore, further analyses will show how the power transition in Armenia was implemented and to what extent it's been succesful in bringing tangible results.

⁴⁷ European External Action Service, on 24/11/2017 'Remarks by HR/VP Federica Mogherini following the signing of the European Union-Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) with Edward Nalbandian, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/peru/36208/remarks-hrvp-federica-mogherini-following-signing-european-union-armenia-comprehensive-and_en.htm (accessed 29 Apr 2020)

Azerbaijan – principled neutrality

As in the other Southern Caucasian countries, relations between EU and Azerbaijan have become more prioritized after the fall of Soviet Union. Formal relations firstly began by PCA signed in 1996, mainly focused on strengthening political and economic freedoms between two sides. This agreement is significantly important as it's the initiation for the relations. Current relations with Azerbaijan are legally in force within the framework of same PCA, but in February 2017 the sides decided to begin negotiations for a new framework for a mutually beneficial cooperation. Furthermore, cooperation with Azerbaijan is maintained within the framework of international organizations like European Council, ENP and EaP.

Located strategically on the Caspian transit roads and rich energy sources, Azerbaijan have always been a strategic partner for it's neighbours -Russia, Iran and Turkey- as well as other main actors of the global politics. Despite their strategic partnerships, Azerbaijan is highly interested in maintaining a neutral foreign policy. For this reason, Azerbaijan is a full member of the Non-Alignment Movement (NAM) since 2011. Further, Azerbaijan overtook the chairmanship of NAM until 2022 in a meeting set at Baku. The membership to NAM is taken very seriously in Baku as an opportunity to boost their international standing. According to Hajiyev -Assistant to the President- foreign policy of the country can be characterized by "4 Ms": Multi-vectorism, multilateralism, multiregionalism and multiculturalism. Although there is not any emphasize in the constitution regarding to their neutrality, this stance of foreign policy can be seen as a necessary result of instability in the region and loss of national territory to Armenian forces in Nagorno-Karabakh⁴⁸.

Compared with the other countries located in the Southern Caucasus region, Azerbaijan is the only state that haven't joined neither to NATO nor Russia-led Collective Security Treaty Organization. Instead, Azerbaijan worked on developing relations with both sides. Azerbaijan has rich energy sources that is boosting the economy. With its energy sources and direct access to the EU market, Azerbaijan is the least dependent country to Russia, compared to the others in EaP (Samadashvili, 2014). Compared to Elchibey's one year rule which ended in 1993,

⁴⁸ Vasif Huseynov, on 01/08/2019, New Eastern Europe, 'Azerbaijan sets to take over the chairmanship of the Non-Aligned Movement': <https://neweasterneurope.eu/2019/08/01/azerbaijan-sets-to-overtake-the-chairmanship-of-the-non-aligned-movement%E2%BB%BF/> (accessed 17 May 2020)

relations between two states are generally good under leadership of his successors -father and son Aliyev's. Relations with Russia is facing with disagreements especially in territorial disputes of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, South Ossetian-Abkhazian conflict and legal status of the Caspian Sea. Additionally to that, war in Georgia and instability of Caucasus region is causing an increase in the number of people who are not in favor of Russia. Currently it's assumed that there are over half million Azeris living in Russia, and Azerbaijan have a strong diaspora in Russia.

Current relations with EU are shaped by a few factors. It's apparent that bilateral relations made the most progress in the economic aspect. According to EU External Action Service (EEAS), EU is Azerbaijan's first trading partner and biggest export and import market both in oil and non-oil sector with %36,2 of its total trade⁴⁹. The EU imports from Azerbaijan is mainly based on oil and gas, and is a key foreign investor in Azerbaijan. While the economic rates are recently improving, there is still room for improvement in public opinion. According to 2018 survey, only 39% of Azerbaijani citizens have a positive image of the EU and 40% of Azerbaijanis trust the EU, while trust in EAEU stands at 27%. Notwithstanding, 70% Azerbaijani citizens associate EU with their personal values, such as peace, security and stability, economic prosperity, freedom of speech⁵⁰.

Most recently, bilateral relations gained momentum with SGC agreement. Thanks to this project, Azerbaijan -and potentially Iran- now became a vital energy partner for EU and is playing a pivotal role in bringing Caspian energy sources to the EU market. EU has put a significant effort and budget into this project to highlight the potential of Azerbaijan for their pragmatic interests. Baku -and Tahrán- serve as an alternative energy source to Russia, as EU is seeking for sources to reduce Russia's monopoly of energy in the region. This monopoly is not only affecting EU's competition with Russia, but also the political reconfiguration of Eurasia (Nitoiu & Sus, 2019). EU's approach to the energy security policy while competing with Russia gives us insight about the hybrid nature of its new external policy. Fueled by the

⁴⁹ European External Action Service, 2019, 'Facts and Figures about EU-Azerbaijan Relations' available on: https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/eap_factsheet_azerbaijan_eng.pdf (accessed 17 May 2020)

⁵⁰ EU Neighbours, opinion survey on 10/07/2018, 'Opinion survey 2018: Azerbaijan': <https://www.euneighbours.eu/en/east/stay-informed/publications/opinion-survey-2018-azerbaijan> (accessed 17 May 2020)

national interests of the member states, EU is seeking for expanding its regional independence while maintaining its safety in the region. The turn of events in Azerbaijan relations are met with satisfaction as it's reducing dependence on Russia economically. SGC is a project that is offering a great potential for the countries in the region. As stated in the previous chapter, there are over ten countries directly or indirectly related with this project. The project will support many businesses in the region.

Having started this grand project for the region, EU's energy dependence on Azerbaijan's sources are questioned normatively. Main argument is that EU's dependence has weakened the normative dimension of its policy towards Azerbaijan. Over the past years, Azerbaijan's human rights records have been showing a worsening trend. The country is classified as "not free" by Freedom House; stating that "in Aliyev's authoritarian government, power remains heavily concentrated in one hand. Corruption is rampant, formal political opposition is weak. In the recent years the regime has overseen an extensive crackdown on civil liberties, leaving little room for independent expression or activism."⁵¹ Another argument states: "EU's lack of coordination and consensus among member states and across and within the institutions over human rights issue in Azerbaijan prevents EU from exercising a sufficiently strong policy tool to overcome Azerbaijan's unwillingness to reform (Merabishvili, 2016)." Furthermore, given the circumstance on energy security, it confirms that settling of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is not prioritized as long as EU's pragmatic interests are met.

Supposedly, external governance of EU is focused on regional development through defined priority areas. As stated in EEAS official website, neighbourhood policies are focused on priorities for building an effective partnership towards a more stable neighbourhood region in political, socio-economic and security terms. However, in Azerbaijan, willingness for reform-building is rather low among the political elite and public opinion (Samadashvili, 2014). That is why Azerbaijan presents a difficult case in achieving these objectives as EU's strategic interests are more privileged than its conditionality for reform-building at the moment. There is no doubt that despite the normative shortcomings of the government, EU genuinely needs to the continuation of their cooperation with Azerbaijan. Although current regional and

⁵¹ Freedom House, 2020, 'Freedom In the World 2020' available on: <https://freedomhouse.org/country/azerbaijan/freedom-world/2020> (accessed 29 May 2020)

economic realities suggest a challenging case in Azerbaijan, there is always great potential for development.

CONCLUSION

Analysis & Findings

Comparing the dynamics of the ENP and responses from the target states highlight different outcomes from each country. Among the three countries of the Southern Caucasus, only Georgia decided to build their relations with the EU on AA/DCFTA's. Despite the signing of CEPA with EU afterwards, Armenia made their choice to be on Russia's regional integration policy and Azerbaijan decided to keep their relations with EU only in a strategic partnership level. Taking the public opinion about EU in these states into consideration, outcomes are highlighting an ineffectiveness of ENP so far. Thus, in this study, it was aimed to analyze ENP's ineffectiveness from the competing theories perspective and find out the main concerns and dynamics on the relations.

As specified in the aim of the study, Vilnius summit marked a moment of break away from ENP's originally designed functioning. This design was mainly oriented on soft power tools, promotion of common values and privileged relations for those who commit to these values. Following Vilnius, the value-oriented approach replaced by an interest-oriented approach. And that is been made clear by the EU officials. Assumptions were made for both theories, taking into consideration the criteria of the analysis.

Assumptions from the neoliberalist perspective have an excessive emphasis on common values. With reference to the results from previous enlargements and initiatives, a spillover effect was expected in ENP and partner countries for the cooperation. Although the purpose of the ENP is suggesting avoidance of new "dividing lines" between enlarged EU, the post-Vilnius era drew an opposite picture. Following the summit, it was clear that the achievement of the ENP depends on relations with Russia. Due to the lack of policy towards Russia, ENP's progression was stumbled.

Going towards the East where the EU's domain is weaker, neorealist elements are more explanatory and the common values do not have the meaning as such. Relative gains explain

Russian ambitions within the region as protection of its borders from a major threat. EAEU was established after Vilnius to alternate ENP in the region. Within the partner countries, relative gains affected their choices to be with ENP or EAEU. As given in Southern Caucasus countries, they either paid for the consequences or decided to cooperate with Russia.

Lessons are taken from Vilnius both for the EU and the partner countries. Following Vilnius, EU's external governance is more towards Neorealist elements. Principled pragmatism and effective partnership are more explanatory in the EU's current neighborhood policies than value promotion and democratic peace theory. EU's relative gains are the most important elements in further policies. These gains include the protection of the EU borders, avoiding new migration waves, cost-sensitive policymaking and so on. Common values and economic cooperation opportunities are still being used, but under conditionality tools like in a carrots-sticks experiment.

From the perspective of Russia, ENP is a major threat to their privileged interests. Although there is not an active conflict in the region currently, there is clearly a clash of interests in the region. While the EU is aiming to increase its magnetic attraction through ENP, Russia is going back to its 19th-century ideology of Eurasianism. EU's policies are facing with strong Russian resistance, and EAEU was established as an alternative. ENP initiatives haven't been successful in alternating Russia so far. Despite there is a high trust for EU in the ENP countries, dependencies towards Russia are very high to give up. From the perspective of Southern Caucasian countries, regional security dependencies are playing a significant role in their cooperation with Russia. Most of the countries are still depending on Russia, and if they want to cooperate with the EU, the costs are high. From the EU side, Russian interventionist policies are seen with disgrace, yet almost nothing has been done. EU's failure in increasing engagement of conflict resolution is shown as one of the causes of its failure in the region (Delcour & Hoffman, 2018).

This study points out that neorealist assumptions are more explanatory over neoliberalist assumptions on analyzing the regional tensions on Eastern partnership. Compared to the initial agenda of the ENP, the current agenda has a more pragmatic approach where relative gains are prioritized. EU's geopolitical interests have become more clear following the failure of Vilnius and that is been made explicit.

Discussion based on the EU's dilemma in the region has a great contribution understanding the limitations of the Eastern Partnership. The failure of the ENP supported with regional tensions and energy security, brings out the demonstration that in reality EU cannot be so proactive in value promotion, and is failing to alternate Russian initiatives in the region. Although the EU is focused on its interests in the region, this study has shown that it is failing to achieve its purposes. It's clear that EU has to reconsider its policy in order to achieve these purposes.

Final Implications

- EU's value promotion is a valuable asset for its interests in the neighborhood and its position in the international community. Opinion surveys from different countries are proving that the EU is one of the most trusted international actor. However, the EU's value promotion has been limited to attract these countries so far. High costs of integration and limited interests offered are causing partners to make their choice with Russian initiatives or stay neutral. Hence, ENP conditionality must be reviewed, and high costs of integration must be lowered. Lack of membership prospects must be replaced with attractive, privileged partnership principles.
- As clearly shown in this study, Russia is not interested in solving regional disputes in a peaceful manner. In its Eastern Partnership, results of these regional disputes are causing a security threat for EU and its interests in these regions. Hence, EU must take responsibility on solving these regional disputes in a peaceful manner. If necessary, hard power to prevent Russian efforts must be considered through EU's CFSP.
- In order to empower the role of civil society in the Eastern Partnership, EU must encourage people to people contacts between member and partner countries. Avoid one-size-fits all approach by creating tailor-made programs for each country. This attention will inevitably help the EU to get public support and its goals in these partner countries.

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Diploma thesis project
**Post-Vilnius European Neighborhood Policy:
The Case of South Caucasus**



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Outline of the topic

This study attempts to analyze the neighborhood relations of European Union from perspective of competing theories. It aims mapping the evolution of Eastern cross-border relations in post-Vilnius Europe and identifying the regional tensions through theoretical approach. Main argument is that post-Vilnius regional tensions in the Eastern Neighborhood are signals that neorealist assumptions will prevail over neoliberalist assumptions. Thus, the thesis attempts to show how and why the EU's neighborhood policies were evolved into today's shape since the initiation of ENP in 2002. Further, it aims to analyze the main argument from actor-oriented perspectives, with contributions of recent history. Beyond making theoretical assumptions, it's inevitably discussing the effectiveness of ENP and multidirectional contributions it brought to the neighborhood region of EU. It aims seeking answer whether if European Commission's "initially neoliberal" strategy of ENP is really designed to transform the region into a space with stability.

Between 2004 and 2013, 11 new countries joined the EU. This enlargement was towards the East Central European countries. Through this enlargement the Union gained a new border with new Eastern neighbors together with having full geopolitical place in Central Europe. As a continuation of these changes, Eastern Neighborhood was officially initiated in Prague Summit in 2009. The thesis specifically focuses on the South Caucasian members of Eastern Neighborhood of ENP, which are Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. It aims to analyze the cross border relations between South Caucasian countries and EU by focusing on internal and external factors. South Caucasian countries are picked due to several reasons: First, as it will be shown in the literature review part, there's a lack of literature based on the post-Vilnius (2013) Eastern Neighborhood relations. Except a few significant contributions, existing literature include controversial assumptions. Second, South Caucasus have always been an interesting region for students of the European studies due to the dynamics it include. After the fall of SSCB, there are diverging interests for various actors in the region. The three countries are coming from very similar backgrounds in the recent history. However, their approaches towards relations with major actors of the region (EU, Russia or Turkey) have been quite different. Third, my personal choice has been on this region due to the background I'm coming from. I believe this will help me to understand the dynamics of the region and present my findings in a feasible way.

In a nutshell, it's aimed in this thesis to express the inconsistency of the relations within ENP against regional dynamics. Through this way, it will try to find answers to the current skepticism against European neighborhood policies. Of course, we cannot make any analysis on South Caucasus without taking into account the role of Russia and Turkey. Together with EU, these countries are the other two major actors playing role in the region. Current regional conflicts between the regional actors are going to be analyzed and will be considered as some of the primary reasons of ineffectiveness. Although there are constant hard security concerns in the region, it will be questioned whether if policies of the ENP are still promising alternative ways to maintain neighbor relations within the scope of neoliberal theory on Eastern Partnership countries.

Eastern Partnership was designed in 2009 by EU to conduct political and economic collaboration with six former Soviet republics without any membership commitments (EaP, 2009). President Putin saw this new designation of Eastern Europe as an assault against Russian strategic interests and decided to combat against this process. EU's attempts to sign partnership and association agreements faced with aggressive opposition of Russia. Especially in Ukraine, the circumstances led up to military

crises in Crimea and even ousting of then-President Yanukovych. It was the moment when the world started speaking about the “second Cold War” (Naumescu, 2014).

Vilnius Summit

The tensions in the East led into this breakpoint with the Vilnius Summit in November 2013. European Commission attempted to create further political and institutional rapprochement opportunities to work with Eastern European countries with full potential. For this reason, EU offered Association Agreement (AA) and agreement for a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) to these countries. Eventually, intentions with establishment of EaP seem to be failed today, as four of the six countries decided not to sign these agreements with the EU. With Ukraine the latest to bite the bullet, only Moldova and Georgia are currently sailing in the direction of EU association *. Furthermore, these countries are affected by frozen conflicts (Nagorno-Karabagh conflict) and even have Russian troops on their territories: the Republic of Moldova (Transnistria), Georgia (Abkhazia and South Ossetia) and, more recently, Ukraine which saw Crimea annexed by Russia, despite the fact that the international community does not recognize the territorial loss suffered by Ukraine. “

Use of *fait accompli* policy on post-Soviet territories by Russia led Western expectations into unwanted consequences in each EaP country. Initially in Ukraine, president Yanukovych seemed to follow EU path and launched a pro-EU campaign in the early 2013. Together with Moldova and Georgia, they were very enthusiastic about signing AA's with EU. As response, Russia started to apply economic pressures on these highly dependent countries. For instance, Moldovan wines were banned on the Russian market (EU Observer, 2013). Ukraine was notified for 20 billion dollar debts owed to Russian banks and Gazprom. Eventually after the meeting between Putin-Yanukovych in November, Ukraine announced that they will not sign the AA with EU at the Vilnius Summit and will choose the path of Russia. In the South Caucasus, Armenia chose to follow Moscow and enter the Customs Union with Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan. Azerbaijan also chose the same path by going on early phases of discussions. The thesis will further investigate the dynamics played role in Vilnius Summit and the factors shaped today's EaP. It will identify potentials and challenges of the relations in the long term.

Theoretical and Structural Framework

ENP, upon its initiation focused on dealing with three main challenges: first, maintaining stability and security of the EU along its borders; second, to avoid the emergence of new “dividing lines” between enlarged EU and its neighboring countries; and third, to strengthen relations with those countries who, although not EU members nor candidates for accession, are of strategic relevance for the geopolitical and geo-economic reconfiguration of EU as a global actor (Celata & Coletti, 2015). Especially enlargements of 2004 and 2007 brought a lead to a new strategic focus from the EU in its neighboring countries. The inclusion of Central and Eastern European countries with communist backgrounds increased the debates whether further enlargement is fundamental for European unity and how to maintain safety of the union with new neighbors. So called “enlargement fatigue” term is being used to describe post-2004 EU external relations. The thesis suggests that ENP policies are

alternative ways for EU on promoting its soft power and maintaining stability in the region due to its enlargement fatigue.

However, that can't be said that ENP is a replacement for enlargement policies. EU, by its nature, will always seek opportunities for deepening and widening itself. Furthermore, almost none of the ENP countries are geographically in the European territories. But still EU is always obliged to maintain cross border cooperation regardless of deepening and widening. As pointed above in the priorities of ENP, security concerns are one of the biggest reasons of that. But more than that, the normative framework behind these policies are worth pointed out. Post-cold war public opinion has become increasingly critical about fixation of traditional concept of borders as well as the normative view it evokes. Besides that, international establishments like EU have encouraged the cross border cooperation and counter-discussions against these traditional views of borders. As neoliberalist perspective suggests, cross-border relations must be highly maintained for the stability of the regions. With this logic, EU has been using its enlargement tools for the accession of eligible countries around its borders. For the countries which are not eligible, EU conducted its relations from different tools. Despite the fact that neighborhood relations can never be identical to the accession relations; that can be said that EU utilizes its enlargement experience in relations with neighbors.

In the current decade, scope of ENP has been challenged by major external threats and violent civil uprisings. In early 2010s, Arab Spring demonstrations pledged a likelihood of major structural changes for the countries in the Mediterranean partnership. On the other side, since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the countries in the Eastern Europe have always seen Russian expansionism as one of the major threats.

ENP shouldn't be taken as EU's first initiative of relations with neighbors through an institution. Prior to ENP and even currently, EU has institutions for serving to similar purposes. Examples such as Eastern Partnership (EaP), Black Sea Synergy and Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EUROMED) can be given. Therefore, one of the chapters of the thesis is focused on presenting the evolution of the relations into ENP, and how the current structure is established.

Competing Theories

EU's practices of enlargement and deepening-widening represent an effort for the creation of "circle of friend countries" that follows the logic of shifting the loyalties to a new center (Scrinic, 2014). Initiatives made for the maintenance of this circle are important examples for neofunctionalism vs. Intergovernmental arguments. Enlargements of 2004 and 2007, together with European Neighborhood experiences suggest a ruling system that taking over the jurisdictions of the states through the spillover effect where further cooperation is aimed. As of for the Eastern neighborhood, cooperation is always vital for its advancement of Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). From neofuncionalist lenses, relations in the region are expected to become more interdependent through the integration path, due to the spillover effect. Signing of Association and Free Trade agreements between the actors will encourage further cooperation and strengthen the application of CFSP. Another perspective views initiation of ENP as only the part of EU's *acquis* transfer for creation of its gravitational center for the wishes of its political elites or of their absorption capacity (Moga and Pascariu, 2013). Recently, outcome of Vilnius Summit proved us that the success of Eastern

Neighborhood is dependent on the pro-European aspirations to the EU standards and norms have been displayed by the group of countries. While Georgia and Moldova have shown a favoring stance; Ukraine, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Belarus has not shown a clear favoring of their integration to the EU.

In regard to promotion of cooperation, recent decades have shown a tendency to neo-functional approach with new institutionalism. Under the inspiration of instrumental rationality, political relations system with partner states increasingly institutionalized and governed by social rationality. Thus, it's expected to discourage the unilateralism of external actions of big member states; and influence state elites through institutional behavior (Smith, 2004). On the other side of the spectrum, intergovernmentalists grant the primary role to the states. For the application of CFSP their claim is that intergovernmental cooperation will remain within same limits if the partner countries do not turn from object to subject of this common foreign policy of the EU (Scrinic, 2014).

Although this study is focused on neoliberal theory contributions, post-cold-war occurrences in the region compelling us to pay attention into neorealist contributions. Ideally, collapse of bipolar world system along with USSR, were supposed to bring EU into a political sphere where cooperation under neorealist motives are disappeared (Collard-Wexler, 2006). However, recent crises EU involved and constant pressures from Russia in the Eastern neighborhood make it still necessary to consider neorealist contributions. One view to see is that the weakness of EU in the foreign policy and security area is closely related to geopolitical considerations, such as power, peace and war (Moravcsik, 2001). In the neorealist perspective, purpose of the ENP is directly related to its interests and the actions of member states in the region. As can be seen under CFSP, these interests and actions are organized for mainly security and defense diplomacy. Target countries expected to adopt EU strategies of external governance if they're in favor or motivated by the outcomes. In a way, neorealist perspective of the relations can be seen as carrot-stick experiment. Hence, EU works on detection of mutual interests and compensates efforts of cooperation in the ways that it doesn't step on Russia's toes or compromise its security. However, results from recent summits (Vilnius and Brussels) shown that even if the Eastern partnership countries adapt into EU's strategies; these efforts are not compensated enough, caused by EU's limited governance capacity in the region (Langbein, 2014). Current unfavorable geopolitical conditions in the Eastern neighborhood are contributing into more frustration against EU policies.

Perspective from neoliberal approach suggests that EU's *bargaining power* against other regional actors is decisive factor on reducing these frustrations. Therefore, EU must focus on negotiations and signing of free trade agreements that can promote its interests to create a power of negotiation and ensure the economic interdependence. After the end of Cold War, EU created an absolutely peaceful environment within its borders via neoliberal tools. Threats came from outside the borders, from Central and Eastern European authoritarian governments or the governments under the process of transformation. For this reason, creation of soft-power is extremely important in defining EU's position of international actor. Neo-liberalist theorists admit that EU is a successful actor on holding soft-power to obtain preferable results; even if it's not a global military power, the EU can settle global issues through non-military terms such as diplomacy, trade and assistance for development (Nye, 2004). In this sense EU is often called as *quiet superpower* that utilizes enlargement and similar tools to diplomatically settle conflicts and promote its policies (Moravcsik, 2010). Given the recent developments in the region, it's currently ambiguous how far neoliberal soft power tools alone will

help EU into reaching the preferable results. Future updates might suggest EU a formulation of strategy which combines hard power and soft power tools for its external governance with Eastern partners.

Literature Review and Conclusion

Ever since its initiation, ENP have been subject to numerous academic studies mostly based on topics such as European integration, enlargement or external policies. While some studies focused on ENP in general by including both Eastern and Mediterranean neighborhood; some focused only on Eastern Neighborhood (Sasse, 2008; Schaffer and Tolkdorf, 2009; Korosteleva, 2011) specifically. After a considerable time since the ENP policies have taken, analyses conducted on its effectiveness led into diverging results. While Borzel & Pamuk (2011)'s study based on EU's promotion of good governance and the fight against corruption in the South Caucasus argues that EU has limited influence on reform agendas; Vasilyan (2019) emphasizes EU's role of moral power in the region and its importance on values and interests of the nations. Mentioning of influence, Delcour & Hoffmann's (2018) comprehensive work on EU's South Caucasus policy concludes the research by pointing out 3 policy flaws: First, the EU has failed to significantly increase engagement in conflict resolution in the region. Second, even though there were considerable concerns over the rule of law in some of the South Caucasus countries, the EU has refrained from using political conditionality. Third, the EU has focused on wide-scale export of EU standards, which raises questions concerning the EU's *acquis* capacity to serve as a blueprint for development in these post-Soviet countries.

In addition to the influence analysis of ENP in general, there are studies on specific sectors regarding to EU such as energy and economy (Sierra, 2011) or public opinion on individual countries (Muller, 2013). From the other perspectives, there are also studies based on different actors in the region (Shaffer, 2003). While Lusaac (2010) conducted their research on energy security on Russia; Haukkala (2008)'s study was based on Russia's reactions on EaP. In his comprehensive study Paul (2015) stressed the influences of Russia-Ukraine war. The outcome of the study was that the war has further exacerbated the situation, raising concerns over the extent to which South Caucasus countries can rely on the West. He further criticized EU's 'one size fits all' policies as the region requires more differentiated policies.

Structure of ENP and its transformation throughout its initiation have been another topic under the scope of academic researches (Naumescu, 2015; Simao, 2018; Knodt et. al, 2018). In the comprehensive book edited by Bouris & Schumacher (2017), contents are focused on diversified topics on ENP's structure. It includes contents such as methodological and empirical, legal and institutional, sectoral cooperation and so on. Researchers also examined the controversy between ENP's approach and domestic politics by case studies (Popescu, 2016; Ibrahimov (2015) to show individual issues experienced in each country. Majority of researchers believe in ENP's potential normatively; however they view EU's policy area in South Caucasus quite limited mainly due to Russia. Their main influence is regional interdependences and their studies focus on creating an approach where both EU and EaP countries can utilize.

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