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Gunel Mammadova

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**EU Policy toward Eastern Partnership
Countries. A Gap between Goals and
Achievements**

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Author: Gunel Mammadova

Supervisor: doc.PhDr. Bela Plechanovova

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Abstract

This study seeks to examine and assess the effectiveness of the Eastern Partnership Policy (EaP) of the European Union. Beside introduction of positive novelties of the Eastern Partnership, this paper gives a premium attention to scrutinize the possible limitations and shortfalls of EaP. Hence, the study aims to analyze some internal and external factors that complicate the effective functioning of the EaP. The inconsistency of the EU policy structure, the role of Russia and its Eurasian Economic Union (EaEU) in EAP, the ambivalent policy of some Member States (Germany and Italy are examined) toward the EaP, unconsidered discrepancy of eastern partners are analyzed and considered as prime reasons of ineffectiveness. In addition, examined case studies of Ukraine and Azerbaijan reveal that the EU's commitment to their "shared values" are controversial. This paper presents that the EU should find a balance between its economic/energy interests and normative values vis-a-vis Eastern Partners in order to fill the gap between its goals and achievements.

Keywords

European Union, Eastern Partnership, Eastern Europe, South Caucasus, energy, Russia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Euroasian Economic Union, democracy

Range of thesis: 132 215 symbols (including spaces), 72 pages

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 21.07.2016

Gunel Mammadova

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Master Thesis Proposal

Faculty of Social Sciences

Charles University in Prague



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Author:	Gunel Mammadova	Supervisor:	Doc. PhDr. Bela Plechanovova, CSc
E-mail:	67540222@fsv.cuni.cz	E-mail:	plechanovova@fsv.cuni.cz
Phone:	720634352	Phone:	251080278
Specialisation:	IEPS	Defense	September 2016
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Topic Characteristics:

The European Union seeks to promote security, regional cooperation and prosperity on its borders. Therefore, the EU with the initiation of Poland launched Eastern Partnership Program with six former Soviet Republics in 2009. In fact, the EU's policy interest toward South Caucasus and New Eastern Europe has formulated gradually since 1990. Over the past two decades, the EU has developed and expanded its policy toward Eastern Neighbors: South Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia) and New Eastern Europe (Moldova, Belarus and Ukraine). Content of policy has also significantly increased, especially Eastern partnership program that covers only eastern neighbors remained the main framework for the development of mutual relations. Despite steady improvements of EU's policy dimension, there are still challenges to achieve further development. For example, the consequences of the Vilnius Summit was not fruitful as expected. Furthermore, it should be questioned why unlike Balkan countries eastern partnership countries could not achieve further development in the way of European integration. Why EU does not play decisive role in the resolution of regional conflicts in South Caucasus as it was in Western Balkan Countries?

The thesis aims to analyze effectiveness of Eastern Partnership program toward the Eastern Partnership countries. I will analyze the setbacks, which hinder further corporation through my hypothesis.

Voluminous literature has been devoted to analyze European Union's foreign policy mechanism toward eastern neighbors. Some group of scholars in this field have begun to explore the dynamic of the relations from more country-based framework. Mainly they focus their attention to the issue from the opposite end by analyzing the challenges of member states to the Eastern Partnership program from what I am doing on my research. Relatively less attention has been devoted to analysis of the internal and external factors that prevent European Union to achieve effective implementation. However, literature

about goals and achievement about Eastern Partnership program has been growing after recent drastic events in Ukraine.

I will divide my thesis into seven part. In the first part, I will employ theoretical framework- (neo) realism and constructivism. I will theoretically explain EU foreign policy dimension toward Partnership countries. In the third part of the thesis, I will compare EU policy toward Eastern Partnership countries with Western Balkans in order to support my first hypothesis. In the next section, there will be discussed some internal and external factors: the role of Germany and Italy toward EaP, and external factor-Russia and its Eurasian Economic Union. In fifth section, I will analyze, how two region- South Caucasus and Eastern Europe are in fact different which leads to differentiated treatment of the potential of relations. In the last part of thesis, I try to draw the reader's attention with a case study. Out of six EaP countries, Ukraine and Azerbaijan will be chosen as a case study. In order support my hypothesis; I will analyze the level of challenges of EU toward Azerbaijan and Ukraine. Moreover, recent events, like the suspension of Association agreement, hybrid war in Ukraine, construction of TANAP pipeline will employed in the case studies. In the conclusion, I will suggest how to overcome these barriers to achieve further development.

Hypotheses:

1. The EU's gap in its policy toward Eastern Partnership countries is caused by internal incentives
2. The EU's Member States, Germany and Italy are less interested in Eastern Partnership program
3. Russia and its Eurasian Economic Union is a threat toward EU and Eastern Partnership countries relations.
4. Large differences between East Europe and South Caucasus negatively affects the potential of Eastern Partnership

Methodology:

In order conduct my research question, and support my hypothesis, I will use the empirical analysis underpinned by theoretical criteria, as well as two case studies. I will employ primary and secondary data for my thesis. I support my study with available books, articles, official documents, press releases. Furthermore, I will also refer to the official webpage of European Union, the report of think tanks and other non-governmental organization that are directly involved the EU- Eastern Partner countries relations.

Outline:

1. Introduction
2. Literature review and theoretical framework
3. The paradox of EU's foreign policy.
 - a. The policy toward the Balkan states
 - b. The policy toward the Eastern Partnership Countries
4. The role of endogenous and exogenous factors in the Eastern Partnership Policy
 - a. The role of Germany
 - b. The role of Italy
 - c. The role of Russia and Russian Eurasian Union

5. Failure of program: One program different countries
 - a. Social and political difference
 - b. Economic difference
6. Azerbaijan and Ukraine as a case study
7. Future dynamic of relations and conclusion

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List of Abbreviations

AA - Association Agreement

CIS- Commonwealth of Independent States

CSDP- Common Security and Defense Policy

DCFTA- Deep Comprehensive Free Trade Area

EaP- Eastern Partnership Program

EaEU- Eurasian Economic Union

ENP- European Neighborhood Policy

ESDP-European Security and Defense Policy

EU- European Union

IPA- Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance

PCA- Partnership and Co-operation Agreements

TACIS - Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States

TANAP- Trans Anatolian Pipeline

TAP- Trans Adriatic Pipeline

1. Introduction

The external relation with neighbors is one of the most challenging and dynamic realms for the European Union (EU). Successive EU enlargements, particularly accession of Romania and Bulgaria to the EU in 2007 (which reduced the geographical proximity of the EU with its eastern neighbors) and desire to upgrade the latter applied policies (European Neighborhood) compelled Brussels to apply a new policy strategy towards its new eastern peripheries. The EU has launched Eastern Partnership Policy (EaP) with the initiation of Poland and Sweden on 7 May 2009 in Prague, during EU Czech presidency. The new policy approach of the EU aimed at enhancing stability, prosperity, democracy and developing a deeper economic and political corporation with six participant countries in Eastern Europe (Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova), and the South Caucasus (Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia). The Eastern Partnership had been dubbed as an ambitious attempt, which would provide new stimulus for the realization of policy goals of the EU.

Indeed, policy has introduced some positive novelties in spite of its juvenile nature. The EU has been able to gain steady economic improvements with some group of partner states by signing Association Agreement (AA) including a Deep Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA), which should not be underestimated. Nonetheless, there are still some setbacks, which hinder the EU to attain further development with eastern partnership countries. Thesis is aimed to address and scrutinize those limitations, shortfalls that complicate the effective functioning of EaP.

This thesis will not only concentrate to identify major drawbacks, which is a threat for the effective implementation of EU's Eastern Policy dimension, but also it will focus on analyzing the evolution of Eastern Partnership policy from Prague to Riga Summit (2015). A gap between goals

¹ See Hedley Bull, "Civilian Power Europe: a Contradiction in Terms?" in R. Tsoukalis (ed.) *The European Community: Past, Present and Future*, Blackwell, London, 1983, p.151.

and achievements will be bridged in the background of realism and constructivism, which will serve as the theoretical and methodological underpinning of this study. Four hypotheses will be discussed to address the research question. Firstly, the EU's policy gap towards Eastern Partnership countries is caused by a lack of internal initiatives of its policy structure. Secondly, the leading EU Member States, Germany and Italy are less interested in EaP. Thirdly, Russia and its Eurasian Economic Union is a threat toward the EU and Eastern Partnership countries relations. Finally, we assume that large economic and political differences between East Europe and South Caucasus countries negatively affect the potential of Eastern Partnership.

It has to be mentioned that this study is primarily focused on the EU and some exogenous factors rather than on partner states to reveal the obstacles of the policy.

In regard to methodology, the empirical analyses will dominate over purely theoretical explanations. However, it will be more or less underpinned by the theories of (neo) realism and constructivism. Hypothesis also will be tested with the help of methodological tools such as statistical and qualitative comparative analysis and case studies (Azerbaijan, Ukraine). Together with related scholarly literature, study will examine the official documents, articles of decision makers and experts, interviews and statements of public officials.

The thesis is organized as follows. Chapter II starts with the discussion of the related literature regarding EaP. Second part of second chapter explores the (neo) realism and constructivism to explain logic behind EU policy treatment towards EaP countries. The third chapter of the thesis will give a glance to the paradox of EU's foreign policy toward Balkans and Eastern Partnership countries in a comparative manner to test the validity of first hypothesis of the thesis. The fourth chapter will examine the role of endogenous (the policy of Germany and Italy) and exogenous factors (role of Russia and its Eurasian Economic Union) in the relation with the EU and six partner countries in the context of EaP. Chapter V will demonstrate how two regions –Eastern Europe and South Caucasus countries are politically, socially, economically divergent, which requires the differentiated treatment in the potential of relations. Six part of the thesis aims

to access the functioning of EaP via selected case studies (Ukraine and Azerbaijan) by analyzing accomplishments and shortcomings of the policy framework in the lens of neorealism and constructivism. Finally, the last part will present the analysis of empirical findings and suggest some means how to increase overall efficiency of policy framework.

Thus, based on above reasoning, the study aims at answering the following research questions:

(1) What are the main barriers that prevent effective functioning of Eastern Partnership policy of the EU?

(2) What has been already achieved and what is still missing in the context of Eastern Partnership?

Contributions of the thesis will be empirical by exploring the EaP's evolution, limitations, effectiveness and its present and future stance.

2. Literature review and theoretical explanation

2.1. Literature review

Voluminous literature has been devoted to analyze the European Union's foreign policy mechanism toward eastern neighbors (Sasse, 2008; Schaffer and Tolksdorf, 2009; Korosteleva, 2011). Although academic literature about the EU's eastern policy dimension is growing, theoretical approaches attempting to explain its evolution and effects have remained underdeveloped. In this perspective, the literature about European foreign policy, its effectiveness and approach toward neighbors dominated by empirical findings rather than theoretical work (Tonra and Christiansen 2004, p.4; Knodt and Princen 2003; Bergmann and Niemann 2015, p.2). Despite the lack of theoretical works and their limitations, European Integration theories - neofunctionalism and intergovernmentalism (Moravcsik, 2001; Scrinic, 2014), alongside with International relation theories neorealism and constructivism constitute major traditional

theoretical approaches to explain European Union's foreign policy dimensions (Smith, 2016; Bergmann and Niemann, 2015, p.2).

Effectiveness of European Union's Eastern policy dimension has been examined from vastly divergent angles. Despite some setbacks, most researchers have tended to analyze the strength of the EU foreign policy instruments toward eastern neighbors. In this meanwhile, published literature emphasized steady improvement of the EU's policies and increased role of the EU in reform - building processes in Eastern Neighborhood states (Natorski, and Simao 2013; Sasse, 2008). Particularity, vast majority of literatures written until 2013 perceived European Union as a crucial actor in the promotion of security and stability of its Eastern Neighbors. Sergunin (2013, p.17) shows Eastern Partnership as *"a window of opportunity for the EU, Russia, Trans-Caucasian countries to develop a joint cooperative strategy regardless of misunderstanding and misperceptions"*. The existing literature interrelate strengthening role of EU in eastern neighbors due to spillover effect of neofunctionalism (Siskova 2014, Scrinic 2014).

There is also controversy and criticism against the EU's eastern policy dimension for its ineffective functioning. The earliest literature, Korosteleva (2011) argues that Eastern Partnership Program is just the continuation of previous unsuccessful policy of European Neighborhood Policy.² She stresses that major drawback in the content of policy is connected with the *"notion of ill-defined concept of partnership"* which prevents to develop successful ties with partner countries (Korosteleva 2011, p.6). She reveals socio-cultural and geopolitical gaps of EaP through the nature of policy especially by analyzing policy from more general perspective. However, study fails to include South Caucasus, namely Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia while assessing the policy. In another work, Korosteleva (2013) criticizes the EU, for its rigid and top-down governance approach in relation-building process with eastern partners. However, there is still gap in analyzing only the position of three individual member states in Eastern Partnership policy formulation

² European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) is the EU's policy towards its 16 southern and eastern neighbors, which launched in 2004. For more information see http://eeas.europa.eu/enp/about-us/index_en.htm

process. A number of publications have emphasized the lack of membership perspective of Eastern dimension of Neighborhood Policy as a major barrier to achieve effective results beyond its borders. For Kasciunas and Sukyte (2013, p.2), the lack of consistency and membership prospects explain policy's limited effectiveness. Sadowski (2013) argues that limitations of Eastern policy interrelate with incoherent approach of European Union and partner countries. However, he stresses that lack of financial support due to economic crisis is the major drawback that prevents European Union to develop strong relations with partner states. Sadowski (2013, p. 7) comes to conclusion that the creation of the EU Investment Fund for Eastern Partnership is an effective way of solving the problem.

Other major publications mainly focused on analyzing the challenges behind the integration of the partner countries with the European Union. One of the earliest works, Gromadzki (2010) argues that Eastern Partnership program is the challenging opportunity for partner countries. The author claims that a lack of democracy in all six-partner countries is one of major barriers. Furthermore, he emphasizes that building of democracy and strengthening the role of civil society in this region must be a fundamental priority for the EU. In line with this view, Gylfason et al (2014) enumerates factors that negatively affects development of relations such as corruption, lack of democracy, regional conflicts of partner countries and discuss the ways to overcome these problems. These works provide interesting arguments, however they mainly focus their attention to the issue from the opposite end of this study by analyzing the challenges of eastern partnership countries. Apart from that, they fail to provide theoretical explanations of this problem.

There is also contradicting view about role of the Russia in the EU's eastern policy dimension among scholars and policymakers. Early works about Eastern Neighbors do not even indicate Russia as a potential threat to the EU relations with eastern neighbors (Sasse, 2008). Wisniewski (2013) argues that the EU and partner states are main actors responsible for ineffective functioning of Eastern Partnership Program and there is no need to blame third actors like Russia. Delcour and Kostanyan (2014) show participation and interest of Russia and its Eurasian Economic Union in

the region as a major factor that affects the EU and Eastern Partnership countries integration dynamics. Bulakh and Verschoor-Kirss (2014) point out that the third party-Russian Federation under leadership of Vladimir Putin is great economic and political threat for further interaction between EU and partner countries. The role of neglected actor of Russia and particularly its Eurasian Economic Union has so far attracted limited scholarly attention until 2013.

Differently from the previous approaches, some academic observers in this field have begun to explore the dynamics of the relations from more country-based framework. For instance, Maksak (2015) analyses the Ukraine-EU relations under Eastern Partnership and come to the conclusion that reconstruction policy is needed to enforce by Brussels to increase future effectiveness of Eastern Partnership for Ukraine. Cenusa (2015) discusses challenges that Moldova faces in the way of Europeanization by highlighting the lack of communication between pro-European elite and the more traditional population as a main reason of ineffective functioning (Cenusa, 2015, p. 6). Similarly, Ibrahimov (2015) mentioned the factors influencing the perception of Azerbaijan in relations with European Union. Author clearly points out that the failure of the Eastern Partnership program *“is interrelated with the fact that program does not initiate any political guarantees against Russian negative reaction”* (Ibrahimov, 2015, p.29). Paresashvili and Abashishvili (2013) analyze partnership policy implementation in Georgia and stress the essence of partnership policy for Georgia. Kuzņecova, Potjomkina and Vargulis (2013) devote considerable attention to analyze each six individual partner states relations with EU and their approach in the process of “Europeanization”.

Eastern Partnership program become hotly debated topic after drastic events in Ukraine. Thus, immediately after these events several authors have contended that European Union refused to use its Common Foreign and Security Policy to deal with security issues of all six Eastern Partner countries (Schwarzer and Stelzemuller 2014, Ciolan 2015). Particularly, literature after Vilnius summit has revealed the fact that security dimension of Eastern Partnership program is considerably weak. Ciolan (2015) highlighted the importance of Eastern Neighbors for European

security and predicted his expectations from Riga summit, which took place in May 2015. Ciolan (2015) also argues that while “Russia using hard power” to conceive Eastern Partnership countries, “EU only uses the soft power concepts” for eastern partners. The author also have stressed that the future fate of EaP depends on how the EU will behave in the future. Overall, his work focused only security shortcomings of EaP.

More recent attempt conducted by Stepniewski (2015) analyzes effectiveness of Eastern policy in respect of Eastern Partnership Riga Summit. The author is drawing attention to analyze the rationale behind the fourth EaP Riga Summit by comparing it with Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius. Stepniewski (2015, p.19) has asserted that “*EU policy makers even unaware of how much EaP countries depend on Russia*”. In addition, he argues that “*imperial policy of Russia*”, and “*involvement of EaP countries in the European economic area is the most important future challenge for the EaP*” (Stepniewski 2015; p.21, 25). The author examines the ineffectiveness of Riga Summit by analyzing only Ukrainian case. However, analyses of EaP Riga summit for South Caucasus countries and two Eastern European countries are still missing.

One group of researchers in this field suggests that EU should offer specific conditions for collaboration and induce profound reforms if it wants to shape its relation with eastern neighbors, and increase effective implementation of Eastern Partnership policy. Bond, et al (2015), shows the role of educational exchange programs, flow of information in both Russia and eastern countries as a long-term investment for EU. Majority academicians believe that future effectiveness of policy depends mainly on policy priorities in each of six individual partner countries and their fulfilment of the requirements of European Union.

2.2. Theoretical framework. Realism and constructivism

Analysis of existing empirical literature showed that the European Union's policy toward Eastern Partnership countries is ambiguous in its scope. In order to understand the external policy of the European Union towards its eastern neighbors it is also important to briefly review two defining theories in the field of international relations that are realism (neorealism, neoclassical realism) and constructivism.

Before analyzing the external policy of the EU under state-centric realist approach (neoclassical realism), it should be highlighted that this kind of analysis represents certain challenges. Major problem to examine the EU foreign policy under realism is that the EU is not a state.

Nevertheless, realism is most suitable approach to assess the EU's external foreign policy. In keeping the logic of realism and attributing the assumptions to the European Union, which is not a state, we can observe rationale behind the EU's outlook towards partner countries. Particularly, the institutional structure of EU, which allows each individual Member States to pursue its own foreign policy in parallel with European Union and gives us a right to use assumptions of realism and explain EU's member states policy behavior in (neo) realist point of view.

There are several major assumptions of (neo) realism, which are helpful in this sense. According to realism, international system is anarchic and states are primarily international actors. Most importantly, *states are rational, unitary actors*, and strategically planned rational calculation of costs and benefits define their actions (Hyde- Price, 2006.p.221). Moreover, states might be "sensitive to costs" and revise their strategy "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, p.164). Further than that, neoclassical realism holds that foreign policy decision-makers made their decisions according to their perceptions, interests and motivations (Smith 2016.p.33). As Bressand argues in regard to eastern neighbors ' the EU pursues more self-

interested – the Machiavellian part of foreign policy ' which prefers 'realpolitik goals not the long-term multilateral ones'- which is called the "Kantian agenda" (Bressand, 2010, p.62-65).

Realism is not certainly enough to explain the EU's all foreign policy actions towards its eastern periphery. Despite contrasting approaches to above, constructivism also fits to explain the EU's relations with eastern partners. According to Alexander Wendt, there are two fundamental assumptions of constructivism: “(1) that the structures of human associations are determined primarily by shared ideas rather than material forces, and (2) that the identities and interests of purposive actors are constructed by these shared ideas rather than given by nature” (Wendt, 1999, p.1). Constructivism emphasizes the importance of norms and values which influence state behavior irrespective of whether these norms bring these actors additional benefits or not (Kratochvil & Tulmets, 2010, p.27).

When we exert the logic of constructivist approaches to the European Union, the Union can be regarded as “normative power” (Manners, 2002, p.235-258) which is more conservative and less rational compared to realism. Manners argues that “power over opinion” or “ideological power” is the main feature that portrays of EU’s international identity (Manners, 2002, p.239). Author also believes that as a strong “normative power” - European Union even does not have a willingness to use force for realization of its goals. In addition, while constructivism defend normative motivations, realism (neorealism) stresses the rationality of actors as a main defining feature of actions.

From the assumptions of two contracting theoretical frameworks, it is visible that on the one hand ineffectiveness of EU foreign policy actions in the Eastern Partnership countries are linked with cost-benefit analysis of EU Member States. On the other hand, Union is viewed as normative actor who is trying to spread its norms and values among partner countries regardless of benefits. In this perspective, there is always a gap between goals and achievement of EU foreign policy toward Eastern partners.

3. The paradox of EU's foreign policy

3.1. Policy toward Balkan states

The foreign policy of European Union is different from policy of classical Westphalian state. As Karen Smith listed, we can describe the EU as "gentile power", "normative power", "civilian power" even "hard power" etc (Smith, K, 2003, p.15). In order to demonstrate the paradox behind EU foreign policy, study will compare of EU policy approach toward Eastern partner states with Balkan States³.

Unlikely to Eastern partnership countries, the European Union has had a major defining impact to determine future fate of the Balkan countries as an international actor. The Balkan states demonstrated poor development tracks, undemocratic regimes and disputes as it was in the Eastern Partner countries. Notwithstanding with the fact that, the EU's interest toward the Balkan region formulated at almost in the same period with Eastern Partnership countries, after dissolution of Yugoslavia and Soviet Union respectively, the EU has gradually increased its involvement in the Balkans and has achieved considerable success in the way of Europeanization.

At the beginning of the 90's, the EU demonstrated rather passive, incoherent and inconsistent approach toward this region. Throughout the 1990s, the EU failed to stop the wars in its backyard, which resulted in more than 100,000 casualties and almost 2 million displaced people (Keukeleire, & Delreux , 2014, p.242). Even up to 1999, the European Union did not take action to promote Europeanization in the Balkans (Vesnic-Alujevic, 2012, p.24).

However, starting from 2003, the EU changed its foreign policy direction, which opened the new window of opportunity for the Balkan countries. When we analyze the level of EU involvement in this region, we can notice that EU's stance toward the Balkans has gone beyond trade and contractual relations, which it cannot use with regard to Eastern Partnership countries.

³ Envisaged Balkan States in this study are Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, Kosovo

For instance, for the first time, the EU launched its actual European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) operation mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2003 (Archer, 2008). Secondly, EU under ESDP started to undertake some military projects in Kosovo, which increased the EU's role to promote peace and prosperity in this region (Bislmi 2010). In this perspective, establishment of European Security and Defense Policy has shown that EU moved away from being solely “*soft power*” under European Common Foreign and Security policy to “*hard power*” which lend a hand to achieve effective implementation of foreign policy (Archer, 2008). Thirdly, Stabilization and Association agreements, Trade Agreements and liberalization of policies with the Western Balkan countries are the powerful policy instruments of European Union that can make wars "unthinkable" for Balkan region (Bismili, 2010,p.41-42). The leadership role of the EU in the Balkans in contrast to South Caucasus and East Europe bring more credibility for both the EU and the Balkan states. Now, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Albania, Montenegro, and Serbia are candidate countries whereas Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo remain potential candidates for European Union.⁴ However, the EU did not offer any perspective membership for Eastern Partnership countries in this sense.

Perhaps more crucially, the EU-Western Summit in 2003 has brought effective results for Balkan countries compared to the summits of Eastern Partnership. During this summit, the leaders of the Western Balkan and the EU official representative reached a consensus better known as Thessaloniki Declaration⁵. For the first time, the Union confirmed its ‘unequivocal support to the European perspective’ of the region and declared that the ‘future of the Western Balkans is within the European Union’ (Eviola, 2013, p.13). Thus, this statement offered the sense of direction and created the base for the integration of the Western Balkans. Over the past ten years, Common Security and Defense missions not only boosted the EU’s role as a global actor, but also substantially contributed to the state building processes in the Western Balkans (Ioannides, 2013,

⁴See official webpage of EU, Countries , http://europa.eu/about-eu/countries/index_en.htm

⁵See official webpage of EU, EU relations with Western Balkans, http://eeas.europa.eu/western_balkans/index_en.htm

p.55). Furthermore, Thessaloniki Declaration set up the base to increase the role of civil society in the Western Balkans (Kostovicova, 2013 a, p.102). Most crucially, this declaration succeeded to stabilize the Balkan region and to promote democracy, human rights, and transit to competitive and market based economy. In addition, as enlargement of Balkan states will bring the Member States of EU long-term economic and geopolitical gains than loses, it is in the direct interest of EU member states to achieve further integration with them (Vachudova Millada, 2013, p.1-17).

Moreover, the EU's Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA), which adopted in 2006 played positive role to deliver a coherent, consistent, and outcome-driven approach towards the Balkan countries. IPA as well-harmonized strategy offered financial assistance to these countries, which enabled them to face the challenges in the way of the Europeanization. Unlike its approach to the Eastern Partnership countries, The Western Balkan countries have also achieved considerable success in the visa liberalization process.

Despite the fact that there are still unresolved issues in the integration processes of the Western Balkans, in overall, the achievements of the EU's policy toward the Balkans are outweigh its discrepancies. Thus, no future new wars are predictable in the Western Balkans, because of active and effective leverage of the European Union in this region.

3.2. The EU's policy towards the Eastern Partnership countries

Notwithstanding important geopolitical location of South Caucasus- Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia and Eastern Europe - Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, these areas have never attracted the attention of the European Union until 1990. The Europe pursued *the policy of exclusion*⁶ until this period by standing away from neighbors in Russian backyard. However, situation has changed slightly after disintegration of Soviet Union, which Europe shifted towards *a policy of inclusion*

⁶ See Moga Teodor, Pascariu Gabriela "The Vilnius Summit – A Milestone in the Eastern Partnership"? European Integration: Perspectives and Challenges How 'Borderless' Is Europe? E-book of the Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence of Pecs, 2014 p.298

(Smith, 1996) and began to transfer European values like democracy, respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms, rule of law, and market economy among its immediate neighbors (Moga ; Pascariu,2014,p.298).

Initial evaluation of EU policy towards these countries launched with Partnership and Co-operation Agreements (PCA), which were addressed all post-Soviet countries with the exception of Belarus and the Baltic states (Sadowski, 2013, p.11). However, Partnership and Co-operation Agreements (PCA) of the EU was not specific and constituted just treaty framework⁷ in the relations with eastern neighbors.

The “big bang” enlargement in 2004 brought new dynamics to the EU's policy dimension towards the Eastern neighbors. This change led to initiation of the European Neighborhood Policy in 2004, which comprises sixteen countries in Eastern Europe and Southern Mediterranean region.⁸ The main aim of ENP was to promote good governance, social development and achieve economic and political integration with eastern neighbors without offering the accession opportunities for participating members (Lupu &Voicu, 2014, p.171). As a one single program, the ENP was not effective as it was expected. The EU gradually started to realize that there is a need to initiate coherent policy, which covers eastern and southern neighbors separately. Thus, the EU launched the Eastern partnership initiative with these six countries at Prague Summit in 2009 as the Eastern dimension of European Neighborhood Policy (Sadowski, 2013, p.8).

The Eastern Partnership initiative is complementary to the ENP and was designed with the aim of achieving the necessary economic and political reforms, and increasing stability, prosperity, and democracy in the EaP countries (Samadashvilli 2014, p.13). In this meanwhile, Association Agreements (AAs) and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements (DCFTAs) were constituted major institutional vehicles to achieve those objectives between two sides. It should

⁷See official web page of European Union, http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/vienna/eu_osce/relevant_policies_and_statements/eastern_europe/index_en.htm

⁸See more details in Communication from the Commission - European Neighborhood Policy - Strategy paper, 12 May 2014, http://eeas.europa.eu/enp/documents/strategy-papers/index_en.htm

be questioned what the EaP brought to the involved parties and in what extent the EU was fine-tuned those objectives?

Vilnius was the first benchmark summit following Prague on 28-29 November 2013. The EU politicians expected that the Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius would bring long-term benefits for the program, however reality has shown that the results were not fruitful as it was expected (Lupu & Voicu, 2014, p.172). It would be true to highlight that the EaP Vilnius Summit has had a certain achievements and benefits for both the European Union and partner states. However, Summit could not deliver what was promised.

The Vilnius summit prioritized "to finalize Association Agreements with four "front-runners" of the EaP " (Samadashvilli 2014, p.14), however only two countries, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia were able to initiate the AAs and DCFTAs agreements with the European Union. Furthermore, while Ukraine refused to sign the agreements with EU in Vilnius, Armenia opted to join Eurasian Custom Union in September in the same year.

The Vilnius Summit was an initiative for the Brussels representatives to reset its policy toward the Eastern Neighbors and clarify the setbacks in the ways of further corporation with the eastern partners. Unfortunately, it was postponed until Riga Summit.

Especially after the Vilnius Summit, the European bureaucracy has often been blamed for implementing "a uniform approach" while negotiating the association and free trade agreements with partner countries, without taking into account social-economic, political realities of each partner (Samadashvilli 2014, p.15). Most crucially, the European Union has been criticizing for its "lack of transformative power" to corporate with eastern partners without a membership perspective (Moga & Pascariu, 2014, p.297).

The Eastern Partnership Summit in Riga on May 2015 was a key momentum for the EU representatives to correct the misperceptions of the Vilnius Summit. As Judy Dempsey (2015) highlights *"if ever there was a chance for European Union leaders to show courage and take risks, it was at the Eastern Partnership (EaP) summit that took place in Riga on May 21–22"*.

Unfortunately, the EU policy-makers did not come up with concrete declarations towards the Eastern Partnership States.

The EU's policy approach toward the Eastern European Partners is visible in their final declaration, which states that “*the EaP aims at building a common area of shared democracy, prosperity, stability and increased cooperation and is not directed against anyone.*”⁹ This statement from Riga Summit of Eastern Partnership delivers clear message that Brussels has no desire to struggle with Russian's "Near Abroad Policy" and the program is no longer a priority for the European Union (Andreva, 2015). Furthermore, there were no any talks about to change the policy direction of the EU's EaP policy. Perhaps more interestingly, recently concluded Riga Summit formalized the perception that the EU's Eastern Partnership “*is on its last legs*”, and it is time to “*let it expire its own*” (Andreva, 2015).

Despite some achievements, generally the Eastern Partnership Initiative is less successful than desired. Russia is trying to become hegemonic player in the post-Soviet space, looking for alternatives to prevent the Westernization and democratization of former parts of USSR. However, the European Union treats as if it is unaware of on Russian's ongoing geostrategic competition for the Eastern Partnership Initiative (see more in Chapter 4.3)

The EU also demonstrates rather passive policy in the preservation of regional stability of partner states. In May 2014, the Commission of European Union in a joint corporation with High Representative has announced that EU is ready “*to enhance its involvement in solving protracted conflicts*”¹⁰. However, up to day there is no progress achieved in the resolution of frozen conflicts of involved parties by the EU. These conflicts continue to be threat for the stability and future development of the both regions. The EU has so far less involved in the resolution of Nagorno-

⁹ See “Joint declaration of the Eastern Partnership Summit (Riga, 21-22 May 2015),” European Council, May 21–22, 2015. Available online: http://eeas.europa.eu/eastern/docs/riga-declaration-220515-final_en.pdf

¹⁰ See Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, A new response to a changing Neighborhood, May 25, 2011, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52011DC0303:EN:NOT>

Karabakh, and partly in the South Ossetia, Abkhazia and Transnistria conflicts of eastern partner countries.

The European Union needs to work out an effective policy in conflict management process of the Eastern Partnership countries. It would be difficult for the European Union to achieve compromise with Eastern Partners without offering the mechanism to settle frozen conflicts of partner states. Furthermore, it would be impossible to promote the stability and security, build up democracy in the South Caucasus and Eastern Europe without sacrifices of the EU policy in the conflict management processes.

Promotions of democracy, human rights - major European values are the main policy priorities of the Eastern Partnership Program. However, a tremendous improvement in both democracy and human rights are less visible in almost all participant countries. The other major goal of the EaP was to promote reforms in six former Soviet Republics. However, the results of previously conducted analyses have shown that the lack of clear promises of Eastern Partnership Initiative discouraged partner states to promote rigorous reforms (Rukhadze, 2012, p.3). After Prague Summit, Brussels offered neither the "*enough carrot, nor the big stick*" to improve the performance of the EaP participant countries in the process of reform building¹¹. In a result, up today only Moldova, Georgia, and now Ukraine have achieved limited progress in the domestic reform building process compared to other eastern partnership participant states.

Together with reform building, assistance to civil society in its Eastern Neighbors was another policy priority of Eastern Partnership project. Unfortunately, the European Union's policy efforts to strengthen the civil society have remained insufficient particularly in South Caucasus region (Aliyev 2016, p.42), which will be discussed in next chapters.

¹¹ See: Interview: After Just One Year, Are the Wheel Coming off the EU's Eastern Partnership? May 7, 2010. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. http://www.rferl.org/content/Interview_After_Just_One_Year_Are_The_Wheels_Coming_Off_The_EUs_Eastern_Partnership/2035235.html

4. The role of endogenous and exogenous factors in the Eastern Partnership

Policy

4.1. The role of Germany in the Eastern Partnership

One of the endogenous factors that affect the European Union's eastern policy is the role of leading European states. The role of member states should not be underestimated as they determine the current and future fate of the EU's foreign policy. As member of UK Parliament Stefan Byers has argued "the reluctance of the member states against pooling their sovereignty will always limit the coherence of EU foreign policy" (Byers, 2006. p. 73).

Germany as Europe's great economic and political power plays decisive role to shape the EU's policy towards its eastern vicinity. In fact, Germany is aware of current regional realities and has a political weight to develop a new policy approach vis-a-vis Eastern partners. However, it is unwilling to take on more responsibility to increase the effectiveness and coherence of the EU towards its eastern neighbors. There are several arguments that support this claim.

Firstly, following the breakdown of Soviet Union, "*Ostpolitik*" which caused to pursue co-operative policy with Russia has become major part of foreign policy of Germany. In political issues, Germany "*is still guided by Russia first approach*" (Gotkowska, 2010, p.2). In the case of Eastern Partnership, Germany policy is driven by the fact that, the EU integration project must not jeopardize the corporation between Germany and Russia. Moreover, this corporation backed by business and economic interests of Germany. Germany is one of the largest trade partners of Russia. Last but not the least, Germany's dependence on Russian energy resources should also be highlighted. In 2011, Russia provided "36.7 percent of natural gas import" and it was also largest oil and coal supplier of Germany (International Energy Agency, 2013). Thus, a strong desire of Germany to preserve energy supply and maintain its relations with Russian Federation, even

pushed the Germany to block NATO membership of Ukraine and Georgia in 2008 (Bogdana, 2012,p.12-13).

Especially after annexation of Crimea and Russian-Ukrainian war, it was expected that Germany would pursue more proactive policy to support the Eastern partnership initiative. Unfortunately, it was not a case. Even the result of polls has shown that German society is against to impose sanctions towards Russia (Jordan, 2014). There is no doubt that after the hybrid war with Russia, Germany makes humanitarian and financial assistance to Ukraine, however this is occurring as a part of bilateral policy rather than strengthening Eastern partnership policy instruments (Gressel, 2015,p.5-8).

On the one hand, Chancellor Angela Merkel underlined the essence of program in recent Riga Summit. On the other hand she expressed Germany's position vis-a-vis Eastern Partnership by highlighting that "the Eastern Partnership is not an instrument of EU enlargement policy, and it is not a question of either/or, either moving closer to the European Union or complying with Russia's wish for closer partnership with these states"(Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Germany, 2015). Alongside with Angela Merkel's statement, a leaked letter from German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, which addressed to European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, urges the European Union "to quickly ease "Russian concerns" regarding the implementation of a free-trade agreement with Ukraine (Jozwiak, 2015). These two messages from state officials show that the German foreign policy is still driven by old *Ostpolitik*. In addition, Germany is aware of Russian geopolitical interests in the six post- Soviet states and unwilling to play its game in the Russian backyard.

Secondly, another argument encompasses the fact that, Germany known as initiator of European Union's integration projects, however it initiated neither European Neighborhood Policy, nor the Eastern Partnership Programs. Interestingly, when Poland came up with the idea of initiation of the EaP, it firstly reproached Germany to put this policy framework under the name

of Poland-German corporation rather than Poland-Sweden initiative, however Germany was rather reluctant and had decided to stay in the background of EaP (Samadashvilli, 2014).

Thirdly, stabilization and democratization constitute principal component of German foreign policy and it has a special weight in the Council of Europe in the promotion of human rights all over the world. However, it has not directed to support policy instruments in respect of the countries of the eastern partnership. Germany also does not actively engage to promote democracy in the Eastern Partners as Sweden and Poland did.

All these factors reveal the logic of Germany's reluctance to become driving power and come up with new policy alternative for the European's eastern policy. However, Germany's position might be key to achieve a success and clear political commitment for the Eastern Partnership Program (Samadashvilli, 2014, p.50-51).

The general role of Germany in EaP should not be completely underestimated, however Germany tries to stay in the background of policy. France officials during the interview stated that, if Germany suggests building solid support for EaP, it is likely that France will follow the Berlin's position (Samadashvilli, 2014, p.50-51). Thus, Germany' active involvement can create domino effect in other EU Member states as well. Whether Germany will take an active part in the integration process of Eastern Partners in the upcoming future it is still under question.

4.2. The role of Italy in Eastern Partnership

Traditionally, Italy regarded as a positive example for supporting the integration efforts of the European Union. In the program of the Italian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, it was stated that *"Italy will support and will actively contribute to the shaping of more coherent and effective EU foreign policy, with a specific focus on promoting democracy, stability and*

prosperity in the closer neighboring regions of the Mediterranean and the Western Balkans”¹². Particularly, in the case of Western Balkans, Italy strongly in the favor of future integration of this region to the European Union. Italian President Sergio Mattarella stated in his speech that *"the completion of the European Union with the accession of the Balkans is a key goal, and that the existing difficulties must not induce any recoil"* (Bonacquisti, 2015, p.4). Italy compels Brussels to assist Bosnia-Herzegovina in the reform building process.

However, the picture is quite complicated when we analyze the position of Italy in respect to the countries of the eastern neighborhood. There is no doubt that preservation of stability and prosperity of the Mediterranean region is in the direct interest of Italy. It is mainly due to possible negative results for Italy. After Arab spring, Italian government acknowledged that they should formulate policy by paying more attention to the southern neighborhood rather than eastern neighborhood. Specially, after the current migration crisis, with more than 150,000 migrants reaching the Italian shores in 2015¹³, southern neighborhood has become major priority of current Italian foreign policy. Thus, "two- thirds of Italian budget of 2014-2020" for European Neighborhood policy was considered for the south and only "one-third for the east" (Franceson, 2015, p.8).

Moreover, similarly to Germany, the Russian factor is another element that could affect Italia's eastern strategy. While Germany was interested in the construction of North Stream 2 gas pipeline, Italy was interested in the realization of the South Stream gas pipeline project with Russia. Therefore, both countries were reticent to impose economic sanctions on Russia.

Unlikely to other Western European countries, Italy is known for its pro-Russian policy. In an interview with Ukraine's Ambassador to Italy, Yevhen Perelyhin has highlighted that Italy has always had ties with Russia and former USSR (Sydorenko, 2015). Ambassador shed the light to

¹²See :Programme of the Italian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, 1 July to 31 December 2014, available online http://italia2014.eu/media/1349/programma_en1_def.pdf

¹³See Yournewswire, Italy Say 400,000 Immigrants Will Cause Country to ‘Crumble’, 27 January 2016 <http://yournewswire.com/italy-say-400000-immigrants-will-cause-country-to-crumble/>

the well-developed corporation by mentioning that "energy relations of Italian Energy Company with Soviet union since 1955 till now" (Sydorenko, 2015). Furthermore, according to the results of recent survey, which measures opinion of Italian public, two-third of Italian population advocate for the mitigating of the sanctions towards Russia, while only one-third supports the lifting of the sanctions (Bonacquisti, 2015, p.1).

However, we cannot ignore the fact that current events in Ukraine have influenced Italy's policy attitude towards Russia. After long delayed procedures, Italy finally ratified Ukraine Association Agreement with the EU on 11 December 2015.¹⁴ It might seem as a paradox when today's Italian government on the one hand is trying to support Ukrainian position, on the other hand preserve its relation with Moscow.

Interestingly, consistent with Ukraine, Italy has good commercial relations with Azerbaijan and Belarus. Moreover, energy is the main part of relations between Italy and Azerbaijan. It should be also stated that Shahdeniz gas field of Azerbaijan have a potential to substitute Russian gas in the Southern Europe. However, Italy wants to preserve its traditional energy relations with Russia. It is also important to note that, while Italy regarded as a supporter of security and prosperity beyond European borders, it is not intended to take this responsibility in the expense of eastern partnership countries.

To sum up, notwithstanding bilateral interest of Italy towards some partner states, improvement of Eastern Partnership requires corporation not in the intergovernmental level, but in the European level. Italy is likely interested in maintaining of commercial relations with those countries, rather than improving policy instruments of Eastern partnership. Perhaps more crucially, reluctance to achieve further collaboration is connected to Italy's interest to shift the EU's financial assistance to bridging the gap with Mediterranean region rather than eastern neighborhood region.

¹⁴ See Web Portal of Ukrainian Government, Association Agreement between the European Union and Ukraine, http://www.kmu.gov.ua/control/en/publish/article%3Fart_id=248279225&cat_id=248274610

4.3. The role of Russia and its Eurasia Economic Union in Eastern Partnership

Russia is major exogenous factor that is against integration efforts of the EaP countries to the EU. Therefore, the South Caucasus and Eastern Europe has faced the dilemma between the East-the Russian Federation and the West-the European Union. Both the Russian Federation and the European Union are potential trade partners for the six countries. However joining both trade blocks require some sacrifices from all six countries. Three countries -Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova have decided to follow the EU way of integration by signing association (AAs) and free trade agreements (DCFTAs) simultaneously attempting to preserve their trade relations with Russia, Armenia and Belarus opted for Russian led regional integration project, while Azerbaijan government opted for neither the EU nor Russian integration models.

Unlikely the European way of integration, Russia's previous integration efforts which initiated after disintegration of Soviet Union, the Commonwealth of Independent States (1991), CIS Free Trade Area (1996), Eurasian Economic Community (2000) were generally unsuccessful and lost momentum. However, after the EU's enlargement to further east, Russia changed its policy direction from reluctant observer (Delcour, & Kostanyan, 2014, p.3) to active player with its immediate neighbors. From Kremlin's perspective, the EU's growing influence in partner states is the threat for Russia's policy goals (Delcour, & Kostanyan, 2014, p.4). Even some Russian experts believe that the "EaP is hidden agenda" which designed with the purpose of to undermine Russian dominance in the Eastern Europe and South Caucasus region (Stanislav, 2009). Particularly after EaP project, Russia has tried to create instability in these six countries to restore its influence in the post-Soviet space. Russia's actions in Georgia, Ukraine as well as in Moldova have showed that Russia is ready to use coercive power to prevent further integration process of the EU with six post-Soviet states.

In response of the EU's eastern policy dimension, Russia initiated its own integration policy namely Eurasian Custom Union, which is called today's Eurasian Economic Union (EaEU). In

essence, Eurasian Custom Union that launched in 2010 has become major policy instrument of Russia to pressure in its neighborhood (Popescu, 2014, p.9). It was designed as a long-term project to reintegrate with post-Soviet space for common future.¹⁵ With the help of this integration scenario, Putin intended to restore Russian's role in post-Soviet Space.

Russia have tried to build up its integration project based on the experience of European Union. Undoubtedly, it would be true to highlight that, Russia's Eurasian Economic Union differs in nature, scope and pace from the EU's integration projects particularly from the Eastern Partnership and much work remains to be done to expand Eurasian integration. Even though, in contrast to previously failed integration initiatives of Russia, Eurasian Economic Union has been able to expand its scope and create ties with post-Soviet space. Interestingly, Russia has intended to achieve integration with its neighbors in a very short time of span, what the European Union has achieved in almost 40 years (Vilpisauskas; Alisaukas, et al, 2012, p.5). Indeed, due to Kremlin's pressure policy towards its neighbors, Eurasian Economic Union has achieved faster growth than it was expected.

Russia compels the member states to decide between European Eastern Partnership and Eurasian Economic Union as Moscow has economic, political and strategic interests toward this areas. The eastern partner participant countries Armenia and Belarus have decided to join the Eurasian Economic Union under Russian pressure. As economist stated Russia offers the Easter partners "soft power (talk of a shared Orthodox heritage), carrots (cheap gas and access to markets) and sticks (trade sanctions) " (Economist, 2013)¹⁶. Regarding to Armenia, the government risks to lose the financial and military support as well as Russian protection in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict with Azerbaijan. Similarly, with Armenia, worst situation is in Belarus where Russia accounts for 59% of Belarus imports and 35% of its exports (Pasquale, 2015, p. 52). Furthermore,

¹⁵ See: V. Putin (2011), 'New integration project for Eurasia – A future born today', 3 October, available online, <http://izvestia.ru/news/502761>

¹⁶ See: Trading insults: a trade war sputters as the tussle over Ukraine's future intensifies', *The Economist*, 24 August 2013, <http://www.economist.com/news/europe/21583998-trade-war-sputters-tussle-over-ukraines-future-intensifies-trading-insults>

Russia want to realize its strategic plans- to create confederation with the help of Belarus, and convert Belarusian its military and technical ally. For Moldova, Russia threatened to impose embargo on Moldovan wine, fruit and vegetables, to support the separatist movements in Transnistria and Gagauzira, and to make an amendment in the migration law of the Russian Federation, which compels the working Moldovans migrants to leave the Russian market (Delcour, & Kostanyan, 2014, p.6). Russia tries to use labor migration as a pressure tool not only in Moldova but also in all neighboring countries to join EaCU. Russia is also looking for the alternative ways to destabilize Moldova internally or offer "*special carrots*" for shift away Moldova from European integration.

Russia is interested in preventing of peaceful solution of frozen conflicts and maintain the status quo in conflict areas. Through this strategy, Russia intended to pressure economically, politically, even militarily the partner states such as Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia and Ukraine. Russia uses the protracted conflicts South Ossetia and Abkhazia as a card to revenge from Georgian government for coming to the terms with the European Union. More than twenty-five years Russia plays the same game in Nagorno -Karabagh to keep Azerbaijan away from EU integration.

In addition, energy is another key determinant to make a chose between the EU and Russia. With the exception of Azerbaijan and partly Georgia, almost all other Eastern Partnership countries depend on Russia's energy resources. Russia uses energy as an instrument to pressure towards its neighbors whereas this dependence is expected to reduce considerably in the near future. Moreover, Russia tries to complicate the simplified procedures to enter the territory of the Russian Federation for the citizens of Eastern partners.

The easy and "favorable" condition to access and participate in the Eurasian Economic Union makes this alternative integration model more "attractive" than European Eastern Partnership Initiative (Vilpisauskas; Alisaukas, et al, 2012, p.11). There are ranges of factors, which support

this claim. Firstly, Russia is crucial and big export market for partner countries without fulfilling the full range of requirements. According to a report of European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the members of Union experienced growth in trade turnover since they entered to Custom Union (Bayramov 2013, p.14). In fact, none of six countries has a desire to end up its trade relations with Russia. According to statistical data Foreign direct investment from Russia constitute 62 % in Belarus, 49% in Armenia, 22% in Moldova, 7% in Ukraine, 5% in Georgia and only 4 % in Azerbaijan (Financial Times, 2014). Secondly, Russian integration project does not demand any reform-building claims such as rule of law, a vibrant civil society, which are direct interest of authoritarian ruling elite of eastern partners. Thirdly, Russia as a regional player is able to monitor the developments even discrepancies of each six countries separately and treat or pressure them accordingly. Last but not the least, accession to the EAEU will offer not only free movement of goods but also free movement of factors of production such as labor and capital. People can live and work freely in any of the Economic Custom Union's Member states territory. The issue of labor mobility has brought extra benefits such as social protection (Article 11), medical assistance (Article 13) for the labor force of participant countries as well as for their families (Pasquale, 2015, p.60).

In contrast to Russian integration policy, the EU's association and free trade agreements bring additional commitments to the partner states by adopting nearly 400 EU regulations and directives (Emerson, 2014, p.4). The Eastern Partners need to follow the convergence of the European Union standards if they really want to pursue the pro-Western integration. The European Union developed these requirements for the sake of partner states without taking into account the specificities of the partner states. Thus, the partner states cannot afford the broader EU's demands because of significantly low level of development in almost all six countries. In addition, the EU's agreements bring short-term costs for all eastern partners, which promise long-term benefits at the end of the tunnel. These short-term costs might seen unaffordable for eastern partners. Another problem is related to the composition of the export products of ex-Post countries. For example,

Moldovan cognac is famous beverage in Russia and unfamiliar among EU member states (Pasquale, 2015, p.64). Thus, the question is in what extent European market will be substitute for differentiated local products of the partner countries that particularly familiar with the Russian market and how the EU can compensate losses of those states with the east?

Moreover, the EU offers insufficient level of financial support to meet the domestic needs of partner countries, which makes them more vulnerable towards alternative regional integration models (Delcour, & Kostanyan, 2014, p.8). As a result, at first glance Russian way of integration, which does not require any multi-tasking, seems more attractive for partner countries.

It is also true that due to Russian economic crisis, falling oil prices the Russian integration process stagnated. Even though, it seems that Russia is always ready to prepare all possible political instruments to influence the six post-Soviet states.

Last but not the least, future fate of both two regions depends on whether the European Union will come up with new strategic alternative or Russia will suggest more attractive offer for these six countries (Kempe, 2013, p.3-5) .

5. Discrepancy of Eastern Partnership. One program different countries

Together with the above-mentioned factors, another setback stems when we are discussing the Union's "*one size fits all*" policy mechanism vis-a-vis eastern partners. Despite the fact that these two regions share the common post-Soviet space, there are fundamentally different development gap among eastern partners in term of political, economic and social point of views. Thus, the EU's eastern partnership policy implementations are lagging behind because of those unconsidered differentiations. The identification of those gaps is vital for effective implementation of the European Policy programs. Today's Eastern Partnership is not enough to accomplish its objectives without looking into alternative policy options, which reflects realities of eastern partners. Figure one indicates general characteristics of the Eastern Partnership countries.

Figure 1. Data on territory, population, religion: employment rate and GDP refer to 2013¹⁷

	Armenia	Azerbaijan	Belarus	Georgia	Moldova	Ukraine including Crimea
Total area (thousand km ²)	29.7	86.6	207.6	69.7	33.8	603.5
Population (mln inhabitants)	3.0	9.5	9.4	4.5	3.6	45.2
Share of population aged less than 15	19.1%	22.30%	15.70%	17.10%	16.00%	14.80%
Share of population aged 65 or over	10.6%	5.80%	13.90%	14.00%	10.00%	15.30%
Employment rate (20-64 years)	60.3%	73.00%	-	65.50%	47.40%	15.30%
GDP per capita (in €)	2600	6000	5 800	2700	1 700	3 100
Religious	Christianity	Islam	Christianity	Christianity	Christianity	Christianity

Source: Eurostat 2015

¹⁷ Eurostat, Facts and figures about the Eastern Partners of the European Union, 89/2015 - 20 May 2015, <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/6836772/6-20052015-BP-EN.pdf/1b8e0bd3-a47d-4ef4-bca6-9fbb7ef1c7f9>

5.1. Political and social differences of partners

Soviet legacy was a common past that brought all six Eastern European and South Caucasus under one umbrella. However, six partner states are considerably heterogeneous. It is obvious that after the dissolution of Soviet Union, the Eastern European countries and South Caucasus countries moved in different directions.

There are profound differences in term of political systems of six countries. The first group of countries- Armenia, Belarus and Azerbaijan are autocratic countries, while second group of countries – Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova are partly democratic countries. Today's members of EaEU- Belarus and Armenia disregard the EU efforts in the field of democracy and human right because the ruling elites see them as a threat to their existing power.

Moreover, the divergence is visible among societies. Even starting from the end of Soviet era Ukrainians, Moldavians and Georgians openly criticized the authoritarian tendencies of governments and supported the democracy. Today these countries have achieved to change the political regime mainly due to the critical stance of their society rather than European Union efforts in this field.

More specifically, "Revolution on Granite" in 1990 was the first mass movement initiated by Ukrainian students became impetus of Ukrainian independence.¹⁸ After 14 years, Ukrainians again back on the streets to protest the legitimacy of presidential elections. This demonstration known as Orange Revolution helped to replace post with the pro-Western presidency Victor Yushenko (BBC Ukraine, 2013). With the Euromaidan event in 2013-2014, and continued hybrid war with Russian government, Ukrainians sent a clear message to the world that they want democratic Ukraine (Gromadzki 2015, Wenerski, 2014).

¹⁸ See: Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Ukraine, <http://mfa.gov.ua/en/news-feeds/foreign-offices-news/41110-25-ta-richnicya-studentsykoji-revoluciji-na-graniti>

Similarly, in Moldova, Twitter Revolution in 2009, which sparked after parliamentary elections, forced Moldavian pro-Russian Communist Part to resign. Due to this revolution, Moldavians were able to shape countries geopolitical situation (Mungiu-Pippidi; Munteanu, 2012). In case of Georgia, Rose revolution of 2003, forced the government to change the regime. These protests, revolutions were the sign of desire of those three nations to move towards regimes that are more democratic. It also indicated that vast majority of society in Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova are ready to stand up for democratization and spread of pro – EU sentiments, such as a rule of law, human rights etc. Unfortunately, pro-authorization tendencies also exist in Republic of Moldova and Georgia where the Orthodox Church possess essential position in society (Gromadzki, 2015, p.28). The Orthodox Church supports traditional values of authoritarianism rather than European liberal democracy. Predominant role of church in these societies is the barrier for effective future integration of both two countries.

However, in countries like Azerbaijan, Belarus and Armenia measures for democratization among society are not on the same level as discussed above-mentioned countries. Therefore, the EU's *one-size work fits all approach* cannot bring effective results for countries which lagging behind in this perspective. Thus, the EU should place more premiums to support democratization among different levels of society in case of Azerbaijan, Belarus and Armenia. Also the Brussels representatives, NGO' should place strong emphasis to support democratic actors in these countries.

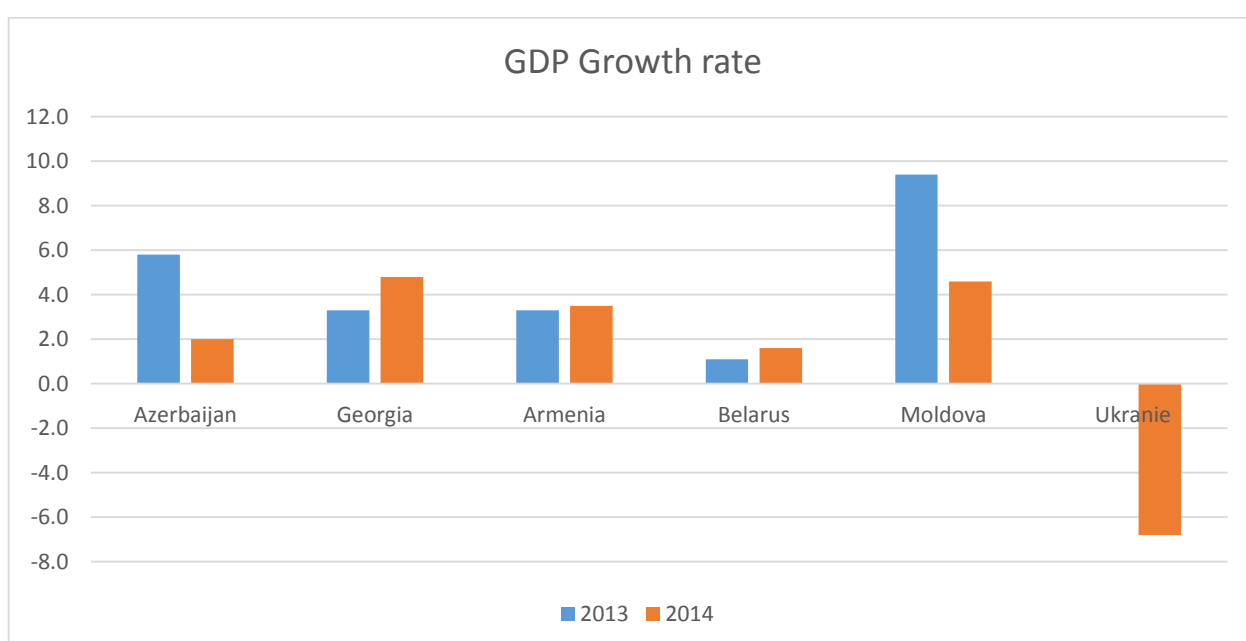
Furthermore, they become more diverse when we analyze foreign policy preferences of each partners. Today, Moldova, Belarus and Ukraine demonstrate more likely pro-European, Armenia and Belarus pro- Russian and Azerbaijan balanced foreign policy.

The EU should understand the economic, societal, and political differences of six partners in order not to face difficulties and achieve effectiveness in the policy implementations in the years ahead.

5.2. Economic differences of partners

With the exception of a little similarity, the economic situation of six Eastern Partnership countries is completely different. The economic indicators are considerably varied not only between South Caucasus countries but also for Eastern European Countries. From below described graph, it is clear that there is a high diversification in the economic growth of all six eastern partners.

Fig.2 GDP growth rate of the Eastern partnership countries in 2013-2014



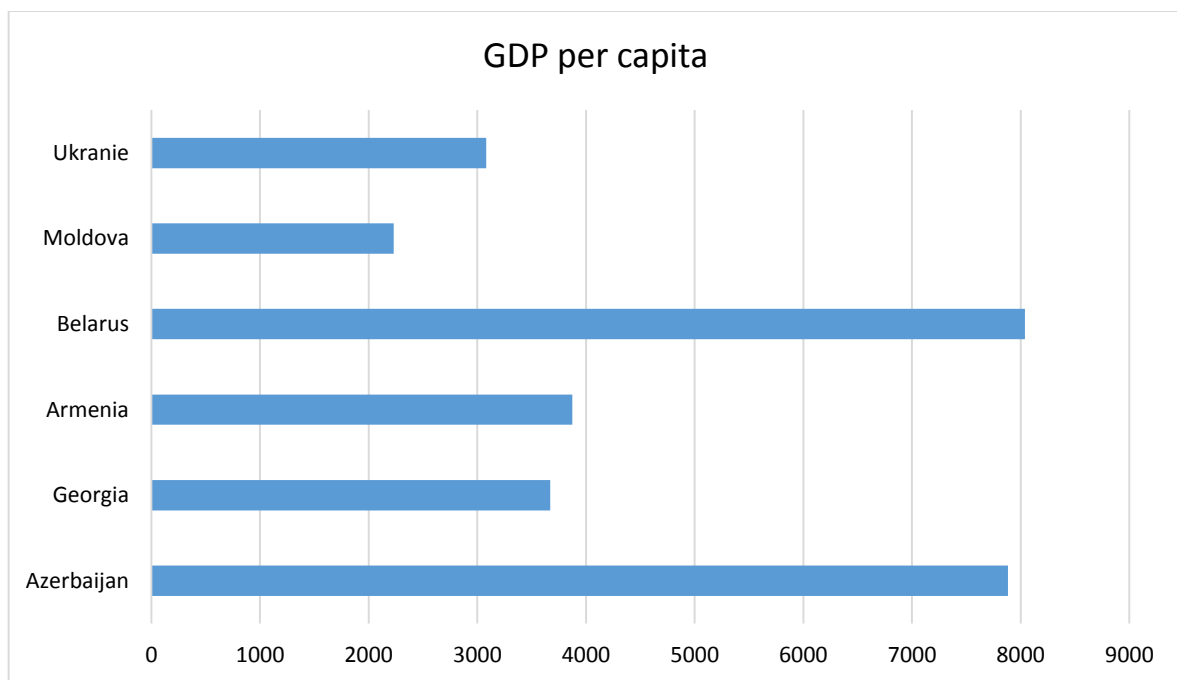
Source: Author's calculations based on Word Bank data for 2013-2014¹⁹

While Azerbaijan and Moldova achieved more economic growth in 2013, Belarus and Ukraine has seen less or zero growth in the same period. In 2014, the trend changed significantly in Azerbaijan and Ukraine due to recent economic challenges (declined oil prices) and existence of on-going conflict respectively. On the other hand, Georgia saw up to 5 % growth, while Ukraine experienced with the negative growth in 2014.

¹⁹ In 2013 Ukraine experienced zero growth therefore growth is not visible in the Figure 2

It is also worth taking a brief look to the GDP per capita indicators of six eastern partners. The diversity of these six countries is on a greater scale if we look at figure 3. It is visible that we can group countries differently according to GDP per capita indicators. While Belarus and Azerbaijan are most prosperous among Eastern partners, Georgia, Armenia, Ukraine and Moldova have a lowest level of income.

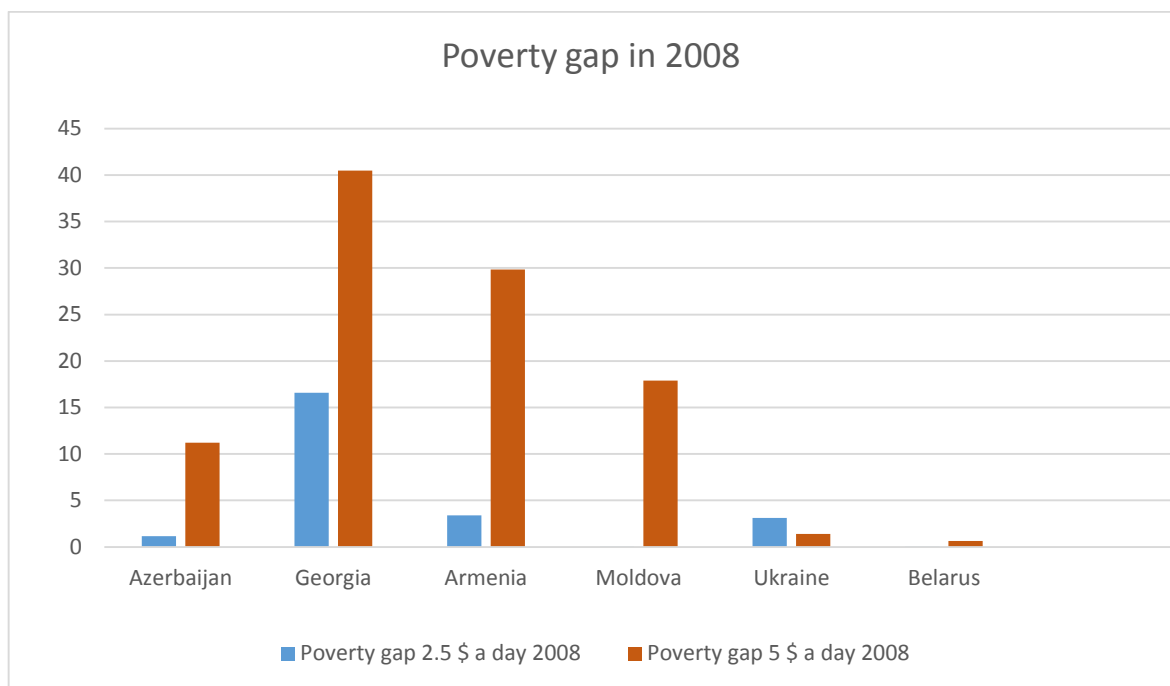
Fig.3 GDP per capita for EaP countries in 2014



Source: Author's calculations based on World Bank data for 2014

When the Eastern Partnership program started, the international poverty line of USD 1.25 a day (in PPP) of those six countries was divergent: 16% in Georgia, 3% in Armenia and Ukraine, 1% in Azerbaijan. However, divergence were more notably visible according to the USD 2.15 PPP a day threshold: 40% in Georgia, 30% in Armenia, 18% in Moldova, 11% in Azerbaijan, 1.3% in Ukraine and 0.6% in Belarus. (Figure 4. World Bank Data). Studies have shown that divergence still exist in term of unemployment rate. There was high unemployment level 13 % in Georgia and 9% in Ukraine in 2014 compared to other eastern partners (Pasquale, 2015, p.18).

Fig.4 Poverty gap (2.5\$ and 5\$ a day) in Eastern Partnership countries in 2008



Source: Author's calculations based on Word Bank Data for 2008

It is also important to mention that export structure of Eastern Partners and importance of their trade relations with the EU vary from one country to another. For example, unlikely to other eastern partners, Azerbaijan is a major energy exporter. Due to its energy-rich economy, Azerbaijan economically is less dependent country from Russia. Moldova is highly depended on agriculture particularly on wine production. Ukraine export mainly relies on raw and heavy industry materials, manufactured goods in case of Armenia, and machinery in Georgia. Fig 5 accurately shows Eastern Partner countries diversification in the trade relations with EU.

Fig 5. EU trade in goods with the Eastern Partners (in € million), 2014

Country	Export	Import
Azerbaijan	3487	13159
Armenia	714	276
Georgia	1911	657
Belarus	7464	3428
Moldova	2355	1159
Ukraine	17143	13764

Source: Eurostat 2014

Ukraine is the largest exporter to the EU, followed by Belarus and Azerbaijan, at the same time the major market for EU imports.²⁰ In addition, the difference is clear from the choice of Eastern Partners' trade partner (see Figure A).

Thus, economic indicators produced by International Organizations help us to show economic disparity of eastern partners, which governed under single EU policy.

²⁰ See :Eurostat, Facts and figures about the Eastern Partners of the European Union , 89/2015 - 20 May 2015 , <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/6836772/6-20052015-BP-EN.pdf/1b8e0bd3-a47d-4ef4-bca6-9fbb7ef1c7f9>

6. Ukraine and Azerbaijan as a case study

6.1. Evolution and effectiveness of EU's policy towards Ukraine

Ukraine has had more profound simultaneously controversial relations with the European Union, which is considered as an ideal case to examine effectiveness of EaP under the lens of (neo) realism and constructivism. Ukraine is the largest and the most attractive country in term of the population weight, territory, size of economy and its industrial capacity in the EU's Eastern Partnership (Smith Nicolas, 2016, p.103). Moreover, due to its transit importance and strategic location, Ukraine plays a pivotal role in European security.

The negotiations of EU and Ukraine have started when the Partnership and Corporation Agreement (PCA) was signed in 1994 during early days of presidency of Kuchma and PCA entered into force just after four years, in 1998 (Molchanov, 2004,p.457). Ukraine became the first CIS country that signed the PCA. However, initial phase of relations was slow and unclear (Pidluska 2002, Moroney 2002, Korbut et al 2001, Korostleva 2012). Period until 2004 characterized as "declaratory Europeanization" which "no clear priorities were agreed, implemented or monitored by the EU and Ukrainian government" and "made Ukraine's 'European choice' marginal" (Wolczuk, 2009, p.197).

Nonetheless, relations of the EU and Ukraine have entered a new phase with the orange revolution and the new presidential elections in 2004, which replaced Kuchma with pro-European candidate president Yushchenko (Dias, 2011, p.16). Indeed, during the presidency of Yushchenko, Ukraine performed much better and deserved membership to the European Union. With the initiation of Eastern Partnership, the EU aimed to promote democracy, stability, good governance and to support economic and political development of Ukraine without offering membership perspective. Thus, starting from presidency of Yushchenko, the EU refused to act as "a truly normative power" which later can avoid losing Ukraine to Russia.

The other phase of relations between EU and Ukraine started with the election of President Viktor Yanukovich in 2010. Although Yanukovich made his first official visit to Brussels and the realignment with Russia was the policy priority for him. On the one hand, under the leadership of Yanukovich, the relations of EU and Ukraine were marked by Euroscepticism, on the other hand, he did not suspend its relations with Brussels (Dias, 2011, p.18). However, interestingly, despite of the worst democratic indicators during the presidency of Yanukovich, the EU started to offer closer economic corporation in the scope of Association Agreement.

As previously discussed, the EaP targets to achieve both economic and political ties with eastern neighbors. In the context of Ukraine, The EU gave a premium attention to its trade relation with Ukraine. Concisely, the EU has offered the Deep and Compressive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) to Ukraine as a part of Association Agreement in 2008. Essentially, DCFTA is *"a framework for modernizing its trade relations and for economic development by the opening of markets via the progressive removal of customs tariffs and quotas, and by an extensive harmonization of laws, norms and regulations in various trade-related sectors, creating the conditions for aligning key sectors of the Ukrainian economy to EU standards"* (European Commission, 2013). ²¹

Further than this, outside of AAs and DCFT, the EU's policy focused on achieving security and normative objectives like illegal migration, terrorism, organized crime, weapons of mass destructions, energy security, expansion of European peace projects to Ukraine, promotion of democracy and visa liberalization. However, the normative objectives of EaP have brought little change to the eastern countries particularly to Ukraine (Christou, 2010, p.415-416).

In the official documents, it has expressed that the EU offered economic corporation to Ukraine in the condition of improving normative values such as democracy, rule of law, human rights. However, the EU's Ukraine policy via AA and DCFT mainly based on its material as well

²¹ See more European Commission, 'EU-Ukraine Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area', available online http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2013/april/tradoc_150981.pdf

as security interests. Certainly, it would be inaccurate to argue that the European Union through EaP policy is not treating as a normative power in its interactions with Ukraine. However, in its trade offer towards Ukraine "EU pursues self-interested goals over normative ones " (Smith N, 2016, p.29-48).

Clearly, under the pressure of Russia, President Yanukovich refused to sign the AA at the Vilnius summit of Eastern Partnership in 2013. However, the agreement resigned on 27 June 2014 with the initiation of both sides. Newly agreed Association Agreement intended to be a blueprint for the Ukraine by the European Parliament. However, when we analyze the content of new Association Agreement, it is visible that it promises reforms mainly in trade, finance and economic sectors of Ukraine. Nevertheless, the EU sees Ukraine as an attractive trade partner the Association Agreement has not envisaged any membership perspectives to Ukraine yet.

The other discrepancy of the EaP policy can be explained with the ambivalent policy of Member States towards Ukraine. Poland, Sweden, later on Lithuania and the three remaining Visegrad group countries like Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia strongly advocated strengthening of the EU policy towards Ukraine (Copsey; Pomorska, 2014). However, strategic partners such as Germany, Italy and France have "special relations" with Russia, which make them reluctant to support more proactive Ukrainian policy of the EU (Dieter, 2011, p.127-142). As Riabchuk argued the "Russian first policy and West European Russocentrism not only overshadows but also profoundly harms the EU-Ukraine relations"(Riabchuk, 2010,p.10) . Further than this, pragmatic policy of Germany, France, and Italy toward Russia was a major setback for assertive and effective policy response of the EU to the Ukrainian crisis (Smith, 2016).

6.1.1. The Role of Russia in the EU's policy towards Ukraine

It is not possible to examine the evolution of the EU policy approach toward Ukraine without considering the role of Russia in this process. Ukraine will continue to be a great concern to Russia. It should be noted that there are several ties between Ukraine and Russia, which create uncertainties and challenges in the of EU's Ukraine strategy (Giusti, Penkova, 2010, 99-118).

First and foremost, energy has shaped the relations of Ukraine and Russia. Ukraine plays a pivotal role to transit Russian gas to Europe (see Fig. B). Security of Russian gas transit through Ukraine has been cornerstone of EU-Ukraine relations. Thus, Russia provided 30 percent gas needs of Europe, which roughly half of it flowed via Ukraine. Conversely, Ukraine is also overwhelmingly depended on Russian energy resources. Until end of 2013, Ukraine bought 95% of its gas from Russia (Naftogaz, 2015). It is not surprising that throughout history, Russia used gas as means to keep Ukraine under its political leverage and to destabilize country. Moscow threatened Ukraine to make economic and political commitments in favor of Russia in return for easing Ukrainian gas debt (Hafner, 2012, p.3). Gazprom-Russian gas exporting monopoly cut off gas supplies to Ukraine explaining with nonpayment of Ukrainian government, which led to the gas dispute between Russia and Ukraine on several occasions in 2006, 2009, and 2011. In order to reduce the transit importance of Ukraine, Russia also prompted to research new pipeline alternatives like North Stream, which connects Russia directly with Germany across the Baltic Sea, and South Stream pipeline across the Black Sea (Hafner, 2012,p.4). The second Ukrainian-Russian gas crisis in 2009 increased the reputation of Russia as major energy supplier in Eastern and Central Europe as well as in Ukraine. In a result, Naftogaz –the national Oil and Gas Company of Ukraine signed 10-years gas supply and transit contracts with Gazprom which planned to run until 2019 under the leadership of Prime Ministers Yulia Tymoshenko and Vladimir Putin respectively. However, Kiev could not afford to pay accumulated gas debts and Naftogaz had tried to reduce the volume of Russian gas from 52 bcm/year as envisaged in Russian-Ukrainian gas to

27 bcm/year in 2012 contract (Hafner 2012, p.10). In a response, Russia offered Ukraine to join its Eurasian Custom Union in return to discounted gas price that was just two times less than it paid before. Russia was able to achieve its policy goal when Mr Yanukovich refused to sign the Association Agreement with EU in November 2013 at the last moment. President came to terms with Russia to pay \$268.5 per 1.000 m³ instead of the nearly \$400/1.000 c/m for Ukraine's gas imports from Russia (Theodoros, 2015, p.204). From this point, it is crystal clear that Kremlin always used gas prices and Ukrainian accumulated gas debt as a pressure to deter Kiev from seeking closer corporation with the EU and join its Eurasian Economic Union.

However, Russian annexation of Crimea and on-going aggression in eastern Ukraine has drastically changed the situation. According to the data of US Energy Information Administration Energy Ukraine's gas imports from Russia in 2014 were reduced nearly half compared to 2013.²² Ukraine government has announced desire to lessen their dependence from Russian energy resources. Ties between Russia and Ukraine has been broken completely when Ukraine decided to stop the purchase of Russian gas on 25 November 2015, and continue to deliver the Russian gas to Europe according to terms of existing contract (Natural Gas Europe, 2015).²³

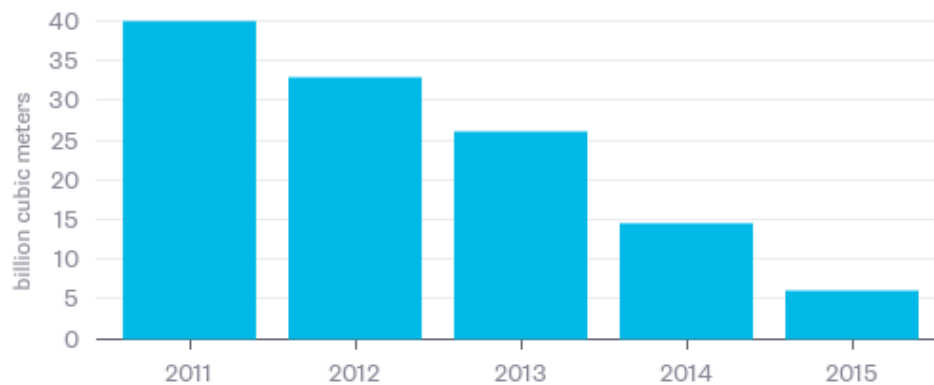
Unfortunately, Ukraine is not capable of completely reduce its substantial energy dependence from Russia at least in a very short period. In spite of Ukraine signed shale gas deal with Shell and Shevron in 2013, the exploration of shale gas operations had been suspended due to ongoing conflicts in eastern part of Ukraine. Moreover, starting from the end of 2014, Ukraine is able to meet its energy requirements due to increased Russian exports to the European Union, which resold to Ukraine by the EU (Theodoros, 2015, p.205-206). At first glance, it might seem

²² See more details: U.S. Energy Information Administration (U.S. E.I.A.), Russia Country Note, 28 July, 2015, <https://www.eia.gov/beta/international/analysis.cfm?iso=RUS>

²³ See more details :Natural Gas Europe, 2 December 2015, <http://www.naturalgaseurope.com/six-views-on-russia-ukraine-gas-ties-for-coming-winter-26880>

that Ukraine considerably diminished its dependence on Russian gas in 2015 (See figure 7). However, in essence, Ukraine indirectly still depends on Russian energy resources.

Figure 7: Ukraine's imports on natural gas from Russia



Source: Uktransgaz

The other component of the Soviet legacy is ethnic Russians, which constitutes 17 per cent of total population of Ukraine (CIA, 2016). The east and southern parts of Ukraine are mostly pro-Russian, which helps Moscow to strengthen its position in eastern parts of Ukraine.

Moreover, throughout the history Ukraine has become a vital for Russian naval base in Crimea, which allowed the Moscow to preserve its hegemony in the Black Sea. Russia guaranteed its presence in Black Sea, when President Viktor Yanukovich signed a new gas deal with Russian President Dmitri Medvedev in 2010, which promised Ukraine with a discount on Russian gas in return for extension of Russian Black Sea Fleet at Sevastopol by 25 years, at least until 2042 (Korosteleva, 2013 , p.88).

Last but not the least, it is important to underline that Russia is one of the biggest economic partner of Ukraine. In 2014, Russian represented 18% of total exports, and 23% of total imports

of Ukraine (World Trade Organization, 2015). However due to the tensions, starting from January 2016, Russia suspended its trade relations with Ukraine.

Reasoning above-mentioned ties Russia has influenced Ukrainian elites to keep Ukraine away from possible Euro-Atlantic integration. Annexation of Crimea, recent ongoing hybrid war between Russia and Ukraine, obviously shows that Russia is a great challenge for Ukraine integration efforts toward Europe. Even the rejection of Holland's population the EU's association agreement with Ukraine on Nederland's national referendum on 6 April 2016 is called as "Putin' a propaganda triumph" (Umland, 2016).

As long as Russia ready to use "realpolitik" and continues to see Ukraine as its own sphere of influence, it will continue to undermine Ukraine's corporation with the EU. Unfortunately, in face of Russian military intervention to Crimea, EU just answered with its "soft power - diplomacy and economic sanctions" which is not effective against Putin's Russia (Barata, 2014). Furthermore, Sthephan Walt claimed that in the case of Ukraine the EU officials "seem unable to recognize that Putin might be reacting to what he sees as a genuine threat to Russia's vital interests, and that he might be willing to play hardball to defend his position" (Walt, S. 2014).

Several scholar argued that Ukrainian crisis and Russian aggression in Crimea ones more have demonstrated ineffectiveness of the EU policy in Ukraine (Forbig 2013, Pridham 2014). Indeed, in the light of Ukraine crisis, the "EU's ostensible normative power role" illustrated its inappropriate functioning in response to Russian continuous aggression (Smith, 2016).

Ultimately, when assessing the EU's EaP from the onset of policy to the recent Ukraine crisis it is arguably that in most detrimental policy contexts the EU acted as self-interested and rational player rather than normative player. If the EU examines its foreign policy decisions as a normative power, which is rooted on constructivism it is more likely that the EU policy in regard

to Ukraine will be more effective and will not be suffering from what Toje have named a “the consensus and expectations gap”²⁴.

6.2. Azerbaijan as a case study. Background of EU’s policy towards Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan has been known as a key player in South Caucasus region after post-Cold war period. This pivotal country is located strategically and geographically at the crossroads of the Eurasian space. It is also noteworthy to mention that country is rich with energy resources. Due to its transit importance and rich Caspian energy sources, Azerbaijan become a priority target for Brussels.

At the outset, it is worthwhile briefly analyze the evaluation of EU policy towards Azerbaijan. Similarly, to Ukraine, the relations between the EU and the Republic of Azerbaijan launched with Partnership and Corporation Agreement (PCA) in 1996 and which entered in force in 1999. The PCA has provided a legal framework for the EU-Azerbaijan relations.

After the agreed ceasefire with Armenia in May 1994, the EU through its TACIS Programme (Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States) provided legal and institutional assistance to Azerbaijan. However until 2003, the EU focused to achieve basic elements of corporation rather than expand deep political dialogue with Azerbaijan (Nuriyev, 2007).

Another step of relations started with the inclusion of Azerbaijan into the EU’s European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) in 2004. Expectations were high from ENP Action plan but negotiations were stalled when the EU refused to insert Azerbaijan’s territorial integrity in the Action Plan (Aliyeva, 2006, p.85). In 2006, President of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev and President

²⁴ See more details: Toje, A. (2008) "The Consensus—Expectations Gap: Explaining Europe's Ineffective Foreign Policy" *Journal of Security Dialogue* vol. 39, no. 1, February 2008 pp. 121–141. Available online at <http://sdi.sagepub.com/content/39/1/121.full.pdf+html>

of the European Commission Jose Manuel Barroso, signed the “Memorandum of Understanding on a Strategic Partnership between the European Union and the Republic of Azerbaijan in the field of energy”. As it is visible the ‘energy resources’ and ‘transit potential’ of Azerbaijan has considerably shaped the EU-Azerbaijan relations (Sadigov, 2009, p.140).

With the initiation of the Eastern Partnership in 2009, the Union opted for redesign its policy approach towards Azerbaijan. Thus, the Union intended to enhance deep economic and political corporation with Azerbaijan. However, it should be questioned in what extent the EaP achieved its targets in case of Azerbaijan?

6.2.1 Achievements and poor incentives of EaP towards Azerbaijan

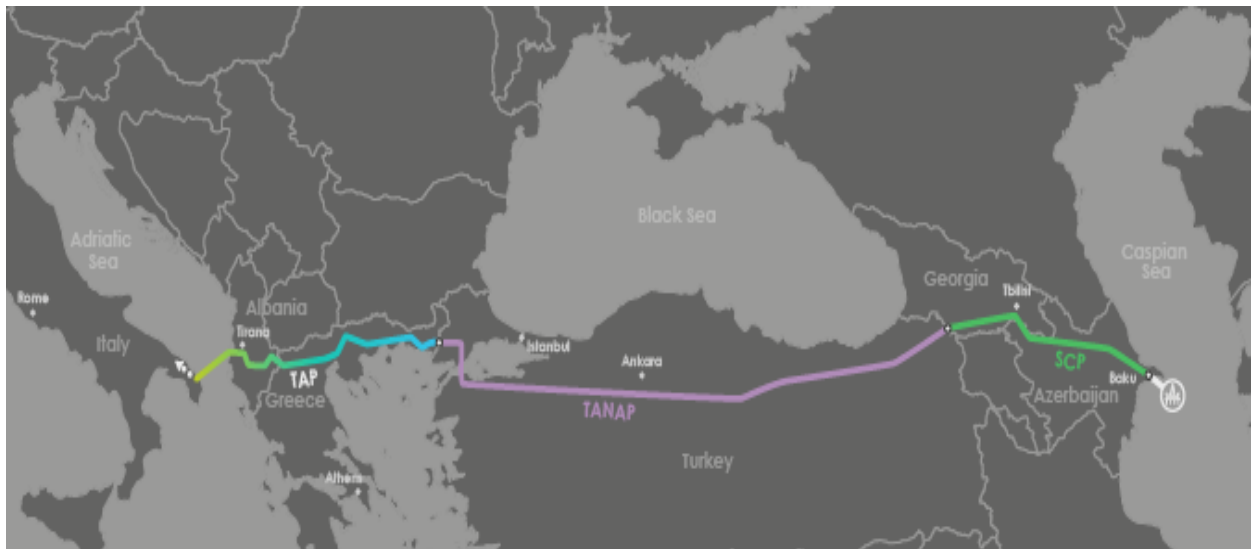
In point of fact, while we assess the results for seven years’ Eastern Partnership for Azerbaijan, it is clearly seen that the outcome of policy for Azerbaijan is ambivalent. The energy security has become a central theme for the Eastern Partnership Initiative. Doubtless, Azerbaijan is considered as one of the potentially key energy partner in the EU's energy security and a main player in Union's attempts in diversification of its energy resources (Frappi, 2013, p. 58). In compared to the other policy fields, energy corporation represents cornerstone of the EU and Azerbaijan relations.

It was a breakthrough for Azerbaijan when government signed "a contract of century on the development and production sharing of natural resources" predominantly with Western companies, which reduced the role of Russian monopoly in Azerbaijan.

In addition, vulnerability of Europe to disruption of gas and oil supply after Russian-Ukrainian gas dispute moved the energy projects up the agenda of the European Union. Among them, Trans Anatolian Pipeline (TANAP) and Trans Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) which replaced the EU's Nabucco project are the most important mutual projects between the two sides in energy sector. It is planned that Trans Adriatic Pipeline will transport Azerbaijan natural gas through

Greece via Albania and the Adriatic Sea to Italy and also to the other western European countries starting from 2019 (see Fig,8) . However, initial capacity of TAP is 10 billion cubic meters of gas per year , it is expected that its capacity will be double to more than 20 bcm in future (TAP official webpage).

Figure 8. TAP and TANAP Pipeline



Source. Southern Gas Corridor, <http://www.tap-ag.com>

Thus, it can be argued that energy corporation is major accomplishment of Euro-Azerbaijani relations.

The other achievement of the Eastern Partnership vis-à-vis Azerbaijan is related with mobility. Thus, finally after long-term negotiation period, the EU has signed the Visa Facilitation Agreement and the Mobility Partnership with Azerbaijan in 2013 and Readmission Agreement in 2014, which both entered into force in 2014 (European Commission 2016). These facilitated agreements do not provide a visa-free regime but at least open a door for the simplification of visa procedures for a certain category of society.

In sharp contrast with the energy corporation, the controversial results of the EaP for Azerbaijan is visible in several policy activities of the EU. First and foremost, the territorial

integrity and regional security are national priority for Azerbaijan, as twenty percent of Azerbaijan territory is occupied by Armenian armed forces more than 24 years. Despite of the ceasefire agreement in 1994, aggression of Armenia along the frontline with Azerbaijan still continues and represents major challenge to stability of Azerbaijan. However, the EU seems reluctant in the settlement of frozen conflicts in South Caucasus, which is particularly true for Nagorno Karabagh conflict. As Martin Malek stated in regard to frozen conflicts in South Caucasus "the EU does not wish to "unsettle" Moscow and "put at risk its relations with Russia" (Malek, 2009, p.61)."Unbalanced policy" of the EU in the way of resolution of Karabakh conflict also affected Union's image in Azerbaijan (Aliyeva 2015, p.9). The EU should also take into account that the resolution of Nagorno Karabakh conflict is vital to fasten regional integration of the whole South Caucasus region.

Clearly, Russia plays the role to keep Azerbaijan away from European integration by threatening to solve Nagorno Karabakh conflict via supporting Armenia. In sharp contrast with Ukraine, Azerbaijan is trying to pursue balanced foreign policy towards West and Russia. In this perspective, Azerbaijan is considered economically and politically least dependent country from Russia (Samadashvilli 2014, p.46).

While the EaP initiated, civil society is described one of the major root for the EU's value based policy goals (European Commission, 2009). However, inconsistency is observed in the EU's civil society promotion role in eastern partners in general, Azerbaijan in particular (Bottger and Falkenhain, 2011). In addition, a lack of initiative of the EU to empower the civil society and promote its values in Azerbaijan deter the society from actively participating in the reform building processes in the Azerbaijan (Aliyeva, 2015). Further than that, as discussed earlier, the EU does not give a big impetus to strengthening people-to-people contacts in Azerbaijan.

Over the past years, Azerbaijan demonstrated worsening human rights records. However, it is surprising that the EU's energy interests forced Brussels representatives to lower its

expectations from Azerbaijan in the reform building process (Aliyeva, 2015, p.9-10). Merabishvili argues that the "EU's dependence on Azerbaijan's rich energy resources has weakened the normative dimension of its policy towards Azerbaijan"(Merabishvili 2015, p.1). Furthermore, the author mentioned that "the lack of coordination and consensus among member states and across and within the institutions over human rights issue in Azerbaijan prevents the EU from exercising a sufficiently strong policy tool to overcome Azerbaijan's unwillingness to reform"(Merabishvili 2015, p.7). It seems that reform-building objective of the EU clashes with its energy interests. Further than that, interest of western powers to provide security of energy pipelines force them to satisfy with achieved status-quo in Nagorno-Karabagh region. According to the above-mentioned facts, it can be argued the EU's behavior toward Azerbaijan is merely driven by energy interests rather than its normative values.

7. Conclusion

7.1 Results and discussion

The EaP Initiative is a European project, which can play a role of bridge by proving integration of those six countries to Europe. Surely, seven-year is not a sufficiently long period to pass the judgment on the effectiveness of EaP policy approach. Nevertheless, from the analysis carried out, one could easily observed that in spite of the Eastern Partnership brings certain opportunities to the participant members it is also regarded as missing opportunity for the eastern partner countries. In other words, the EU has found itself in the intersection of promises and realities. In contrast to other Europeanization projects, EaP partnership offers integration to its eastern partners without any membership model.

This study aimed at verifying four suggested hypotheses by analyzing internal and external factors that hampered effectiveness of EaP. Firstly, the inconsistencies are rooted in the nature of the EaP policy. Thus, while examining the EU policy towards EaP countries with Balkan countries in the comparative lack of inconsistency is become more obvious and first hypothesis has been confirmed.

Secondly, the next hypothesis has been validated by counting factors demonstrating reluctance of Germany and Italy toward Eastern partnership countries. The powerful EU member states such as Germany and Italy might use the Union's power to balance the hegemonic power namely Russia in Eastern region. Furthermore, they can use the "military" power of European Union to solve the regional conflicts in the EaP countries as they did in Western Balkans. Additionally, the discontinuities in the Eastern Partnership program are interrelated with rational cost-benefit analyze of the Member States. In the perspective of the EU's Member States, costs of active involvement or effective policy implementation on Eastern Partnership countries are greater than its benefits.

Thirdly, the study has showed that the greatest challenge to the EU's EaP comes from third actor- Russian Federation under the leadership of Vladimir Putin which is verified by third hypothesis of the thesis. Indeed, Moscow not only uses its military power but rather, offers attractive rewards to eastern partners to undermine Brussels's policy efforts. In this sense, rival geopolitical Russian project- ECU later EaEC is obstacle to the success of EaP. It seems that the Russian "tricky policy" under the Eurasian Economic Union will continue to be a challenge for the EU's Eastern Policy dimension unless it receives a clear message from Brussels. The Brussels representatives have to realize that the EU needs to develop strategic tools in order to block Russian ambitious imperialist policy goals if they want to succeed further.

Fourthly, while analyzing statistical indicators of the EaP countries it is clearly seen that there are large economic, social and political differences of eastern partners which are not taken into consideration by EaP Initiative.

To summarize, discussion based on suggested hypothesis have a great contribution to future researchers to understand the limitations of Eastern Partnership Initiative. Hence, the weakness of internal policy structure, ambiguity between member states of the EU and Russia are the major challenges for EU while adhering promised goals and means into practice.

From the other prospective, the study has also showed that starting with the initiation of the Eastern Partnership, the EU achieved a considerable success in the field of energy, trade, economy rather than human rights, democracy, reform-building, visa-liberalization.

Crucially, main findings of the examined case studies contended that the EU acts as a self-interested actor rather than normative focused actor in its eastern partnership depending on policy contexts. While approaching the EU's EaP policy towards its eastern neighbors, it has been founded that the EU reproduces (neo) realistic logic in some policy areas, which threatens its image to become an essential security provider and real normative power. Practically, Ukraine and Azerbaijan case studies demonstrate that in reality the EU cannot be so productive to spread its

normative values in circumstances when it has economic and energy interests toward mentioned partner countries.

7.2 Policy Recommendations

It is clear that in order to fill the gap between goals and achievements, the EU should reconsider its policy. The current examination of EaP, which endeavored in this research, also intends to give several policy recommendation how to increase performance of policy. It seems that below mentioned policy recommendations may be considered as useful mechanism to tackle the problems and increase effective functioning of EaP.

- The EU should not disregard the threat coming from Russia and its Eurasian Economic Union in its policy towards the EaP countries. If required, the EU should apply its hard power to prevent Russian efforts to jeopardize the European integration process. Alternatively, the EU can develop a new policy strategy with the participation of Russian Federation.
- Germany is the key EU member state that capable to redesign the EaP. If Germany put aside its ‘Russia-first policy approach’, and gives its full economic and political weight behind the EaP it is more likely that EaP in future could be more effective than EaP today.
- The EU need to strengthen its engagement with ordinary citizens of Eastern Partnership countries via supporting the people-to-people contacts and true civil society. In addition, the EU should give a premium attention to involve the civil society into the official negotiations if they want to see effective and functioning EaP.
- The EU should continue its attempt of promoting democracy and human right in a broader sense, and if it is necessary Union should sacrifice its self- interests for the sake of democratization of partner countries.

- The EU will need to increase its presence in conflict resolution processes of the Eastern Partners through strengthening its Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) missions.
- If there is no any talks regarding to the eastern partner's accession to the EU in the near future, the EU at least could create possibility for the citizens (students, tourists) of Eastern partners to advance the visa liberalization procedures.
- Clear, coherent and consistent policy of the EU concerning eastern partners is essential for developing and projecting of the EaP policy.
- The EU should not disregard its normative values, which could acquire greater contributions to the eastern partners compared to short-term economic corporation.
- The EU should not only offer trade (economic) incentives, but also should offer political and cultural incentives to its eastern neighbors.

To conclude, this study believes that in order to keep the promises, and make the EaP more functional the EU could behave normatively by spreading its democratic values and European identity in its eastern peripheries rather than see them as a source of raw material.

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APPENDIX

Figure A: Eastern Partners' trade partner

Armenia	Imports	Russia 20%, Germany 11%, Bulgaria 9%, Belgium 9%, Iran 6.5%, United States 6.1%, (2012 est.)
	Exports	Russia 19.6%, Germany 10.7%, Bulgaria 9.1%, Belgium 8.9%, Iran 6.9%, United States 6.1%, (2012)
Azerbaijan	Imports	Russia 14.1%, Turkey 13.7%, United Kingdom 12.5%, Germany 7.7%, Ukraine 5.5%, China 5.3%, (2013 est.)
	Exports	Italy 25%, Indonesia 11.6%, Thailand 7%, Germany 5.7%, Israel 5.3%, France 4.7%, India 4.6%, Russia 4.5%, United States 4.1% (2013 est.)
Belarus	Imports	Russia 59.4%, Germany 5.9%, China 5.1%, Ukraine 5% (2012)
	Exports	Russia 35.4%, Netherlands 16.4%, Ukraine 12.1%, Latvia 7.1% (2012)
Georgia	Imports	Turkey 17%, Ukraine 8%, Azerbaijan 8%, Russia 7%, China 7% (2013 est.)
	Exports	Azerbaijan 25%, Armenia 11%, Ukraine 7%, Turkey 6%, Russia 6% (2013 est.)
Moldova	Imports	Russia 14.3%, Romania 13.1%, Ukraine 12%, China 8.7%, Germany 7.2%, Turkey 6.9%, Italy 6.3% (2012 est.)
	Exports	Russia 26.3%, Romania 17.2%, Italy 7.7%, Ukraine 5.9%, Turkey 5.3%, Germany 4.7%, United Kingdom 4.4% (2012 est.)
Ukraine	Imports	Russia 32.4%, China 9.3%, Germany 8%, Belarus 6%, Poland 4.2% (2012)
	Exports	Russia 25.6%, Turkey 5.4%, Egypt 4.2% (2012)

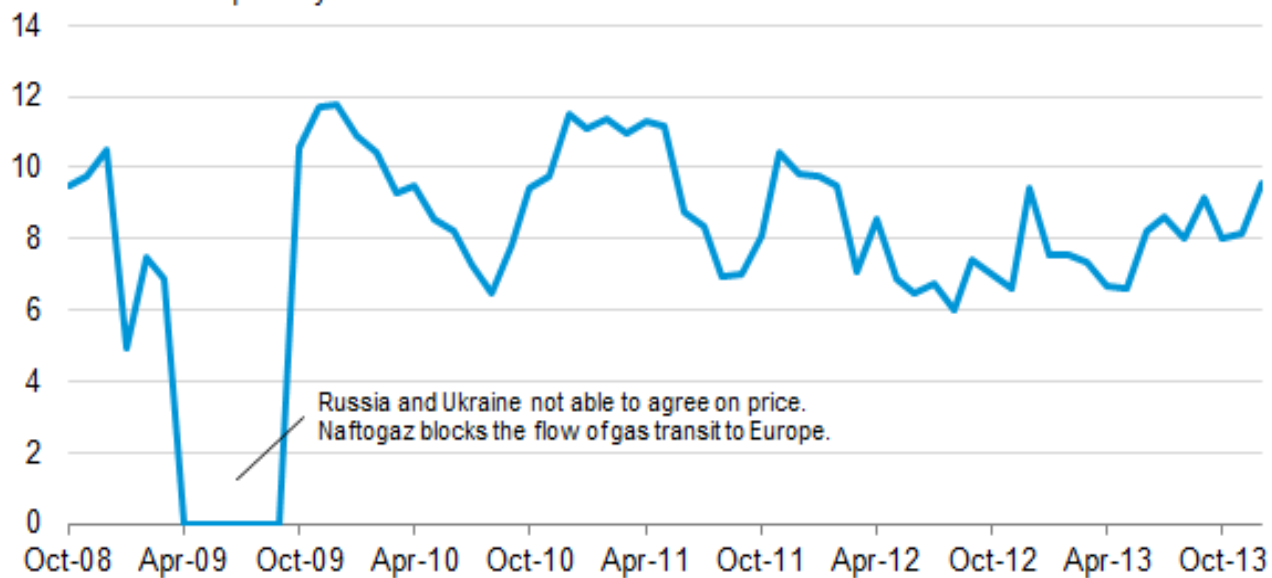
Source: European Eastern Partnership: Recommendations for a Refined Approach, CIA Factbook, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>, pp.13

Figure B: European transit dependence on Ukraine

Russian natural gas exports to Europe through Ukraine

(October 2008-December 2013)

billion cubic feet per day



Source: Metelitsa (2014)