

The EU and Its Eastern Neighbors: Integration without Membership Perspective

The Cases of Moldova and Georgia

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Abstract

The thesis explores the rationale of Moldova's and Georgia's aspiration to integrate with the European Union without membership perspective and therefore it raises the following question: which factors determine Moldova's and Georgia's aspiration to comply with the EU requirements outlined in the regional policy agendas and to incorporate the EU's norms and values in the absence of the membership incentive? The attempt to answer this question has lead to investigate the secondary question asking whether the unconditional and yielding compliance with the EU's requirements is a solid guarantee to achieve success in closer integration with the EU.

The thesis, within the space provided, delved into the EU-Moldova and EU-Georgia relations since 2002 and identified six factors that explain both countries' strong will to integrate with the EU. At the same time it questioned the sufficiency and sustainability of unilateral aspiration of Moldova and Georgia and concluded that the EU needs to be more engaged with conflict resolutions, which remain the most painful issues for those countries to date.

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Introduction

Following the dissolution of the USSR, fifteen new states emerged on the world's political map. Even though the Soviet leadership had been waging a long term two-front “war”, one against their ideological rivals from the West and another against its constituent states, this radical shift was still rather unexpected to many Soviet people as well as the outside community. In the beginning of the 90s the “wind of change” was blowing so fast from the East that the European Union (EU) was inadequate and inconsistent to establish an immediate coherent external policy towards the newly born states.¹ Concomitant domestic and inter-state turmoil which erupted in the post-Soviet space: territorial disputes between the neighboring states (Azerbaijan and Armenia), violent conflicts on the grounds of ethnic cleavages and self-determination (Georgia and Moldova), civil wars between fledgling governments and opposition paramilitary groups (Georgia and Tajikistan) posed threats to the stability of the EU.

In the mid-90s, Brussels hesitantly and cautiously started to respond to the newly emerged environment and geographical proximity by developing regulated bilateral and regional relations with the states of the former Soviet Union. The continuous eastward enlargement process of the EU triggered the corollary boundary approximation of the once remote neighborhood². Consequently, the EU has become more concerned about the politico-economic and security transformation of the states in its eastern vicinity and launched various projects aimed at providing substantial financial, humanitarian and

¹ The European Union was officially established on 1 November 1993, when the Treaty on European Union (TEU) entered into force. Before, the Union had been referred to as the *European Communities (EC)*. In my entire thesis paper, however, I will use the EU which will embrace both names.

² “Big-bang enlargement” of 2004 re-unified 10 Central and Southern European countries with the EU. Romania and Bulgaria’s accession accomplished the latest round of enlargement in 2007.

technical assistance to Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova and South Caucasus. At the same time, however, the EU averted to play a crisis management role and contribute to conflict resolution in the post-Soviet space for a long time and confined itself with low-profile engagement, which limited the overall effectiveness of other initiatives.

The relationship of the EU with the post-Soviet countries has attracted huge academic interest, which has continued to grow together with the Union. Since the last two waves of enlargement in 2004 and 2007 respectively, it has remained ambiguous whether the EU will incorporate the states of the former Soviet space, which are located within the European geographical border. Interestingly, in this case geography does not seem to be a decisive factor. Nor do fervent aspiration and commitment of some post-Soviet countries provide sufficient basis for the EU's further enlargement. A great deal of scholarly research including policy briefs providing the EU decision-makers with recommendations has been dedicated to individual policy areas such as the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA), the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP), The Black Sea Synergy, the Eastern Partnership (EaP) and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions. Briefly stated, their main contributions come on the empirical evaluation of political, economic and geopolitical impacts of each policy area and exploration of the EU's genuine interests underlying its strategy towards the neighboring countries³. However, relatively less attention has been paid to examine the rationale behind the non-members' behavior to adhere to the implementation of the European norms and values, thus prompt the expansion of the EU "normative" power in the neighborhood area. Heiko Prange-Gstöhl has raised similar question; however he only looked through the prism of the EU external energy policy, which

³ See Richard G. Whitman and Stefan Wolff (2010): "The European Neighborhood Policy Perspective Context, Implementation and Impact" (Basingstoke: Palgrave); Karen Henderson and Carol Weaver (2010) "The Black Sea Region and EU Policy the Challenge of Divergent Agendas" (Farnham, Burlington: Ashgate)

serves “the export of EU energy norms and regulations to neighborhood countries and beyond”.⁴

The thesis is empirical in its approach and intends to fill up an existing gap by diverting a particular focus on examine the underpinning external and internal factors of non-member states’ motivation to import the EU norms in the absence of a main rewarding incentive – membership perspective. This question gains more acuteness in light of the unclear and illusive objectives of the EU regional policies. The thesis will look into the cases of Moldova and Georgia for a number of reasons. In spite of the fact that none of them enjoy preferential attention and interest from the EU (compared to other countries of the eastern neighborhood area), nevertheless, the overall dynamics of their cooperation testifies that Moldova and Georgia have become obvious compromisers to “appease” the demanding institutions in Brussels and abide by their directives. Moreover, the following main criteria also distinguish them from other EU eastern neighboring states: first, Moldova and Georgia have been parts of all initiatives launched by the EU with regard to its eastern regional dimension including: PCA, ENP, the Black Synergy and EaP. Second, both states have declared openly their ultimate aspirations to become members of the EU. Third, the EU is involved as a conflict management actor in Moldova and Georgia by performing civilian missions: the Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine (EUBAM) and the Monitoring Mission in Georgia (EUMM).

Research Questions and Hypothesis

Derived from the above premises the thesis puts forth two questions:

⁴ Heiko Prange-Gstöhl (2009): “Enlarging the EU's internal energy market: Why would third countries accept EU rule export?”, *Energy Policy*, vol. 37, issue 12, pp: 5296-5303. Available at: <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0301421509005709>

First question: Which external and internal factors determine Moldova's and Georgia's aspiration to comply with the EU requirements outlined in the regional policy agendas and to incorporate the EU norms and values in the absence of the membership incentive?

The hypothesis: As the empirical research of EU-Moldova and EU-Georgia relations has evidenced the EU progresses in exporting its norms and values in both countries without wielding a strong leverage to influence them to be acceptive. It has identified the following factors:

1. Even though the EU is not a sole international player in the region, it remains a single "normative" supplier.
2. Moldova's and Georgia's clear pro-European stance has been underpinned by their respective governments' commitment to the democratization of their countries.
3. As a result of erupted conflict on their soils in the early 90s, neither countries control substantial parts of their territories, which have become a serious impediment to their successful economic development and stability. They perceive the EU as the most credible player capable of solving their status quo.
4. The EU has become the biggest financial donor to Moldova and Georgia, which buttresses their economic stability.
5. Strained relations with Russia have deprived their national production of an access to the huge marketplace, which compel Moldova and Georgia actively seek alternative channels.
6. Although the EU does not consider their membership in the foreseeable future, there are Member States which are lobbyists of Moldova and Georgia's interests within the Union (Romania for Moldova; Poland and the Baltic States for Georgia).

Second question: Is unconditional and yielding compliance with the EU's requirements from the neighborhood country a solid guarantee to achieve success in closer integration with the EU?

The hypothesis: As empirical evidence has demonstrated, one-sided willingness and readiness to aspire the approximation with the EU is not sufficient provisions on a long journey towards the Union. Without a strong political backing and internal consensus on common foreign policy strategy among the member states within the EU, all efforts from third country to "cut the distance" are doomed to failure.

Research Design

In search for answers to the thesis questions and testing the truthfulness of the proposed hypothetical arguments, the thesis relies on the comprehensive methodologies and various data resources. Initially, it reflects on the mainstream debate among scholars about the theoretical perspectives and approaches of EU foreign policy in general and then, more precisely, in relations with the states of the Eastern Partnership, which is complemented by the qualitative analysis of data obtained from resources such as scholarly research, policy briefs, websites and analytical reports from European as well as Moldovan and Georgian think-tanks and (Non-) governmental organizations. The utilized data provide comprehensive empirical evidence which in turn upholds the comparative analysis of the current dynamics of the EU-Moldova and EU-Georgia relations.

The structure of the Thesis

The thesis is structured in the following chapters: the first chapter provides a brief review which reflects on the theoretical debate about the foreign policy nature of the EU with a main focus on its Eastern Neighborhood dimension. "Civilian" and "Normative"

power will be compared and contrasted to highlight the mainstream scholarly discussion. The second, third and fourth chapters consequently explore the EU – Moldova and EU – Georgia relations through the ENP, EaP and the CSDP missions respectively in an empirical narrative manner. The last chapter summarizes the major findings of the thesis and substantiates hypotheses with underpinning conclusive remarks. It illustrates which “norms” have been prioritized in developing each regional initiative, what has prompted Moldova and Georgia to accept them and whether it ensures a closer integration with the EU.

Chapter 1: Theoretical Framework

1.1. *European Union - “Civil” or “Normative” Power?*

This chapter starts with illuminating the widespread academic discussions on the EU's foreign policy behavior and as long as the thesis intends to examine the case studies of Moldova and Georgia, it will place the debate within a context of PCA, ENP, The Black Sea Synergy and CSDP Missions in what follows.

There have been incessant and searing debates among scholars about how to define the EU's international actorness. The academic community found it daunting a task to come up with a single definition. The EU, over five decades of its life, wielded various instruments to pursue its foreign policy thus made it a fertile avenue for researchers. Until the 90s the prevailing thesis identified the EU as a pure civilian “giant” with an emasculated military power, whose united economic stability had become a model for “outsiders”. As Francois Duchene, who was the pioneer of the theoretical debate over the EU's “civility”, clearly pointed out:

The European Community will only make the most of its opportunities if it remains true to its inner characteristics. These are primarily: civilian ends and means, and a built-in sense of collective action, which in turn express, however imperfectly, social values of equality, justice and tolerance⁵.

Proponents sustained this thesis by claiming that the EU did not intend to become a military power and had relinquished this domain to the transatlantic organization – NATO.

⁵ Francois Duchene (1973): “the European Community and the uncertainties of interdependence” Max Kohnstamm and Wolfgang Hager (Eds): “A Nation Writ Large? Foreign-Policy Problems before the European Community”, (Basingstoke: Palgrave), pp. 20.

According to Hanns Maull's assumption, the EU utilized the non-military instruments and primarily concentrated on economic leverages to influence its international partners⁶.

Duchene's vision dominated until the Maastricht Treaty (1992) against the several failed attempts of the European Community to gain some military muscles through the European Defence Community and the Fouchet Plans. Nevertheless defenders of the "civilian power" conception were criticized by other scholars and blamed for the vagueness and their inability "to offer the descriptive account of Europe's possible role in the world"⁷. For instance, Ian Manners, while arguing about the EU's international role, introduced a concept, which advanced the notion of Europe's "normative power"⁸. In his scholarly work that aimed to expand the Hedley Bull's discussion denouncing the "civilian" nature of Europe⁹, he analyzed the evolution of the EU's hybrid polity and its constitutional configuration and concluded that the EU is "constructed on normative power", which in turn made it a norm diffuser in world politics and "act to change norms in international system". Manners identified the pooling of sovereignty, the proliferation of human rights and the abolishment of the death sentence as inherent constitutive features of the EU's internal polity¹⁰. Although the debate was held on the threshold of the millennium, in 1999–2000, a few years before the "big bang" enlargement, the normative power thesis has remained dominant thereafter. Moreover, in order to dash the divisive line with its new neighbors, the EU has designed the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) which is to ensure the spread of European values

⁶ Hans W. Maull (1990): "Germany and Japan: The New Civilian Powers", *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 69, no. 5, pp. 92-93

⁷ Jan Orbie (2006): "Civilian Power of Europe- review of original and current debates", *Cooperation and Conflict*, Review essay. Available at: <http://cac.sagepub.com/content/41/1/123.full.pdf>

⁸ Ian Manners (2002), "Normative power Europe: a contradiction in terms?" *JCMS*, vol 40, issue 2, pp. 235 – 238. Available at: <http://www.princeton.edu/~amoravcs/library/mannersnormativepower.pdf>

⁹ Henry Bull (1981): "Civilian Power Europe: a contradiction in terms?", *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 2, pp. 149 – 164.

¹⁰ Ian Manners (2002), "Normative power Europe: a contradiction in terms?" *JCMS*, vol 40, issue 2, pp. 235 – 238. Available at: <http://www.princeton.edu/~amoravcs/library/mannersnormativepower.pdf>

beyond its borders. “*The ENP is both a structure for reform that can be constructed over a host of pre-existing regional partnerships and a new norm – driven security paradigm*”¹¹. The normative power thesis puts much emphasis on the values and it does not consider the material capability be it civilian or military. The EU’s toolkit to diffuse its norms includes the conditionality, which means that without conformity with the European values no neighboring states will be granted the benefits of integration and/or approximation with the EU.

1.2. Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA)

Scholars researching the EU foreign policy towards the former Soviet countries largely agree that PCA was an explicit demonstration of the asymmetric institutionalized relations between the winner and the loser¹². These relations are not be seen as zero-sum game, although the changing geopolitical settings prompted the EU to act (pro-) actively to expand its area of influence by developing the individual cooperative strategy. According to bilateral agreements within the PCA, the EU pledged its commitment to assist the Newly Independent States (NIS) strengthen their democracies and transition towards a market economy – two European existential values, which explicitly meant that for the sake of political and economic gains the recipient states had to open the “borders” for the European “norm” expansion. Additionally, as it will be explored in more detail in the next chapters, the EU has earmarked substantial financial endowment to promote the creation of civil society which in their turn played active roles to import the European values and raise the awareness of the population, thus became one of the biggest donors in the region. Slowly but steadily the post-Soviet partner states started to adapt to the European standards in exchange of

¹¹ Amelia Hadfield ‘ENP-EMP: Enlargement Lite or Orientalism?’, In *The External Dimension of EU Justice and Home Affairs: Governance, Neighbors and Security*, ed. Thierry Balzacq, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, pp 66.

¹² Hiski Haukkala (2010): “The EU–Russia Strategic Partnership: The Limits of Post-Sovereignty in International Relations”, (London & New York: Routledge), pp. 69 – 87.

financial rewarding. The absence of influential instruments which would guarantee the achievement of PCA goals undermined its credibility; however it did lend support to “normative” impact on the EU’s foreign policy. As a result Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia made it explicit that they would commit themselves to implant all EU directives to gain accession opportunity.

1.3. European Neighborhood Policy

The launch of the ENP became a resonated voice of the academic community which had been upholding the EU’s “normative power” definition. Earlier it had been underscored by the European Security Strategy (2003) which became the basis for neighborhood policy:

To make a particular contribution to stability and good governance in our immediate neighborhood and to promote a ring of well governed countries to the East of the European Union and on the borders of the Mediterranean with whom we can enjoy close and cooperative relations¹³

Strikingly some empirical evidences suggest otherwise. For instance, the *Orange Revolution* in Ukraine clearly revealed the timidity of the EU to support the anti-governmental movements, which intended to import the European values into the country once assuming the ruling power. Javier Solana’s demarche to mediate between the opposing parties and Russia came out only at a later stage of the crisis¹⁴. Similarly Russian military intervention into Georgia in August, 2008 and following disagreement among the Member States to defend its European values in its neighborhood once more questioned the EU’s “normative” power.

¹³ “A secure Europe in a better world, European Security Strategy”, European Council, Brussels, 12 and 13 December, 2003. Available at: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/78367.pdf>

¹⁴ Elisabeth Johansson – Nogues (2007): “The (Non-) normative power EU and the European Neighborhood Policy: an exceptional policy for an exceptional actor?” *European Political Economy Review*, No. 7, p. 186. Available at: <http://aci.pitt.edu/8366/1/johansson.pdf>

The rationale of the ENP and EaP is that they propose neighbors a possibility to deepen political and economic cooperation with the EU. The Copenhagen conditionality plays major role to influence the neighbors but unlike in relations with candidate countries it lacks a most rewarding incentive which is an accession perspective¹⁵. The EU disperses its norms and values by individual Action Plans, which provide concrete action steps to assist in the implementation of democratic reforms, rule of law and the principles of market economy. Most high-rank officials, Romano Prodi and Javier Solana among others, appeared to be vocal defenders of this notion¹⁶.

1.4. The Black Sea Synergy

While reverberating on a theoretical debate about the EU foreign policy behavior in its relationship with the immediate neighborhood, the Black Sea Synergy cannot be a target of separate analysis, it should rather be placed within the context of the ENP, because it represents a complementary regional initiative, which intends to add new dynamism to the existing regional cooperation¹⁷. The EU has reinvigorated its normative power by the diversification of its regional strategy and encircling the Black Sea littoral. The objective is, as outlined in founding papers drafted by the institutions in Brussels, to remain committed to

¹⁵ “European Neighborhood Policy: strategy paper COM” (2004), Commission of the European Communities, Communication from the Commission,, Brussels, available at http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/strategy/strategy_paper_en.pdf

¹⁶ Javier Solana, “The development of a Common Foreign and Security Policy and the role of the High Representative”, Speech to the Institute of European Affairs, Dublin, 30th March 2000, Available at: http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/discours/30.03.Dublin.IEA.doc.html; Romano Prodi. “2000-2005: Shaping the New Europe”, Speech to the European Parliament, 15th February 2000. Available at: <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=SPEECH/00/41&format=HTML&aged=1&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>.

¹⁷ “Black Sea Synergy – a new regional cooperation initiative”, Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament, Brussels, 11.04.2007 COM (2007) 160 final. available at http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/com07_160_en.pdf

the diffusion of the European norms such as good governance, democracy, protection of environment, diversification of energy supply and combating organized crime¹⁸

1.5. CSDP missions

The inception of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) gave a new impetus to the academic debates about the EU's international actorness. Further the establishment of European Defence Agency (EDA) in 2004 was accepted as a sign of the EU's "militarization". Hedley Bull, the arduous promoter of military necessity, argued that the foreign policy lacked the effectiveness without strong "hard" power supporting it, therefore the EU needed to develop common defence build-up to gain more political weight in the international arena¹⁹. However the Union failed to create united armed forces due to the division among the Member States over the development of common military institutions and their diverse individual foreign policy priorities which substantially damaged its military image, although it has succeeded to enhance its crisis management capability by sending civilian and military missions to the hot spots.

Currently the EU is represented by two missions in its eastern neighborhood: the European Union Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine (EUBAM) and the European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia (EUMM Georgia) operating respectively on the territory of Moldova and Georgia. Based on there constitutions and objectives neither missions serve as an upgrade to the EU's civilian or military image, rather they uphold the "normative" power notion. As Natalie Tocci argues even the EU military missions have

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Hedley Bull (1982) "Civilian Power Europe: A Contradiction in 'Terms?'" *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 21 (1), pp. 151

served to promote the European values in the areas where the rule of law, human rights and democratic norms were violated, as it has been evidenced in Kosovo²⁰.

This chapter has made a short overview of contesting scholarly debate about the “normative” and “civilian” power of the EU and its applicability to eastern neighborhood engagements. Based on the existing approaches among the scholars, which have constantly stimulated the debates aiming to explore the true “face” of the EU, it is a daunting task to concur with a single summation. The EU has started its existence as a pure “civilian” power and has been constantly transformed according to the enlargement process followed by the inherent changes of the internal and external environment. Not all proposed conceptions can boast the full capability to fully account for motives of the EU foreign policy behavior. Therefore many claim that the EU is *sui generis* power. However, after examining the patterns of the eastern regional initiatives and engagements, it becomes explicit that the EU holds an absolute dominant position vis-à-vis its neighbors – the EU unanimously sets the conditions of relations and others can either accept them or drop out. Moldova and Georgia have demonstrated the most enthusiasm of full compliance thus far, which allows the EU to step up as the “normative” power to its full extent in both countries. Additionally, the EU has also intervened as a crisis management actor and peace mediator respectively in Transdnistria and Abkhazia/South Ossetia, therefore its foreign policy activity has reached its top-notch level. CSDP missions on the ground advance norm diffusion capability and serve as an influential instrument on both neighbors.

These arguments will be further elaborated and substantiated in the next chapters while narrating on each case study. In doing so the thesis will only look at the ENP, EaP and the

²⁰ Natalie Tocci, (2008): “The European Union as a Normative Foreign Policy Actor”, *Centre for European Policy Studies Working Document*, No. 281, pp 15 – 16.

CSDP missions, which will provide sufficient grounding to the argumentative analysis the EU-Moldova and EU-Georgia relations.

Chapter 2: The European Neighborhood Policy (ENP)

This chapter aims to identify those factors which preconditioned and gave impetus to Moldova's and Georgia's pro-European stance in the early 2000s and ensured the implementation of the ENP's norms in both countries, thus answer the first research question inquiring which external and internal factors determine Moldova's and Georgia's aspiration to comply with the EU's requirements outlined in the foreign policy agendas and to incorporate the EU norms and values in the absence of membership incentive. In doing so, the following subchapters will first look into Moldova's and Georgia's cases discretely to highlight the development of domestic affairs before and after the establishment of the ENP. Then a brief description of the ENP will be provided including the goals the EU intends to achieve by them, which will be linked to the theoretical framework of the thesis supporting the normative power conception of the EU in relations with the eastern neighborhood area. In the end, the conclusive remarks of the chapter will set out the arguments claiming the Russian factor and the pro-European policy of the Moldovan and Georgian governments in time of the ENP's adoption as catalyst determinants of the EU's normative power projection in the respective neighborhood area.

2.1. Moldova

Moldova – the poorest European country to date – has been an immediate target of the ENP. Nevertheless, despite its geographic proximity to the EU and the explicit declaration of its primary goal to integrate with the European institutions through the “Principal Directions of Foreign Policy” of 1998-2002²¹, Brussels had not spared due attention to its

²¹See Gwendolyn, Sasse (2010). “The ENP and the EU's Eastern Neighbors: Ukraine and Moldova as Test Cases”, In Richard Whitman & Stefan Wolff (eds): “The European Neighborhood Policy in Perspective: Context, Implementation and Impact”, (Palgrave), pp. 194.

neighbor before 2003²². The EU's lack of interest was obviously derivative from the then internal process of Moldova. Strikingly, the Communist party won the parliamentary election in January 2001 and according to the constitutional law elected the president from within. In the first years of his presidency Vladimir Voronin attempted to smooth the economic backwardness and find a solution to the "frozen" conflict in Transdnistria and actively sought to acquire a political and economic backing from Russia. The failure to achieve anything tangible from the big neighbor prompted him to divert Moldova's foreign policy vector back to the EU²³. Furthermore, the then domestic political situation increased the anti-Russian sentiments reflected by the recurrence of the pro-European opposition parties' popularity in the country and the possible contagious effect of the Georgian "Rose Revolution" (November, 2003), which forced the ruling Communist Party to abandon the pro-Russian foreign policy course. Consequently, as a response to the "Appeal on European Integration", president Voronin created a special state agency – a National Commission for European Integration – which would work on designing effective plans aiming to bring Moldova closer to the EU.

The public opinion also favored the government's pro-European stance²⁴. The discord between Moldova and Russia over the Transdnistrian problem in 2003 gradually worsened their relations, which compelled the Moldovan government to seek support from the EU. However, the EU's interference in the conflict resolution did not go further than managing to disrupt the Russian attempt to impose the inimical terms of the conflict resolution.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Instead of helping Moldova to restore a territorial integrity Russia offered "The Kozak Memorandum" which aimed to create a state constituting of two or three equal federal entities in Mid-November 2003. See Nicu, Popescu (2011): "EU Foreign Policy and Post-Soviet Conflicts Stealth Intervention", (Routledge: London and New York), pp. 46

²⁴ See Arne Nieman, and Tessa de Wekker (2010) "Normative power Europe? EU relations with Moldova, European Integration online Papers", *European Integration Online Paper*, Vol. 14, Article 14, pp-23. Available at: <http://eiop.or.at/eiop/texte/2010-014a.htm>.

Despite all of that, such a cardinal transformation of the foreign orientation from the Communist party was rather unexpected even in Moldova. The ensued debate among local experts and scholars tried to find the answers. As Ryan Kennedy has explored, some Moldovan scholars perceived their country's aspiration towards the EU as the natural process destined largely by its "Proximity to Europe" and the "European Experience", among other factors.²⁵ Similar findings were proposed by Verdun and Chira after interviewing the representatives of the leading Moldovan and International organizations in Chisinau²⁶, which is arguable considering the fact that Moldova, as a constituent part of the Soviet Union, has more "Russian (Soviet) experience". The Georgian case below confirms that historic and geographic co-existence is not the determinant of the choice of foreign policy vector.

2.2. Georgia

While the EU policy-makers were discussing the geographical area the ENP should cover, Georgia was deciding the course of its future development and simultaneously determining its foreign policy vector. The bloodless "Rose Revolution" orchestrated by the western educated young politicians successfully managed to oust the corrupt and dysfunctional government led by the erstwhile Soviet foreign minister Eduard Shevardnadze. The successive interim and elected governments²⁷ pledged that they would lead the country to the West, undertake urgent and drastic reforms to transform the almost failed state into

²⁵ Ryan Kennedy (2010): "Supranational identity, democratic attitudes, and political participation: The EU and Moldova", *European Union Politics*, Available at: <http://eup.sagepub.com/content/11/4/511>

²⁶ See Amy, Verdun and Gabriela E. Chira (2008) "From Neighborhood to Membership: Moldova's Persuasion Strategy towards the EU", presented at ECSA-Canada Biennial Conference "The Maturing European Union" Edmonton, Alberta, 25-27. available at: http://web.uvic.ca/ecsac/biennial2008/Conference%20Program_files/Verdun%20and%20Chira.pdf

²⁷ After the "Rose Revolution" and successive resignation of Eduard Shevardnadze, acting head of state Nino Burjanadze assumed the interim government from 23 November 2003 to 25 January 2004. She was replaced by Mikheil Saakashvili who won a presidential election with overwhelming majority on 4 January 2004.

prosperous society governed by the rule of law, imperatives of universal human rights and market economy principles²⁸. In the beginning the EU's position towards the revolution was rather cautious. It preferred to assume a role of observant, thus gave other international players in the region – the US and Russia – full *carte blanche* to interfere into the processes. However, as further events have demonstrated, the revolution played a decisive factor to include the South Caucasus region in the ENP: in March 2003, the Commission stated that the South Caucasus “falls out the geographical scope” of the ENP²⁹ and in December of the same year, the Council already reformulated the EU's strategy towards the region: “*We should now take a stronger and more active interest in the problems of the Southern Caucasus, which will in due course also be a neighboring region*”³⁰.

The legacy of the new government was grave. The country had long been suffering from numerous challenges: impoverishment, corruption, fragile democratic institutions, uncontrolled breakaway regions with ensued instability and insecurity among other grievances since its independence. Taking advantage of Georgia's inclusion in the ENP, the Saakashvili's administration started to embark upon further actions to promote closer integration with the EU institutions.

As a symbolic gesture and demonstration of Georgia's aspiration, the EU flags have been hoisted on all governmental buildings. Few months after the election a special commission headed by the Prime Minister was created that would work on the acceleration of Georgia's positioning within the ENP, followed by the implantation of special EU

²⁸ Lincoln A. Mitchel (2009) “Uncertain Democracy: U.S. Foreign Policy and Georgia's Rose revolution”, (University Pennsylvania Press), pp. 1-5; Charles King (2004): “A Rose among Thorns: Georgia Makes Good” *Foreign Affairs*. Available at: <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/59706/charles-king/a-rose-among-thorns-georgia-makes-good>

²⁹ “Wider Europe – Neighborhood: a New Framework for relations with Our Eastern and Southern Neighbor”, Commission Communication COM (2003) 104 final: Brussels, 11 March 2003. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/com03_104_en.pdf

³⁰ “A Secure Europe in a Better World - European Security Strategy”, the European Council, 12 and 13 December, 2003. Available at: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/78367.pdf>

departments in each ministry with a sole task to approximate the countries legislation with that of the EU.³¹

Georgia's commitment to welcome more presence of the EU in the region had also been preconditioned by the Russian factor. Despite more than ten years of separation, the Russian government never refused to interfere into Georgia's internal affairs thus impact its foreign policy choice as well. To keep control over the region, Russia successfully manipulated the separatist movements by backing the regimes of South Ossetia and Abkhazia and impeded the EU-Georgia approximation. Saakashvili's government was skeptic to the OSCE and the UN capabilities to resolve the conflicts due to Russia's veto power in both organizations; therefore the EU was invited to substitute for them. The ENP envisaged more active engagement of the EU in the conflict resolution of the neighborhood area, however, the fear to irritate Russia prevailed the EU's decision to send only three-member team which would provide the Georgian side with advisory assistance on border control with Russia. On the other hand, the EU rendered a substantial financial support to help Georgia on its painstaking reformative journey.

2.3. The Establishment of the ENP and the Russian Reaction

Initially, when the EU's policy-makers started to design a new foreign policy project – the European Neighborhood Policy in 2002 – their main concern envisaged the development of a closer, more effective and result-oriented partnership with only three eastern neighbor countries: Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova³². However, the scale and scope of the policy has been broadened immediately due to two main factors: firstly, the powerful

³¹ Nathalie Tocci (2007): "The EU and Conflict Resolution Promoting Peace in the Backyard" (Routledge: London).

³² Marek Cichocki (2010): "European Neighborhood Policy or Neighborhood Policies?" In "The Black Sea Region and EU Policy the Challenge of Divergent Agendas", ed. By Karen Henderson and Carol Weaver, (Farnham, Burlington: Ashgate), p – 10.

Member States such as France, Spain, Italy and Portugal urged to also include southern neighborhood areas, where their post-colonial legacy obliged them to extend a “guardian’s hand” to the economically underdeveloped countries of north Africa and the Middle East. Secondly, the planned big enlargement of the EU in 2004 would substantially increase the exposure and susceptibility of the Union to instability and insecurity emanating from the old neighbors. As a result, the EU managed to achieve an internal consensus and, in search for the creation of “ring of friends” among adjoining countries by offering them “everything but institutions”³³ and tackle the emerged post-enlargement challenges, established a neighborhood policy covering a vast geographical area including sixteen neighboring countries in May 2004³⁴.

The southern expansion of the new neighborhood policy did not incur the resistance internally from the Member States and externally from other international actors, whereas its eastern dimension caused a wide disagreement. Russia’s reaction to the EU’s eastern expansion has always been negative. The Russian political establishment was constantly outrightly denouncing the possible intrusion of the erstwhile ideological rival in the former Soviet space. Additionally, the revolutionary changes in the post-Soviet space (Ukraine, Moldova) and the striking transformation of the ruling Communist party’s foreign policy vector (Moldova) were largely perceived as conspiracy intending to weaken the Russian influence. The internal wide division among the Member States over Russia further complicated the state of matter.

³³ See Romano Prodi’s speech on *Looking ahead in Transatlantic Relations*. The UN forum, 24 June 2003. Available at: http://www.europa-eu-un.org/articles/en/article_2477_en.htm

³⁴ Today the ENP includes Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Egypt, Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Moldova, Morocco, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Syria, Tunisia and Ukraine. See at: http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/policy_en.htm

Initially, the EU was seriously considering Russia's inclusion in the ENP, however, due to the above factors and Russia's ambitious self-apprehension of being a powerful international actor therefore requiring suitable treatment, exterminated this idea in its infancy³⁵. Moreover, to block the escape of former satellite states from its orbit, the Putin's regime re-activated its "hard power" approach towards Moldova and Georgia. The ban of the Moldovan and Georgian wine import in early 2006, the massive deportation of Georgian blue-collar workers illegally residing in Russia, the unilateral imposition of a visa requirement on Georgian citizens, increasing the military and financial support to the separatist regimes in Transdnistria, Abkhazia and South Ossetia were those leverages which Russia utilized to extinguish the Moldovan and Georgian pro-European aspirations. Strikingly, the Russian punitive measurements yielded opposite results. Moldova and Georgia intensified relations with the EU by signing the Action Plans of the ENP aiming at closer economic cooperation and political partnership³⁶.

2.3.1. The ENP Goals

In order to ensure the success and to soften its uniform approach to all neighbors the EU has developed tailor-made Action Plans with individual countries. The Action Plans are not legally binding by nature and they are meant to be implemented within three or five years with an intention to support political and economic reforms entailing the following goals:

1. Political dialogue and reform
2. Economic and social cooperation and development

³⁵ Vladimir, Chizhov (2004): "European Union: a Partnership Strategy", *International Affairs* (Moscow), Vol 50 (6) pp. 79-87.

³⁶ The EU signed The ENP Action Plan with Moldova in February 2005 and Georgia in November 2006.

3. Trade related issues, market and regulatory reform
4. Cooperation on justice, liberty and security
5. Sectoral issues including transport, energy, information society, environment, research and development
6. The human dimension covering people-to-people contacts, civil society, education, public health³⁷

The incentives the EU offers in exchange of the achievement of these goals are not encouraging. The participant country which will excel in implementing of the above goals will only be rewarded by the EU with the opportunity of a greater engagement into European programs, broader access to the EU market and financial and technical assistance from the EU to further the reforms³⁸. As Gwendolyn Sasse has pointed out, the absence of strong incentive make it unable for the ENP to be coercive and therefore “*The scope for policy, institutional and normative change under ENP conditionality is thus limited from the outset*”³⁹. The essence of the individual action plans is to keep an asymmetric balance between the EU and non-member states. As discussed in the previous chapter, the ENP is an explicit manifestation of the EU’s attempt to project its normative power in the neighborhood area. “*[T]he Union does not give any meaningful say to the neighbors in setting the normative agenda: the objectives and means are non-negotiable and the only place where the partners would be consulted is when the individual Action Plans with clear benchmarks and timetables, are being agreed upon*”⁴⁰.

The findings of this chapter have demonstrated that although the ENP was established with two main inherent objectives: to design an alternative to the enlargement and to reinforce the EU’s normative power vis-à-vis non-member states thus ensure the

³⁷ See “European Neighborhood Policy (ENP)” – ENPI Info Center. Available at: http://www.enpi-info.eu/main.php?id=344&cid_type=2

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Gwendolyn Sasse (2010): “The ENP and the EU’s Eastern Neighbors: Ukraine and Moldova as Test Cases”, In Richard Whitman and Stefan Wolff (eds), “The European Neighborhood Policy in Perspective: Context, Implementation and Impact”, (Palgrave), pp. 181-205.

⁴⁰ Hiski Haukkala (2010): “Explaining Russian Reactions to the European Neighborhood policy”, In Richard Whitman & Stefan Wolff (eds), “The European Neighborhood Policy in Perspective: Context, Implementation and Impact”, (Palgrave), pp. 164.

secure and stable environment surrounding it, the brief overview of the actual development of the EU's relations with Moldova and Georgia under the ENP explicitly shows that, at the doorstep of the policy activation to its full extent, the EU did not invest much effort to square a "ring of friends" and further expand its normative power. Moldova and Georgia, despite a huge risk to call into permanent question their territorial integrity and lose the only competitive market for their meager agricultural production by antagonizing with Russia, chose a pro-European stance thus unilaterally paved the way for the EU normative expansion. As the analysis of the early stage of the ENP's establishment illustrates, Moldova's and Georgia's motivation to seek closer integration and respectively the promotion of EU norms were determined by the external Russian factor and the internal pro-European stances of the local governments overwhelmingly favored by the public opinion.

In the chapter that follows, the EU's more ambitious initiative covering the eastern dimension of the neighborhood area – Eastern Partnership – will be discussed which accelerated the transition of the EU-Moldova and EU-Georgia relations into a more active, resulted-oriented phase.

Chapter 3: The Eastern Partnership

This chapter intends to look at the most recent eastern neighborhood initiative of the EU – the Eastern Partnership (EaP) – by zooming in on the dynamics of the EU-Moldova and EU-Georgia cooperation within this framework. It will be divided into three parts: the separate analysis of the Moldova and Georgia cases, where a special focus will be allocated on the internal and external political processes that played key roles in boosting the EU prominence in both countries, which will be followed by the assessment of the goals spelled out in the EaP, which in turn will complement the theoretical debate advocating the EU's normative power conception. Finally, the chapter will summarize all findings to answer both questions of the thesis: first, inquiring the rationale behind Moldova's and Georgia's motivation to implement the EU's norms without being offered the membership perspective and second whether the unconditional and yielding compliance with the EU's requirements from the neighborhood country is a solid guarantee to achieve success in closer integration with the EU.

3.1 Moldova

The enactment of the EaP declaration coincided with the governmental crisis in Moldova including two unsuccessful parliamentary elections in 2009, when no party could secure enough votes to be able to choose a president. Moreover, after the first election in April 2009, the acting communist head of country resorted to a brutal crackdown on massive anti-governmental civilian protests, which are sometimes hailed as the “Twitter revolution”. The EU Parliament strictly condemned the undemocratic behavior of the interim Moldovan

government.⁴¹ However, the other institutions of the EU did not follow suit and preferred the absolute abstention to making their official stance publicly known. The civil unrest soured the relationship of Moldova with its fraternal EU Member State – Romania. The Voronin administration harshly criticized the alleged backing of the Romanian side to the demonstrators and broke the diplomatic relationships⁴². Furthermore, the public sentiment of the population was anti-European by the middle of 2009: more than 50 % believed that Russia was a strategic partner hailing Medvedev and Putin as the most trusted leaders, whereas only 26,2 % retained a pro-European stance.⁴³

The popularity of the Communist party endured a dramatic decline very soon before the second parliamentary elections. The massive distrust of the population towards the government stemmed from their feebleness and lack of efficacy to handle the crisis situation. The internal disagreement in the Communist party over the presidential decisions and an attempt of some members to disassociate from the others by establishing a “genuine independent socialist party” accelerated the dramatic reverse of the public opinion⁴⁴. On the other hand, the pro-European parties managed to consolidate their popular support, combined the power after the second election guaranteeing their majority in the Parliament and overtook a helm of the country thus rescued Moldova from a short-term “derailment”. The pro-European parties forged a coalition government *Alliance for European Integration*. The

⁴¹ “European Parliament resolution on the situation in the Republic of Moldova”, Resolution P6_TA (2009) 0384, European Parliament, Strasbourg, May, 2009. Available at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONSGML+MOTION+P6-RC-2009-0262+0+DOC+PDF+V0//EN>

⁴² See “Voronin: România a declanșat revolta de la Chișinău”, *Evenimentul Zilei*, April 8, 2009. Available at: <http://www.evz.ro/detalii/stiri/voronin-romania-a-declansat-revolta-de-la-chi%C5%9Fin%C4%83u-846596.html>

⁴³ Ryan Kennedy (2010): “Supranational identity, democratic attitudes, and political participation: The EU and Moldova”, *European Union Politics*, p. 517. Available at: <http://cup.sagepub.com/content/11/4/511>

⁴⁴ George Dura (2009): “On track Moldova Wants EU Integration, but Needs to Do Its Homework First”, *Center for European Policy Studies*, Available at: <http://www.ceps.eu/book/track-moldova-wants-eu-integration-needs-do-its-homework-first>

new cabinet of ministers under the PM Vlad Filat declared the “integration with Europe” as his government’s top priority⁴⁵ and designed an ambitious plan “Rethink Moldova”⁴⁶ aiming at speeding up democratic reforms, convergence with the EU and the reunification of the country, which in turn gave impetus to the revitalization of the temporal backward relations with the EU. As a response, the EU together with the US and other world leading financial institutions (The World Bank and the IMF) pledged to contribute 2,6 bln USD to the project spanning 2011-2013 period⁴⁷. Moreover, the EaP considered further financial assistance aiming at an implementation of various projects, which would accelerate the reformative pace of the country.

However, despite the persistent political crisis, the high officials of the Moldovan government did not conceal their resentments when the final version of the EaP excluded the membership opportunity to the participant countries. Believing in the more advanced position of their country in the integration process with the EU, they were also unhappy with the EU’s decision to put Moldova next to, for example, Azerbaijan and Armenia that do not aspire towards the EU.⁴⁸ The Moldovan’s dissatisfaction over the EU’s regional approach utilizing the one-size-fit-all approach towards its eastern neighbors has reasonable groundings. Current rounds of negotiations about the Association Agreement (AA) between the EU and Moldova have demonstrated a considerable progress by assiduously

⁴⁵ “Moldova Gets new pro-Western PM”, (September 2009), BBC news. Available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/8275641.stm>

⁴⁶ “Rethink Moldova Priorities for Medium Term Development”, Report for the consultative Group Meeting in Brussels 24 March 2010, available at: <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTMOLDOVA/Resources/Rethink-Moldova-2010-2013-Final-edit-110310.pdf>

⁴⁷ Cristian Ghinea and Victor Chirilă (2010): “EU – Moldova negotiations what is to be discussed, what could be achieved?”, *Romanian Center for European Policies and Foreign Policy Associations*. Available at: http://www.crpe.ro/eng/library/files/crpe-ape.eu_%E2%80%93_moldova_negotiations.pdf

⁴⁸ “Moldova Unhappy with EU’s Eastern Partnership Offer”, (March 25, 2009), Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty. Available at: http://www.rferl.org/content/Moldova_Unhappy_With_EUs_Eastern_Partnership_Offer/1516575.html

implementing the EU *Acquis*. This is why Moldova is often being hailed as a forerunner among the other EaP participant countries⁴⁹. For example, to achieve visa liberalization with the EU, Moldova “started implementing reforms before being asked to do so by the EU”⁵⁰. Additionally, the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA) negotiations are progressing fast, which distinguishes Moldova together with Georgia from the other EaP countries.

3.2. Georgia

The establishment of the EaP was a great relief for Georgia, which faced a grave triple challenge by the time of the Prague Summit in May 2009: the loss of the recent war with Russia over South Ossetia inflicted huge financial damages on the country. Additionally, the Georgian government had invited wide international criticism and condemnation for being an initiator of the war and for its alleged attempt to drag the international actors (the EU and the USA) into a confrontation with Russia. The global financial crisis erupted in the early 2008 also had an adverse impact on the economic development of the country, which mainly relies on foreign aid and investments. Strikingly, the EU, which traditionally had not been a strong player in the Caucasian region mainly due to the Russian factor, came first to rescue Georgia from the overall devastation from the war in 2008. The immediate engagement of the EU under the French presidency had demonstrated the Union’s crisis management capability; however, it is arguable who deserves credit for that: France or the EU? As Dennis Sammut points out, the EU’s effectiveness as a mediator between the warring parties was insured by the “France’s prestige” and its president’s “personality and

⁴⁹Paul Ivan and Christian Ghinea (2010): “Making sense of EU Eastern Partnership – Moldova as an Opportunity”, Policy Memo, *Romanian Center for European Studies*, p-14. Available at: http://www.crpe.ro/eng/library/files/pm_13_moldova_eastern_partnership_en.pdf

⁵⁰*Ibid.*

charisma” and he argues further that *“If the war had happened in June and Slovenia was still in the presidency, its ability to impact on the process would have been negligible”*⁵¹.

Additionally, The EU was one of the co-initiators with the World Bank to convene a “Donor’s conference” in the immediate aftermath of the Russo-Georgian war in October 2008, which mobilized 3,4 bln Euro to assist Georgia to recover from the damages of war and save the country from the financial default. If the EU successfully managed to avert crisis in its neighborhood, it fell short in demonstrating the strong political will to force Russia to fully comply with the six-point truce brokered by France during the Russo-Georgian war. Instead, the EU has maintained its traditional peaceful approach reflected in providing financial support which serves the promotion of its norms in Georgia. To date, under the framework of the EaP, the EU and Georgia have upgraded their relations in several areas, however, with some inherent limitations. First and foremost, the sides concluded the visa facilitation agreement in June 2010. This has eased the hitherto restrictions on Georgian citizens to obtain EU visas, however, this achievement still cannot be regarded as a breakthrough in their relationships. The agreement does not grant Georgian citizens visa free travel to the EU; it solely considers the simplification and cost reduction of the application process.

3.3. The establishment of the EaP and its goals

The idea of the EaP was initiated by Poland and Sweden. Their respective foreign ministers voiced the details of the proposal at the EU Council meeting in Brussels in May

⁵¹ Dennis Sammut (2010): “The European Union’s Increased Engagement with the South Caucasus”, In Karen Henderson and Carol Weaver (eds): “The Black Sea region and EU policy: the challenge of divergent agendas”, (Ashgate), p-81.

2008. Despite being overloaded by the big enlargements in 2004 and 2007 and the low pace of the “digestion” process, the EaP’s initial version envisaged to launch special bilateral relationships with the six post-Soviet neighbors, Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus and the Caucasian states, thus counterbalance the French southern initiative – the Mediterranean Union – and add a membership reward as a strong incentive to the successful “executors” of the EU *Acquis Communautaire*. “[T]o the east, we have European neighbors...they all have the right one day to apply [for EU membership]”, and “We all know the EU has enlargement fatigue. We have to use this time to prepare as much as possible so that when the fatigue passes, membership becomes something natural”, – these were the main messages the Polish Minister Sikorski intended to send to both the Member States as well as the six neighbor countries.⁵² Although the Eastern Partnership has dual authors, the very idea had been generated by the Polish government later asking its Swedish counterpart to join aiming at putting more weight on the proposal at the EU high forums against the skepticism of some Member States.⁵³

The EaP enjoyed an endorsement from Germany because the Mediterranean dimension of the neighborhood policy, which was actively lobbied by France, fell out the foreign policy scope of the one of the strongest Member States of the EU. However, the German government insisted that instead of referring to the six countries as “Eastern European partners”, the final version of the EaP draft should use the term “European countries”, thus thoroughly excluded the accession possibility.⁵⁴ It is noteworthy to mention that the hidden agenda of the EaP was to detach these six countries ultimately from the

⁵² Marcin Łapczyński (2009): “The European Union’s Eastern Partnership: Chances and Perspectives” *Caucasian Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 3 (2), p.145.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p.146.

⁵⁴ John Van Oudenaren and Ronald Tiersky (2010): “Europe and Russia: Strategic Partnership and Strategic Mistrust”, In J.V.O and R.T. (eds): “European Foreign Policies: Does Europe Still Matter?”

Russian influence without an explicit confrontation with it. Therefore the inclusion of the membership perspective would bring undesirable results, which clearly explains the German insistence on the final changes. As a result the end-goal of the EaP is not to offer membership to the six post-Soviet states. It is created to “accelerate political association and further economic integration between the Union and partner countries”.⁵⁵ The EU strives to enhance the relationships with the participant countries by establishing AA, the DCFTA and visa facilitation.

Special attention needs to be diverted to the ongoing negotiation between the EU and Georgia and Moldova over the DFTCA, which clearly demonstrates the explicit asymmetry in their relationships. A group of scholars has recently made an in-depth analysis and assessment of “the EU-Georgia discussion on a free trade agreement”.⁵⁶ Their main findings are that Georgia has made a substantial progress in making economic reforms since 2003, namely, it has “implemented basic free trade unilaterally” by reducing the tariffs on imported goods to the unprecedented level of 0, 3 %, which was followed by other reformative steps making Georgia the most liberal economy among the EaP countries. In such circumstances, they continue, Georgia justly deserves a fast move to the DCFTA negotiations. Instead, the EU has demonstrated an inconsistent approach towards it. The Commission demands from Georgia to incorporate an unnecessary set of regulations, which “[P]ortray the EU as being hegemonic towards its very much smaller neighbor and not an enlightened and trustable anchor”.⁵⁷ The EU’s highly demanding treatment to Georgia loses its relevance in the absence of the membership perspective. Nevertheless, Georgia stands firm in its

⁵⁵ “Joint Declaration of the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit” (7 May 2009), Council of European Union, p-6. Available at: http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/er/107589.pdf

⁵⁶ See Patrick Messerlin, Michael Emerson, Gia Jandieri and Alexandre Le Vernoy (2011): “An Appraisal of the EU’s Trade Policy towards its Eastern Neighbors: the Case of Georgia”, CEPS, Available at: <http://www.ceps.eu/book/appraisal-eu%E2%80%99s-trade-policy-towards-its-eastern-neighbours-case-georgia>

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* ii

commitment to adopt the EU norms and directives with a hope to deflect the Russian influence thoroughly from the region.

Similarly, the Moldovan government has gone far ahead in an implementation of the EU requirements pertaining the DCFTA by utilizing a strategy called “preemptive implementation”, which aims to carry out reforms unilaterally before the sides start to negotiate on them after learning other countries’ experiences⁵⁸. Despite the salience of Moldova’s progress, the EU avoids setting a fixed date when the DCFTA will be established, allegedly taking it as an effective instrument to impose non-trade norms on Moldova. Another reason, as Leonid Litra concludes, is that the EU puts Moldova next to Ukraine in the “package” treatment, which means that although Moldova has overrun its neighbor in implementing the EU directives it will not receive a preferential treatment.⁵⁹

This chapter has identified three factors sustaining Moldova’s and Georgia’s inspiration towards the EU. Firstly, as argued above, similarly to the ENP, the EaP does not consider the membership perspective for the partner country. However, there are still a few Member States which strongly support the idea of granting the membership perspective to Moldova and Georgia. It is not a surprise that these are the countries which share common borders and the Soviet-led communist experience with the EaP countries. Poland, the Baltic States and Romania, among other Member States, have committed to the successful implementation of the EaP and the engagement with defence of Moldova’s and Georgia’s interests vociferously on the EU forums⁶⁰. This argument will be further reinforced in the

⁵⁸ Cristian Ghinea and Victor Chirilă, EU – Moldova Negotiations What is to be Discussed, What Could be Achieved?, CRPE and APE. Available at: www.crpe.ro/eng/library/files/summary_eu-moldova_negociations.pdf

⁵⁹ Leonid Litra (2010): “Some Reflectionson the timing of Moldova’s negotiations of the EU Association Agreements”, *Profit Moldova*. Available at: <http://profitmd.net/economics/some-reflections-on-the-timing-of-moldovas-negotiations-of-the-eu-association-agreement.html>

⁶⁰ See the charter “Commitment towards the EaP – an Overview” in David Rinnert (2011): “The Eastern Partnership in Georgia. Increasing efficiency of EU Neighborhood Policies in the South Caucasus” Available

next chapter, where the analyses of the CSDP missions will touch upon the Russo-Georgian war of 2008 and the EU's reaction to it.

Another key factor why Moldova and Georgia remain committed to the European stance is that the EU represents the biggest financial donor to them, which has the existential importance to sustain the economic development in both countries. Moldova and Georgia are highly dependent on the inflows of foreign investments and external energy supplies, which make them vulnerable to the influence of their unfriendly neighbor (Russia). The projects implemented through the ENP and the EaP and other extra funds earmarked on an ad hoc basis have been playing a role of a “breathing machine” for the Moldovan and Georgian economy, thus contributed to the maintenance of their pro-EU orientation.

Lastly, despite the explicit “European choice” of the Moldovan and Georgian governments and their relentless effort to achieve political and security backing from the EU beside its mere financial assistance, their economic underdevelopment, internal political turmoil and prevailing democratic deficit, uncontrolled breakaway regions and being beleaguered by the strong and at the same time hostile actor in the region - Russia, make it unlikely that the EaP will yield successful results. The above factors, among other things, pose a serious threat to Moldova and Georgia's future and there is a likelihood that they return to the Russian orbit if they manage to improve their bilateral relations. This presumption gains more relevance considering that Russia holds the key of conflict resolution in Transdnistria and Abkhazia/South Ossetia and even the DFCTA - the highest reward the EU can offer to the EaP countries, loses its incentive power for the Moldovan and Georgian production hardly meeting the EU quality requirements. Therefore the

at: http://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/arbeitspapiere/Rinnert_EUEasternPartnershipGeorgia.pdf, p-25.

Russian marketplace, which neglects quality control on the exporting goods, still remains attractive for them.

The next chapter will highlight the EU's CSDP missions in Moldova and Georgia to examine their roles in conflict resolutions and analyze their overall impact on the bilateral relations.

Chapter 4: The CSDP Missions – Keeping Peace without Arms

*“European integration was conceived in the 1950s’ largely as a conflict resolution exercise”*⁶¹. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Moldova and Georgia emerged as hot spots where the secessionist movements dragged both countries into the persistent instability featured by the sporadic escalation of the violence across the borderlines of the breakaway regions or the plunge into the full-scale war (The Russo-Georgian war in 2008) between the conflicting parties. The EU engaged with conflict resolutions in Moldova and Georgia immediately, however, not as an active conflict management actor or a mediator. Instead, as argued in the previous chapters, the EU has long confined its interference to, and sought to influence indirectly, the conflict resolution by the implementation of various projects and the provision of financial support under the ENP and the EaP. However, the EU’s concern about neighboring instability has mainly increased concomitant to the enlargement process and the inherent geographic approximation towards the conflict-ridden areas. Eventually, the EU decided to augment its conflict resolution capability by sending the European Union Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine (EUBAM) and the European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) to Georgia.

The chapter initially will explore those different preconditions that led the EU to increase its commitment to the conflict resolution and dispatch the missions to Moldova and Georgia. In order to achieve this goal, it will first introduce a brief empirical overview of the conflicts in Georgia and Moldova and the EU’s engagement with them complemented by the Russo-Georgian war in 2008 in a separate subchapter. Further, it will look into the CSDP missions and analyze their real implications and viability. Lastly, it will summarize the

⁶¹See, Nicu, Popescu, *EU Foreign Policy and Post-Soviet Conflicts: Stealth Intervention*, Routledge, and December, 2010. p. 1

arguments in response to the thesis questions and provide complementarity to the list of the factors keeping Moldova's and Georgia's pro-EU inspiration alive.

4.1. Conflict in Moldova and the EU engagement

Most of the conflicts on the post-Soviet space bear the nature of ethnic tension (Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Nagorno Karabakh), however, the animosity between Moldova and its secessionist region Transnistria, which started in the early 90s and soon culminated into a full-scale military clash, had been largely evolved along the relentless struggle instigated by the local elites aiming to achieve a full political and economic autonomy. Transnistria raised its status equal to Moldova within the still existent Soviet Union by declaring itself "Pridnestrovian Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic", which escalated into an armed collision between supporters of the central and local governments. The major participants to the erupted violence became Russia and Ukraine assisting the secessionist republic and Romania siding with Moldova by provision of the military hardware or advisory service⁶². The conflict ended up with achievement of a ceasefire agreement between Moldova and Russia in July 1992, which set out the three-party Joint Control Commission consisting of Russian, Moldovan and Transnistrian representatives with a task to observe security issues in the demilitarized zone. According to the agreement, the status of Transnistria would be discussed during the ensuing negotiations among the parties⁶³. The negotiations were held in the "five-party" format led by the OSCE. They could not yield tangible results due to the Russian factor. Russia, which was interested to keep a *status quo*, tried to reassert its control over the region, and obstructed any attempt to reintegrate

⁶² Alexei Arbatov, et al. eds (1997) "Managing Conflict in the Former Soviet Union: Russian and American Perspectives, (Cambridge: MIT Press), p. 178

⁶³ "Agreement on Principles of a Peaceful Settlement of the Armed Conflict in the Transnistrian Region of the Republic of Moldova", Article 4, p. 2. Available at: <http://www.stefanwolff.com/files/Russian-Moldovan-Ceasefire-Agreement.pdf>

Transnistria with Moldova. Therefore the Moldovan government relentlessly sought the involvement of other international actors in the negotiations process, which would effectively overcome the Russian “hurdle”.

The EU has long been reluctant to engage in conflict resolution in Moldova. Similarly, the EU also avoided its direct involvement in conflicts on the Georgian territory; however, in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Member States like France, the UK and Germany actively participated in various formats under the auspices of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the United Nations (UN)⁶⁴. The explicit negligence lasted until 2002, when the EU actively started to develop its grandiose foreign policy initiative – the ENP. Moldova with its inherent problems became the immediate focal point of that initiative. The EU’s sudden interest, as discussed already, had been preconditioned by the enlargement process and also, *“This was preceded by the growing emphasis on the EU and Europeanization in Moldovan Political discourse”*⁶⁵. Similarly, the European discourses have also undergone gradual transformation over the unresolved conflicts in the post-Soviet space, namely on the Moldovan territory. While discussing the conflicts nearby Europe, Charles King bearing also Transnistria in mind, stated that:

‘Eurasia's de facto countries are informational black holes ... [T]he problems they have spawned are immense. They are the central political problem for the recognized states whose territory they inhabit, and they have become conduits for trafficking in drugs, arms, and even people across Eurasia into Europe and beyond’.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Nicu, Popescu (2010): “EU Foreign Policy and Post-Soviet Conflicts: Stealth Intervention” (Routledge: Oxon and New York), pp. 42-43.

⁶⁵ Marius Vahl and Michael Emerson (2004): “Moldova and Transnistrian Conflict” In “Europeanization and Ethnic Conflict Resolutions - Case Studies from the European Peripheries” Bruno Koppieters et al. (eds), (Academia Press, Ghent), p-149.

⁶⁶ Charles King (2001): “The Benefits of Ethnic War Understanding Eurasia’s Unrecognized States”, *World Politics*, Vol 53, p-550.

Truly enough, after gaining the *de facto* independence, Transdnistria have started to pose a threat to EU stability. Consequently, the EU responded to the Moldovan government's appeal and joined the "five-party" negotiation format as an observer and appointed Special Representative. However, the end-result has been indiscernible due to the unresolved border control issues between Transdnistria and Ukraine, which inflicted millions of euro loss to the Moldovan central budget.

4.2. EUBAM – Civilian Border Control

The EUBAM mission assumed its responsibility in November 2005 following the appeal of the Moldovan and Ukraine governments to the EU to assist in the 470 km border control to diminish illegal activities such as smuggling, human trafficking and other related criminal. The EUBAM is a civilian mission staffed with more than 120 skilled customs personnel, which implements its daily tasks through the newly established customs regime. The main objectives of the mission are:

- Contribute to enhancing the overall border and customs management capacities and the abilities of Moldova and Ukraine to fight against cross border and organized crime and to approximate the standards of the border and law enforcement authorities to those of the EU.
- Assist Moldova and Ukraine in fulfilling their commitments under the European Neighborhood Policy Action plans and partnership cooperation agreements
- Contribute to a peaceful resolution of the Transnistrian conflict.⁶⁷

Although the tasks of the mission are ambitious, its actual contribution into the conflict resolution is rather minor. The inability to again access to the Transdnistrian territory and an insufficient number of the mission staff in comparison with border length undermine the overall efficacy of the mission. Additionally, the EU has failed to achieve an

⁶⁷ See "Mandate of EU Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine" Available at: http://www.eubam.org/en/about/what_we_do

internal consensus to change a peacekeeping format which has been predominantly the Russian domain thus far, because some Russia-friendly states, Germany, France and Italy among others, feared it would deteriorate their relationship with Moscow.⁶⁸ Otherwise, the presence of Russian peacekeepers on the ground and the EU's cautious approach to conflict resolution only underpins the *status quo* in Transdnistria.

4.3. Conflict in Georgia and the EU Engagement

Similar to the Republic of Moldova Georgia also failed to avert the outburst of conflicts and inherent bloodsheds on its soil after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. However, dissimilar from the Transdnistrian region, the Georgia's erstwhile autonomous constituent entities – Abkhazia and South Ossetia – sought their independence on the basis of their ethnic distinctiveness from Georgians. Other external and internal factors have also contributed to and fueled the escalation of hostilities between the conflicting parties: the Soviet legacy which had produced the political and economic instability in the region, the rising popularity of Georgia's first nationalist government, which planned to build a homogeneous nation-state, and the Russian intervention into the military clashes by providing support to both sides occasionally thus effectively manipulating the situation in its favor and attempting to restore the influence in the region⁶⁹. Eventually, South Ossetia and Abkhazia succeeded to gain independence in June 1992 and October 1993 respectively but devoid of international recognition and remained largely labeled as “frozen conflicts” until being fully “melted” during the Russo-Georgian war in August 2008.

⁶⁸ Nicu, Popescu (2010): “EU Foreign Policy and Post-Soviet Conflicts: Stealth Intervention” (Routledge: Oxon and New York), pp. 60-61.

⁶⁹ Stephen F. Jones (1997): “Georgia: the Trauma of Statehood” In “New States New Politics Building the Post-Soviet Nations” Ian Bremmer and Ray Taras (eds) (Cambridge Press), pp 505-543.

The EU's engagement in conflict resolution in Georgia has been negligible for a long time stipulated by a number of reasons. Firstly, the whole South Caucasus was beyond the scope of the EU's foreign policy priorities due to the lack of knowledge about the region and its geographical remoteness from the EU. Secondly, as Nicu Popescu points out, "*Throughout the 90s, EU policies toward South Caucasus in General and Georgia in particular have been marked by a Russia-first approach*".⁷⁰ Thirdly, the EU, as an international actor, was trying to gain its foothold after the establishment of the pillar structure incorporated by the Maastricht Treaty in 1992. If the EU stumbled to contribute to the conflict resolution in Georgia on the institutional level, its Member States France, Germany and the UK were active participants of the UN led mediation within the format of The Group of Friends of the UN Secretary General on Georgia which focused on Abkhazia.⁷¹

The EU gradually started to engage with the Georgian conflicts ensuing the "Rose Revolution" in 2003 and the new government's explicit demonstration of the pro-European stance. Also the enlargement process and the concomitant geographic approximation to the region increased the EU's exposure to instability. Furthermore, the abundant Caspian oil deposits added prominence to Georgia as a strategic transitory country in the eye of the EU, which was relentlessly seeking alternative sources of energy supply. Consequently, the inclusion of the South Caucasus in the ENP and the appointment of the Special Representative (EUSR) for the region increased the EU's role in the conflict resolution in Georgia. However, as discussed in the first chapter, the ENP circumscribed to the provision of economic and humanitarian aid entailing the rehabilitation of the destroyed infrastructure in the conflict zones and the mandate of the EUSR mainly comprised to support the UN

⁷⁰ Nicu, Popescu (2010): "EU Foreign Policy and Post-Soviet Conflicts: Stealth Intervention" (Routledge: Oxon and New York), pp-69.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p-71.

and OSCE offices involved in the conflict resolution.⁷² The Georgian government was not satisfied by the EU's "soft approach" to conflict resolution and required more commitment "in particular instruments from the CSDP to promote regional stability and crisis management"⁷³. However, the EU's abstention lasted until 2008, when the Russo-Georgian war changed the existential circumstances in the Georgia.

4.4. The Russo – Georgian War

There is no doubt that the Russo-Georgian war remarkably demonstrated that the EU has a capability to act as an effective crisis management actor when the Member States can arrive at a common stance pertaining the CFSP area. Namely, under the French rotating presidency, the EU immediately reacted to the crisis of August 2008 and within a few days brokered a ceasefire agreement between Russia and Georgia, thus managed to halt military actions on the ground. Furthermore, the EU decided to dispatch a mission of observers to Georgia in September and made it already operational in two weeks after the decision. It is important to mention that before the French involvement, four EU Member States Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia condemned the Russian aggression against Georgia and urged the other members and the EU institutions to apply punitive measurement on Russia⁷⁴. Moreover, the leaders of four countries decided not to wait for the ending of war and went to Tbilisi in order to demonstrate their strong solidarity to Georgia. They continued to support the Georgian interests on various occasions in Brussels by demanding for more coercion on Russia to fully meet the ceasefire agreement mediated by France.

⁷²*Ibid.*, p-74.

⁷³ Giselle Bosse (2011): "the EU in Georgia towards a coherent crisis management strategy?" In "EU Conflict Prevention and Crisis Management Roles, institutions and policies", ed by Eva Gross and Ana E. Juncos (Routledge), p-136.

⁷⁴ See "Joint Declaration of Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian and Polish Presidents on the Situation in Georgia", 11 August, 2008. Available at: <http://www.baltic-course.com/eng/transport/?doc=4027>

4.5. EUMM – The Fastest Mission Deployment⁷⁵

The EUMM is a civilian mission consisting of almost 200 personnel representing twenty-six Member States. The Mission has three field offices with headquarters in Tbilisi and is tasked to work on:

- Confidence building in the areas adjacent to the Abkhazian and South Ossetian Administrative Boundary Line
- Compliance with the Memoranda of Understanding between the mission and the Georgian Ministries of Defence and Internal Affairs
- Human rights and humanitarian issues.⁷⁶

However, the issue on the real implication of this mission and the extent that it can contribute to the conflict resolution remain highly disputable and undermines the EU's credibility as a conflict management actor. Even the high officials of the EU do not deny the limited capability of the mission to perform its duty according to the ascribed mandate.⁷⁷ The mission still does not have an access to the Abkhazian and South Ossetia territories; thereby the overall efficacy of the EU involvement is questionable. The situation is gloomier in comparison with Transdnistria given the fact that Russia recognized both breakaway regions independent and requires the EU to treat them accordingly. Proceeding from the occasional rhetorical statements from the conflicting parties blaming the other in re-militarization and preparation anew for another violence, it becomes clear that without strong political will from the EU to increase its conflict resolution capacity, the mission cannot guarantee the lasting peace and stability in Georgia.

⁷⁵ EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy made an official statement regarding the launch of the EUMM while visiting Georgia in September 2008, where he emphasized that this mission was “[t]he fastest deployment that the EU has ever undertaken. Speech available at: http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/georgia/press_corner/all_news/news/2008/20080930_01_en.htm

⁷⁶ See detailed information on the EUMM to Georgia available on the mission webpage at: http://www.eumm.eu/en/about_eumm

⁷⁷ See “Statement by the EUSR for the South Caucasus Peter Semneby”, OSCE Permanent Council, Vienna, 10 February, 2011. Available at: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2009_2014/documents/dsca/dv/dsca_20110315_10/dsca_20110315_10en.pdf

As the analyses of the EUBAM and EUMM have demonstrated, the CSDP missions are limited in their capacity to make a substantial contribution to the conflict resolution. The EUMM, which has a wider mission than the EUBM and is obliged to ensure the security on the whole internationally recognized territory of Georgia, can also be regarded as a border mission. Their mandate *de facto* is extended till the borderlines of the conflict zones controlled by the Russian military forces. Nevertheless, the Georgian side has to be content with the EU's lame effort, because currently the EU remains a sole counterbalance international actor against the Russian predominance. The US – another strong player in the region – is currently more focused on its own problems in other geographic areas, namely in Iraq and Afghanistan and tries to “reset” the relations with Russia, which also partly explains Georgia's total devotion to the pursuit of the “appeasement” policy reflected in the full compliance with the EU norm diffusion policy. Additionally, as the Russo-Georgian war has also manifested, some Member States do not eschew a confrontation with Russia and explicitly advocate Georgia's pro-EU aspiration.

Similarly, Moldova, powerless to achieve a support from Russia to solve Transdnistrian problem favorably, tried to convince other international player to involve. As Nicu Popescu correctly pointed out: *“Moldova has been a strong demandeur for EU and US involvement in the negotiations, since in Moldova's view, this would correct for Russia's dominance in the talks”*.⁷⁸ The US interest towards Moldova has always been modest. Moldova, which is geographically sandwiched between Romania and Ukraine and devoid of requisite natural resources espoused with official neutrality excluding its possible NATO membership, falls out of the area of US strategic interest, which leaves the EU as a sole actor vis-à-vis Russia.

⁷⁸ Nicu, Popescu (2010): “EU Foreign Policy and Post-Soviet Conflicts: Stealth Intervention” (Routledge: Oxon and New York), pp-50.

Additionally, despite a short-term severance of the relationships, Romania has become a staunch supporter of the EU's more engagement with the Moldovan matters.

Thus, Moldova and Georgia, which face problems of unresolved conflicts on their soils, do not have much of an option but to align with the EU by committing explicitly to incorporate its norms.

Conclusion

The thesis has analyzed the EU foreign policy in relations with its eastern neighbors. In particular, it has focused on the cases of Moldova and Georgia and explored the rationale of their aspiration to integrate with the EU in the absence of the membership perspective. The selection criteria of the cases have been influenced by various factors. Despite their different geographic proximity and geo-strategic importance to the EU, as already argued, the EU often places both together in its eastern neighborhood initiatives.

Elucidating the mainstream debate about the EU's actorness, the thesis has concluded that the Union vis-à-vis its eastern neighborhood behaves as a normative power, which exports its norms through the implementation of various initiatives aiming to create a "ring of friends" which will share the EU values, forestall the spill-over of external threats thus ensure inner stability.

In search for an answer to its main question, the thesis looked into the dynamics of the EU-Moldova and EU-Georgia partnership since 2002 and explored the key features of their relations. More specifically the thesis has identified six factors which have impacted the unabated desire of Moldova and Georgia to strive integration with the EU.

First, the EU remains a single international actor, which is engaged with its normative exports in relations with both countries.

Second, although Moldova and Georgia still have a long way ahead until they fully incorporate *Acquis*, their respective governments do not wish to abandon the chosen pro-EU course.

Third, the unresolved conflicts and uncontrolled regions on their territories compel them to seek international support which can counterbalance the Russian predominance. The EU represents the sole player thus far which has an in-depth knowledge and experience

about Transnistria and Abkhazia/South Ossetia and at the same time, has a leverage to achieve palpable results with Russia.

Four, despite the EU's longstanding reluctance to be more pro-active to contribute to the conflict resolution in Moldova and Georgia, it has always been one of the biggest donors to both countries to sustain their economic development.

Five, the deteriorated relations with Russia and pro-EU stance cost Moldova and Georgia losing a huge market for their export and they are forced to seek other opportunity. Ongoing negotiation between the EU and Moldova and Georgia over the DCFTA is a clear example of that.

Lastly, although the EU does not consider further enlargement eastward in the foreseeable future, some Member States (Poland, the Baltic States and Romania) still advocate the idea to set up a timeframe for Moldova's and Georgia's inclusion in the Union.

With regard to the secondary question whether the unilateral strive of Moldova and Georgia will ensure them the integration with the EU, as the analysis has revealed there is a disparity of interests between the parties. The EU puts a significant emphasis on the economic aspects of bilateral relationships and a promotion of its normative expansion in Moldova and Georgia. While the top priority of both countries remain the restoration of their territorial integration and establishment of a stable and secure environment without which the further development of those countries is questionable. Therefore, if the EU does not change its approach to the conflicts in Moldova and Georgia and instead of trying to keep a *status quo* summon the political will and apply a more pro-active approach to its resolution, the current fragile situation on the ground, notably in Abkhazia/South Ossetia, and the presence of the limited-capability missions will not be able to preempt the re-escalation of another instability. Similarly, the uncontrolled Transdnistria will continually

inflict the multi-million euro loss to the Moldavian economy and will continue to remain Europe's "black hole". Accordingly, the likelihood that these states will revert to the Russian orbit any time soon is still high provided that Russia holds keys to those conflicts. Additionally, Russia represents an attractive marketplace of which quality requirements, unlike the highly competitive and saturated EU market, are not difficult to meet for mostly low quality national Moldavian and Georgian production.

The thesis has a limitation, which creates a good basis for a further research. Due to the short space Moldova's and Georgia's cases could not be analyzed versus other EaP countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus and Ukraine). Given the fact the EU traditionally prefers a regional approach in conducting its enlargement policy, the research questions and corresponding findings would have acquired more precision in exploring the behaviors of Moldova and Georgia against other EU neighborhood countries.

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