EASTERN PARTNERSHIP VS. EURASIAN UNION: A NEW GEOPOLITICAL GAME BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND RUSSIA

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Submitted to
Central European University
Department of International Relations

In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in International Relations

Word count: 16,985

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Budapest, Hungary
2017

Abstract

The thesis examines the construction of a geopolitical contestation between the European Union and Russia over the common neighborhood where the six post-Soviet Eastern European countries, namely Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine are situated, to demonstrate its negative implications for the target countries. Positioning the issue in critical geopolitics, it argues that the EU and Russia's integration plans for the region—Eastern Partnership and Eurasian Union—are mutually exclusive, thus urging the target countries to make a choice between them that can provoke challenges to their security, as recently seen in Ukraine. Through tracing the roots of the Ukrainian crisis, the thesis seeks to show the casual link between the independent variable—rivalry between the EU and Russia, and the dependent variable—its negative impacts for these six countries. Being aware of their distinct characteristics, the thesis comes to the general conclusion that these smaller countries are weakly positioned in this geopolitical game; while the existence of unresolved conflicts makes them more vulnerable to Russian threat, these disputes also block their way to full EU membership.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest gratitude and appreciation to my thesis supervisor, Professor Péter Balázs, for his valuable support, guidance, and advice throughout the writing process.

I would also like to express my sincere thanks to Zsuzsanna Toth from the Center for Academic Writing for her precious assistance that helped me to improve my academic writing skills.

Last but not least, my special thanks go to all the professors from the Department of International Relations for their worthwhile contributions to my knowledge on the field throughout the year.

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INTRODUCTION

The war in Eastern Ukraine is still continuing despite a ceasefire agreement signed between the parties in February 2015, and the Autonomous Republic of Crimea in Southern Ukraine remains illegally annexed to the Russian Federation after the bloodless takeover of the peninsula by Russian soldiers—little green men—and subsequent referendum during February-March 2014. Deeply grounded in Realism, John J. Mearsheimer put the blame on NATO's enlargement and the EU's expansion towards the East that as the West was "moving into Russia's backyard and threatening its core strategic interests," Putin reacted with taking Crimea and destabilizing Eastern Ukraine. To explain Russia's responses, he argued: "This is Geopolitics."[1] In this respect, inspired by Mearsheimer, this study positions the Ukrainian crisis in the geopolitical game between the EU and Russia exploring how a rivalry between these geopolitical powers over the shared neighbourhood encompassed by the six post-soviet countries, namely Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine has been constructed in the recent decades to show its negative impacts on the smaller target countries. However, departing from Mearsheimer's perspective, the thesis is based on the construction of the game between the EU and Russia excluding the NATO factor.

In fact, as per Article 49 of the Treaty of the European Union *"any European State which respects the values…may apply to become a member of the Union."*[2] In this regard, when the EU launched the Eastern Partnership (EaP) program targeting these six post-Soviet countries at Prague

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[1] John J. Mearsheimer, "Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault, The Liberal Delusions That Provoked Putin," *Foreign Affairs*, September/October, 2014 issue, accessed May 25, 2017, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2014-08-18/why-ukraine-crisis-west-s-fault

[2] "Consolidated version of the Treaty on European Union," *Official Journal of the European Union* 55 (2012), accessed May 10, 2017, http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.C_.2012.326.01.0001.01.ENG&toc=OJ:C:2012:326:TOC

Summit on 7 May 2009 to create a safe and prosperous ring of countries around itself, in its "close neighbourhood,"[3] it officially acknowledged them as Eastern European countries. As stated in Article 2 of the Prague Declaration *"the main goal of the Eastern Partnership is to create the necessary conditions to accelerate political association and further economic integration between the European Union and interested partner countries."*[4] However, these six post-Soviet countries are located in Russia's 'Near Abroad,'[5] and shape a central component of its geopolitical Eurasian concept. Consequently, Russia deemed the EaP as EU's expansion posing a direct threat to its vital interests in the region, and accordingly, started to actively seek to form an alternative Eurasian integration model for these Former Soviet Republics (FSRs)—the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU). As stressed in the Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation 2013, "Russia sees as a priority the task of establishing the Eurasian Economic Union…a model that would determine the future of the Commonwealth states."[6]

Being mutually exclusive, these rival projects—the EaP and the EEU, create pressures on the target countries to make them choose an enhanced relationship with either player de facto restricting relations with the other.[7] However, both models have flawed designs, for instance, exclusion of Russia from the EaP was among the key factors contributing to the intensification of the power competition over the region. Furthermore, the existence of geopolitical rivalry over the region produces the security issues for the participant countries, whose territories are home to the unresolved disputes, and even drives them into a new one as seen in the case of Ukraine. In this

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[3] Gabriela Dragan, "Deepening the economic integration in the Eastern Partnership: from a Free Trade Area to a Neighbourhood Economic Community?" *Eastern Journal of European Studies* 6, Issue 2 (2015): 10.
[4] Council of the European Union, "Joint Declaration of the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit Prague," 7 May 2009, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/er/107589.pdf
[5] Hannes Adomeit ," Russia and its Near Neighbourhood: Competition and Conflict with the EU," *Natolin Research Papers* (2011): 1.
[6] The Ministry of the Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation (Approved by President of the Russian Federation V. Putin on 12 February 2013), published February 18,2013,http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptICkB6BZ29/content/id/122186
[7] Laure Delcour, "Between the Eastern Partnership and Eurasian Integration: Explaining Post-Soviet Countries' Engagement in (Competing) Region-Building Projects", *Problems of Post-Communism* 62, no. 6 (2015): 316.

respect, because of its strategic importance for the security and survival of Russia as an international player, Ukraine's role was the most crucial one. It is here argued that the principal reason behind the radicalisation of Russia's position towards Ukraine was the latter's pro-EU regime change following the Euromaidan revolution that re-focused on the integration into the EU. As these developments were an infringement of Eastern Europe's balance of power,[8] Russia responded aggressively to block Ukraine's way towards full EU membership.

Thus, this research aims to demonstrate the negative implications of this geopolitical competition between EU and Russia for these six countries. The key hypothesis of the thesis is that several kinds of triggering factors, positive developments in one front, intensify a power competition in the shared neighbourhood between the major powerful actors and create direct challenges to the national security of the smaller, non-powerful actors located in that region, at a certain time. With a main emphasis on the ongoing Ukrainian crisis, it is possible to test the validity of this hypothesis by tracing the roots of the EU-Ukraine cooperation and the subsequent reactions of Russia. Additionally, the sub-hypothesis that the existence of breakaway regions put constraints on the foreign policy orientations of the target countries in a sense that under this intensified competition siding with EU may exacerbate the conflicts, is tested through briefly exploring the different policy choices of the other target countries with a focus on how Russia uses these conflicts to pressure the country governments.

To accomplish the aim of the thesis, the following questions are explored: how the countries positioned in this geopolitical game are affected, why the EaP was perceived as a real threat by Russia; are the both projects sufficiently effective to avoid failures; how the absence of

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[8] David Cadier, "Eastern Partnership vs Eurasian Union? The EU–Russia Competition in the Shared Neighbourhood and the Ukraine Crisis," *Global Policy Volume* 5, Sup.1 (2014): 79.

future membership offer under the EaP make participants more vulnerable to Russian threat, how breakaway territories affect integration choices of the target countries and more importantly, why Russia's stance towards Ukraine was radicalized at a certain time. With minor exceptions, the time frame of this empirical analysis extends from 2004, launching of the European Neighbourhood Policy till now, but with a strong focus on 2014, emergence of the Ukrainian crisis.

Indeed, there is a lack of scholarly works on the exploration of the issue from the perspective of critical geopolitics with a focus on the whole region, not only Ukraine. Additionally, most of the studies do not frame this rivalry as a geopolitical game constructed over the time or do not recognize the EU's geopolitical actorness. In this respect, mainly tracing the roots of Ukrainian crisis to support the main hypothesis, the thesis intends to fill this gap in academia by generalizing the casual relationship between integration plans and the choices of the six target countries applying the critical geopolitics and positioning the rivalry in Wendtian constructivism.

The thesis is structured in four chapters. The first chapter offers theoretical frameworks the research fit in, and conceptual insights into the issue to make the study intelligible. The second chapter introduces the evolution of the two rival projects; EaP and the EEU, while the third chapter traces the roots of the Ukrainian crisis to show how the rivalry between these economic integration models constructed in at a certain time to validate the main argument of the thesis about the negative implications of this contestation between the EU and Russia for a common neighbourhood. Finally, the first section of the last chapter briefly assesses the EaP and EEU to find out how effective are they as integration projects for the target countries, and the second section makes arguments concerning the role of breakaway regions on the foreign policy orientations of other five countries through a brief exploration of the links between policy choices and the following events around these territories.

Methodology

To test the validity of the hypothesis, the author has done a qualitative research primarily grounded on the case study. As Robert K. Yin underlines, when the emphasis is on the actual real-life events that are not under the control of the researcher, for instance the Ukrainian crisis, the case study is a selected strategy to explore "how" and "why" questions.[9] Indeed, Audie Klotz states that "framing the theoretical insights through the dominant scholarly discourse of testing propositions can lead to productive engagements."[10] Moreover, Van Evera has specified the five principal aims that case studies serve, which also involve testing theories through three ways: process tracing, controlled comparison, and congruence procedures.[11] In this respect, tracing the roots of the Ukrainian crisis, the key hypotheses designed to prove the negative consequences of the geopolitical contestation between the EU and Russia over a common neighbourhood has been tested. In addition, to contribute to the validation, the position of the breakaway regions in the territories of the other target countries in this rivalry are explored as subsets.

Indeed, it is acknowledged that political regimes governing these six countries, and their foreign policy orientations are distinct, for instance, Georgia and Armenia. These facts could be enough influential to make generalization about the implications of this geopolitical rivalry on the target countries through the single case study of Ukraine challenging. However, as Van Evera acknowledges, the case study has potency to enable defining how the independent—rivalry triggered by the EU and Russia's different integration plans, the EaP and the EEU, for the common neighbourhood—causes the dependent variable—the negative impacts of this rivalry for the six EaP countries located in this region. Whenever case-study argument backs a hypothesis, it is

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[9] Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research, Design and Methods (third edition)*, Applied Social Research Method Series 5 (Washington: Sage Publications, Inc, 2003), 1.

[10] Audie Klotz, "Case Selection," in *Qualitative Methods in International Relations: A Pluralist Guide*, eds. Audie Klotz and Deepa Prakash (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 48.

[11] Stephen Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 55-56.

possible to examine the case further to make inferences and test accounts delegating the operations of the hypothesis. We can "process trace," that is, analyse the evidences through which the early situations are interpreted into case outcomes.[12]

Thus, the thesis explores the sequences of the events around Ukraine through the process-tracing to show the cause-effect links between the dependent and independent variables, and how "the initial case conditions are translated into case outcomes."[13] As George Bennet argues, process-tracing aims to detect the intervening casual process, put differently the casual chain and casual mechanism, between an independent variable and the end result of the dependent variable.[14] Since it brings plenty of observations about within a case and link them to elucidate the case, process tracing is a preferred tool for theory testing and theory development.[15] What is more, Andrew Bennet highlights that in the process tracing, which "involves the examination of "diagnostic" pieces of evidence within a case…A central concern is with sequences and mechanism in the unfolding of hypothesized casual processes."[16] In this regard, both the detailed narrative and use of hypothesis and generalizations among the variates of process tracing are employed in the thesis. On the one hand, the story of Ukrainian crisis, chronically has been presented, and on the other hand, the general statements about the cause-effect relationship between the EU-Russia's rivalry and its implications for the common neighbourhood has been made. As George Bennet stresses,

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[12] Evera, *Guide to Methods*, 54.
[13] Ibid, 64.
[14] Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005), 206.
[15] Ibid,207.
[16] Andrew Bennet, "Process Tracing and Casual Inference" in R*ethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tool, Shared Standards*, Henry Brady and David Collier, 2nd edition (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010), 208.

more robust mode of the explanation utilizes some generalization to back the account for the outcome or it brings forward that particular historical explanation illustrates general pattern.[17]

To conclude, the evidences are mainly collected from one source of the case study, "documentations—formal studies or evaluations of the same "site" under study."[18] However, employing the major techniques of the case study methods—interviews and surveys is not attempted here due to the time limitation. To sum up, the research has been designed employing the process-tracing under the case study on the existing scholarly works in IR including books, articles, publications, policy papers as well as the official documents, policy frameworks, official statements and the news articles contributing to the validation of the main hypothesis of the research.

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[17] George and Bennett, *Case Studies*, 211.
[18] Yin, *Case Study Research*, 86.

CHAPTER 1- THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS AND CONCEPTUAL INSIGHTS

This chapter introduces the theoretical frameworks that research fit in, and the relevant conceptual insights for a thorough understanding of the issues discussed through the study. Notwithstanding the fact that the basic argument of the thesis—a geopolitical competition between two powerful blocs—could be mostly based in Realism, the thesis employs more Constructivist approaches. What is argued here indeed, is not a rivalry in a given context, but the construction of it over the last two decades in a sense that the six EaP members started to constitute a geopolitical space in the foreign policy of the EU only as a consequence of big Eastern Enlargements. Moreover, the same logic can be applied to answer why Eurasia re-gained a primacy in the external policy of post-Soviet Russia. Thus, to trace the construction of a common geopolitical space as a process, the thesis applies critical geopolitics, a post-positivist approach challenging taken for granted understanding of the world.[19] The following insights—the EU in Geopolitics and External Governance—give a hand to analyse the EU's geopolitical actorness and the nature of its geopolitical doctrine, the Wider Europe. Furthermore, to elucidate intensification of a rivalry over this geopolitical space, Wendtian constructivism offers suitable underpinnings to trace casual links between dependent and independent variables. It is followed by a brief insight into Russia's self-identification in respect to Eurasia. So, based on constructivism, both frameworks allow discussing how and why the rivalry aggravate over the geopolitical space that has been constructed through the time.

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[19] Pami Aalto and Eiki Berg, "Spatial Practices and Time in Estonia: From Post-Soviet Geopolitics to European Governance," *Space and Polity* 6, no.3 (2002): 255.

1.1 Explaining the common neighbourhood: Critical Geopolitics

To analyse construction of the rivalry over the same geopolitical space at a certain time, "Critical Geopolitics" can be applied by referring to the works of the leading scholars in the field, namely Harvey Starr, Simon Dalby and Gearóid Ó Tuathail. To make the framework intelligible, Starr argues that territory and borders have substantial impacts on international relations because of the meaning scholars, policymakers, or peoples attach them. However, geography—space, distance, territory, and borders, is not a static rather "dynamic" phenomenon in the understandings of peoples and foreign policy-making elites.[20] To differentiate critical geopolitics from traditional geopolitics Tuathail draws attention to the fact that the latter takes geography and existing power structures for granted. Also, critical geopolitics is a much broader and more complex than is acknowledged in traditional understandings of the concept, which studies the influence of geography on the foreign policy practices. Tuathail further argues that according to the critical geopolitics, geography is not a fixed substratum, but a historical and social form of knowledge about the earth. It is not nature, rather, geography is an inescapably social and political geo-graphing, an earth writing—cultural and political writing of meanings about the world.[21]

Indeed, critical geopolitics problematizes the "is" of "geography" and "geopolitics," their status as self-evident, natural, foundational, and eminently knowable realities that it does not lend itself to the constative form it takes place.[22] As Dalby notes, it is significant to study politics of geographical understandings, recognising that geographic is a specification of political reality that has a political effect. But, we should not limit our attention to the study of the geography of politics within pre-given, taken-for-granted, common-sense spaces, but investigate the politics of the

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[20] Harvey Starr, "On Geopolitics: Spaces and Places," *International Studies Quarterly* 57 (2013): 439.
[21] Gearóid Ó Tuathail,"Understanding critical geopolitics: Geopolitics and risk society," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 22, no.2-3 (1999): 109
[22] Gearóid Ó Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics, The Politics of Writing Global Space (*London: Routledge, 1996): 52

geographical specification of politics.[23] In its comparative analysis of traditional and critical geopolitics, Kelly quotes Tuathail that "critical – geography is itself exclusively about power…the study of geopolitics is the study of the spatialisation of international politics by core powers and hegemonic states."[24] It sheds light on the fight over supremacy, governance in the global politics by replacing hegemony with sophisticated social configurations.[25]

Thus, this study takes lenses of critical geopolitics to analyse how Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine formed as an important geopolitical space in the foreign policy discourse of the European Union and Russia at a certain time. Indeed, Bialasiewicz has applied critical geopolitics to critically explore the EU's foreign relations that based on its self-identification as a civilian or normative power.[26] However, while she offers detailed discussions of the EU's Mediterranean and Balkan policies, when it comes to the EU's Eastern Neighbourhood, a mission deployed by the EU to monitor Ukraine-Moldova borders has only been analysed. Furthermore, Svarin has examined how Eurasia, to which these six countries are central, was constructed as a geopolitical space in the modern foreign policy of Russia.[27] However, his discussion is only limited to the Russian foreign policy discourse with respect to the Ukrainian crisis. Thus, the research attempts to decrease this gap by tracing the roots of casual relationship between appearance of the EU's geopolitical doctrine or policy framework directed at this region after the Eastern Enlargements of 2004 and 2007 that brought these countries to the immediate neighbourhood of the EU, and Russia's perception of the EU's attempts as an expansionist threat

[23] Simon Dalby, "Critical geopolitics; discourse, difference, and dissent," *Environment and Planning 0: Society and Space* 9 (1991): 274
[24] Gearóid Ó Tuathail, "Critical Geopolitics: The Politics of Writing Global Space," (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1996): 60 quoted in Phil Kelly, "A Critique of Critical Geopolitics," *Geopolitics 11*, no.1 (2006): 39.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Luiza Bialasiewicz, *Europe in the World: EU Geopolitics and the Making of European Space* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2011): 1
[27] David Svarin, "The construction of 'geopolitical spaces' in Russian foreign policy discourse before and after the Ukraine crisis," *Journal of Eurasian Studies* 7 (2016).

to its vital interests in Eurasia, which led to the reformulation of the political importance of this geography in Russian foreign policy discourse.

1.1.2 The EU in geopolitics

Being aware that the EU's role as a geopolitical actor is questionable, we can refer to Scott's approaches to position the EU in this geopolitical game. Applying critical geopolitics, Scott argues that within the enlargement proceeding of the early and mid-twenties, a doctrine about the geopolitical role of the EU appeared due to its self-identification of itself as a stabilizer in the world system, especially in its immediate surroundings. In this respect, it introduced the Wider Europe concept to create a consistent political stability and economic progress around itself. Excluding full membership, the concept encapsulated the sense of belonging to the community.[28] So, "the notion of Wider Europe is ultimately based on geopolitical power...,"[29] because its security interests led the EU to shape this idea, and they are tightly related to the EU's ambitions within this geopolitical doctrine, in which the EU identify itself as a major stabilising power.[30]

1.1.3 Sharing everything but institutions? External Governance

Wider Europe was introduced in December 2002 as an alternative model to the enlargement to create a ring of friends around the Union, sharing everything but institutions.[31] To grasp the EU's expansion beyond full membership under this initiative, the concept of external governance

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[28] James Wesley Scott, "The EU and 'Wider Europe': Toward an Alternative Geopolitics of Regional Cooperation?," *Geopolitics* 10, no.3 (2005): 429-430.
[29] Ibid, 430.
[30] Ibid, 435.
[31] European Commission, A Wider Europe - A Proximity Policy As The Key To Stability, 2002 http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-02-619_en.htm.

can be applied. Within the relevant academic scholarship, Lavanex's viewpoints offer a comprehensive guidance to perceive the concept. She defines governance as a system of rules based on cooperation but beyond voluntarism; it is more than cooperation but less than a government. When the regulative legal rules, the EU's acquis communautaire, are extended to the non-member states beyond the institutional integration, as in the case of the ENP, external governance happens.[32] However, Haukkala questions this policy interrelating it with the issue of belonging and identity—European-ness and argues that the EU faces problems in distinguishing its normative power from its identity. Trying to avoid expansion without breaking its self-image as a 'European Project,'[33] the EU is a regional normative hegemon playing the game of Great Powers; "normative, as its foreign policy agenda is laden with norms and values, and a hegemon, as it seeks and seems to enjoy a monopoly on defining what those norms entail and thus creates the boundaries of normality and European-ness."[34]

2.1 Explaining "Rivalry": Wendtian constructivism

To explain how "rivalry" constructed, and later intensified between Russia and the EU over the common neighbourhood at a certain time, this research refers to Systemic or Wendtian constructivism. Wendt argues that through a routine rhetoric of decision-makers about the needs, interests, rationality, responsibilities and so on, states construct themselves as well as each other as agents.[35] These agents are socially tied to each other through ideas, and these ideas help them

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[32] Sandra Lavenex, "EU external governance in 'wider Europe'," Journal of European Public Policy 11, no. 4 (2004): 682-683.
[33] Hiski Haukkala, "The European Union as a Regional Normative Hegemon: The Case of European Neighbourhood Policy," *Europe-Asia Studies* 60, no. 9 (2008): 1606.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Alexandr Wendt, *Social theory of international politics* (New York: by Cambridge University Press, 1999), 10

to construct who and what they are.[36] As non-material interests, these ideas shape the system along with the material interests. For instance, while we could fit interests of Russia in Near Abroad in Classical Realism as egoistic national interests based on the security, however, when it comes to the interest of the EU in the Eastern neighbourhood, norms, ideas, institutions matter more than material interests. In Russian case too, as Wendt argues, we cannot explain interests only with materialism, some of the ideas also constitute interests.[37] In this study, the EU's Wider Europe and Russia's concept of Eurasia have shaped their interests in the common neighbourhood.

When it comes to the use of violence in relations of Self and Others, Wendt identifies three alternative cultures: enemy—Hobbesian, rival—Lockean, and friend—Kantian. This research properly fits in the Lockean culture of rivalry, in which contestants use violence to secure their interests without killing each other.[38] Wendt argues that "…with respect to violence… unlike enemies, rivals expect each other to act as if they recognize their sovereignty, their "life and liberty," as a right, and therefore not to try to conquer or dominate them."[39] However, as it encloses recognition of property—sovereignty over the territory, it does not exclude use of violence in the conflicts. Because, only when Others acknowledge right of Self to that property, it becomes Self's right.[40] In this respect, the EU did not admit the Eastern Neighbourhood as Russia's sphere of influence and challenged its vital interests there through imposing its own norms. Consequently, being deprived of the right over Near Abroad, Russia's Self responded to the Others'—EU's defiance of its interests by triggering a crisis in Ukraine. In this respect, labelling this rivalry as Wendt's 'master race,' we could name Russia as a revisionist state, who has "…desire to conquer

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[36] Ibid, 372.
[37] Ibid, 114.
[38] Ibid, 258.
[39] Ibid, 279.
[40] Ibid, 279-280.

others… change the rules of the game."[41] But, the EU is "collectivist states have the desire to help those they identify with even when their own security is not directly threatened."[42]

2.1.2 Imperial glory and Near Abroad

To elucidate Russia's identity in relation to its Near Abroad, Sakwa's contribution is worth referring. He relates Russia's perception of its self-understanding to its self-identified role as a great power that establishes a system, and to its covert allegations for being treated as an equal and autonomic power within the Western hegemonic order. To explain how this self-identification as a great power happens, Sakwa argues that states who has a glory of imperial history look at the present from the perspective of historical problems and successes. Russia has both, glory of the tsarist and Soviet imperialism.[43] When it comes to the post-Soviet Eurasia, where a never-ending contestation happens over the region's energy resources and transportation potentials,[44] "the system-forming dynamic takes the form of attempts by Russia to become the ordering power with 'privileged interests.'"[45] Thus, Russia's post-imperial interests collide with expansionist attempts from outside the Eurasia,[46] in our case the EU.

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[41] Ibid,124.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Richard Sakwa, "Russia's Identity: Between the 'Domestic' and the 'International'," *Europe-Asia Studies* 63, no.6 (2011): 957-958
[44] Ibid, 960.
[45] Ibid, 957.
[46] Ibid, 960.

CHAPTER 2 - CONSTRUCTION OF THE GEOPOLITICAL SPACE: ANALYSING THE TWO-COMPETING PROJECTS FOR THE 'COMMON NEIGHBOURHOOD'

2.1 The EU and Eastern Neighbourhood: Eastern Partnership

2.1.1 European Neighbourhood Policy under the Wider Europe

Through the introduction of the Wider Europe concept during the proceeding of EU's big Eastern Enlargement as 'a new Framework for Relations with the Eastern and Southern Neighbours' in March 2003, these six post-Soviet countries—Eastern Neighbourhood—started to be formed as an important geopolitical space in the foreign policy of the EU. Being closely tied to the EU's nascent Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP),[47] the concept was a response to the EU's rapidly changing geography. It was a geopolitical doctrine stressing the EU's stabilizing and democratizing role in the world system. Under the concept, it was proposed "to develop a zone of prosperity and a friendly neighbourhood – a 'ring of friends' - with whom the EU enjoys close, peaceful and cooperative relations." [48] Thus, the Wider Europe initiative and the subsequent launching of the 'European Neighbourhood Policy' that developed throughout 2004, aimed to establish a coherent basis for political stability and economic growth within EU's immediate regional surroundings with an extensive cooperation in the political, economic and cultural spheres.[49] Indeed, these areas significantly influence the security of the whole of Europe; while cooperating with them to prevent threats or crisis can boost stability and strengthen security, the

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[47] Scott, "The EU and 'Wider Europe', 431.
[48] Commission of the European Communities, Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament, Wider Europe—Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours, published March 11, 2003 http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/enp/pdf/pdf/com03_104_en.pdf
[49] Scott, "The EU and 'Wider Europe'," 430.

support given to their economic reforms can promote economic growth also in the Member States, eventually.[50]

Indeed, departing from the enlargement policy, the ENP established another game in town. It was the form of external governance aiming to link the internal and external system of EU governance[51] and to achieve integration at a level that shared everything with the Union but institutions.[52] Furthermore, it had a dual function, firstly, it was an alternative to further enlargements of the Union, secondly, it was also an attempt to re-inject the Union's normative agenda and strengthen the application of conditionality in relations with non-candidate countries. Only, in return for effective implementation of required reforms, opening of the individual sectors of the EC internal market would be granted to the participant countries.[53] However, the ENP had several defaults that challenged its effectiveness; therefore, it did not prove to be an attractive policy framework in particular for the East European neighbours. It was not tailored to the specific requirements of each country, and as it excluded the prospects for future membership, it could not offer guidelines and a particular plan to shape democratic transition in these countries.[54] Additionally, the viability and sufficiency of the ENP procedures and instruments were also questionable because of the lack of enough funding; though it was declared as one of the priority elements of the EU external policy, only 10 % of the total fund allocated for the EU's foreign policy in the years of 2007-2013 accounted for the ENP.[55]

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[50] Artur Adamczyk, "The Role of Poland in Shaping the Eastward Dimension in the European Neighbourhood Policy," *Yearbook of Polish European Studies* 9 (2005): 43.
[51] Stefan Gaenzle, "Policy-Making and New Modes of Governance in the European Neighborhood Policy," *Jean Monnet/Robert Schuman Paper Series* 8, no. 8 (2008): 4.
[52] Adamczyk, "The Role of Poland, 32.
[53] Hiski Haukkala, "Russian Reactions to the European Neighborhood Policy," *Problems of Post-Communism* 55, no. 5 (2008): 41.
[54] Iris Kempe, "Identifying an Agenda for a New Eastern Policy – Evaluating the European Neighbourhood Policy beyond the ENP Approach," *Intereconomics* (2007): 188-189.
[55] Adamczyk, "The Role of Poland," Ibid,43.

To sum up, the ENP's shortcomings were the outcomes of the absence of a strategic vision based on the mechanisms of enlargement but without offering the necessary institutional commitment, and the unclear focus of combining Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, the Mediterranean and to some extent even Russia.[56] As per Article 49 of the Treaty of the European Union, the European countries located in the Eastern surrounding had a potential to join the Union. However, the Mediterranean agenda was intended to safeguard the internal balance of European integration. Thus, putting them under the same framework disregarded the distinct preconditions concerning cooperation, interests, regional conflicts and the general structure.[57] Consequently, it posed the most serious challenge to the efficiency and attractiveness of the policy and a few years after its introduction, a need for differentiated policy became apparent.

2.1.2 The establishment of a new framework

In fact, additional to the internal deficiencies of the ENP, numerous external factors also led the EU acknowledge the necessity of pragmatic function-driven engagements in Eastern Neighbourhood including its 2004, and 2007 enlargements, the Russo-Georgian war of 2008, 2005-2009 gas wars between Russia and Ukraine, Ukraine's declared aspirations to become a candidate country of the EU, and the Moldovan-Romanian socio-historical linkage. For instance, when Romania joined the union, the Transnistrian question turned to be a notably problematic issue for the EU as a whole.[58] These geopolitical factors were also accompanied by the perception among the EU politicians, experts that inclusion of the "geographically and identically different"[59]

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[56] Ibid, 190.
[57] Kempe, "Identifying an Agenda," 189.
[58] Vlad Vernygora et al, "The Eastern Partnership Programme: Is Pragmatic Regional Functionalism Working for a Contemporary Political Empire?" in *Political and Legal Perspectives of the EU Eastern Partnership Policy,* eds. Tanel Kerikmae, Archil Chochia (Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2016), 14.
[59] Marcin Łapczynski, "The European Union's Eastern Partnership: Chances and Perspectives," *Caucasian Review of International Affairs* 3, no.2 (2009):144.

Southern and Eastern Neighbourhood in the same basket was not an effective strategy. Thus, since a need for more active, concretized, and diversified policy towards the close neighbourhood was clear, distinct frameworks, Mediterranean Union and Eastern Partnership (EaP), were proposed as French, and Polish-Swedish initiatives[60] to start a radically new phase in the relationship between the EU and particular groups of partner states.[61]

On May 26, 2008, the EaP was officially presented at the EU General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC), and on June 20, the European Council expressed its support and asked the Commission to frame proposals for concrete measures.[62] However, at the request of the Council to present the proposals earlier than it was scheduled due to the start of the war in Georgia in 2008, the Commission officially presented the framework to the public on December 3, 2008.[63] Accordingly, the EaP was officially launched on 7 May 2009, at the Prague summit where the joint declaration signed with the six East European countries – Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan to facilitate the closer cooperation with them. Based on the mutual interests, shared ownership, and responsibility, EaP was introduced as an essential step towards creating the necessary conditions to accelerate political association and further economic integration between the EU and interested partner countries. Within the framework, a dual-track approach to the region, to deepen bilateral relations with the more interested partners such as Ukraine and Moldova, and to develop new relations with less concerned countries, namely Belarus

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[60] Ibid, 144-145.
[61] Dimitry Kochenov, "New developments in the European Neighbourhood Policy: Ignoring the problems," *Comparative European Politics* 9 (2011): 583.
[62] Łapczynski, "The European Union's Eastern Partnership," 145.
[63] Ibid, 150.

through a multilateral dimension, was envisaged. However, though EaP was innovative and diversified policy,[64] it reaffirmed the principle of conditionality.[65]

Indeed, the EaP, as an inter-regional initiative,[66] sought pursuit of the more ambitious partnership between the European Union and the partner countries to ensure the policy's effectiveness and legitimacy in the neighbourhood.[67] The strengthened bilateral relations with these six participants would include cooperation on migration issues involving visa-facilitation in the short-term perspective and prospect for the introduction of a visa-free regime in the distant future; the creation of a Free Trade Area based on free-trade agreements; provision of the support for sector reforms; initiating a new Action Plan with each country; and finally ensuring a distribution of assistance funds to the partner countries.[68] Moreover, to bring the partners into the ever closer union, the framework outlined four thematic platforms of good governance and democracy, economic convergence with EU's acquis communautaire, energy security, and people-to-people contacts, to be grounded in new association agreements, and some particular projects.[69]

To conclude, the EaP's main novelty is its multilateral dimension that provides a relatively simple operational structure with both high-level political support and expert meetings to ensure its practical impact.[70] As for its bilateral dimension, the Association Agreement (AA), Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) and visa liberalisation are the main instruments to reach the framework's key political and economic goals.[71] In fact, the AA is a main action-based

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[64] Elena Korosteleva "The Eastern Partnership Initiative: A New Opportunity for Neighbours?," *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 27, no.1 (2011): 2.
[65] Oleksandra Hissa, "The role of Euroscepticism in EU-Eastern Partnership Relations," in *EU Relations with Eastern Partnership: Strategy, Opportunities and Challenges*, Carlos E. Pacheco Amaral et al, (Chisinau-Chernivtsi-Tbilisi, 2016): 133.
[66] Sima Rakutienė, "The Web of the Eu's Neighbourhood Policy: Between Bilateralism and Multilateralism," *Baltic Journal of Law & Politics* 2, no.1 (2009): 146.
[67] Elena A. Korosteleva, "Change or Continuity: Is the Eastern Partnership an Adequate Tool for the European Neighbourhood?," *International Relations* 25, no.2 (2011): 243-244.
[68] Łapczynski, "The European Union's Eastern Partnership," 147.
[69] Korosteleva, "The Eastern Partnership Initiative," 3.
[70] Jos Boonstra and Natalia Shapovalova, (2010) "The EU's Eastern Partnership: One year backwards," (working paper 99, Fride: A European Think Tank for Global Action, Madrid, 2010): 5-6.
[71] Ibid, 3.

instrument of the EaP, which does not imply the compliance with all the acquis communautaire that could lead to accession, but only focus on the core issues of specific service sectors which are essential for economic integration.[72] Without the membership promise, it specifies how close and deep the political and economic relations with the EU can potentially be. Moreover, the DCFTA to which WTO membership is a precondition to enter and complete negotiations, [73] is AA's central component aimed to integrate the associated country into the Internal Market.[74] It is worth to note here that among these instruments the DCFTA was the one that evoked strong Russian opposition and triggered the pursuant of an alternative model by Russia to achieve Eurasian economic integration. Thus, while the EaP marked beginning of an active phase in relations of the EU with its Eastern European neighbours, it also sparked a geopolitical rivalry over the same geopolitical space.

2.2 The birth of a rival project in 'Near Abroad'

2.2.1 The concept of Eurasia

Arguably, one of the major geopolitical spaces in Russia's foreign policy discourse is Eurasia, the region where Russia occupies a central position.[75] As Russia's expansion over the last four centuries occurred across the Eurasia, its centrality in the construction of the region is also interlinked with historical factors. The history is crucially important because relating Russia to

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[72] Olga Batura and Tatjana Evas, "Information Society Goes East: ICT Policy in the EU's Eastern Partnership Cooperation Framework," in *Political and Legal Perspectives of the EU Eastern Partnership Policy,* eds. Tanel Kerikmae, Archil Chochia (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2016), 49.

[73] Tatjana Muravska and Alexandre Berlin, "Towards a New European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP): What Benefits of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements (DCFTAs) for Shared Prosperity and Security?" in *Political and Legal Perspectives of the EU Eastern Partnership Policy,* eds. Tanel Kerikmae, Archil Chochia (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2016), 25.

[74] Yuri Misnikov, "Democratising the Eastern Partnership in the Digital Age: Challenges and Opportunities of Political Association Beyond the Language of Official Texts," in *Political and Legal Perspectives of the EU Eastern Partnership Policy,* eds. Tanel Kerikmae, Archil Chochia (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2016), 69.

[75] Svarin, "The construction of 'geopolitical spaces,'" 131.

other countries sharing the same experience it provides Russia with a certain legitimacy to practically follow its foreign policy interests in the region. In this regard, FSRs that regrouped in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) are a central component of the Eurasian geopolitical space.[76] From this perspective, this core part of the Eurasia is also seen as a key in preserving its status as a great power. Russia perceives activities of other powers such as EU in this region as an unwelcome intrusion.[77]

Thus, when the EU started to pursue the Wider Europe initiative, it challenged Russia's centrality and interests in the Eurasia. Notably, the EU's attempts to draw the former Soviet republics closer to its orbit were not welcomed by Moscow, who considered the establishment of the EaP as an infringement of its sphere of influence.[78] Consequently, to prevent the EU's expansion, Russia started to actively strive to add an institutional element to the construction of Eurasian space to institutionalize its dominance through a new regional setting. This new integration initiative, the establishment of the Eurasian Union, was actively promoted by Vladimir Putin during his third presidential term. Indeed, as Russia conceives its centrality within Eurasia as a precondition for its influential role in global politics, it is moving towards establishing Eurasia as a geopolitical region governed by legitimate institutional links.[79] However, its attempts towards Eurasian integration intensified the geopolitical confrontation with the EU.[80]

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[76] Ibid, 132.
[77] Andrej Krickovic, "Imperial nostalgia or prudent geopolitics? Russia's efforts to reintegrate the post-Soviet space in geopolitical perspective," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 30, no. 6 (2014): 513.
[78] Svarin, "The construction of 'geopolitical spaces'," 135-136.
[79] Ibid, 132.
[80] Ibid, 136.

2.2.2. The Eurasian Union

In fact, promotion of the regional integration by Russia in its Near Abroad was not a new phenomenon, for instance, under the CIS. However, these attempts were unsuccessful, because economic status, political regime, and speed of reforms were different among the countries situated in the region.[81] So, in the first decade of the new millennium, since it failed to reintegrate the former Soviet space within over twenty years of its establishment, Russia gave up on the CIS as a mechanism for regional integration and started to seek a pragmatic and multi-layered approach.[82] However, the "regional integration does not occur in a vacuum but is very much shaped by the international environment surrounding it. In many cases, exogenous factors serve as immediate drivers for integration, and this is certainly true for the EAEU."[83] In this respect, 2008 global recession, and EU's attempts to spread its rules into its Eastern neighbourhood under the ENP, and later the EaP, were the chief background drivers of the last phase of the Eurasian integration that ended up with the establishment of the Eurasian Economic Union.

Indeed, on the backdrop of the EEU, there were some integration projects that prepared a basis for its inception. In this respect, an agreement on tariff-free trade and the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC) that formed in 2000, were early predecessors. The EurAsEC did not have a supranational character to direct the integration process, however, it could provide a useful forum to push for the next stages of integration eventually.[84] Later, in 2007, Russia, Kazakhstan, and Belarus declared their intention to create the Eurasian Customs Union on the basis of the EurAsEC. It was a fast-moving project that managed to make sufficient practical steps such as the launching

[81] Pablo Podadera Rivera, Anna Garashchuk, "The Eurasian Economic Union: prospective regional integration in the post-Soviet space or just geopolitical project?" *Eastern Journal of European Studies* 7, no. 2 (2016): 93.
[82] Krickovic, "Imperial nostalgia or prudent geopolitics?" 506.
[83] Sean P. Roberts and Arkady Moshes, "The Eurasian Economic Union: a case of reproductive integration?," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 32, no. 6 (2016): 554.
[84] Ibid, 544.

of the common customs tariff, adoption of the Customs Code in 2010, and the removal of border checks in 2011.[85] However, as already noted, an intensive phase of the Eurasian integration, 2010-2015, was principally triggered by the exogenous factors: global financial crisis and EU's shift towards hard-law integration project for the region. Between these two background drivers, the latter's role was more crucial. Thus, the latest stage of Eurasian integration and its timing could be better explained with a focus on the geopolitical component considering it as a manifestation of Russia's hegemonic ambitions in the region. The emergence of the EEU represented little more than an attempt to directly counter the EU's new generation of Association Agreements under the EaP.[86]

Put differently, the Eurasian Customs Union that came into existence in 2010 was a rival project to the EU's EaP.[87] It was completed with the inauguration of the Single Economic Space in 2012.[88] However, as an essential external influence, it was the events around Ukraine in 2013-2015 that triggered the complete formulation of the Eurasian integration as a supranational union. As Ukraine is an important trading partner of the EEU founding states, its inclusion in the integration project has been a major objective from the outset. As discussed later, the hard competition between Russia and the EU manifested itself within the chain of events around Ukraine that reached its culmination with the annexation of Crimea, and the following conflict in the east of Ukraine triggered by Russia[89] and brought forward a rival economic project—the EEU.

Thus, on May 29, 2014, the leaders of Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Russia signed the treaty of the EEU's, which entered force on January 1, 2015. The partners' main objective was to

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[85] Ksenia Kirkham, "The formation of the Eurasian Economic Union: How successful is the Russian regional hegemony?" *Journal of Eurasian Studies* 7 (2016): 111.
[86] Roberts, Moshes, "The Eurasian Economic Union," 544.
[87] Iana Dreyer and Nicu Popescu, "The Eurasian Customs Union: The economics and the politics," Brief Issue, *European Union Institute for Security Studies* (2014): 1
[88] Kirkham, "The formation of the Eurasian Economic Union," 117.
[89] Roberts, Moshes, "The Eurasian Economic Union," 556.

integrate the economies of its member states to strengthen and increase their competitiveness in the global market.[90] In fact, the Union was created in agreement with WTO rules using the experience of the EU.[91] For the time being, it has five members. Besides Belarus who was the founding member, Russia only managed to make Armenia among the EaP participants drop its plan to sign the AA with the EU and join to the EEU.

To conclude, the EU's and Russia's economic integration offers are mutually exclusive. In other words, while the EU's offer of the DCFTA is consistent with other FTAs, thus enabling target countries to sustain such agreements signed with Russia or within CIS, accession into the EEU entails a loss of sovereignty over external trade policy and is therefore not liveable-with a DCFTA. In this respect, by pushing for membership of the EEU, Russia is de facto compelling countries in the contested neighbourhood to choose between the two projects.[92] In contrast to the EU, Russia employs not only positive incentives such as discount in energy prices, moneylending, and political support to attract members, but also disincentives, namely trade bans, deportations of migrants, or exuberating instability in breakaway territories. For instance, Armenia decided to join the Custom's Union after Russia related this issue to its support in Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.[93]

2.3 Conclusion

As argued in critical geopolitics, construction of the geopolitical space is not a fixed, rather a dynamic phenomenon that takes place over a certain period. The big Eastern Enlargements reconditioned the EU's external relations with these six post-Soviet states by locating them in its

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[90] Boris Kheifets, "On the Eurasian Economic Union's Free Investment Zone," *Problems of Economic Transition* 58, no. 4 (2016): 328-29.
[91] Rivera, Garashchuk, "The Eurasian Economic Union," 99.
[92] Esther Ademmer et al, "Beyond geopolitics: exploring the impact of the EU and Russia in the "contested neighbourhood," *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 57, no.1 (2016): 4.
[93] Ibid, 11.

immediate—Eastern neighbourhood. By introducing the ENP and later the EaP under the Wider Europe, this region started to shape a geopolitical space in the EU's external policy. However, in this post-Soviet space, the EU is not the only geopolitical power; since their launching, Russia perceived the ENP and the later EaP as geopolitical projects of the EU to struggle for power over the region. In other words, "Moscow is concerned about strengthening its position in the post-soviet region, where the reallocation of spheres of influence has entered a more active phase."[94]

Thus, the EU's normative expansion into Eurasia especially under the EaP was paralleled with Russia's attempts to hamper its increased presence in the region; Russia started to seek the Eurasian integration to attract the countries it shares the same historical experience or at least to dissuade them from pursuing closer economic integration with the EU. Indeed, rather than economic, the EEU was more geopolitical project calling to provide an alternative to associating with the EU, to become a second pillar in the pan-European security architecture, and to demonstrate Russia's role as an indisputable regional power.[95]

To conclude, the six EaP countries constituting the geopolitical space in the foreign policy of the EU and Russia, increasingly became an object of contention and rivalry between Brussels and Kremlin. Finally, the Ukrainian crisis that demonstrated the implications of this rivalry most vividly [96] became the culmination of the aggressive Russian counteraction to the EU rapprochement with its Eastern neighbours, in which political and economic competition were replaced with an open geopolitical confrontation.[97]

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[94] Dossym Satpayev, "Kazakhstan: Economic Integration Without Relinquishing Sovereignty," in *The Eurasian Economic Union Analyses and Perspectives from Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Russia*, ed. Felix Hett and Susanne Szkola, (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung 2015): 11

[95] Andrey Zagorski, Caught between the Economy and Geopolitics, in *The Eurasian Economic Union Analyses and Perspectives from Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Russia*, ed. Felix Hett and Susanne Szkola, (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung 2015): 4.

[96] Ademmer et al, "Beyond geopolitics," 1-2.

[97] Amaral et al, "EU Relations with Eastern Partnership," 57.

CHAPTER 3 - MASTER RACE: THE CASE OF UKRAINE

3.1 EU-Ukraine-Russia triangle in 1994-2013: notable developments

In the modern history of Ukraine, the signing of the Budapest Memorandum in December 1994 had a distinguished importance for its security as a newly independent post-Soviet country. To meet the Western concerns about the existence of the Soviet nuclear weapons in its territory after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Ukraine agreed to join the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in return for the security assurances provided by the United Kingdom, the United States, and Russia.[98] Most importantly from the perspective of this case study, "with the signing of this agreement… Ukraine was seen as a potential issue for the evolution of Eastern Europe."[99] However, recognition of the geopolitical significance of Ukraine by the EU dates earlier, to June 1994, when it signed the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) with Ukraine, which was the first signed with a CIS country.[100] Because of its demographic and economic indicators, and geographic location, the EU was thinking of Ukraine as a geopolitically important actor in the region that could contribute to the whole continent's safety, prosperity, and stability.[101]

Indeed, collaborating with the EU, Ukraine was aspiring to get the Associate Status that would lead the country to join the Union; nevertheless, its expectation failed in 2003, at the EU-Ukraine summit held in Yalta.[102] However, appearance of Ukraine in the direct neighbourhood of the EU following the big Eastern Enlargement reconditioned its significance in the Union's foreign

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[98] Mihaela-Adriana Padureanu, "More Expectations towards the European Neighbourhood Policy: The Case of Ukraine, Continuity and Change in European Governance," *Europolity* 9, No. 2 (2015): 227.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Paul Kubicek, "The European Union and democratization in Ukraine," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 38 (2005): 275.
[101] Odysseas Spiliopoulos, "The EU-Ukraine Association Agreement as a Framework of Integration Between the Two Parties," *Procedia Economics and Finance* 9 (2014): 257.
[102] Ibid, 280.

policy. For instance, Poland, Ukraine's close neighbour, was urging the EU to take an operative stance not to lose Ukraine to Russia. As already mentioned in the second chapter, to deal with its new surroundings the EU launched the ENP in 2004, but placed Ukraine under the same framework with its Southern neighbours, who were unqualified to apply for the membership in accordance with the Article 49 of the TEU.[103]

In the meantime, during the 2004 presidential elections, Prime Minister Yanukovych was seeking to take advantage of failed membership hopes of Ukrainians playing the Russian card and campaigning with Vladimir Putin.[104] However, the Orange Revolution defined the end result—the democratic transfer of the authority to a newly elected president, which was supported by Brussels seeking to prevent civil unrest in its immediate neighbourhood.[105] This support was indeed a part of the EU's democratization and Europeanization attempts in Ukraine under the ENP, however, several factors, namely promotion of its own rules bypassing Ukrainians' main will—the EU membership, and Ukraine's complicated internal issues undermined the effectiveness of this one-size-fits-all initiative.[106] Indeed, the new Ukrainian leadership also firmly believed that it was not enough for Ukraine to collaborate with the EU under the ENP; as a European country, it is worthy of getting membership after its full adherence to the EU values.[107]

In fact, between 2007-2009, significant developments occurred in the EU-Ukraine relations following Ukraine's accession to WTO, and the launching of the EaP.[108] The EaP was firstly welcomed by Ukraine. On the one hand, it was deemed as a tool to enhance multilateral cooperation, and to ensure regional dialogue in which Ukraine could play a leadership role.

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[103] Ibid.
[104] Ibid, 276.
[105] Ibid, 287.
[106] Padureanu, "The Case of Ukraine," 229.
[107] Oleksandr Stegniy, "Ukraine and the Eastern Partnership: 'Lost in Translation'?," *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 27, No. 1 (2011): 54.
[108] Taras Kuzio, "Ukraine between a Constrained EU and Assertive Russia," *Journal of Common Market Studies* 55, No.1 (2017): 105.

However, on the other hand, since the bilateral dimension of the EaP's was mainly designed on the sample of the EU-Ukraine relations, it did not represent added value for Ukraine.[109] Furthermore, more importantly from the perspective of this study, the launching of the EaP marked the beginning of the geopolitical confrontation between the EU and Russia in the shared neighbourhood. As mentioned in the second chapter, the exclusion of Russia from the framework led the Russian political elite to think of the EaP as it has been directed against Russia.[110] Thus, Russia was concerned about the EU's attempts to spread its rules to the CIS countries, and deemed the EaP "as an alternative to Russia's integrationist plans in the region, namely to the Eurasian Economic Union,"[111] in which Ukraine's role would be crucial.

Following the introduction of the EaP, the EU increased its efforts to accelerate the negotiations with Ukraine on the AA, the key political element of the program, to shape its agenda. In fact, Ukraine's accession to the WTO created an opportunity for the launching of the DCFTA, an economic element of the AA, and consequently, the negotiations were started.[112] In November 2009, the two sides officially affirmed the Association Agenda based on the principles of joint ownership and responsibility.[113] However, the text of the AA itself was initialized three years later, in March 2012, while the text of its principal component, the DCFTA, was agreed in July of the same year. Aimed at speeding the political, and economic integration up, it opened a new phase in the EU's relations with Ukraine by enforcing a policy dialogue.[114]

However, the coin had another side; Ukraine's relation with Russia. On the one hand, after the presidential elections of 2010 that brought Yanukovych to power, Ukraine started to follow a

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[109] Stegniy, "Lost in Translation", 55.
[110] Nadia Alexandrova-Arbatova, "Geopolitical challenges for the post-bipolar Europe," *Eastern Journal of European Studies* 7, No.2 (2016): 33.
[111] Ibid, 34.
[112] Spiliopoulos, "The EU-Ukraine Association Agreement," 257.
[113] Stegniy, "Lost in Translation", 55.
[114] Spiliopoulos, "The EU-Ukraine Association Agreement," 257-258.

similar path with Russia, domestically. Yanukovych's presidency was characterized by the strengthened role of the military elites in comparison to educated elites and blurred the relationship between political and economic elites that were close to him.[115] On the other hand, Russia was also seeking to increase its political influence on Ukraine; for instance, in April 2010, in return for 30% discount in the sale of gas, Yanukovych agreed to extend the agreement with Russia on Black Sea Fleet for more 25 years. Additionally, as noted earlier, since 2011 Putin started to actively promote the idea of Eurasian integration, and recognizing its importance for the project, he even offered several economic incentives to attract Ukraine. For example, a formal invitation of 2011 for joining the Customs Union was paralleled with the promise for another reduction in gas prices.[116] However, as the EaP was promising access into the EU's internal market and boosted investment,[117] Yanukovych did not accept the invitation that it could impede the integration into the EU.

3.2 Vilnius failure and the following 'Euromaidan' revolution

In December 2012, the EU presented a package of measures including major legislative and judicial reforms to Ukraine to continue the negotiations on the signing of the AA. By the next EaP summit in Vilnius in November 2013, Ukraine should have demonstrated considerable progress in their implementation.[118] Though it did not fulfil all the demands including the release of Tymoshenko, the EU was ready to sign the AA with Ukraine in Vilnius believing that it would increase its leverage over Ukraine. Also, having the largest population among the participants,

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[115] Padureanu, "The Case of Ukraine," 231.
[116] Andrei Tsygankov, "Vladimir Putin's last stand: the sources of Russia's Ukraine policy," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 31, No.4 (2015): 284.
[117] Spiliopoulos, "The EU-Ukraine Association Agreement," 259.
[118] Kuzio, "Ukraine between the EU and Russia," 106.

Ukraine had significance for the general success of the EaP.[119] Thus, at the third Eastern Partnership Summit held in Vilnius in November 2013, the EU was expecting to sign the AAs with Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. However, if it happened, it could be a serious blow to Russia's interests in its Near Abroad; therefore, Russia started to exert economic and political pressures to discourage the first Armenia, and later Ukraine to sign the documents. While the former revealed its preference of joining the ECU in September 2013, the latter's stance was unknown until a few days before the Summit.[120]

Indeed, to dissuade Yanukovych from the signing of the AA, Russia used both sticks and carrots. Sticks involved economic sanctions that started to be imposed since the late summer, such as a ban on the 'Roshen,' and import of the cars. But, the carrots were a remarkable discount in the gas price, trade concessions, and the preferential loans.[121] For instance, one month before the Vilnius summit, Putin offered a significant reduction on gas price along with a $15 billion package to Yanukovych.[122] As a result, Moscow could make Kyiv drive away to sign the AA on the eve of the summit.

In fact, there were several reasons behind the EU's Vilnius failure. On the one hand, the EU did not take Russia's concerns and plans about Ukraine into account. As the signing of the AA could influence its trade with Ukraine and integration project, Russia's reactions were reasonable. Indeed, it was only after the Vilnius summit, in early 2014 that the EU started to debate the possible impacts of the AA with Russia. On the other hand, the EU did not think over the consequences of its proposal on Ukraine as a country divided between the east and west politically, linguistically, and culturally, and who had a dysfunctional democracy, and a weak economy that was vulnerable

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[119] Ibid, 107.
[120] Hiski Haukkala, "From Cooperative to Contested Europe? The Conflict in Ukraine as a Culmination of a Long-Term Crisis in EU–Russia Relations," *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 23, No.1 (2015): 33.
[121] Ibid.
[122] Tsygankov, "Putin's last stand," 284.

to Russian pressures.[123] Additionally, the reforms required by the EU were also carrying the risks for Yanukovych's regime itself;[124] "integration without membership translates into costly, and electorally unpopular short-term policies in return for deferred economic benefits."[125]

Indeed, not only the EU's expectations about Ukraine failed at the Vilnius Summit, but also more than half of the Ukrainians were disappointed by President's refusal to sign the agreement.[126] Even before the Summit, when Yanukovych announced the decision publicly on November 21, 2013, citizens of Kiev started to hold mass demonstrations. The outcome was the 'Euromaidan Revolution' that flamed on November 24, 2013.[127] In fact, notwithstanding their political affiliations, the demonstrators were mainly opposing to Ukraine's corrupted political regime that was pursuing its own interests instead of that of citizen's. It was also accompanied by the myths about higher Western living standards, and the liberal state systems.[128] Although the protest had a peaceful nature, since November 29, 2013, Berkut—special forces—started to use violence against the demonstrators. In particular, February 2014 passed into modern Ukrainian history as the bloodiest month; more than 100 protesters were killed between 18-21 February.[129]

The EU's first reactions to the 'Euromaidan' were mainly about sending warnings to the Ukrainian government not to violently suppress the demonstrators, and releasing the statement condemning such brutal acts.[130] The EU High Representative Catherine Ashton's meetings on 10-11 December 2013 with the President as well as other key government and opposition figures, and civil society leaders to end the crisis were not fruitful, either. In December, while Berkut's violent

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[123] Serena Giusti, "The EU's Transformative Power Challenged in Ukraine," *European Foreign Affairs Review* 21, No. 2 (2016): 177.
[124] Kuzio, "Ukraine between the EU and Russia," 106.
[125] Ibid.
[126] Michał Rulski, "The European Union's Activity in Regard to the Conflict in Ukraine Before the 2014 Presidential Election," *International Studies Interdisciplinary Political and Cultural Journal* 18, No. 2 (2016): 64
[127] Padureanu, "The Case of Ukraine," 232.
[128] Rulski, "Before the 2014 Presidential Election," 65.
[129] Padureanu, "The Case of Ukraine," 232.
[130] Kuzio, "Ukraine between the EU and Russia," 107.

suppression was growing, it also became clear that Yanukovych was not willing to meet the opposition's demands. On January 16, 2014, as a consequence of Yanukovych's consultation with Putin, the Verkhovna Rada voted to legislate the cruel suppression of the demonstrations, which triggered the crisis escalation. In the meantime, Russian intelligence forces were covertly training and aiding the anti-Euromaidan forces to suppress the demonstrators.[131]

However, after the bloody clashes of mid-February, the EU was urged to take decisive actions, such as imposing sanctions against state officials and mediating the meeting between the government and opposition leaders on February 21, 2014.[132] At this meeting, the sides reached an agreement to return the 2004 Constitution, to establish a new government, to release the arrested demonstrators, and to organize new presidential election in the coming months. However, the protests were still going on demanding the President's resignation .[133] On the same day, the Ukrainian parliament voted for the suggested amendments about the Constitution, and the release of the protesters.[134] However, surprisingly, on February 22, 2014, Yanukovych disappeared and following his flight from Kyiv the provisional pro-EU government was established.[135]

After the regime change, the EU provided its support to the interim government of Ukraine. For instance, advisors were sent to the Justice and Energy Ministries, and the support group for Ukraine was established by the Commission.[136] More importantly, the EU returned to its initial offer of the AA, the EaP mechanism. The signing of the agreement was intended to be realized in two, political and economic levels at different times. While the political chapters were signed on

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[131] Ibid, 108

[132] Geoffrey Pridham, "EU/Ukraine Relations and the Crisis with Russia, 2013-14: A Turning Point," *The International Spectator* 49, No. 4 (2014): 56.

[133] "Yanukovych and opposition leaders sign an agreement on settling the political situation," Euromaidan Timeline, accessed on May 10, 2017, http://maidantime.org/en.html#82

[134] "Verkhovna Rada returns the 2004 Constitution, grants amnesty to the demonstrators, and frees Timoshenko," Euromaidan Timeline, accessed on May 10, 2017, http://maidantime.org/en.html#82

[135] Pridham, "A Turning Point," 56.

[136] Ibid.

March 21, 2014, the economic provisions of the treaty were planned to be signed after the presidential elections of 25 May 2014.[137] Additionally, the EU eliminated tariffs for Ukraine to support its weak economy, also it promised the macro-financial assistance for the implementation of the IMF reforms.[138] Indeed, the new government also welcomed the signing of the AA and re-focused on the integration into Europe.[139] However, the parties again underestimated the Russian factor, which became apparent after the annexation of the Crimea.

3.3. Start of the prolonged crisis

As stated in the second chapter, Ukraine has vital importance for Russia's security and role as a global actor. In fact, since 2008, Russia was quite clear about its objectives concerning Ukraine. In his speeches, Putin was referring to the Southern and Eastern Ukraine as "New Russia" and calling the Ukraine an "artificial state." Insisting that one-third of Ukraine's population is ethnically Russian, he was calling protecting them as Russia's responsibility.[140] Not surprisingly, Russia did not stay silent during the 2013-2014 developments in Ukraine. While supporting the anti-protester forces, since February 2014 it was also doing preparations for the annexation of the Crimea, which violated the 1994 Budapest Memorandum providing security assurances to the territorial integrity of Ukraine.

Indeed, on February 20, 2014, two days before the expulsion of Yanukovych from his position, the speaker of the Crimean Parliament Konstantinov declared the necessity of holding a referendum to secede Crimea from Ukraine. In the meantime, Russia was calling Yanukovych's dismissal as illegitimate and using media circulations to justify its intentions in Ukraine.[141]

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[137] Giusti, "The EU's Transformative Power Challenged in Ukraine," 177-178.
[138] Pridham, "A Turning Point," 56.
[139] Kuzio, "Ukraine between the EU and Russia," 106.
[140] Ibid, 109.
[141] Padureanu, "The Case of Ukraine," 232.

Following the regime change in Ukraine, Putin sent the special forces—little green men, to Crimea to take military control of the peninsula.[142] During the last days of February, without violent clashes with the Ukrainian army, they took possession of the parliament, airport, television stations, and official buildings and established control posts on Crimea's border with Ukraine. Later, the Parliament's decision dated March 6, 2014, for separation and joining to Russia was confirmed by 16 March referendum, in which around 95% of the participants voted for incorporation into Russia. The referendum was followed by the official annexation of Crimea by Russia on 21 March 2014.[143]

To explain Russia's motivations to annex Crimea, Karagiannis has put forward several arguments including Putin's concerns about the impacts of regime change in Ukraine on its own authority, military significance of Crimea, and the geopolitical rivalry between Russia and EU over Ukraine.[144] It is argued here that among them, the latter played a greater role. As Moscow was pursuing the Eurasian integration project since 2011, its objectives concerning Ukraine and the CIS region contradicted with the EU's EaP policy. Russia conceived the EU's policy as it aimed to take the Black Sea under its influence,[145] and from this geopolitical perspective, the loss of Ukraine was carrying higher risks. However, Crimea was not the only blow to Ukraine.

Following the annexation, an unrest appeared in the Eastern Ukraine, where ex-President Yanukovych had many supporters among Russian-speaking Ukrainians. To trigger the uprising, Russia represented Yanukovych's expulsion as directed against Eastern Ukrainians to weaken their political representation at the government. As a consequence of the unrest, the control over Donetsk and Lugansk was lost. In the meantime, the planned presidential elections were held on

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[142] Haukkala, "From Cooperative to Contested Europe?" 34.
[143] Emmanuel Karagiannis, "The Russian Interventions in South Ossetia and Crimea Compared: Military Performance, Legitimacy and Goals," *Contemporary Security Policy* 35, No.3 (2014): 408
[144] Ibid, 410-412.
[145] Ibid, 411-412.

May 25, 2014,[146] and resulted in the victory of Petro Poroshenko, who declared Ukraine's re-focus on the pro-EU path. To support the new government, and to express its solidarity with Ukraine, the EU took actions to speed up the signing of the AA; the parties signed the economic chapters of the AA on 27 June 2014. However, despite the EU's efforts to alleviate Russia's concerns about the negative consequences of the AA and DCFTA by inviting it to the EU-Ukrainian discussions, Russia again threatened Ukraine with destructive economic measures to divert it from proceedings of the DCFTA implementation. As a result, at the meeting held between Russia, the EU, and Ukraine on 12 September 2014, the decision to delay the provisional implementation of the DCFTA until the end of 2015, was taken.[147]

However, the EU's reaction to the Ukrainian crisis was debated. As a civilian or normative power, it did not use force to prevent the crisis appearing in a European country, whose importance for the stability and security of Europe was not less. Indeed, the EU slowly responded to the crisis with sanctions, diplomatic protests, and turning the cooperation in the international organizations off for Russia.[148] One of the reasons behind this gradual response was the lack of consensus among the member states about the nature of the measures against Russia, with whom some of them were sharing an economic interest, and a historical experience.[149]

Thus, firstly, following the Crimea's annexation it halted the bilateral talks with Russia on the visa issues, the EU-Russia Agreement, and the arrangements for joining the Sochi Summit of G8. The first travel bans and asset freezes against Ukrainian and Russian important figures were started to be imposed since March 17, 2014.[150] However, it was only after the shooting down of the MH-17 Malaysian civilian aircraft in July 2014 that the EU started to take stricter measures; it

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[146] Padureanu, "The Case of Ukraine," 232-233.
[147] Haukkala, "From Cooperative to Contested Europe?" 35.
[148] Kuzio, "Ukraine between the EU and Russia," 110.
[149] Giusti, "The EU's Transformative Power Challenged in Ukraine," 179.
[150] Ibid.

circumscribed Russia's access to its capital markets and imposed a ban on the main sectors of the Russian economy,[151] which triggered Russia's retaliatory counter-sanctions. For instance, the import of agricultural products from EU member states that adopted or joined to the sanction decision to Russia was banned since August 2014.[152]

Furthermore, so far to end the crisis, two Minsk agreements have been signed between the parties in early September 2014 and February 2015, respectively.[153] The EU members, Germany and France actively participated in the negotiations of the Minsk II, in which a 'Package of Measures for the Implementation of the Minsk Agreements' offering a comprehensive roadmap for conflict resolution was signed between Germany, France, Russia, Ukraine and the leaders of secessionists on February 12, 2015.[154] Indeed, Minsk II did not promise better hopes to Ukraine. Acting on behalf of the EU, France and Germany tried to solve the crisis quickly and pressured Ukraine to agree with the agreements that suited more to Russia's interests. Ukraine was obliged to agree to grant a special status to Donetsk and Lugansk and to hold local elections that would legitimize these separatist Republics.[155] Thus, "the Minsk negotiations have led towards the international acceptance of separatist authorities in Russian-controlled territories as de facto interlocutors."[156]

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[151] Haukkala, "From Cooperative to Contested Europe?" 35.
[152] Giusti, "The EU's Transformative Power Challenged in Ukraine," 180.
[153] "The Economist explains: What are the Minsk agreements?" *The Economist*, published September 14, 2016, accessed May 11, 2017, http://www.economist.com/blogs/economist-explains/2016/09/economist-explains-7
[154] Ibid.
[155] Kuzio, "Ukraine between the EU and Russia," 113.
[156] Ibid.

3.4. Assessing the crisis: concluding remarks

The Ukrainian crisis set a good example about what impacts the geopolitical confrontation between the rival powers, the EU and Russia, could have on smaller countries located in the common neighbourhood—the six EaP participants. In the case of Ukraine, colliding interests of the EU and Russia under competing economic projects "led to an escalation in coercive diplomacy, political revolution, military intervention and territorial seizure."[157] As the EU disregarded the preferences of Russia and the latter conceived of the former's integration instruments under the EaP, namely the AA, as a serious blow to its vital interests in the Near Abroad, the geo-economic rivalry over Ukraine turned to be geopolitics.[158] Furthermore, the Ukrainian crisis made it apparent that though the EaP was depicted as a normative project, it could produce serious geopolitical consequences.[159]

On the one hand, as already stated, Ukraine has a special place in Russia's geopolitical Eurasian concept. Over the years, challenging the EU's interests, Russia was seeking to strengthen its soft power in the independent Ukraine, in the business, social, cultural spheres. And during Yanukovych's presidency, the sufficient grounds were laid for the geopolitical confrontation.[160] The Vilnius failure was a clear evidence revealing that the loss of Ukraine could be unacceptable for Putin, who was actively working on the Eurasian integration project since 2011. However, following the Euromaidan, Russia lost its political influence over Ukraine after Yanukovych's expulsion, and the rules of the game were changed in favour of the EU as the interim government decided to re-follow the EU path. Furthermore, there was another issue concerning the internal

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[157] Cadier, "Eastern Partnership vs Eurasian Union?" 79
[158] Ibid.
[159] Giusti, "The EU's Transformative Power Challenged in Ukraine," 183.
[160] Pridham, "A Turning Point," 57.

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situation of Russia. Democratized and stabilized post-Soviet states under the EU policy could also affect Russia's internal system of governance. Especially, in the case of Ukraine, the modernized, democratic European state could have a reflection on Russia itself; Russians might reject to live under authoritarianism and start to seek for what Ukrainians have achieved.[161] Thus, Russia responded to the establishment of the democratic regime in Ukraine with annexing Crimea and provoking separatism in its Eastern part.

On the other hand, in practice, the EU has been following the closed-door policy excluding the membership offer for Ukraine. The enlargement fatigue and the Russian factor are the main reasons behind this policy. While the EU tries to avoid being overly provocative against Russia, this policy also makes its influence over Ukraine limited.[162] However, it is argued here that the closed-door policy made Ukraine more vulnerable to Russian threats. Ukraine was demanded to implement reforms to comply with the EU's acquis, as the candidate countries do, which turned to be provocative enough to lead to the crisis.

However, as already mentioned, the EU's reaction to the crisis was not immediate. Though Ukraine has geostrategic importance for the EU because of its position as a transit country for energy supply to whole Europe,[163] when it came to taking a tougher stand against Russia, it became apparent that there was a lack of coherent vision on the nature of the measures. While post-Communist member states, such as Poland and the Baltics were insisting on more strict measures, others such as Hungary, France, Bulgaria were reluctant because of the economic interests, and the past they are sharing with Russia. Furthermore, it was only after the Malaysian flight shooting that the EU replaced diplomatic moves with punitive sanctions targeting the Russian economy.[164]

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[161] Svante E. Cornell, "Underestimating yourself: the EU and the political realities of the eastern neighbourhood," *European View* 13 (2014): 119
[162] Kuzio, "Ukraine between the EU and Russia," 104-105.
[163] Rulski, "Before the 2014 Presidential Election," 76.
[164] Pridham, "A Turning Point," 58-59.

As the sanctions have been prolonged until September 2017, and the war in Eastern Ukraine is still continuing, the effectiveness of the EU's measures raises doubts.

To conclude, the Ukrainian crisis also showed the ineffectiveness of the EU's EaP instrument to tackle with unpredicted outcomes it could cause. The EU could not anticipate the possible negative consequences of its normative power for the countries directed by the EaP. [165] Additionally, the Ukrainian crisis also revealed that the EU did not have a strategic plan to face the unintended consequences of the EaP, which could also have taken a strict Russian response into account. Overlooking Russia's influence and interests in the CIS region, the EU sought to stabilize this area and to restrict Russia's moves but without an in-depth strategic plan. [166]

Thus, this case study demonstrated how a geopolitical game between the two rival integration centres brought about the unresolved conflict in Ukraine. As the EU sought to spread its liberal, soft power to the post-Soviet countries having significance for the stability of Europe, it challenged Russia's self-claimed right over Near Abroad, and triggered its aggressive counter-reactions; as a revisionist state Russia reacted to change the rules of game by creating a crisis in Ukraine.

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[165] Giusti, "The EU's Transformative Power Challenged in Ukraine," 166.
[166] Ibid, 182.

CHAPTER 4- GENERALIZATION: DEFICIENCIES AND CONSTRAINTS

4.1 Deficiencies: The critical assessment of the both rival projects within the game

4.1.1 The reasons behind the failure of the EaP as an effective policy framework

Indeed, the EaP, the EU's policy instrument, has not been designed as efficient enough as to attract countries targeted while securing them from by-products of their policy choices. The most insistent among the numerous reasons that make the framework less attractive for the participants are 'more sticks, but less carrots' policy based on inconsistent incentives, and lack of enough funding as well as security assurances for interested countries. The Ukrainian crisis made it apparent that how these shortcomings could expose an interested EaP participant to the external threats in a geopolitical confrontation with Russia. Indeed, there is not also a consensus among the member states concerning further improvements within the framework, contrarily, the EU's bilateral relations with the participants largely depend on the geographical preferences of the member states. While some member states that are sharing the same Soviet experience with the participants, such as Poland, actively support the developments,[167] some states do not want to challenge their partner's, Russia's interests and impede their bilateral, for example, energy cooperation.

In fact, the main discrepancies of the EaP originate from the principles of shared values, value-based conditionality and joint ownership, and the lower incentive offers.[168] Firstly, since the framework did not distinctly construe the notion of partnership—joint ownership, it reflected itself

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[167]167Canan Ezel Tabur, "The Evolution of EU's Neighbourhood Policy towards Eastern Europe," *Marmara Journal of European Studies* 21, no:2 (2013): 67.
[168] Kochenov, "New developments," 587.

as a top-down conditional approach to the governance; in the same manner with the enlargement policy, participants were conceived as a norm-taker, but not a negotiator.[169] In other words, "the EU elected to deploy a means-tested method of external governance, used for EU enlargement and operating through conditionality …which is at odds with voluntarism and equality of partnership."[170] By applying external governance instead of the partnership, the EU does not provide the participants with a choice—either cooperation based on the EU conditions, or no co-operation at all.[171] Considering the role and influence of Russia on their economy and security, the framework countries "struggle to balance their relations with these two competitive powers."[172] Here it is worth noting that dealing with Russia under an alternative external initiative—the EU-Russia Partnership for Modernization,[173] the EU itself laid a groundwork for Russia's view of "the EaP as a geopolitical project aimed at limiting the Russian sphere of influence over post-Soviet republics,"[174] and triggered the rivalry.

Secondly, incentives provided under the EaP can be summarized as three Ms: Markets—DCFTA, Mobility—visa liberalization and Money—financial aid, and are based on the bilateral agreements between the EU and an interested party.[175] However, in practice, they are carrying the major deficiencies of the policy. For example, the DCFTA, an economic component of the AA, seemed vague because of its pre-conditions. Some countries, Azerbaijan, and Belarus do not even have the WTO membership, while Armenia's economy is not yet prepared for a such extensive liberalisation. Moreover, as the member states' vision on the mobility partnership with the participants was not congruent, the visa-liberalisation is offered as a long-term goal without

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[169] Korosteleva, "Change or Continuity," 246.
[170] Korosteleva, "The Eastern Partnership Initiative," 6.
[171] Ibid, 6-7.
[172] Ibid.
[173] Roman Petrov, "The EU Neighbourhood Policies and the Security Crises within the Eastern Neighbourhood," *Security and Human Rights* 25 (2014): 305.
[174] Ibid, 305-306.
[175] Cadier, "Eastern Partnership vs Eurasian Union?"78.

providing a clear prospect, and based on the principle of conditionality.[176] Furthermore, what indeed makes the framework much less attractive to the participants is its funding offer. While a little bit more money was offered in comparison with the ENP—a package of 250 million euro, it was not sufficient to make a success story under the value-based conditionality, even if it increased to 350 million.

What is more, another reason making the framework less efficient is that it does not contain mechanisms to respond to the security concerns of participants. While it was introduced to create a ring of stable and secured friends in the EU's Eastern neighbourhood, the region's security has gradually worsened; "currently, almost all EaP countries have unresolved border security conflicts either with other EU neighbouring countries or with third countries … A key EaP country, Ukraine has been plunged into a bloody civil conflict since April 2014."[177] Furthermore, based on the multilateral cooperation, the EaP could only contribute to the security and stability of the region in the long run. However, frozen conflict between some of the participants, for instance, Armenia and Azerbaijan, block improvements concerning multilateral cooperation.

To conclude, on 27 June 2014, the EU signed the AA with Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine; within the period of ten years, they must adopt around 350 EU laws, norms, and standards. However, lack of membership offer decelerates progress even for these interested participants.[178] Indeed, the last EaP Summit held in Riga on 20-22 May 2015 revealed "a striking discrepancy between the expectations of some member countries and the willingness of the EU to respond to those expectations."[179] It also became clear at the Summit that the Ukrainian crisis affected the EU's interest in the framework; it had to take Russia, who owns enough resources to counter the

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[176] Tabur, "The Evolution of EU's Neighbourhood Policy," 66.
[177] Petrov, "The EU Neighbourhood Policies," 307.
[178] Muravska, Berlin, "Towards a New European Neighbourhood Policy," 25.
[179] Oleksiy Kandyuk, "Eastern Policy of the EU: Strategy for Ukraine," in *EU Relations with Eastern Partnership: Strategy, Opportunities and Challenges*, Carlos E. Pacheco Amaral et al, (Chisinau-Chernivtsi-Tbilisi, 2016): 57

EU policies in the region, into account.[180] Thus, designed as an enlargement policy but without membership offer, and based on the principle of conditionality but without sufficient incentives, the EaP is a weak policy mechanism making the target countries vulnerable to the potential Russian threats.

4.1.2 The Eurasian Union: Economic or Political project?

The Eurasian Union also has several deficiencies that make it less competent as an integration model for the CIS region. While its institutional system is based on the universal principles such as sovereign equality, territorial integrity, mutual cooperation, fair competition and market economy which are encoded in Article 3 of its Treaty,[181] in practice, the EEU can mostly be defined as a political tool addressing interests of Russia in its Near Abroad. Though its initiators have taken the EU-style integration path to achieve a deeply institutionalized and integrated region,[182] as a union of the less balanced countries under Russia's superiority and enlarging under subsidies offered by Russia and coercion, the EEU is less comparable to the EU.[183]

From an economic perspective, an optimistic view of the EEU assumes that in the region where economies of the countries were once highly interdependent under the Soviet Union, it is unavoidable to integrate economies, because, as the cost of cooperation is lower than non-cooperation, the FSRs have no other choice.[184] However, by contrast, the Union's overdependence on Russia presents different scenarios, today; downturns in Russian economy which is the engine of the growth within the EEU directly affects the success of the union. For example, sanctions

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[180] Arbatova, "Geopolitical challenges," 37-38.
[181] Alsu M. Khurmatullina and Aleksandr F. Malyi, "The Supranationality Problem in the Formation of Interstate Associations: The Case of the Eurasian Economic Union," *Journal of Economics and Economic Education* Research 17, no. 2 (2016): 304.
[182] Roberts, Moshes, "The Eurasian Economic Union," 545.
[183] Dreyer, Popescu, "The Eurasian Customs Union," 2.
[184] Roberts, Moshes, "The Eurasian Economic Union," 545.

imposed by the EU, and Russian financial crisis that started in 2014 significantly increased the costs of the integration.[185] It is worth remembering here that the EU Council has prolonged the sanctions against Russia until 15 September 2017,[186] and though recovery of the Russian economy has started since the end of 2016, it is still struggling with the problems of recession.[187]

Indeed, the EEU possesses more political rather than economic characteristics. On the one hand, especially under the regime of Putin, the measures leading Eurasian integration are directed to re-establish Russia's role as a regional hegemonic power in the CIS region. In this respect, the EEU is formed and controlled by Russia to provide it with an economic and political resource in the global system.[188] In other words, the EEU "…is an attempt on behalf of Russia to return to leadership in the region and strengthen its positions at the international level."[189] On the other hand, as already discussed in the second chapter, the EEU was introduced as a part of Eurasianism—a geopolitical doctrine, to prevent the post-Soviet states from collaborating with the EU and China.[190]

To conclude, in practice even economic policies of member states have not so far been harmonized within the EEU.[191] For instance, Belarus and Russia still take protectionist measures violating their obligation for the free movement of capital within the Union.[192] Furthermore, almost all member states of the EEU are governed by the autocratic political elites, which makes it possible for Russia to control them;[193] the Russian subsidies and security assurances are the main

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[185] Ibid, 557-558.
[186] "EU prolongs sanctions over actions against Ukraine's territorial integrity until 15 September 2017," Press Release, European Council, published March 13, 2017 (http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2017/03/13-eu-sanctions-ukraine-integrity/)
[187] "Russian Economy Crawled to Growth With Recession in Rearview," Bloomberg, published on March 31, 2017 (https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-03-31/russian-economy-crawls-to-0-3-growth-with-recession-in-rearview)
[188] Maxim Bratersky, "Isolationism versus Geopolitics: The Dual Role of the Eurasian Union in the System of Global Governance, New Mechanisms for International Cooperation: Opportunities and Challenges," *International Organisations Research Journal* 11. no.2 (2016): 48.
[189] Rivera, Garashchuk, "The Eurasian Economic Union," 94.
[190] Ibid, 101.
[191] Ibid. 95.
[192] Kheifets, "On the Eurasian Economic Union's Free Investment Zone," 337.
[193] Rivera, Garashchuk, "The Eurasian Economic Union," 102-103

guarantors of survival of these political regimes.[194] Thus, being overdependent on Russia the EEU is a less efficient economic project, rather it is a political or geopolitical tool to consolidate Russia's hegemony and to prevent other powers, mainly the EU from cooperating with the countries located in the region—in Russia's Near Abroad.

4.2 Constraints: The role of breakaway regions

Arguably, the Ukrainian crisis did not only reveal that to use irredentist tools was a proven strategy of Kremlin to prevent a country trying to leave its sphere of influence, but it also delineated the limits of the EaP to secure the target countries from Russia's aggressive moves within the game. Indeed, the initiators of the framework did not think of the roles of the breakaway regions, so called frozen conflicts, as limiting factors on the target countries' developments under the EaP. Indeed, with the only exception of Nagorno-Karabakh that started on a bilateral basis, other unresolved conflicts, namely Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Transnistria have been provoked by Russia to keep the post-Soviet countries located in its Near Abroad under its influence. However, the EU leaders label these disputes as local conflicts, and with the only exception of the Georgian case they do not recognize Russia as a party to these disputes.[195] In fact, "even if these conflicts indeed began as local conflicts, they rapidly transformed into primarily geopolitical conflicts, as Russia's policy has been the decisive force in maintaining their lack of resolution through controlled instability."[196] Thus, with an emphasis on the breakaway regions, the following sub-cases briefly discuss how other EaP countries have been positioned within this geopolitical confrontation.

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[194] Roberts, Moshes, "The Eurasian Economic Union,"554
[195] Cornell, "Underestimating yourself," 120.
[196] Ibid.

4.2.1 Georgia

Indeed, located in the Black Sea area and the South Caucasus, Georgia's geographical position makes great powers interested in the country. On the one hand, having the huge transit capacities, this region has crucial significance in ensuring energy security of the EU[197] that since the Rose revolution of 2003 the EU has embraced the country's pro-EU aspirations. On the other hand, tying it to the Middle East and Turkey, and closely linked with the North Caucasus, the South Caucasus is also strategically important for Russia's security interests, which explains why Russia engaged in a short war with Georgia and gained a control over its secessionist areas—South Ossetia and Abkhazia, in 2008.[198] Indeed, Kremlin was deeply concerned about the signing of the ENP Action Plan between the EU and Georgia[199] and NATO's decision to launch an intensive dialogue with Georgia, which could pose a real threat to its security interests in the region. Not coincidentally, the war started only months after NATO's Bucharest summit.[200] Along with the OSCE, the EU actively engaged in the management of the Georgian crisis.[201]

Later, while the signing of the AA/DCFTA with the EU on 27 June 2014 marked beginning of a new level in the EU-Georgia relations, it also led to the consolidation of Russia's control over Georgia's breakaway regions; Russia responded to Georgia's ratification of the agreement, "with the Russian-Abkhaz Treaty on Partnership and Integration in which the military component is key."[202] Later, through the signing of the Treaty in March 2015, military and economy of the South

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[197] Archil Chochia and Johanna Popjanevski, "Change of Power and Its Influence on Country's Europeanization Process. Case Study: Georgia" in *Political and Legal Perspectives of the EU Eastern Partnership Policy*, eds. Tanel Kerikmae and Archil Chochia, (Cham: Springer International Publishing 2016), 199.

[198] Karagiannis, "The Russian Interventions in South Ossetia and Crimea Compared," 403.

[199] Martin Nilsson and Daniel Silander "Democracy and Security in the EU's Eastern Neighborhood? Assessing the ENP in Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine," *Democracy and Security* 12, no. 1 (2016): 54.

[200] Karagiannis, "The Russian Interventions," 406.

[201] Richard G. Whitman and Stefan Wolff, "The EU as a conflict manager? The case of Georgia and its implications," *International Affairs* 86, No. 1 (2010): 92-93.

[202] Andrey Makarychev, "Russia's policies in the South Caucasus after the crisis in Ukraine: the vulnerabilities of realism" in The South Caucasus Between integration and fragmentation, Fuad Chiragov et al, European Policy Center /Center for Strategic Studies 2015, 25.

Ossetia was unified with Russia's. However, the EU could only react to these developments by reiterating its support to the territorial integrity of Georgia,[203] without taking any concrete steps to prevent Russia.

4.2.2 Armenia

When it comes to Armenia, another South Caucasian country, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict with Azerbaijan deeply constraints its policy maneuverers. While the conflict started locally within the breakaway region of Azerbaijan, it later turned into the war between two countries. Though a ceasefire reached between the parties under its mediation, Russia is indeed interested in keeping this dispute unresolved to influence both countries' external politics. For instance, the U-turn of Armenian President Sargsyan—to abandon negotiations on the initiation of the signing of the AA at Vilnius in 2013 and to join the ECU, better justifies this argument. In fact, joining the ECU, and later the EEU brought more problems to the country's economy rather than benefits; it hampered the accession talks with the WTO, because Armenia had to adjust to the higher tariff rates and implement more protectionist trade policies that were not in compliance with the WTO requirements.[204]

Thus, to divert its main ally in the South Caucasus from its pro-EU orientation, Russia played a security card over Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. In fact, Russia keeps military bases in Gyumri, Armenian territory "as a security guarantee against a possible attempt to take back Nagorno-Karabakh by Azerbaijan,"[205] which ensure its presence in the South Caucasus and provide it with the military outpost.[206] Thus, in August 2013, one month before the meeting with

[203] Amanda Paul, "The EU and the South Caucasus – Time for a stocktake" in *The South Caucasus Between integration and fragmentation*, Fuad Chiragov et al, European Policy Center /Center for Strategic Studies 2015, 79

[204] Richard Giragosian, "The European Neighbourhood Policy: An Armenian Perspective" in *Reviewing the European Neighbourhood Policy: Eastern Perspectives*, eds. Alina Inayeh and Joerg Forbrig, Europe Policy Paper 4 (Washington: The German Marshall Fund of the United States 2015), 8.

[205] Makarychev, "Russia's policies in the South Caucasus," 24.

[206] Paul, "The EU and the South Caucasus," 80.

Sargsyan in which he announced the decision to join the ECU, Putin visited Baku together with six ministers.[207] Indeed, this visit and the following statements about increasing arms sales to Azerbaijan while ceasing military assistance to Armenia[208] were the reasons behind this sudden policy shift. Since the EaP does not promise any security assurance, Armenia's U-turn was more about "…maintaining the alliance with Russia as a counter-balance to Azerbaijan …."[209]

4.2.3 Azerbaijan

Located in the South Caucasus and possessing hydrocarbon reserves, Azerbaijan represents potentials to the EU for the diversification of the routes and energy sources away from Russia.[210] Resource politics offers opportunities to the country to follow a balanced policy—not to take either the EU or the EEU integration path. Indeed, under this balanced policy "with its geopolitical position, caught between the interests of Russia, Iran, and the West, Baku tries to preserve its independence...."[211] Thus, thanks to the hydrocarbon reserves, on the one hand, Azerbaijan could avoid the EU's 'more for more' principle under the EaP; to ensure its energy security the EU has agreed to discuss a Strategic Partnership for Modernisation (SPM) agreement proposed by Azerbaijan without applying the conditionality principle.[212] On the other hand, the resource politics also help the country to continue its balanced policy when Kremlin takes actions to convince Azerbaijan to collaborate with Moscow closely, for instance, as seen in June 2014 visit of Russia's high-level officials to Baku.[213]

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[207] Cornell, "Underestimating yourself," 117.
[208] Ibid.
[209] Kevork Oskanian, "Armenia: Stuck in Eurasia" in *Trouble in the Neighbourhood? The Future of the EU's Eastern Partnership*, eds. Adam Hug (London: The Foreign Policy Centre 2015), 55.
[210] Paul, "The EU and the South Caucasus," 77.
[211] Ibid. 80.
[212] Leila Alieva, "The European Neighbourhood Policy and Azerbaijan: When Soft Power and Security Are Tightly Related" in *Reviewing the European Neighbourhood Policy: Eastern Perspectives*, eds. Alina Inayeh and Joerg Forbrig, Europe Policy Paper 4 (Washington: The German Marshall Fund of the United States 2015), 12.
[213] Farhad Mammadov, "Azerbaijan's foreign policy – A new paradigm of careful pragmatism" " in The South Caucasus Between integration and fragmentation, Fuad Chiragov et al, European Policy Center /Center for Strategic Studies 2015, 34.

Furthermore, in the eyes of the Azerbaijani political officials, the main obstacle to the EU-Azerbaijan relations is that differently from the case of Georgia and Ukraine, the EU has shown little interest in settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.[214] In fact, as the conflict poses a threat to the energy routes from Azerbaijan to Europe and blocks the multilateral relationship under the EaP, the EU has enough reasons to take an active stance in the conflict resolution.[215] Recently, disappointed by the EU's support to Ukraine,[216] at the Davos Forum of December 2014 President Aliyev openly declared that Azerbaijan does not have an intent to sign the AA with the EU, or to seek any association with the EEU, either.[217]

4.2.4 Moldova

Aimed at achieving a future EU membership, Moldovan leadership have advanced cooperation with the EU to the levels of political association and economic integration over the years.[218] However, Moldova also has an unresolved territorial conflict that started in the early nineties by the ethnic Russian and Ukrainians in Transnistria. In fact, the EU has attended in the conflict settlement by deploying a mission to control the illegal movements between the borders of Ukraine and Moldova.[219] The main reason behind this involvement was indeed to prevent a spill-over effect of the conflict, because after the accession of Romania to the EU it would have the direct neighbourhood with Moldova. However, Russia does not allow the EU to have enough room to influence the settlement. In fact, to monitor the cease-fire it has even stationed military

[214] Alieva, "The European Neighbourhood Policy and Azerbaijan," 12.

[215] Tural Abbasov, "Azerbaijan and Eastern Partnership relations: Current trends" in *Trouble in the Neighbourhood? The Future of the EU's Eastern Partnership*, ed. Adam Hug (London: The Foreign Policy Centre 2015), 60.

[216] Mammadov, "Azerbaijan's foreign policy,"35.

[217] Abbasov, "Azerbaijan and Eastern Partnership relations," 58.

[218] Victor Chirila, "Moldova: More Focus, Flexibility, and Visibility for the European Neighbourhood Policy" in *Reviewing the European Neighbourhood Policy: Eastern Perspectives*, eds. Alina Inayeh and Joerg Forbrig, Europe Policy Paper 4 (Washington: The German Marshall Fund of the United States 2015), 32.

[219] Petrov, "The EU Neighbourhood Policies," 307.

troops there.[220] Today, the conflict remains frozen, and putting forward own constitution, the region even has declared its independence from Moldova.

Most importantly from the perspective of this study, the Transnistrian issue also has an instrumental value within Russia and EU's the geopolitical game in the shared neighbourhood. In fact, the advancements in the EU-Moldova relations have usually met attempts by Russia to consolidate its position in Transnistria. For instance, the signing of the AA/DCFTA on 27 June, 2014 resulted in the strengthened military ties between the parties;[221] "in 2015, Russia held a military exercise in Transnistria, which was seen in the EU as a future threat to annexation of the breakaway region, similar to the 2014 event in Crimea."[222] In fact, following the annexation of Crimea, the Transnistrian parliament also made the same appeal to join Russia, which has not so far met.[223]

4.2.5 Belarus

The last EaP country discussed here, Belarus, is also stuck between the two powers though an autocratic political elite of the country prefers to follow the brotherhood policy with Russia to avoid threats to the existence of its regime. However, in practice, Belarus is in an uncertain position in this geopolitical game; whenever rivalry intensifies, it becomes more challenging for Minsk to keep a balance between the powers because of the potential risks to its sovereignty. Put differently, its economic overdependence on Russia and the existent military partnership between them does not allow room to it for manoeuvre; if the situation goes worse, Russia can demand a full loyalty

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[220] Nilsson, Silander "Democracy and Security," 53.
[221] Nilsson, Silander "Democracy and Security," 53
[222] Ibid.
[223] Ibid.

from the Minsk.[224] Obviously, the country has never sought an active partnership with the EU; even there is not still a bilateral agreement between them.[225]

4.3. Concluding remarks

As seen in the first section, both projects have several discrepancies that contribute negatively to their efficacy as integration models for the target countries. These internal deficiencies make the interested partners vulnerable to the potential threats stemming from the rivalry between the projects. On the one hand, the EU's mechanism, the EaP, does not include instruments providing security assurances to the interested country securing it from the outcomes of its policy orientation as it seen in the Ukrainian crisis. By contrast, it positions them in a weaker situation through demanding the reforms that usually candidate countries implement, but in return for the lower incentives. On the other hand, Russia's Eurasian integration model—the EEU, is not more than a policy instrument of Russia to protect its core interests in Near Abroad. Thus, both EaP and EEU do not promise high hopes for the target states; while the former leaves the participants undefended against Russian threats, the latter is just a tool in the hands of Russia to re-establish its dominance over the CIS region.

Furthermore, brief discussions of the remaining five target countries', namely Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, and Belarus's positions in this geopolitical game with a special focus on the frozen conflicts made it obvious that pro-EU integration choice had never been easy to make. Russia keeps these issues unresolved to have enough leverage on the foreign policy of

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[224] Yauheni Preiherman, "Belarus and the European Neighbourhood Policy: A Special Case for "a Special Case"" in *Reviewing the European Neighbourhood Policy: Eastern Perspectives*, eds. Alina Inayeh and Joerg Forbrig, Europe Policy Paper 4 (Washington: The German Marshall Fund of the United States 2015), 20.
[225] Ibid, 18.

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these post-Soviet countries and does not refrain from creating a new such instrument as seen in the case of Ukraine, whenever the competition intensifies in the shared neighbourhood. Since the EaP excludes to address the security challenges that target countries face, Brussel's attempts to develop a partnership with them under this framework do not deprive Moscow of the tools to undermine the progress. In fact, Russia explicitly and implicitly threatens these countries that if "…they opt for European integration, Russia will not only wreck their economies, but physically tear their countries apart."[226] To conclude, the problem of the breakaway regions, and a huge economic, military dependence on Russia limit a space for the small target countries to manoeuvre within this geopolitical game. Additionally, though they have not been promised a clear prospect for the future membership, in practice, the existence of the territorial disputes blocks their full integration into the EU.

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[226] Cornell, "Underestimating yourself," 121.

CONCLUSION

The main aim of the thesis was to demonstrate how negatively the six post-Soviet countries, namely Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Belarus were affected within the ongoing geopolitical rivalry between the EU and Russia over the common neighbourhood. It was argued that on the one hand, notwithstanding the fact that its instruments were normative, the EU introduced the Wider Europe as a geopolitical doctrine directed to create stability around the Union's surroundings. To serve to the security interests, firstly under the ENP, and later its subset EaP, the Eastern Neighbourhood has been constructed as a geopolitical space in the EU's foreign policy within the last two decades.

On the other hand, Russia's geopolitical actorness is not debatable; as Russia looks at the future from the prisms of the past—glory of tsarist and Soviet history—its foreign policy initiatives are indeed based on post-imperial geopolitical interests. In this respect, the region where these six smaller states are located, constitutes one of the core places in Russia's geopolitical concept—Eurasianism or is a central component of its Near Abroad. However, since Russia conceives outside intrusions into the Eurasia or its Near Abroad as threats challenging its core security interests, the EU's cooperation offers to the countries in question were perceived as its expansionism and led to the re-formulation of this area as a geopolitical space in the foreign policy of Russia.

As a result, to prevent the EU's normative expansion into the region under the EaP, Russia started to form an alternative integration project for the region—Eurasian integration. While the introduction of the EaP marked the start of the geopolitical game, Russia's moves to lead the Eurasian integration intensified it. Under this 'master race,' when economic objectives were replaced with geopolitical goals, it was obvious that the target countries would face challenges,

especially, security. In this respect, being mutually exclusive, and implicitly or explicitly entailing to make a policy choice, both projects position the six target countries in a vulnerable situation.

As seen in the Ukrainian crisis, when the target state actively collaborates with one 'master'—the collectivist EU—demonstrating its choice, the rivalry intensifies and poses that state defenceless to the threats by the revisionist state—Russia. Neither the EaP had mechanisms to secure Ukraine from Russia's aggressive moves, or the EU could use force as a civilian power to push Russia back from Crimea and to contribute to the stabilization of the Eastern Ukraine.

Indeed, tracing the roots of Ukrainian crisis supported the main hypothesis of the thesis; pro-EU regime change in Ukraine that re-focused on the active collaboration with the EU exacerbated the game over the country, which resulted in the violation of the territorial integrity of Ukraine. As this target country has crucial importance for Russia's role as a global player and its security, Russia deemed the EU's normative expansion into Ukraine as unacceptable.

In fact, it is argued here that both models, the EaP and the EEU have internal discrepancies that make them less efficient for the target countries. While the EEU is a political project aimed at re-establishing Russia's hegemony over the CIS region, the EaP's internal deficiencies such as lack of mechanisms providing security assurances to the interested partners, raise solid criticisms about its effectiveness.

Last but not least, the thesis argued that the existence of breakaway regions in the territories of target countries not only put constraints on their policy orientations, but also blocks their way to full EU membership. Though, these six countries were officially recognized as Eastern European countries that could apply for membership in accordance with Article 49 of the TEU through the launching of the EaP, they were not indeed provided with a clear prospect for accession into the Union. At the same token, apart from Belarus, since they are involved in or home to

unresolved conflicts, the hope for EU membership seems far from reality even for the most interested countries such as Moldova, Ukraine, and Georgia.

Thus, the research allows to conclude that the EU and Russia's contestation over the common neighbourhood has been constructed over the time since the introduction of the Wider Europe initiative by the EU, and intensified by the launching of the EaP, and later attempts directed to form the EEU by Russia. The EU's efforts to seek active collaboration with its Eastern Neighbours exacerbated the game and left the target countries vulnerable to Russian threats.

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