EU ROLE CONCEPTIONS IN THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP REGION: NORMATIVE POWER EUROPE?

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Submitted to

Central European University

School of Public Policy, Mundus MAPP program

In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Public Policy

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Word count: 12,813

ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the European Union's role in the security of the Eastern Partnership region focusing on regional conflicts. Drawing on role theory, EU role conceptions are analyzed across three dimensions of "Normative Power Europe" – normative intent, normative process and EU capability – between 2003 and 2020. Looking at strategic documents on security, the ENP and the EaP, the thesis finds that EU role conceptions do not reflect "Normative Power Europe" and carry some characteristics of the concepts of "empire" and hegemony". The EU's prioritization of its security interests, as well as inconsistency and limited inclusiveness in the EU approach to conflicts in the EaP region, undermines its normative power. The results demonstrate that the EU has gone from seeing itself as a Normative Power due to its increasing preference for military instruments and strategic autonomy.

Keywords: *role theory, role conceptions, Normative Power Europe, EU foreign policy, Eastern Partnership*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my advisors Dr. Simona Davidescu, Prof. Uwe Puetter, Dr. Nuray Aridici and Prof. Agnes Batory for the continuous support of my MA study and thesis research. Dr. Davidescu's guidance helped me significantly in critical thinking of my research topic and writing of this thesis.

I would like to thank my family: my parents, my brother and to my husband for supporting me spiritually throughout writing this thesis and my academic life.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CFSP Common Foreign and Security Policy

CSDP Common Security and Defence Policy

EaP Eastern Partnership

EEAS European External Actions Service

ENP European Neighbourhood Policy

ESS European Security Strategy

EU European Union

EUGS EU Global Strategy

FPA Foreign Policy Analysis

HR/VP High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission

EC European Commission

NATO North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

NPE Normative Power Europe

OSCE Organisation for Cooperation and Security in Europe

INTRODUCTION

The EU initiated the Eastern Partnership (EaP) as "a more ambitious partnership" with its eastern partners to contribute to stability, security and prosperity in Europe ("Joint Declaration of the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit," 2009). This initiative generated expectations regarding the EU's increasing role in the EaP region, particularly in security issues. The literature on external governance, Europeanization and the EU's role as an international actor demonstrates an asymmetrical relationship between the EU and the EaP countries (Korosteleva, 2011, 2012; Lavenex, 2004; Schimmelfennig, 2015). The literature emphasizes the accommodation of the EaP between two key concepts with contested meanings - partnership and governance (Korosteleva, 2012, p. 20). The EU is often cited as "civilian power" (Duchêne, 1972), "normative power" (Manners, 2002) and "ethical power" (Aggestam, 2008) in its external actions. Due to the normative dimension of EU foreign policy, the EU's high interests in the security of its borders, as well as serious security problems in the EaP region gives rise to thoughts about its increasing roles in contributing to security problems of the EaP region. However, the literature shows that the EU is not perceived as having an active role in the conflict resolutions in the EaP region (Bengtsson and Elgström, 2012; Delcour and Wolczuk, 2018). Since there is a mismatch between what the EU says and what it does, the question arises about the EU's intention regarding its commitment "to provide prosperity, stability and security". In what role does the EU see itself in the EaP region?

The word "role" hints us role theory which has been used by many scholars to analyze the EU's global role, as well as in particular regions, including the EaP (Bengtsson and Elgström, 2012; Delcour and Wolczuk, 2018; Rakutienė, 2018). I find role theory most useful for addressing my topic due to its rich conceptual framework as well as its relevance to the EU's complex structure. Role theory was introduced to foreign policy analysis (FPA) by Holsti (1970). Due to the sui generis nature of the EU, Aggestam (2006) incorporated role theory with three dimensions (intentional, interactional, institutional) which help us understand how the EU's roles are taking shape. According to the role theory, role conception predicts the general directions of role performance (actual foreign policy behaviour). In this regard, analyzing the EU's role conceptions may contribute to the

understanding of EU foreign policy in the security issues of the EaP region. Thus, I formulate the research question as follows:

What are the EU's role conceptions concerning security problems in the Eastern Partnership region?

To analyze the EU's self-conception regarding its foreign policy, it is needed to make some assumptions related to the concepts used in the research question.

There is a continued debate on the nature of the EU as an international actor. Two extreme views whether the EU can be viewed as a potential state or diplomatic coordination of member states' foreign policy are located at the ends of the spectrum (Elgström and Smith, 2006, p. 1). This thesis aims at exploring the EU's intentions in its external actions through its foreign policy role conceptions. Thus, the EU needs to be considered as an international actor which has a foreign policy of its own. Additionally, I acknowledge the sui generis nature of the EU due to the mix of intergovernmental and supranational elements in its institutional set-up (Elgström and Smith, 2006, p. 5). This is particularly important because the EaP includes both the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) (the leading institution is the European Council) and other external actions (the leading institution is the European Commission). The EU foreign policy is often understood as CFSP which includes both civilian and military instruments. The term of EU external actions is broader in this sense and includes international agreement, economic, trade, development, and financial cooperation with partner countries. Additionally, some internal policies such as energy, environment and migration have external dimensions which are relevant to EU foreign policy (Svensson, 2017, p. 3). Thus, the scope of EU foreign policy goes beyond CFSP. For the purpose of this paper, it is important to adopt a broader definition of EU foreign policy.

Security is also a controversial concept that needs to be clarified. Two streams can be identified in the security literature: "traditionalists" who argue that security is about survival and put states and military element at the centre of the conceptualization of security (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 21) and "non-traditionalists" who are people-centric and studies all threats including economic, societal and environmental threats (Buzan et al., 1998, pp. 2–5). Four changes have been recorded regarding the notion of security: 1) Its referent object is extended downwards from states to individuals; 2) as well as upwards from states to the international system; 3) It has been subjected to horizontal extension by including economic, political, social and environmental security; 4) societal actors such as NGOs, market, press as well as different level of governments have become responsible for security together

with states (Rothschild 1995, p. 55). In the face of changing nature of threats and response to them, the EU has adopted a broader security understanding (Kirchner and Sperling, 2007, pp. 7–8). To limit the scope of this thesis, I focus on "hard" security issues, namely conflicts or frozen conflicts in the EaP region. The reasons for selecting this area of security are threefold. Firstly, the EaP region has experienced four military conflicts. All the EaP countries except Belarus have been involved in the armed conflicts since independence - Transnistria in Moldova, Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia, Nagorno Karabakh in Azerbaijan involving Armenia, Crimea, Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts in Ukraine. Secondly, increasing military capabilities of the EU arises a question about the EU's preference of instruments for solving military security issues. Finally, the existence of hard security problems is an obstacle for the membership prospects of the EaP countries due to the criterion of 'finished statehood' (Balázs, 2018), thus the EU's role in the resolution of these conflicts also sheds light on the EU's willingness to see these countries as its future members.

Another issue regarding the research question is whether we can look at the EaP as a region or whether the EU perceives the EaP as a whole region. The EU prefers a regional approach in its relations with third countries (EU-US bilateral relations are an exception). Regions that the EU address its policies, sometimes, have few regional features (Schimmelfennig, 2015). The EaP involves six post-soviet countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine), thus, these countries share some common features, as well as common problems. However, this is not to say that the EaP countries constitute a region. The EaP countries also differ according to their size, economic development, democracy level as well as the intensity of their relations with the EU. My claim is that the EU sees the EaP as a region since it has developed a regional or multilateral approach.

To answer the research question this thesis employs role theory and analyzes EU role conception within the concept of normative power which includes three dimensions: normative intent, normative process and EU capabilities. Textual analysis has been utilized to analyze EU official documents on the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and the EaP within 2003-2020 timeframe (see "Methodology" section). Relying on the role theory and the literature that shows inconsistent and uneffective role performance of the EU, my general hypothesis is that *EU role conceptions do not reflect "Normative Power Europe"*. It is also argued that the EU's engagement in the neighbourhood is driven by its interests rather than the norms it promotes.

The thesis starts with a brief overview of the literature on EU external governance, Europeanization and the EU's global role. It is followed by a theoretical framework which includes role theory and the concept of normative power. The third section outlines the methodological approach of this thesis. The fourth section presents the empirical findings regarding the EU role conceptions. The final chapter discusses the findings and concludes the thesis.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section outlines the scholarly debate on the EU's external actions in the EaP region reviewing the literature on external governance, Europeanization and the EU's role as an international actor. The external governance literature studies the expansion of EU rules and practices to non-member states (Lavenex and Schimmelfennig, 2009, p. 791). As a form of external governance, the EU extends its *acquis communautaire* by converging internal and foreign policy goals. The expansion of EU rules towards non-member states not only increases the efficiency and problem-solving capacity of the EU's internal policies but also serves the CFSP goals of the Union focusing on the stabilization of its neighbourhood (Lavenex, 2004, p. 681). Rieker (2016, p. 7) considers the EU's external governance as "a process that can lead to security community-building". Lavenex and Schimmelfennig (2009) distinguish between the institutional modes of external governance – hierarchy, networks, and markets and conclude that governance modes are shaped by a sectoral, policy-specific logic (Lavenex and Schimmelfennig, 2009, p. 807).

Korosteleva (2011) claims that external governance considers the ENP and the EaP "a one-way traffic" in which the partners are not perceived as equally sovereign subjects but as "objects of governance". She supports her argument with the controversial meaning of partnership in EU rhetoric analysed by Bechev and Nicolaidis (2010). The main tensions regarding the notion of partnership include a)hegemony versus partnership; b)conditionality versus ownership; c)bilateralism versus multilateralism; d)differentiation versus homogeneity; e)functional versus geo-strategic vision (Korosteleva, 2011, p. 5). Similarly, in her book, Korosteleva (2012) accommodates the EU's approach to its eastern neighbours between partnership – the principal concept that defines the new "privileged relationship" with partners and governance – the combination of top-down rule export and conditionality that have been applied inconsistently. To analyse the EU's relations with the EaP countries, Korosteleva develops a framework what she calls "partnership-governance nexus" in which partnership serves as a complementary approach rather than supplementary to or replacement of governance (Korosteleva, 2012, p. 20). With such an ambiguous notion of partnership, coupled with conditionality, it reveals significant challenges for the EU in terms of implementation and legitimation of its policies in the region. Thus, an ill-defined concept of partnership effectively distorts the substance and the purpose of the EaP (Korosteleva, 2012, p. 40). Korosteleva (2019) also analyses the notion of resilience as a new analytic tool of governance. Resilience is defined as "the

ability of states and societies to reform, thus withstanding and recovering from internal and external crises" in the EU Global Strategy (EUGS). Although the notion of resilience illustrates the enthusiasm of EU policy-makers to "turn to the local" acting as "partners" and "mentors", the EU's strong desire to stay in control of rule transfer has shown that EU policy-makers' resilience-thinking become entangled in EU security priorities rather than the local needs of partner countries (Korosteleva, 2019, p. 17). The study examines the perceptions of the EU's external governance by local experts in Belarus and Ukraine reveals that partner countries are treated as "passive executors" of rule transfer. The EU's external governance is mainly considered as "old governance" and resembles a hierarchy in networks (Happ and Bruns, 2017, p. 103).

Europeanization literature is also of great importance for studying the EU's role in the EaP region. Schimmelfennig (2015) dedicated one of his publications to the analysis of Europeanization beyond the EU borders drawing on EU external governance literature. His classification of the mechanisms of Europeanization beyond member states is based on logic of action, direct or indirect pathways of impact as well as functional channels including intergovernmental and transnational. These mechanisms include conditionality, transnational incentives, externalization, socialization and imitation (Schimmelfennig, 2015, pp. 5-9). The literature shows that the EU wants to act in an international environment that is based on its own principles and rules – "domestic analogy". This approach includes promoting the EU model of regionalism, the EU's economic model as well as its constitutional norms in external relations. Regarding the instruments, there is a broad agreement in the literature that the EU experienced a significant change in its external policies by replacing its apolitical content and the principle of not interfering with the internal issues of third countries with conditionality which puts forward the constitutional norms such as democracy, human rights and the rule of law as "essential elements". However, the literature does not agree on the consistent application of the EU conditionality (Schimmelfennig, 2015, pp. 10–12). Concerning the impact of Europeanization Schimmelfennig (2015, pp. 13-18) reveals that although regionalism has been consistent in the EU's external relations, it has been undermined by differentiation among partner countries as part of conditionality. In democracy promotion, the EU's actual foreign policy behaviour follows the rhetoric when consistency is "cheap" for the EU, otherwise, conditionality is considered "declaratory" rather than an actual policy. The literature, generally, recognizes the low consistency and effectiveness of the EU's democracy promotion and human rights policies. According to the analysis, the ENP can be easily accommodated in the framework of Europeanization. As

Europeanization in the enlargement process, it was also formulated by the European Commission (EC). Similarly, the ENP covers the same principles that are applied to candidate states such as promoting EU values and norms, political conditionality and monitoring (planning, reporting and assistance). However, the ENP includes the principle of differentiation, "more-for-more" principle in the absence of membership prospect. Conditionality and socialization as the principle mechanisms of the EU in the ENP countries are being undermined by limited incentives, poor credibility, international resistance, high adaptation costs for partner countries (in case of conditionality) and weak resonance and identity and lack of joint ownership and dialogue (in case of socialization) (Schimmelfennig, 2015, pp. 18–22).

The literature reviewed above on external governance and Europeanization mainly discusses the mechanisms of the EU in the promotion of its norms and standards, the rationale behind it as well as its impact in partner countries. However, it does not cover how the EU's roles in external relations are being established. Role theory has great importance in this regard. Role theory was applied to FPA by Holsti (1970) and its relevance to the EU foreign policy was put forward by Aggestam (2006). The role theory has been applied to the analysis of the EU's role as an international actor. The concepts of role theory such as role expectation, role conception, role performance have enabled researchers to produce a thorough analysis of EU foreign policy. Additionally, due to its complex structure, the EU can be analyzed from different perspectives (*institutional, intentional, interactional).* Through the lens of role theory, the EU is seen as an *institution* which is governed by certain rules and norms has *self-interests* in pursuing its external policies by involving in *interaction* with other actors (Aggestam, 2006).

Reviewing the debate on the nature of the EU as an international actor, Elgström and Smith (2006, p. 1) conclude that role theory has analytical importance to exploring the EU's roles and impact as an "unidentified international object". The role theory has not been only used for the EU's global role (Bengtsson and Elgström, 2012; Delcour and Wolczuk, 2018; Klose, 2019, 2018) but also the role conceptions/expectations of the institutions within the EU (Aggestam and Johansson, 2017; Chappell et al., 2020; Chelotti, 2015). For example, Chelotti (2015) analyzes the predictors of intergovernmental or supranational role conceptions of the EU officials; Aggestam and Johansson (2017) investigates leadership paradox between the role conceptions of the EU High Representative (HR/VP) and the European External Action Service (EEAS) in EU foreign and security policy and the role expectations of member states from them. Chappell et al. (2020) investigate the association

between member states' expectations regarding the EU's security role and EU institutions' role conceptions.

Employing the notion of "normative power" (Manners, 2002) as the EU's generalized role, Bengtsson and Elgström (2012) analyzed the EU's interaction with third countries. They conclude that the EU perceives its role as a normative great power regardless of empirical context, however, this role conception is partly reflected on the perceptions of partner countries since the EU is perceived as "saying one thing and doing another" due to its incoherent foreign policy behaviour (Bengtsson and Elgström, 2012, pp. 105–106). Another theoretical advantage of the role theory is that it allows researchers to look at perceptions of outsiders and their expectations from the EU. Delcour and Wolczuk (2018) investigate the role expectations of three EaP countries (South Caucasus) from the EU and uncover a significant discordance between the EU's role conception as a strong security actor in the region and the perceptions of the EU's low engagement in conflict settlement. It is paradoxical because the EU's role conceptions are rhetorically compatible with the role expectations of partners as security is concerned, however, the EU's actual performance is below the expectations of partner countries (Delcour and Wolczuk, 2018, p. 43).

The EU is viewed as "under-equipped" in conflict resolution because of institutional, political and financial difficulties (Sasse, 2009). Baltag and Bosse (2016) argue that the EU cannot expand its security community to Moldova as well as to all EaP countries because, first, security community should have shared interests which is not the case for the EU approach to the EaP countries; second, a high level of de-securitization is needed for building a security community and the EU's uneasy relationship with Russia makes it almost impossible (Baltag and Bosse, 2016, pp. 69–71). It is argued that in the Ukraine conflict, the EU became "an inadvertent" great power in its own right by employing its market power (sanctions against Russia) for high politics (Gehring et al., 2017, pp. 738–39). The EU's low involvement in the conflict does not meet Georgia's expectations although the EU succeeded in calming tensions and eliminating the likelihood of renewed war between Russia and Georgia (Bolkvadze and Lebanidze, 2016, p. 99). Axyonova et al. (2018, p. 39) analyzes the perceptions of Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine regarding the EU's role as a security actor and concludes that all three countries expect more responsibility from the EU in providing security in the region.

As illustrated above, the literature on external governance, Europeanization and the EU's role as an international actor has many similar and overlapping views such as asymmetrical relations with

partner countries and the EU's inconsistent and incoherent policies. External governance has been dominated in the debate on the EU's involvement in the EaP as a security actor. However, this study brings novelty by using role theory to understand the EU's approach to the security of the EaP region. Although some authors have applied role theory to the analysis of the eastern neighbourhood, comprehensive research has not been carried out concerning "hard" security in the region (Bengtsson and Elgström, 2012; Delcour and Wolczuk, 2018; Rakutienė, 2018). The next section provides theoretical explanations regarding the role theory and the concept of normative power which constitute a foundation of the research.

2. THEORETICAL AND ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. ROLE THEORY

2.1.1. INTRODUCTION TO ROLE THEORY

The theoretical framework of this thesis draws on sociological role theory. Role theory is of great importance in terms of identifying how interests, identity, beliefs affect an actor's role conceptions. This, however, does not exclude rationalism. Rationalism investigates why certain decisions and certain courses of actions are made. But it does not examine norms and culture which are not considered an empiric form of knowledge. In other words, rationalism does not provide explanations about the evolution of interests or identities resulting from contact, negotiation or even partnership with other actors. By contrast, constructivism asks what the bases of security decisions are (i.e., identity, perceptions) (Tonra and Christiansen, 2004, pp. 7–8). The role theory includes two different logics of human behaviour combining rational instrumental action and rule-based action: the logic of expected consequences and the logic of appropriateness (Aggestam, 2004, p. 86).

Role theory was introduced to FPA by Holsti (1970) with his seminal inductive work by presenting national roles as causal variables in FPA. He considers roles as an expected behaviour which is determined by both an actor's self-conception ("ego") of appropriate behaviour (role conception) and others' ("alter") expectations (role expectations or role prescriptions) (Holsti, 1970, pp. 236–39). According to him:

> A national role conception includes the policymakers' own definitions of the general kinds of decisions, commitments, rules and actions suitable to their state, and of the functions, if any, their state should perform on a continuing basis in the international system or in subordinate regional systems (Holsti, 1970, pp. 245–46).

He argues that the national role conception is an essential concept to analyze and predict the state's foreign policy behaviour. As mentioned above, this concept fills the gap in the (neo)realist-dominated literature – which stresses material resources and systemic characteristics – by emphasizing different sources of role conceptions such as history, culture and socio-economic characteristics (Holsti, 1970, pp. 236–45).

According to the role theory, an actor has an expectable behaviour (rule-based action). The advantage of this theory is that it emphasizes the relationship between agency and social structure. It suggests

that foreign policy decisions are neither freely chosen by foreign policymakers, nor are fully shaped by social structures. The agency in foreign policy is considered as a "situated actor" whose actions are guided by both rules and reasons (Aggestam, 2006, pp. 11-13). Accordingly, due to the interaction between agency and structure, the EU foreign policy and security decisions are taken by the agent with self-interests and distinct identity but are also subject to norm-based social structures (Aggestam, 2004, p. 83). It should be noted that agency and structure can be analyzed separately only on an abstract level. The actor and structure are "two sides of the same coin" (Hay, 1995, p. 197 cited in Aggestam, 2006, p. 13).

Aggestam (2006) adjusts role theory to the EU context to examine how the EU's roles in international relations are constructed, sustained and reconstructed. The next two sections introduce necessary concepts in the role theory and provide explanations about the interactions between these concepts.

2.1.2. PERSPECTIVES: INSTITUTION, INTERACTION AND INTENTION

To exhibit the nature of and the relationship between agency and structure in the EU context, Aggestam (2006) includes Gidden's structuration theory to the role analysis. Interactional, institutional and intentional perspectives explain how roles are generated from a combination of structure, interaction and intention (Aggestam, 2004, p. 89).

Institutional perspective explains how roles are shaped by institutions. They claim that roles are determined by institutions, not by actors. The rules, norms and practices the actor has in a particular social structure generate a set of expectations. Integrating this perspective in the theoretical framework of role theory is necessary because it conceptualizes the link between institutional concepts (such as norms) and foreign policy (Aggestam, 2006, p. 15). However, the institutional perspective does not consider the autonomy of the agency or the dynamic process of role-playing (Aggestam, 2006, p. 15).

Considering the dynamic nature of the EU, it is important to incorporate dynamism and process into the analytical framework of the role theory. Interactional perspective emphasizes the role of learning and socialization process between actors. Unlike the institutional perspective, It claims that roles are not static and are subject to change through negotiations and adaptation (Aggestam, 2006, p. 16). The interactional approach also stresses the process of foreign and security policy integration between member states, as well as within the EU institutions (Aggestam, 2004, pp. 89–90). However, this

perspective does not take into account the pre-existing identities and roles of actors before arriving at the interaction with others (Aggestam, 2006, p. 17)

Actors neither simply perform passively according to their script, nor shape their preferences during the interaction with others. The role conceptions of an actor can only be fully understood if intentions and interests that drive them are taken into account (Aggestam, 2004, pp. 89–90). The intentional perspective reflects the "ego" of the actor (Holsti, 1970, p. 36). It demonstrates how the actor itself is involved in calculations and reasoning process to define its role. This perspective does not consider the actor simply as a passive reflection of social structure but confirms that the actor can exercise some freedom for interpretation and innovation regarding the roles it performs (Aggestam, 2006, p. 18). With the inclusion of the intentional perspective, the role theory can provide a comprehensive ground linking two logics: the logic of expected consequences and the logic of appropriateness (Aggestam, 2004, p. 90).

2.1.3. ROLE CONCEPTS AND THEIR INTERACTION

Roles, generally, refer to social positions that consist of ego and alter prescriptions regarding the purpose of an actor in a particular social institution (Harnisch, 2011, p. 8). The role theory has several concepts through which foreign policy can be understood. The relationship between concepts is explained below and illustrated in Figure 1.

Role expectations refer to the expectations that others (alter) prescribe the role-beholder (ego) (Aggestam, 2006, p. 19). The role expectations derive from various sources including the structure of the international system, rules, traditions, system-wide values and treaties (Holsti, 1970, p. 246). Political culture and identity also generate expectations which constrain the range of roles that foreign policy-makers perceive (Aggestam, 2006, p. 19) Role expectations are generally normative ideas about appropriate behaviour that external actors expect the actor to perform (Aggestam and Johansson, 2017, p. 1209). Role expectations comprise both domestic expectations (i.e, member states in the case of the EU) and external expectations. Role expectations differ in terms of their scope, specificity, commonality and the degree of obligation (Harnisch, 2011, p. 8).

Role conception is the ego's-part own definition of its role. It characterizes the subjective dimension of foreign policy behaviour and reveals the actor's intentions, responsibilities and obligations (Aggestam, 2006, p. 19). Role conceptions include both actors' self-perception and others' role

expectations. They are shaped by the interplay between these two elements (Elgström and Smith, 2006, p. 6). However, the magnitude of the influence of role expectations in developing role conceptions varies according to different actors and different contexts (Holsti, 1970, p. 246). Role conceptions can be investigated both as independent and dependent variables in FPA. It becomes an independent variable by predicting the general directions of role performance. However, it is also an outcome variable which is shaped by many independent variables (sources of role conceptions) (Holsti, 1970, p. 236). Role conception is treated as an independent variable in this paper to understand the relationship between the EU's self-image and its actual performance.

Different role conceptions can be explained by varied sources such as location, resources, capabilities, social characteristics, public opinion, political needs of key foreign policy-makers (Holsti, 1970, p. 245). It should also be mentioned that a role conception varies in degree of specificity and according to the situation and institutional context. Therefore, general role conceptions can be translated into specific roles by foreign-policy actors with some freedom during the phase of role-playing, by interacting with other actors involved (Aggestam, 2006, pp. 19–20).

Role performance refers to "the actual foreign policy behaviour" of states. This includes decisions, actions, attitudes and commitments toward others. (Holsti, 1970, p. 245). Role performance is also concerned with how, in what ways, certain roles are performed by an actor (Elgström and Smith, 2006, p. 6). Aggestam suggests that the correlation between role performance and role conception may apply only to general roles. Role conception shapes the role-set of foreign policymakers and policymakers have some freedom to choose the most suitable roles according to the contexts. Thus, for Aggestam, role conceptions do not directly determine the role performance but condition the set of roles that are available to the actor (Aggestam, 2006, p. 20). *Role-set* is conceived as one general role. For instance, civilian power could be interpreted as a general role for the EU and specific roles within this role-set should be congruent with each other (Aggestam, 2006, p. 21).

There is also a possibility to have an incompatibility between role expectations and role conceptions. In case of conflict between role conceptions and expectations, role conceptions may come under scrutiny. Role expectations may undergo alteration during the interaction with the actor (Delcour and Wolczuk, 2018, p. 45). As Holsti (1970, p. 243), argues, in case of incongruence between highly values national interests and the norms of behaviour established through practices and treaties, the former has supremacy over the latter.

These different concepts of role theory are tightly interlinked yet do attribute to different phenomena and processes in the course of application to FPA (Aggestam, 2006, p. 19).

Figure 1. Simplified relationship between role concepts

Source: Created by the author according to Holsti (1970) and Aggestam (2006)

2.2. NORMATIVE POWER EUROPE

The EU is often cited as a unique and distinct actor owing to the nature of its goals, norm and values, its preference of political instruments used as well as its peculiar institutional set-up (Elgström and Smith, 2006, p. 2). The most popular terms used to portray the EU identity are "civilian power" (Duchêne, 1972), "normative power" (Manners, 2002) and "ethical power" (Aggestam, 2008).

In 2007, Manners's article on "Normative Power Europe" (NPE) (2002) was voted as one of "the five most important, essential and seminal academic pieces" published up to that date (Forsberg, 2011, p. 1184). For Manners (2002, p. 239), the EU has "ability to shape conceptions of 'normal' in international relations" and this makes the EU a normative power. Three factors determine the EU's normative difference: its historical context, hybrid polity and political-legal constitution. Manners identifies five core (peace, liberty, democracy, rule of law and human rights) and four minor norms (social solidarity, anti-discrimination, sustainable development and good governance) within its constitution and practices. The EU foreign policy aims at consolidating these constitutional norms (Manners, 2002, pp. 241–23). The NPE (Manners, 2002, p. 252) suggests the EU's predisposition "to act in a normative way in world politics" and the most important factor in the analysis of the EU's global role is "not what it does or what it says, but what it is".

The NPE has received many critiques in the literature. The concept has been regarded as "highly influential but also equally controversial" and criticized for not being an analytical concept, but a normative one (Haukkala, 2008, p. 1602). Diez (2005) argues that the notion of normative power is not unique to the EU bringing out the historical evidence from the practices of the US. Additionally, the discourse on the NPE constitutes an influential factor not only in the EU's identity construction

but also the identity of the EU's others by making attempts to change its partners through the expansion of norms (Diez, 2005, pp. 613–14). Diez (2005) also argues that self-reflexivity is crucial for the EU's identity construction as a normative power.

In the face of several critiques regarding the ambiguity of the concept, Forsberg (2011) and Manners (2013) contributed to the NPE to alleviate its "linguistic fluidity". Manners (2013, pp. 308-309) provides reclarification regarding the meaning of normative power: the first meaning in which normative theory is emphasized, the second is normative power as an ideational form of power, as the third meaning, normative power is characterized as an ideal-type of international actor. Normative power as an ideal-type of power refers to "idealized (but not necessarily normatively idealized) descriptions of the concrete features of things that help to compare otherwise fuzzy phenomena with each other" (Forsberg, 2011, p. 1199).

The NPE concept is often compared with civilian and military power. However, it should be noted that while civilian power and military power are concerned with the capabilities of the actor, normative power focuses on the ideational dimension of the EU's international role. Manners does not downplay the EU's civilian or military power, he simply argues that the EU's "ability to shape conceptions of normal" should get more attention (Manners, 2002, pp. 238-39). Thus, normative power is "different from great power and distinctive from civilian power." (Manners, 2006a, p. 167). Diez (2005) disagrees with Manners's arguments by arguing that civilian power is a particular kind of normative power. Sjursen (2006, pp. 238-39) and Diez (2005, p. 620) argue that military capabilities can be used to back up the expansion of universal norms and values. It is also problematic to think that civilian instruments are soft measures and do not cause serious harm (i.e, economic sanctions) (Sjursen, 2006, pp. 238-39). According to Manners (2006b, p. 183), the militarization of the EU does not lead to a decline in its normative power in case of critical reflection involved in the process. However, there is empirical evidence that the European Security Strategy (ESS) has already been weakening the EU's normative assertions with its "martial potency" and "military-industrial simplex". The EU's possession of greater military capacity could also lead to a temptation to employ short-term military solutions instead of long-term structural conflict resolution such as capacity-building (Manners, 2006b, pp. 194-195). Manners (2006c, p. 405-407) considers the EU as a security actor whose role is to provide human security in which freedom from fear and freedom from want are equally stressed. However, these normative assumptions are challenged by empirical evidence which shows that the EU's prioritization of strategic security over development aid (concerning

freedom from want). For example, in the ESS, the EU pays more attention to "Eurocentric threat perception" and fails to list to the needs and expectations of partner countries (Manners, 2006c, pp. 412–13)

Scholars have suggested several concepts that define the EU against the NPE. Given the EU's increasing capability including military dimension, Aggestam (2008, pp. 3-4) introduces a new concept "Ethical Power Europe". The concept enables us to consider the recent development in military cooperation; includes both international contexts the EU operates and domestic politics; make relevant comparisons with other actors such as the US.

Diez (2013) suggests the concept of hegemony to replace the NPE which does not reflect some features of the EU foreign policy. He rejects the neo-realist concept of hegemony and uses the Gramscian concept of hegemony. Hegemony best suits to the EU's actual foreign policy behaviour because it combines norms and interests and claims its inseparability and acknowledge inconsistencies among the norms promoted (Diez, 2013, pp. 205–206).

The EU is often characterized as "an empire" by scholars (Behr and Stivachtis, 2015; Laïdi, 2008; Pänke, 2015; Sarto, 2016; Zielonka, 2006;). An empire also aims at expanding its norms beyond its borders; however, unlike normative power, it is based on a balance of power rather than mutual consent (Laïdi, 2008, p. 2). For Zielonka (2006, p. 2), the EU resembles "a neo-medieval empire" due to the lack of clear power centre, socio-economic discrepancies and fuzzy borders (Zielonka, 2006, p. 57). The EU was also regarded as a "non-imperial empire" in the speech of the former president of the EC José Barroso in his 2007 press conference (Pänke, 2015, p. 351).

Sarto (2016) considers the EU's promotion of its norms and practices in its neighbourhood "as the modus operandi of empires in pursuit of their own interests." One of the important aspects of his work is that the EU's norm-driven policies are considered as "a utility-maximizing strategy" (Sarto, 2016, p. 217). The concept of empire takes the peculiar features of the EU into account; captures asymmetrical power relations between the EU and its neighbours, encompasses the EU's interest-driven actions particularly concerning stability and security (Sarto, 2016, pp. 227–28). Manners argues that the EU has normative rather than instrumental interests using the cases of its campaign against the use of death penalty as well as its trade policies. However, in many cases, the EU has acted according to its economic interests in the cases of trade relations with China and Russia (Forsberg, 2011, pp. 1192–93). Unlike Manners, Laïdi (2008, pp. 5-6) argues that the EU acts in a normative way, not because of its normative differences but because it knows that "it is only by norms

and not by force that it can make its voice heard." In other words, the EU has the greatest interests to promote these norms. As a softer version of "norms-interests" debate, Youngs (2004) states the co-existence of ideational (norms) and strategic dimensions (interests). From the realist perspective, Hyde-Price (2006, p. 220) argues that the EU acts as "a vehicle for the collective interests of its member states", driven by the EU's largest powers considering the promotion of norms as "second-order concerns" (Hyde-Price, 2006, p. 223). Palm and Crum (2019) defines the EU as "liberal power" whose military operations are based on economic interests. Brummer (2009) argues that although norms play a role in the EU's sanctions policy, they do not overrule security and economic interests. The problem with the EU's norm promotion is that it never negotiates the content of norms with its partners. The EU acts with the principle of "take it or leave it" (Laïdi, 2008, p. 10). Given the inconsistency in the norms promoted by the EU, Sarto (2016, p. 217) argues that the EU's choice of norms depends on how "close to home" the region or state which the EU interacts with. Thus, the EU sees norms as a means of providing its own security (Sarto, 2016, pp. 222–23).

The difficulty with the NPE concept is that it lacks assessment criteria. For the analysis of the EU's actions within the framework of the NPE, we need a conceptual apparatus. Otherwise, it would be very difficult to differentiate normative power from "an expression of Eurocentric imperialism" (Sjursen, 2006, pp. 241-42). Scholars proposed various assessment tools for the analysis of normative power, and it is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Scholars' proposals for assessment criteria of the NPE

Scholars	Criteria
Tocci et al., (2008)	Normative goals; normative instruments; normative impact
Bicchi (2006)	Inclusiveness; reflexivity
Sjursen (2006)	Legal principles, cosmopolitanism
Janusch (2016)	Logic of arguing
Forsberg (2011)	Normative identity; normative interest; behaving according to norms; normative means; normative ends.

Source: Created by the author using the relevant literature.

In the cases of the ENP and EAP, the EU has been regarded as "regional normative hegemon" (Haukkala, 2008), "geopolitical power" (Crombois, 2017; Valiyeva, 2016). On the one hand, the ENP

is normative in the sense that the EU projects its norms and practices to non-member states. On the other hand, the ENP represents imperialism due to the EU's monopoly on the authoritative interpretations of these norms (Pänke, 2015, p. 352). For Sarto (2016, p. 220), the rules and practices the EU seeks to transfer to its neighbourhood differ significantly from those norms stated in Manners's NPE. The EU tries to integrate the neighbours into its internal market, focuses on economic reforms as well as border control management aimed at "preventing unwanted migrants". Additionally, partner countries are free to choose the intensity of their relations with the EU, however, the rules and practices supposed to be transferred are "non-negotiable". Valiyeva (2016) argues that the EU's role in the EaP region is shaped by both norms and self-interests and lack of consistency and coherence is the main reason for the policy failure in the region. For Manners (2010), the ENP can be portrayed as "a mass of contradictory impulses". The ENP is located in the EU's external actions in which significant conflicts exist between principles and practice; security and democracy; and norms and interests (Manners, 2010, p. 30). To analyze the ENP within the framework of normative power, Manners (2010, pp. 36-44) provides analytical tools. First, it is needed to study and judge the ideational foundations of EU principles through analyzing legitimacy, consistency and coherence. Second, the means used by the EU within the ENP should be studied focusing on the process of persuasion, engagement and differentiation. Finally, the impact of EU normative power in the ENP should be analyzed focusing on the processes of socialization, ownership and conditionality. Niemann (2010) studies EU normative power in its relations with Moldova particularly in the areas of democracy, good governance and Transnistrian conflict using three dimensions: normative intent, normative process and normative impact.

This section provided explanations about the main aspects of role theory and the concept of NPE. This thesis benefits rich conceptual framework of the role theory to demonstrate EU foreign policymakers' role conceptions given the association between role conceptions and actual foreign policy behaviour (Holsti, 1970). Role theory needs to be accompanied by the NPE concept as an ideal type to analyze EU role conceptions systematically. Forsberg (2011, p. 1199) and Manners (2013, pp. 308-309) present normative power as an ideal type of power by arguing that the EU is the closest international actor to this ideal type. This thesis does not investigate whether the EU acts as a normative power in the security of the EaP region, but whether the EU conceives its role as a normative power.

This paper treats normative power as an ideal type and sets criteria for the analysis of EU role conceptions in the EaP region. To do so, the analytical framework also includes the critiques of normative power to provide alternative concepts according to the characteristics the EU shows in its relations with partner countries (such as empire, hegemon, geopolitical power). These concepts are not treated as ideal types separately because, in the context of the EaP, they do not have relevant opposing reference points to the study of EU role conceptions, but together, they add analytical value to our framework. Thus, the thesis takes the NPE as a point of departure for the analysis of EU role conceptions in the security of the EaP region. The NPE is a quite influential concept in the academic debate; thus, EU role conceptions may have been influenced by the EU's function and performance in the international system as a normative power. The next chapter outlines the criteria for analyzing EU role conceptions as a normative power.

3. CORE CONCEPTS AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

3.1. CRITERIA FOR ANALYSIS

To analyze EU role conceptions within the framework of the NPE, this thesis utilizes a set of criteria proposed by Niemann (2010) and adapts it to the topic of discussion. There are three aspects of normative power: normative intent, normative process and normative impact. This is very similar to Manners's (2010) analytical tools for the ENP. Since this paper investigates role conceptions, not role performance, we will not look at the dimension of normative impact. Additionally, as Manners (2010, p. 36) states, this approach analyzes "the ideational aspects found in EU principles, actions and impact" and omits one important aspect of the EU's role in the security of the EaP region - its capabilities. The NPE concept pays more attention to the ideational aspects and universal norms, but not often discusses EU capabilities to achieve them. Thus, the paper also includes this aspect in the analysis. The dimensions of criteria are explained below and summarized in Table 2.

Normative intent: EU's normative commitment in the conflict resolution

This question is important in terms of identifying the EU's self-image. As Nieman (2010, p. 7) argues, the EU is normative because it pursues the norms themselves, not its self-interested agenda. The intentional perspective (Aggestam, 2006) of role theory also supports this question in terms of the EU's independence (to some extent) to opt for its actions within the institutionalized role-set. Concerning "hard" security issues in the EaP region, firstly, it is to be asked whether conflict resolution is/was at the centre of relations with the EaP countries considering the EU's commitment to providing security in the region.

Secondly, it needs to be asked whether EU role conceptions regarding the conflicts in the EaP region is norm-driven or interest-driven (Niemann, 2010, p. 8). Additionally, it is important to answer the question of "security for whom" as Baldwin (1997) rightly presents. In other words, to whom is the EU committed to providing security in the region: self-security, the security of partners or both.

The third approach to normative intent is its consistency. It is to be asked the extent to which the EU is consistent and the degree to which the EU applies double standards in its approach to the conflicts in the EaP region. The final criterion for normative intent is coherence. Coherence is similar and related to consistency, but it goes beyond the latter. Incoherence emerges in the cases in which inconsistent approaches are not explained or justified to make them legitimate (Niemann, 2010, p. 8).

Normative process: Inclusiveness and self-reflexivity in EU role conceptions

Reflexivity and inclusiveness are two criteria (previously used by (Bicchi, 2006)) for analyzing the normative process in shaping the EU's approach towards the EaP region. Reflexivity refers to a process of learning and changing behaviour in case of facing with convincing arguments. Additionally, it is about expecting (adverse) effects of policies towards third countries and modifying them accordingly. The EU's reflexivity is examined by asking whether EU foreign policy towards the conflicts in the EaP is "conscious" or "routine-based". Routine-based actions refer to "practices that have lost their original meaning and have thus become more symbolic and ritualized". The EU's application of its best practices as a template to third countries regardless of their differences can be considered as routine-based action. Conversely, the EU's effort to assess its policy, reveal its shortcomings and modify it accordingly can be regarded as conscious actions and indicate reflexivity. Inclusiveness refers to giving a voice to affected partner countries by the EU to take account of their views in partnership. Inclusiveness and reflexivity are the main criteria to distinguish between the EU's normative and imperialistic actions (Niemann, 2010, p. 9).

EU capabilities: The EU's preference for instruments.

The subjectivity in EU role conceptions enables us to identify the relative willingness of the EU to use particular tools. For this study, EU capabilities are divided into military and civilian instruments. Civilian instruments refer to all non-military means employed to achieve strategic objectives. This includes political (diplomatic), cultural, economic and developmental instruments as well as the deployment of non-military personnel aiming at contributing to security. Military instruments refer to the use of armed force. Military instruments are often considered as coercive means; however, it should be noted that civilian instruments can be coercive (i.e. economic sanctions) and military instruments can be non-coercive (i.e. training of armed forces upon invitation) (Svensson, 2017, p. 18).

Table 2. Criteria for analyzing EU role conceptions

Dimensions	Indicators
Normative intent	Centrality of conflicts
	Norms vs interests
	Consistency
	Coherence

Normative process	Reflexivity
	Inclusiveness
EU capabilities	Preference for civilian vs military instruments

Source: (Niemann, 2010)

3.2. METHOD, DATA AND LIMITATIONS

This thesis employs textual analysis method for investigating EU role conceptions through official documents. Textual analysis has been proven as a useful qualitative method in political science by revealing personal reflections of actors in political institutions, events or processes. An interpretivist approach to document analysis (discourse analysis) has particular importance in terms of locating "interpretation of texts within an analysis of broader social, political and cultural processes." (Vromen, 2010, p. 264). EU role conceptions can be revealed through analyzing key foreign policy-makers' "own definitions of the general kinds of decisions, commitments, rules" (Holsti, 1970, p. 245). Textual analysis of official documents and elite interviews are two suitable methods to address this question. However, considering difficulties in reaching high-ranking officials makes interviews an infeasible option for this study. Additionally, regarding the data, officially issued documents have been preferred over foreign policy-makers' speeches because of the great number of speeches made on this topic as well as the availability of these speeches on the Internet. Moreover, official documents are more systematically structured, therefore, comparable across time.

Role conception is defined as "images that foreign policy-makers hold concerning the general long-term function and performance of the EU in the international system." (Aggestam, 2006, pp. 19–20). EU foreign policy is mainly intergovernmental and based on consensus. The European Council is at the core of shaping EU foreign policy as the highest decision-making body which is guiding the EEAS together with the High Representative. The EaP has a different approach to relations with partner countries. It is a combination of both bilateral and multilateral partnership. It also combines the European Council's and HR/VP's CFSP and the EC's external action in the neighbouring countries. Additionally, the EaP is the continuation of the ENP which has been under the responsibility of the EC. Therefore, this paper includes official documents issued by the European Council (conclusion), HR/VP (security strategies and implementation reports) and the EC (communications and implementation reports)

Some studies are investigating the varying role expectations and role conceptions of EU institutions (Aggestam and Johansson, 2017; Chelotti, 2015); thus, there may emerge a question that these institutions have different self-images or role expectations regarding their roles in the EaP region. This study acknowledges that EU institutions may have varying role conceptions regarding their roles; however, according to role theory, the interaction process that they are involved in during role-making facilitates the convergence of role conceptions. Klose (2019, p. 1148) confirms that the EU's constituent units with possibly varying role expectations are involved in the convergence process in which they seek to convince each other regarding the specific roles that the EU should take. Once the role conceptions are shaped by EU decision-makers and are sufficiently converged, the EU can move towards interacting with others (the EaP countries in our case).

The thesis analyzes the documents from 2003 to 2020. Although the EaP was launched in 2009, the EaP initiative takes its roots from the ENP which was brought to the table by "Wider Europe" document in 2003. The seventeen-year timeframe covers internal and external crises the EU experienced in the 21st century such as eurozone economic crises, migration crises, Brexit and the rise of Euroscepticism and the Ukraine crises (Dinan et al., 2017). For a systematic analysis, it is needed to divide the documents into groups. I expect that the war between Russia and Georgia and the Ukrainian conflict may have implications for the EU foreign policy in the region. Thus, the thesis will analyze the documents for periods of 2003-2007, 2008-2013 and 2014-2020 to identify changes in EU role conceptions according to the dimensions of criteria.

4. EMPIRICAL FINDING

The EU defines itself as a "credible and effective actor" who shares the responsibility of global security where easily accessible borders make the internal and external security "indissolubly linked" (Council of the European Union, 2003, pp. 28-29). The EU also views itself as "an anchor of stability" becoming more proactive and "shaping events" in the global world (Council of the European Union, 2008, pp. 7–8). The EU sees its global role as "an agenda-shaper, a connector, coordinator and facilitator in a networked web of players" where partnering is crucial (Council of the European Union, 2016a, p. 43). These statements contribute to EU role conception as "a global security provider" (European Union External Service, 2019, p. 10).

4.1. NORMATIVE INTENT

The centrality of conflict resolution in the relations. Regional conflicts have been one of the key issues negotiated in the relations between the EU and its neighbours although the importance given to them by the EU has been changing over time. In the early years of the ENP, the ESS depicts regional conflicts as key threats which danger EU borders and regional stability (Council of the European Union, 2003, pp. 30–32). Although it was repeatedly stated that the EU should be "more active and more present" in conflict settlement (European Commission, 2006a, p. 4), the flagship initiatives (such as Integrated Border Management Programme; an SME Facility) do not directly address the settlement of conflicts in the region (European Commission, 2008, p. 13). Conflicts become more central to the EU foreign and security policy during the outbreak of violent conflicts such as the war between Russia and Georgia (European Council, 2008). The EU perceived the necessity to "enhance EU involvement in solving protracted conflicts" and "be ready to step up its involvement in formats where it is not yet represented" (European Commission, 2011, pp. 5-6). However, the EU expects more from the neighbouring countries to make progress in the settlement of conflicts and shows its readiness "to provide necessary support for the implementation of settlements once they been agreed" (European Commission, 2012, p. 8). The EUGS emphasized "an integrated approach to conflicts and crises" as one of the priorities of EU external action. The multi-dimensional and multi-phased approach is put at the centre of the EU approach to conflict resolution. This differs from the EU's previous approach which considered its active participation after the settlement has been agreed by conflict parties (Council of the European Union, 2016a, pp. 26–27). The EU's role conceptions in the EaP region was largely affected by illegal annexation of Crimea

and Sevastopol in 2014 (European Council, 2014). After the recent events, the Council called for a stronger security cooperation with the EaP countries including security sector reform, border management, fighting hybrid threats and cybercrime as well as participation of the EaP partners in CSDP Operations and Missions by claiming its support to the territorial integrity, independence and sovereignty of the partner countries (Council of the European Union, 2016b, pp. 5-6). Recent years while celebrating the 10th anniversary of the EaP, conflicts in the region, particularly The Ukrainian conflict has been brought to the centre of the documents (European Council, 2019) by calling for an active role for the EU in conflict resolution (Council of the European Union, 2020). The analysis of the EaP documents reveals that conflict resolution is given importance in the bilateral relations with partner countries. The multilaterally agreed deliverables of the EaP mainly address economic development, governance, connectivity and people-to-people contact (European Commission, 2017, p. 3). Since the EU's contribution to conflict resolution is defined bilaterally, the centrality of the conflicts in the relations differ according to partner countries ("differentiation" principle). The centrality of conflict resolution can also be seen in the individual Action Plans although the degree of priority differs from country to country. The clause regarding the conflict resolution has been agreed with Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia as the first, seventh and sixth priority area respectively (European Commission, 2006b, 2006c, 2006d).[1] This means that partner countries also play a great role in bringing regional conflicts to the negotiations table with the EU.

Norms vs interest: Promoting peace as a norm or EU security interest? The ESS includes normative claims regarding the promotion of universal norms and these norms are seen as "the best means of strengthening the international order" (Council of the European Union, 2003, p. 37). However, the EUGS has a slightly different approach by stating:

> Our interests and values go hand in hand. We have an interest in promoting our values in the world. At the same time, our fundamental values are embedded in our interests. Peace and security, prosperity, democracy and a rules-based global order are the vital interests underpinning our external action.

This is related to "principled pragmatism" that refers to "a realistic assessment of the strategic environment as from an idealistic aspiration to advance a better world". This approach emerged after the crises the EU experienced (such as Ukrainian conflict, migration crises) before the adoption of

[1] The Transnistrian conflict was also stated as a priority in the relation between the EU and Moldova in the EU-Moldova Action plan, but it was not numbered. The Ukraine Action plan was adopted before the conflict.

the EUGS (Council of the European Union, 2016a, p. 8). In the strategic documents, interests are more frequently emphasized than norms (Council of the European Union, 2016a, 2008, 2003).

The EU discourse on the ENP and the EaP concerning security is described as interest-driven rather than overly norm-driven in the official documents. As stated in almost all the official documents of the ENP and EaP, these policies aim at providing stability, security and prosperity. The EU official documents make it clear that as an initiator and designer of the policies, the EU prioritises its security over neighbouring countries. The ESS states that: "With new threats, the first line of defence will often be abroad." (Council of the European Union, 2003, p. 34). The EU gives high importance to geographic proximity. It is in the EU's interests that it is surrounded by "a ring of well-governed countries". Not simply because the EU promotes universal norms including good governance, but it is because neighbours who are involved in armed conflicts, weak states and vulnerable to transnational threats pose problems for the EU (Council of the European Union, 2003, p. 35). The EC emphasizes "the danger of spillover" of the effects of regional conflicts (European Commission, 2003, p. 9). The objectives the ENP seeks to achieve address mainly the EU's needs in terms of protecting its borders rather than partners (European Commission, 2004, p. 27). Ensuring the security of borders will protect the EU from the spill-over effects of conflicts such as organised crime, terrorism and illegal migration.

The EaP has been designed to advance political, economic and trade relations of the EU with partner countries. The main goal is "to strengthen the prosperity and stability of these countries, and thus the security of the EU". The adoption of communication, particularly on "Cooperation in the Area of Justice and Home Affairs within the Eastern Partnership" once again confirms that the EU perceives security as a broad conception (includes societal, environmental, political, economic and military security) which intrinsically links internal and external aspects of security. Here, the priorities are identified as migration, mobility and asylum, integrated border management, public order and security, tackling illicit drugs, justice and fundamental rights (European Commission, 2011b). The in-depth reading of the official documents reveals that the EU priorities the security issues that threaten the security of the EU borders, in other words, the EU's own security. Regional conflicts gain importance in the cases that "they could affect the EU's own security, through regional escalation, unmanageable migratory flows, disruption of energy supply and trade routes, or the creation of breeding grounds for terrorist and criminal activity of all kinds" (European Commission, 2007, p. 6). This reveals the EU's intention to promote stability, security and prosperity in the region;

however, it does not comply with the NPE which argues promoting norms (such as peace) even it is against EU interests.

Consistency and Coherence. It has been argued that inconsistency undermines the normativity of the Union's approach towards the EaP region. According to the NPE, it is expected that the EU equally promotes peace in the region regarding conflict resolution. The literature shows inconsistency and double standards the EU applies in its policy towards partner countries. The analysis of the official documents demonstrates that the EU frequently uses the words "consistency" and "coherence" either as a reference to previous actions – "We have been consistent and united in our approach" (European Union External Service, 2018, p. 10) or for future actions – "We must continue to invest consistently in our collective capacity" (European Union External Service, 2019, p. 10). The individual action plans help identify the consistency of the EU approach towards the conflicts in partner countries. This is a good sign that all the action plan analyzed (Action plans of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Moldova) includes conflict prevention and resolution as a priority and elaborates in EU commitments. The Action plans of Armenia and Azerbaijan have relatively similar wording regarding conflict resolution than Georgia's and Moldova's Action plans. However, the EU's commitment to the resolution of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict differs in Armenia's and Azerbaijan's action plans. While the EU refers the conflict resolution based on "the relevant UN Security Council resolutions and OSCE documents and decisions" in Azerbaijan's action plan, the EU emphasizes conflict resolution based on the "international norms and principles, including the principle of *self-determination* of peoples" (European Commission, 2006b, 2006c). Additionally, the EU refers to the resolution of conflicts on Abkhazia and South Ossetia and the Transnistrian conflict based on "respect of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognised borders" although this clause is not included to Azerbaijan's action plan (European Commission, 2006d, 2005) Concerning coherence, the EU's strong verbal support to Georgia can be justified by the principle of "differentiation" that the EU emphasizes in the relations with partners (European Commission, 2003, p. 13). However, there is no plausible justification by the EU regarding its inconsistent approach to conflicts in South Caucasus countries.

4.2. NORMATIVE PROCESS

Self-reflexivity. Reflexivity can be measured through critical reflections of the EU and modifications on its own policies. The EU's general approach to the conflict resolution has been based on its own

experience. It is expected that the instruments (confidence-building and arms control regime) used to strengthen the Union's security can also contribute significantly to the security of the EaP region (Council of the European Union, 2003, p. 37). The expectations that the EaP countries can strengthen the security of the region by building regional integration (Council of the European Union, 2008, p. 23) show the un-reflexive approach of the EU to impose its practices on others since the EaP countries represent a group of countries which are quite different than the EU in terms of history, political regimes, economic indicators, distinct features of conflict they experience. The EC issued several communications addressing the changing environment within and beyond the EU borders. These communications bring out some modifications regarding the conflict resolution. The involvement of civil society (NGOs, media, businesses, academia) and the recognition of the role of women in conflict settlement (European Commission, 2012, p. 2). In the face of new events such as the violation of Ukrainian territorial integrity, energy crises and terrorist attacks demonstrated the need for a new approach by the EU (European Commission, 2015). This led to the adoption of an integrated approach to conflicts and crises (Council of the European Union, 2016a). This entails:

> A multi-dimensional approach through the use of all available policies and instruments; a multi-phased approach, acting at all stages of the conflict cycle; a multi-level approach acting at the local, national, regional and global levels of conflicts; and a multilateral approach engaging all key players present in conflict and necessary for its resolution (European Union External Service, 2017, p. 17).

Additionally, the EU understood the importance of being more credible, responsive and joined-up (Council of the European Union, 2016a, p. 10). This indicates that the EU becomes a joined-up Union in its external relations by working "jointly across policy sectors, institutions and Member States" (European Union External Service, 2017, p. 25). These modifications show that last decade, the EU has gain self-reflexivity to some extent in its approach to conflict resolution.

Inclusiveness. To analyze the indicator of inclusiveness in EU role conceptions, it is needed to look at the extent to which the EU initiates joint policymaking with the EaP countries concerning the ENP and the EaP. The EC frequently mentions the term "joint ownership" in the policy documents (European Commission, 2004, 2006a, 2007, 2008, 2015, 2020a). However, we cannot simply assume that the frequent use of "joint ownership" reflects EU role conceptions in terms of inclusiveness. The EC states that the process of partnership is jointly owned by the EU and partners "based on the awareness of shared values and common interests". But whose values? and whose interests? The

analysis of EU norms vice versa security interests in the previous section shows that it is the EU interests/values which dominates in the relations. In the literature, it is argued that "joint ownership" is an ambiguous notion which unjustifiably demands the EaP countries' swift adoption of "EU-centric agenda and norms" (Korosteleva, 2012, p. 10). In the face of increasing critiques regarding the asymmetrical relationship with partners, the EU started organizing public consultations with members states, EU institutions, partner governments, civil society and other relevant organizations (European Commission, 2015, 2020a). The consultation has shown that the partnership has been viewed as "too prescriptive" and "not sufficiently reflecting their respective aspirations" (European Commission, 2015, p. 3). Security should be given "a stronger place" in the ENP concerning the security issues partner countries currently experience (European Commission, 2015, p. 12). The EaP countries have been invited to a "structured consultation" in 2019 by the EU. Like before, questions were prepared by the EC and partner countries were asked for their contributions (European Commission, 2020a, 2020b). This shows that the EU's perception of "joint ownership" is different than what the notion implies itself. Consultations help partner countries have their say in the future of the policy; however, they are not equally involved in defining the content of partnership. The EC is the one who possesses "agenda-setting ownership" (Korosteleva, 2012, p. 6). Additionally, it is highly difficult to identify the extent to which the EU integrates partners' expectations to the policy since the EC is the one who has access to responses.

4.3. EU CAPABILITY

The ESS emphasizes the changing nature of threats the EU has been facing. In contrary to purely military threats received in the Cold war "none of the new threats is purely military; nor can any be tackled by purely military means". However, it does not exclude military means. Military instruments may be needed in the post-conflict stage. The EU, generally, favours "a mixture of instruments" in which civilian means such as political, diplomatic, trade and development, humanitarian instruments dominate. It emphasizes the importance of acting before a crisis occurs since "conflict prevention and threat prevention cannot start too early." (Council of the European Union, 2003, p. 34). To underscore the role of civilian means, the ESS notes that almost all military interventions cause civilian chaos; thus, the EU needs to be fully equipped with civilian resources (Council of the European Union, 2003, p. 40). Similarly, the ENP emphasizes the limitations of short-term crisis management and the importance of "working around the conflict issues" and the instruments such as

border assistance missions and confidence-building. Regarding the political dialogue, the EU seems satisfied with its involvement as an observer in some conflicts (Transnistria and South Ossetia) and a supporter of OSCE Minsk Group in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (European Commission, 2007, pp. 6–7).

The Implementation Report, similarly, underscores the prevention of threats before becoming sources of conflict as well as long term peacebuilding and poverty reduction. As acknowledged in the ESS, five years later on, the EU still believes that peace and sustainable development are inseparably linked which is stated as "security and development nexus" (Council of the European Union, 2008, pp. 19–21). It is again stated that conflict resolution requires "coherent use of instruments" which includes "political, diplomatic, development, humanitarian, crisis response, economic and trade co-operation, and civilian and military crisis management." As noted, military means is just one of the many dimensions of instruments that are needed to be used in the conflict resolution. It is also stated that the EU should increase its dialogue and mediation capacities and reinforce the combination of "civilian and military expertise from the conception of a mission" (Council of the European Union, 2008, p. 22). The ENP considers the EU's role in the conflict resolution in the EaP region as a provider of confidence-building which also includes promoting economic integration and sectoral cooperation. The EU states its readiness to be active in the post-conflict reconstruction together with relevant international organizations and key partner (European Commission, 2013, p. 6)

The EUGS demonstrates that the EU is continuing to be good at "pre-emptive peacebuilding and diplomacy" and should redouble its efforts on preventing and addressing the root causes of conflicts (Council of the European Union, 2016a, p. 29). Although the strategy frequently emphasizes the role of diplomacy, it acknowledges that "civilian power" of the EU "does not do justice to an evolving reality" and "For Europe, soft and hard power go hand in hand." (Council of the European Union, 2016a, p. 4). Unlike the ESS, the EUGS mentions restrictive measures as an important instrument to foster peaceful change. "Smart sanctions" plays a key role in deterrence; however, they should be applied very carefully in compliance with international law (Council of the European Union, 2016a, p. 32). The EU is committed to pursuing its priorities "by mobilising our unparalleled networks, our economic weight and all the tools at our disposal in a coherent and coordinated way." Accordingly, the EU acknowledges the insufficiency of soft power in the fragile world and the importance of increasing its credibility in security and defence. Thus, this indicates that "all the tools at our disposal" does include military means as well. To build its military capacity, the EU should make sure of the

efficient use of resources, meeting the defence budget commitment and improvement in military research and technology. Additionally, member states should accept "defence cooperation as the norm" (Council of the European Union, 2016a, pp. 44–45). The Union has enhanced its defence capacity considerably recent years: the launch of different initiatives such as Permanent Structured Cooperation on defence, military mobility within the Union, the Military Planning and Conduct Capability and the European Defence Fund as well as the establishment of Civilian Common Security and Defence Policy (European Union External Service, 2019, 2018). The EC states that the EU's comprehensive approach to conflict and crisis considers using "all means available" including CSDP missions and operations, where necessary, to support the conflict resolution in the neighbourhood (European Commission, 2015, p. 14). The analysis clearly shows that there is a shift in EU role conceptions regarding its preference for using civilian and military tools. This is not to stay that the EU currently prefers military instruments over civilian ones; however, it shows that the EU is capable of using military means if its security is threatened.

As a consequence of the analysis, another change has been identified in EU role conception and this section is the most relevant to discuss this. This is about the EU's call for strategic autonomy in its international actions. The literature on the NPE as well as the official documents until the EUGS notes the EU's call for effective multilateralism since it is hardly possible to deal with new security threats on its own. It is identified as a European priority to strengthen the role of the UN in international peace and security by equipping it with necessary means (Council of the European Union, 2003, p. 44). Although the EUGS presents the EU as "a responsible global stakeholder" and emphasizes the importance of sharing this responsibility with its partners, it also states that the EU needs "strategic autonomy" to provide security within and beyond the EU borders (Council of the European Union, 2016a, pp. 18–19) in a connected, complex and contested world in which multilateralism is questioned (European Union External Service, 2019, p. 10). NATO is perceived as an important player in the protection of Europe from external security threats; however, recent events made the EU committed "to act autonomously if and when necessary". This requires the EU to become much stronger as a security community (Council of the European Union, 2016a, pp. 19–20). This is not to say that the EU prefers its strategic autonomy over multilateralism since the Union is "inherently cooperative, in line with the DNA of the EU itself." (European Union External Service, 2019, p. 30). It rather means that the EU keeps supporting multilateral organizations and becoming more assertive in defending its interests and values at the same time since the EU should give "a

clearer priority to European economic, political and security interests, leveraging all policies to that end." (European Council, 2019, p. 11)

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Having presented the analysis of the extent to which EU role conceptions are compatible with the identified criteria of the NPE, what results can be drawn? The results meet my expectations regarding the limited influence of the NPE in EU role conceptions since its intention, the process it develops, and its capability do not fully reflect normative power. The EU power with increasing civilian and military capability can be easily identified in the region; however, its normativity is questionable.

As for the normative intent, the conflict resolution does seem to capture a central role in EU foreign policy in the EaP region. However, the analysis suggests that the EU prioritises its security interests in the neighbourhood. The EU aims at ensuring consistency and coherence in its external actions but also possess contradictory commitments (its emphasis on different terms regarding the conflict settlement) regarding its role in conflict resolution in the EaP region. Recalling the EU as "a situated actor" (Aggestam, 2006), the analysis can conclude that the intentional perspective of role theory dominates in EU role conceptions towards the EaP region. Although norms also influence EU role conception, interests have supremacy over norms in case of mismatch between these two (Holsti, 1970, p. 243)

As for normative process, the results suggest that the EU does not perceive the EaP countries as equal partners and demonstrates limited inclusiveness of the EaP countries in defining the priorities of the partnership. Although the EU pursues "routine-based" policy of promoting regional integration for conflict resolution, the EU has shown self-reflexivity by adopting an integrated approach to conflict resolution. Having limited inclusiveness and reflexivity which reflects imperialistic actions challenges the EU's normative power (Niemann, 2010, p. 9).

Concerning EU capability, the analysis suggests that the EU has a clear shift in its self-conception regarding the preference of using military instruments accompanied by civilian means. The analysis also revealed an unexpected result regarding the EU's willingness to act autonomously in security issues. Manners (2002) presents multilateralism as a default option for the EU. Although the EU's increasing military capacities can be justified as a means of protection of its values, the EU's preference for strategic autonomy significantly undermines its normative power.

Generally, the findings support the previous research on EU external governance, the EU's global role and critiques of normative power. Diez's (2013) "hegemony" suits better to EU role conceptions concerning its perception of the inseparability of norms and interests and inconsistencies in the EU

approach to its neighbourhood. The findings on inclusiveness support the external governance literature, particularly for "ill-defined partnership" relations (Korosteleva, 2012), as well as views about the asymmetrical relationship in which rules and practices the EU promotes are "non-negotiable" (Sarto, 2016).

The findings contradict to Bengtsson and Elgström's (2012) conclusion that the EU perceives itself as a normative great power regardless of empirical context. However, the findings show that this is not the case for the EaP region. Normative power can be accepted as a general role – role-set – for the EU due to its normative differences; however, according to the role theory, the EU foreign policy actor as an agency has some degree of freedom to choose specific roles (sometimes even contradictory to a general role) in the specific context. Additionally, this difference may occur because the EUGS which was not adopted at that time is the main source for the arguments that undermine the NPE.

Moreover, the findings challenge significantly Manners's NPE, particularly in terms of EU preference for using military instruments for its security interests. Previous literature overlooks EU capability in the discussion of the EU's normative power. This should be taken into account in further discussions on the NPE.

This thesis contributes to the literature in terms of its theoretical, methodological and empirical understanding of the EU role in the EaP region. Theoretically, the thesis employs an underused theory in the EU studies and adapts it to the topic which has not been widely studied. Methodologically, the three-dimensional framework for the analysis of EU role conceptions within the NPE is innovative. There are a limited number of researches investigating self-conceptions using specific criteria for the NPE. Particularly, the dimension of EU capability has been rarely used in EU role conceptions (Svensson, 2017). Empirically, the findings are of great importance because it helps us define the relationship between EU role conceptions and actual role performance in the EaP region. Concerning normative intent and process, EU role conceptions match to some degree with the views in the literature about the EU's low role performance in the conflict resolution. Regarding EU capabilities, although EU role conceptions include increasing preference for military instruments, it is not reflected in EU participation in the settlement of conflicts.

It is beyond the scope of this study to analyze how EU role conceptions are being translated into actual foreign policy in the EaP region. Further research is needed to look into the relationship between EU role conceptions and role performance in more detail. Additionally, role conception is

treated as an independent variable in this thesis. Further studies may investigate EU role conceptions as a dependent variable and find the influential sources of EU role conceptions. It also should be noted that the generalizability of the results is limited by the criteria set for the NPE and the data investigated in this paper. The criteria identified by the previous literature mainly address the actual behaviour of the EU rather than its self-conception. Thus, further research may investigate relevant criteria for the analysis of self-conceptions as a normative power.

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APPENDICES

THESIS REPORT

THESIS REPORT

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Security in the Eastern Partnership region: Limits of the EU

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Number of words: 6596 including appendix

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INTRODUCTION

Eastern Partnership (EaP) as "a more ambitious partnership" was launched in 2009 to contribute to stability, security and prosperity in the entire European continent ("Joint Declaration of the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit" 2009). After a decade it is highly difficult to claim that this partnership has increased the security level of the EaP region. The European Union's (EU) interest in strengthening security in its neighbourhood is apparent due to its clear statements in official documents and speeches. However, it is also evident that almost all the EaP countries face political and military security problems and the security of the region has even deteriorated in recent years (Ukraine crises). Additionally, relying on the literature, it is clear that the EU has political power and military capability to take an active role in the security issues of the EaP region (E. Kirchner and Sperling 2007; Marsh and Rees 2012; Merlingen 2012). Then a question arises as to why the EU could not improve the security of the EaP region despite its intention and capability. The purpose of this thesis to find the limitations of the EU's role as a security provider in its eastern neighbourhood. Thus, the research question can be formulated as follows:

What limits the role of the European Union in strengthening security in the Eastern Partnership region?

We can understand security to mean traditional security which includes military and political dimensions. Due to the limited time and space, this research only includes traditional security challenges. This thesis employs Baldwin's definition of security which characterizes security as "a low probability of damage to acquired values" such as territorial integrity, national independence and sovereignty (Baldwin 1997, 13). EaP region includes six countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. This thesis analyses five partner countries which have traditional security problems (see Section 3).

Some scholars have studied the EaP countries separately or as a comparative case study (Sasse 2009; Bátora and Navrátil 2016; Baltag and Bosse 2016; Gehring, Urbanski, and Oberthür 2017; Axyonova et al. 2018) some of them have examined the administrative capabilities of the EU (Rieker 2009) and Russia's role in the region (Simão and Dias 2016) to answer this question. However, there is not much literature in which the EU's role in the security of all EaP countries is analysed. My thesis will fill this research gap. This study has academic and practical importance in this regard. Firstly, it will generate possible reasons for the EU's limitations by examining all EaP countries in a systematic

way and find commonalities in the EU approach towards the whole EaP region, which has not been done before. Secondly, as an empirical study, it is useful for policy-makers in the EU as well as EaP countries in terms of improving the framework of the partnership.

This thesis report introduces the theoretical ground for the thesis and consists of three sections. The first section outlines previous literature on security, international security activities of the EU and its role in the security of the EaP region. The second section presents the theoretical framework which is based on previous literature and role theory. The last section covers the research methodology which includes content analysis and structured focused comparison methods.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review starts with the general concept of security and moves to the specific area which discusses the role of the EU as a security provider, particularly in the eastern neighbourhood. Foremost, the concept of security needs to be defined as it is the main component of the research question, also it is an elusive concept that scholars do not have a common understanding of. The second sub-section confirms that the EU has emerged as a security actor since it is supposed to be the case for the purpose of this research. The last section is necessary for getting familiar with the EU's approaches to the EaP countries regarding security challenges.

1.1. SECURITY AS A CONCEPT

Security is considered as a "neglected" and "essentially contested" concept (Baldwin 1997, 8–10). Buzan (1991, 4) describes security as an underdeveloped concept considering substantial empirical work on security issues and lack of well-developed theoretical writing. Baldwin (1997, 9) also complains about the lack of interest in the concept of security, since it has not received serious attention to the same degree as the concepts of justice, freedom and power.

The idea of "security dilemma" sounded by John Hertz is a crucial breakthrough in the early 1950s. According to him, wherever an anarchic society exists, there is always a concern or fear by groups or individuals to be attacked or dominated by other groups and individuals. Gaining more power to ensure security from such attacks renders others insecure and induces them to enhance their power to escape from that threat (Herz 1949, 157).

As discussing security notion, it is important to distinguish between "traditional" and "non-traditional" security. For traditionalists, a state and military element are in the center of the conceptualization of security. From their point of view, security is about survival, it arises when an existential threat is presented to a referent object (Buzan, Wæver, and Jaap 1998, 21). Conversely, the non-traditionalist approach is people-centric which includes all threats including terrorism and irregular immigration (Buzan, Wæver, and Jaap 1998, 2–5). According to Rothschild (1995, 55), the extension of security took four main forms. First, the referent object of security is extended downwards from the security of states to the security of individuals. Second, it is extended upwards from the security of states to the security of the international system. Third, the concept of security is extended horizontally such as economic, social and environmental security. Fourth, political responsibility for security is itself extended from states towards all directions including NGOs, local and regional governments, press and market (Rothschild 1995, 55).

In his seminal article, Baldwin (1997) constructed an analysis by centralizing security within seven questions: *for whom, for which values, how much, from what threats, by what means, at what costs, and in which time period.* Security is a broad concept, which is difficult to be defined. Thus, Baldwin's specifications mentioned above are helpful to look at security by analysing different features of this concept. It also enables us to present a systematic literature review. I start with the definitions of security then continue the review within six specifications which incorporates various thoughts of scholars.

What is security?

Wolfers describes national security as an ambiguous symbol. He claims that in the absence of depression and social reform, national security becomes to be practically synonymous with national interest (Wolfers 1962, 148). Similarly, for Waltz (1979, 134), a state acts according to its national interests which are determined through examining its security requirements.

Wolfers (1962, 150) characterized security as "the absence of threats to acquired values." Baldwin (1997, 13) reformulates it as "a low probability of damage to acquired values". Wolfers distinguishes between two types of security: the one mentioned above has an objective sense. From a subjective perspective, security means "the absence of fear" that acquired values will be attacked (Wolfers 1962, 150–51). Likewise, Buzan (1991, 18) defined security as "the pursuit of freedom from threats". Kolodziej (2005, 22) brought a different approach by defining security as "a special form of politics"

which emerges at the centre of political dispute if one of the actors threaten or use force against their counterparts (Kolodziej 2005, 22).

Security for whom?

The answer to this question may vary according to a particular research question (Baldwin 1997, 13). States have been in the centre of security analysis since states are the main units of political organizations of peoples in the world and states have legitimacy concerning violence (Kolodziej 2005, 26). Scholars also point out levels of analysis used for examining specific security issues. By level, Buzan, Wæver, and Jaap (1998, 5–6) mean objects that are in examination defined by "a range of spatial scales" from a small scope to a larger one. They list five key levels of analysis used in the study of international relations: *international systems, international subsystems, units, subunits* and *individuals*. Kolodziej (2005, 37) identifies 4 discrete levels of security which are *interstate, systemic, states and transnational actors*, and *domestic* (Kolodziej 2005, 40).

Region is an important level of analysis for this thesis. Buzan, Wæver, and Jaap (1998, 188) define region as a special subsystem of security among a set of states whose security is interlinked with each other owing to geographical proximity. Sometimes this proximity creates security interdependence which is called "security complexes" (Buzan, Wæver, and Jaap 1998, 12).

Security for which values?

Nations usually fight to protect their "minimum national core values" such as national independence and territorial integrity (Wolfers 1962, 154). There can be other values for individuals, states and other social actors such as economic and social welfare, physical safety, and autonomy (Baldwin 1997, 13). Nations may see the protection of more marginal values essential for their existence. For instance, the US foreign investments are considered as a vital component for the nation's well-being (Wolfers 1962, 154).

How much security?

Security is a relative condition, as none can ever experience absolute security in such an anarchic world (Hertz 1949, 157). According to neorealists, security cannot be durable within anarchy (Buzan 1991, 13). Absolute security cannot be achieved unless a state has power for world domination

(Wolfers 1962, 158). However, for US General Jacob L. Devers, partial security is not possible, a state is either secure or insecure (Baldwin 1997, 14).

From what threats?

Military, political, economic, societal and environmental threats may danger the existence of state. Traditionally military threats have been the highest priority in the national security concerns of states (Buzan 1991, 117). Baldwin (1997, 14) discusses "Communist threats" mentioned in many documents but it is unclear whether this phrase refers to ideological, military, economic threats or a combination of these three. Generally, insecurity is perceived as a combination of threats and vulnerabilities. Vulnerabilities are quite perceptible. However, objectivity problem arises during the analysis of threats. Actual threats may not be perceived by a state. Sometimes the threats perceived by a state may not have substantive reality (Buzan 1991, 114-15).

By what means?

Means has particular importance in the discourse of international politics (Baldwin 1997, 16). According to Wolfers, means is equally as important as the goal of security policy. He discusses different means of strengthening the security of a nation such as armaments, forming alliances, neutrality, international cooperation, compromise agreements as well as accumulation of an adequate force against an attack. He also points out the importance of circumstance: means used to ensure security may be effective in one situation but inadequate in another situation (Wolfers 1962, 154-55). Kolodziej (2005, 22) distinguishes between coercive and non-coercive means of providing security.

At what costs?

For Baldwin, this specification is important because writers sometimes imply that costs do not matter. Security always requires some costs and these costs matter (Baldwin 1997, 16). Additional sacrifices of other values are the costs of every increment of security attained (Wolfers 1962, 158). Baldwin (1997, 16) also complains about the silence of realists/neorealists and their critics regarding the costs involved in attaining security.

Overall, this section has shown that substantial work has been carried out on the concept of security. Although scholars approach this notion from different angles, they have some points in common. For the purpose of this thesis, I have adopted a narrow definition of security which is proposed by Wolfers

but then reformulated by Baldwin to eliminate the ambiguity of the definition. Here, security is defined as "a low probability of damage to acquired values" such as territorial integrity, national independence and sovereignty (Baldwin 1997, 13).

1.2. THE EUROPEAN UNION AS A SECURITY PROVIDER

There is large literature analysing the EU as a security actor. The literature reveals that most scholars have seen the components of security in the creation of the Union (E. Kirchner and Sperling 2007; Marsh and Rees 2012; Merlingen 2012). Kirchner and Sperling (2007, 1) start their well-known book *EU Security Governance* with the acknowledgement that from the beginning the EU was obviously a security project. Likewise, Marsh and Rees (2012, 4) confirm that the European Community was designed as a peace project to prevent potential use of force amongst member states. Although there was a deliberate intention to interlink economies of the European countries to make potential military conflicts impossible, the EU could not transform itself into a security actor easily. Four key reasons led to the emergence of the EU as a security actor. The first reason was the evolution of the European states towards a post-Westphalian identity. Second, important changes occurred in the nature and kind of actors in international politics, especially the EU gained more authority at the expense of member states. Furthermore, the EU and its members became aware of their dependency on the US in regional security issues. Finally, broadening security agenda changed the understanding of security and instruments required for meeting the security challenges (E. Kirchner and Sperling 2007, 20–21).

Although the EU could engage in a variety of security and foreign policy issues, it has been continuing to face challenges in this regard. First, it was not an easy task to create a common security culture among member states which have a variety of co-existing strategic cultures. The military forces of these countries were trained in different ways which challenge the creation of coherent European forces (Marsh and Rees 2012, 4–5). Another challenge raised by Kirchner and Sperling (2007, 2) is the tension between solidarity and sovereignty which limits the EU's capability as a security actor. National governments can no longer meet their primary security requirements such as controlling their borders and ensuring economic growth. However, thanks to this interdependency, member states have been relieved of the security dilemma (E. Kirchner and Sperling 2007, 9–10).

Another difficulty the EU faces in acting as a security provider is the legitimacy of engaging in expeditionary operations. The EU is often questioned about the use of military force in the circumstances other than the defence of territorial sovereignty (Marsh and Rees 2012, 7). For Shepherd (2015, 173) despite all challenges, the EU is still "the preferred or only security provider that is willing to become involved."

Shepherd (2015) argues that the EU is further challenged by the blurring internal and external security divide. This divide is being undermined by the changing nature of potential threats, changing threat perceptions and the EU's responses. Interlinks between internal and external security threats erode geographic and bureaucratic boundaries creating what he calls *European security continuum.* This leads to both opportunities and obstacles for the EU as a security provider (Shepherd 2015, 156–57).

Contemporary security agenda has changed the nature of threats and responses to those threats. The emergence of new sources of threats such as weak state structures, ethnic conflicts and cyber threats have widened European security requirements (E. Kirchner and Sperling 2007, 7–8). While the risk for interstate conflict decreased, the probability for civil and ethnic conflicts is still high (Marsh and Rees 2012, 5). The EU finds itself in a situation where a peaceful community neighbouring an unstable region which is called "juxtaposition of zones of peace and conflict" by Singer and Wildavsky (Marsh and Rees 2012, 8). Kirchner characterizes the EU as a security provider as follows:

> The extent to which the EU can be deemed a security provider depends considerably on the definition of security or, more precisely, on the type of security threat that is envisaged. If non-military threats are added to the traditionally held military threats, as suggested by security governance, then the scope of the EU response to such threats can be justifiably extended. (Kirchner 2006, 952).

Kirchner's thoughts confirm the logic of the EU's active engagement in the EaP region since this region does not only host military conflicts but also non-military threats to the European security and stability such as illegal immigration, weak states etc.

Scholars also claim that the EU's perception of threats and their geographical origins made the EU committed to becoming an international security provider with the human security approach (Rodt, Whitman, and Wolff 2015, 157). Kartsonaki and Wolff (2015) examined whether the EU Foreign and Security Policy is driven by human or European security imperatives. After mapping all conflicts

between neighbours' neighbours, they conclude that the EU's approach to managing conflicts is mostly compatible with the elements of the human security approach. In contrast, Olsen (2015) found three arguments that explain the EU's interventions in Africa and they do not confirm the human security approach. First, EU decision-makers perceive security problems in Africa as a "Somaliasation" of African states threatened European security. Second, EU decision-makers are influenced by the US and French security priorities which put encountering terrorism in a high priority of the EU's Africa policy. Finally, EU decision-makers are concerned about the probability of the radicalization of Muslim immigrant communities and contributing to breeding "home-grown terrorists" (Olsen 2015, 227–42).

Kirchner and Sperling (2007, 14-5) summarize all sets of instruments that can be used by the EU as persuasive and coercive instruments which then divide themselves into four categories of security governance: assurance (post-conflict reconstructions and confidence-building measures), prevention (building or sustaining institutions at all levels to mitigate anarchy), protection (protecting society from external threats) and compellence (conflict resolution through military interventions) (E. Kirchner and Sperling 2007, 14-5). Security policies of assurance and prevention are non-military instruments of the EU emerged due to the extended security agenda (Marsh and Rees 2012, 11).

According to Rieker (2009), the EU's capability within rights and authorities (1) and knowledge and competence (2) are satisfactory as both experience gradual development through institutionalization and "learning by doing". Although the EU is challenged by the limited resources (3) at its disposal, there is a slight increase in resources across time. A major deficit in the EU's capabilities is organizational skills (4) which are essential to incorporate the other three categories. The main reason is the special character of the EU which is located in between intergovernmentalism and supranationalism (Rieker 2009, 708–17). Aggestam (2006) also considers the EU as a complex organization which can be analysed from different perspectives. Role theory she adapted to the EU foreign and security policy explains the EU's international action from *intentional, interactional* and *institutional* perspectives. The basic logic of this approach is that the EU as an institution which is governed by rules and norms has its own interests and objectives in pursuing certain policies through interacting with other actors within different organizational structures.

Although the capability of the EU to act as a security provider is questioned by some authors, it is mostly agreed that due to change in the threat perception, the EU strives to be actively engaged in the

security issues which constitute a potential threat to the European security and stability. Traditional security threats are the most important issue in the EaP region as almost all countries (except Belarus) have been engaged in military conflicts. Thus, military and political threats are paid more attention in this thesis. However, considering the EU deals with a variety of security challenges, a wider understanding of security is also incorporated in our analysis.

1.3. ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION IN THE SECURITY OF EASTERN PARTNERSHIP REGION

Two contrasting security narratives of the EU namely normative/duty security narrative and threat/risk security narrative should be mentioned regarding the EU's approach to the EaP countries (Christou 2010). This paradox within European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and EaP constrains the achievement of the main aims of these policies. Normative/duty security narrative implies cooperation and friendship with the eastern neighbours to extend European peace project in order to prevent the creation of new dividing lines within Europe. Within this narrative, all states (EU and EaP countries) are perceived as equal partners who share common interest and commitment to security challenges in the region (Christou 2010, 414-16). Threat/risk security narrative is based on the argument that the main aim of the ENP/EaP is to manage risks, threats and potential challenges stemming from the poorly governed neighbourhood. In contrast to the normative/duty narrative, here the EU is challenged by the enlargement as it brings the Union closer to the region with security problems and it increases the fear that these security problems will spill over into the EU. This implies an asymmetrical relationship in which EaP countries are not seen as equal partners and imposed by the EU norms and values (Christou 2010, 417–18).

Additionally, for Christou, there is "a heavy dose of self-interest" by the EU who views partner countries as "Others". However, there is differentiation among "Others" in which countries such as Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus are perceived as "negative or antagonist others", and countries such as Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine are accepted as "willing or positive others" (Christou 2010, 419). Simão's (2017) article in which she used a post-structuralist perspective to examine challenges to "the EU's ordering of the Eastern Partnership" corroborates the threat/risk security narrative. She asserts that the aim of the EU in the region is safeguarding "hegemonic and hierarchical order" rather than

providing “partnership and emancipatory forms of security”. It prevents objective security provision for the region (Simão 2017, 349).

Kirchner and Sperling (2007, 10) bring an alternative to security dilemma regarding the EU’s relations with neighbouring countries. According to them, any measures taken by the eastern neighbours are not viewed as a threat to the security of Europe. On the contrary, this is viewed as a positive contribution to the security and stability of Europe. This alternative what Kirchner and Sperling call civilian security dilemma incentivize EU member states to allocate their scarce national resources for the policies focused on external stability even though they are aware of being exploited by those nations. In other words, the threats of security free-riding by those nations to the security of Europe are less than the threats occurred due to the re-emergence of authoritarian regimes or economic collapse (E. Kirchner and Sperling 2007, 10).

The EU’s role in the resolution of conflicts in the region is mainly based on confidence-building and post-conflict reconstructions. It is because the EU’s approach to the conflicts in the region is concerned both to its own experience in the EU integration which regional cooperation rendered new conflicts impossible on the continent and to the lack of military capabilities and defence policy (Delcour 2010, 538).

Previous literature has looked at the EU-EaP security relations through case selection, mostly Ukraine and Georgia where conflicts are relatively new and Moldova because of its rapid Europeanization (Sasse 2009; Bátora and Navrátil 2016; Baltag and Bosse 2016; Gehring, Urbanski, and Oberthür 2017; Axyonova et al. 2018). In his comparative study of Moldova and Georgia, Sasse (2009) concludes that the EU’s ENP, as well as EaP, remains “under-equipped” to address the conflicts in these countries due to political, institutional and financial difficulties. Baltag and Bosse's (2016) has shown that Moldova is among the “front runners” within EaP countries owing to its integration to the EU’s laws and standards. However, they argue that there are two main reasons for the limitations of the EU to expand its security community to Moldova and these also apply to all EaP countries. First, a security community should be based on common or shared interests which are not observed in the EU’s approach to Moldova. Second, a security community requires a high level of de-securitization which is not possible due to the hard the uneasy relationship with Russia. They also argue that the EU, in fact, decreased not only the economic but also political security of Moldova, as the EU pushed Moldova to exclusive economic cooperation without taking Russia into account (Baltag and Bosse

2016, 69–71). Gehring, Urbanski, and Oberthür (2017) analysed how the EU employs its market power for the purpose of high-politics in case of Ukraine (economic sanctions against Russia) but it is only possible with the unanimous decision-making by member states. They also argue that the EU became "an inadvertent" great power in Ukrainian conflict in its own right which led to the military conflict in eastern Ukraine (Gehring, Urbanski, and Oberthür 2017, 738–39). The EU's engagement in the conflict also fell short of Georgia's expectations although it has a significant role in defusing tensions and lessen the possibility of renewed war between Russia and Georgia (Bolkvadze and Lebanidze 2016, 99). The study carried out in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine to examine perceptions about the EU's role as a security provider confirms that all three countries call for the EU to take greater responsibility to assure security in the region (Axyonova et al. 2018, 39).

Russia is one of the main factors that limit the EU's role in the region since it designates the EaP region as its sphere of influence. Simão and Dias (2016) elicit noteworthy security dynamics in the EaP region: "the more assertive Russia in the neighbourhood, the more the EU intensifies its security policies and actions towards the region…" (Simão and Dias 2016, 113). They argue that Russia shaped the context in which the EU defined security relations within the ENP and EaP.

Overall, the literature confirms the EU's high interest in strengthening security in its eastern neighbourhood. It also suggests some potential reasons that limit the EU's active role in the region. However, little work has been carried out on the analysis of the whole region including all partner countries. Several questions, therefore, remain unanswered regarding the differences between security perceptions by the EU and partner countries as well as inconsistency in the EU policy. This thesis will try to answer these questions by focusing on all the EaP countries which have traditional security concerns.

2. THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

2.1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section outlines a theoretical framework for how I may understand and analyse the EU's role in the security of the EaP region. The theoretical baseline is the literature reviewed and role theory which is helpful in explaining the EU's foreign and security policies and instruments towards the EaP countries. Sociological role theory originated from the theatrical analogy where actors are expected

to act as predicted (Aggestam 2006, 12). Since 1970 it has been used to analyse national foreign policies. But role theory is also a productive tool for the examination of the thriving EU foreign and security policy. It enables researchers to analyse how the EU has been altering its general role from the concept of "civilian power" to the concept of "ethical power" which is willing and capable to use military means in support of the foreign and security policy (Aggestam 2006, 25–26)

Aggestam developed the role theory further and adjusted it to the EU foreign and security policy. She asserts that roles are not static, it is being changed, sustained and reconstructed in foreign policy. Within the role theory, she incorporated both individual and structural nature of behaviour. This framework also includes two important elements of behaviour (*interests* and *rules*) which are helpful in seeking to explain the role of the EU in the security of the EaP region (Aggestam 2006, 14). Main concepts of role theory are *role expectation, role conception, role performance* and *role-set* and it is crucial to distinguish them while applying the role theory to the analysis of foreign and security policy (Aggestam 2006, 18–21).

The model proposed by Aggestam for analysing EU foreign policy incorporates three perspectives: *institutional, interactional and intentional*. According to the *institutional perspective*, roles are deeply embedded in institutions which structure all available roles and the way in which they are played. Thereof, institutions are the ones which determine roles, not actors themselves. *Institutional perspective* has a significant contribution to our theory since it helps us conceptualize the impact of intersubjective beliefs and political culture on foreign and security policy. Institution can be conceptualized as a narrow and broad definition. Institution is defined as "social practices consisting of easily recognized roles coupled with clusters or rules or conventions governing relations among the occupants of these roles" by Oran Young. According to Robert Keohane, the most important criterion for institutions is having durable rules which prescribe behavioural roles for actors as well as circumscribing activities and shaping expectations (Aggestam 2006, 15–16).

Considering the possibility of the emergence of new roles on the supranational level, it is important to include *interactional perspective* into the role theory which brings dynamism and process to our role analysis. This perspective implies that roles often undergo change due to ongoing processes and interactions with other actors which may have social consequences. Rules concerning the EU level policy-making on foreign policy and security issues are subject to change and this can be regarded as

"a learning process involving intense negotiation and socialization of policy-makers within the institutions of the EU." (Aggestam 2006, 16–17).

These two perspectives mentioned above do not encompass pre-existing identities and roles which are crucial in examining the foreign and security policy of the EU as it uncovers objectives as well as norms. Therefore, the *intentional perspective* brings a new aspect to our framework which recognizes "a man" not only a passive reflection of "society" but an individual gained some freedom to choose ends and means of his own action (Aggestam 2006, 17-18).

Overall, these perspectives are of great importance to my analysis of the security policy of the EU in the eastern neighbourhood. In this regard, Aggestam's summary is noteworthy to be mentioned here: "purposive roles are the result of a dynamic *interaction* between *institutional* constraints and the actor's *preferences*." (Aggestam 2006, 18).

2.2. HYPOTHESES

Having presented the theoretical framework, this section presents several hypotheses to further the examination of factors that limit the EU's role in strengthening security in the EaP countries. Based on the theoretical framework and empirical evidence, three hypotheses can be generated.

The first hypothesis investigates how the rules and objectives, as well as security concerns guide the EU to behave in the eastern neighbourhood and to what extent it is relevant to the interests and expectations of the EaP countries regarding the EU's engagement in security issues. This hypothesis is supported by Christou's (2010) threat/risk security narrative, the study by Axyonova et al. (2018) on the EaP countries' perceptions about the EU's role as a security provider and Baltag and Bosse's (2016) case study on Moldova.

Hypothesis 1: The EU's intentions towards the Eastern Partnership region are not compatible with the security expectations of the EaP countries.

Furthermore, it is expected that the EU cannot decide on a common foreign and security policy towards the EaP countries owing to intergovernmental and supranational character of the EU. Rieker's (2009) claim about the lack of organizational skills and Christou's (2010) argument about the EU's differentiation between the EaP countries support my hypothesis.

Hypothesis 2: The EU does not have a coherent and consistent foreign and security policy towards the EaP region.

Finally, the last hypothesis claims that Russia is one of the main factors that limit the EU in strengthening security in the region. Additionally, the EU's partnership with the post-soviet countries in the shared neighbourhood strongly affected Russia's policy towards these countries in a negative way. Simão and Dias's (2016, 114) analysis and Baltag and Bosse's (2016) case study on Moldova confirm that Russia should be taken into account as a significant factor while studying EU security policy towards the eastern neighbourhood.

Hypothesis 3: The EU policies within the Eastern Partnership initiative impel Russia to scale up hostility in its foreign policy towards the countries located in the sphere of influence.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1. METHODOLOGY

This research employs a multiple case study approach which includes the EaP countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine). The case study research method enables us to identify which approach of the EU is common to all the EaP countries and what is specific to the case or cases. The main criteria for the case selection are the security situation in these countries. There are six military conflicts in the EaP region: Transnistria in Moldova, Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia, Nagorno Karabakh between Armenia and Azerbaijan, Crimea, Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts in Ukraine. These countries face military and political threats to their security as mentioned in the definition of security. Additionally, these five countries ranked at the top five for international security cooperation with the EU. Accordingly, Belarus is excluded from the cases examined as it does not host any military conflict and it has the weakest cooperation with the EU in terms of international security ("Eastern Partnership Index - 2017" 2018, 135).

This thesis adopts two different qualitative methods. Content analysis is crucial for examining all actors' approaches, rules, interests and security concerns. Through this method, main EU security documents such as European Security Strategy, ENP and EaP policy papers, European Council conclusions, declarations, annual reports, country-specific security documents and other relevant documents as well as the speeches of representatives will be analysed and compared.

The other qualitative method is structured focused comparison as the study requires case comparison in terms of security perceptions and concerns, cooperation with the EU and their relationship with Russia, Case study research method provides precious material for the analysis, while the structured and focused approach makes these data comparable (Kachuyevski 2014, 2). The countries selected for the research can be considered as similar cases and all of them suffer from traditional security challenges. However, there is considerable variation in the EU approach towards them. These cases will be analysed according to general questions that are asked by the author to make a systematic comparison. These questions will be formulated next year. Work plan for the completion of the thesis can be found in the Appendix.

As discussing the methodology, it should be noted that some limitations may arise during the research process: limited access to data and language barrier. Concerning the accessibility and language, most official EU documents are obtainable from the Internet in English. Initial research for the country-specific documents revealed that all countries' national security concepts/strategies are available in English on the Internet. However, during the research other relevant documents which have not been translated into English may be needed to be investigated. In that case, Russian and Azerbaijani language skills may help the author to access these documents.

3.2. OPERATIONALIZATION

This section briefly explains how the research methods and theories discussed above will be operated to achieve the purpose of the thesis. According to Allen (2017), the first step in operationalizing variables under study is to define concepts clearly. In the first section the concept of security has been discussed from different perspectives and has been defined according to the research question. Next step requires the abstract theoretical concepts to be translated into concrete terms which can test the hypothesis formulated according to the empirical observations of the real world (Allen 2017, 4). In other words, the task here is to identify some patterns which may confirm or refute the hypotheses.

Concerning the first hypothesis, main security documents of the EU and EaP countries and the speeches of officials will be evaluated in order to find out primary threats and security issues as well as differences between the EaP countries' expectations from the EU and the EU's objectives. The intentional perspective of the role theory is helpful in this regard. It is expected that the EaP countries prioritize traditional security issues that can threaten their territorial integrity, political independence

and sovereignty while the EU concentrates on the security challenges that can impair the European security and stability. The main evidence is written statements and speeches which characterize traditional and non-traditional security, the frequency with which they are repeated, and the order of the threats stated. For instance, the top four threats that National Security Concept of Georgia listed are the traditional security issues related to *military conflicts* and *territorial integrity* ("National Security Concept of Georgia" n.d.).

The second hypothesis is related to the fact that decision-making on the common foreign and security policy has intergovernmental character. However, the European Commission is also an authorized institution for the Eastern Partnership. Due to the conflict of interests of member states as well as coordination problems between the European Council and the European Commission, it is difficult to agree on a coherent and consistent foreign and security policy towards the EaP region. Coherent and consistent policy means the policy is applied to all the EaP countries and remains the same over time. This hypothesis can be evaluated within the framework of interactional and institutional perspectives. It is estimated that the EU changes its approach according to countries, time and context. Differences between the policy documents of the EU over time and countries will be the main evidence for confirming the hypothesis. Decision-making and policy-making procedures for the common foreign and security policy can also support my hypothesis.

When it comes to the third hypothesis, the main documents of the EU and Russia which can explain the relations between these two will be analysed. However, this analysis will be framed by the time (since 2009) and context as the main goal here is to find how the Eastern Partnership and Russia's aggressive policy toward the EaP countries are related. The content of the documents and statements as well as the sequence of important events in the EaP region will reveal the evidence that is needed to test the hypothesis. This evidence can be written statements and speeches that display Russia's aggression towards the EaP countries due to their deep partnership with the EU. Institutional and intentional perspectives of the role theory can be used to explain the framework of the relationship between the EU and Russia.

CONCLUSION

This thesis report built a groundwork for the MA thesis to be written next year. Generally, it is argued that the EU's role conception is different from the role expectations of the EaP countries from the EU. The EU perceives security as the extended form including military, political, societal, environmental and economic dimensions while the EaP prioritize traditional security threats as all of them have been engaged in the military conflicts. Additionally, it is estimated that inconsistency and incoherence in the EU foreign and security policy towards the EaP region is one of the reasons for the limited role of the EU in the security problems of the EaP countries. Finally, it is argued that the involvement of post-soviet countries to the EaP initiative, in fact, has deteriorated their relationship with Russia and Russia increased its influence over the EaP countries which are located in its sphere of influence.

The thesis will contribute to the existing debate on the EU's role as a security provider in the EaP region by studying the EU's limitations within the framework of intentional, institutional and interactional perspectives of the role theory. Although the EU's approach differs from country to country which is called differentiation, this thesis will reveal commonalities in the EU's approach towards the EaP countries as well as its limitations. The thesis employs context analysis and structured focused comparison methods to evaluate hypotheses.

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APPENDIX

Table 1. Work plan for the completion of the thesis.

Tasks	**Deadline**
Submit the thesis report	August 31, 2019
Complete literature review	January 26, 2020
Develop theoretical framework	February 23, 2020
Collect all relevant data	March 31, 2020
Improve research skills for content analysis and structured focused comparison	April 31, 2020
Complete the analytical part	June 1, 2020
The first draft of the thesis	June 14, 2020
Submit the thesis	July 8, 2020
Oral defence	September 2020

DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I, the undersigned Ilhama Gasimzade hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis report. To the best of my knowledge this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgement has been made. This thesis report contains no material which has been accepted as part of the requirements of any other academic degree or non-degree program, in English or in any other language. This is a true copy of the thesis report, including final revisions.

Date: 28.08.19

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