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Policy Paper 2/2014

Eastern Partnership:
The Next Five Years between Brussels and Moscow

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Ministry of Foreign Affairs
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Policy Recommendations

- The West should be consistent and sound in the pursuit of sanctions against Russia. The leaders of the European countries should discuss the introduction of the sanctions of the third level similar to those used against Iran including sanctions on Russian financial institutions, ban on selected Russian-origin imports or arms ban. The West has to remain strong in its actions against Moscow; otherwise the stability of the international system would be imperilled. The annexation of Crimea represents dangerous precedent that undermines the post-Second World War arrangement of the global affairs.
- A broad international conference that will represent the second round of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe should be organized in medium-term perspective. The original Helsinki Conference represented political conclusion of the Second World War. In similar fashion the “Helsinki Two” should represent the political conclusion of the Cold War and creation of the new “rules of the game”. Among others, it is necessary to solve the problems of Transnistria, Crimea, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno Karabakh. Otherwise, they will represent conflict potential. This is possible only through concert of great-powers. The affected states proved that they were unable to solve these problems on their own.
- In case of Ukraine the EU must insist on its territorial integrity and help by any means in its conflict with Russia. For this purpose the EU should not hesitate to strengthen isolation of Russia.
- The EU should help Ukraine in transformation of the country which can in case of its successful result serve as an example for other eastern European countries such as Belarus or Russia and which should strengthen position of Ukraine in the region. Because future application for EU membership is highly possible and significant part of Ukrainians support country’s European integration, the EU should use its enlargement policy which proved to be very effective in this field as a tool to implement necessary and sustainable reforms in Ukraine.
- This is linked with support of independent Ukrainian NGOs that monitor controversial activities of Ukrainian political and business elite as it can help to build more transparent society and improve political culture in Ukraine.
- In short term perspective the EU should focus on negotiations on visa-free regime with Ukraine and approve it without any delays as soon as Ukraine fulfils all criteria.



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- The EU should also help Ukraine to strengthen its energy security and reduce its dependence on Russian resources, especially natural gas, which serves as a tool to blackmail Ukraine.
- Because of its small size and close ties to Romania the EU could use Moldova as model example for other Eastern Partnership countries. In this respect it would be necessary to offer clear European perspective to Moldova. As in the case of Ukraine the EU should pressure on Moldovan politicians to create more transparent environment in the country and fight more effectively corruption which is main cause of disillusionment with last pro-European governments.
- The EU should help Moldova against any attempts to destabilize the country from Russia through its breakaway region of Transnistria or autonomous region of Gagauzia. Signing of DCFTA should occur as soon as possible to secure Moldova against Russian pressure which was in the past based on restriction of import of Moldovan products to Russia.
- The EU should cooperate with Belarus only on necessary level to avoid legitimizing of Lukashenko regime. In this case the EU should focus on help to persecuted citizens of Belarus and promoting of human rights agenda. In long term perspective the EU could experiment with opening to people from Belarus to promote their mobility and contacts with the EU member states which could have effects on democratization of Belarus.
- The EU should emphasize in its relation towards Georgia its possible security guarantees against Russia. Nonetheless, it has to insist on the peaceful solution of the conflicts between Georgia and Abkhazia, Georgia and South Ossetia and Georgia and Russia.
- The EU should give a clear perspective of membership to Tbilisi. This would not only stimulate Georgia itself but also the democratization and modernization processes in neighbouring Armenia and Azerbaijan.
- The EU should divide the Eastern Partnership between the fast and slow track countries. It has to reasonably use its soft power. In other words, it should support the reform in fast track countries through the perspective of membership and maintain contacts with the slow track countries through limited dialogue that would enable broadening the cooperation when conditions are more favourable.
- In Armenia, the EU should foremost focus its attention on the solution of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict that would ease the grip of Moscow and its security guarantees. Also if Georgia gets the candidate status, it would represent significant incentive towards Armenia's political elite.



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- The EU should together with the United States restore the “Silk Roads” initiative which was quite popular in the early 1990s but remained largely on the paper. At first, it would bypass Russia and lower European dependence on its energy exports. At second, it would improve the economic situation of the South Caucasus and Central Asia countries.



Introduction

In May 2014, we will celebrate the fifth anniversary of the foundation of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) initiative. Nonetheless, it is not clear if there are any reasons to celebrate this occasion amid the worsening situation in Ukraine and other member states of the EaP. The Vilnius Summit in last November should have marked the success of the EU eastern policy and its principal instrument – the Eastern Partnership. However, Russia unraveled its new neo-imperial policy and spoiled the awaited European victory. Moscow revealed that it was prepared to withstand the West in case when it considered its vital interests to be imperiled. Hence, the next five years of the Eastern Partnership will be presumably characterized by the clash between the European and Eurasian integration models and value systems. This conflict will define not only the destiny of the EaP states but also the fate of the European continent at large. The presented policy paper will focus on the prospect developments in the EaP countries and their relations to seats of power in Brussels and Moscow. At first, the new Russia's approach to its "Near Abroad" shall be discussed. Then, individual member countries of the EaP will be described. Based on that, recommendations to the EU are provided.

Russia: The Crimean Turnover

Moscow begins to perceive the Eastern Partnership as an initiative of the West that is directly aimed against its vital interests in the post-Soviet area. This was revealed especially with the escalation of the Ukrainian crisis. According to Moscow's view, the EaP represents Western geopolitical instrument for creation of the second "cordon sanitaire" that would circumscribe Russia and slowly smother it.¹ The EaP was allegedly illogically separated from Russia, ignoring the close economic relations, open borders and free movement of persons in the area of the Commonwealth of the Independent States. The European pressure on Kiev to sign the Association Agreement was according to Moscow disrespectful to the traditional Russo-Ukrainian relations. However, instead of new markets Brussels created on its eastern frontier a geopolitical catastrophe.² In the case of Crimea, Kremlin was afraid that if it should have shown weakness, it would have lost its great-power status. Moscow reasons that if the US can intervene in Iraq, Yugoslavia, Libya and so on, it has right at least to carry out similar policy in its neighbourhood.³

¹ A. Nosovich, "Vostochnoye partnerstvo 2.0: Latviya pereformatiruyet evropeyskoe sosledstvo?", MGIMO Universitet, February 2, 2014, accessed April 20, 2014, www.mgimo.ru/news/experts/document247570.phtml.

² G. G. Tishchenko, "Voyenno-politicheskaya obstanovka v mire ugrozhayet novymi konfliktami: Zadacha Rossii – stanovitsya silnee", Rossiyskiy Institut Strategicheskikh Issledovaniy, March 12, 2014, accessed April 20, 2014, www.riss.ru/analitika/2818-zadacha-rossii-stanovitsya-silnee.

³ A. Tokarev, "Raskolotaya Ukraina raskalyvayet i nas", MGIMO Universitet, March 25, 2014, accessed April 20, 2014, www.mgimo.ru/news/experts/document249788.phtml.



Russia arrogates the right to proclaim its own “Monroe Doctrine” on the territory of the post-Soviet area.⁴ Besides it wants to continue with the pursuit of the political-economic integration under the aegis of the Eurasian Union that will be formed in January 2015. This integration structure was firstly projected as a partner of the European Union. However, it is more likely it will turn into its geopolitical rival as was seen in Armenia or Ukraine.⁵ Ironically, the Eurasian integration is inconsistent with the concept of *russkiy mir* that was used as a justification of Russia’s actions in Crimea by Vladimir Putin in his speech on 18 March 2014.⁶ According to this concept Russia and the Ukraine are one because of these countries being part of one common Russian civilization. Moscow has messianic mission to reunite *russkiy mir*. Unless it succeeds in this endeavour, it will be torn apart and destroyed.⁷

Russia’s policy makers will be at pains to consolidate the new foreign policy of their country because they will have to explain how they can support on one hand Serbia’s position on Kosovo and on the other annex Crimea or somehow forge together contradicting concepts such as *russkiy mir* and the Eurasian integration. For instance, Kazakhstan wants to become part of the Eurasian Union but fears the idea of *russkiy mir* as it could lead to annexation of the northern third of the country that is inhabited by the ethnic Russian minority. Nevertheless, it is more than clear that the old foreign policy concept is dead. In the next several months we will witness the rise of new and more emancipated Russia’s foreign policy that will focus most of all on the countries of the EaP.

Based on several analysis and articles of Russian foreign policy experts and officials it is evident that the old syndrome of “besieged fortress” returns to country’s political discourse.⁸ Russian decision making process is strongly influenced by something that could be described as “Weimar syndrome”. The high echelons of Russia’s policy making believe that the West has never put an end to the Cold War and tries to annihilate Russian state. Besides, they want

⁴ Y. Gorodenko, “Rossiya imeyet pravo na svoyu ‘doktrinu Monro’ na prostranstve SNG: Ukrainskoye gosudarstvo dolzhno byt sostavnoy chastyu yedinoy slavyanskoy federatsii”, Rossiyskiy Institut Strategicheskikh Issledovaniy, March 11, 2014, accessed April 20, 2014, www.riss.ru/analitika/2816-rossiya-imeet-pravo-na-svoyu-doktrinu-monro-na-prostranstve-sng.

⁵ D. Trenin, “Russian-Western Confrontation: Prepare for a Long Haul”, Carnegie Moscow Center, April 4, 2014, accessed April 20, 2014, <http://carnegie.ru/eurasiaoutlook/?fa=55243>.

⁶ “Address by President of the Russian Federation”, President of Russia, March 18, 2014, accessed April 20, 2014, <http://eng.kremlin.ru/news/6889>.

⁷ P. V. Multatuli, “Obreteniye Rusi Iznachalnoy: K sobyitiyam na Ukraine”, Rossiyskiy Institut Strategicheskikh Issledovaniy, April 2, 2014, accessed April 20, 2014, <http://riss.ru/analitika/2968-obretenie-rusi-iznachalnoj>.

⁸ G. G. Tishchenko, “Voyenno-politicheskaya obstanovka v mire ugrozhayet novymi konfliktami: Zadacha Rossii – stanovitsya silnee”, Rossiyskiy Institut Strategicheskikh Issledovaniy, March 12, 2014, accessed April 20, 2014, www.riss.ru/analitika/2818-zadacha-rossii-stanovitsya-silnee.



a just vengeance for the defeat in this undeclared war.⁹ The peace conference after the Second World War de facto took place in Helsinki after thirty years since the cessation of hostilities. It is already twenty three years since the end of the Cold War and thus the time is ripe for another peace conference that would reconfigure the rules of the game in continental Europe and world system.

Foremost, it is necessary because Vladimir Putin by his actions destroyed the Yalta-Potsdam System and even the fundamental arrangements in post-Cold War Europe symbolised by the Budapest Memorandum of 1994. Among others, it is necessary to solve the problems of Transnistria, Crimea, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno Karabakh. Otherwise, they will represent conflict potential. This is possible only through concert of great-powers. The affected states proved that they were unable to solve these problems on their own. It is also necessary to propagate the idea that the Cold War did not have any defeated participants. Every participating state was victorious in the end because they managed to prevent the all-out war between the East and the West. However, it is questionable that this process could be undertaken with the current Moscow's regime in power.

Russian experts claim that the Ukrainian crisis and the annexation of Crimea were mostly provoked by irresponsible and adventurist foreign policy of the Lithuanian presidency of the Council of the EU. Vilnius allegedly tried to convince Kiev that it had to choose between the European or Eurasian vector of its foreign policy as soon as possible or everything might be lost.¹⁰ Besides Lithuania, Russians consider Poland as the principal proponent of the anti-Russia policy in the EU. Formerly, Moscow viewed Poland as an American "Troian horse" in the EU. Recently, they feel the changed attitude of Warsaw regarding common European policy and its close cooperation with Germany in this direction. According to Moscow, Polish key goal in the post-Soviet space is the geopolitical weakening of Russia through curbing of its influence in the EaP countries and Central Asia.¹¹

Any analogy with the interwar period or the Second World War could be artificial and misleading. Nonetheless, there is at least one analogy that is worth mentioning. The West was not able to stop Hitler's Germany until it was too late and the catastrophe was inevitable. Something similar is happening in the case of Putin's Russia. The West was not able to decisively react on the Russo-Georgian War, it was not able to decisively react on the

⁹ S. Karaganov, "Evropa: okonchit kholodnuyu voynu", *Izvestiya*, April 8, 2014, accessed April 20, 2014, <http://izvestia.ru/news/568861>.

¹⁰ S. Rekada, "Litva – istochnik nestabilnosti dlya Evropy", MGIMO Universitet, March 21, 2014, accessed April 20, 2014, www.mgimo.ru/news/experts/document249723.phtml.

¹¹ M. E. Kuchinskaya, "Vostochnaya politika Polshi: Polskoye rukovodstvo smotrit na vostochnuyu politiku cherez tezis o neobkhodimosti ee 'evropeizatsii'", *Rossiyskiy Institut Strategicheskikh Issledovaniy*, December 23, 2013, accessed April 20, 2014, www.riss.ru/analitika/2492-vostochnaya-politika-polshi.



Russia's stance in the Syrian crisis and neither was on the dismemberment of Ukraine and annexation of Crimea. If it does not react decisively on the Russia's activities in the south-eastern portion of Ukraine, the catastrophe will follow. For Putin and his entourage money and power are the most important value and thus the only reasonable weapons against them are deep Western sanctions. The chief mistake of the West was that it did not eradicate chekist mentality from the core of Russian power and now it has to pay for it.¹²

Russia represents geographically and culturally indivisible part of the European civilization. Any attempts on claiming that Russia is a core of distinctive Eurasian civilization are futile and only hinder the modernization and democratization of the country. The Eurasian model of development was fully exhausted during the Communist era. The EU must prepare that it will have to compete and clash with the neo-imperial Russia over its eastern neighbours in several years to come. It is time for more homogenous and solid European foreign policy. Moreover, Europeans should finally admit that it is not possible to have constructive relations with Putin's regime and therefore it has to be weakened through sanctions and taken down. The deteriorating situation of Russia's economy could enable this sooner than we now expect.¹³

Ukraine: The European Perspective

Size and location of Ukraine at the border of the EU makes this country key element of Eastern Partnership initiative. Until now the EU focused on negotiations on Association Agreement that includes Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA) which establishes free trade area between Ukraine and the EU. Text of the agreement was finalized in 2011, but its signing was postponed due to sentence over Yulia Tymoshenko in October 2011. Later, Ukrainian government revoked its decision to sign the agreement on summit in Vilnius in November 2013 which led to mass protests in Ukraine that eventually led to fall of Azarov government and ousting of president Yanukovich. In result of those processes political part of the agreement was signed on March 21, 2014 and signing of DCFTA is expected to take place after presidential election scheduled for May 25.

Important question that arises is where to continue after implementing of Association Agreement and DCFTA. Especially in western part of country that has strong historical ties

¹² A. Dražanová, "Západ je vystrašený a Putin to vidí, říká pro MF Dnes známý kremlolog", idnes.cz, March 24, 2014, accessed April 20, 2014, http://zpravy.idnes.cz/rozhovor-s-novinarem-edwardem-lucasem-dh7-/zahranicni.aspx?c=A140323_205417_zahranicni_zt.

¹³ V. Dvornikov, "11 yavnykh priznakov, chto v ekonomike Rossii vse plokho", slon.ru, April 2, 2014, accessed April 20, 2014, http://slon.ru/economics/yavnykh_priznakov_chto_v_ekonomiki_rossii_vse_plokho-1078634.xhtml.



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with central Europe, there is strong firm for eventual EU membership¹⁴ and leading presidential candidate Petro Poroshenko declared that Ukraine could become EU member state by 2025¹⁵. In February European Parliament passed a resolution which clearly said that EU Treaty had allowed Ukraine to apply for membership.¹⁶ Although this will be in long perspective very controversial topic, Ukraine will probably sooner or later apply for EU membership and the EU will then not avoid giving Ukraine European perspective.

In shorter perspective Ukraine however needs to undergo deep transformation of all sectors of the country starting with reform of constitution that was adopted in 1996 during presidency of Leonid Kuchma who was notoriously known for his undemocratic practices.

Apart from the change of formal rules, elimination of other informal practices that are common in Ukraine is necessary. This includes fighting such phenomena as insufficient divisions of legislative, executive and judiciary power, dependence of MPs on economical elites of the country or unacceptable practices in Ukrainian parliament such as voting of one MP for absent colleagues which was detected after fall of Viktor Yanukovich in all parliamentary fractions with exception of nationalist party Svoboda.¹⁷ Another key challenge for Ukraine is fighting corruption which is widespread in the country and it is one of the most important factors that make Ukrainian state totally ineffective. Transparency International rated only four central Asian republics worse than Ukraine in whole post-Soviet area in perceived level of corruption in 2013 and therefore there is much space for improvements.¹⁸

To help Ukraine in fight with those phenomena the EU should strongly support Ukrainian NGO sector that often focuses on revealing of those problems. Especially after Euromaidan Ukrainian politicians are under much bigger pressure and control from the society and that is

¹⁴ “Public Opinion Survey Residents of Ukraine: March 14 – 26, 2014”, slideshare.net, accessed April 20, 2014, www.slideshare.net/Ratinggroup/2014-april-5-iri-public-opinion-survey-of-ukraine-march-14-26-2014.

¹⁵ “Poroshenko vpevneny shcho Ukraina za 10-11 rokiv Ukraina mozhe statychlenom ES”, Informatsiyne ahentstvo Unian, March 30, 2014, accessed April 20, 2014, www.unian.ua/politics/902161-poroshenko-vpevneniy-scho-ukrajina-za-10-11-rokiv-ukrajina-moje-stati-chlenom-es.html.

¹⁶ “Ukraine: MEPs urge EU to help financial rescue, but enact targeted sanctions too”, European Parliament/News, February 27, 2014, accessed April 20, 2014, www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/content/20140221IPR36637/html/Ukraine-MEPs-urge-EU-to-help-financial-rescue-but-enact-targeted-sanctions-too.

¹⁷ “Dva provladnykh deputaty znovu knopkodavlyly”, chesno.org, April 9, 2014, accessed April 20, 2014, <http://chesno.org/news/1869>.

¹⁸ “Corruption Perception Index 2013”, Transparency International, accessed April 20, 2014, <http://cpi.transparency.org/cpi2013/results>.



first important step towards transparent environment. In this respect the EU should critically rate activities of all Ukrainian political subjects, avoid simplistic black-white perception that was common especially after the Orange revolution and promote better political culture in Ukraine. It must be acknowledged that in all political fractions including former opposition against Viktor Yanukovich there are many personalities with controversial business or political past including such leading figures as Yulia Tymoshenko, Arseniy Yatsenyuk, Oleksandr Turchynov or Petro Poroshenko.

Financial help to Ukraine is necessary in present difficult situation and it can in short term solve worse economic problems of the country. However as noted above it cannot solve deep structural problems of Ukraine. Past experience showed that enlargement was indeed one of the most powerful tools of the EU and as such it could be also used in Ukraine once the country applies for membership. EU member states should then by no means complicate Ukrainian prospects without clear reason. The same principle applies for present negotiations on visa free regime as well. On the other hand, it is of course necessary to follow all EU rules, insist on compliance with all formal procedures and avoid such initiatives as in December 2013 when Ukrainian NGO Europe Without Barriers urged the EU to temporary lift visa regime for Ukrainians in 2014 without finishing all negotiations.¹⁹

Ukraine must feel strong support from the EU in transformation of the country, but on the other hand it is necessary for Ukrainians to understand that the EU cannot do any work in Ukraine itself and that it is no panacea for their problems. The EU can serve as an example for Ukrainians, motivate them to transform the country and can also help with finding solutions to different urgent problems. But Ukrainians themselves must implement all changes and they must be willing to cooperate with the EU. The scheme can however only work in the case when Ukraine gets concrete offer for changes in the country. At present stage it must be implementation of visa-free regime in reasonable time and the EU must later count with giving Ukraine clear European perspective.

Moldova: From the Eastern Partnership to the Candidate Status?

Since inauguration of the Eastern Partnership Moldova has made significant progress in its relations with the EU which was possible because of ruling pro-European government that was elected in July 2009. Since then Moldova – although paralyzed by the deadlock in parliament due to which it failed to elect president for two and half years – closely

¹⁹ “Statement from the civic initiative ‘Europe without Barriers’ on suspension of visa requirements for the citizens of Ukraine”, Europe without Barriers civic initiative, December 11, 2013, accessed April 20, 2014, <http://novisa.org.ua/en/zvernennya-gromads-koyi-initsiatiivi-yevrope-bez-bar-yeziv-shhodo-prizupinennya-vizovih-vimog-dlya-gromadyan-ukrayini>.



cooperates with the EU and it is supposed to sign Association Agreement and DCFTA during this year. Meanwhile, visa regime for citizens of Moldova has been lifted and it will enter into force on April 28.²⁰

According to an extensive survey conducted in 2013, European integration in Moldova, although attractive, has not overwhelming support. The pro-EU camp has even declined since 2009.²¹ This is possibly due to tarnished reputation of Moldovan pro-European government that faced severe scandals and failed to tackle important problems such as high level of corruption. This helps to strengthen Communist Party²² that ruled Moldova until 2009 and which is still the most popular political party in the country²³. Thus, parliamentary elections scheduled for November 2014 will be probably critically important for the future cooperation with the EU.

In short term perspective the signing of the Association Agreement is overriding priority. If there is enough will in Moldova, the next logical step would be the application for membership. Apart from that, the EU should play active role in facilitation of frozen conflict in Transnistria. That cannot be however solved without active participation of Russia which can in case of closer integration of Moldova into the EU use this breakaway region to discourage Moldova from European path. The EU must be prepared for this alternative and strongly support Moldovan aspirations in such case.

Belarus: The Eurasian Path

Belarus as a member of the Customs Union with Russia and Kazakhstan with its authoritative regime of Alexander Lukashenko has always been the most problematic country of the Eastern Partnership initiative. Belarus was the only country of the Eastern Partnership that has not ratified Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with the EU in 1990s.²⁴ Mutual relations with Belarus had somehow improved after 2007²⁵, but have been

²⁰ “Commissioner Malmström on visa-free travel for Moldova”, europa.eu, April 3, 2014, accessed April 20, 2014, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_STATEMENT-14-101_en.htm.

²¹ “EU Remains Attractive but not Default Option for Moldovans”, Central European Policy Institute, January 14, 2014, accessed April 20, 2014, www.cepolicy.org/sites/cepolicy.org/files/attachments/survey_results.pdf.

²² Z. Alimbaeva, “Seeing Red Again in Chisinau”, Transitions Online, March 13, 2014, accessed April 20, 2014, www.tol.org/client/article/24213-moldova-communists.html.

²³ “Poll: Four Parties would enter Moldovan Parliament”, Teleradio Moldova, March 17, 2014, accessed April 20, 2014, www.trm.md/en/politic/sondaj-patru-partide-ar-accede-in-parlamentt.

²⁴ “Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCAs): Russia, Eastern Europe, the Southern Caucasus and Central Asia”, europa.eu, last modified September 29, 2010, accessed April 20, 2014,



effectively frozen again since December 2010 after crackdown on demonstrations against presidential elections. In long term, Belarus participates on the Eastern Partnership only within multilateral track.²⁶

There are no signs that situation in Belarus can change significantly in the following years. As Belarus does not see the EU as a partner for closer cooperation, there is no reason for the EU to follow different pattern. Apart from that, there can be however made some steps towards helping citizens of Belarus. This can be done for example by mitigating of visa policy and increasing their mobility into the EU which can be in long term perspective effective tool towards democratization of the country.

Georgia: Security First

The new government of Irakli Garibashvili has significantly changed the foreign policy of Georgia. It tries to be more rational and to avoid emotional reactions. This is especially apparent in its relationship with Russia, as it endeavours to de-escalate the Russo-Georgian conflict over the breakaway territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Nonetheless, the oppositional United National Movement still supports the concept of occupied territories. Garibashvili presumes that the better its relations with Russia will become, the easier it will be for him to pursue his main goal of the European integration. Mikhail Saakashvili's policy towards Russia and the EU was based on completely reversed assumption. In other words, if the relations between Russia and the West are bad, it would facilitate Georgia's accession into the EU and NATO.²⁷

Georgia does not want to be a hostage of the relations between the West and Moscow. This is clearly visible on the stance of Tbilisi on the Ukrainian crisis as it distances itself from it. Georgia's politicians do not want to risk the planned summit of Russian and Georgian presidents and the regular meetings between Russian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Gregori Karasin and Georgian Prime Minister's Special Representative in Relations with Russia Zurab Abashidze. The language situation is also very different from Ukraine. Georgia's language minorities have their own educational system and their use of mother

http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/external_relations/relations_with_third_countries/eastern_europe_and_central_asia/r17002_en.htm.

²⁵ "Belarus", Eastern Partnership Community, accessed April 20, 2014,

www.easternpartnership.org/partner-states/belarus.

²⁶ "Belarus", European Union External Action Service, accessed April 20, 2014,

http://eeas.europa.eu/belarus/index_en.htm.

²⁷ K. Gadzhiiyeva, "Vliyaniye sobytiy na Ukraine na rossiysko-gruzinskiye otnosheniya yavlyayetsya minimalnym, schitayut eksperty", Kavkazskiy Uzel, March 29, 2014, accessed April 20, 2014,

www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/240196.



tongue is not inhibited. In the contrast to Ukraine, Georgia has created efficient state apparatus and the level of corruption is decreasing. Above all, Georgia is not important for Russia per se, but for Moscow is important that it will not access NATO in the near future.²⁸ This enables the de-escalation of the Russo-Georgian relations in present but could support their deterioration in the years to come because Tbilisi is not going to sacrifice the prospect of membership in the Euro-Atlantic integration structures for Russia's favour.

Georgia sees the signing of the Association Agreement with the EU as confirmation of its progress towards the West and it is less interested in the specific obligations or advantages that this document brings. The overriding priority for Georgia's policy makers is maintaining their European vector of foreign policy. Moreover, they perceive in both NATO and the EU predominantly their security aspect as they foremost want to safeguard their country. Regarding the separatist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Moscow believes that Tbilisi – by initialling of the Association Agreement with the EU – acknowledged the loss of its territory. The eventual accession into the EU could allegedly even deepen this process.²⁹ Obviously, Tbilisi does not see it in this light and believes that the improvement of its economic performance could pull up both breakaway territories. In the oncoming years will be also very important to distinguish between Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Abkhazia has a professional political leadership and national project that counts with the establishment of independent and prosperous country. While South Ossetian political elite is rather unprofessional and lacks visions.³⁰ According to opinion polls one third of South Ossetians prefer independence, one third is for the union with North Ossetia and the last third wants to be part of the Russian Federation but as an individual subject of federation.³¹

In any case, the EU should emphasize on its relation towards Georgia its possible security guarantees against Russia. Nonetheless, it has to insist on the peaceful solution of the conflicts between Georgia and Abkhazia, Georgia and South Ossetia and Georgia and Russia. Moreover, it should give Tbilisi clear perspective of membership. This would not

²⁸ J. C. K. Daly, "What does Russia's Annexation of Crimea Mean for Georgia's Efforts to Join NATO?", *The Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, April 2, 2014, accessed April 20, 2014, www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/12950-what-does-russias-annexation-of-crimea-mean-for-georgias-efforts-to-join-nato?.html.

²⁹ A. Polunin, "Evropa poluchit Moldaviyu i Gruziju kuskami", *MGIMO universitet*, November 29, 2013, accessed April 20, 2014, www.mgimo.ru/news/experts/document243858.phtml.

³⁰ V. Dzutsev, "The Crimean Crisis and Georgia's Breakaway Territories", *The Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, March 19, 2014, accessed April 20, 2014, www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/12936-the-crimean-crisis-and-georgias-breakaway-territories.html.

³¹ G. Toal and J. O'Loughlin, "How people in South Ossetia, Abkhazia and Transnistria feel about annexation by Russia", *The Washington Post*, March 20, 2014, accessed April 20, 2014, www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2014/03/20/how-people-in-south-ossetia-abkhazia-and-transnistria-feel-about-annexation-by-russia.



only stimulate Georgia itself but also the democratization and modernization processes in neighbouring Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Armenia: Is Second Maidan Possible?

After Armenia's turnover on Russia in September 2013, the country chose the path of Eurasian integration. If Yerevan really joins the Customs and Eurasian Unions, it would represent significant loss of its sovereignty.³² The negotiations on the Association Agreement and the DCFTA are postponed indefinitely. It should be underlined that Russia's pressure on Armenia in 2013 is comparable only with the Russian invasion into Georgia in 2008 and with the annexation of Crimea in 2014.

This pressure has twofold explanation. Firstly, Moscow wanted to retain Armenia in its sphere of influence at any costs. Secondly, it was probably meant as sort of warning for other states on Russia's orbit. Yerevan's security is heavily dependent on Russia's security guarantees against its enemy Azerbaijan. Armenia is the only South Caucasian member of the Collective Security Treaty Organization. Moreover, it hosts Russia's military base in Gyumri. Russia was willing to annex Crimea in order to – inter alia – maintain the position of its Black Sea Fleet, so it is quite logical that it politically and economically pressured Armenia in order to preserve its position in Gyumri. Above all, Russia is the largest trade partner and investor in Armenia.³³ Therefore, it was easy for Moscow to intimidate Yerevan. It started to increase the price of its gas exports, threatened Yerevan with introduction of visa requirements and even alleged that it might enhance its military support of Azerbaijan's claims on Nagorno Karabakh. Hence, Armenia's President Serzh Sargsyan decided that the European integration was futile and returned to Russia's fold.

Russia also initiated a plan to build a highway and railroad through Abkhazia, Georgia and Armenia to Iran. This project would significantly lower Armenia's international isolation. Therefore, it is wholeheartedly supported by Yerevan's political elite. Armenian economy is strongly affected by the fact that its borders with Azerbaijan and its ally Turkey have been since the inception of the 1990s sealed off as a consequence of the Nagorno Karabakh War. Although it does not seem as likely at present, Kremlin fears the most the possibility of another Maidan in Yerevan because then it would lose the entire South Caucasus. Georgia is nowadays firmly pro-Western and Azerbaijan is too strong to be intimidated as easily as

³² "Politolog: Otkaz ot sotrudnichestva s ES pod davleniyem Rossii raven potere Armeniyyey suvereniteta", News.am, April 12, 2014, accessed April 20, 2014, <http://m.news.am/rus/news/203980.html>.

³³ "Post-Elections Armenia", Caucasus Analytical Digest, July 17, 2013, accessed April 20, 2014, www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?ots591=0c54e3b3-1e9c-be1e-2c24-a6a8c7060233&lng=en&id=167342.



Armenia. The only way how Moscow can daunt Baku is through the Nagorno Karabakh conflict that is possible only when Armenia is under Russia's control.³⁴ Therefore, the EU should divide the Eastern Partnership between the fast and slow track countries. In Armenia it should foremost focus its attention on the solution of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict that would ease the grip of Moscow and its security guarantees. Also if Georgia gets the candidate status, it would represent significant incentive towards Armenia's political elite.

Azerbaijan: The Advantage of Choice

At the first glance, Azerbaijan is part of the EaP only by mistake. In last few years it is more similar to the autocratic Muslim states of the Persian Gulf. The main pillar of the relations between Brussels and Baku is not the European integration but rather the energy security of the European bloc. Ilham Aliyev's family and his entourage administer the country as a colossal energy enterprise. Obviously, the profit comes first. Therefore, Baku does not wish to aggravate its relations with neither of its customers. Azerbaijan can afford its ambitious foreign policy of balancing amongst the West, Russia and Iran thanks to its vast reserves of hydrocarbons.³⁵

At present, the negotiations between the EU and Azerbaijan on the Association Agreement are under way but their successful conclusion is rather dubious. The signing of this agreement is dependent on the state of human rights in Azerbaijan. Baku is not even trying to implement the commitments that are connected with its membership in the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. The persecutions of independent and oppositional journalists are common and there are also many political prisoners in Azeri prisons.³⁶ The presidential elections in October 2013 were reminiscent of a political farce as the official results were even published before the opening of polling stations. Moreover, the negotiations on the DCFTA could not even be initiated as Azerbaijan is not a member of the World Trade Organization.

The EU should together with the United States restore the "Silk Roads" initiative which was quite popular in the early 1990s but remained largely on the paper. At first, it would bypass

³⁴ F. Medzhid, "Znachimost Azerbaydzhana dlya Zapada rastet iz-za sobytiy na Ukraine, schitayut eksperty", Kavkazskiy Uzel, April 11, 2014, accessed April 20, 2014, <http://georgia.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/240807>.

³⁵ "The Vilnius EAP Summit and the South Caucasus", Caucasus Analytical Digest, December 18, 2013, accessed April 20, 2014, www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?ots591=0c54e3b3-1e9c-be1e-2c24-a6a8c7060233&lng=en&id=175328.

³⁶ M. Muratova, "Azerbaijani Journalist Charged with Spying for the U.S.", The Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst, March 5, 2014, accessed April 20, 2014, www.cacianalyst.org/publications/field-reports/item/12923-azerbaijani-journalist-charged-with-spying-for-the-us.html.



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Russia and lower European dependence on its energy exports. At second, it would improve the economic situation of the South Caucasus and Central Asia countries. At third, it would secure Baku's affiliation and European position in the country. Unfortunately, in the new game that was initiated by Moscow in the beginning of 2014, the geopolitical interests go first and human rights last.



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