

KHAZAR UNIVERSITY

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Normative Power agenda of the EU in Eastern Partnership countries versus Realpolitik.

Master Student:

Shahla Maharramova

Supervisor:

Dr.Elmar Mustafayev

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ABSTRACT

Normative Power agenda of the EU in Eastern Partnership countries versus Realpolitik

The research was conducted by Shahla Maharramova, a master student in the field of Area Studies at the Khazar University, and the topic of the research is “Normative Power agenda of the EU in Eastern Partnership countries versus Realpolitik.”

The European Union (EU), considering its discourses and policies along with some of the features attributed to it, appears in the literature with various definitions such as normative, civil and civilizing power. The normative role of the EU will be studied in the context of the EU and Eastern Partnership Countries in comparison with *realpolitik*. In this context, firstly, the concept of *normative* power and various definitions of power are discussed. This study aims to examine the relations of the European Union with its Eastern Neighbors, within the scope of the European Neighborhood Policy, which was launched in 2004. The main purpose of the European Neighborhood Policy is to contribute to the democratic transformation and economic development by ensuring stability in the surrounding countries. The EU established the Eastern Partnership initiative in 2009 to bring functionality to the policy and to improve cooperation with its Eastern neighbors. This initiative was a turning point in terms of deepening the economic and political cooperation between the partners. In the study, European Union’s endeavors to exist as a normative power and permeate democratic principles into the international system will also be elaborated. Since the implementation of EaP there had been some reviews and adjustments and specifically in “Twenty deliverables for 2020” there was an emphasis on “resilience” and “reforms” alongside the *realpolitik* elements. This research shows the ways of understanding the EU’s normative behavior and power, and some examples of *Realpolitik* behavior.

Keywords: *Normative power, realpolitik, EU, European Neighborhood Policy, Eastern Partnership*

Abstrakt

Araşdırma Xəzər Universitetinin Regionşünaslıq ixtisası üzrə magistr tələbəsi Şəhla Məhərrəmovaya tərəfindən aparılıb və tədqiqatın mövzusu “Realpolitikə qarşı Şərq Tərəfdaşlığı ölkələrində Aİ-nin normativ güc gündəliyi”dir.

Avropa İttifaqı (Aİ) ona ithaf edilən bəzi xüsusiyyətləri nəzərə alaraq ədəbiyyatda normativ və sivil güc kimi müxtəlif təriflərlə qarşımıza çıxır. Aİ-nin normativ rolu Aİ və Şərq Tərəfdaşlığı ölkələri kontekstində realpolitiklə müqayisədə araşdırılacaq. Bu kontekstdə ilk növbədə normativ güc anlayışı və gücün müxtəlif təriflərindən bəhs edilir. Bu araşdırmanın məqsədi 2004-cü ildə başlanmış Avropa Qonşuluq Siyasəti çərçivəsində Avropa İttifaqının Şərq Qonşuları ilə əlaqələrini öyrənməkdir. Avropa Qonşuluq Siyasətinin əsas məğzi demokratik transformasiyaya töhfə vermək və qonşu ölkələrdə sabitliyin təmin edilməsi ilə iqtisadi inkişafa nail olmaqdır. Aİ 2009-cu ildə siyasətə funksionallıq gətirmək və Şərq qonşuları ilə əməkdaşlığı təkmilləşdirmək məqsədilə Şərq Tərəfdaşlığı təşəbbüsünün əsasını qoyub. Bu təşəbbüs tərəfdaşlar arasında iqtisadi və siyasi əməkdaşlığın dərinləşdirilməsi baxımından dönüş nöqtəsi oldu. Araşdırmada Avropa Birliyinin normativ güc kimi mövcud olmaq və demokratik prinsipləri beynəlxalq sistemə yaymaq səyləri də ətraflı müzakirə olunacaq. Şərq Tərəfdaşlığının həyata keçirilməsindən bəri bəzi təhlillər və düzəlişlər olmuşdur və xüsusilə “2020-ci il üçün iyirmi hədəf”də realpolitik elementləri ilə yanaşı, “davamlılıq” və “islahatlar”a da diqqət yetirilmişdir. Bu araşdırma Aİ-nin normativ davranışını və gücünü anlamaq yollarını və Realpolitik davranışının bəzi nümunələrini göstərir.

Açar sözlər: Normativ güc, realpolitik, Aİ, Avropa Qonşuluq Siyasəti, Şərq Tərəfdaşlığı

Abbreviations

EU	European Union
EC	European Community
USSR	United Soviet Socialist Republic
USA	United States of America
UN	United Nations
EaP	Eastern Partnership
ENP	European Neighborhood Policy
SPA	Strategic and Partnership Agreement
PA	Partnership Agreement
EEU	Eurasian Economic Union
DCFTA	Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area
WTO	World Trade Organization
CEAA	Comprehensive and Enhanced Association Agreement
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States

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Introduction

Continental Europe sought ways of socio-economic development right after World War I and World War II in the 20th century. Europe has had a sui generis historical experience, especially since the 1950s. The conflicts between European states in both the First World War and the Second World War were gradually overcome with the development of cooperation in technical and economic fields. The rebuilding of Europe started with the unity of coal and steel. Integration in technical and economic fields turned into a political integration as time went by and “integrated” Europe emerged on the international stage as an actor. With the end of the Cold War, the EU, which rapidly expanded geographically to the east, started to search for new issues such as foreign policy, security and defense. 1993 was the year of the launching of the enlargement process which was the unique process in the EU history because of the number of applicant countries. With each enlargement, the geographical structure of the EU changes greatly, new borders are formed and new neighbors are reached. (Balfour, R., Rotta, A, 2005) The biggest expansion since its establishment was experienced in 2004 with the participation of ten new countries. With this historical enlargement and the inclusion of three new countries in the EU in the following period, the Union border took its final shape. After this enlargement, it became necessary for the Union to develop a policy according to the new conjuncture. The European Neighborhood Policy was put into practice with the 2004 strategy document to prevent the formation of new divisions around it and to evaluate the existing threats and opportunities.

The Union has used its membership incentive toward other countries as a powerful instrument. For contributing the stability in Europe, the Union began the partnership relations with its eastern neighbors. The ENP is one of the important sides of its regional foreign policy. The ENP helps the EU to be identified as a normative power by exporting its fundamental values to the other states. The EU's foreign policy, in the process of transforming into a political union, focuses on more foreign-focused issues such as common foreign policy, defense and security. Through the Eastern Partnership Program (EaP) it provides financial support to relevant countries as well as ensuring democracy and peace in countries, and peaceful settlement of conflicts in this geography. The EU, with its 2004 enlargement, deals with its relations with Eastern neighbors within the scope of the ENP and EaP initiative. The EU, which aims to bring its neighbors closer to the Union's norms and values, takes special care of the promotion of democracy within the scope of policies. It has been seen that the European Union's democracy promotion cannot be separated from its security approach and these approaches are considered in the context of security. The European Union's interest,

especially within the framework of access to energy resources, and Russia's influence in the EaP countries plays a decisive role in promoting democracy.

One of the contemporary points of view is to portray the EU's nature as a concept of the EU's normative power in world politics. It is believed the concept of normative power can alter the idea of the norm completely. The EU is differentiated from Westphalia states because of its structural and conceptual characteristics and it is crucial to pay attention to those details concerning analyzing the EU's influence on world politics. Member states compromised a certain level of their national sovereignty in favor of the EU in exchange for rewards and benefits of the EU. Due to the abundance of actors in foreign policy, problems with the convergence of foreign policies of member states within the Common Foreign and Security Policy remains unresolved. All these conditions affected limitations of the "power" concept of the European Union with Eastern neighbors' approach the EU determines the course of bilateral relations according to the countries' adherence to the principles of democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law, and their level of implementation of political reforms. Within the scope of the Eastern Partnership Initiative, the Union increases the importance it attaches to the socialization mechanism in the transfer of norms, values and standards to neighboring countries. In this context, the EU, which offers platforms to increase interaction and mobility between senior officials and civil society, deepens both bilateral and multilateral relations with its Eastern neighbors.

In this study, the relations of the European Union with its eastern neighbors are discussed within the framework of the neighborhood policy. In the study, first of all, the action plans, which are the most important tool of the neighborhood policy, will be discussed, the policy's Eastern Partnership initiative and in this context, the proposals made to neighboring countries in return for realizing reforms will be examined and the current situation of the countries will be analyzed. Furthermore, as the limitation of the EU normative power EU was forced to add some realpolitik elements such as Russia's influence will be discussed.

Literature Review

The EU's international role as a civilian power has proposed by Duchêne in the 1970s. Since then, this concept has changed and developed. Ian Manners described the EU as a normative power. From 2000, the "normative power" concept led to discussions among

researchers and policy-makers. The relations between the EU and Eastern Partnership countries have been researched as well as the normative role in the EU's foreign policy. However, the EU's normative power and the Realpolitik elements towards the EaP have not been researched in-depth.

Some of the researchers suggest that the normative power of the EU is a new model for the new world order at the same time there are some oppositions against that idea. According to Merlingen (2007), the normative power concept does not include innocent aims. Merlingen argues that norms can be understood as a control or a limit on political, social, cultural and other constraints. Surely, the EU with its sui generis structure of political and economic policy is a democracy and it promotes establishing the same structure for its cultural policy. Nevertheless, specifying which facets have used the relations with other countries in the economic, political, and cultural terms is not often possible. EU norms can be constraints on social, cultural, or political terms rather than emancipation from insecurity.

Robert Kagan (2002) suggests that the EU is not as powerful as it is perceived. The author gives the example of the Kosovo conflict in the 1990s and claims that it was the decline of the EU into a relative weakness because the US stabilized the situation. According to Kagan the EU no more believes in the importance of military power.

Neighborhood policy was a fairly new and remarkable area studied by researchers in the mid-2000s. Especially, most of the researchers working on enlargement policy are examined this policy. Although its history is nearly two decades old, it has very rich literature. It is possible to identify different approaches to the Neighborhood Policy in various groups.

The first group- Tassinari and Manners (Tassinari, F, 2009) claim that the interests, norms, and values of the Union play a role in the development of the neighborhood policy. It is generally accepted by researchers that EU institutions and member states make significant contributions to policy. In particular, the enlargement policy, which is known as the most effective tool used by the EU, is seen as the starting point of the neighborhood policy. Neighborhood policy aims to provide stability and security in neighboring countries by going through similar processes to enlargement policy. However, although the aims and the tools used are close, the same budget and the same perspective are not presented to the neighboring countries. According to Manners, it is possible to state that it has a complex structure that is intertwined. (Manners, I, 2009)

The second group -Ademmer, Delcour, Wolczuk, Schimmelfennig, and Scholtz address (2016) policy by questioning how much the Union influences the internal reforms of the countries concerned. In particular, they examine the extent to which various sectors and political transformation in neighboring countries has taken place. Schimmelfennig and Scholtz (2008) studied how effective and relevant the Union political requirement is for the promotion of democracy in third countries.

The third group –Aliboni,(2005) Maurer (2007), Monastiriotis, and Borrel (2012) consider politics as the foreign policy of the Union. As a foreign policy tool, the security and stability dimension of politics has been examined by researchers. Maurer (2007) states that many policies are presented under a single and comprehensive framework within the scope of neighborhood policy. However, he states that it differs from the traditional common foreign and security policy. Aliboni (2005) analyzed the possible scenarios by examining the geopolitical effects of the policy. In order to increase its political power, the Union should act more effectively in defusing crises and resolving conflicts, while making use of a common foreign and security policy and security strategy.

In the last group, Cadier and Truyens examined the regional and geographical dimensions of the policy and its consequences. Cadier (2014) analyzed the relations of the policy with its eastern neighbors and analyzed the competition between Russia and the Union in the region through the example of Ukraine. In conclusion, it proposes that the EU try to define its interests in the region more clearly and stick to its values, emphasize the regional dimension of the policy rather than individual countries and consider the strategic, political and economic structures specific to neighboring countries. Likewise, Truyens (2015) examined the relations of neighborhood policy with eastern countries. ; Thanks to the policy, the Union is increasing its effectiveness in the region; however, economic, governance and unresolved issues remain in the region.

Despite neighborhood policy and normative power being studied by researchers in the mid-2000s not so many researchers focused on realpolitik and normative power simultaneously and gaps in the literature inclined this comparison can demonstrate itself.

Methodology

The first chapter will reflect on the concept of Normative Power in Europe with the concept of Eastern Partnership countries as well as the limitation of the normative power. The

second chapter will analyze the history of the relationships between Eastern Partnership countries and the EU and how the Union enlarges towards the east with normative intention. The last chapter focuses on conflicts in Eastern Partnership countries as well as the transformation from “high” politics to “low” politics. The analysis includes the examination of the agreements between the EU and EaP countries, notably the 1999 Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, the 2006 Action Plan and the strategy papers by the Commission. Strategy papers of the ENP and the EaP will also be analyzed. The thesis covers the time interval between the beginning of Partnership and Cooperation Agreement until the outbreak of the war in Ukraine. Scientific approaches such as systemization and structurization as well as scientific cognition methods such as synthesis, modulation of historical and logical, analysis will be applied during the process of research. The strategy used in this paper is qualitative research elements such as case study and content analysis with the interpretative approach using the information provided by media sources and EU agreements.

Research questions and results

The key issue of this topic is the normative power of EU and its impact on Eastern Partnership Countries. This study will explain the EU’s normative power in its actions and behavior toward the EaP countries. Moreover, shifts towards Realpolitik will be taken into consideration and it will be examined with its consequences. Thereby the below-mentioned questions should be analyzed:

1. How does the current state of play could support the EU claims for the normative orientation in its relations with the EaP countries?
2. What are the limits of the EU normative power in the EaP countries?

The main goal of the research is to describe the relationship between EU and the Eastern Partnership and define the nature of the EU foreign policy towards the eastern region. Another aim is to examine the EU normative role and the nature of the EU power. The EU as a normative power aimed to export norms and practices to other countries and the fundamental of the EU identity is rule of law, democracy, and protection of human rights, freedom and social justice. The EU has aimed to promote and export these abovementioned norms to neighboring countries with the member states. However, the outbreak of the violent conflict between Russia and Ukraine at the end of 2013 demonstrates that the EU has failed in its efforts in Russia. The EU has been revived as a geopolitical and security actor, as well as

an economic and normative power, with new countries lining up to join it. Russia's invasion gives a sense of urgency and moral weight to Kyiv's EU aspirations. After the outbreak of the war, the question of whether the EU should use normative power elements or the *realpolitik* became more popular. Moreover, historical roots and origins of power concept, specifically normative power will be analyzed. The relations between normative power and other kinds of powers will be taken into account.

Research objective

The thesis aims at analyzing the concept of normative power versus *Realpolitik* in terms of Eastern Partnership countries relations. It will analyze problems and prospects for using of power. The purpose of this thesis is to research and analyze in detail the EU and EaP countries' historical roots, relations and influence state's policy.

Research novelty

This research is based on various approaches to the relations between the EU and Partnership Countries and contains historical, economic, political aspects. The thesis will mention norms which the EU wants to implement in its east neighbors. The scientific novelty is that the relationship was systematic and generalized between the EU and Eastern Partnership states. It consists of comprehensive analyzes and describes realities in the region and explain the EU's approach towards other countries. While the EU sets some common values, norms and rules in its democracy-promoting policies, it does not adopt a one-size-fits-all approach within the scope of Eastern Partnership. The deepening of bilateral relations with the elements of democracy promoted by the EU is driven by the internal context of the relevant country, and the EU calls this approach country-specific and tailor-made. It is not possible to consider the democracy promotion policies of the EU independent of the EU's interests, the Russian factor and especially the EU's energy dependence. This situation brings the inconsistent and selective application of the conditionality mechanism, which is one of the dominant mechanisms of the EU in democracy promotion. When the EU's approach towards its eastern neighbors is evaluated since the beginning of the 2000s it is seen that the conditionality mechanism for some countries is applied more consistently and stricter than others. However, apart from the fact that the EU's interests override the promotion of democracy, weakening the principle of conditionality, and the Russian factor, domestic dynamics have an important place as facilitating or complicating factors for the EU's influence. As a matter of fact, while there is no systemic effect of the EU and Russia in the

EU's Eastern Partnership countries when domestic dynamics and external factors are considered together, the success/failure of the EU in individual country examples is more obvious.

Thesis structure

This research consists of three chapters and seven subchapters in which a detailed explanation of relations between the EU and the Eastern Partnership Countries is covered.

The first chapter will shed light on the general idea of normative power and how it is used in world politics. The norm idea can be changed with the normative power concept. "Normative power" like other concepts is developed over time and Ian Manners, the Danish political scientist recommended using of "normative power" concept. In that concept "power" was explained as an ability to formalize "norm" ideas in world politics. The "normative power" idea was created in the liberal-idealistic approach. The EU has a special role in the promotion of democracy within the Eastern neighbors' approach. The EU deepens both bilateral and multilateral relations with its Eastern neighbors. However, the EU has limitations in terms of normative power with ENP countries. The absence of membership promise and weak conditionality mechanism toward Eastern Partnership countries has been a factor limiting the normative power. In the second chapter historical relations between the EU and Eastern Partnership countries are discussed. With the 2004 and 2007 enlargements, the EU in order to prevent separatist movements in Europe, to strengthen peace, security and stability has launched the European Neighborhood Policy. After the disintegration of the USSR, Europe gave priority to Eastern European countries and relations with the South Caucasus countries were of great importance for the EU. The fundamentals of EU's Enlargement policy in 1990s have been democratization and modernization in the economic field and the EU's concept was embodied by the "Copenhagen criteria" in which important political and economic tools are shown in the time of regime change.

Last chapter dedicated to explain security threats, unresolved conflicts and changing nature of the EU with some realpolitik elements. Over the years, since the implementing of the European Neighborhood Policy, the EU has been developing complicated means to shape the outside world. The EU has been driven by politics to promote its own values. The ENP agreements were about dealing with transition and "low" politics comes from EC experience with the joined countries in 2004-2007.

Chapter 1. Concept of Normative Power

1.1 Concept of Normative Power as an EU identity in Global Politics

A lot of scholars used terms to describe the EU as an international actor. These terms are “civilian power” (Duchêne F, 1972) “normative power” (Diez T., Manners I, 2007) “quiet superpower” (Moravcsik A, 2002), etc. An integrated Unity as an actor is a general feature of theirs but some limitations are obvious as well. Most of the academic studies about the role of EU in the world politics are hypotheses or discussions which show us its unique character of it. “Normative Power” proposes that the EU makes an effort to exert influence on actors of world politics such as states in matters of the values and norms. (Bickerton C. J, 2011)

“Normative power” like other political concepts has been developed over time, for this reason, we should pay careful attention to the predecessors which created conditions over time. There were the first debates about the role of the European Community and the international world thawed in the 1970s. François Duchêne made the most important remark to that discussion and created the idea of “civil power” in Europe. According to that power, the EC does not use military methods to coerce other international actors - primarily states but emphasizes civil methods. During that time, politics leaned against principles such as common social equality, justice, collective actions, and responsibility for creating an adequate international environment. (Duchêne F, 1973) This explanation of the term “power” was made for its time. Nevertheless, those times of world politics were influenced by two main powers, therefore, the EU could not be considered the main power to influence other actors. Affairs between two superpowers- the USSR and the USA were deteriorating and it made political realism and state’s power idea powerful and left “civil power” less attractive for world politics in the 1980s. Hedley Bull, an Australian realist, stated that the “civil power” idea was a paradox in its terms: it had a weak foundation in terms of 1970s progressive thinking because the concept of “force” basically was about the military might of member states. According to Bull, Europe had to be more sovereign about the defense and security matters and not depend on the USA. (Bull H, 1982) When the “European Security and Defense Policy” was created in 1999, the military component of the EU was strengthened.

With the fall of the USSR and the ending of the Cold War, a new debate about the status of the EU as a regional and global actor began at a new level. The globalization process, problems with war and peace made topics such as human rights, equality, democracy, humanitarian interventions significant. Because of these changes, the EU identified its key areas in foreign policy. These key areas are based on ethical norms which were determined by

United Nations Charters. The EU's foreign policy is based on the policy to protect human rights, maintain good governance, and "normative power" concepts and they dominated the European studies since then.

Ian Manners, the Danish political scientist who responded to the "civil power" concept of François Duchêne, recommended the "normative power" concept. In that concept, the "power" idea of the EU was explained as an ability to formalize "norm" ideas in world politics. Manners underlined that with the ending of the Cold War "civil" and "military power" terms became outdated and should be revised. (Manners I, 2002) That is why, the "normative power" idea which was created in the liberal-idealistic approach is emphasized by the abandonment of state-centered traditional approaches; therefore, military and economic aspects of the EU cannot describe "power" notion. (Diez T., Manners I, 2007)

However, there were some weak aspects of this concept. There is no exact explanation of "normative power". Ian Manners explained his approach to interpretation in 2001 and systematized three visions: normative international theory, the power of the actors, and the international identity perspective. (Manners I, 2011)

The normative international theory approach emphasized the presence of normative ideas in world politics. Molly Cochran, an American political scientist, stated that all international affairs should be based on the concept of a normative approach. (Cochran M, 1999) We should take some assumptions into account if we consider the EU's "normative power" from the normative approach to world politics according to Manners. How researchers evaluate and confirm these assumptions and criticize them should be paid attention to. (Manners I, 2011) Manners recommended that to understand the significance of the EU in the international world, a wider and modern approach should be employed. (Manners I, 2008)

The second approach, which I. Manners explains, is about imagining "normative power" as the power of actors in the international area. Although, it is not defined by material stimuli or physical coercion; it is explained by the ability to justify of normative role. According to Manners, this "power" type can be understood as a social power, since the ability to impact individuals' behaviors is not the main idea but the secondary importance. These are the basic aspects of "normative power" since it is about arranging and implementing principles in world politics sustainably.

The last approach is about interpreting "normative power" from the standpoint of international identity as a behavior of international actors. According to I. Manners, by this

approach international actors, come to close to the ideal type of this power. It is suggested that global actors utilize the concept of “normative justification” to “normalize a cosmopolitical environment”. (Manners I, 2011) This approach is an important concept for “normative power” because any powerful actor can form the “normal” idea in world politics.

“Soft power” (in contrast to “hard power”), which was coined in the 1990s by Joseph Nye, and other “powers” relations with “normative power” is a contentious aspect of research. (Nye J, 1990) According to Nye, “soft power” is such a set of tools that use persuasion, and shows positive attraction for getting desired results. (Nye J, 2011) Nikolai Yudin stated soft power is targeted at the “healing” of an object’s environment such as reducing the immediate challenges effects and threats. (Yudin N. V, 2015) From that point of view the similarity between “normative power” and “soft power” is clear. But Ian Manners and Thomas Diez explained it the other way around. They emphasized that “soft power” is an empirical aspect that can be used for negative ambitions as a tool of foreign policy, whereas “normative power” is a theoretical concept that requires differentiation between practices and social diffusion. To generalize, “normative power” is not an instrument of foreign policy which is used for state interests. (Diez T., Manners I, 2007) This approach raises some questions. If “normative power” is not a tool of foreign policy, the norms are spread in various ways such as trade, assistance, and sanction over developing countries. The border between “normative power” and imperial approach is not clear as well as the correlation with the “normative sustainability” principle. Furthermore, the idea that “normative power” does not help national interest is also suspicious since interest and values, norms are inseparable. According to E. B. Pavlova and T. A. Romanova, interpreting national interest is the result of states’ perception of the international environment and its current norms. (Manners I, 2002) That is why it is virtually impossible to separate rational foundation from “normative power”.

Furthermore, Manners stresses that the soft power which was formulated by Nye cannot be utilized for researching the EU since it was used for explaining the USA’s foreign policy - the mixture of “soft” and “hard” power. (Diez T., Manners I, 2007) When we look at its historical use, it was obvious that the popularity of “normative power” stemmed from the US foreign policy by Bush after 9/11. In contrast to the USA which was inclined to utilize military power, the EU was making endeavors to utilize diplomacy for solving disputes. That is why the EU has a reputation as a model of obeying international law. For that reason “normative power” puts the EU in order with the US and other international actors. According to scholars of “normative power”, classic Westphalian actors used material competition for

reaching their goals, whereas the EU created a new level by using value competition for achieving a reasonable environment for international affairs. It means the EU succeeded in being a superior and ideal actor in an international area that has an ample level of development for helping the other partners of its own via “norm” and impacting them. The superiority approach can create some questions in developing countries.

Specific care should be given to the roots of “normative power” whether they were created as nature or policy of the EU. (Manners I., 2006) According to Thomas Diez and Michele Pace, the EU possesses “normative power” not only as a special tool but also the specific identity. (Diez T., Pace M, 2011)

Manners states three origins of the EU’s “normative power”: historically (after world wars), polity (hybrid case), and constitution (from a political-legal aspect). (Manners I, 2002) The main values of the EU are the foundation of the treaties which make the EU identity. The Union is created on the norms of respect for dignities of humanity, democracy, freedom, minorities’ rights, etc. They are the norms of Member States in a pluralist, non-discriminate society

Also, principles guiding international relations are similar to the EU norms: the Union encourages and sustains its principles and protects its citizens. It protects peace, stability, and development of the world, harbors respect among people, promotes trade, manages poverty, and maintains human rights specifically those of the children, as well as respects UN Charter 5 principles. (The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, TFEU. Part One, Article 3.) That is why the EU has affairs with the international world based on the “power” concept which is in this regard based on fundamental values and norms according to Manners. (Manners I, 2002) But, policy of states can include discrepancies between values in theory and practice. It raises the question about disregarding some values can justify using another one, which norms are more valuable and how to interpret them. Nowadays, the EU is controlled by the more important value which is human rights and it is more important than national sovereignty. It means with the help of this approach the EU can intervene in other actors’ domestic relations if threats to fundamental human rights emerge. However, some actors such as Russia and China do not share this interpretation of the law; therefore, the EU’s “normative power” cannot be considered as precise.

Scholars from European and non-European countries have different ideas about the importance of the EU in the global world. Scholars from European backgrounds are inclined

to describe the EU nature as an ideal specifically by the advocates of “normative power” values. This raises the question to justify the EU as being an attractive role model and studying it as a global power promoting basic fundamental values. Ian Manners stated the EU’s role in world politics in 2008 by making clear that the EU is and will be a power in the international area in terms of “normative values”(Manners I., 2008)This perception moves the EU’s normative power to a different level in the ideological concepts.

In terms of consistent foreign and domestic policies of the EU, we can observe the EU can sometimes lose energy (Wood S, 2009) specifically in terms of the central “normative power”- human rights. (Bailes A. J. K, 2008) That kind of paradox can decrease the convincing nature of the EU which can be formed with political goals and reasons. This power is the most powerful one in the international area for solving ethical issues, safeguarding human rights, solving problems about climate change, and helping international stability. That’s the reason why the success of “normative power” is assessed by the accomplishment of these abovementioned areas.

Otherwise, the EU’s inspiration to be a “normative actor” cannot be considered a solid fact. The EU can use any power necessary but the impact on world politics is dependent on the vision which is shared by states in international relations. These studies are little examined by European authors whereas the image of the EU in Russia, China, India, and Japan is studied heavily and concluded with not using “hard power” the image of the EU is positive. (F. Cerutti, S. Lucarelli, 2008) The EU acts as a global actor and takes into account the ideas of its partners concluding the self-reflecting phase.

It is worth taking note of the inconsistency and ideal character of the “normative power” of the EU if we talk about the likelihood of this power. This area stressing fundamental values of the EU policy offers a modern concept to the union and its role in global politics.

1.2 Perception of EU Normative Power by EaP countries

ENP is accepted as the most successful foreign policy tool as the EU's adaptation of the enlargement policy to the neighborhood since it learned from the EU's success in the democratization of countries. Thus, the enlargement policy constitutes the ENP’s existential reason and the historical dependence on the EU's promotion of reforms based on democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. In addition, the tools and mechanisms used by the EU in the ENP are similar to those used in the enlargement policy In this respect, the EU's

conditionality mechanism in the ENP is similar to the conditionality used in its enlargement policy, but it is considered rather mild since it cannot provide a sufficient incentive for the realization of reforms in the absence of membership promises. (Kelley J, 2006). The success of the EU in the democratic transformation of the candidate countries with enlargements is attributed to the existence of the pressure that created the rigidity of the conditionality mechanism and the promise of a reliable membership. (Schimmelfennig, F., & Sedelmeier, U. 2004)

With the “Europeanization” of neighboring countries, the EU wants to promote fundamental norms and values for being a normative power. Promoting democracy is the main part of European values and it plays a central role in this process. The ENP process is about relations without present accession or pre-accession aspects between the EU and states which are neighboring the union. ENP aims to connect the advantages of enlargement with states near the EU in stability and security matters and by this action to create a “ring of friends”. ENP creates an opportunity for neighboring states to take part in different activities on the topic of political, security, economic, cultural, and education. But the EU also seeks from its partners the commitment to fundamental norms, specifically the rule of law, human rights, good governance, and friendly relations with other neighboring countries. In other words, by creating “a ring of friends” the EU wants to surround itself with some kind of politically stable states, have good governance, and be economically prosperous. Therefore, the ENP follows the aims of the European Security Strategy which are about making a contribution to stabilization and good governance in the neighboring countries.

The EU wants to advance the “Europeanization” process in the neighboring countries. The term 'Europeanization' cannot be founded on a specialized definition such as "the approval of European and worldwide agreements by the government" since Europeanization, or the change is not just a parliamentary interaction dependent on quantities of votes in favor and against. (E. Kūlahçı, 2005) Europeanization simply means confirmation of some policies, structures, or identities which are common in member states. All of these particular policies, identities, or structures are norms such as liberty, democracy, the rule of law, and fundamental values. (Diez T, Agnantopoulosi A and Kaliber A, 2005) One of the scholars, Robert Ladrech, explains this term as applying EC’s political and economic aspects to the countries’ economic and political decision-making process gradually. (Ladrech R, 1994) Another scholar Cladia Major also explains Europeanization as a transformation and socialization which happens gradually. (Major C, 2005) Thomas Diez, who described Europeanization at a greater level,

attached new notions such as the balance between public and private as well as the executive and legislative, transforming policy-making conduction. (Diez T., Wiener A., 2004) He also added two main features to this notion and systemized it by doing so. One of these two concepts is about European integration and this process happens in this context, another one is about applying the policies, structures, or identities to the actor as a one-way approach. (Diez T, Agnantopoulosi A and Kaliber A, 2005)

The Europeanization process cannot be considered a straightforward one but rather is a multi-dimensional process because it includes changing from political life to social life by learning policies. However, membership is not on the agenda with the discussion of the ENP, it benefits via various tools to support democratic norms in neighboring countries. If we look and examine closely the influence of the ENP in the democratization process, we will understand the effective tool of the “normative power” in the ENP context.

It is worth explaining the term “democratization” which means a process of changes in different aspects of the democratic rule of law. Transition to democracy is studied a lot and there have been numerous case studies on this topic. Samuel P. Huntington described three waves of transformation to democracy. (Huntington S.P. 1991) With the third wave of this process, a new transition process in the neighboring countries by the ENP can be added as well as the changes in the Central and Eastern Europe countries.

Although democratization as a term is vague, the EU is obvious about its requirements from neighboring countries and they are written in formal documents of the EU. In the Country Reports and Action Plans, which are written by European Commission, the chapter “political issues” relates to democracy, respect for human rights, stability, justice, and fundamental freedom; and the “Economic and Social Situation” chapter talks about the macroeconomic and social view, free trade, reforms in market and research. It means this transformation process should be understood from all aspects of countries from minority rights to the energy sector.

1.3 Limits of the EU Normative Power beyond its borders

The EU is called civil power; (Duchêne, F. 1973) normative power (Manners, I. 2002) and transformative power, (Börzel, T. A., & Lebanidze, B 2017) have limitations concerning normative power with ENP countries. The limited impact of the EU on the democratization of third-party countries is widely discussed in the literature through the lack of a membership

perspective. While the EU's conditionality is evaluated as weak, the reward offered within the scope of conditionality is seen as ambiguous. (Burlyuk, O., & Shapovalova, N 2017) The conditionality practiced in ENP is called conditionality-lite by Sasse. It draws attention to the fact that this conditionality can constitute an important application mechanism in realizing the EU's reform demands, at least for countries with EU membership goals and integration aspirations. Thus, he points out that if these countries carry out reforms, the EU will have difficulty denying the membership option.(Burlyuk, O., & Shapovalova, N 2008) Beyond the absence of membership promise and weak conditionality mechanism; Börzel and Lebanidze draw attention to the fact that the selective and inconsistent application of conditionality towards Eastern Partnership countries has emerged as a factor limiting the normative and transformative power of the EU.(Börzel, T. A., & Lebanidze, B, 2017)

Lavenex proposes the sector-based governance approach as an alternative to conditionality on the EU's role in democratizing and deepening integration in the neighborhood area. In the sector-based governance approach, apart from the expectation and purpose of foreign policy to create a regime change at the macro level; The EU effect is tried to be determined by looking at the EU's policy, rule, norm, and standard transfer in areas such as energy, environment, security, migration, and trade, where the mutual dependence of the EU and neighboring countries is high. The starting point of the governance approach is that a systemic and positive EU effect is not expected in the democratization of the countries within the framework of the ENP, due to the absence of membership offered by the EU in the neighborhood area.(Freyburg, T., Lavenex, S., Schimmelfennig, F., Skripka, T., & Wetzel, 2015)

Studies have stated external actors, who play a role in promoting democracy, consider the internal dynamics of the relevant country and that the internal dynamics and actors of countries are a part of promoting democracy. (Stewaer, S. 2009) In this respect, beyond the ways, the EU presents its own identity, norms, and values within the scope of ENP and tries to transfer them to neighboring countries, the perceptions, interpretations, and strategies of neighboring countries towards the EU and Europe are equally important and decisive. (Browning, C. S., & Christou, G. 2010) Thus, the level of identification of the identity, norms, and values of the third country with the EU identity, norms, and values (Balkır, C. Soyaltın, D, 2018) is decisive for the EU to be a normative power in these countries and for the EU's perception of itself, its borders and the security environment. (Browning, C. S., & Christou, G. 2010)

The EU published the European Security Strategy for the first time in 2003. In the strategy document, it is underlined that in the post-Cold War period, military threats have been replaced by different threats. In addition, it stated that neighbors at risk of violent conflict, smuggling, terrorism, nuclear proliferation, and organized crime on their borders pose threats to Europe. Promoting reforms and good governance was offered as a solution, and it was deemed that trade, development policies, and aid programs could be beneficial. (European Union. European Security Strategy – A secure Europe in a Better World. 2003) In this direction, the ENP, in which the EU demonstrated the relationship between security and democracy, was initiated for 16 countries upon the recommendation of the European Commission including three South Caucasus countries Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia. (Commission of the European Communities. European Neighbourhood Policy Strategy Paper 2004). The Neighborhood Policy aims to establish a “circle of friends” that shares European norms and values such as democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. It is possible to say that the main reason underlying this policy is foreign security concerns. (Balkır, C. Soyaltın, D. 2018)

The EU has placed importance on the promotion of democracy by improving its relations with its Eastern neighbors within the framework of the ENP. When the action plans are examined, there are specific issues such as promoting economic development and improving the investment environment. However, it has taken into account the needs and current contexts of countries by applying the EU Neighborhood Policy according to the principle of distinction. For example, the desires and wills of the relevant countries regarding EU integration have been effective in achieving a further level of integration in their relations with Moldova and Ukraine and increasing the emphasis on democracy in their policies towards these countries. Thus, in addition to the emphasis on economic and commercial relations and development in Ukraine and Moldova (EU/Moldova Action Plan, 2005), guaranteeing democratic elections, ensuring freedom of press and expression, fighting corruption, realizing reforms in the fields of political dialogue and fundamental freedoms were also emphasized. (EU/Ukraine Action Plan, 2005)

Among the Eastern Partnership countries, Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova were the countries where relations were deepened at the most advanced level. The EU has applied the principle of democratic conditionality in its relations with Ukraine. It did not recognize the results of the presidential elections held in 2004 deeming it as fraud, and the initiation of the Association Agreement negotiations was conditional on the progress of reforms to consolidate

democracy, cooperation with the Council of Europe, and the United Nations human rights bodies, and compliance with international standards. .(EU/Ukraine Action Plan, 2005) In return for the free and impartial conduct of the 2006 parliamentary and 2007 presidential elections in Ukraine, the EU started negotiations as a reward.(Ferreira-Pereira, L. C., & Viera, A.V. G ,2014) In Ukraine, which is considered the most successful example of the EU in promoting democracy, it has been observed that it does not impose any sanctions in cases of corruption, violations of freedom of expression and the principles of freedom of the press and the rule of law, and it reacts moderately by applying positive conditionality.(Franke, A., Gawrich, A., Melnykovska, I., & Schweickert, R , 2010)

During the period when Viktor Yanukovich came to power, he carried out practices different from democratization. Ukraine did not sign the Agreement after Russia announced that it would cut energy supply through Ukraine to prevent the signing of the Association Agreement with the EU. The result was that Russia rewarded this anti-EU behavior by giving Ukraine 11 billion euros in loans, lifting trade sanctions, and lowering the natural gas price. (Lehne, S. 2014) However, thanks to the Euro events triggered by the failure to sign the agreement with the EU, Yanukovich's rule ended and the EU decided to sign the Association Agreement with Ukraine in 2014, even though the reforms in Ukraine did not reach the desired level, showing that it supports democracy and pro-European movement in Ukraine. (Pridham, G., 2011) Brudny and Finkel emphasize the importance of not having a pro-Russian hegemonic national identity in the country for the EU to be effective in the democratization of Ukraine. (Brudny, Y. M., & Finkel, E. 2011)

Similarly, the EU did not recognize the results of the fraudulent elections held in Georgia in 2003 and supported civil society and opposition movements. During the 2003 Rose Revolution, it did not approve new loans to be given to the country by applying financial sanctions against the government and putting pressure on the government by causing a budget crisis before the elections. Thus, it is possible to talk about the impact of the EU in the fall of Shevardnadze's government and the success of the pro-Western and reformist opposition. (Börzel, T. A., & Lebanidze, B, 2017) Before the 2012 elections, the EU pointed out that there is a connection between the democratic conduct of the elections and the size and intensity of the future relations with the EU, and stated that it would implement the principle of democratic conditionality. (European Commission. Joint statement by a high representative, 2012) One of the countries where relations have reached the highest level within the framework of the ENP is Georgia. (Nilsson, M., & Silander, D, 2016)

After gaining its independence, Moldova experienced mismanagement by unstable coalition governments and experienced government changes at short intervals. The weakness and instability of the Moldovan economy emerge as a complicating factor for democratization. (McDonagh, E. 2008) In Moldova which is the poorest country in Europe, more than half of the population lives in rural areas with the lowest employment rate. Thus, it is possible to say that one of the main reasons for Moldova to support integration with the EU is rural development, which is one of the strategic goals of the country. (Chirila, V, 2015)

EU aid is very effective in Moldova, which has a high dependence on external factors such as trade with Russia and Ukraine and the arrival of foreign currency through remittances from migrant workers working abroad. (McDonagh, E, 2008) Even though pro-European parties could not form a majority coalition in the elections held after the Association Agreement with the EU was signed in 2014, the pace of reforms slowed down, corruption increased and the proportion of those supporting integration with the EU decreased throughout the country. (Chirila, V, 2015) After the corruption scandals of 2015, in which Moldovan politicians were also involved, the EU stopped financial aid to Moldova by criticizing the Moldovan government for not carrying out the promised political reforms. (euractiv.com,2015)

It is seen that the EU fully implements the principle of conditionality, including sanctions, in its relations with Belarus, which is defined as an authoritarian or unfree country. The EU General Affairs and Foreign Relations Council expressed concerns about the parliamentary elections held in the country in 2004; Several restraining measures, such as limiting aid to support civil society and democratization, and imposing a visa ban on government officials have been proposed. In the following years, sanctions such as travel bans on government officials, freezing the assets of some citizens, and an arms embargo were imposed on the country. (Korosteleva, E., 2012) The EU continued to use the conditionality mechanism positively, offering new incentives for the development of bilateral relations.

It is not possible to explain the changing approach of the EU towards Belarus without considering the change in Belarus' internal dynamics. It partially joined the ENP and held a different position in other Eastern Partnership countries. (Ekinci, F, 2018) Until 2008, Belarus followed a foreign policy that was far from accepting EU values and focused on the rewards it obtained from its close relations with Russia. However, with Putin's rise to power, Belarus has been led to a tendency toward the EU as a balancing factor in foreign policy and to refine the cooperation with the EU. To gain EU support, Belarus took steps to improve democratic

conditions, political prisoners were released and two newspapers were granted freedom. These developments convinced the EU to improve relations by giving new incentives to Belarus. (Browning, C. S., & Christou, G. 2010) Lukashenko's desire to reduce his dependence on Russia and the influence of Russia in domestic politics created a factor that changed the course of relations with the EU. (Ekinici, F, 2018)

Despite Russia's traditional political, cultural, military, and economic influence in Armenia, it is possible to talk about the EU's influence, albeit limited. Since independence, Armenian politics had traditionally focused on the frozen Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, and Russia is seen as a vital security partner. Although official discourse in Armenia focuses on the European identity of the country, nation, and state-building processes are attributed to the Soviet period and Russia, which is seen as the continuation of the Soviets, the closest regional player with which relations can be developed. However, the fact that a significant part of the Armenian population lives outside the borders of the country necessitates the diversification of foreign relations with many actors rather than focusing on a single country. In this context, the EU is seen as an important political and economic bloc. (Vieria, A., & Vasilyan, S, 2018) In Armenia, where relations with the EU deepened until the signing of the Association Agreement, Russia announced that it would withdraw its military support, which is considered vital for ensuring the security of the country, with the sanctions on energy supply and trade to prevent the signing of the Agreement. Although Armenia seems to have preferred Russia over economic integration with the EU, it continued its relations with the EU at a similar level and signed a new framework agreement. It is possible to talk about two important reasons for Armenia's choice to deepen its relations with the EU, despite the Russian factor. The absence of a land connection and a functioning railway connection between Armenia and the member states emerges as a structural obstacle. In addition, membership requires increasing customs tariff rates and directing Armenia's trade relations with the Western market to the single-centered Russian market. (Giragosian, R. 2015) These issues will contrast with the multilateralism that Armenia is trying to implement in its foreign policy.

When an evaluation is made in terms of the implementation of the conditionality principle, it is seen that the EU has not shown stability in applying the democratic conditionality principle to Armenia. Against Armenia, which violates the basic principles of democracy and the rule of law, the EU did not go beyond criticizing the elections and did not impose any sanctions against the violations of democracy and human rights in the country.

(Börzel, T. A., & Lebanidze, B, 2017) In the process initiated within the framework of the neighborhood policy, Armenia acted with economic concerns, and the relations were shaped by the need to increase its economic development. At the same time, the EU expected Armenia to carry out long-term reforms that are vital for the democratization of Armenia to end regional conflicts, and aimed to advance the conditionality principle at a certain level by utilizing its financial and economic capacity in Armenia. However, this approach could not initiate the political transformation in Armenia. (Simao, L. 2012) However, the indifference of the West and the continuation of the deepening of economic relations lead to the fact that, unlike the democratization process in Armenia, the EU is seen as a factor contributing to the survival of the authoritarian regime.(Börzel, T. A., & Lebanidze, B , 2017)

Attaching importance to its relations with the West in its post-independence foreign policy, Azerbaijan established close relations with the EU, but always considered the pressure of Russia. In this context, with the effect of seeing the EU as a symbol of democracy and human rights, relations with the EU have been improved, and steps have been taken to ensure the political and economic stability of the country with the revenues to be obtained from energy exports. (Memmedli, E 2017)

The fact that Russia is an important partner in terms of energy and trade relations has built the EU's relations with its Eastern neighbors, which are former Soviet countries, in a way that did not make Russia hostile to itself during the 1990s. This "Russia first" policy followed by the EU (Solonenko, I, 2009) has also been maintained within the scope of the relations established with the Eastern Partnership countries. Russia applies “cross-conditionality” to break the EU influence in countries it sees as its sphere of influence. Russia's decision to impose trade sanctions against Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, and Armenia, when they want to increase their level of integration with the EU, interrupted the energy supply and announced that it would withdraw military support in the case of Armenia. As a result, Ukraine and Armenia refrained from signing the Association Agreements. After Russia's annexation of Crimea in Ukraine, where the pro-European and EU government came to power is important in terms of showing the necessity that the EU attaches to normative values.

To sum up, it has been accepted that the promise of membership, which is seen as the most successful foreign policy and security strategy tool of the EU, has lost its sustainability for the EU. Aiming to maintain its relations with its close and distant neighbors, especially the ENP, by creating a circle of friends around it, the EU considers the promotion of democracy

as a part of its security strategy. Making the democratic conditionality principle the EU acts selectively in the implementation of this principle. This selectivity of the EU is mainly due to its concerns about security and trouble-free access to energy resources.

It is seen that the EU puts conditionality mechanisms to the fore more in some countries in its policies carried out with its Eastern partners, and develops more detailed and comprehensive policies in the fields of civil society and democratization. In this case, as seen in the examples of Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia, the desire of the countries for EU integration and the will to realize the political reforms demanded by the EU have been decisive. Furthermore, the EU added realpolitik elements in its policy with EaP, and in “Twenty deliverables for 2020” there were chapters about cooperation in security fields. In November 2015, there was a section about the “security dimension” and it mentioned crisis management in EaP countries. To conclude, the EaP became crossroads and mixed elements of normative power and realpolitik and adjusted accordingly to the crises.

Chapter 2

2.1 Historical Background of the relations between EU and Eastern Partnership countries

In the light of the 2004 and 2007 enlargements, the EU in order to prevent separatist movements in Europe and to strengthen peace, security, and stability has launched a new initiative called the European Neighborhood Policy. This Policy is an indicator that more importance is given to bilateral relations between neighboring countries. The ENP policy first was addressed in 2003 and extended in 2004 by the “European Neighborhood Policy Strategic Document”. (Commission of the European Communities, 2003) From the statement made at the Thessaloniki Summit, Ukraine and Moldova, which hope for membership in the future, are not placed in the same basket as the Mediterranean countries that are not given a membership perspective, therefore they were not pleased at all. The Commission's proposal also has been criticized by Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia. (Aydın, Mustafa, 2005)

Since the disintegration of the USSR, Europe's been prioritizing Eastern European countries with geographical and cultural affiliations. (Çelikpala M, 2008) Despite this, relations with the South Caucasus countries were of great importance for the EU. For example, in a decision taken by the European Parliament in 2010, attention was drawn to the increasing importance of the South Caucasus as it is energy and communication corridor connecting the Caspian basin and Central Asia to Europe, and for this reason, the EU's relations with the South Caucasus were deemed important. (European Parliament resolution of 20 May 2010 on the need for an EU strategy for the South Caucasus)

The EU's first initiatives towards Azerbaijan and other regional countries were financial assistance (Ağacan K, 2007) to help these countries maintain their independence and transition to democracy and a market economy. The legal framework of relations between Azerbaijan and the EU started with the signing of OIA. (Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Communities and the Republic Of Azerbaijan) This tool was signed in Luxembourg on 22 April 1996 and entered into force on 1 July 1999, after being ratified by all signatories. OIA has given new impetus to relations between the two parties by providing appropriate mechanisms to strengthen cooperation. This document encompasses democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law, reforms, free trade, and investment, and economic, legislative, cultural, and other cooperation. The specific objectives of the agreement are to ensure the development of political relations between the parties within the framework of the relevant political dialogue, to strengthen democracy in

Azerbaijan, to support economic development and the transition to a market economy, to establish cooperation in trade, investment environment, economic, social, financial, scientific, technical and cultural fields, etc. One of its other main objectives has been to align Azerbaijan's legislation with the EU legislation.

Since 2000, the Permanent Representative Office of Azerbaijan to the EU was opened in Brussels, and on February 4, 2008, the EU Representation in Azerbaijan was opened in Baku. (Qurbanov I, 2017) Due to its strategic location and energy opportunities, Azerbaijan has been at an important point for the EU. In particular, cooperation in the field of energy has been an important subject of negotiations between the parties. (president.az, 2013) After independence, the first foundations of the Azerbaijan-EU energy dialogue officially started with the INOGATE program. The transfer of Baku oil to Europe by Western companies has opened a new page in bilateral relations in the energy sector. In 1994, with the agreement signed between Azerbaijan and Russia, England and the US state, and private oil companies, these companies were entitled to extract crude oil from the Caspian Basin. The construction of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline was started in 2002 for the transfer of crude oil, and when this pipeline was put into use in 2006, it became a bridge in the energy corridor of Azerbaijan. (Qurbanov İ., 2017)

Furthermore, a Strategic Partnership Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the two sides in 2006, which aims to deepen cooperation, especially on energy. The Memorandum of Understanding identified areas of cooperation in four departments - legislative adaptation, supply and transit systems, energy efficiency, technical cooperation, and experience sharing. (europarl.europa.eu 2006)

In January 2011, the parties signed the Southern Gas Corridor Joint Declaration in Baku. The Southern Gas Corridor has been a strategic initiative that can bring Caspian, Central Asian, and Middle Eastern natural gas resources to the European market and contribute to the diversification of EU energy imports. Azerbaijan approved the development of more strategic and multilateral relations within the scope of the Eastern Partnership in 2009.(consilium.europa.eu , 2009) At the 2011 Warsaw Summit of the Eastern Partnership, Azerbaijan accepted its commitments to build deep and sustainable democracy and expressed its desire to establish closer relations with the EU. In addition, Azerbaijan approached the development of strategically important infrastructure in order to diversify the energy transportation routes from the Caspian Sea to the European market and approved action plans on other issues. (consilium.europa.eu, 2011)

At the 2013 Vilnius Summit, the EU stated that it supports Azerbaijan's membership in the WTO and declared that it is ready to start the Association Agreement negotiations. In addition, a Visa Facilitation Agreement was signed with Azerbaijan and it was decided to start negotiations on the Joint Aviation Area Agreement. At the Summit, targets to be reached by 2015 were determined among all parties. (consilium.europa.eu, 2013)

At the 2015 Riga Summit, where the Crimean crisis was on the agenda, the Framework Agreement Protocol determining Azerbaijan's participation in EU programs was approved. In addition, Azerbaijan's approach has been positively evaluated in the ongoing work on the realization of the Southern Gas Corridor and the expansion of the South Caucasus Pipeline, the Trans-Anatolian Pipeline, and the Trans Adriatic Pipeline. (eeas.europa.eu, 2015)

At the 2017 Brussels Summit, it was stated that the negotiations for an Agreement with Azerbaijan continue positively. (consilium.europa.eu 2017) If we summarize the Azerbaijan-EU relations, it is possible to say that the priority of the EU in relations with Azerbaijan was perceived not as closing the democracy gap in the country, but rather as providing energy supply. (Kobzova, J., Alieva, L., 2012)

EU-Armenia relations were rebuilt after the disintegration of the USSR. In 1994, the EU has been represented by a delegation in Yerevan. (Cevikoz U, 2016) SPA was signed between Armenia and the EU on 22 April 1996. (Özdaşlı E, 2016) The agreement envisaged wide-ranging cooperation in the fields of political dialogue, trade, investment, economy, law, and culture. (eeas.europa.eu, 1999)

A new era has started in EU-Armenia relations within the framework of the ENP since 2004 and the Eastern Partnership since 2009. As a result of the positive progress of bilateral relations with Armenia, it was decided to start PA negotiations with Armenia at the 2011 Warsaw Summit of the Eastern Partnership (consilium.europa.eu, 2011). The signing of the Agreement between the parties was expected at the Vilnius Summit, however, Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan, who was on an official visit to Moscow on September 3, 2013, made a surprise move and joined EEU and Customs Union. (eurasiancommission.org, 2013)

At the Riga Summit held in May 2015, it was decided to start new negotiations with Armenia, and finally, at the October 2017 Brussels Summit, a large part of the PA was enacted between the EU and Armenia. (eeas.europa.eu 2021)

In summary, the CEEA, which has the same content as the SPA, focuses on human rights, establishing a democratic environment, deepening cooperation in commercial areas, the convergence of economies with gradual economic integration, access to markets, facilitating investment conditions, aligning the business environment with EU standards, accelerating communication between societies, safe mobility. Taking into account Armenia's obligations as a member of the EEU, CEEA has also been evaluated as an initiative aiming at differentiated and more flexible integration. (Giragosian R., 2017) The establishment of relations between **Belarus**, which declared its independence after the USSR, and the EU, has been very difficult, unlike other former Soviet countries. Bilateral relations continued with the negotiation process in 1994 and the signing of the SPA in 1995. However, Aleksander Lukashenko, who was elected in 1994, organized a referendum in 1996 to increase his influence in the government and then turned himself into an authoritarian head of state, which resulted in the rejection of the approval of the SPA, which was criticized and signed by EU countries. (White, S., Korosteleva, E., 2005) Since 1999, the increase in violence and repression against the dissidents has led to the complete rupture of relations between the West and Belarus, as well as the imposition of sanctions against Lukashenko and his government, defined as the "Last Dictator of Europe". (Melyantsou D., 2017)

Due to the non-enforcement of the SPA, commercial relations with Belarus were established through the Trade and Cooperation Agreement signed with the USSR in 1989, and the EU was content with imposing certain quotas on Belarusian products from 1993 to 2006, instead of trade sanctions against Belarus. Most of these sanctions lasted until 2009. In the 2008 Russia-Georgia war, Minsk's attempts to establish peace between the parties, as well as the non-recognition of the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia by Belarus, as well as the release of political prisoners, had a positive effect on EU-Belarusian relations. (europarl.europa.eu, 2009)

Although positive relations were not established within the scope of the ENP, which was initiated in 2004, the EU carried out projects and provided technical assistance in Belarus through the financial programs of TACIS and ENPI. Between 1991 and 2004, 221 million Euros were allocated to these projects. (Korosteleva E., 2012) Since 2009, EU-Belarusian relations have started to take shape through the Eastern Partnership. In 2007, the Trade and Cooperation Agreement was renewed between the parties and remained in force.

Belarus has the least developed ties with the EU among the Eastern Partnership countries. Accordingly, while the EU aimed to establish relations with other countries within

the framework of PA, relations with Belarus were mostly in the form of regulation of human rights and commercial relations. In addition, in order to reduce the influence of Russia, it is aimed to develop dialogue and cooperation with Belarus in the field of energy. The government's harsh reaction to the demonstrations, which started as an objection to Lukashenko's victory in the 2010 elections, and the imprisonment of the dissidents again led to a new crisis in EU-Belarus relations. As a result of this crisis, the EU expanded the scope of sanctions. (economist.com , 2010)

EU-Belarus relations have only started to progress positively since 2015. Negotiation between the parties on visa facilitation and readmission agreement resumed. Moreover, the EU stated that the concrete steps taken by Belarus to respect universal freedoms, the rule of law, and human rights, including fundamental rights, will be the main criteria in shaping the EU's policies towards Belarus. (eeas.europa.eu, 2017)

Moreover, in July 2015, it was again decided by Belarus to continue the EU-Belarusian Human Rights Dialogue and hold annual talks. In addition, Minsk has decided on the release of political prisoners. In response, the EU lifted most of the sanctions imposed in February 2016 and started negotiations to establish relations in the economic and other fields of cooperation. In this context, the EU has given special importance to the abolition of the death penalty, the fight against torture and ill-treatment, and freedom of expression and freedom of assembly in Belarus, the only country in Europe where the death penalty is applied.

In February 2016, the official economic dialogue started between the parties. In addition, the EU has created the “Spring” program, which supports the private sector and economic initiatives in Belarus and foresees employment opportunities. Moreover, in 2016, the EU-Belarus Customs Dialogue was launched. This dialogue is aimed at facilitating trade, ensuring supply chain security and safety, and identifying possible cooperation and assistance activities to combat fraud. Another important aim was to ensure the flow of goods at border crossing points, including the unification of customs and border procedures. (eeas.europa.eu 2017)

Despite this, EU sanctions against Belarus remain. Within the framework of the 1999-2000 events, the EU imposed a travel ban on suspected persons and froze their bank accounts. (nytimes.com 2001) In addition, several sanctions were imposed on the export of arms to Belarus. (nytimes.com 2018)

Relations with Georgia, which gained its independence with the disintegration of the USSR, started with the SPA, which was signed in Luxembourg on April 22, 1996, and entered into force on July 1, 1999. SPA aims to establish an appropriate framework for political dialogue between the parties, to consolidate Georgia's democracy and develop its economy, complete its transition to a market economy, to promote harmonious economic relations in the fields of trade and investment, in summary, in legislative, economic, social, financial, civil, technological and cultural areas. (mfa.gov 1996)

In 2004, a new era began in bilateral relations. The relations carried out under the ENP continued with the creation of the EU-Georgia Action Plan on 14 November 2006. Covering five years, the Action Plan has been a political document revealing the strategic objectives of the cooperation between Georgia and the EU and aimed to establish ties in new cooperation areas within the framework of the SPA provisions and to integrate Georgia more and more quickly into the European economic and social structures. (eeas.europa.eu 2006)

Since 2009, bilateral relations have continued within the scope of the Eastern Partnership. Within the framework of these relations, the joint declaration on Mobility Partnership (ec.europa.eu, 2010) in Brussels on 30 November 2009, Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreement (eur-lex.europa.eu, 2011) on 17 June 2010 (both agreements entered into force in March 2011), Joint Aviation Area in 2010 and Comprehensive air transport agreement were signed off. In February 2017, EU authorities approved the visa-free travel agreement for the free movement of Georgian citizens in the Schengen Area, and this law came into force on 28 March 2017.

The pro-Western policies of Mihail Saakashvili, who was elected to the government in January 2004, accelerated relations with the EU, and the war with Russia in July 2008, accelerated these relations. As a result, at the Eastern Partnership's Vilnius Summit on 29 November 2013, PA negotiations, including the DCFTA section, were initiated with Georgia and a Framework Agreement was signed. (consilium.europa.eu, 2013) In order to implement the Agreement, the Agenda Plan covering the years 2014-2016 was created. (agenda.ge, 2014) In July 2014, the Georgian Parliament approved the Agreement. On June 1, 2016, the PA entered into force. (europa.eu, 2016)

In order to implement the Agreement, the EU provides financial assistance to Georgia. These aids are divided into areas such as human rights, integration of national minorities in civil society, fight against money laundering and financing of terrorism, freedom in the

media, and democratic governance. (rm.coe.int, 2017) Additionally, it was decided that technical support programs and programs supporting legal reforms would be supported by EU funds in order to establish the DCFTA area.

With the disintegration of the USSR, relations between the EU and Moldova started with the SPA, which was signed between the parties on 28 November 1994 and entered into force on 1 January 1998. (trade.ec.europa.eu, 2007)

It has continued under the ENP since 2004 and an Action Plan covering the years 2005-2008 has been prepared (EU-Moldova Action Plan). Bilateral relations have continued within the framework of the Eastern Partnership since 2009. The Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreement between Moldova and the EU was signed in October 2007 and entered into force in 2008. (eurlex.europa.eu 2007)

In January 2010 within the scope of the Eastern Partnership, the parties signed the OA, including the DCFTA section, on 27 June 2014. PA entered into force on 1 July 2016. PA has established a long-term basis for EU-Moldova relations. In terms of its content and objectives, it has the same context and position as the PA signed with Georgia. PA has more advanced binding, rules, clauses, and cooperation than traditional contracts.

According to the 2018 reports, Moldova has implemented positive reforms for integration with the EU. These reforms included human rights, judiciary, transparency, further democratization, and, in parallel, economic and technical reforms to accelerate the implementation of the DCFTA. Despite the disruptions in the reforms for democratization, significant progress has been made, especially in the finance area. (ec.europa.eu, 2018)

Thanks to the commercial relations established within the framework of DCFTA, the Moldovan economy grew and the bilateral trade volume increased.

The relations of Ukraine with the EU, which declared its independence in 1991, started in 1992. Bilateral relations resulted in the signing of the SPA between the parties in Luxemburg in 1994. (EU trade relations with Ukraine policy.trade.ec.europa.eu)The SPA, which came into force in 1998, envisaged the establishment of different and deeper relations than the SPAs signed by the EU with other UN countries. There are important articles in the Agreement regarding the establishment of political dialogue with Ukraine, the reforms in the fields of human rights, democracy, and economics in Ukraine, and ultimately the creation of a free trade area.

The relations have progressed under the ENP since 2004 and have continued within the framework of the Eastern Partnership since 2009. In this context, in April 2010, the EU Visa Code which gathers all the legal provisions governing visa decisions in a single document entered into force (EU Visa Code eeas.europa.eu 2010). Again in September of the same year, Ukraine joined the European Energy Community (Commission Welcomes Ukraine eeas.europa.eu, 2010) In Energy Community and an Action Plan on Visa Liberalization (EU-Ukraine Visa Dialogue Action Plan on Visa Liberalisation register.consilium.europa.eu 2010) was prepared between the parties in November. In October 2011, a joint decision was reached on the DCFTA section, which has been negotiated since 2008 and on the text of the PA in December. As a result of the postponement of the PA, which was expected to be signed at the 2013 Vilnius Summit, by Ukraine and the events that followed, the political part of the Agreement was signed in Brussels on 21 March 2014, and the DCFTA part was signed on 27 June 2014. In September 2014, the European Parliament and the Ukrainian Parliament simultaneously ratified the Agreement. Later, EU members ratified the Agreement following their domestic laws in 2015 and 2016. All of the agreements some parts of which have been in force since 2015 and 2016 entered into force as of 1 September 2017. (AB-Ukrayna Ortaklık Anlaşması trade.ec.europa.eu, 2016)

In addition, internal reforms initiated in the name of further democratization, as well as transparency in state institutions and initiatives to fight corruption, continued with some disruptions in line with the Action Plan. (Report On Implementation of The Association Agreement Between Ukraine And The European Union In 2017)

2.2 Neighborhood Policy with Normative Intention

Norms and fundamental values began to influence the EU's foreign policy discourse since the 1970s.(Hill, C, 2000) With the Maastricht Treaty, the EU supports peace and security, encourages international cooperation and deals against international crime, and promotes democracy, human rights, freedom, and rule of law as well as economic and social development.

The fundamentals of the EU's policy in the 1990s have been democratization and modernization in the economic field which were achieved by Western plural policy and economic liberalism. When communism was destroyed in Eastern Europe in 1989, the EU replied by extending accession possibility to those countries in order to transform them into

democratic governance and bring them again to the European mainstream. This membership offer made those countries normalize their relations with other actors and achieve democratic internal rule standards. The EU's concept was embodied by the "Copenhagen criteria" in which important political and economic tools are shown in the time of regime change. Substantially, these requirements for being a member of the EU can be considered as an invitation because they are about democracy, economy, and rule of law. These criteria are used to evaluate if the candidate country is ready to join the EU and also the Copenhagen criteria is about the EU's own traditions regarding common policy practices and the legal basis. Constitutive aspects of the EU's political elements are codified by Article 6 of the Treaty as important principles such as democracy, respecting human rights, and the rule of law. In the EU's treaties, there is a legal basis for the joint ruling of the EU's economic place via policies and institutions. Before accession, the EU asked possible candidates to follow certain rules and they are applicable to the member states of the EU as well. With the enlargement policy implementation, the EU institutions demonstrate their own identities.

If we want to understand the normative aspects of the neighborhood policy, we should pay attention to the nature of the policy which is a voluntary process with normative qualities. Eastern European countries voluntarily asked for becoming members of the EU in order to be protected against the former USSR in the 1990s beginning. By looking at the external events the EU creates an agenda and develops a strategy for successful enlargement policy.

The EU utilizes the popular conditionality principle which is called "carrots and sticks" for following normative goals in the enlargement policy. (Schimmelfennig, F. and U. Sedelmeier, 2004) If the EU candidates cannot get success in the short term for reforming expectations, the active punishment strategy has not been considered by the EU in the context of accession conditionality. However, the EU retains advantages from the accession by postponing membership talks. While candidates increase by their good performance, indolent ones are highlighted as lost chances, and this process is called "reinforcement by reward" (Schimmelfennig, F., S. Engert, and H. Knobel, 2016) or 'gate-keeping' (Grabbe, H., 2003) by scholars. To generalize, the EU is more prone to reward good performers rather than punish laggard ones. This is because of not ignoring the asymmetry in the context of power between candidates and the EU. The decision-making power is in the hands of the EU by making sure the candidate is suitable to integrate into the EU and the EU measures the level of preparedness by putting the accession criteria. It is said in the theory the candidate

countries can make negotiations but in the practice, very little discussion is made. In the end, evaluating and deciding power is the EU.

Due to the political norms and economic values, the Commission is empowered to request respecting its accession requirements. If the candidates cannot follow the requirements, in that case, the Commission criticizes them publicly and announces recommendations, and revives international organizations, and donors with the reform process. (Grabbe, H, 2001) Due to the relations between the EU institutes and states' governance, and political bodies, the conditionality principle can be come along by softer mechanisms such as policy change. By signing Association Agreements so-called Europe Agreements with central and Eastern European Countries the EU liberalizes trade and economy, as well as political affairs, are created at the beginning of the 1990s. This partnership which came into force at the end of the 1990s ensured close relations between the political body of the states and the EU institutions which detail priorities for the reform and mechanisms for evaluation. Another change in the exchange of information between the union and candidates is annual reports of the Commission in which each state is judged by progress. To sum up, with the conditionality method which is incentive-based modified each applicant, and in the short term, the consequences of the accession are worth more credit.

In 10 years, former authoritarian countries transformed into liberal democracies with the pluralism and civil societies elements and created the foundations of the modern countries' institutions. (Vachudova, M.A., 2005) These CEE countries also drew the attention of foreign investments by creating a modern economic field and billions of euros of FDI were drawn in every year. (Gros, D. and A. Steinherr, 2002)

However not every country succeeded. Some of them did not go through the smooth way of transformation and some candidates, in the beginning, were luckier because of the favorable conditions, therefore, their progress was faster. In some candidates, there was an internal resistance to change and they had to overcome and fight harder than others. Overall, the results were satisfactory despite the setbacks. Some criticized the quality of the new authorities and the gap in terms of quality governance between the Western and Eastern sides of Europe is still obvious. However, we should take into account the beginning of the transformation which was the 1990s and we can credit these countries as reliable partners in the integration process to Europe.

The normative behavior of the EU can be explained by understanding the shortcomings of the internal and external dynamics. The internal context of politics was adequate for the enlargement process. There was a difference between member states but the most important question is how and when to extend not why to extend. There was internal unanimity which was significant for solving problems and difficulties in the process. The EU had reasons both geopolitically and economically to encourage change in CEE countries and impact transition for its own advantage.(Vachudova, M.A ,2005) But some scholars state that the EU never wanted to propose full containment to the CEE and it never admits its leaders as equal partners in the decision-making process.(Schimmelfennig, F. 2001) It can also be explained by the kinship feeling and moral duty of the EU to its eastern relatives who were separated by the disastrous results of the Second World War.(Sjurssen, H. ,2002) However, the significance of the normative goals should not be underestimated by the origin of interest.

In the beginning, the EU had no idea how to unite the former communist countries and how to support a transition from communism to democracy and create a market economy. Member states trusted the Commission to control the enlargement files which were taken seriously because of the opportunity to increase its institutional profile in the international area. Afterward, internal resources of the Commission quicken the process and the Commission creates essential internal tools to work in this policy.

External environmental factors were also necessary to the role of the EU's normative role in CEE countries after the collapse of the USSR. The ideological difference which marked post-war history in Europe was changed by the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the USSR. Therefore, the foreign policy of Eastern Europe formed again. In that period, Eastern European countries were ready to show their willingness to integrate into the EU and the West was ready to provide financial support to them. In this way, former communist countries demonstrated their will to integrate Euro-Atlantic institutions and normalization. The US encouraged Western actors as well and in general, both internal and external factors were ready to make the EU the normative power.

Chapter 3 Security threats undermining -EU Normative Power

3.1 Regional actors & unresolved conflicts as an obstacle to EU Normative Power

There have been territorial or separatist conflicts in the Eastern region and the EU for almost 30 years has been struggling to manage them. The countries get used to living in those situations and Russia involves in almost all conflicts in the region. The EU's approach to the conflicts should be examined

The biggest problem that Azerbaijan was experiencing was the Nagorno-Karabakh problem. The EU has made some efforts to solve the problem between the two sides and to maintain peace and stability in the region. During the years of the conflict, the EU's attitude was generally manifested in the form of calls for a cessation of war and peace. (anl.az) After both parties became members of the OSCE, the Nagorno-Karabakh issue was brought to the international arena and the Union has started to support and contribute to relations within the scope of the OSCE. Regarding this issue, the EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus visited Karabakh and both countries many times and examined the activities of the Minsk Group.

Finally, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini once emphasized the EU's approach to the issue in her meeting with Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov. (eastbook.eu 2011)

From a broad perspective, the EU's contribution to the resolution of this troubled region has been limited and has not shown the expected impact to date. The protection of territorial integrity for Azerbaijan and the inclusion of the principle of self-determination for Armenia in the Action Plans adopted between the parties reduced the opportunities for the EU to determine a positive and effective strategy as an important actor in solving the problem. (Huseynli F., 2011)

Despite this, Russia has been an effective actor in solving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Russia is one of the three countries co-chairing the Minsk Group and also has frequent diplomatic and commercial relations with the two countries.

In summary, negotiations with Western companies for the use of energy resources in the Caspian Sea, Azerbaijan's refusal to participate in the CIS and at the same time the expulsion of Russian soldiers from the country, manifested as pressure on Azerbaijan by Russia, where "Near Environment" discourses are increasing in foreign policy. (Yiğit S., 2017)

Russia aimed to keep the Nagorno-Karabakh problem under its control, like other similar problems in its immediate surroundings. Moreover, the fact that the Nagorno-Karabakh problem remained a frozen conflict has always ensured compatibility with Russia's political and economic interests in the region. It is possible to summarize these interests as follows.

- Both sides import billions of dollars' worth of weapons from Russia every year.

- The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is an important and balancing threat to keep both sides under influence, especially Armenia. For example, in response to the control of Azerbaijani energy resources by Western countries and companies, an Agreement of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance was signed between Russia and Armenia in 1997. (Yiğit, S., 2017)

- Armenians, located in strategically important lands, prevented Turkey from gaining power in the region, which wanted to show its influence in the Turkish states that gained independence with the disintegration of the USSR. In this context, Turkey's ineffectiveness in the region has been in line with Russia's geopolitical interests. (Cevikoz U., 2016)

Armenia and Azerbaijan are always at the doorstep of renewed war. In 2016 four days in April two sides fought and they ceased fighting with Russian intervention. On 27 September 2020 relations escalated and the "Second Nagorno-Karabakh War" started. The EU tried to strengthen resilience and as a peace-building initiative, the Commission delivered €10 million in humanitarian aid to assist affected civilians by conflict. (ec.europa.eu Nagorno Karabakh conflict: EU allocates an additional €10 million to support those affected 2021)

Declaring its independence with the disintegration of the USSR, Armenia soon became dependent on Russia in political and economic fields. It is possible to summarize the reasons for this situation as follows. (Özdaşlı, E., 2016)

- Geopolitical location. It is located in a region that has borders with Iran, Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Georgia and has no outlet to the sea. This situation has brought some geopolitical difficulties to Armenia.

- Political administrations and territorial claims. The economic difficulties at the beginning laid the groundwork for radical nationalist parties to gain a majority in the government. The fact that the powers that made the policy of "foreign extremists" the priority

of their foreign policy, made claims of "territory" and "genocide" from neighboring countries caused Armenia to become isolated in the region.

- Underdeveloped economy. Armenia, which has a weak economy in production, economic difficulties, as well as the military needs and political support after the occupation of Nagorno-Karabakh, has been the biggest reason for this dependence.

Despite this, serious dependence on Russia in military, economic and political fields has greatly affected Armenia-EU relations. In this context, while Armenia was expected to sign a PA with the EU in 2013, its accession to the EEU was the best example of this effect.

Because, in the period when the negotiations with the EU were completed, on July 9, 2013, Putin's visit to Baku with a large delegation and the signing of agreements with the Azerbaijani side on further expansion of political, economic, military, security and cultural relations was perceived as pressure.(Khachatryan H., 2013) As a result, the agreement signed between the EU and Armenia recently, the transition of Armenia from the presidential system to the parliamentary system, the change of administration with the civil revolution in the country, and the coming to power of a more democratic administration indicate that the current relations are going in a positive direction for the EU. However, increasing dependence on Russia in the EEU and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict posed an obstacle to further integration with the EU.

The isolation of Belarus by the EU since the 1990s has brought Minsk closer to Moscow. Belarus' increasing economic and energy dependence on Russia has also manifested itself in foreign policy and accordingly increased Moscow's effectiveness.

Russia-Belarus relations are built on more solid foundations when compared to other post-Soviet countries. In April 1996, the parties chose to form a union based on the EU model. By the Treaty establishing the Union of Russia and Belarus, it was decided to create a politically and economically integrated community to consolidate the material and intellectual potentials of the two states. On April 2, 1997, in Moscow, the Presidents of Belarus and Russia signed the Treaty on the Union of Belarus and Russia.

Natural gas purchased from Russia was the second reason that increased Belarus' dependence on Moscow. Since Russia transformed its energy policy into a foreign policy mechanism, similar natural gas crises have also been experienced in Belarus.(Balmaceda, M.M., 2014) Until 2004, Minsk paid a lower price for gas prices imported from Moscow

compared to normal market prices. The reason for this is the tax exemptions applied in bilateral relations, as well as the energy lines reaching Europe through Belarus and the exemptions provided by this.(Balmaceda, M.M., 2006)

In this context, the first crisis occurred in 2004. It is also possible to describe this crisis as the first pressure on Belarus for unification. In 2002, Putin put forward a proposal aimed at unification with Belarus. In return, he promised that the energy prices exported to Belarus will be calculated the same as the domestic prices. When Minsk reacted negatively to Moscow's offer, the gas crisis occurred in 2004. Moscow blocked gas transportation to Belarus due to unpaid gas debts. The resolution of this gas crisis resulted in the sale of 50% of the shares of the Belarusian state company, “Beltransgaz”, to Moscow.(Balmaceda, M.M., 2014)

The natural gas crisis in June 2010 created a bigger problem. This crisis was also a response to Belarus' refusal to recognize the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. In June, Moscow did not pay Gazprom's debt of 183 million dollars unpaid from Belarus, recalling the unpaid 260 million dollars debt as a transit pass fee. As a result, after the crisis, Gazprom first reduced the gas supplied to Belarus by 30%, then by 60%. In response, Minsk closed the Yamal Natural Gas Line reaching Europe. After Moscow paid Europe's gas needs through Ukraine, Lukashenko paid Gazprom's debt and then gradually demanded that Gazprom pay its transit debts.(Yafimava K., 2013)

Despite all these crises, Lukashenko tried to maintain a partially balanced policy between Russia and the EU. Lukashenko, who aims to obtain loans from European banks to improve the economy by keeping good relations with the EU, on the other hand, followed a mediation policy in order to solve the problems between the EU and Russia by turning the increasing dependence on Russia into an opportunity.

However, Belarus' financial difficulties made it difficult to defend against Moscow. Because, rather than energy dependence, the Belarusian economy is also under the control of large Russian companies. Moreover, Russia is the largest trading partner of Belarus. (Korosteleva, E., 2012) Energy and economic dependency forced Minsk to support Moscow's policies. Belarus, which took a step together with Russia in the establishment of the CU and the EEU, was on the side of Russia even though it was not open in the Crimean crisis. (Melyantsou, D., 2017)

As mentioned above, relations with the EU are not sufficient and in October 2020, the EU has implemented restrictive measures in response to the August 2020 presidential elections in Belarus.(EU relations with Belarus consilium.europa.eu)

The Republic of South Ossetia is a region recognized as the territory of Georgia in international law, although it is recognized by 6 countries in the world. The conflicts that started in the capital Tskhinvali in 1989 resulted in the Georgian Soviet Republic's taking drastic measures and the suspension of its autonomous status in 1990, separating South Ossetia from North Ossetia. As a continuation of the process, the conflicts intensifying with the declaration of independence of South Ossetia in January 1992 resulted in the intervention of Russian troops in the region on June 18, 1992. (Sammut, D., Cvetkovski, N., 1996)

The Republic of Abkhazia, located on the eastern shore of the Black Sea, is another separatist region located within Georgia. With the amendment to the USSR Constitution in 1977, after the applications of Abkhazians to the central government, which demanded independence and education in their own language, remained unanswered, the objections that started in the 1980s resulted in the publication of the Lihny Declaration by the Abkhaz authorities gathered in the Lykhny village of Abkhazia in 1989.(Declaration of State Sovereignty of the Abkhaz Soviet Socialist Republic 1990)While the reactions created by the Lihny Declaration continued, in 1990 the authorities of Abkhazia declared their independence on the axis of the USSR, referring to the “right to self-determination”. Abkhazians held a referendum on March 17, against Georgia's independence referendum on March 31, 1991, and renewed their allegiance to the USSR with 98% of the vote. (Tekushev I., 2013)

After mutual decisions, on August 14, 1992, Georgian army units entered Abkhazia and took control of some regions. As a result of the aid of the Confederation of Peoples of the Caucasus to the Abkhazians, the course of the war changed and the Georgian troops had to leave the areas they controlled. The war, which started in August 1992, ended in September 1993 with the defeat of Georgia.

Although the problem of South Ossetia and Abkhazia covers different regions and different balances, it has generally been handled within the framework of the territorial integrity of Georgia. These territorial problems, which prevent Georgia's participation in the EU and NATO, are also Russia's biggest mechanism that can keep Georgia under influence.

The EU approached this problem within the framework of Georgia's territorial integrity and stood by Georgia in this respect. Despite this, the EU's focus on the Balkans

since the 90s prevented it from being an active actor in the conflicts in the east. For this reason, the UN, OSCE, and Russia participated in these issues as an observer.(Whitman, R., Wolff, S., 2010) In 2003, the EU appointed the EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus to promote regional cooperation and support peace. In 2005, the EU formed the Border Support team after the OSCE Border Monitoring Mission, which monitors the Georgian-Russian border, was stopped by Russia's veto.

Since 2004, within the scope of the ENP, the EU has tried to resolve the conflicts in the eastern region, especially within the framework of reforms and political dialogues. (Barbakadze S., 2010) The Commission has implemented projects in Abkhazia and South Ossetia on the basis of the Action Plans and financed by ENPI.(EU-Georgia Action Plan eeas.europa.eu) Until 2008, the EU sought to influence conflict resolution in Georgia through support for second and third-level conflict transformation initiatives, rehabilitation, conflict area development, and confidence-building programs.(Magdalena F. 2010)

During the war in 2008, France's approach, both as the government and as the EU Presidency, turned the EU into an active actor in diplomatic negotiations.(Whitman, R., 2010) The 6-point ceasefire plan, designed by the EU under the leadership of France, envisaged the cessation of the war, the initiation of international discussions on the evacuation of the armed forces, especially the Russian troops, and the security and stability arrangements for Abkhazia and South Ossetia.(Nichol, J. 2009)

Despite the withdrawal of Russian troops from Georgian territory by October 15, Moscow declared the lands captured during the war as a buffer zone. In addition, it signed military cooperation agreements with regions it saw as independent and increased its military presence in both regions.

Since 2008, the EU has contributed to the establishment of peace in the troubled regions with peaceful projects and financial support of around 500 million Euros. Furthermore, the Commission has tried to increase its effectiveness through its reports and the Special Representative for the South Caucasus. In addition, on 25 September 2008, the European Council appointed a new Special Crisis Representative to Georgia to prepare the international negotiations envisaged in the reconciliation plan of 12 August 2008, to represent the Union in these negotiations, and to carry out further duties. Not all initiatives have been able to help the EU increase its effectiveness as much as Moscow within the framework of

this problem. At the same time, the factor of confrontation with Russia prevented the EU from playing an active role.(Grono, F.M., 2010)

The problem of Abkhazia and South Ossetia was also included in the PA signed between the EU and Georgia. With the signed agreement, the Georgian side has committed to the ceasefire and the peaceful resolution of the problem. In addition, the EU has committed to support Georgia's territorial integrity within the scope of establishing a Common Foreign Policy and to act jointly to solve the problem within this framework. Furthermore, the EU has been party to the full implementation of the ceasefire agreement signed on 12 August and the restoration of territorial integrity for a peaceful and lasting conflict resolution. Russia, on the other side of the conflict, has a more effective position compared to the EU.

The EU has implemented different programs in health and environmental protection fields as well as in the 2009 Non-Recognition and Engagement Policy. Brussels officials traveled to the region to explore interest in signing DCFTA.(Abkhazia and South Ossetia: Time to Talk Trade crisisgroup.org, 2018) In September 2019, Moscow decided to modernize the military of Abkhazia to control it better. To sum up, the EU is not inactive in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. In South Ossetia, financial aid is involved in mediation by the OSCE and in the Joint Control Commission on economic programs. In Abkhazia, the mediation process is implemented by EU member states, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom. (Tocci N., 2007)

The territorial problems on the basis of ethnic nationalism, which were experienced with the disintegration of the USSR, were also experienced in Moldova. Tarnsdniester and Gagauzia regions of Moldova experienced problems with Chisinau as a result of ethnic conflicts that started in the 1990s. Moldovans constitute 2.4% of the country, which has a population of 4 million, and Russians, Gagauz, and Ukrainians constitute the other part.(National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova)

As a result of the nationalist movements that started in the 1980s against the Russification policy of the USSR, the Supreme Soviet of the period, in August 1989, declared that the occupation of Moldova, which was occupied after World War II, was invalid, it adopted a decision on the declaration of independence. After this, it was decided to replace Russian with Moldavian as the official state language, and Latin instead of Cyrillic alphabet. On June 23, 1990, the Parliament adopted the Declaration of Sovereignty by deciding independence.

In reaction to the independence decision, the Gagauzia region, where the Gagauz people live, and the Transnistria region, where the Russians mostly live, objected to the independence decision. The objections that started after the change of the official language in Gagauzia resulted in the declaration of the Republic of Gagauzia in August 1990. In reaction to the independence decision of Chisinau, the army of Moldovan nationalist volunteers decided to intervene in the region, but the conflict was prevented by the Soviet Red Army. On December 23, 1994, Chisinau offered Gagauzia autonomy. Gagauz people were given special status and the right to education in Russian and Moldavian, including their own language, was recognized. Thus, Gagauzia received the status of the Gagauz Autonomous Region of Moldova. (King C., 2000)

However, today Gagauzia poses a threat as a critical region. The simultaneous referendum held in Gagauzia in February 2014 brought this issue back to the agenda. Indigenous people, who give importance to the CU more than EU integration, stated that they are in favor of declaring their independence in case of loss of sovereignty of Moldova. The Moldovan Central Election Commission considered the election to be dubious. At the same time, Chisinau accused the President of the Gagauz Autonomous Region Mihail Formuzal, and some prominent politicians of trying to overthrow the constitutional order of the state. (Gagavuz Bölgesinde Referandum Krizi”, aljazeera.com 2014)

The emergence of the Transnistria crisis was also based on the same history and reasons. With the claim of denial of their rights, an independence referendum was held in the region in December 1990 and the people of the region, with 97.7% of the vote, were in favor of the proclamation of the Transnistrian Republic of Moldova. The problem resulted in Chisinau's intervention in the region in 1992. The conflict ended with the arrival of the Russian army in the region. On July 22, 1993, an agreement was reached between Moldova and Russia regarding the solution of the problem through diplomatic means. In accordance with the agreement, a Russian Peacekeeping Force was deployed to the region. In October 1994, Moldova reached an agreement with Russia regarding the withdrawal of the Peace Corps from the region, again in accordance with the Agreement, although the Russian side has not taken any steps in this regard. (King, C., 2000)

After the 2004-2007 enlargement policy, the Transnistria region, which is 100 km from the new borders of the EU, is called "Europe's Black Hole". (John P. Rose ., 2010)

Negotiations were held at regular intervals with the parties concerned with the solution to the problem. The negotiations, which started in 1993, continued at regular intervals until 2011. In 2005, the USA and the EU also participated in the negotiations with the demands of Moldova and Ukraine. (EU Role in the Settlement of the Transnistrian Conflict, ape.md 2010)

The EU, which has joined the negotiations since 2005 with the status of a mediator, has addressed the issue both in the Action Plan (Eu/Moldova Action Plan)within the framework of the ENP and the framework of the Eastern Partnership. Generally, as the first attempt to restore peace and resolve the crisis in the region, the EU proposed the withdrawal of Russian troops under the ceasefire agreement signed in 1992. Since 2005, the EU has appointed a Special Representative on this issue. Although the EU also supported the idea of deploying NATO Peacekeeping Forces in the region, **Transnistria** officials and Russia, as well as France and Germany from within the Union, opposed it.

To date, the Transnistrian negotiations continue in a 5+2 format and generally within the framework of adaptation and mutual integration.(Press releases and statements related to the 5+2 negotiations on the Transdnestrian settlement process osce.org)Although the status of the Transnistrian separatist region was not on the open agenda, the EU has always supported the resolution of the problem within the framework of Moldova's territorial integrity.

For Russia, the Tranniester issue is an important mechanism of influence in order to keep Moldova under its influence. In addition, Russia has been more influential than the EU and the USA, as well as the OSCE, on this issue.

As in the Abkhazia and South Ossetian problems, Russia was seen as the savior and at the same time the guarantor of their independence for the indigenous people living in the Transnistria region. In addition, Russia has provided employment opportunities for the people of the region with investments in the regional economy, meeting their energy needs. At the same time, most of the people of the region, as Russian citizens, hold Russian Federation passports. (Popescu, N., 2009)

Although Moldova offered the Tranniester region an "autonomous region", Russia supported the idea of a republic under the auspices of Moldova. Putin, who was active on this issue between 2001 and 2003, held talks on the inclusion of the Transnistria region as an "autonomous state" in the Parliament and the recognition of the right to veto. In the Kozak Memorandum that emerged as a result of these negotiations, it was envisaged that Moldova

would turn into a special federative structure. In addition, it is planned to gradually remove the Russian soldiers settled in the region from the region. The present Memorandum aims to ensure that this danger remains a mechanism of action again in the future, rather than solving the Transnistria problem. The Memorandum was not signed at the last minute by President Vladimir Voronin due to the opposition of the EU and the USA and the public's objections. (Rose, J., 2010) Russia, despite the objection of the Moldovan side in 1994 maintains its military presence in the Transnistria region to this day.

After the collapse of the USSR, Russia-Ukraine relations continued, especially within the framework of political crises. Although Leonid Kuchma, who ruled the country as President from 1994 after Leonid Kravchuk's resignation, followed a pro-Russian policy, there were serious problems between the parties (Russia/Ukraine: Prime Ministers Meet Today Over Tuzla rferl.org). In October and November 2004, the victory of the Russian-backed Viktor Yanukovich in the elections resulted in the protests of Viktor Yushchenko, known as pro-Western and considered Yanukovich's biggest rival. These demonstrations, which started from November 22 until the elections planned to be held again on December 26, were symbolically called the Orange Revolution due to the orange flags used. (Anders A., 2015) Accordingly, the Yushchenko government was dismissed by the 2006 Parliament as a result of the conflict with Russia, which had problems with Moscow about gas prices and turned energy resources into a mechanism of influence. The new government was established in December 2007 by Yulia Tymoshenko, one of the other pioneers of the Orange Revolution. Tymoshenko followed a pro-EU policy, supporting NATO membership and opposing the formation of the CU and the EEU.

Yanukovich, who is known to be pro-Russian in the February 2010 Presidential elections, defeated his rival Tymoshenko and won 48.5% of the votes. (Ukraine: Presidential Elections, January-February 2010 osce.org) Yanukovich, who sees the normalization of Russian relations as Ukraine's national interest, did not sign the OA at the November 2013 Vilnius Summit on the grounds that the Ukrainian industry was not ready for EU integration and it caused a harsh reaction that started in November. As a result of the protests intensified in January, Yanukovich decided to hold early elections on 22 February in consultation with the opposition. Despite this, the continuation of the protests resulted in Yanukovich leaving the country.

After the fall of the Yanukovich government, Russia stated that it would not recognize the new government. As of February 23, the protests by the supporters of Russia-

supported Yanukovich in the Crimea and Donbas regions located in the east of Ukraine increased the tension in the country. As a result of the protests in Crimea, on February 27, the Parliament of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea decided to a referendum on the annexation of Crimea to Russia, and the people of the region supported this decision with 95.5% of the votes in the referendum held on March 16.(Crimea referendum: Voters “Back Russia Union [bbc.com](#) .,2014) On 18 March with the approval of the Duma, Putin signed the agreement declaring that Crimea is a part of Russia.(Ukraine: Putin signs Crimea annexation [bbc.com](#) ., 2014)

After the unification of Crimea with Russia, the protests intensified in the Lugansk and Donetsk parts of the Donbas region, where the Russian population is the majority, and they declared the independence of the Lugansk People's Republic. On June 2, the Donbas war started with the intervention of Kyiv in the region a ceasefire was re-established on February 12, 2015 with the Minsk II Agreement.

After the war in the Donbas region, the problem has been tried to be resolved through diplomatic negotiations with the participation of the EU, USA, OSCE, Russia, Ukraine, and separatist parties. The annexation of Crimea resulted in harsh reactions by the EU and the USA and it followed the implementation of new sanctions against Russia. The annexation of Crimea was perceived by the EU and its member states as an attempt to threaten European security. The EU cited Russia's support for separatist groups that threaten Ukraine's sovereignty, as well as the annexation of Crimea in violation of international law, as a justification for the sanctions imposed on Russia.

In this context, the first initiative taken by the Council on March 17, was freezing the assets of 21 people from Russia and Ukraine in Europe.(Council Regulation [eur-lex.europa.eu](#) ., 2014) After the Crimean referendum, Russia's G-8 membership was suspended (U.S., other powers kick Russia out of G8 [CNN News](#) ., 2014) and at the 20-21 March meeting of the EU Summit, the decision that the territorial integrity of Ukraine was defended and the status of separatist regions and annexed Crimea could not be changed and 12 more names were included in the sanctions list. Furthermore, visa issuance to people living in Crimea by EU Embassies located in Russia has been stopped. (European Council meeting [consilium.europa.eu](#) 2014)

The election of pro-Western Petro Poroshenko, who won with 56% of the votes in the Ukrainian elections on May 25, 2014,(“Petro Poroshenko wins Ukraine presidency,

according to exit polls”, The Guardian News 2014) and the downing of the Malaysia Airlines flight MH17, which took off from the Netherlands in July, by Russian-backed groups in eastern Ukraine, opposing Russia brought into question the application of new sanctions.(“Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 crashes in east Ukraine”, The Guardian News 2014)

Accordingly, with the Council decision of 11 September, restrictions on Russia's access to EU markets were strengthened, and loans to the Russian bank, as well as three defense and three large energy companies, were stopped.(Reinforced restrictive measures against Russia”, consilium.europa.eu ., 2014) Furthermore, EU programs concerning public institutions in Russia and Crimea have been canceled and it has been accepted that the agreements signed between the EU and Russia cannot be implemented in Crimea and Sevastopol.(The EU non-recognition policy for Crimea and Sevastopol: Fact Sheet”, eeas.europa.eu , 2017) In addition, with the decision of 30 September 2014, the Council took decisions preventing the access of Crimean origin products without a Ukraine certificate to the EU internal market and prohibiting EU companies from all investment areas in Crimea. (Council Regulation 2014) On 10 March 2016, the Council imposed sanctions on 146 individuals and 37 institutions. It extended the sanctions imposed on Russia for another 6 months and in June for another 1 year. (Ukraine territorial integrity: EU extends sanctions by 6 months consilium.europa.eu. 2016) In 2018, the State Department approved the sale of anti-tank weapons to and Ukraine joined large-scale air exercises in western Ukraine. (voanews.com 2018) In 2022, Russia launched a military invasion into Ukraine (nytimes.com 2022) On 21 February, 2022 President Vladimir Putin send Russian troops into Donetsk and Luhansk and recognized those areas. The EU condemns Putin’s decision to recognize the non-government controlled areas and also condemns Belarus' involvement in Russia's military aggression. The EU has shown unity and strength by adding some realpolitik elements such as massively expanded sanctions. For weakening Russia’s economic base the EU has adopted six packages of sanctions. (consilium.europa.eu 8 June 2022)

The sanctions imposed on Russia by the EU covered three economic areas. The first of these was the sanctions that restricted or completely blocked the access of Russian state institutions to the EU market. The second type of sanctions provided for restrictions on the export of technology related to oil exploration and extraction to Russia. The third type of sanctions envisaged preventing the sale of certain military equipment of Russia. (Pikulicka, A., Sakwa, R., 2015) Finally, EU member states avoided the imposition of more severe economic sanctions.

3.2 Changing Nature of the EU Normative Power in Eastern Partnership countries: from high politics to low politics

In order to understand changing nature of the normative power from high politics to low politics, one firstly needs to understand “high” and “low” political terms. High politics covers all sides of politics which are important to the survival of the state such as the security concept, while low politics often designates economic, cultural, or social affairs. (Jackson, Robert H. and Sørensen, Georg. 2007)

Over the years, since the implementation of the European Neighborhood Policy, the EU has been developing complicated means which are financial and policy tools, new governance methods, and more cooperative relationships with a commitment to shaping the outside by its world which. (Korosteleva, E., M. Natorski, and L. Simão.. 2014) The EU has been driven by politics to promote its values but it should keep in mind that politics is also the contestation result.(Edkins, J.. 1999)

The ENP agreements were about dealing with transition and “low” politics comes from EC experience with the joined countries in 2004-2007. The EU needs to have more “low” politics before changing rule of law in ENP countries. One thing we have observed in both EU and EaP is the growing realism in relations on both sides, as well as frustration with the limits of relations. According to the EU, the reform process in the EaP countries is progressing much slower than expected. The expectation of a linear transformation process towards democracy and the rule of law turned out to be unrealistic. There are alternatives to democratization and Europeanization that rely on interest groups, unofficial rules, and weak institutions rather than sustainable modernization. The EU is very cautious about describing these countries as “leading” in the reform process because the political situation can change very quickly in both directions (e.g. Moldova and Armenia). According to the EaP countries, EU membership is not on the table and the EU's support and vision for the region have their limits. While support for integration and convergence with the EU is still very high in most EaP countries, the majority of EU citizens are not in favor of creating membership prospects or further convergence in EaP countries. Internal politics and the external environment are changing on both sides. The combination of the EU's internal crises with rising populism is affecting the EU's appeal and mobility in its neighborhood.

A striking point in terms of relations between the EU and the eastern countries is the lack of a common vision. The position of most EU member states is status quo. But the success of reforms in EaP countries requires long-term adoption and adherence to EU

standards for internal and external change. Moreover, EU leaders have finally realized that Russia is not a partner in this reform process, but a rival with often irreconcilable political goals.

The rapid change in the political environment in which the EaP policy is implemented is currently the main trend. Since 2008, and especially since 2012, the third presidency of Vladimir Putin, Russia has become increasingly aggressive and eager to use force against its neighbors. This is because it has ongoing economic weakness and limited soft power, but it also can send its military forces and operate over long distances while the West is weak and divided. The EU is no longer a model of modernization for the Russian elite, and the Kremlin is paying less and less attention to what the EU thinks. Other players, such as Turkey, China, and Arab countries, are more active in the EaP region and offer their political role models to the region. While the EU is constantly in crisis within itself, its neighborhood policy is increasingly competing with other external players. All of this creates more uncertainty at a time when liberal democracy is under pressure and authoritarian states, including those in EaP countries, are becoming increasingly active. For countries like Georgia and Ukraine, NATO may be the sole security guarantor, but there is no consensus among member states on membership prospects given Russia's sphere of influence.

The role of civil society in politics and the reform process is changing. Societies are less willing to accept corruption, a lack of development prospects, and stagnation in reforms. Because citizens cannot change politics through elections, they use their will to take to the streets to express their dissatisfaction. Over the past decade, we have observed protest movements in all EaP countries—the most notable being the Pride Revolution in Ukraine (2013-2014) and the Velvet Revolution in Armenia (2018). (Stanislav S, Sinikukka S., 2019) A new generation of politicians and protesters is growing in the countries that emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Union. These protesters organize the demonstrations through social networks and other digital communication platforms. Pressure can delay but not stop this development. For the EU, this means that there are allies in these countries that support the reform process and can play a much more important role in demanding and monitoring reforms. Brussels needs to include these civil actors more comprehensively in its strategic policies and learn from them the methods of forcing the elites into the reform process.

A major challenge for these six states is their security situation, which is not part of EaP policy. Russia has occupied the territory of Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine and is involved in regional conflicts (in Armenia and Azerbaijan) in five of the six EaP countries.

Challenging the security situations of post-Soviet states and exploiting regional conflicts is part of Russia's policy of keeping these countries under control. Manipulation of public opinion (mostly by Russia) was discovered in post-Soviet countries before it was used in Western Europe and the United States. Ignoring such links means that they do not take Russia's destabilization policy in the common neighborhood and the EU seriously enough. As Russia's economic attractiveness and soft power wane, it increasingly uses military power and hybrid measures to influence these countries. This situation requires the EU to develop a different approach and conduct a different risk analysis regarding EaP policy.

Although we still use the term "post-Soviet" for these states, the differentiation between them is constantly growing. Although they have a common Soviet heritage and unofficial rules, interest groups, corruption, and oligarchic structures still play a dominant role in their society and politics, the development path of these six countries is changing day by day. The common history that once united these six countries is interpreted or reinterpreted from different national perspectives.(Stanislav S, Sinikukka S ., 2019) This has an impact on the generation born after 1991. Russian is still the lingua franca, but it is no longer the most common among the younger generation. The nationalization of different political and social sectors is being witnessed, thanks to which relations with non-EU countries such as Turkey, China, and Iran play an increasing role.(Bertelsmann S., 2018) Social networks and the Internet determine how people communicate and how societies are organized. The digital community represents a new actor influencing changes in economies and challenging politics, as we saw in the Velvet Revolution, where they played an important role in Armenia recently.

When talking about these countries, instead of saying "post-Soviet" countries, it would be more appropriate to say that they have become more and more post-Soviet states.(Stanislav S, Sinikukka S ., 2019) While differentiation is an element of EaP policy reforms, the EU needs to see more differentiation in certain sectors (e.g. rule of law, energy). A regional approach is not always appropriate, although there are common issues that unite states within the EaP. Georgia, a South Caucasian country, may have more partnerships with Ukraine or Moldova than with Armenia and Azerbaijan.(Kakachia K., 2018) For some EU member states, Russia is still the main reference point for understanding trends in the region. But this is misleading and does not reflect the growing differentiation and the interests of the EaP countries to leave the post-Soviet region as a Russian sphere of influence. What is asserted here for the EaP countries is also true for Russia: Putin's Russia is not the Soviet Union, because society and elites are changing and becoming more pluralistic.

If we examine the South Caucasus, we can understand three different countries in terms of the reform path they followed and the relationship they established with the EU. While Georgia aims to integrate as much as possible with the EU and transatlantic institutions, Armenia relies more on Russia (in the field of economy, security, and energy), is a member of the Eurasian Economic Union led by Russia, and has also signed a partnership and cooperation agreement with the EU. It is in the interest of Azerbaijan to integrate neither with the EU nor with Russia, and this country follows a policy of balance between different players. Baku has an interest in the development of energy and economic relations with the EU, but it does not accept the EU *acquis* and does not show any interest in the perspective of membership. These three countries have three different approaches to the EU (and Russia), and all three are at three different stages in their EU integration processes.

The EU did not meet the expectations of any of these countries, and it was disappointing that the EU did not respond to Georgia's expectation of integration. In addition, limited EU investments in Armenia, conflicting interest policy in Azerbaijan, and limited support for conflicts caused disappointment among all these countries. The ability of both sides to manage expectations is essential to avoid further disappointment, but it is also important to understand that the South Caucasus is not the highest priority for Brussels. At the same time, the EU needs to understand that this region is a region competing for geopolitical and geo-economic interests between Asia and Europe, the Middle East, and Russia, and it needs to invest more if it wants to play a decisive role here.

First of all, if the EU wants to maintain its ties with the South Caucasus Region, it has to accept that Russia is the biggest competitor to its EaP policy and cannot agree with Russia on issues such as democratization, rule of law, mediation and conflict resolution. Establishing a clearer and more coordinated Russia policy is very important for the EU's EaP policy. Acknowledging Russia's hegemony in the South Caucasus will not stabilize and modernize the region or prevent future military conflicts. As a result, the EaP needs the EU to become more involved in the conflict and develop a more comprehensive security strategy. Moreover, in the coming years, China looks set to become a bigger competitor to both the EU and Russia in the region.

Secondly, the EU needs to see that transformation and democratization cannot be achieved without security. It is in favor of the EU that the EaP is not a partnership that includes security and focuses on soft areas such as reforms and transformation. This is because the partnership limits conflict with Russia and do not involve the EU in resolving

hard power conflicts in the region, which may require more resources to resolve. The EU may also find itself in a position that may require it to favor one side over the other. At the same time, any attempt at reform and transformation may face obstacles due to the fragility of the security situation and the role Russia plays in the region. Therefore, a hearty discussion is needed to determine whether EaP policy requires a security component or should focus on soft areas such as modernizing security institutions and their response to common cyber threats rather than hard security threats.

Collaboration and integration on core issues are possible without any membership expectations. This includes digitalization, the energy market, financial services, environmental issues, and labor standards. Cooperation focusing on norms and standards in strategic areas will likely be in the midst of competition from Russia and increasingly China. Civil society and involving them in the reform process in terms of monitoring, public communication, and conceptual inputs is extremely important for a sustainable reform process that is not top-down (as in Georgia under Mikheil Saakashvili), integrated with society and determined by social needs. Here, the involvement of the business community can be helpful: it is necessary to focus not only on traditional civil society (human rights) but on all actors who have an interest in change and modernization.

Improvement of infrastructure and ties with the EU is extremely important in terms of economic and social exchange as well as development. This policy needs to be further developed and supported by an increased budget and a strategic vision. The South Caucasus, a very important region between the Caspian Sea and the Black Sea, connects Asia, Russia, and the Middle East to Europe. All these have economic and strategic importance in terms of access to energy resources, transportation, migration, and security. It could be linked to China's "One Belt One Road" Initiative, but it could also continue to compete with Beijing.

All this leads us to the final argument — After the Union Agreement, there is a need for the next step, which encompasses increasing the operational impact and aspiration of the Union Agreement and a more flexible adaptation to the changing situation in the target countries.(Blockmans S., 2019) A feedback process from EaP countries is important, particularly the involvement of civil society to better understand what is working and what is not. While more young people and more cultural exchanges are welcome, this is not enough to solve the problems faced by the EaP countries and the EU. The EU needs to be more ambitious in its neighborhood policy to prevent authoritarian players from shaping trends in these countries.

Conclusion

The EU despite a chaotic and anarchic international system it is clear that it is in search of an order that moves within peace, human rights, and principles of the rule of law. The Union aims to be the reference point for these values. The literature has produced theories about how the Union can best be understood. Ian Manners underlined the power of the EU neither economic nor military against the civil power concept in the 1970s by Francois Duchêne and military power by Hedley Bull. According to Manners, the EU is a norm-forming actor.

The "normative power of the European Union" refers to immeasurable units of power. The main weakness of the normative power claim is that it is relative. The claim to the normative power of the EU rather than being a unit of power, it is the motivation and ideal of the Union.

For example, the sanctions against some countries in the post-Cold War period and the positive results of these sanctions are shown as an example of the Union's normative power, and the existence of such a power element is accepted even if it is limited. In addition, considering the situation of the Central and Eastern European countries that wanted to join the Union for similar reasons after the Cold War, it is still possible to talk about the normative power of the Union. The normative power of the Union is also felt in the union practices in the field of education and cultural policies.

On the other hand, the issue of being a normative power and its effectiveness is debatable, especially in matters concerning foreign policy, given its inadequacy in resolving crises. According to Manners, acceptance of fundamental principles and approaches such as democracy, rule of law, fundamental rights and freedoms, sustainable development and social solidarity by third countries, and being persuaded to act in this direction are important criteria that determine whether the EU is a normative power. When we look at the effectiveness of the EU in crisis areas in the last period, it is seen that the power of persuasion and influence of third countries in the light of these principles is quite weak.

Emphasizing adherence to democratic principles and respect for human rights in the Partnership and Cooperation Agreements it signed with its Eastern neighbors, discussed in the study, the EU developed various policies to promote democracy. When the internal dynamics of Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia, in which relations reached the highest level within the framework of the EaP, are examined, the decisiveness of Europe is a part of the historical and

geographical identity in Ukraine, the orientation to the EU created by economic concerns in Moldova, and Georgia in 2008. After the annexation of Crimea, the EU added some realpolitik elements such as smart differentiation. Differentiated relationships mean that the “quality and pace of reforms” will be identified by the EU and partners’ ambitions. (Shagina M., 2017) It is important to understand the effects of the war with Russia, which is experienced in internal dynamics, provide an explanatory element in the development of relations with the EU, even though Russia does not hesitate to use its military power along with soft power to consolidate its dominance in the region. In this region the EU norms and Russian realpolitik collides. Similarly, the internal dynamics of Belarus, with which relations have been at the lowest level for many years, can increase its influence by not staying silent in the face of concrete steps taken toward democracy and respect for human rights.

The example of Armenia, where Russia is the most effective country in the implementation of cross-conditionality, and the country's need to diversify its political and economic relations and its geographical location enabled it to overcome the Russian factor as the determining factor of this situation. Similar to the countries in the region, Azerbaijan experienced economic problems after independence. Thus, it is not possible to talk about a sharp success or failure of the EU, which has achieved different degrees of effects.

In the aftermath of the Ukrainian crisis, the EU added pragmatism and realpolitik elements to its policy and the EaP countries can combine pro-European and pro-Russian orientations. In the “Twenty Deliverables for 2020”, there is a section about “security cooperation”. It means that the EU had its kind of realpolitik elements.

The fact that the Union has not yet achieved sufficient success in the challenges does not mean that it will lose its normative behavior pattern in the international system. On the contrary, the Union is a system that operates with human and community-centered values. It is expected to continue its efforts to exist as a “norm force”. The system with its theoretical background; human rights, democracy, and the rule of law will continue to try to export the aforementioned principles to the international system.

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