



THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP — IT IS HIGH TIME TO START A REAL “PARTNERSHIP”

Paweł Dariusz Wiśniewski



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Summary

The European Union's (EU's) Eastern Partnership, which aims to deepen cooperation between the EU and its Eastern European neighbors, must be modernized. Partner states and the EU have to acknowledge their own failures instead of playing a “blame game” and work together to make the partnership a success. If the Eastern Partnership initiative fails, both sides—along with Russia, whose role is key—will be responsible.

Key Themes

- Major efforts, such as signing an Association Agreement with Ukraine and initialing Association Agreements with Moldova and Georgia, are on the table at the upcoming Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius, Lithuania.
- The EU should take responsibility for the ineffective financing of the Eastern Partnership and the inconsistent way in which it differentiates among partner states. It is also to blame for the lack of agreement among EU members concerning the depth of the partnership on issues such as visa liberalization and economic cooperation.
- Authorities in the partner countries, frightened of losing power, tend to use the initiative as a counterweight to Russian influence instead of as an opportunity to transform.
- Russia weakens the initiative by using hard and soft power to influence EU institutions, EU states, and partner countries.

Implications for the Eastern Partnership's Future

- The Eastern Partnership has the potential to be a foundation for further cooperation between the EU and its Eastern neighbors. But the initiative needs deep reforms. Unless changes are made, Moscow will use the partnership's weaknesses to hamper the program, decreasing the initiative's role in post-Soviet states.
- The EU should refocus on people-to-people contact with partner states, be more open to further cooperation, improve the way the initiative is funded, and stop threatening Eastern Partnership leaders and the public with “now-or-never” language to push them into reform.
- While authorities in partner states may be hesitant to reform, they should stop using the initiative as a tool to bargain with the EU and Russia. Doing so has negative long-term consequences.

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- The populations of partner countries should more willingly cooperate with the EU to encourage the EU to offer more people-to-people programs.
- Regardless of the outcome of the Vilnius Summit, the EU should look at the Eastern Partnership more critically and remember that democracy is a process and not a condition to be taken for granted. The EU must help maintain stability and further democracy in partner states.

Introduction

The year 2013 is supposed to be an especially crucial one for the European Union's Eastern Partnership (EaP) program. Four years after launching this ambitious program for three Eastern European (Ukraine, Belarus, and the Republic of Moldova¹) and three Southern Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia) states, both the European Union (EU) and the EaP countries² lack strict decisiveness on their further steps within the framework of the initiative. Still, it is far from legitimate to refer to the EaP as a success or a failure. It all depends on what was and could have been achieved within these four years in this geographical area. Understandably, the Soviet past still casts a shadow on the political, social, and cultural life of the EaP states. Hence, for some, just the existence of the EaP and the regular meetings of its institutions (especially those at a high level) might be viewed as a great success, while for others, the program and all of its achievements after these few years are seen as a major fiasco.

While often describing this year as the decisive point for the initiative, commentators and EU politicians emphasize that the November EaP Summit in Vilnius should bring tangible results for the program to actually provide a further development potential.³ Indeed, signing the Association Agreement (AA) with Ukraine and initialing the AA with Georgia and Moldova with a clear conscience would positively influence further cooperation between the EU and the EaP states.

Still, to understand and assess future developments of the EaP, the behavior of all three groups of stakeholders (the EU, the EaP states, and Russia) should be taken into account, not just the actions of the EaP countries and the EU, as often explained by scholars. However, both of them do carry most of the blame.

The challenges of the EaP must be acknowledged so that both sides can take steps to overcome the hurdles and improve EU-EaP cooperation. The Vilnius Summit could be a perfect point in time to take a look back and reform the program, as a reform and a new perception is what the Eastern Partnership really needs now.

What is the Eastern Partnership?

The Eastern Partnership was introduced as a joint Polish-Swedish initiative in May 2008 during the meeting of the EU's General Affairs and Foreign Relations Council.⁴ The war in Georgia in 2008 speeded up the process by illustrating the potential instability in the neighborhood.

In the beginning, the EaP received a rather skeptical reaction from the Eastern Partners and Russia. For example, Kiev saw almost no added value from the project in comparison to what it had been promised before the project's launch, and it did not want to be treated in the same way as such small countries as Armenia or Georgia. Moldovan President Voronin called it "another CIS," but based around Brussels, not Moscow.

Nevertheless, when it was officially launched in May 2009 in Prague, the Eastern Partnership was perceived by the EaP states more positively than before, yet still with some objections, which became a hurdle for EU-EaP cooperation.

It is the *Joint Declaration of the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit*,⁵ signed during the Czech Presidency of the EU Council in May 2009, that should be recognized as the key document outlining the goals and strategies of the EaP. It explains that the “main goal of the Eastern Partnership is to create the necessary conditions to accelerate political association and further economic integration between the European and interested partner countries.” This should be achieved by the EaP through support for a socio-economic and political transformation in the six partner states, as well as support for closer and more confident cooperation with the EU. At the heart of the EaP are values such as democracy, good governance, and a free market; this is often emphasized by European officials and in EaP documents.

Importantly, documents on the EaP tend to show a somewhat too “altruistic” perception of the initiative. In reality, although the main gain of the EU seems to be a stable and democratic neighborhood, it is obvious that through the EaP Brussels may enhance the role of EU standards and boost its role as an important international player.

In addition, the EaP aims at accomplishing fruitful cooperation with and among the EaP states through bilateral and multilateral cooperation. On the bilateral level (partner state–EU), the European Union offers, for example, visa liberalization and strengthened energy cooperation, as well as the new Association Agreement (AA). Concerning the latter, the AA is a bilateral document between the EU and a partner state, creating a framework for cooperation. Its final structure and content depend on the particular state, but they relate to the following issues: a) a possible Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA), a precondition for which is the World Trade Organization (WTO) membership of the particular EaP state; b) a political dialogue in the sphere of foreign and security affairs; c) justice and domestic affairs; and d) economic and sectoral cooperation.

The DCFTA is, arguably, the greatest value added to the previously existing Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCA).⁶ The DCFTA carries more obligations for the partner states than the PCA and requires adopting a great part (up to 80 percent) of the EU’s *acquis communautaire*.⁷ It is intended to lead to a more beneficial cooperation between the EU and the partner state than an ordinary free trade area and to eliminate non-tariff obstacles by harmonizing legislation between the partners. As explained in the *Prague Declaration*, the AA aims to “underpin political stabilization” in the EaP states. Moreover, bilateral regulations within the framework of the EaP should provide grounds for long-term energy cooperation, based on secure transit and supply between the partner states and the EU. Furthermore, the EaP should support mobility of citizens by liberalizing the visa regime, leading to the elimination of EU visas for the partner states in the case of countries that fulfill the conditions of safe and

well-administered mobility. Hence, it should become a framework for cooperation not only with the authorities but also with the people of the EaP countries.

Importantly, the EaP does not grant *any* promises on future EU membership for the partner states, although some European countries have strived to grant such promises. Even though a future membership prospect is not impossible, especially for countries that share the EU's values, the lack of a membership perspective is often perceived as the Achilles' heel of the initiative.

The creators of the EaP correctly observed that this type of multilateral cooperation could also provide a forum for cooperation not only between the EU member states and the partner states but also among the EaP states themselves, especially since some of the local issues that may complicate closer relations between Brussels and the region have major stakeholders among the EaP countries (for example, the Nagorno-Karabakh issue or energy cooperation).

As declared in the *Prague Declaration* and conducted by the European Commission, multilateral cooperation is based on four thematic platforms in order to organize “target-oriented sessions and serve for open and free discussion.” Each of them should adopt a set of “realistic, core objectives” to be discussed at least twice a year during platform meetings. The platforms are: democracy, good governance, and stability; economic integration and convergence with EU sectoral policies; energy security; and contacts between people. Moreover, multilateral cooperation should be given a further impetus for effectiveness by launching various flagship initiatives such as integrated management of borders; regional energy markets and energy efficiency/renewable energy; diversification of energy supplies (building an alternative pipeline bypassing Russia); and support for small and medium enterprises.

While governmental cooperation has as its foundation annual ministerial meetings and meetings of heads of state or government (every two years during the EaP Summits), parliamentary cooperation is supposed to take place through the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly.⁸ Last but not least, people-to-people contacts should develop through a Civil Society Forum and a Business Forum.

The advantage of such diversified cooperation could be an enhancement of communications channels, thus making the Eastern Partnership not only an authority-based initiative but also opening it up to citizens—business people, students, NGOs, activists, and others.

Out of a total of about €1.9 billion, only a small part of this sum (about €350 million) is fresh funds designated for this new program for the time period 2010–2013. The rest comes from the European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) and had been planned to be spent on the six partner states even if the EaP had not existed. It should be emphasized that the funds spent on the Eastern Neighborhood are two times lower than those spent on the Southern Neighborhood.⁹ Still, in addition to the ENPI, the EaP

It is obvious that through the EaP Brussels may enhance the role of EU standards and boost its role as an important international player.

Institutional framework for multilateral cooperation within the EaP
Eastern Partnership Summit ¹⁰ (biannually)
Ministerial meetings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ministers of Foreign Affairs (annually) ▪ Other ministerial formulas (depending on the issues to be tackled; ad hoc)
Four thematic platforms: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Democracy, good governance ▪ Economic integration and convergence with EU policies ▪ Energy security ▪ Contacts between people
Flagship Initiatives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Integrated Border Management Program ▪ Small- and Medium-sized Enterprise facility ▪ Regional energy markets and energy efficiency/renewable energy ▪ Environmental governance ▪ Prevention of, preparedness for, and response to natural and man-made disasters ▪ Diversification of energy supplies (Southern Energy Corridor)—the only initiative that has not been launched
Euronest Parliamentary Assembly
Assembly of Local and Regional Authorities
Business Council
Civil Society Forum

Based on the work of Pelczynska-Nalecz¹¹

has the mandate of the European Investment Bank (€1.5 billion), the European Investment Facility (€700 million), and other EU and non-EU based tools (within the framework of the Visegrad Group) to be invested in the region.

The way funds are supposed to be invested is strictly connected to the financial means of the Eastern Partnership. While it is often said that the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) is based on the “more for more” policy, which means for more will and actual reforms in certain countries, the EU offers more in the financial and political sense, only 10 percent (!) of all ENP funds is spent that way, as Undersecretary of State of the Polish Ministry for Foreign Affairs Ms. Pelczynska-Nalecz notes.¹² Most of the funds are already distributed among the partner states beforehand. Therefore, what is so often preached by Brussels does not function in the way that it is often represented.¹³

Main Accomplishments of the Eastern Partnership

The official standpoint of Brussels and national EU-politicians from countries interested in the EaP (such as Poland or Lithuania) is that the Eastern Partnership has achieved a lot. Still, they often mention that much is still to be accomplished.

However trivial it might seem, one of the biggest accomplishments of the EaP is that it still really exists. When comparing it to the EU's Southern Neighborhood mirror initiative, which received more funds, at least the meetings of the EaP (especially on the higher levels) still take place regularly. Importantly, the difference is huge not only due to occurrences connected to the Arab Spring and the change of leadership in those countries but also due to the readiness of EU and partner states to come closer to each other, as cultural differences may play a crucial role in these relations.

The Association Agreement (with the DCFTA component) with Ukraine, which is ready to be signed at the Vilnius Summit if Ukraine fulfills some additional criteria (mainly connected to releasing former prime minister Tymoshenko and reforming the judicial system), as well as the Association Agreements with Georgia, Moldova, and Armenia, which are almost ready to be initialed in November, are among the achievements of the Eastern Partnership. Still, EU Commissioner Füle explained that the AA (even without the DCFTA component) with Armenia will not be signed if Yerevan decides to join the Kremlin-supported Customs Union project, as it surprisingly brought up in September. The talks on the AA with Azerbaijan lag behind, while the negotiations with Belarus have not even started.

The most crucial issue for the EaP counties (Moldova, Ukraine, and Georgia) is the visa liberalization process, which is also bringing slow but tangible results. The two former states are already in the final stage of the process.

The establishment of new institutions, such as the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly, the Civil Society Forum (CSF), the Business Forum, and the Assembly of Local and Regional Authorities, and the conduct of regular meetings by them should be perceived as a positive step in multilateral cooperation among the EaP and EU states. Only successful cooperation on the multilateral level can fully reveal the great influence that the EaP might have. The CSF (with a relatively significant representation of Belarusian citizens and NGOs) is especially well-managed on a daily basis and has regular contact with EU and EaP citizens through social media and the Internet. Together with the Business Forum, it has provided a significant platform for non-political cooperation.

Speaking of people-to-people contact, academics from some EaP states may participate in EU programs and exchanges. The EU created various initiatives promoting student exchanges, youth programs, and school cooperation between EU and EaP states (such as Youth in Action, Erasmus, and Tempus).

The Imperfect Side

As mentioned, EU authorities comment that a lot still has to be done for the EaP to bring the results that were planned.

While the Association Agreement with Ukraine—indisputably the key EaP state—is ready to be signed, it is often not mentioned that the talks on further economic and political cooperation had begun even before the launch of the EaP.

Hence, the program cannot be seen as a great tool for enhancing Ukrainian democratic stability (even if it existed) but rather as an additional instrument in Brussels-Kiev relations.

Still, further pro-European reforms and their implementation in the four more open states (Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine) are questionable, as they would endanger the position of the authorities who seem extremely willing to stay in power at all (even undemocratic) costs, (except for the overwhelmingly unstable Moldovan government). Thus, it is not surprising that the Belarusian regime was not condemned by the other EaP states’ authorities in a declaration during the EaP Summit in Warsaw. This unity was nothing special, as any one of them could be the next in line to be criticized.

Surprisingly, however, at the beginning of September 2013, Armenian President Sargsyan announced that he will join the Russian-led Customs Union.¹⁴ The DCFTA component—the cherry on top of the AA—cannot be initialed due to different tariffs and trade-related issues between the EU and the Customs Union. The over 1000-page Association Agreement could theoretically be signed but without the DCFTA component. It would have to be changed, as all of the trade-related issues for cooperation have to be crossed out. What would remain in the agreement are mainly phrases concerning cooperation in foreign relations (which are rather useless in light of Moscow’s great economic and military pressure on the Armenian regime) and some culture-related statements. However, although the EU still emphasized its will to cooperate further with Armenia, Commissioner Füle, who is responsible for the EU’s neighborhood policy, explained that the AA will not be initialed in Vilnius if Armenia chooses the Customs Union. Importantly, the “loss” of geographically distant and economically dependent and weak Yerevan is rather more symbolic than strongly damaging to EU interests and emphasizes Russia’s power in the region.

Why not speak about Belarus and Azerbaijan when talking about the EaP? Because almost nothing has happened in terms of negotiating visa liberalization and AAs with these two regimes. Mr. Lukashenka simply ignores the EU’s naïve proposals to reform the economic and political spheres in the country, while the negotiations on the AA (without the DCFTA component) and visa liberalization are still in the initial stage. Economic and political support from other countries (mainly Russia) enables Mr. Lukashenka to pursue undemocratic politics by sacrificing the country’s economic independence to its Russian “big brother.” The undemocratic elections are also the reason why the Belarusian delegation cannot participate in the Euronest. Minsk is almost completely beyond the scope of efforts for cooperation with Brussels. Baku, with its Aliyev-family regime, on the other hand, seems even less interested in cooperation with Brussels than the EU is with Azerbaijan. Still, it is treated with more understanding than Minsk, mostly because of its oil and gas. Thanks to its energy resources, Baku is far less dependent on Brussels than other EaP countries. The great attempt

to cooperate with Baku from the EU side sometimes simply looks comical, as there is virtually nothing coming back from Azerbaijan.

When speaking about democracy, it is often emphasized that the EaP is founded on democratic values and should help the partner states in striving for democracy, human rights, and good governance. However, according to Freedom House, the status of freedom in the partner states has not only stagnated since launching the EaP but even deteriorated in Ukraine. This calls into question the *whole* idea of an initiative aiming, first of all, at improving the conditions for human rights and democracy. While speaking to the author, one important EU official stressed that the increasing political instability within the EaP states is also seen within the European Union and by European diplomats as a major challenge to giving the initiative meaning.

Stability in the region is also not improving. While politically the countries may be perceived to be stable, the region has four separatist regions—Southern Ossetia and Abkhazia in Georgia (recognized as independent states by Russia); the Armenia-controlled Nagorno-Karabakh on de jure Azerbaijani territory; and Transnistria (which is less unstable) within the de jure Moldovan border. The situation has not improved since the launch of the EaP, although these separatist areas are key factors explaining why the region is unstable and why the authorities in EaP states sometimes lack the legitimacy to rule. Still, to solve these conflicts, the will and power of both Russia and the EU are necessary. Moscow might see the separatist areas as a way to maintain influence in the region, while Brussels lacks the instruments and political will to side with one of the actors in the conflicts.

The new institutions, although a great success, also have various flaws. With regard to the Euronest, there have not been any meaningful tangible outcomes, except for several declarations and the fact that the partner states were willing to meet on a multilateral level. The deputies from conflicted Armenia and Azerbaijan, for example, seem to often treat the Parliamentary Assembly as a forum for blaming each other and not for EU-EaP cooperation. Even the CSF does not function in the way that it was intended to. The EaP structure and the EU do not support civil society organizations in receiving key information on the work of the EaP's flagship initiatives that are crucial for them or in getting access to their authorities;¹⁵ the EU financial opportunities for civil society groups are also very limited.

Last but not least, one of the main aims of the EaP was to build an alternative gas pipeline bypassing Russia. While Russia has already started building its pipeline to Southern Europe, bypassing Ukraine (South Stream), after years of attempts and bidding, dreams of an EU-backed Nabucco pipeline seem to be over.¹⁶

Further pro-European reforms and their implementation in the four more open states (Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine) are questionable, as they would endanger the position of the authorities.

Whose Fault is It?

In international politics one can seldom say that only one party is fully responsible for the state of certain affairs. While a positive outcome of the Vilnius Summit would have two fathers—the EaP states and the EU—a negative outcome would have two-and-a-half, as Russia’s role in the EaP is not to be ignored.

The EU does not look Eastward

Looking at the state of affairs in the EaP countries and their path toward closer cooperation with the EU, the disproportion between the goals or challenges of European politics and the tools that can potentially be used by Brussels is easily observable.

The greatest problem of the EaP is the lack of the EU states’ unanimity and interest concerning the Eastern Neighborhood, as well as an incomprehensible strategic message. Concerning the latter, what is to be the end point of the EaP? Why should the EaP states cooperate with the EU? Will they be treated as partners—as states belonging to the same cultural or historic family—or only as countries that should not fall into “Russia’s hands”? The lack of a precise promise of EU membership for at least some of the EaP states also negatively influences cooperation. While some third countries have offered uncomplicated economic cooperation without many sacrifices to the Eastern European states, the EaP does not have a “carrot” big enough to make the undemocratic regimes support further deep reforms (which could be positively represented on the domestic level). The EU demands EU-based Western-values reforms in countries that still lie in the shadow of the Soviet, undemocratic regime. The membership perspective would be a perfect carrot that can be positively perceived by the electorate (and therefore enable the regimes not willing to give away their power to have a success story to brag about). Without it, it is senseless to expect that most EaP states’ regimes will lead their counties to become liberal, Western models of democracy. As Thomas De Waal states, without the accession promise any fundamental transformation in the partner states is less likely.¹⁷ Lack of reforms may lead to negative domestic consequences in the EaP states or even an eruption of large-scale violence in the Southern Caucasus that could expand into a major regional conflict. The EU would have to pay the financial and political price for that, too.

It is almost always the same with the EU’s unanimity on foreign affairs. While some states (for example Poland and Lithuania) are almost fully devoted to cooperating with the Eastern Partners, treat the EaP mostly as a geopolitical project (although they deny it), and want to offer some EaP states an AA and a liberalized visa regime, the majority of the EU states (among them major players such as France or the UK)¹⁸ do not even pretend to be interested in the region and hamper further cooperation. Some of the uninterested countries (such as Bulgaria) prefer not to damage their business relations with Russia and, for example, start building competition (South Stream) for a flagship project of the EaP—Nabucco.

Others (France, Italy, and Spain) may simply not want the Eastern Neighborhood to receive more funds than the Southern Neighborhood, as the latter lies within their interest, or do not want to incur any negative responses from Moscow. Importantly, the longer the Arab Spring lasts, the more eyes are turned to the Mediterranean basin, ignoring Eastern Europe, which is also in need of fast and decisive support. The lack of unanimity is most palpable in the case of Ukraine. While for Lithuania and Poland the release of former prime minister Tymoshenko (or sending her to the EU for treatment) would be enough for the AA to be signed, some states such as the UK seriously demand fundamental reforms concerning judicial affairs as an unquestionable condition for signing the document. This is virtually impossible to achieve in the short term. Even arguments that London may later not ratify the document in Parliament and, thus, pressure Ukraine for reforms but then not allow the EU to sign it, are not convincing. In this case, even if the EU signed the deal with Kiev, how long the ratification process would last is a question to be avoided.

Further, while on the official level the EU wants to come closer to its neighbors, in practice its external politics concerning the East are often based on prejudice and exclusion from the European family as well as on only paying lip service to the idea of integration. Faster visa liberalization at least for students, scholars, and businessmen would lead to a great influence on the grassroots level in the EaP states. There is not any justification to hamper this people-to-people contact. Thus, one could accuse the EU of ambivalence and indecisiveness: it strives for integration with its neighbors but at the same time shows a defensive approach toward the issue. This is especially noticeable in cases when the EU punishes pro-EU citizens (who share the determination for real democracy) through the decisions of the rather drastically less pro-EU (if not anti-EU) elites.

The lack of unanimity and the desperate desire of some EU countries to portray the EaP as a success story leads the EU states not to negotiate with EaP states but, paradoxically, to negotiate with each other, lowering the demands toward the partners and exaggerating the positive side of the partners' reforms. Other EU states are either ignorant of the situation or do not want to sacrifice their values for the sake of geopolitics.

At the same time, the EU uses “now-or-never” language.¹⁹ It does not have empathy toward partner states' citizens but concentrates strictly on the regimes that are not so easily reformable. For some EaP states' citizens, Brussels' “now-or-never” attitude might be perceived as a light version of the Kremlin's threatening language or acts (threatening with higher gas prices or rewarding anti-EU behavior with lower gas prices). The EU is not Russia. It does not have “hard power” or even the potential to use it. Brussels' strength is “soft power,” normative ideas, and the values that seem legitimate and convincing to the EaP states' population.

While a positive outcome of the Vilnius Summit would have two fathers—the EaP states and the EU—a negative outcome would have two-and-a-half, as Russia's role in the EaP is not to be ignored.

One of the main reasons for the dissatisfying state of affairs within the EaP is the financing of the initiative. Although the financial support for the period 2010–2013 rose to €1,9 billion, it might still be regarded as a low, considering the organization of the initiative and the sacrifices the EaP states are expected to make. This is especially noticeable as the partner states are not rewarded solely based on the conditionality principle (and some of the EU bodies do not know where the money goes). Not only are the funds for the conditionality principle low (10 percent of the entire ENPI budget), but also the geographic distance from the EU and Brussels’ interests toward some states play a crucial even if informal role in the initiative. Thus, Belarus is treated more critically on its human rights record than similarly undemocratic but energy-rich Azerbaijan. These informal criteria enable partners and third states to criticize Brussels for double standards. Moreover, they hamper the EU’s ability and flexibility to support smaller but more engaged (in comparison to other partner states) EaP countries like Moldova and then show them off as poster children of positive development. On the other hand, strict adherence to the conditionality principle would mean a very low level of support for the most important country of the EaP region—Ukraine—and a higher one for a poor country that is not of the utmost importance like Moldova.

Eastern non-partners?

However, the EU commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighborhood Policy, Mr. Füle, is correct when he states that Brussels cannot impose any reforms on the EaP states.

Most of the partner states’ regimes treat the EaP as a counterbalance to Russian influence. The geographic position of these states enables the authorities to participate in a certain geopolitical gamble. Instead of reforming themselves, most of the states decide to play Russia and the EU against one another. Before announcing that they will join the Customs Union, Armenian authorities stressed that their choice will largely depend on which side would offer Yerevan more on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue.²⁰ While the EU does not share the Armenian ambition for Nagorno-Karabakh to be an independent country or a part of Armenia, the presence of the Russian Army in Armenia enables Yerevan to feel more confident and safe. Without Russian troops, a war over Nagorno-Karabakh would probably be only a matter of time, taking into account the huge amount Azerbaijan is spending on its army and the “war rhetoric” between Baku and Yerevan. Ukraine, knowing that it is the key state for both Moscow and Brussels, has mastered this attitude, using Russia and its Customs Union as a threat toward the EU, and using Brussels’ AA as a tool to get as much as it can from Moscow. Some Georgian figures also play the “Eurasian card” to get more from the EU. When speaking to EU figures, the author discovered that this strategy might still be working. However, soon this instrument will not be as effective, leaving Ukraine not as a player but possibly as a state being played by the Kremlin.

Additionally, most of the EaP authorities lack the political will to fully participate in and commit themselves to the EaP (which also means promoting democracy and free elections). They pay lip service to democratic and free market change, while often maintaining the status quo. Hence, they do not represent their citizens, who see the EU and most of its values as a model. They cannot decide on how far they want to see the reforms go, and where will they look: Eastward or Westward? Even if a country wants to have both Moscow and Brussels on its side, a decision has to be made.

The authorities' devotion might in some cases lead to a change of the regime or jeopardize its influence (for example, in Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, or Ukraine). The reforms connected to the AA will be very painful for the elites. As an EU official explained, if the EaP states change the law (that also means the criminal law) in the way that the EU wants them to, their regimes "will not be able to manipulate it in the way they want to." Hence, the elites play the "pick-and-brag" card by not fully committing to the rules but choosing only certain (comfortable) reforms to be introduced and later bragging about how many painful changes have been introduced.

However, while the willingness to liberalize the visa regime seems legitimate and helpful for the development of the initiative, the authorities seem to exaggerate the importance of something like a "promise" of membership. The EU does not look the way it did when it welcomed ten new member states in 2004. It does not have enough funds and the ability to fight its own internal economic crisis, not to mention invest in new member states the way it has invested in the Czech Republic, Poland, and other Central and Eastern European states, especially not to invest in Ukraine, which would need far more support than the largest beneficiary of the EU budget: Poland. Ukraine will not be the next Poland any time soon (the fact that the Polish economic situation got worse is another topic). If Bulgaria and Romania are treated as "outsiders" within the EU, Armenia or Ukraine with their close connections with Russia would be treated with even more distance. Moreover, the issue of Turkey's membership simply shows that a promise does not bring any tangible results. Tired of waiting, the support of Turks toward EU integration is declining. The difference between a promise and actual politics must be understood by the authorities, without useless blaming and shaming of the EU, which is now focused on its own internal problems and not on the neighborhood. This critical stance toward the EU probably only fulfills internal political demands.

The "spoiler" in the room?

The geopolitical context of the EaP must not be ignored. After the West began "incorporating" the territories that were dependent on the Soviet Union, Russia showed it where the red line was around its sphere of interest²¹ (the non-Baltic

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**Anything carried out in this territory
without the participation of Russia is
perceived in Moscow as being against it.**

post-Soviet countries). For many in Moscow, the EaP is a strict anti-Russian initiative. Mr. Putin called the EaP an alternative for NATO expansion to the East,²² while Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov called it an attempt by the EU to build a “sphere of influence” and emphasized that the program may cause damage to similar projects by Moscow in the post-Soviet space. The *Prague Declaration* does not even name the Kremlin as an important partner for cooperation, and

it is well known that anything carried out in this territory without the participation of Russia is perceived in Moscow as being against it. Since another goal of the EaP was to build an alternative pipeline to the EU bypassing Russia, it is understandable that Moscow (a gas and oil monopolist in some of the EU and EaP states) sees it as a threat. Hence, Russia wants to undermine the success of the initiative or, at least, use it to its own advantage. This aspect of the analysis of the EaP is often either ignored or its importance is greatly diminished by scholars and commentators. Therefore, in this paper it will be dealt with more broadly, although it is mostly the EU and EaP states that are to be blamed for the results of the EaP.

Interestingly, the EaP is not a military instrument in any sense. Hence, Moscow does not fear the straightforward influence of the EaP moving closer to Brussels. Still, the Kremlin learned its lesson before. In the 1990s, it did not oppose economic cooperation with and a probable future membership of the post-Soviet Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania) in the EU but only the idea of them joining NATO. However, it was the economic and judiciary reforms that the countries conducted to access the EU that moved them further from the Russian sphere of influence rather than the changes expected by NATO involvement. When considering the complexity of the AA with Ukraine or the EU talks with Georgia or Moldova, Russia does not want to make the same mistake.

Russia would not be a “full father” of a great failure of the EaP, as any “anti-EaP” steps have to be agreed to by either the EU member states or the EaP partner states. Still, Russia has three channels of influence.

First, Russia might exercise influence on the EaP through EU institutions. Direct and unanimous statements by Russian authorities (when the EU is divided on the EaP) and the adaptation of the instruments of the EaP for its own purposes are some interconnected examples of the sub-channels.

The stance on the EaP on the Russian political scene has been harsh and united, regardless of the political party. Then president Medvedev emphasized that European leaders failed to convince him that the EaP is not anti-Russian; Minister for Foreign Affairs Lavrov proposed that Russia should have a say in the Eastern Partnership when decisions are being made on questions regarding Moscow’s interests; and Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Russian Federation Council Mikhail Margelov stated that the EaP is

an attempt to include former Soviet republics in the EU sphere of influence, since Georgia's and Ukraine's inclusion into NATO has been postponed. Alexander Babakov, vice chairman of the Russian Duma and a member of A Just Russia, and Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, the leader of the nationalist Liberal Democratic Party of Russia, both criticized the Eastern Partnership. The latter claimed that EU states “for money try to somehow ally” the EaP countries and turn them against Russia. The unanimity might have been easily used for Russia's sake.

So as not to upset Russia (also in connection with its strong and united critical stance), Moscow was assured that it could take part in some of the EaP projects, and another project was proposed for Russia—the Partnership for Modernization (PfM). According to several politicians, officials, and specialists responsible for EU-Russian relations in Brussels with whom the author spoke, Russia has intelligently adapted the instruments of the EaP to its own advantage. They argued that the EaP was used by Russia as an instrument to gain “benevolence” on other issues from the EU and better cooperation through the PfM (an EU–Russian program introduced in 2010 that supports and co-funds the economic, political, and technological modernization of Russia). One official explained that the PfM was introduced by the EU to show that the EaP is not against Russia and to emphasize that Brussels has the “same types of offer to all of our partners.” In that way, thanks to the proposal of the PfM realistic-thinking Moscow gained assurance that it has a similar program to the EaP, although it is not part of the European Neighborhood Policy, and that it can also gain something from the EU's cooperation with its smaller Eastern neighbors.

Second, Moscow uses the bilateral level with EU states to influence the EaP, as it knows that on various occasions the EU fails to build a consensus on Russia-related issues. It knows it can use the differences among EU member states on the EaP and (also due to its mistrust toward the EU) prefers to pursue bilateral relations with EU players. This has led to several results. For example, Bulgaria agreed to participate in building a pipeline to compete with EaP-supported Nabucco (South Stream), which is indirectly targeted against Ukraine, a crucial transit state for Moscow. Moreover, with the “modernization” language of President Medvedev, the Kremlin used its soft power to support the “Russia first” strategy in Berlin. It is not a surprise that Germany's policy toward Eastern European states is too often dependent on Berlin's policies toward Russia. Why support a weak initiative (that German Foreign Minister Steinmeier welcomed rather lukewarmly) and endanger Berlin's economic interests if Russia is on a modernization path with a new president?²³ Last but not least, Moscow even knows that due to Warsaw's support of the Eastern Partnership, Poland will not criticize Russia on other issues as loudly simply because that would harm its relations with the Kremlin. It is a fact that bad relations with Russia make Poland a weaker

So as not to upset Russia, Moscow was assured that it could take part in some of the EaP projects, and another project was proposed for Russia — the Partnership for Modernization (PfM).

actor within the EU.²⁴ It is all indirect; however this indirect “power” should also be considered when talking about the EaP. Although some in Europe exaggerate and treat Russia as if it were still the Soviet Union, nobody wants to have bad relations with Moscow.

The most important, however, is Russia’s third channel—influence on the EaP states. Indeed, Russia is culturally and historically connected with the EaP states. But instead it is “hard power” (although not in a strictly military sense, but by paying or coercing) that is used to somehow undermine the EaP’s proposals. The most crucial ways this is done is through Russia’s support for the authorita-

tive regimes exercising “managed democracy” (as in Belarus or Ukraine), its use of energy diplomacy, and its proposal of an alternative economic integration path—the Customs Union, and in the future, the Eurasian Union.

While the values of Russia, the EaP states, and the EU countries are similar (democracy), their norms (what is practiced) differ. The EU expects the EaP regimes to develop into Western democracies. Russia, on the other hand, while

stating that democracy and human rights are important, claims that because of historical differences, the post-Soviet states cannot apply Western democracy. In 2006, then first deputy chief of the Presidential Administration Vladislav Surkov coined the term “sovereign democracy” (called “managed democracy” by others), which in its initial meaning “preserved democratic procedures and allowed for marginal media and civil society to operate while preserving the main levers of political power, including, first and foremost, national television in [governmental—author] hands.”²⁵ Russian authorities claimed that this is Eastern democracy and that the Western version currently cannot function in the post-Soviet territory for historical and cultural reasons. The concept, promoted by the Kremlin, was Russia’s weapon to defend the EaP regimes from the EU’s criticism (and at the same time build bridges between Moscow and the EaP states based on this type of understanding) and is an important “soft power” instrument of the Kremlin. Indeed, when Yulia Tymoshenko was sentenced to a prison term in Ukraine, Medvedev called this situation Ukraine’s “internal affair,” although later several Russian authorities criticized the verdict as being anti-Russian.²⁶ However, when Yuri Lutsenko was sentenced, Moscow did not react. As the EU and the United States expressed alarm that the presidential elections in Belarus were illegitimate, Russia congratulated Lukashenka on his victory, recognized him as legitimate, and did not react against the post-election tortures and arrests of oppositionists. When Ilgar Mammadov, candidate in the upcoming 2013 Azerbaijani presidential elections, was arrested, the EU expressed its concern. Russia remained silent. In Moldova, Medvedev supported Vladimir Voronin, who viewed Romania as a threat to Moldova’s independence. Thus, when the EU emphasizes its demands, Russia builds alliances with friendly (not always democratic) regimes and positions itself as an alternative to the EU.

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Often it also does not criticize the regime in the Russian media, which have great influence on the EaP citizens' mindset. Arguably, without Russia's economic and political support, the regime of President Lukashenka, at least, would not exist in the way it does now.

As a country with exceptionally large reserves of natural gas, oil, coal, and uranium, and as one of the largest producers and exporters of gas and oil, Russia arguably enjoys its current status as a respected power mainly thanks to its energy potential. The way that it uses its energy sources in foreign politics is often called Russia's "energy diplomacy." The trade of gas has often been used as an instrument to exert pressure for "wrong" or reward "correct" decisions by the EaP states, even without cutting off gas. For example, as a reward for progress in integration with Russia, Belarus, in a deep economic crisis, received a discount of 40 percent on gas—from \$263 for 1000 cubic meters in the fourth quarter of 2011 to \$166 for 1000 cubic meters in mid-2012.²⁷ On the other hand, in 2012, Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak made a proposal to Moldova—the poster child of the EaP—to denounce the European Energy Community agreement (the so-called Third Energy Package²⁸), through which it receives lower prices for Russian gas for the "near abroad" region and gets about €3 billion for relief of its debt. The Energy Community is a platform integrating the EU energy market with the Balkans and the Black Sea Region as well as enhancing the security of supplies from the region. It is based on the EU's *acquis communautaire*, which is also the basis for the EaP talks. Being a part of the Energy Community is unofficially a key component of the EaP program. During the negotiations with the EU, Moldova insisted on a five-year postponement of the implementation of the Third Energy Package to satisfy Moscow.

It is economic cooperation that is perceived to be the greatest advantage of the EaP. To counterbalance the European offer, Russia introduced another competitive organization—the Customs Union (CU).²⁹ The aims of the CU are deepening economic cooperation among its members (at the moment Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan), eliminating trade and non-trade barriers within the community, and agreeing on a common external tariff. For some, the CU is strictly economic, but the political accents and the timing of the initiative should not leave any doubt that it is a counter-initiative to the EU's EaP. The Customs Union should become an organization comparable to the European Union—the Eurasian Union (EuAsU)—and will concentrate also on political questions (migration, visa policies). EU officials admit that the CU is a major competitor of the EaP.

Russia stresses that all CIS states are encouraged to join the CU and later the EuAsU. Still, Azerbaijan and Georgia do not seem to be interested, and Moldova (the poorest EaP state) is not high enough on Moscow's priority list. As Moscow repeatedly emphasizes, Ukraine is the main "invited party." According to the Eurasian Development Bank, in the period between 2011 and

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2030 the maximum cumulative increase of Ukraine’s economy would amount to \$219 billion in 2010 prices (however, it would have to raise its WTO-tariffs to the Union’s level). President Putin explained that Ukraine could preserve its access to the Russian market, especially for agricultural products, which under the DCFTA would become subject to export quotas to the EU. Most Western

sources are much more critical toward the CU, emphasizing that Ukraine would to some extent lose its economic voice, being constantly influenced by Russia;³⁰ the gain would be visible only in the short term, but losing its chance for modernization (as the CU virtually does not demand any reforms), Kiev would miss an opportunity to gain in the long term from the rich, EU market (fully integrated into the world economy). Moreover, joining the CU means raising about 11,500 customs tariffs to the higher—Russian—level.³¹ What would happen if Ukraine decided in favor of closer cooperation with the EU? Moscow threatened that if Ukraine signed the DCFTA, Russia “would have to introduce protective measures” and encouraged Kiev to join the CU by offering it much lower gas prices. The Kremlin pictures the DCFTA in almost apocalyptic terms for the Ukrainian economy. For President Yanukovich, whose Eastern Ukrainian colleagues and “family” do business with Russia rather than the EU, and who faces a serious economic downturn, such an offer is very difficult to resist. For Yanukovich, the decision may be sketched as follows: gaining a lot in the short term through his regime or gaining virtually nothing but only reforming the country in order to lose his power, probably soon. It is the Ukrainian regime, and not public opinion, that decides the future of the country, but it is the Ukrainian citizen who may lose the most.

Ukraine has for a long time held the position that it would join the CU on a 3+1 basis, which would be a mixed approach—not officially joining the CU, but playing on both fronts (the EU and CU) to get cheaper gas prices and be able to sign the AA with Brussels. Brussels does not know what it means precisely, while Moscow states that one cannot be only “a little bit pregnant” and demands a decision—all or nothing. Both the EU and Russia are waiting for a decision and probably slowly losing their patience.

Russia’s loss of patience could be observed during the August 2013 developments concerning Moscow’s blockade of Ukrainian goods. This event precisely showed that it is “hard power” that can be most effectively used by the Kremlin. As the voices to sign the AA with Ukraine have become louder from within the EU and even the United States, Russia decided to use its direct power by blocking trade. Even though the blockade of a large part of Ukrainian goods ended after several days, a bad “aftertaste” remained even in pro-Russian circles in Ukraine. After economist Sergey Glazyev, who is close to the Kremlin, warned that if Kiev signs the AA with the EU, such blockades may be repeated, Ukraine again got a picture of how extremely unreliable Moscow is.

Although it is too early to predict, the blockade might have been a step too far, as it might have woken up the “heroic posture” of the EU to rescue Ukraine (in the European Parliament two major factions³² called for further steps in integrating Ukraine with European structures) and showed Kiev that if it were associated with Moscow (on the Kremlin’s terms) it would have almost no weapon to fight back against the Kremlin. Still, it does not mean that the AA will definitely be signed in Vilnius.

Joining the Customs Union precludes signing the AA with the DCFTA component. The latest “gain” of the Russia-led organization is Armenia, which is already a member of the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization. It is highly doubtful that it was trade-related issues that convinced President Sargsyan to do this, because Yerevan’s trade relations are far more developed with the EU than with the CU states. The AA with the DCFTA component would serve as an instrument to tighten EU-Armenian cooperation. The ace that Russia used was probably the presence of its troops in Armenia, securing it from a possible attack from richer and militarily stronger Azerbaijan. Blackmailing and pressuring Armenia (with which Russia does not have any common land border³³) to cooperate was mainly a symbolic slap in the face to the EaP. It was not difficult to predict, but the EU treated Moscow as a reliable regime that played fair.

The issue of Armenia clearly shows that Russia may use the troops that it has in five of the EaP states (Armenia, Belarus, Transnistria in Moldova, and Ukraine, as well as Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia) to further destabilize the situation or limit independence in terms of moves available for the countries’ regimes. It also further illustrates that although Russia may have soft power potential, at the moment it has the will and ability to efficiently use only hard power.³⁴ It should be noted, however, that Armenia is not as important for the EU as Georgia or Ukraine. It is difficult to be sure whether or not “showing off” the Russian army in other EaP countries will be used again before the Vilnius Summit.

EaP Country	Approximated number of Russian troops in 2011
Armenia	3,214
Azerbaijan ³⁵	900
Belarus	850*
Georgia (Abkhazia & South Ossetia)	7,000
Moldova (Transnistria)	1,500
Ukraine	13,000

Source: author’s own compilation based on data from the International Institute for Strategic Studies,³⁶ Klein,³⁷ Lukin,³⁸ Popescu & Wilson.³⁹

*Data for 2008; however, no changes were publicly reported

Nevertheless, Russia plays for its own gains. It should not be demonized when it treats the EaP as a geopolitical project—just like the EU. By using its power, it shows that two can play this game. Russia’s influence only emphasizes the main problems of the EaP: the lack of unanimity among the EU states on almost any issue concerning the program; the tendency to ignore Russia as a player in a region that is so symbolic for it; the lack of a truly structured and attractive program for the EaP states; the lack of support if they really decided to cooperate closely with the EU (as in the case of Moldova); and no real support of opposition figures in EaP countries, as well as the indecisiveness and unwillingness of the EaP states’ authorities to choose and commit themselves to one development path (unless they are somehow coerced, as in the case of Armenia and perhaps soon Ukraine).

Even though earlier Moscow used the EaP’s weaknesses to achieve what it wanted, it might have recently gone too far with its “hard power” tools in the “battle for Kiev.” The game is still going on, but the goal that it shot recently into its own goal box could be the decisive one, unfortunately for the Kremlin.

Nobody said that the EaP would be an easy project. However, it is obvious that Russia will not disappear or leave its symbolic “area of interest” to the EU. Moscow’s actions should be treated by Brussels as a challenge, emphasizing what should be improved. The EU should also review its strategy toward the Kremlin, which had earlier given assurances that it would not hinder the EaP. It is obvious that Russia is not in the mood and the position to support or ignore this initiative. Indeed, Russia might be seen as a “spoiler,” but mostly due to the weaknesses of the EaP. Without the CIS states, Russia cannot even daydream about being any kind of great imperium.⁴⁰

Is There Any Future for the EaP?

The EaP is a great foundation for further reform, but it does not function as intended. It is time to reform the basis of the EaP. One cannot overcome the challenges of weak cooperation with (most of) the EaP states using an instrument that does not work and causes further problems. It is not the time to blame Russia for certain failures, as the EU should work *ex ante* (“preventively”) in terms of Moscow’s possible influence, and not as a quasi-rescue partner for EaP states after great crises. It is time to act more in unison and not just brag about mutual success.

Indeed, 2013 will be a decisive year for the EaP. The Vilnius Summit will present the questionable results of the program. It is very possible that the EU will be so desperate and willing to highlight some successes that it will sign the AA with Ukraine even despite the dissatisfying human rights situation. However, whatever the outcome of the Vilnius Summit, it is time for both sides—the EU and the EaP states—to do some serious and genuine thinking about the sense and the future of the EaP.

Brussels is experiencing an internal crisis and is focusing instead on the burning problems of the Southern Neighborhood. However, the troubles and weaknesses of the Eastern Neighborhood will sooner or later be directly connected to the EU's security. To minimize future problems, the EaP must proceed to function but should definitely be reformed.

Even if Brussels is not able to promise a membership perspective to the EaP partners, it should:

- Outline a new, understandable, and attractive mission statement for the cooperating EaP states. It should be based on the idea of a unified Europe (not only the EU) that can stand together on various occasions and face any challenges. The EaP states are to be equal partners and not lower-level states. Possible hegemonic cooperation is offered to the elites by Russia. What is the goal if not membership? Political cooperation the way that Romano Prodi saw it (“all except for institutions”), a simple economic union, or perhaps other ways of engaging in cooperation? Often neither the partner states nor even the EU countries know what is hidden behind the EaP.
- Support the people-to-people program with political will and more funds. While the EaP regimes may prefer to engage with Russia's vision of cooperation to keep power in their hands, the EaP citizens tend to support the Western development vision. Hence, engaging more with grassroots movements (civil society organizations) and citizens (youth programs and scholarships for students and young professionals, as well as support of scientists with EU grants) is of the utmost importance. This is directly connected to visa liberalization, which is probably the best card that Brussels holds to encourage a democratic bottom-up approach. Democratic change in history has most often begun in societies. While most of the EaP authorities stick to the status quo political landscape, the EU should invest in their societies. Here, there is no place for prejudice and an exaggerated fear of illegal immigration. Putting the EaP logo on investments co-funded by the EU could further show to the EaP citizens that cooperation with the EU bears fruit and is observable in their everyday lives.
- Differentiate more strictly on two levels—the state and society. While Lukashenka constantly gives the cold shoulder to the EU, Belarusian NGOs are some of the most active within the EaP. State authorities should not be able to hamper societal change in the region. The EU has various channels to support democratic and civil movements and thus should make some use of them. Still, differentiation between states' regimes should also be more strict and bold. The instruments that the EU has at hand (the AA, visa liberalization, funds, governmental cooperation, and others) should be opened to those who

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really reform, engage in reforms, and do not just pay lip service to change. Double standards (as between Azerbaijan and Belarus) will only undermine the EU’s position as an honest actor and potential broker.

- Stop using “now-or-never” language. For the EaP states’ citizens it may be perceived as a light version of Russia’s coercion—you are with us by reforming and applying Western standards at once, although they are so far from what you preach, or you are against us and are “doomed” to a lack of modernization. Does that mean that if they do not reform now, they should not care about anything and slip down the authoritarian slide, as there is no way back? The EU must not be a “bully” and should keep the doors for cooperation open. If this is really about democracy, the EU should be able to wait, as this value is priceless and timeless. Further cooperation with Armenia, even if it joins the CU, would be trustworthy evidence of this commitment.

Although the EaP is not a perfect tool, neither any EU state nor the EU as a whole can force political and democratic change in the EaP states. Hence, there are several things that must be done:

- The initiative lies on the side of the EaP authorities. Of the utmost importance for the EaP to succeed is reform. Understandably, great reforms may be connected with their loss of power. However, various experts in Russia stress that signing and implementing (!) the AA with the EU would be a great success for President Yanukovich and might bring him closer to re-election in 2015.
- Still, what must not be done is using the EaP as a tool to bargain with Russia and using cooperation with Moscow to influence or even threaten Brussels. In the long run, this tactic is going to decrease the will to cooperate with those states on the part of many EU states’ societies that are relatively open to the EaP. It also casts a great shadow on mutual understanding on the EU-EaP level and may lead to a feeling of tough competition between Brussels and Moscow. An entity caught between two fighting sides is seldom likely to be a real winner.
- The EaP’s citizens are a lantern in the tunnel for the program to succeed. Therefore, the EaP population must engage more in the cooperative efforts with the EU through the mechanisms that the EaP offers (the Business Forum, Civil Society Forum, and others). A higher demand for cooperation could lead Brussels to offer more opportunities for cooperation. Further, a developing and broadening civil society provides more opportunities for a greater democratic transition.

It is virtually impossible that before the Summit in November the EaP states (mostly Ukraine) will fully reform themselves to a level that would enable the EU to sign the AA with Kiev and initial the AA with Chisinau, Tbilisi, and Yerevan with a clear conscience. The mythical and promised democratic, economic, and social change will not be achieved. The Eastern Partnership, however, has to be

given a chance. All heads of states will probably understand that a lot remains to be done, and some documents are only signed or initialed as a sign of hope for further transition, because the crucial step is implementing reforms, not just signing agreements. The ratification process may be the time for countries such as France or the UK to play a shame game concerning Ukraine.

The certain “battle” over the EaP states with Russia is intensifying, and the EU needs a stronger and more integrated voice on this issue. Thus, the Vilnius Summit must be the time to change and upgrade cooperation within the EaP—to focus, to differentiate, and to really engage in EaP-EU relations. Otherwise, Vilnius will turn out to be similar to Warsaw in 2011—an expensive chit chat on democratic values with a nice photograph at the end.

Notes

- 1 For the sake of simplicity, the Republic of Moldova will be called Moldova in this paper.
- 2 The author understands the EaP states to be the so-called partner states: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine.
- 3 O. Shumylo-Tapiola, "A Successful Vilnius Summit: Mission Possible," Carnegie Europe, June 4, 2013, <http://carnegieeurope.eu/2013/06/04/successful-vilnius-summit-mission-possible/g88t>.
- 4 With the signing of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009, the General Affairs and External Relations Council was divided into the Foreign Affairs Council and the General Affairs Council.
- 5 Council of the European Union, "Joint Declaration of the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit," last modified May 7, 2009, http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/neighbourhood/eastern_partnership/documents/prague_summit_declaration_en.pdf.
- 6 Before the AAs, the document regulating bilateral cooperation between the EU and all other post-Soviet states (except for the Baltic states, Belarus, and Turkmenistan) was the PCA. It provided third states with closer economic ties to the EU and some of its standards.
- 7 R. Goncharenko and O. Sawizki, "EU's deal with Ukraine falters over Tymoshenko case," *Deutsche Welle*, December 19, 2011, <http://dw.de/p/13VnT>.
- 8 The Euronest meetings bring together members of the European Parliament (MEP) and members of the parliaments of each of the Eastern partners. The idea is to gather sixty MEPs and sixty representatives of the partner states (ten from each EaP state).
- 9 Kancelaria Sejmu Biuro Komisji Spraw Sejmowych [Chancellery of the Sejm, Office of the Committee of Sejm Issues], "Pełny Zapis Przebiegu Posiedzenia Komisji do Spraw Unii Europejskiej, Komisji Spraw Zagranicznych z dnia 27.09.2012 r." [The whole record of the meeting of the Committee of European Union Affairs and the Foreign Affairs Committee held on September 27, 2012], p. 11, [http://orka.sejm.gov.pl/zapisy7.nsf/0/A2D30024ACF669EEC1257A92004B07F0/\\$File/0097107.pdf](http://orka.sejm.gov.pl/zapisy7.nsf/0/A2D30024ACF669EEC1257A92004B07F0/$File/0097107.pdf).
- 10 The first Eastern Partnership Summit took place in Prague in 2009 and the second in Warsaw in 2011. The third Eastern Partnership Summit is planned for Vilnius in November 2013, during the Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the EU.
- 11 K. Pełczyńska-Nałęcz, "Integracja czy imitacja? UE wobec wschodnich sąsiadów" [Integration or Imitation? The EU toward its Eastern Neighbors] (Warsaw: Centre for Eastern Studies, 2011).
- 12 Kancelaria Sejmu Biuro Komisji praw Sejmowych [Chancellery of the Sejm, Office of the Committee of Sejm Issues], "Pełny Zapis Przebiegu Posiedzenia Komisji do Spraw

- Unii Europejskiej, Komisji Spraw Zagranicznych z dnia 27.09.2012 r.” [The whole record of the meeting of the Committee of European Union Affairs and the Foreign Affairs Committee held on September 27, 2012], p. 11, [http://orka.sejm.gov.pl/zapisy7.nsf/0/A2D30024ACF669EEC1257A92004B07F0/\\$File/0097107.pdf](http://orka.sejm.gov.pl/zapisy7.nsf/0/A2D30024ACF669EEC1257A92004B07F0/$File/0097107.pdf).
- 13 It was the countries that are interested in the Mediterranean region instead of the EaP that did not want more funds spent on the basis of conditionality. Understandably, the EaP states can more easily adapt to the democratic and free market demands of the EU than the Arab states. Hence, the funds spent on the Mediterranean region would be distinctly lower than the ones spent on the six EaP countries.
 - 14 This decision has to be supported by the Armenian parliament. However, since President Sargsyan’s Republican Party holds the majority of seats in the Armenian National Assembly, the decision to choose the Customs Union is highly likely.
 - 15 This is of major importance in Azerbaijan and Belarus, for example, where civil society is often perceived as a threat to the government. Actions of Belarusian authorities toward some human rights movements (such as toward Ales Bialatski) might serve as an example. Not showing the names of Belarusian civil society organizations receiving grants from, for example, the Polish Solidarity Fund for the sake of their own security is also an important proof of the problems of civil society in this country.
 - 16 Euractiv, “EU-backed Nabucco project ‘over’ after rival pipeline wins Azeri gas bid,” June 28, 2013, <http://www.euractiv.com/energy/eu-favoured-nabucco-project-history-528919>.
 - 17 T. De Waal, “Expanding the EU’s Ostpolitik,” Carnegie Europe, October 24, 2011, http://carnegieeurope.eu/publications/?fa=45792&solr_hilite=.
 - 18 The approach of France or the UK, for example, toward the EaP was symbolically underlined during the Eastern Partnership Summit in Warsaw in 2011. It was not attended by the highest representatives of these states. Prime Minister François Fillon (and not President Nicolas Sarkozy) and Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg (instead of Prime Minister David Cameron) represented these states.
 - 19 However, to some extent, it is understandable why the EU has to speak like that to Ukraine. The AA was negotiated in 2012; in 2014, an election year in the EU and Germany (a major state that is undecided on Ukraine’s future), the probability of signing the agreement is very low. In 2015, the AA would have to be renegotiated.
 - 20 N. Hayrumyan, “Associating with EU: Brussels stance on Karabakh may sway Armenia’s decision,” *ArmeniaNow*, July 19, 2013, http://www.armenianow.com/commentary/analysis/47829/armenia_eu_association_agreement_karabakh.
 - 21 D. Trenin, “Russia’s Sphere of Interest, not Influence,” Carnegie Moscow Center, September 22, 2009, <http://carnegie.ru/publications/?fa=23863>.
 - 22 S. Bolzen and C. Schiltz, “Drahtseilakt mit dem Osten” [Tightrope with the East], *Die Welt*, May 7, 2009, http://www.welt.de/welt_print/article3690008/Drahtseilakt-mit-dem-Osten.html.
 - 23 After Moscow ignored Berlin’s “Meseberg Initiative” to solve the Transnistria question by proposing the opening a Russian consulate in Tiraspol (the capital of the separatist region), and after the German public loudly demanded criticism of Russia on its human rights record, Chancellor Merkel’s attitude changed dramatically.
 - 24 P. Wisniewski, “Poland’s Strategy for Dealing with Russia’s Human Rights Record,” Carnegie Moscow Center, March 1, 2013, <http://carnegie.ru/2013/03/01/poland-s-strategy-for-dealing-with-russia-s-human-rights-record/fn0t>.

- 25 M. McFaul and R. Spector, “External Sources and Consequences of Russia’s ‘Sovereign Democracy,’” in *New Challenges to Democratization*, ed. P. Burnell & R. Youngs 125 (New York: Routledge, 2010).
- 26 Tymoshenko was accused of signing a gas deal with Russia that was against Ukrainian interests and was subsequently sentenced for it.
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