

European Neighbourhood Policy: Does the tool work? Area study of the South Caucasian countries

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Abstract: *This paper deals with the European Neighbourhood Policy in the case of three South Caucasian countries — Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. By comparing the official documents issued by the European Commission with the independent data provided by several independent NGOs this paper suggests the European Neighbourhood Policy is not an efficient tool in this regard. Finally, the paper offers a hypothesis that the ENP is rather a tool in the hands of the South Caucasian countries by which they carry out their own political goals.*

Keywords: *European Neighbourhood Policy, South Caucasus, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia*

Introduction

The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) is an ambitious project of the European Union (EU) to redefine its own borderland and establish mutually beneficial relations between the EU and its neighbours.¹ By now the policy covers 16 countries of Southern Mediterranean, Eastern Mediterranean and so-called Western Newly Independent States (WNIS), i.e. Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus and the states of the South Caucasus — Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.

This paper deals with the ENP in the three last-mentioned states — Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. Despite their similar geographic location, each of the South Caucasian states represents a distinct type of the ENP involved state — from Western-oriented modernizing semi-democracy (Georgia) via Russian-oriented, but Western-minded semi-authoritarianism (Armenia) to oil-rich personalist authoritarianism (Azerbaijan). The paper shows whether or how the ENP is differentiated in the case of these three countries, evaluates the impact of the ENP on the political reforms in the South Caucasian states and finally suggests a hypothesis explaining why despite the unsatisfactory results of the ENP in the South Caucasus the policy continues. The evaluation of the ENP impact is based on declared goals of the ENP for the states of the South Caucasus, defined by the Action Plans (APs), on European Commissions' (EC) Progress Reports and other EC's documents, which are compared with independent analyses of political, social and economic developments in the South Caucasian countries and several indexes developed by independent non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

ENP in a Nutshell

A few years before the 2004 and 2007 enlargements, the EU countries found themselves as becoming neighbours to the WNIS and decided to develop a single framework for cooperation with all EU neighbours, of Southern and Eastern Mediterranean as well as of the WNIS. The EC's Communication on Wider Europe from 2003 excluded the South Caucasian states from the proposed ENP; however, in 2004 with another phase of eastern enlargement ahead and with the Georgian "Rose Revolution" in fresh memory, the EU included Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia into the ENP (Ghazaryan 2010: 229–230, Smith 2005: 759).

The ENP Strategy Paper identifies the creation of the sphere of shared values around the EU as a general goal of the ENP and adds other areas for cooperation with the partner states: more effective political dialogue; economic and social development policy; trade and internal market; justice and home affairs; connecting the neighbourhood (transport, energy, environment, research, etc.) and people-to-people relations (EC 2004). The European Commission in its Communications defines ENP as a differentiated approach, reflecting the needs of the involved countries. However, the ENP countries are expected to share the same fundamental values as the EU member states, and in exchange the EU offers them some benefits unwinding from participation in the fruits of the European integration process, above all the participation in the Common Market and enhancing the mobility of the citizens of the involved countries. To put it simply, from this point of view ENP can be described as a policy of the "stick and carrot," where the stick is the EU's pressure for

democratic, economic, law, etc. reforms in the neighbourhood countries, and carrot is the benefit resulting from the participation of the ENP countries in the integration process. Nevertheless, this carrot has one insurmountable limit, famously defined by Romano Prodi as “everything but the institutions.” In forthcoming paragraphs we will perceive the ENP by this popular metaphor (the stick and carrot); nevertheless, in final paragraphs we will show that this metaphor is not necessarily the correct one.

The structure of the ENP was designed after the enlargement policy (Dannreuther 2006, Kelley 2006); nevertheless, the main difference between the enlargement policy and the ENP rests in the character of the “sticks and carrots.” For the candidate countries, there was a sweet “carrot” of the promised EU membership, which forced them to implement political, economic, law and other reforms. Central and Eastern European countries finally became stable liberal democracies with reasonably strong economies and all of them joined the EU. By now, the enlargement policy is often evaluated as the most effective EU foreign policy (Kelley 2006: 31).

Another important difference between the enlargement policy and the ENP rests in the character of the APs, jointly developed by the EU and their partner countries. In the enlargement policy it was the EU which declared the benchmarks candidate countries had to reach; however, in the ENP individual partner states can, in dialogue with the EU, choose in which areas they like to cooperate and to which goals the cooperation should lead. Therefore, each partner country should have a different AP and should seek different goals. The Mediterranean countries hardly expect to become EU member states and also usually do not want to. The countries of WNIS including the South Caucasus are in a different position and many of their politicians openly speak about ambitions to become candidate countries and finally also EU members.

In 2007 the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI, see table 1) was launched as an instrument for financing the ENP. The APs (which have been, in the cases of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, approved by the EC in 2006) were followed by the Country Strategy Papers (CSPs, designed for five years) and National Indicative Programmes (NIPs, two during the five-year term of the CSPs) that have assigned financial resources among the priority areas of the APs. Annually, the EC issues Progress Reports that evaluate the implementation of the ENP in the last year and propose future development of the EU — partner country relations, e.g. the Association Agreement.

In addition to the bilateral character of the ENP, two multilateral programs have been launched: the Barcelona Process — Union for the Mediterranean (2007) and the Eastern Partnership (2009). This also reflects the two main groups of ENP states as well as two main vectors of the EU’s neighbourhood policy — towards the Mediterranean and towards the post-Soviet area.² In the frame of the Eastern Partner-

ship, which coexists with the ENP, the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) is also one of the possible carrots of the process.

Table 1: ENPI indicative multi-annual allocations for the period 2007–10

| Country | Million € | € per person |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| Algeria | 220 | 6.3 |
| Armenia | 98.4 | 32.8 |
| Azerbaijan | 92 | 11.1 |
| Belarus | 20 | 2.1 |
| Egypt | 558 | 6.8 |
| Georgia | 120.4 | 26.2 |
| Israel | 8 | 1.1 |
| Jordan | 265 | 40.8 |
| Lebanon | 187 | 45.6 |
| Libya | 8 | 1.2 |
| Moldova | 209.7 | 48.8 |
| Morocco | 654 | 20.4 |
| Palestinian Authority | 632 | 166.3 |
| Syria | 130 | 5.8 |
| Tunisia | 300 | 28.3 |
| Ukraine | 494 | 11.0 |
| <i>Total for country programmes</i> | <i>3996.5</i> | <i>–</i> |

Source: EC 2007

Official Goals of the ENP in the South Caucasus and its Outcomes

The Armenian AP³ is divided into eight priorities. First of all, the strengthening of democracy, the rule of law, reform of the judiciary and combat of fraud and corruption are mentioned, then strengthening the respect for human rights. Other priorities are: encouraging sustainable development, improvement of investment climate, convergence of economic legislation, development of an energy strategy (including the decommissioning of the Metzamor nuclear power plant), contribu-

tion to a peaceful solution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and efforts for regional cooperation (EC 2006a).

The Progress Reports for Armenia (2008–2011) are generally positive; such a fact reflects Di Puppò's remark that Armenia is perceived as the "better pupil among the three South Caucasian states" (Di Puppò 2007). EC stated that Armenia made considerable progress in the fields of human rights, political dialogue with the EU and also made some positive steps in the aftermath of the political crisis in February and March 2008, when the demonstrations of the supporters of the defeated presidential candidate Levon Ter-Petrossian were brutally suppressed by the security forces and dozens of opposition activist were jailed, detained or held in house arrest. The EC also appreciates amendments to the Criminal Code, improving anticorruption legislation, customs and taxation legislation, and also highly appreciates Armenia's involvement in the fields of European Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and multilateral Eastern Partnership (EC 2008a, EC 2009a, EC 2010a, EC 2011a).

The latest Progress Report mentions good progress of the negotiations leading to the EU-Armenia Association Agreement, however, only limited progress is seen in reforms leading to the launching of the negotiations on the DCFTA and also in the attempts for rapprochement with Turkey. Here, the sole fact that some process of this kind has even started was warmly appreciated; nevertheless the fact that the ratification has been stopped was mentioned. Also some hopes regarding the Karabakh peace process were expressed. According to the EC, Armenia has to independently investigate the events of February and March 2008, improve electoral standards, strengthen media freedom, ensure independence of the judiciary, reform the office of the Prosecutor General and enhance the political dialogue between ruling political parties and the opposition (EC 2008a, EC 2009a, EC 2010a, EC 2011a).

Rather different figures than in the Progress Report are obtained if we look at the independent indexes and databases. In the fields of political and civil rights, according to the Freedom in the World database provided by Freedom House (see table 2), political rights in Armenia have declined since 2005, while civil rights remained basically the same. The Press Freedom Index by Reporters without Borders (see table 3), has also slightly declined since 2005.

Table 2: Freedom in the World Data – 2005 and 2010

| country | 2005 | | | 2010 | | |
|------------|------------------|--------------|-------------|------------------|--------------|-------------|
| | political rights | civil rights | status | political rights | civil rights | status |
| Armenia | 5 | 4 | partly free | 6 | 4 | partly free |
| Azerbaijan | 6 | 5 | not free | 6 | 5 | not free |
| Georgia | 3 | 3 | partly free | 4 | 4 | partly free |

Source: Freedom House 2010

Note: The best grade in the partial evaluation of political and civil rights is 1 and the worst is 7.

Overall status can be generally read as follows: free = democracy, partly free = semi-democracy, not free = authoritarianism.

Anti-corruption legislation, so adored by the Progress Report, might have been really adopted, but its impact, at least according to Transparency International Corruption Perception Index (CPI, see table 4), is not yet visible. Actually, the score of Armenia in the CPI as well as overall world ranking have deteriorated significantly since 2005.

Table 3: Press Freedom Index – 2005 and 2010

| country | 2005 | | 2010 | |
|------------|-------|---------|-------|---------|
| | score | ranking | score | ranking |
| Armenia | 26.0 | 102 | 27.5 | 101 |
| Azerbaijan | 51.0 | 141 | 56.38 | 152 |
| Georgia | 25.17 | 99 | 27.0 | 99 |

Source: RWB 2006, 2011

Note: The best score is 0.0, currently Eritrea has the worst score – 105.0. There are 178 countries in the Reporters Without Borders rankings.

If we focus on Armenian state institutions, the features are also not very optimistic; however, we have to admit that also the EC's assessment was quite critical, mainly of the judiciary and Prosecutor's office. In the Failed State Index, Armenia has added 2.6 points for last five years, which means slightly worse result than in 2006. The quality of public services has also slightly deteriorated — probably due to economic crisis (see table 5). Selected core state institutions (police, judiciary and state administration) according to the Fund for Peace remain basically the same in years 2006 and 2008 (see table 6). However, this cannot tell us much, since we have to wait for the publishing of 2010 results. Possible impact of the ENP on these institutions may be not measurable just in two years since launching — nevertheless

the overall figures of the 2010 Failed States Index, aggregated i.a. of these qualitative data foreshadow that there will be no major shifts.

Georgia's AP is divided into 8 priority areas (clusters) — including rule of law, rebuilding state institutions, strengthening democratic institutions and respect for human rights, fighting corruption, improvement of the business climate, poverty reduction, environment protection, border management, strengthening regional cooperation, promoting peaceful resolution of internal conflicts, cooperation on the CFSP, and transport and energy (EC 2006c).

The Progress Reports for Georgia mention progress especially in the areas of the justice system, rule of law, fight against petty and administrative corruption, trade facilitation, regional development and improvement of the business climate. However, Georgia has to continue with democratic reforms, enhancing political pluralism and media freedom in a so-called “second wave of democratic reforms.” Especially the prevailing election irregularities were mentioned and also the process of adoption of the new constitution is observed carefully, but major comments did not appear (EC 2008c, EC 2009c, EC 2010c, EC 2011c).

Table 4: Corruption Perception Index – 2005 and 2010

| country | 2005 | | 2010 | |
|------------|-------|---------|-------|---------|
| | score | ranking | score | ranking |
| Armenia | 2.9 | 88 | 2.6 | 123 |
| Azerbaijan | 2.2 | 137 | 2.4 | 134 |
| Georgia | 2.3 | 130 | 3.8 | 68 |

Source: TI 2006, 2011

Note: Best possible score is 10 (highly clean), the worst possible score is 0 (highly corrupt). There are 178 countries in the Transparency International rankings.

Progress Reports see the major problem in the field of civil service, where the reforms are referred to be at a standstill. From other problematic issues we can choose the state of the labour market, situation in the “Occupied Territories,” poverty encompassing more than 25 % of population, pending repatriation of the Meskhetian Turks, or generally the situation of the minorities (EC 2008c, EC 2009c, EC 2010c, EC 2011c).

If we focus on the independent data, we again see different results. According to the Freedom House, civil rights as well as political rights have deteriorated during last five years from grade 3 to grade 4 (see table 2). The Press Freedom Index has remained basically the same, when Georgia ranked in 2005 as well as 2010 as 99th from 178 compared countries (see table 3). However, still it is the best result in the

region. What seems to be a real success is fighting the corruption; at least according to the Corruption Perception Index, in which Georgia has climbed up from 130th to 68th position during last five years.

The Failed States Index perceives the state of the civil service as highly problematic as the Progress Reports do. Failing civil service together with worsening economic situation and the fact that part of its territories are not under governmental control even caused the evaluation of Georgia as a failing state — ascribing it the status of “alert” (see table 5).

The Azerbaijani AP consists of ten priorities: the first one is the EU’s contribution to the peaceful solution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, which more than the real EU’s involvement reflects Azerbaijan’s diplomatic needs. Other priorities include the strengthening of democracy and the electoral process, strengthening the protection of human rights and the rule of law, improving the business and investment climate, fighting corruption, customs, sustainable economic development (including poverty reduction strategy), cooperation in the energy industries, border management, etc. (EC 2006b).

Table 5: Failed States Index (selected indicators) – 2006 and 2010

| country | 2006 | | | 2010 | | |
|------------|------------------|-----------------|----------------|------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| | economic decline | public services | total score | economic decline | public services | total score |
| Armenia | 5.1 | 6.5 | 71.5 (warning) | 6.5 | 6.9 | 74.1 (warning) |
| Azerbaijan | 5.9 | 6.5 | 81.9 (warning) | 5.9 | 5.5 | 84.4 (warning) |
| Georgia | 5.5 | 6.3 | 82.2 (warning) | 6.5 | 6.4 | 90.4 (alert) |



















Source: Foreign Policy 2011, The Fund for Peace 2009a, b, c

Note: Failed state index represents highly aggregated data from 12 social, political and economic indicators, each with the best possible score 0 and the worst possible score 10. The worst possible total score is 120. Total scores are divided into four intervals: 0–29.9 = sustainable, 30.0–59.9 = moderate risk, 60.0–89.9 = warning and over 90 = alert (failing state).

The Progress Reports for Azerbaijan are the most critical among the three South Caucasian progress reports. Moreover, most of the progress relevant to the ENP is seen by the EC in the economy, social governance and energy cooperation with the EU. Also fighting money laundering and to a certain extent also fighting corruption is seen as a successful part of the Azerbaijani-EU cooperation. The situation is worse in the fields of democracy, elections, media freedom and human rights. The state of democracy in Azerbaijan is described as a “setback.” The problems are seen in electoral process, constitutional reform, media freedom, freedom of assembly,

etc. Negotiations concerning the Association Agreement are mentioned as having good progress; however negotiations concerning the DCFTA have not started at all. (EC 2008b, EC 2009b, EC 2010b, EC 2011b).

Table 6: Core State Institutions (selection) – 2006 and 2008

| Armenia 2006 | | | Armenia 2008 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|--|
| Police | Judiciary | Civil Service | Police | Judiciary | Civil Service |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| weak | weak | moderate | weak | weak | moderate |
| Azerbaijan 2006 | | | Azerbaijan 2008 | | |
| Police | Judiciary | Civil Service | Police | Judiciary | Civil Service |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| weak | weak | moderate | weak | weak | moderate |
| Georgia 2006 | | | Georgia 2008 | | |
| Police | Judiciary | Civil Service | Police | Judiciary | Civil Service |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| weak | weak | moderate | weak | weak | moderate |

Source: The Fund for Peace 2007a, b, c, 2009a, b, c

Note: Core state institutions represent qualitative data taken from the Fund for Peace Country Profiles.

These data serve also as one of the sources of the comprehensive Failed States Index. The grades are as follows: poor, weak, moderate, good and excellent.

If we compare this with independent data, the state of democracy (or rather authoritarianism) remained basically the same in the period 2005–2010, at least according to the Freedom House (see table 2). However, the Press Freedom Index shows further deterioration of the media freedom (see table 3). The Corruption Perception Index implies tiny improvement; Azerbaijan has climbed up three places in the world rankings (see table 4). As seen from partial characteristics of the Failed States Index, Azerbaijan is the only country in the South Caucasus that has not seen any economic decline in comparison with the year 2005, and also functioning of public services has significantly improved during last 5 years (see table 5).

Discussion

Concerning the question about the differentiation of the ENP among the three observed states, it seems the goals of the APs are rather differently structured than independently developed for the particular country. However, Georgian and Armenian APs do give priority to the goals concerning strengthening of democracy, human rights, electoral process, etc., whilst the Azerbaijani AP prioritises security and economic issues.

The goals from the APs are fulfilled diversely. In the case of Armenia, the goals in the fields of “democratic agenda,” human rights and even fighting the corruption do not seem to be fulfilled, even if the Progress Reports speak about successes. It seems the EU wants to have Armenia as a good pupil and some “discrepancies” are not to change it. In Georgia, the jaded phrase about fighting corruption seems to be true; however, the “war on corruption” was launched briefly after the “Rose Revolution” and does not seem to be a direct result of the ENP. The EU’s support for further democratisation is not efficient, as seen from the Freedom in the World database. Azerbaijan’s results in the field of democracy, human rights and various civil and political freedoms remain sad. The Progress Reports mention them; however, they focus on good economic results of the country and the exclusive EU-Azerbaijan energy cooperation.

Regarding above mentioned findings one has to ask, what is the cause of such contradictory results. The difference between the EU’s evaluations and the independent data can be explained as an outcome of comparison of independent data and political documents that can be results of a necessary political compromise. However, this explanation suggests that the ENP does not provide so effective sticks in order to force the countries of the South Caucasus to do what they contractually consented to do. If we ask what sticks the ENP provides, the answer is clear: stopping the negotiations of the Association Agreements or reducing the funding from ENPI. However, nothing of this is happening. Negotiations of the Association Agreements not only continue, but also are evaluated as in a good progress. The funds from ENPI also do not slow down, but rise (see table 7).

Table 7: ENPI money allocations

| countries | Allocations in programming period 2007–2010 (mil. €) | Allocations in programming period 2011–2013 (mil. €) |
|------------------|---|---|
| Armenia | 98.4 | 157.0 |
| Azerbaijan | 92.0 | 122.5 |
| Georgia | 120.4 | 180.29 |

Source: EC 2007b, EC 2007c, EC 2007d, EC 2010d, EC 2010e, EC 2010f

Above mentioned findings suggest that the ENP is not efficient. Such a claim has also significant support from many authors (Delcour and Duhot 2011, Kochenov 2011, Popescu and Wilson 2009 and many others). The question is why the EU continues the policy if it is objectively not effective? The answer may rest in a more general view of the ENP. This policy is also quite often characterized as a geopolitical tool of the EU aimed at creating of “European semi-periphery,” “geopolitical arc,” of “restructuring the borders,” “reordering and rebordering,” etc. (Aliboni 2005, Marchetti 2006, Scott 2009, Kuus 2011). Thus, the logic of offering the carrots instead of whipping by the sticks makes some sense; independent indicators showing limited or no progress in areas covered by the ENP documents then may not be the right tools to understand the effectiveness of the ENP. Having in mind the importance of the region for the EU, dwelling above all in the production of hydrocarbons and its transport to Europe (e.g. Rummel and Zullo 1999, Lynch 2003, Marchetti 2006), the sole presence of the EU in the region and the communication with local political elites is relevant activity.

If the “geopolitical” nature of the ENP can explain the fact why the policy continues despite the above mentioned failures, it is necessary to ask, in this context, whether also the involved states of the South Caucasus can use the ENP as a tool for their own interests. If we look at the reality of the South Caucasus, we can see that all three countries have different expectations from the ENP, which reflect their geopolitical position, self-perception, level of democratic development, economic situation, etc.

For Armenia, whose borders are blocked by Azerbaijan and Turkey as a consequence of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, and which is dependent on the military assistance from Russia and energy cooperation with Russia and Iran, the ENP is a welcomed initiative to break its relative international isolation. It seems that after the power transfer from ex-president Robert Kocharian to his close colleague Serzh Sargsian in April 2008 and after the brief Russo-Georgian war in August 2008, the new Armenian government realized, that the reliance on Russia may bring also some unexpected externalities, e.g. destabilization of Georgia, which serves as a vital corridor for Armenian foreign trade with both Russia and the West (Kopeček 2010: 104). By now, the EU is Armenia’s major trade partner, whilst Russia is keeping its position of Armenia’s key importer, mainly of oil and gas.⁴ In 2008–2010 Armenia also tried to establish normal relations with Turkey in order to open the borders. Armeno-Turkish rapprochement has been frozen since 2010; nevertheless the EU still supports the process and sees it as an important way to boost regional cooperation.

Armenians appeared, perhaps quite surprisingly, as the best-prepared South Caucasian nation to cooperate with the EU in the frame of the ENP, a policy quite often characterised as bureaucratic and technocratic. Armenians seem to understand the way the EU wants to cooperate — that is through economic cooperation, assistance

in the creating of institutions, adoption of *acquis communautaire*, etc., and does not explicitly seek the EU membership (Di Pippo 2007).

The ENP enables Armenia to boost its partnership with the EU, prospectively leading to the Association Agreement or DCFTA. It also serves as a way for partial breaking through the Turkish-Azerbaijani blockade and also distancing Armenia from Russia. On the other hand the character of the policy and the vague and politically compromising Progress Reports allow Armenia to maximize the financial and other benefits offered by the ENP, meanwhile the impacts of new laws remain only on paper.

If there is a country that really expects much from the ENP, it is Georgia. After the “Rose Revolution,” the new government placed stress on the European identity of the Georgian nation and looked over the Black Sea and even over the Atlantic Ocean for help. The new elites are Western-educated (president Saakashvili is graduate of Columbia University), and have close contacts to the West (for example ex-foreign minister Salome Zourabichvili holds French citizenship) (Leonard and Grant 2005: 2). When the author of this text arrived in Georgia for the first time, in 2006, every governmental building was displaying an EU flag, something that would be rather unexpected even in the new EU member states. Moreover, Georgian visual shift towards Europe was also supported by dramatic reforms in state administration, police, tax laws, by fighting corruption, etc. (Lazarus 2010; Mitchell 2006: 672–675; Tsikhelashvili 2010:119).

What Georgia expects from the ENP is above all political support for the governmental reforms, for the territorial integrity of Georgia vis-à-vis Russian aggressive foreign policy⁵ and of course the promise of future membership of the country in the EU (Kobaladze and Tangiashvili 2007). The EU’s support for the governmental reforms strengthens the government’s positions vis-à-vis the Georgian citizens, who to a greater extent also share the “European ambitions” (as a result of the author’s long-time observations). The ENP offers a good framework for achieving such demands. Regarding the state of democracy and human rights, Georgia is the top pupil of the region and consequently the EU’s favourite. It seems the Georgian government is aware of this fact and knows that the ENP can bring it only benefits, regardless of the fact how the ENP really fulfils the goals stated in the APs and other programming documents.

Azerbaijan is a case of its kind. The Azerbaijani regime looked also Western- and reform-minded, but the reality after the power transfer from father Heydar to son Ilham Aliev can be perceived as a proof of increasing personalism and the fact that Ilham Aliev succeeded in abolishing the two-terms limit for presidential mandates proves increasing authoritarianism (see e.g. ICG 2010). Azerbaijan’s importance for the EU dwells in relatively big deposits of oil and gas in the Caspian shelf, deposits that decrease the EU’s dependence on Russian hydrocarbons. Azerbaijan also per-

ceives itself as a regional player, whose power and influence are growing with the increasing export of oil and gas (Di Puppò 2007). Ilham Aliev's government is quite cautious about the ENP and to certain extent joined the process just for the reason that Georgia and Armenia are taking part. However, the civil society in Azerbaijan seems to be more pro-European than its government and after the intervention of the civil society organizations also the Azerbaijani AP expresses European ambitions of the country. Moreover the Armenian and Azerbaijani APs serve as status quo instruments regarding the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Neither Armenian, nor the Azerbaijani side succeeded in shifting the favour of the EU to their point of view. The formulations regarding the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in both APs remain vague and compromise (Alieva 2006: 13).

Azerbaijan simply profits from the fact the EU perceives the South Caucasus as a region and does not want to have one country excluded. Well aware of its strategic importance for the EU, the Azerbaijani government knows that the Progress Reports will not be so critical to damage the image of the regime at home and it even succeeded in the structuring of the AP, where the democratic agenda is not on the first place. Instead, the priority number one in Azerbaijan's AP is the EU's support for the peaceful resolution of the Karabakh conflict. Thus, Azerbaijan uses the ENP as a tool to counterbalance the EU's relations with Armenia and incidentally also offers to the Azerbaijani citizens the feeling of flourishing cooperation with the EU.

Conclusions

The ENP has been launched as an ambitious project aimed at creating the area of shared values around the EU and thus securing the EU's neighbourhood. It was designed after the example of the successful enlargement policy and thus frequently characterized by the metaphor of "stick and carrot." However, first, the carrot is not as sweet as in the case of the enlargement policy and thus the stick simply cannot be so powerful to force the countries to do what they have promised to do in the APs, NIPs, etc. Second, many studies comprehend the ENP as a geopolitical tool and thus some shortcomings of the policy regarding the goals in the APs need not be evaluated as clear failures. In this regard, even the sole presence of the EU in the strategically important region, enabled by the ENP, is understandable and can be evaluated in a long-time period. However, the ineffectiveness of the ENP vis-à-vis the goals from the official documents can be explained also by another hypothesis that is in operation together with the previous one. As we have shown, the involved countries of the South Caucasus have also their own interests that they can pursue through the ENP; however, those interests are frequently in sharp contrast with the official goals of the ENP. So, if the ENP is perceived through the official documents

and statements, it cannot be evaluated as a successful policy of one of the leading political and economic blocs of the world because the weaker partner states are able to pursue their own goals through the ENP better than the EU itself.

Notes

- ¹ For more about the ENP and the transformation of the borderland and identity of the neighbour-outsider see Tonra (2010).
- ² For detailed information about the structure and implementation of the ENP and its relations with the Eastern Partnership or the Union for the Mediterranean see e.g. Whitmann and Wolff 2010.
- ³ Of course there are more documents that could have been chosen for the analysis, like the NIPs or CSPs, however we regard the APs as the crucial documents that laid down the general goals of the ENP in the involved countries and due to the aims of the paper we consider the example of the APs as a sufficient one. Another paper would be required to analyse all these documents.
- ⁴ According to the data from 2003, the share of Armenia's trade with the EU reached 38 % of its total foreign trade (EC 2005), in 2009 the main export partner was Germany (16.5 % of total exports), followed by Russia (15.5 %), USA, Bulgaria, Georgia, Netherlands, Belgium and Canada, the main import partner was Russia (24 % of total imports), followed by China (8.7 %), Ukraine, Turkey, Germany and Iran (CIA 2011).

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