1. Introduction

The purpose of this article is to identify and explain the difficulties the EU is encountering when formulating a coherent policy framework such as the ENP to tackle specific, mostly ethnically colored disputes in the Caucasus. The article will therefore begin with a brief description of the region as a highly volatile and unpredictable, but highly strategic, spot and will continue with a discussion of the first EU attempts to include the region into its foreign policy realm. Section 3 will be dedicated to analyzing the policy framework of the ENP more in detail, and Section 4 will provide insight into the shortcomings and deficiencies of this policy in general. As single case study, Azerbaijan will be highlighted in the view of the ENP in Section 5, and the conclusion will again sum up the main arguments of the paper. Additionally, the article contains many direct references to “frozen conflicts” and how they are included in the ENP and which measures should be undertaken to improve EU-led conflict resolution on the ground.

2. A brief glance at the strategic importance of the Caucasus

How can we categorize and explain the importance that is ascribed to this subregion? The Caucasus, a picturesque mountainous region, conveniently located between the Black and the Caspian Seas and of strategic importance for the transport of energy resources to Europe, nowadays represents the biggest security risk in Eurasia. The whole region, which is marked by ethnic, linguistic and cultural diversity, has been afflicted by armed conflicts, terrorist attacks and impoverishment during the past 20 years. The northern Caucasus subregion alone, including seven Russian federal subjects, is one of the most ethnically complex and at the same time conflict-ridden regions in the world.
For instance, the Republic of Dagestan, with a population of about two million, contains more than 30 distinct ethnolinguistic groups.\(^1\) After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the whole region managed to gain some degree of visibility in Europe and the rest of the world and not merely because of the ongoing conflicts. It was the strategic importance of the Caucasus as a geographic concept that led to an increasing awareness of the region in Brussels and Washington. However, in consideration of the divisions in the region, generated by ethnically motivated tensions, wars, blockades and trade restrictions, it seems like a curse that the region as such does not have a unique structure to allow Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia to discuss questions that affect the region as a whole on one platform.\(^2\) The August 2008 war in Georgia especially shows the lie of the denomination of “frozen conflicts”. The only “frozen” element turned out to be the peace and settlement process.

The strategic weight of the region rests on three main factors. First, a very important and increasingly dominant factor is Islamic radicalism: it is the irony of history that the Chechens and Ingush were brutally displaced to Kazakhstan under Stalin’s iron rule because of their supposed collaboration with the advancing German Wehrmacht. They maintained their strict Sufi fraternity\(^3\) in the steppes of Altai and even revived the beliefs of Kazakh Islam, which was already regarded as a folkloristic aspect of the past.\(^4\) It was the former Soviet Air Force General Dzhokhar Dudayev who declared the sovereignty of Chechnya in 1991 by swearing on the Quran, yelling, “Allah Akbar”,\(^5\) and thereby setting the stage for what would become two full-scale wars with atrocities on both sides and thousands of refugees. The major massacre of about 400 people, mostly children, in Beslan in September 2004 seems to underline how radical Islam and claims for secession

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\(^1\) R. Craig Nation, “Russia, the United States, and the Caucasus” (Strategic Studies Institute, Carlisle, 2007), 1.
\(^3\) Sufism is also known as the mystical dimension of Islam. Although all Muslims believe that they are on the pathway to God only after death and the final judgment, those who affiliate with Sufism think that God can be experienced while one is still alive. See <http://www.uga.edu/islam/Sufism.html>.
\(^5\) Ibid., 14. This is the common Arabic expression for “God is great”.
in the region are interrelated. Additionally, because this attack was staged out of Ingushetia against a city in northern Ossetia, it appeared to be a blatant attempt to expand the Chechen conflict throughout the Caucasus.\(^6\) This is also compounded by inter-land claims within the Russian Federation, which demonstrates that regional conflicts cannot simply be downsized to episodes of war between one state and one substate actor. For instance, Ingushetia and northern Ossetia, both federal entities of Russia, have been for quite some time now involved in a long-standing and continuing conflict over the Prigorodny District,\(^7\) a dispute that escalated in 1992 to violence and resulted in some 60,000 refugees and 600 deaths\(^8\) and which was additionally heated up by the arrival of thousands of refugees during the intra-Georgian war over South Ossetia. Therefore, the denomination of the South Caucasus often reflects a European preference to see all these enormous tasks embedded in one well and clearly arranged region. But it would be wrong to explain this complexity by civilizational-ethnographic romanticism, whose alleged essence lies in the clash of civilizations. The manifestations of Islamic radicalism—which are actually by and large not common in the moderate and peaceful expression of Islam in this region—are to a large extent financed and planned by Saudi organizations that attempt to expand radical Wahhabism in the region by sending mercenary units.

Therefore, ethnic or religious diversity is less pronounced in the South Caucasus, but by no means less real. Hence, the second factor to which strategic importance can be accorded is regional instability, first and foremost regarding the unresolved territorial question marks, often incorrectly referred to as “frozen conflicts”. These entities remain hotbeds of political instability and make the threat of a full-scale war between Armenia

\(^6\) Nation, op.cit. note 1, 6.

\(^7\) Whereas Chechen representatives are advocating the re-combining of Chechnya and Ingushetia into one single Russian federal subject, Ingushetia makes claims to the Prigorodny Raion and causes permanent tensions with Northern Ossetia. See Liz Fuller, “Chechnya seeks to subsume, ‘stabilize’ Ingushetia”, Radio Free Europe, 13 June 2006, at <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2006/06/7A1789A0-9158-48EE-BEDE-1ED4AACD9525.html>.

\(^8\) K. S. Gadzhiev, Geopolitika Kavkaza [Geopolitics of the Caucasus] (Mezhdunarodnie Otnosheniya, Moscow, 2002), 50–51.
and Azerbaijan over the troubled entity of Nagorno-Karabakh not unlikely, especially after the war between Georgia and Russia in 2008. Immediately after (in some cases even prior to) the collapse of the Soviet Union, ethnically motivated conflicts emerged, especially in the Caucasus region. Hundreds of thousands of people born in the territories of newly established states such as Russia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, etc., have found themselves with a diminished status. New national ideologies reflected the dominant groups’ perception of itself as being of the one and only holder of statehood, thereby, excluding from nationhood all those of other ethnicities. These conflict-generating doctrinal considerations are also legacies from the complex system of Soviet Federalism, which was seen as an argument by many secessionist movements to disagree with the territorial disposition in the new state. It is exactly this nature of ethnic conflict that makes the Caucasus very well comparable with the Balkans, meaning that far-reaching decisions in the Balkans are connected to repercussions in the Caucasus. Therefore, unintended consequences of the declaration of independence in Kosovo are might be pouring fuel onto the flames on the ground. It has been repeatedly proposed by political scientists, and even published in American newspapers, that Kosovo might become exactly the kind of precedent for the Caucasus that Americans and most of the EU states denied it could be. It seems that the EU has sometimes manifested an inconsistent approach towards regions that express a desire for self-determination but are occupied by people who are perceived as ‘pro-Russian’ or see their security as only guaranteed by Russia. Moreover, it seems clear to any observer that Tbilisi is not planning a peaceful solution; hence, “if Georgia chooses to use force, Russia is likely to respond militarily. If there is shooting between Russia and Georgia, would NATO come to Georgia’s defense,

risking a confrontation with Russia?"\textsuperscript{11} The answer to this question was given in August 2008 and showed the EU quite plainly how war can easily break out in its environment. And third, the EU’s and many others states’ growing interest in diversification of energy supplies and, moreover, the necessity to satisfy the growing demand for petroleum and gas in the near future has pushed it towards closer cooperation with the Caucasus. The estimated energy resources of the Caspian Sea basin are approximately about 200 billion barrels of petroleum and up to 500 to 600 trillion cubic feet of gas,\textsuperscript{12} and thus constitute an important new energy source for Europe.\textsuperscript{13} On top of this comes the fact that its convenient geographic location on the crossroads between Central Asia and Europe makes the South Caucasus attractive and even inevitably crucial in terms of trade, military and energy transportation.\textsuperscript{14} The very same holds true for Russia: apart from Russian interests to retain the states neighbouring the Caspian basin, the Caucasus serves as a fundamental line for trade of goods out of Russia. It needs to be taken into account that the \textit{ethnic} nature of conflict is very often debatable in the Caucasus because an international struggle over this strategic line started so that changes in local leaderships, personnel shifts and conflict situations are sometimes also an expression and a direct result of this struggle.

In other words, the interest of the EU to both bring peace to the Caucasus and to benefit strategically has clear limits given these highly problematic circumstances. But what could explain the inherent complexity of the factors mentioned above? One of the major elements in this puzzle that has explanatory value for the convoluted and obscure situation on the ground is the long-lasting presence of different external actors. Until this very day, the region has been fragmented politically and dominated by various external power centers such as the Tsarist and the Ottoman Empires as well as Persia.

\textsuperscript{12} Stephen Neil MacFarlane, “A Role for the EU in Preventing Ethnic Conflict”, in Reinhardt Rummel and Claude Zullo (eds.), Rethinking European Union Relations with the Caucasus (Nomos, Baden-Baden, 1999), 55–78, at 58
\textsuperscript{13} In consideration of these figures, such capacity would make the Caspian basin the third largest oil and natural gas reserves in the world, after Saudi Arabia and Siberia.
Hence, the Caucasus as such was never able to develop functional regional institutions or a shared political identity. This is compounded by the geographic conditions of narrow valleys difficult to access, which gave as an isolating factor natural refuge to various ethnic groups so that so many different languages are still being spoken. In hardly any other region of its size in the world are there so many different ethnic groups and languages. Other regions of the world might also contain some ethnic groups, but in comparison to the Caucasus, with its nearly 60, they are nothing else but a poorly stocked ethnographical museum. However, the lack of a common political identity makes a peaceful future very hard to achieve: This assessment is redolent of the pre-war situation in former Yugoslavia, which represents the starting point for further considerations regarding ethnically motivated conflicts: “Yugoslavia was a weak state, unlikely to have the capabilities to adapt to changing international and technological circumstances”.

And since Yugoslavia was for centuries a story of conquest and intervention by the great powers, “its international borders as well as its domestic political and economic systems, may have been constructed primarily for the convenience of outsiders”, and the “Great Game” (in the style of the British-Russian rivalry over Central Asia in the nineteenth century) among these outsiders triggered to a certain extent the strong desires of groups within the states for secession or revenge.

Although the South Caucasus has never constituted one entire state, one should apply the lessons learned from the Balkans to this troubled spot in order to consider the regions’ relative capacities to cope with the typical dilemma of post-Soviet state engineering, that is, separatism and cultural disorientation in a region in which “outsiders” such as Russia and the United States and organizations such as NATO, Shanghai Organization of Cooperation and others try to get a foothold in this strategic region. Similarly to the Balkans, the South Caucasus is an area in which the dilemma of identity and security

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15 Nation, op.cit. no 1, 2.
17 Ibid., 19
18 Suzdaltsev, op.cit. no 9, 124.
balance remains unresolved.\textsuperscript{19} The conflicts, among them ethnically motivated conflicts in the South Caucasus, as well as their geostrategic importance, have attracted many external actors with different and sometimes contradicting interests, objectives and perceptions, resulting in a highly complex net of international relations.\textsuperscript{20} However, the EU took only very late notice of the region.

3. Stumbling on the South Caucasus

What drove the EU to pay more attention to the three South Caucasian states, how did the EU try to develop a framework to deal more intensively with the region, and what have been the biggest obstacles so far? The historical enlargements of 2004 and 2007 have set in motion the EU’s interest in closer cooperation with its new neighbours. Moreover, both enlargement rounds provided the hope that states that are currently located on the geographic periphery of the EU might one day become part of an intensified cooperation. But the presence of so many international actors, such as the OSCE (involved in conflict resolution in Azerbaijan and Georgia), the UN, but also states such as Russia, Turkey, the United States and Iran, has complicated the European approach towards the South Caucasian region and has left no doubt that there is little room for the EU to claim, because the lines of confrontation are not well defined: “The activities of Russia and the US, not to mention the policies of other regional actors such as Turkey and Iran, muddle rather than clarify the strategic shape of the region”.\textsuperscript{21} And equally important, the limited possibilities of the EU are also related to disagreements within the EU itself. Apart from this, the South Caucasus as a geographic concept has had no promoter within the EU to generate a greater awareness for the region\textsuperscript{22}:

Finland played a decisive role in the development of the Northern Dimension of the EU; France has always put the emphasis on enhanced cooperation with the states of Ma-

\begin{enumerate}
\item Nation, \textit{op.cit.} note 1, 4.
\item Sabine Fischer, “The EU’s strategy of ‘New Neighborhood’ and its impact on international relations in the FSU”, paper presented at the ISA Annual Convention, 1–5 March 2005, Honolulu, HI, 18.
\item Ibid., 179.
\end{enumerate}
Poland represents the main lobbyist for Ukraine in its membership aspirations and is very actively engaged in civil society projects in Belarus; and finally Austria regards itself as the promoter of the states of the Western Balkans. Somehow it seems that the South Caucasus has been for a long time left along the road by the EU. The first attempts to draft a new framework addressing neighbouring countries and future neighbours were unveiled in 2003, following the conclusions of the 2002 Copenhagen European Council, which confirmed “that the Union should take the opportunity offered by enlargement to enhance relations with its neighbors on the basis of shared values”. This process demonstrated that the EU increasingly sees itself as a full foreign policy actor that is able to act beyond the antagonism of membership/non-membership in order to pursue its interests abroad. Although the ‘Wider Europe Communication’ of 2003 launched a debate about its new and future neighbours, the paper did not initially include the South Caucasian states in order to “avoid drawing new dividing lines in Europe and to promote stability and prosperity within and beyond the new borders of the Union”. Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan were not among the first group of ENP countries and were only mentioned in a footnote: “Given their location, the Southern Caucasus therefore falls outside the geographical scope of this initiative for the time being”. Although all three states remained unmentioned in the first paper on a new neighbourhood policy, the culmination of a series of discussions and debates on the EU’s policy in this fragile region resulted in the nomination of a EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus on 7 July 2003 with the task of pursuing a value-based EU policy on the ground. Surprisingly, the “ENP Strategy Paper” issued by the European Commission in 2004 as a fine tuning of the first ideas of how to handle the challenge of the European neighbourhood after the enlargements, recommended, in contrast with the “Wider Eu-

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23 Nevertheless, it has to be mentioned here that Lithuania and Latvia have been active in developing military ties with the three South Caucasian states, including providing training assistance at the Baltic Defense College to officers from the region. For further information, see <http://www.bdcol.ee/>.
25 Ibid., 4.
26 Ibid.
27 Lynch, op.cit., no 21, 172.
rope Paper”, that the South Caucasian states also be included in the new concept: “The Commission also recommends the inclusion of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia within the scope of the ENP”.28

Thus, within the course of only one year, the South Caucasus moved from the footnotes to within the scope of the application of the ENP. What happened? And why did the South Caucasus become so important for the EU? Was it the result of well-calculated decisions or the contrary? The strategic importance comes here into play again and explains why in retrospect, the first attempts by the EU to approach the region were anything but convincing. Moreover, they showed that Brussels is bad at differentiation: the republic of Cyprus had questioned for a long time Azerbaijani links to the Turkish Republic of North Cyprus. Only because of a single charter flight between Azerbaijan and North Cyprus, which led to a Cypriot veto, and even months before the draft ENP Action Plans were put on the table, all of the countries could not start negotiations on the ENP on time.29 Again the principle of differentiation and joint ownership was seriously undermined although, instead of a ‘one size fits all’ approach, the ENP supposedly reflects “the existing state of relations with each country, its needs and capacities, as well as common interests”.30

However, it remains questionable how successfully the ENP will be able to apply this principle to its relationships with the three South Caucasian states. The EU is interested in the South Caucasus as a region rather than as three individual states with different expectations and ambitions for cooperation. Thus, even the ENP Strategy Paper points at the importance of the region for both the production and the transportation of energy.31

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31 Ibid., 11.
One of the main reasons for the importance of the region as a whole is undoubtedly that of material interest. It goes without saying that Caspian Sea petroleum exports are for the EU a very attractive alternative that would allow for reducing dependence on current sources.\textsuperscript{32} For the new EU members whose dependence on Russian sources is even more striking, this interest seems to be all the stronger.\textsuperscript{33} Similar to the growing attention that is dedicated to Ukraine and Moldova, the new member states bring new urgent questions that have until now only been superficially addressed by the EU.\textsuperscript{34} In other words, the decision to include the South Caucasian states under the umbrella of this new framework and to put them on an equal level with Ukraine can be primarily seen as a result of a growing awareness on the part of the EU, rather than a result of their repeated quest for closer cooperation, as in the case of Georgia as concerns integration into Western international structures. It has to be pointed out, again, that none of the three South Caucasian states are actively demanding an increased EU role for purely altruistic and selfless reasons. These states are active only in cases in which it serves their own individual interests and not necessarily if it serves automatically or as by-product the other neighbours in the region at the same time. From this perspective, their wish for a reinforced EU role is not on the same level as that of the states of the Western Balkans. The intensity of their demand for EU membership opportunities is not even comparable to that vocalized by Moldova and Ukraine. The South Caucasian states have beyond a doubt an interest in an EU presence in general, but the attraction expressed is largely utilitarian. The EU is perceived as one more forum (besides the United States, and eventually NATO), in which these states may promote their own interests. Tbilisi in particular sees the EU as another heartily welcomed actor that might counterbalance Russian influence in the region.\textsuperscript{35} Although the ENP initiative in the South Caucasus can be seen as a new development, the engagement of corporate actors of several member states (notably the United King-
dom, France and Italy)\textsuperscript{36} that are involved in exploiting the Caspian resources is by no means new. But the presence of these companies leads to a dangerous situation as well, underlining the fact that energy resources represent a blessing and a curse at the same time: “One of the characteristics of transition created by the resource development before strong democratic institutions are built is that it structurally deprives any leadership of incentive to reform”.\textsuperscript{37} Hence, policy frameworks aimed at bringing progress to energy-rich countries, as in the case of the ENP in the South Caucasus, have only a small chance of success if they fail to take into account this specific feature of transition in energy-rich countries. To understand this “Caucasian peculiarity,” it is worthwhile to look back in time.

The first European strategy to deal with its periphery after the twilight of communism was the implementation of PCAs with the successor states of the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{38} They were concluded for a period of 10 years and defined the scope of cooperation in several pillars: political dialogue, economic trade relations and cultural exchange. In the South Caucasus, with regard to the three countries of Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan, the first instrument of cooperation with the EU were PCAs that were signed in 1996, entered into force in 1999 and provided the legal framework for the mutual relations.\textsuperscript{39} But apart from a decelerated implementation of this framework, the PCAs, which were due to terminate in 2008, with very limited parameters, lack the much clearer \textit{quid pro quo} philosophy of the ENP. Moreover, they represented the only EU framework with neighbours that did not establish an association between the partners.\textsuperscript{40} Yet, while articles in the PCAs dealing with political dialogue call for governance reforms and attempts to resolve regional conflicts and tensions, these agreements remain only economic and

\textsuperscript{36} Oil companies such as Total, Elf, BP, British Gas, Shell and AGIP.
\textsuperscript{37} Aliche, \textit{op.cit.} no 14, 9.
\textsuperscript{38} Except the Baltic states.
\textsuperscript{40} Barbara Lipper, “Beefing up the ENP: Toward a Modernisation and Stability Partnership”, in Johannes Varwick and Kai-Olaf Lang (eds.), European Neighbourhood Policy—Challenges for the EU-Policy Towards the New Neighbours (Verlag Barbara Budrich, Berlin, 2007), 181–196, at 183.
technical.\footnote{Lynch, op.cit. no 21, 181.} This, of course, augurs poorly in an energy-rich and strategic region with regard to democratization and respect for human rights.

Nevertheless, the member states of the EU kept declaring for a long time that the PCAs offered the best framework and that there would be no other strategy, no other political role, no other provisions than that offered in the PCAs. Again, the lack of differentiation necessary to understand the Caucasian peculiarities became one of Brussel’s major Achilles’ heels. Under the sole framework of the PCAs, the mildly phrased value-based stipulations remained an illusionary aspiration blocked by the reality that regional cooperation between the respective states was not achieved. Tbilisi, Yerevan and Baku remained at loggerheads.\footnote{Lynch, op.cit. no 21, 183.}

On the other hand, another point of reference to determine whether political frameworks fail or succeed are the available financial resources. The PCAs, based on the declaration of common values and the commitment to market-economy structures, refer to the Technical Aid to the Commonwealth of Independent States (TACIS). TACIS was supposed to provide grant-financed technical assistance to the PCA states. However, the amount of the funding was fairly modest and contributed to the lack of visibility and success of the EU in the region.\footnote{TACIS, whose budget amounted to nearly 212.1 million euro for the three South Caucasian states between 1991 and 1999, was only slightly increased between 2000 and 2003. See \textlt{http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/ceeca/tacis/figures.pdf>}.}

To sum up, the PCA/TACIS instrument was increasingly perceived as a failure, both on the part of the EU and by the partner countries.\footnote{Fischer, op.cit. note 20, 9.} It became apparent that a blanket PCA/TACIS approach applied in particular to the South Caucasus would not be enough to assist the transition of these states and to promote European interests. It placed the burden of transition efforts on the neighbours, which had to adjust to the political, economic and legal rules of the EU without being offered major advantages in terms of cooperation with the EU. Above all, one of the major failings of the PCA/TACIS method that led many in Brussels to reconsider the European strategy was the inability of the EU
to differentiate its policies and to adapt to the specific situation of each country. The EU has to recognize the imperative of developing differentiated approaches to states, and in particular, to the fragile region of the South Caucasus and its highly explosive situation. The old concepts of cooperation have not generated substantial progress in terms of stability. Evidently, with Central and Eastern European enlargement completed in 2007 and the Balkan states at its doorstep, the EU finds itself confronted with similar challenges as those faced 16 years ago after the collapse of the Soviet Union.45

4. ENP or “Creating a Ring of Friends”

We will now turn our attention to a more detailed description of the ENP. This policy, which was discussed and launched between 2002 and 2005, is the latest product in the long series of EU-driven foreign policy experiments. Yet it is still in its formative stage, on uncharted ground, being shaped first and foremost by the European Commission and the governments of the 17 neighbouring46 countries.47 At present, it is still too early to judge the success of the ENP in its entirety, and it will still take much time before the actors involved in the ENP process find and agree on the basic description, what might then be called the “ENP doctrine”. Today scholars are already arguing over characteristic traits of this policy. For example, there are some who think that the ENP should be viewed as a foreign policy instrument or, moreover, as the first project of the CFSP, which represents together with the CSDP the principal item of European diplomacy.48 Yet others strongly disagree with this characterization and argue that the ENP is neither foreign policy nor an enlargement policy. They call attention to the fact that it is a mix of

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46 However, the three republics of the South Caucasus do not fall in the scope of the term “neighbour”. They are located some 1000 km apart from the nearest EU member country, Romania. But as already mentioned above, all three republics were included in the European Neighborhood Strategy Policy Paper of 2004.
47 Rhein, op.cit. no 45, 39.
domestic policy instruments, foreign policy and enlargement practices. Another theoretical battlefield seems to be the heavily disputed question of the ENP as a policy of “half-open doors”. But somehow it seems to remain beyond question that the ENP can be seen as the “EU’s new mission civilisatrice to externalize its success and export its model to the rest of the world”.50

The result of the reflection period between 2002 and 2005 is what the European Commission first termed a policy of “Wider Europe”, including the former Soviet republics (except for Russia, which expressed the intention not to be part of this policy and to have a special partnership, based on the four common spaces with the EU), as well as the Mediterranean countries and—since 2004—the South Caucasus states. Yet, the fact that the South Caucasus states, having at least somewhat European identities and perceiving themselves to a certain degree as part of Europe, were united in one policy document together with the states of Maghreb—located on the African continent—sent them a clear message that they were EU neighbours at the periphery, rather than future members.53 Yet, the ENP is not in the first place about enlargement. Rather, the policy aims at exporting stability to neighbouring countries so that the EU’s own peaceful development is not hampered by the new periphery.54 Moreover, in its intention to “create this ring of friends”, or less lyrically, to “develop stability at the Union’s periphery”, the EU also addresses the necessity of an effective and target-oriented CSDP.

However, despite this bold and ambitious objective, “the European Union is not seeking to establish new bodies or organizations, but rather to support existing entities and encourage their further development”.55 Furthermore, the neighbourhood strategy paper

49 Popescu, op.cit. no 29, 2.
52 (1) Common economic space; (2) common space of freedom, justice and security; 3) common space on external security; and 4) common space on research, education and culture. For more profound and detailed information on the relations between the EU and Russia, see Sabine Fischer, “Die EU und Russland: Konflikte und Potentiale einer schwierigen Partnerschaft” (SWP-Studie, Berlin, 2006).
53 Alieva, op.cit. no 14, 7.
54 Fröhlich, op.cit. no 50, 77.
devotes a whole chapter to the issue of cooperation in Eastern Europe and points at the CoE, the BaSEC, the CEI, and the Stability Pact as important already-existing structures and bodies of cooperation. In this sense, the ENP process follows the same spirit, since the ENP builds upon several existing policy instruments, in particular the PCAs concluded between the EU and the former Soviet republics in the course of the 1990s, and the Association Agreements (AA) with the Mediterranean states. Hence, as the ENP is built into the already-existing institutional framework of the EU’s bilateral relation with states at the Union’s periphery, yet is supposed to have a more differentiated focus; in contrast to the PCA/TACIS approach, it should by highly flexible and based on individually tailored bilateralism, while providing a common framework for all target countries at the same time.

Following this approach, the form of cooperation between the EU and the respective ENP state differs from country to country, according to each state’s needs, capacities, limits and possibilities, as well as the EU’s cooperation goals laid down in ‘Action Plans’. All Action Plans concluded with the ENP states have in common that they provide a number of core priorities at the beginning before defining an agenda of political reform priorities to be implemented and monitored by the European Commission. Taking into account that the states concerned have very different needs and goals to be accomplished through the ENP, Action Plans are set up by the European Commission on a bilateral level, which makes it possible to draft tailor-made Action Plans for each ENP state under their cooperation.

In this regard, the ENP provides four subsequent phases: (1) establishment of treaty-based relations, (2) draft of country reports, (3) agreement on objectives of the Action

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56 Ibid., 20–21.
57 The existence of a PCA is a precondition for the elaboration of Action Plans; sometimes provisions in Action Plans refer to an existing PCA. For this reason, Belarus, whose PCA was already negotiated but never put into force, does not fall into the scope of the ENP for the time being. This is also the case of Algeria, Libya and Syria. Neither an association agreement nor a PCA came into force in these states, so ENP negotiations have not yet been started.
58 Fröhlich, op.cit. no 50, at 78.
59 Ibid., 79.
60 Helmerich, op.cit. no 48, 5.
Plans, and finally (4) implementation and the monitoring of the progress.\textsuperscript{61} The legal concept of this policy faces occasional heavy criticism from members of the European Parliament due to the dominant role of the European Commission in this framework. At present, the European Parliament can only execute its co-decisional authority in allocating the European Neighborhood Policy Instrument (ENPI) budget, but has no say with regard to the priorities of the ENP as such.\textsuperscript{62} It seems that the ENP is somewhat “out of reach” for the parliament, which again demonstrates that the policy as such is by no means fine-tuned. Apart from this, the Commission underlined that the “ENP should be introduced progressively, and be \textit{conditional} on meeting agreed targets for reform. New benefits should only be offered to reflect the progress made by the partner country in political and economic reform” (emphasis in the original).\textsuperscript{63} On the one hand, the European Parliament has stressed on various occasions that the Commission has not yet defined a measurable aim for the ENP, or at least indicators that would help to assess the success of this policy.\textsuperscript{64} On the other hand, the concept of soft EU conditionality is not new, in particular not new for the South Caucasian states. We should again examine past experiences, because since 1999, the cooperation between the EU and the South Caucasus states has been based on PCAs which had—regardless of the softly phrased principle of conditionality—no significant positive impact on the promotion of democracy or human rights. Quite the contrary, according to the Freedom in the World ratings, Armenia and Azerbaijan performed worse on democratic development during 2005 to 2006, when even the ENP Action Plans were adopted, than during the early 1990s period before the signing of the PCA.\textsuperscript{65} Schimmelfenning et al. argue that “the effectiveness of the EU social influence will mainly depend on the degree to which non-member ac-

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\textsuperscript{61} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{63} COM(2003) 104 final, op.cit. no 24, 16.
\textsuperscript{64} Leinen and Weidemann, op.cit. no 62, 53.
\textsuperscript{65} Freedom in the World, historical rankings, at \texttt{<http://www.freedomhouse.org/uploads/fiw/FIWALLSCORES.xls>}.
tors identify themselves with the EU community” and their “commitment to Europe”. Hence, political elites in ENP states will only pay lip service to values and incentives if the domestic costs are too high.

Procedurally, the EU negotiates with neighbour governments a package of legislative and administrative acts that the respective country agrees to implement in a period of three to five years. The results of these negotiations between the ENP states and the EU are laid down in Action Plans, whose implementation is subject to joint monitoring. The Action Plans that were negotiated with the South Caucasian states from 2005 to 2006 and entered into force in 2006 placed the reform of democratic institutions and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms among the top priorities. They automatically expire after 5 years. The protection of minorities is mentioned in practically all Action Plans; however, the EU has considerably less influence on this topic because of the lack of conditionality-related tools. In theory, ENP Action Plans reach well beyond the scope of the current PCAs and AAs by offering the neighbouring countries “a stake in the EU’s internal market”. But the interesting question, and the real crux of the matter in this regard, is whether this is the only source of motivation for ENP states to accept the conditionality imposed on them. Why should sovereign states agree to revolutionary and sweeping programmes suggested by an outside actor—and in the case of the South Caucasus, an outside actor that is very far away? This holds in particular true for EaP, which even emphasizes the element of “partnership” rather than top-down policy instructions.

It goes without saying that there is no single answer. Many researchers point in this regard to the funds that are provided by the EU. Indeed, the EU has earmarked an amount of 12 billion euro from ENPI funds for all neighbouring countries that participate in the ENP framework.

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67 Rhein, op.cit. no 45, 44.
68 Ibid., 45.
budget have been considerably increased in the framework of the ENPI. But one should not overestimate the financial carrot of the ENP. The mentioned amount, distributed among 12 countries with a population of 200 million, over the span of seven years, is certainly not enough to convince ENP state governments to conduct reform that they dislike. The South Caucasus example shows that sometimes neighbour countries want to maintain good relations with the EU as a powerful international actor in order to counterbalance other dominant powers. This alternative explanation has to be increasingly taken into consideration by the Commission and should be kept in mind during negotiations for the implementation of Action Plans.

However, even those modest amounts of funds matter for governments that are keen to continue with reforms. The already-mentioned ENPI compliments the ENP and includes a special cross-border facility that also entails—in contrast to the former TACIS programme—a radical simplification and debureaucratization of the current state of affairs. Moreover, the Commission has also agreed to improve future cross-border cooperation along the EU’s external land and sea border. And in this regard, the EU has to take its commitment vis-à-vis the establishment of a comprehensive framework for transfrontier cooperation more seriously. For instance, the Lugansk oblast located in eastern Ukraine cooperates much more intensely in many fields, such as social cohesion and economic partnership, with the neighbouring Rostov Oblast in the Russian Federation than does L’vov, located in the western part of Ukraine, with the eastern administrative units of Hungary or Poland.

From this enumeration of failed strategies and overestimated effects on the part of the EU, one could reason that the first institutionalized attempt to cope with enormous challenges in the immediate neighbourhood of the EU fell short at removing the dividing line between West and East in Europe. However, the following section will show that

69 Ibid.
70 Fröhlich, op.cit. no 50, 79.
71 Roy Medvedev, Raskolotaya Ukraina [Divided Ukraine] (Institut ekonomicheskikh strategyj, mezhdunarodnaya akademiya budushego, Moscow, 2007), 144.
the ENP also has inherent features that limit a real rapprochement towards the neighbourhood, and in particular, towards the South Caucasian states.

5. Room for improvement?

At present, the ENP still leaves many questions open, especially those concerning the challenges that will have to be met in the future. Most of these still unresolved questions gravitate around the issues of possible EU membership perspectives (that is, the ENP or enlargement vs. the ENP plus enlargement), technical issues, and the role of Russia and de facto regimes. The ways in which these issues will be dealt with will to a large extent determine whether or not the ENP will meet its self-imposed objectives. Regrettably, the EaP has not solved this riddle either: As a complementary policy launched in 2009, which is providing new forums for the Eastern periphery and distinguishing this region from the Mediterranean, it has done little to sketch out a future scenario for co-existence between these states and the EU.

When it comes to the assessment of the ENP in general, many writers follow a paradigm of modernization by adapting the practice of conditionality from the enlargement experience. But the refusal to consider membership for the ENP states, even in the long term, has led skeptics to argue that the countries at the Union’s periphery will not be motivated enough to undertake domestic reforms, and the ENP will therefore fall short of achieving significant results. The European Parliament, for example, seeks to establish a more equal partnership with the ENP states, works seriously on keeping EU membership open as an option, and supports many initiatives to include the partners in various activities of the EU, offering them a seat at the table of relevant EU agencies.\textsuperscript{72} Nevertheless, the ENP, which is formulated accurately as "something of a philosophical quest for the EU in which it seeks to answer of how to support the transformation of its neighbors in line with EU standards while not offering membership",\textsuperscript{73} is giving very little of what many neighbours want. The ultimate prize—membership—is available for the time being only to Turkey and the states of the Western Balkans. The intense discus-

\textsuperscript{72} Leinen and Weidemann, op.cit. no 62, 50.
\textsuperscript{73} Popescu, op.cit. no 29, 2.
sion about membership prospects is a signal that the ENP as such has become a subject of polarization and politicization, with dividing lines drawn within the legal bodies of the EU and to a certain degree between ‘new’ and ‘old’ EU members. For instance, the former Commissioner on Enlargement Günter Verheugen said that “Ukraine is as close to joining the EU as Mexico is to joining the US”, whereas some EU states, among them mostly Eastern European states, are in favor of dangling a European future in front of states like Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova. But the ENP states also receive different signals from different EU institutions and governments, and even the Commission sends mixed messages. It seems to be clear that the Commission hopes that this new policy will stop neighboring countries from demanding unrealistic promises of membership for a while. The former President of the Commission, Romano Prodi, has coined the phrase “everything but institutions”. Will the ENP, complemented by EaP, hence achieve only “everything but institutions”?

The practical, technical and political obstacles to incorporating the EU’s much poorer neighbours into this kind of economic and political area are still enormous, and what the EU is offering at present is far from ‘everything but institutions’. The Commission still has to work within the framework of existing EU policies, so it is unable to grant neighbouring countries the two benefits they really want: visa-free access to the EU and free trade in agricultural products. Still today, these policies are extremely sensitive for member states and national governments, and decisions on them are in the hands of ministries that do not have foreign policy objectives as their first priority.

74 We must not lose sight of the fact that the ENP was originally considered a rather technocratic approach with the aim to consolidate existing tools and new instruments in order to develop a more efficient policy for fostering transformation at the EU’s periphery. Today it has a growing strategic character. See Kai-Olaf Lang, “European Neighbourhood Policy: Where do we Stand – Where are we Heading?”, in Johannes Varwick and Kai-Olaf Lang (eds.), European Neighbourhood Policy—Challenges for the EU-Policy Towards the New Neighbours (Verlag Barbara Budrich, Berlin, 2007), 15–26, at 15.

75 See <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/talking_point/4061717.stm>.

76 For instance, the Directorate-General for External Relations tries to encourage the neighbors by proposing trade concessions, but it’s often blocked by the directorates for agriculture and trade. See Heather Grabbe, How the EU Should Help Its Neighbors, policy brief (Centre for European Reform, London, 2004), 5.

77 Grabbe, op.cit. no 76, 1.

78 Fröhlich, op.cit. no 50, 80.

79 Grabbe, op.cit. no 76, 2.
The EU should be more realistic and ambitious in its periphery policy. It would be naïve to expect that the EU with its softly phrased value policy of the ENP on strengthening of democracy, civil society and rule of law will transform the whole of ‘wider Europe’ in the way it did the Central and Eastern European states. Unfortunately the EU still sends contradictory messages to its neighbors via the ENP. On the one hand, the ENP promises easier access to the EU market, but on the other hand, because of imprecise incentives and short-term security considerations, the EU tries to impose on its neighbours a number of far-reaching obligations linked with implicit threats of exclusion, although there is no kind of institutional rapprochement between ENP states and the EU. It is hence crucial to understand that the ENP requires a long-term vision. The EU needs to show more patience and understanding with its neighbors at the periphery and should be more than happy if by 2025 the majority of its neighbours uphold standards of governance, democracy and human rights that are comparable with the new EU member states, prior to their accession in 2004 and 2007. Some argue that as long as explicit membership incentives are absent and ENP countries are governed by authoritarian regimes, there is only a small hope that the ENP will have a positive impact on democracy and human rights in the future. But with regard to the South Caucasus, the effectiveness of conditionality and socialization mechanisms on a state’s behavior depends on the potential threat of interference and the influence of other external actors in the domestic scene. Thus, the conditionality mechanism, combined with membership prospects, would certainly dilute the EU’s strategy in Tbilisi, Yerevan and Baku. Apart from this, a further enlargement of the EU is not possible for the time being. The EU’s absorption capacity has definitely reached a critical point, Europe is suffering from an intensified enlargement fatigue. Yet, in the past, it was exactly the possibility of becoming a

80 Grabbe, op.cit. no 76, 6.
82 Rhein, op.cit. note 45, 47.
83 Tangiashvili Nodar and Mikheil Kobaladze, EU-Georgia Neighborhood Relations (Center of EU Enlargement Studies, Central European University, Budapest, 2006), 13.
member of the EU that set in motion reforms in candidate countries. But if the prospect of membership is insufficient to encourage the level of democratic and administrative reforms required by the EU, as it is evident in a couple of candidate countries, why should the golden carrot of membership be more successful in Kiev, Kishinev or Baku? This of course means that the ENP should be strictly separated from membership; instead, it should really offer the concerned states visa liberalization and a stake in the EU’s internal market by demanding a transformative agenda on the part of the ENP states. Although membership should not be generally ruled out, it should be kept in mind that the EU has designed the ENP as a permanent alternative to future enlargements. The EU is afraid to overextend itself, but at the same time it does not want to nourish unrealistic hopes. Silently but steadily, the Union’s capability to act became an integral additional part of the Copenhagen criteria (democracy, rule of law, human and minority rights). Accordingly, Brussels must find a way to balance its efforts to increase security and prosperity by inclusion. The only way to accomplish this political high-wire act is to clearly articulate how far the EU is willing to go.

Another important element that is insufficiently considered is the Russian factor. The EU’s relationship to Moscow casts to a certain degree dark shadows on its ENP. While Russia tries to reinforce its influence over its “near abroad”, Brussels is also trying to widen and deepen its ties with many of the same countries. Potential tensions are already emerging: Russia wants its citizens be able to travel freely in the whole former Soviet Union, but the EU urges its eastern neighbours via the ENP to reinforce their bor-

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84 Leinen and Weidemann, op.cit. no 62, 55.
86 Due to an amendment to the French Constitution, future enlargements will have to be put to a referendum. Similarly, the present Austrian government (as well as its predecessor) has pledged to hold a referendum on Turkey’s accession. See Lang, op.cit. note 74, at 17.
der controls with other non-EU countries like Russia.\textsuperscript{89} At the same time, both have common interests in the region of the South Caucasus. Russia and the EU are first and foremost concerned about stability in the region. However, stability and the spill-over argument works differently for both sides:\textsuperscript{90} Whereas Russia has been directly and manifestly affected by recent ethnopolitical conflicts, terrorist attacks, refugee streams and wars in or from the Caucasus, no similar effect can be proven for the EU. Additionally, the argument about the EU’s interest in diversifying its energy imports sounds different from the viewpoint of Moscow, which clearly sees itself as the only alternative for Europe’s relative dependence on the Middle East for its gas and petroleum supply. In this sense, the Caucasian transit corridor is—from a purely Russian perspective—even more vital to Moscow than to Brussels. In the next few years, both actors will have to reflect on whether to choose cooperation over conflict: any new ideas in EU initiatives in the Caucasus should be carefully considered against the basic background of EU–Russian relations.\textsuperscript{91} But this does not mean that Brussels should grant Russia a veto for its ENP policy: it is the EU that decides how to develop fruitful relations with its periphery. Yet, an EU dialogue on the ENP is absolutely essential. This is not only to convince Moscow that EU–Georgia, EU–Armenia and EU–Azerbaijan relations provide a chance for Russia, but also to find out and discuss areas of EU–Russia and ENP cooperation in which coordination and communication might be useful.\textsuperscript{92} The positive side effects of such an approach are obvious: Russia could be convinced by the transformative agenda of the ENP and, on the other hand, this could be helpful in assuring Russia that the ENP is not directed against Moscow.

A remaining typical perception of the Caucasus ruling elites should not remain unmentioned as concerns the Russian aspect: the attempt to reconcile two objectives—to increase the efficiency of the ENP as an incentive for sweeping reforms, without nourish-

\textsuperscript{89} Grabbe, op.cit. no 76, 3.
\textsuperscript{90} Stephan De Spiegeleire, “Russian Responses to Possible EU Policy Initiatives in the Caucasus”, in Reinhardt Rummel and Claude Zulló (eds.), \textit{Rethinking European Union Relations with the Caucasus} (Nomos, Baden-Baden, 1999), 91–11, at 95.
\textsuperscript{91} Ibid., 111.
\textsuperscript{92} Lang, op.cit. no 74, 22.
ing unrealistic accession hopes, and to promote trilateral cooperation with Russia—creates some confusions on the ground. This is perceived in the Caucasus as the intention of Brussels to keep them in the regional “club”.  

With regard to the South Caucasus, one of the main shortcomings of the ENP is the fact that not the entire region is included in the ENP. Therefore, the question arises whether ENP objectives can be achieved without involving the breakaway regions of Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh. These *de facto* subjects of international law, which are not *de jure* states but are nevertheless really existing statelets and therefore enjoy from a legal perspective the provisions of Art 2, clause 4, of the UN charter, remain untouched by the provisions of what Brussels calls “a wider Europe”. Hence, it is time for the EU—regardless of technical and political constraints—to think about how these entities can be connected to the ENP. In this regard, the conflict resolution capacity of the ENP in the South Caucasus will be addressed later on.

In the following section we will turn our attention to the issue of which policy the EU pursues in Azerbaijan with briefly selected ENP-related case studies. One of the basic elements of these considerations will be the Action Plans.

### 6. ENP in Azerbaijan

In March 2005, the European Commission recommended intensifying relations with Azerbaijan through the conclusion of an Action Plan under the framework of the ENP. However, the first problems and disagreements began to appear: in the drafting period of the Action Plan, the Azerbaijani government and EU officials could not agree on a strongly emphasized wording for democracy, rule of law and human rights, so the Azerbaijani Action Plan remains in this regard rather neutral and weak. However, one of the key issues of the Azerbaijan Action Plan is mentioned as Priority Area 1: “Contribution to the peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict”. In this respect the Azerbaijani Action Plan remains in this regard rather neutral and weak. However, one of the key issues of the Azerbaijan Action Plan is mentioned as Priority Area 1: “Contribution to the peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict”. In this respect the Azerbaijani Action Plan remains in this regard rather neutral and weak.

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93 Alieva, *op.cit.* no 14, 8.


The Action Plan contains a strongly worded paragraph on respect and support for sovereignty, territorial integrity and the inviolability of international borders of each other’s state and “compliance to international and European norms and principles” in reference to this frozen conflict. This is also underlined by a clause, stating that “any breach of these norms and principles by either party to the Action Plan will result in the immediate suspension of its implementation.”

There is no doubt that the basic incentive for Azerbaijan to conclude the Action Plan was the concession of the EU to pursue a stronger policy, which aims at resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict under the principle of territorial integrity. From the outset of EU engagement in Azerbaijan, Brussels used the three principal instruments of TACIS, the Food Security Program and humanitarian aid to assist refugees, along with the rehabilitation of territories damaged during the war over Nagorno-Karabakh. In this respect, Nagorno-Karabakh was the top priority for the EU and the total assistance provided by Brussels has amounted to some €400 million. Yet, because any directive with regard to a resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict without the inclusion of the Armenian authorities is very unlikely to succeed, the EU showed once more that its foreign policy capacity and knowledge about the region is very limited: the parallel negotiation process with Baku and Yerevan was not sufficiently used as soft leverage to bring both states, which are at the same time conflict parties, into a convincing dialogue and to pressure them to reach at least a preliminary agreement. In attempting to balance the EU interests, the Action Plan with Armenia and Azerbaijan regarding Nagorno-Karabakh contain fundamentally different language. Whereas the Azerbaijan Action Plan is full of strong wordings and stipulations of state sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of internationally recognized borders and refers to the Karabakh conflict resolution as first priority, the Armenian Action Plan does not contain any particular reference to territorial integrity, and moreover, the issue of Nagorno-Karabakh comes very late in the Action Plan, only as Priority Area 7.

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95 See Action Plan Azerbaijan, 1.
Conversely, the principle of self-determination that was added to the Armenian Action Plan is not included in the parallel Azerbaijan Action Plan.  

Most likely, the Commission wanted to get Baku and Yerevan to agree on the very same text with regard to the conflict-ridden region of Stepanakert, but the ineffective result of this obvious inconsistency is a reliance on the lowest common denominator. Only some specific actions are the same in both Action Plans: continued support for a peaceful solution, increased diplomatic efforts, and people-to-people contacts. From another perspective one might say that this inconsistent language is the only feasible way to find an arrangement acceptable to both parties as well as an attempt not to interfere with previously agreed upon principles from negotiations brokered by the OSCE. One can consequently argue that the EU clearly does not see itself as having, or wishing to have, a wider, stronger and more robust role in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. In addition, the Azerbaijan Action Plan mentions the necessity of political dialogue “on security issues that affect the interests of both sides”, which certainly refers to European necessities in energy policy as mentioned above. The European interests in energy are crowned by the reference to a possible free trade agreement once Azerbaijan has joined the World Trade Organization (WTO). Overall, the actions under the respective sections are very general and weak and make a reading like a non-binding shopping list. In the sections regarding strengthening democracy and ensuring respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, the language of the Action Plan remains again very empty and leaves the interpretational authority to Baku. To sum up, the potential of Action Plans to promote conflict resolution and to push for democracy and the rule of law has not been fully exploited. Measured by the original strategy, the ENP was to “reinforce stability and security and contribute to efforts at conflict resolution” and to

100 Freire and Simao, op.cit. no 98, 17.  
101 Azerbaijan Action Plan, 2.  
102 Ibid., 20.
strengthen “the EU’s contribution to promoting the settlement of regional conflicts.”

Because the European focus is more on trade relations and economic change, one should not be too surprised that Baku pays only lip service to the soft and vague stipulations of the Action Plan. Accordingly, the EU is regrettably closing its eyes much too often onto undemocratic standards and grave human rights violations and, as a consequence, contributes to the accusation of maintaining double standards. Azerbaijan remains a good example of a post-Soviet autocracy in which a democratic façade only partially masks the full control of a narrow ruling clique.

To sum up, Azerbaijan represents a quite illustrative case study for understanding how the strategic factors of the Caucasus such as the transportation of energy (as discussed in Section II) are interrelated with unresolved issues of the nature of the ENP, especially concerning the dilemma of whether to involve de facto states (as discussed in Section IV).

7. Conclusion

The August war of 2008 showed the EU two facts quite plainly: the further away conflicts break out, the more likely it becomes that the EU will have to coordinate its interests with other key players, be it Russia, Iran or Turkey, and, moreover, without meaningful and comprehensive conflict prevention tools, the concept of state sovereignty will become gradually eroded. One of these tools, the ENP, albeit not conceptually finalized, represents the first serious attempt of the EU to exert positive influence in the volatile region of the South Caucasus. But in view of the unresolved tragedy of Nagorno-Karabakh and other “frozen” conflicts, which showed their potential to unfreeze very quickly as in August 2008, the ENP falls short of effectively contributing to conflict resolution and democracy promotion, because of a number of reasons. First, the ENP was designed as a political framework concentrating on cooperation with governments, en-

103 ENP Strategy Paper, 4 and 6.
104 Nation, op. cit. no 1, 14.
abling the EU to directly negotiate with the states concerned in the region. This forced the Union to cooperate partly with very nationalist governments, which still have problems recognizing that “breakaway” regions do not simply break away unless there is a reason for it, such as manifestations of nationalism resulting in ethnic cleansing. This is compounded by the dilemma that the various crisis zones of the Caucasus have been out of reach for the respective governments for nearly 20 years and are, therefore, also out of reach for the positive provisions of the ENP. In other words, the concept of the ENP makes it difficult to involve nongovernmental organizations, civil society organizations or even de facto governments of the breakaway states. Second, the ENP does not assign Russia a specific role. This does not mean that Russia should be awarded veto rights, but an enhanced and considerably improved relation with Moscow—for instance, by accelerating the process of the formulation of the four common spaces—should be envisaged to make the ENP both more attractive and more efficient. However, technical shortcomings such as relatively vague stipulations of gains for ENP states also dilute the possible success. Finally, the role of other actors, such as the United States, are not sufficiently addressed by the ENP in regions that are “overcrowded” in a sense that the interest of various states and international organizations are aroused with their great cultural influences, contradictory magnitudes and geopolitical potentials.

The way to counteract local disparities in the Caucasus and to prevent these from turning into violence lies beyond a doubt not only in a strategy of proactive position and intervention. Also, a policy of restraint and non-participation and critical self-reflection is needed.