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Overcoming the EU Core-Periphery Divide:  
The Role of V4 Countries**

**The cohesion and security policy of the EU in the Eastern Partnership:  
The divergence and convergence among the Visegrád Four in the EaP**

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**Abstract**

The European Partnership (EaP) has demonstrated that the EU has deep concern in “Wider Europe” and it has a vital interest in the “wider” Cohesive Europe through an intensive cohesion policy in Eastern Europe. This specific policy needs a new conceptual framework based on the three analytical pillars of the (1) External Europeanization and/or external governance, (2) Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade and (3) the largest possible, complex meaning of security. The Ukrainian crisis has also triggered divergences in the EU foreign policy, but the main tendency of the securitization of the EaP policy and the ensuing rediscovery of the geopolitics has been clear. The EaP is a “nested game” or two-level game reflecting the dynamics of both the domestic and international politics in the countries concerned. The paper outlines the key features of this nested game and provides a “horizon scanning” on the increasing high uncertainty in Wider Europe. The nested game model applies also to the Visegrád Four (V4) states. In the present decade there have been “critical elections” in the V4 states that have caused deep changes in their domestic political systems and, according to the logic of the nested game, they have provoked divergences among these states both in their EU and EaP relationships. At the same time, the last Quarter-Century has produced many common problems and interests in the V4 states in their catching up process and in their global security perceptions. This paper argues that despite their current divergences, the V4 states could and should improve the EU Core-Periphery Divide with the joint interest representation in the EU to avoid the further peripheralization.<sup>1</sup>

**Key words:** External governance, deep trade, securitization, carrot crisis, cohesion policy, integrative balancing, regional integration, bilateral and multilateral cooperation, military and energy security

*Introduction: External Europeanization through the European Partnership*

Eastern Europe (EE) has been a part of “Wider Europe” for the EU, although the institutionalization of the relationships with the EE has taken place relatively late through the stages of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), the Eastern Partnership (EaP) and the recent Association Agreements (AA). Actually, the EaP region is the last

extension of "Europe", as the European integration process - the "Europeanization" - has moved eastwards and it has recently reached this easternmost region in its very special forms of "External Europeanization". This "extension" of the EU, however, has been highly controversial process for both historical and geopolitical reasons. Historically, the contacts between "East" and "West" in the economic, political and cultural dimensions were rather weak, mostly frozen, for a long time that reached its apex in the Cold War period. The East was isolated from the dynamism of the EU due to a lack of intensive cooperation even in the aftermath of Cold War, and this isolation has only slowly diminished. Thus, the "European" perceptions and identities in the EaP states have been multiple and polyvalent. They are not "givens" nowadays either, because they have always been historically determined that has created a mental barrier between East and West with mutual ignorance. The identities of the EaP societies have been rooted in their socio-economic determination of the "longue durée" on one side, but they have lately been influenced by their specific EU context on the other. Simply said, their identity has become "European" to that extent as they could see a "European future" for themselves within the EU or at least with the EU. Although the EU in 2004 in ENP redefined "Europe" with its borders - the EaP with its six states in 2009 was also a practical definition -, the "European perspective" was not given for these countries, and it has not been given nowadays either.<sup>2</sup>

Geopolitically the EaP region has remained the "in-between" area under the dual influence of the EU and Russia. Russia was not ready to join ENP, therefore the EaP region with its six states has become an area of competition and conflict between the EU and Russia. What is the EaP for the EU, it is the "near abroad" for Russia. Nevertheless, the EaP analysis should not be reduced to the treatment of the EU-Russia relationship, since the EaP countries have their own historical trajectory and socio-political specificity that has to be taken into consideration (**Table I**), so their geopolitical situation cannot be simplified as the "dependence on Russia". Whereas in the nineties there was an increasing interest towards the EaP countries in the EU, it has turned to be one of the most contested issues in the 2010s due to their domestic crises and recently to the Russian authoritarian revival. In general, in the last decades there has always been some fluidity on both sides, and by now the EaP countries have reached the stage of high uncertainty and unpredictability in the quickly changing global environment. In the present situation not only the small socio-political elites have some kind of "European" identity connected with the EU, but much larger layers of their societies, first of all in Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova. All in all, it has become clear that the "Easterners" are behaving and thinking "European" to that extent they have been taken seriously by the EU.<sup>3</sup>

## *Cohesion policy as the main instrument of External Europeanization*

Cohesion policy is the main instrument of the EU for pursuing economic, social and territorial cohesion that has also been developed in the EaP case for providing security in its largest meaning for both sides. The effectiveness of cohesion policy within the EU relies on the institutional and administrative capacity of member states that has recently needed a renewal. This has been accomplished by the Sixth Cohesion Report (EC, 2014) based on the principles of the ongoing Rule of Law Initiative. The new cohesion policy began in 2014, at the turning point between the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) periods and two main trends can be identified at the EU level. First, given the necessity of building the Energy Union, a big emphasis has also been put in the current MFF on the “connectivity” (infrastructure, transport and energy-transfer) related investments. Second, in the former MFF the gap between the most and least developed NUTS2 regions has increased and the new cohesion policy tries to decrease this gap. Both trends concern very closely the EU cohesion policy in EaP because first, the connectivity has also been a priority in strengthening the relations with this area, and second, the adjacent EU territories on the borders of EaP are among those least developed NUTS2 regions. So there is a positive correlation between the general EU cohesion policy and its particular EaP version in all respects of the economic, social and territorial cohesion, as well as in the demand for the institutional capacity building. In EaP there is a strong synergy between the economic and territorial cohesion, and a high spill-over effect works in the policies pursued by the EU, e.g. between the intensive, deep trade and the comprehensive energy security.

With the Eastern enlargement the entire EU cohesion policy has been radically restructured (e.g. Baun and Marek, 2008 and Dabrowski, 2013) to perform its integrative balancing role in the EU28. The low absorption capacity and the poor effectiveness of cohesion policy in NMS has been a constant topic from the very beginning of Eastern enlargement (Bachtler et al., 2014, and Freise and Garbert, 2013). This debate has influenced the extension of cohesion policy to the EaP region and the approach to Cohesive Europe beyond the EU. In general, in the present period (2014-2020) of the Multiannual Financial Perspective (MFF) serious changes have taken place in the EU cohesion policy and in the philosophy of differentiated integration (Ágh, 2015b). Thus, the recent emphasis on connectivity and administrative capacity as well as on the divergence of the NUTS2 regions has a direct impact not only for on Energy Union and NMS, but also on the EaP cohesion policy.

In developing a conceptual framework for the cohesion policy in the EaP region it is important to note first that the EU with its rules and values has acted as a “normative power” and “a centre of gravity”. In general, it has played a role of a global actor as the

"civilian superpower" (Piattoni, 2010 and Larsen, 2014) that gives the substance of the "Europeanization" process. These terms have turned more and more from virtual to actual during the series of enlargements, and finally, the Eastern enlargement has opened up the way for the External Europeanization of the new EU neighbours in Wider Europe. The accelerated, "running" globalization has necessitated the process of "globalization cum regionalization" through the world-wide process of the External Europeanization. The issue how to "govern" the third countries beyond the EU based on the rules of the European Governance has also wider implications because the particular relations of the EU with the regions concerned has to be taken into account. Namely, the issue of European External Governance (EEG) has emerged (1) in the world in general as global governance by the civil superpower, (2) in the EU development policy in African, Caribbean and Pacific region, (3) in the Southern part of ENP, especially concerning the "traditional" associated members (e.g. Morocco), (4) in the Wider Europe with the six EaP "partner states" and (5) in the "pre-accession" region of West Balkans.

The issue how to "govern" the third countries beyond the EU based on the rules of the EEG has also wider implications because the particular relations of the EU with the regions concerned has to be taken into account. Namely, the issue of External Governance has emerged concerning (1) the world in general as global governance by the civil superpower, (2) the EU development policy in African, Caribbean and Pacific region, (3) the case of the Southern part of ENP, especially concerning the "traditional" associated members (e.g. Morocco), (4) in the Wider Europe with the six EaP "partner states" and (5) the "pre-accession" region of West Balkans. The EEG has become quite relevant in the specific case of EaP states after the Eastern Enlargement as the issue of Cohesive Europe in Wider Europe, but unlike in the West Balkans, this comprehensive cohesion policy is just a substitute for enlargement, therefore the terms of "Enlargement-lite" and/or "Europeanization-lite" has been commonly used for EaP. External Europeanization in EaP is the goal, and the EU cohesion policy through EEG is the main instrument of the Eastern policy. The external governance is very specific in EaP, since in this region the external periphery (EaP) and internal periphery (NMS) of the EU meet that creates a special mix for EEG.

The conceptual framework of EEG has been well-elaborated, although it still needs a further elaboration in the present situation of the deepening crisis. No surprise that the issue of external governance was an eminent topic in the European Studies in the second half of 2000s and it has turned to be a vital issue for in the mid-2010s due to the Ukrainian crisis with its new, complex meaning of security. Basically, External Europeanization means according to Schimmelfennig (2012: 657-659) that "the EU projects its own regulatory model(s), institutions and rules of governance beyond the borders of formal membership and does so in institutional forms of coordinated action

that aim at the production of collectively binding agreements”, in such a way “external governance results in Europeanization.” The EEG has general principles coming from the EU norms and rules of the European Governance, at the same time it has been arguably even more shaped by “the issue specific regimes of the EU in a broad variety of areas of public policy”, therefore the Europeanization effects are “patchy”. Externalization is an indirect mechanism of Europeanization is based both on the EU proactive actions to promote its values and on the socialization process of the participants from the EaP side.<sup>4</sup>

Altogether, the EaP megaproject can be outlined as follows:

(1) The EU can only be competitive globally if it develops a proper regionalization in its neighbourhood by the External Europeanization.

(2) The specific way of the EU “extension” in integrating further countries into the Wider Europe is providing means for the “integrative balancing”, i.e. decreasing the economic, political and social gap between the EU and its (Eastern) Neighbourhood and extending the European Governance to the European External Governance (EEG).

(3) After the Eastern enlargement the EU has exhausted its enlargement capacity and there has been a “carrot crisis” in the ENP countries concerned due to the lack of offering something meaningful for the deep structural reforms through the EEG.

(4) The EaP can be considered as the first step by building partnership structures in cohesion policy and the Vilnius Declaration by introducing the Deep and Comprehensive Trade Area (DCTA) project as the second step to solve the carrot crisis.

(5) Nowadays obviously some further steps should be taken to manage the increasing Ukrainian crisis, or the much wider crisis in the EaP region, that concerns not only the EU-Russia tension, since it has developed a global dimension with the US involvement in geopolitical considerations and in the complex energy security issues.<sup>5</sup>

This process has been deeply analysed in all dimensions in the European Studies, but this paper can deal only with the securitization in the Eastern relationships of the EU through the lens of the external governance in its present conflict. The Eastern member states and the EaP states as neighbours have intensive contacts of necessity, due to the common history with similar problems and striking differences, as to the convergence in the general development efforts on one side and divergence in the specific Europeanization strategies on the other. Namely, when Cohesive Europe has been extended to the “East” through the EEG, the cohesion policy, as the blood circulation within the EU, has also gained an extended meaning through the financial transfers by the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) in the former MFF, and by the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) in the ongoing MFF (**Table II**). These financial constructions have been the special EU transfers in EaP as direct efforts for integrative balancing, but the EU cohesion policy in EaP has been much larger and complex process. It has mainly worked through the intensive economic contacts that

have been innovative in many ways, since a “comprehensive institution building program” has also been attached to it.

*From ENP to EaP: From “promotion of democracy” to “deep trade” pragmatism*

External Europeanization has evolved in a historical process in several stages of subsequent agreements (**Table III**). The original aim of the ENP in 2004 was the creation of “ring of friends” and to encircle itself with “well-governed countries”. In the optimistic spirit of the “coloured revolutions” in EE, in the first stage of the Eastern cohesion policy the EU envisioned not only increasing the economic contacts with the Eastern countries, but first of all a general democratization through external governance (Buscaneanu, 2015, Cheneval et al., 2015, Freyburg et al., 2011 and Lavanex and Schimmelfennig, 2011). Europeanization meant institution-building at both the state and civil society levels in the spirit of the EU’s role as the “centre of gravity”. The EU expected a relatively quick adjustment of the EE countries to the EU due to its “normative challenge”. Even the intensive economic contacts acted supposedly as promoting welfare and prosperity, and - through many spill-over effects - it also “fostered” the democratic order as an easy dream on democracy promotion.<sup>6</sup>

In the efforts to create a Cohesive Europe the idea of an institution transfer in Wider Europe dominated in EEG, without raising the issue whether the new institutions remained on surface as a mere formal-legal façade or could become an organic part of society. The EU in its relations with outsiders seemed to favour top-down governance approach based on rule transfer and conditionality. However, the original ENP was too general, not specific and differentiated enough, neither between the East and South, nor within the East. Hence, the institutional reforms remained shallow and ineffective, since the big formal institutions would have necessitated structural reforms. They would have to be based on many smaller informal institutions and the civic patterns of behaviour that were missing in the EE region. Furthermore, their emergence would have needed much longer time and much more favourable international environment. Although the EaP was a big step forward compared to the original ENP in specifying the relationships and also in their financing instruments, nonetheless the content of the partnership structure remained vague and the dual – multilateral and bilateral - track approach proved to be controversial. The added value of the initiative, strategic partnership was still not defined properly: “In summary, as the research indicates, EU ‘politics of inclusion’ remain patchy and inconsistent, making it difficult for the neighbours to commit themselves to the European course of reform. (...) All neighbours felt that they were ‘caught’ between the EU and Russia” (Korosteleva, 2011: 14,15).<sup>7</sup>

All in all, this new EaP megaproject, that was elaborated at the Prague Summit (2009) and further developed at the Warsaw Summit (2011), was based on the renewed dual track approach through deepening both bilateral relations and multilateral dimensions. This program presupposed that the multilateral and bilateral approaches can be harmonized, even if the big diversity of bilateral approaches would be kept, but it also overvalued the regional approach and suggested mostly common solutions for the EaP region as a whole. The Multilevel Governance (MLG) and the Multidimensional Governance (MDG) principles appeared also in the EEG, above all the MLG as emphasising the decentralization in the civil society for democracy promotion. The MDG principle was less promoted, although the high complexity of policies would have needed this approach very much. The prevalence of the EU interest in fostering the trade relations pushed aside the complexity of policies and this neglected approach came back later in securitization with vengeance. Thus, ENP, and later EaP, had a "patchwork character", i.e. its "sectoral policies" were not really coordinated. At the same time the "sectoral" efforts were important to go ahead in some fields anyway, without being disturbed by other policy fields that might involve more conflicts.<sup>8</sup>

This normative approach of "democracy promotion" produced an obvious "carrot crisis" because the EU had nothing relevant to offer for the EE states instead of the European perspective to make structural reforms. This led to the Polish-Swedish proposal of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) introduced by the EU with its basic document, the European Council Declaration of May 2009. To revitalize this aim of Cohesive Europe in Wider Europe first a joint declaration was signed in Prague in 2009 with the six Eastern partners – Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine – about the EaP to facilitate closer cooperation in "political association" and "economic integration". EaP meant a turning point in the Cohesive Europe with its more realistic spirit, since it wanted to remedy the weaknesses of the original ENP scheme. The promotion of democracy has not been given up, and the respect for common values of the "deep and sustainable democracy" has come back in all EaP documents, but has become more specific and sophisticated, and the "deep trade" has been more and more emphasized instead.<sup>9</sup>

The EaP introduced the partnership structures with much more sensitivity for the individual states concerned in the relationship of multilateral and bilateral approaches, since the six states diverged a lot in their socio-economic situation (**Table IV**), and consequently, in their participation in, and contribution to, EaP (**Table V**). In general, the case of differentiated integration/membership has appeared from new angle of flexible external governance from the rapid conflict management in Ukraine and Moldova (see e.g. Baltag and Romanyshyn, 2011) through the sleeping conflict in Georgia to the "benign neglect" in Belarus, partly in Armenia and Azerbaijan. Moreover, the differentiated integration appeared in the "more for more" principle. It meant that the

more a country progresses in democratic reforms and institution building, the more additional support it can expect. Thus, keeping the emphasis on shared values and joint ownership, this pragmatic turn abandoned the naïve ideas of rapid democratization through the massive institution transfer and the easy harmonization of the multilateral and bilateral approaches. It focused on the extension of the “deep” economic and/or trade relationships by elaborating the magic term of “deep trade”, meaning comprehensive economic and social transformations as the effect of intensive trade relations (**Table VI**).

In the EaP megaproject launched by the Prague and Warsaw Summits with its spill-over effects worked to some extent, indeed, although they were not as “deep” as expected by the EU. In addition, the energy policy or energy security became more and more the priority in both the EU and EaP policies. With this energy pressure the securitization process began. However, the external governance in energy matters is especially difficult, and it hampers the spill-over effects in other policy fields. The EaP introduced a complex set of specific rules, well beyond the general democratization and this system raised the issue of compliance with the new rules. The *effective* compliance means an adherence to the provisions of the accord and to the implementing measures not only in the formal-legal transposition, but also in its real enforcement and proper application. Several factors go against the full implementation as the weak administrative capacity and high domestic adoption costs, namely misfit with national rules, and/or general domestic preferences, and the party-political interests. This situation leads to actual non-compliance with increasing reform-fatigue and placebo reforms. Therefore, the EU has introduced a large set of indicators as the EaP Index (**Table V**) for the assessment of the effective compliance in order to evaluate its country-specific partnership system. This EaP Index charts the progress made by the six countries in EU integration by the indicators on (1) the *linkage* as the depth and intensity of the contacts with the EU, (2) the *approximation* as the convergence with the EU rules and values and (3) the *management* as the performance of institutional structures, hence it provides a cross-country and cross-sector picture in a historical trajectory between 2011 and 2014.

#### *From Warsaw to Vilnius: The elaboration of Association Agreements*

At the Vilnius Summit in 2013 there were negotiations on Association Agreements (AA) – based on the DCFTA – to replace the Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCA). Finally the AAs with Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine were signed in Brussels on 27 June 2014. An ambitious agenda was also agreed upon in Vilnius with the commitments of political, economic and social reforms, since “DCFTA goes beyond a classical free trade agreement. It concerns not only the liberalisation of trade in goods (...) and services, but



broad provisions on establishment of companies and on the harmonisation of the partner countries' trade-related legislation with the EU *acquis communautaire* (the body of EU laws and regulations)." In general, "The EU shared its **cohesion and regional development experience** with partner countries to help them address internal regional socio-economic disparities." (EaP, 2013: 5,13), and this statement can be the motto of the EaP (see EaP, 2015a).<sup>10</sup>

The Association Agreements with Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) replaced the Partnership and Cooperation Agreements concluded with the partner countries in the late 1990s (with the exception of Belarus). DCFTA is part of an Association Agreement (AA) between the EU and any country of the ENPI-ENI. It is one of EU's the most ambitious bilateral agreements yet. The DCFTA offers partner countries a framework for modernising its trade relations and for economic development. This takes place by the opening of markets via the progressive removal of customs tariffs and quotas, and by an extensive harmonisation of laws, norms and regulations in various trade-related sectors, creating the conditions for aligning key sectors of their economies to EU standards to facilitate FDI (**Table VII**). DCFTA goes beyond a classical free trade agreement, indeed. It concerns not only the liberalisation of trade in goods (by lifting customs duties and abolishing trade quotas) and services, but broad provisions on establishment of companies and on the harmonisation of the partner countries' trade-related legislation with the EU *acquis communautaire*.

Membership of the WTO is a precondition for entering negotiations on the DCFTA. It aims to remove customs duties on imports and exports. Traditional trade defence instruments (anti-dumping, anti-subsidy and global safeguard) as well as technical barriers to trade shall also comply with WTO rules. DCFTA agreements contain also provisions for sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures. DCFTA also include provisions on movement of capital, public procurement issues and trade in services, including electronic commerce (**Table VIII**). Provisions also cover intellectual property issues and competition rules as well as the provision of transparency in administrative matters. The Association Agreements, including DCFTAs, are designed to support far reaching political and socio-economic reforms and facilitate comprehensive approximation towards the EU, its rules and standards. The effective future implementation of Association Agreements and, where relevant, DCFTAs, accompanied by reforms could bring about the comprehensive approximation with EU legislation and standards leading to the gradual economic integration of partners in the EU internal market and therefore to the creation of an economic area. They undertake to review DCFTAs at the EaP Summits, the possible further steps that could be taken to advance economic integration with a view to creating an economic area in light of implementation of the Association Agreements.

Real progress on DCFTAs can only be achieved with economies that welcome competition, have well-functioning institutions and a legal framework that guarantees a safe business-and investment climate. Supposedly, DCFTA would have strong spill-over effects pushing towards the mutual harmonization among the various policy fields and also among the countries concerned. The intensive and increasing trade relations would generate structural changes also in some other policy fields, as deepening External Europeanization, first of all through the improvement of social environment for the business/trade/investment sectors. The DCFTA based EaP project was indeed more pragmatic and more successful, however - although to a lesser extent - it reproduced the former Western fallacy on the relatively easy institution transfer and very rapid spill-over effect from the "deep trade" to the other social sectors.

The EaP multilateral dimension in the Vilnius Declaration provides a new forum between 2014 and 2017 for strengthening multilateral cooperation through four thematic platforms: (1) democracy and good governance, (2) economic integration and convergence with the EU sector policies, (3) energy security and (4) contact between people. It indicates the outlines of further activity and main directions of the EU cohesion policy: "The participants of the Vilnius Summit acknowledge the significance of multilateral cooperation in support of deeper bilateral relations. (...) the fora of multilateral dimension are the place where exchanges between the EU and all six partners can be held" (EaP, 2013: 11). Accordingly, in the financial support of ENI, "Assistance will be focused on a few sectors of concentration, with the aim of increasing ownership, quality as results as a means to contribute towards the modernisation and social cohesion of societies." At the same time, the participants emphasized also the importance of regional cooperation and encouraged "the development of efficient inter-regional and cross-border cooperation dialogue, including ECTC (European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation), to facilitate partners' social and economic development." (EaP, 2013: 12).

Paradoxically, the Vilnius declaration was the big event of the pragmatic stage, at the same time it turned out to be the start of the new stage of crisis management due to the deepening Ukrainian crisis. In Vilnius the Ukrainian President Yanukovich refused to sign the AA for Ukraine that provoked the pro-EU mass protest movement, which deprived him of power. With the Ukrainian crisis from the late 2013 the traditional military security dimension has come back with a vengeance as the quickly widening securitization process. Since then the EaP megaproject has been overburdened with the crisis management of the increasing conflict between the EU and Russia. The MDG principle of policy coordination has appeared in the complexity of security coordination, beyond the military dimension also in economy, energy and politics and it has become the new pragmatic priority. Although the energy policy looked like the unifying factor in

the security challenge as “the external dimension of regulatory state” (Goldthau and Sitter, 2014), but when the non-conventional, “hybrid” war broke out, the traditional-military security issues in fact became the real common denominator in a new, non-traditional form.

Altogether, the hard and soft dimensions of security effects have influenced the EU Eastern policies more and more directly with the frozen conflicts and mass migrations on one side and with the violations of human rights, persecutions of civil organizations and abusive minority policies in the EaP states on the other. The EaP regional integration as the multilateral European External Governance has become a dream or reduced to diplomatic nicety. At the same time, there has been a shift in security policy from the traditional to the complex meaning, embracing financial, economic, energy-related security in its political-global dimensions. This shift can easily be described in the present Ukrainian crisis. In this respect the EaP countries need also the regional “security integration” with the EU through the EaP, since all countries under scrutiny are “contested states” to a great extent.<sup>11</sup>

#### *From Vilnius to Riga: From trade pragmatism to the crisis of crisis management*

The conflict with Russia in the EaP region has also generated an internal conflict within the EU and deepened the Core-Periphery Divide that has been replicated in NMS, first of all in the V4 states, as the Semi-Periphery Divide. In fact, the Eastern policy of the EU has divided the EU from the very beginning, given that the Southern member states opposed to the newly emerged megaproject for Wider Europe. The Ukrainian crisis and the sanctions against Russia have divided the EU even more because some member states have preferred more confrontation, and some others less confrontation with Russia. The increasing security challenge has produced the crisis of crisis management in the EU’s effort for Cohesive Europe in Wider Europe. This big Eastern crisis with the expansionist Russia and declining EaP region has come as a surprise to the EU, since Europeans must have lost the habit and the expertise to analyse the world in geopolitical terms in the relatively relaxed period of the multipolar era (Biscop, 2015: 2). In this respect the “rethinking of the EU’s development paradigm” in EaP may be relevant as well (EPC, 2015).

In 2015 and afterwards more uncertainty can be expected than ever before, since “The revised ENP Strategy will be characterized by the abandonment of ‘more for more, less for less’ conditionality and the further differentiation of relations with each of neighbouring countries, taking their own and their neighbours’ interest more into account. As such, the ENP will be detached from the EU’s enlargement philosophy and thus come to resemble a more classic foreign policy.” (Blockmans, 2015: 2). Indeed, the

European External Action Service has increasingly become involved the Eastern policy (EEAS, 2015) as the regional security has come to the fore. The “more for more” principle can hardly be kept in 2015, since the manoeuvring room for the EaP states has drastically shrunken, and the commitment to democracy has decided the choice of the EaP states between the EU and the autocratic Russia (Buscaneanu 2012 and 2015). The Riga Summit has focused on the Ukrainian crisis and it has only taken small steps elsewhere, e.g. in the visa liberalization process (Kaca, 2015). The Riga Declaration has called for the “multilateral and bilateral security dialogue” in EaP, and it has made references to energy security (EaP, 2015b: 8,12), but otherwise has not dealt seriously with the securitization of the EaP region in its complexity. Riga Summit has been described as non-event and/or survival summit with ongoing stagnation in EaP, due to the “growing instability in the EU’s neighbourhoods”, since they are “exposed to ever changing developments and are slipping from crisis to crisis” (Egmont, 2015: 2,3,5).

However, most analysts have not distinguished between two issues: (1) the former, pre-crisis approach of the EU in EaP was already inadequate in many ways, and (2) the new, post-crisis approach needs even more new policies that have not yet been elaborated. The same problem appears in the four scenarios (FES, 2014) written by the joint group of the EU-EaP experts in the late 2014, in which the Scenario I (Shared Home) and Scenario II (Common Home) at that time already lost their relevance. Namely the Shared Home scenario presupposes that the EU and Russia after this lost decade of political crises and economic stagnation would focus on the shared interest, so the EaP countries could be developed through the deep trade and were not forced to decide between them. The Common Home scenario puts even more emphasis on the democratization of Russia and on its common interests with the EU in the global competition to resolve the European conflicts in order to counter the common threats. Whereas the Scenario III (Broken Home) takes the authoritarian modernization of Russia into account and predicts continuing confrontation with it, turning the EaP region into a zone of permanent instability. Finally, Scenario IV (Divided Home) forecasts even the further deterioration of the EU-Russia relations due to the Russian efforts to carve out a sphere of influence, therefore no political and economic transformation takes place, and the EaP region would be locked in a stalemate. Here we are.

#### *The deepening V4 divide and the contrast of external and security governance*

Beyond the general interest and/or disinterest of the EU in the East, there has been a special interest of NMS in the partnership with their close neighbourhood. The EaP was a Polish-Swedish initiative, and so far all biannual EaP Summits have taken place in NMS. Nonetheless, this new “horizontal” divide between the tough and soft attitudes

towards Russia has also appeared in NMS that has also created a "vertical" divide as a contrast between their external governance and their special security governance in the EaP case. First, there has been a split between its Northern and Southern parts, since the former have had more concern in EaP and the latter in the Balkan and Black Sea region. Second, even more so, the V4 states have diverged in their relationships to Russia that has deepened the divide between Poland and Hungary, and to a lesser extent, between Poland and the Czech Republic and Slovakia as well. As to the vertical divide, it has been the strongest in the Polish case – similarly also in the Baltic states and Romania –, where the security governance has dominated, and the weakest in the Hungarian case – similarly also in the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Bulgaria –, where the structure of the external governance has been more or less kept with the dominance of foreign trade relations, but at the same time they have abided the NATO security arrangements in the region.

The V4 cooperation has been elaborated in a rich body of literature, its overview has been given in the recent paper of Törő et al. (2014) that has also discussed the activities of the V4 states in the EaP matters. The particular merit of this paper is that it has also described the "V4+" formations, first of all that of "V4+B3" formation with the three Baltic states (2014: 367, 376, etc.), which has been especially important in the case of the EaP Summits. But the analysis of this paper has not been extended beyond the positive side of cooperation to the negative experiences. It has dealt mostly with the V4 as the "coordinating bridge" (2014: 377), and not so much with the detailed analysis of the conflicts within the V4. The paper has only mentioned "controversies" in general terms (2014: 390), first of all concerning the Ukrainian crisis and their relationships towards Russia.<sup>12</sup>

No doubt, however, that the expansionism of Russia and the authoritarian rule of Putin after 2011 have created a deep split in V4. Poland has strongly opposed this new Russian politics, while the other V4 states have developed much more reconciliatory behaviour, the Czech Republic and Slovakia mostly for economic reasons, Hungary due to the special ties of the Orbán government with the Putin' Russia. But the close contacts and the suspicious contracts between the Hungarian government and the Putin leadership have raised concern in the Czech Republic and Slovakia as well. Thus, the Austrian challenge to V4 proved to be attractive and it led to a new formation in the Slavkov meeting and agreement on 29 January 2015, leaving aside both Poland and Hungary. Actually, the first humiliation of the Hungarian government was its exclusion from the Slavkov meeting of Austria, Czech Republic and Slovakia. It demonstrated already the increasing isolation of the Hungarian government due to its pro-Russian course and praising the "success" of the Putin's Russia in the Orbán's speeches.

The traditionally good relationships between Poland and Hungary – mentioned usually as the “two brothers” in everyday parlance – have been drastically deteriorated by the pro-Russian political and economic turn of the Orbán government. The main deal for the Orbán government is the Paks-II nuclear reactor, contracted with Rosatom firm. This contract is very bad deal for Hungary and very good deal for Russia, but it gives a manoeuvring room of euro millions for the Orbán government and its oligarchic clientele. The symbolical visit of Putin in Hungary on 16 February 2015 and his common, friendly press conference with Viktor Orbán caused a big international uproar, especially in Poland, where PiS, the traditional ally of Orbán condemned this event with strong words. Afterwards, Orbán’s visit to Warsaw was again a failure and second humiliation. This visit was called by the Polish PM Ewa Kopacz “frank and difficult”, and the PiS leaders were not ready to meet him. By the summer 2015 Orbán perceived the disadvantages of his isolation not only in the EU28 but also in the V4. Orbán in his Tusványos speech in July 2015 made big gestures to Poland, inviting Poland to lead the V4 cooperation, but it remained without a positive response, with justification. This divide between Poland and Hungary – reinforced by the “third way” of the Czech Republic and Slovakia - prevents to a great extent the common interest representation of V4 as a regional organization.<sup>13</sup>

As to the vertical divide in policy governance, the Polish concern has been the highest in the EU and their approach has usually been the most critical about the current developments. A Polish EaP report in early 2015 actually described this crisis of crisis management and it questioned the EU’s “experimentalist governance” in the analysis of the security, energy and migration governance. The Report criticized first of all the EU security policy as regards the “soft line” towards Russia in the new Cold War: “The EU’s neighbourhood policy has been driven by a strong liberal assumption that the best way to secure stability is to improve governance, and to strengthen economic cooperation. (...) the EU conducted its security policy with economic means accompanied by political dialogue” (Godzimirski et al., 2015: 7, 8). The Report also noted that the EU was not ready and able to meet the mass migration challenges from the EaP region, and it was even more critical about its energy policy: “The external dimension of the EU energy policy, as an extension of internal EU regulations, is prone the same weaknesses.” (Godzimirski et al., 2015: 14). All in all, “In the wider realm of security, some alterations in the EU’s neighbourhood policies are clearly needed. Although there are some confirmations of the role of the EU’s economic clout and security instruments, and of the continuing attractiveness of its governance model, the Russian-Ukrainian crisis has revealed that the previous framework was insufficient.” (Godzimirski et al., 2015: 14, 25).

Given the fact that the Ukrainian crisis is deepening, the perspectives of the V4 cooperation are too bad, as the Polish observers noted in a second Report in the mid-

2015: "even the future of the V4 is now questioned because of the deep differences among its members' perceptions of Russia" (Rieker and Terlikowski, 2015: 1). In their view, the V4 states after joining NATO, had the same security perception and were "able to speak with one voice on crucial issues debated in the Alliance" that was disturbed by "their divergent threat perceptions" of "the Russian-driven hybrid war". This Report concentrated on the V4 military cooperation and it had only a modest view on the other dimensions of the V4 cooperation: "The pragmatic character of this cooperation (...) excluded regional integration projects in any dimension, much less defence." Altogether, within the NATO framework the special security governance earlier worked well in the V4, and although the authors were unsatisfied with it in the deepening security crisis, they still stated that "despite the differences regarding Russia on the high political level, the V4 countries seem to display increasing willingness to tighten cooperation in the military domain (...) despite the diverging assessments on the place and role of Russia in European security policy." (3, 8-9). It means that between the external governance in general and the security governance in particular the contrast has recently increased that has to be the main reason for the crisis of crisis management. In fact, in my view, this contrast has originated from the "patchy" character of the EaP, i.e. from the missing coordination and synchronization of the various policies in the European External Governance hurting the MDG principle.

*Conclusions: The new security challenge and the EU transformation crisis*

The EU special interest in the EE has been moving in cycles, since right after the end of the Cold War it diminished, but the Eastern Enlargement has increased the interest in the new neighbours, and it has become quite intensive in the period of the new "Cold War" at the crossroads of energy and traditional security. Although some Eastern EU members - first of all Poland – have tried to keep EaP high on the EU agenda, the EU's Eastern policy has still been influenced to a great extent by the fact that the limits of the EU's integration capacity have been shown in NMS because in the first decade of membership they have failed "transcending the East-West divide" (see Epstein and Jacoby, 2014). This failure has also indicated the weaknesses of the EU's cohesion policy as the limit of its "transformative power". The weak absorption capacity of the NMS in cohesion policy has been investigated by both the EU and by the analysts (Bachtler et. al., 2014), therefore, the EEG has also focused more and more on the strengthening the administrative capacity of the EaP states.

The current EU "transformation crisis" is a multilevel game for the EU with its increasing internal tension in overcoming the global crisis at both the EU and the member states levels, overburdened by the new security challenge in the East. Nowadays the

biggest problem for the EU is how to restart economic growth, first of all in the Southern periphery due to the increasing Core-Periphery Divide, when facing a tough global competition (Schweiger, 2014). Moreover, the EU democracy depends not only on the newly developed internal forms and contents, but also more and more on the international challenges, including the level and forms of democracy in its neighbourhood (Cheneval et al., 2015). Thus, the security challenge in the East, in its largest meaning as the military, political and energy security issue, has disturbed the EU and it has led to the freezing of the External Europeanization due to the increasing internal instability of the EaP states that has caused instability in the EU in a vicious circle.

This situation of high complexity needs a complexity management based on the strong coordination of the EU policies in EaP that could be elaborated by the EU step by step going beyond the Minsk type of troubleshooting in order to coping with the contrast between the external governance and security policy. The rethinking of the current crisis management has to produce a new Eastern policy, since Cohesive Europe in Wilder Europe is still an important part of the Future Europe. The "top challenge for 2015" for the EU is, indeed, that "The EU should carefully differentiate between the six Eastern partner countries, and provide intense support to Ukraine to help it overhaul its system of governance against the backdrop of the war in Eastern Ukraine." (EaP Index, 2015: 7). Accordingly, the top challenge for the V4 states is to overcome their internal debates deepened by the Ukrainian crisis. Otherwise, without a common representation of their interests in the EU, they will be marginalized within the EU as its stagnating Semi-Periphery in the period of the running globalization and sharpening global competitiveness.

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### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> An earlier and shorter version of this paper was written by Attila Ágh and Attila Kovács for the *Handbook of Cohesion Policy in the EU* (edited by Simona Piattoni and Laura Polverari, Edward Elgar, 2015). This enlarged and updated version deals the EU policy on the EaP countries in general and on that of the V4 states in particular, concentrating on the interface between cohesion and security policies.

<sup>2</sup> The CEPS and EPC have been pioneering in the ENP research and documentation, CEPS with the European Neighbourhood Watch since February 2005 (see recently Blockmans, 2015) and EPC with a large horizon analyses (see recently, EPC, 2015). In the huge literature see also the Special Issues of *Journal of European Public Policy* (Vol. 16, No. 6, 2009), *Democratization* (Vol. 18, No. 4, 2011) and *International Politics and Society* (3/2011). The European Integration Index (2015) is a deep and comprehensive overview of the six states with their detailed data in their historical trajectory. This paper relies to a great extent on these sources, but there is no space here to discuss these publications in details.

<sup>3</sup> Russia has also been a main player in the ENP game, but there is no space here to deal with its role at length. In the Introduction of the Special Issue on Russian foreign policy the editors conclude that "The crisis in Ukraine exploded the status conflict between Russia and the West (...) the West is willing to recognize Russia's status as a great power in terms of existing normative order. It seems that this does not satisfy Russia." (Forsberg et al, 2014: 267).

<sup>4</sup> On the EEG see Lavanex and Schimmelfennig, 2009 (Introduction to the Special Issue on External Governance); on its application to Moldova and Ukraine Baltag and Romanyshyn, 2011; and on the dependence on Russia as a "constraining" factor of EaP Dimitrova and Dragneva, 2009.

<sup>5</sup> This short overview relies on my former papers on the ENP, in which I have discussed the idea of "globalization cum regionalization", "integrative balancing" and "carrot crisis" (Ágh, 2010 and 2012). On the recent situation in NMS see Ágh, 2014, 2015a. In this paper I deal only with the Eastern dimension of ENP and I concentrate on the V4 states. It can be also considered as a particular case of differentiated integration (see Ágh, 2015b, and Leruth and Lord, 2015).

<sup>6</sup> EaP has also established some institutions that have been helpful both in the EU-EaP and regional cooperation. Euronest Parliamentary Assembly (3 May 2011 in Brussels) is a parliamentary forum to promote political association and economic integration, composed of the EP delegation (60 MEPs) and 50 EaP delegates (5x10, none from Belarus). The EaP Civil Society Forum (CFS) is part of the program to facilitate and monitor the democratic transition, its Steering Committee meets annually.

<sup>7</sup> On the conceptual and practical limitations of EaP as a continuing "carrot crisis", see also Korosteleva et al, 2013,2014).

<sup>8</sup> The EEG has also meant an extension of the MLG literature to EE, see Faludi (2012). Simona Piattoni has pointed out (2010: 177-191) that the MLG principle has only not involved an empirical challenge in the EU, but also a normative challenge in democratization as decentralization, accountability and transparency.

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<sup>9</sup> In this spirit, the establishment of European Endowment for Democracy (EED) in 2011 was to encourage “deep and sustainable democracy” by “Fostering – not exporting – democracy and freedom” (EED, 2015). I do not engage here in the discussion of the naïve expectation of democratization in EE by the EaP projects that have been in a strong continuity with the Western fallacy in the democratization in NMS (Ágh, 2015a).

<sup>10</sup> “The **Eastern Partnership Integration and Cooperation (EaPIC)** programme was set up in 2012 to provide initiatives – in the form of increased financial assistance – for continued efforts in democratic transformation (...) Since its launch in 2012, the EaPIC program has mobilised EUR 152 million of additional funding.” (EaP, 2013: 9).

<sup>11</sup> The conceptual shift in security policy from the narrow, traditional meaning to the largest complex meaning has been described in my recent chapter on the EU foreign policy (Ágh, 2014: 116-117). According to Barry Buzan (2015), the English School has elaborated the “societal approach” to security that provides a “normative framing” for securitization in its largest meaning.

<sup>12</sup> Christian Schweiger (2013) describes the V4 relationships in a more differentiated approach as the “multiple cores” in the EU. The relationships of the Baltic states to the Ukrainian conflict would deserve a special analysis, also with regards to the V4+B3 cooperation. Moreover, the specific interests of NMS in the Eastern cohesion policy have also come up in the sub-national regional cooperation in the border regions, since the territorial interest representation is also part of external governance (see Dabrowski, 2013).

<sup>13</sup> The Slavkov meeting on 29 January 2015 was a failure and a big humiliation for PM Orbán (see György Lázár, A new regional alliance – without Hungary, Hungarian Free Press, 19 March 2015, <http://hungarianfreepress.com/2015/03/19/a-new-regional-alliance-without-hungary/>), similarly, the February 2015 visit to Poland and meeting with PM Kopacz (see Piotr Skolimowski, Hungary’s Orban Gets Cold Shoulder in Poland After Russian Deal, 19 February 2015, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-02-19/hungary-s-orban-gets-cold-shoulder-in-poland-after-russian-deal>). Viktor Orbán - in his speech on 25 July 2015 at Tuzsányos (Romania) – realized the un-splendid isolation of his government in V4 and he made some reconciliatory remarks to Poland, emphasizing the strength of the Polish economy and expressing his view that Poland had to lead the V4 cooperation (see Szymon Kowalczyk, Orbán Sings Poland’s Praises in Romania, <http://inside-poland.com/t/orban-sings-polands-praises-in-romania/> and the Hungarian Report, <http://www.hirado.hu/2015/07/25/hallgassa-eloben-orban-viktor-tusnadjurdoi-beszedet>).