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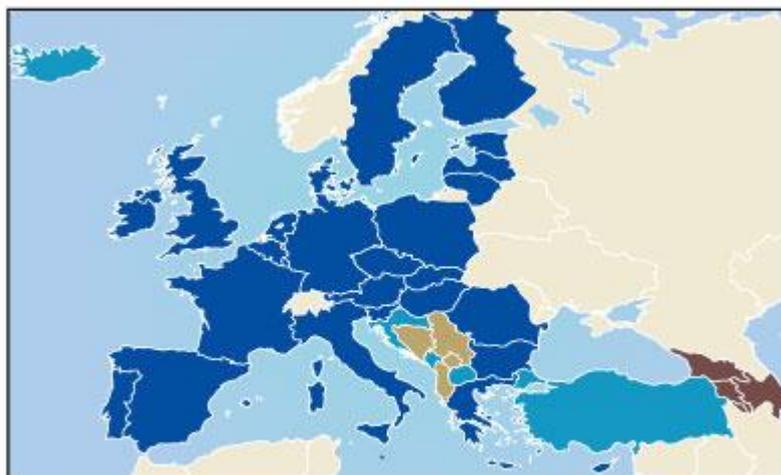
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Georgia between the European Union and Russia

Does Russia constitute an obstacle to Georgian
Europeanization?

November 2012

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Introduction

On October, 1 the Georgian people has voted for the Parliamentary elections. OSCE electoral observers reported that there was a strong animosity during the electoral campaign, but also that the scrutiny was conducted regularly on the whole.¹ For a young democracy like Georgia, always under pressure because of the internal secessionist conflicts, and in turmoil for the September revelations about the tortures in the Georgian prisons, this can be considered a very positive outcome.

Besides, the elections could be analysed also from a (geo)political point of view: as the majority of international scholars and analysts were almost sure that the result would have confirmed the United National Movement – President Saakashvili’s party – as the first party in the Georgian Parliament, it was the main opposition party, Georgian Dream, led by Bidzina Ivanishvili, which won the elections, and thus the possibility to create a new government. Also in this case we should acknowledge that the democratic procedures have been respected enough to bring a new party to power, for the first time after the 2003 ‘Rose Revolution’. On another level of analysis, though, the outcome of this election raises another kind of concern: Mr Ivanishvili, the richest person in the country and now Georgian Prime Minister, is also known to be in favour of a rapprochement with Russia.

The relationship between Russia and Georgia has degenerated since the ‘Rose Revolution’, which brought the incumbent President Saakashvili to power, and completely changed the course of history for Georgia: Saakashvili set up a government of young professionals, and launched the reform of the whole national system, starting from liberalisation and the fight against corruption. The diplomatic relations between the two countries have increasingly worsened until 2008, when they got to their lowest level, and brought to the beginning of a short armed conflict on the issue of the independence of the Georgian region of South Ossetia. Notwithstanding the ceasefire agreement, Russia has kept its military forces on the Georgian territory, in the two secessionist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which declared their independence after the war in 2008. Their declaration was recognized by Russia, thus exacerbating the conflict between the latter and Georgia, which did not accept the unilateral declaration.

Therefore, Mr Ivanishvili’s election as Prime Minister could constitute a turning point in the relationship between Russia and Georgia, and consequently also a change in the country’s alliances choice: a possible reorientation toward East, renouncing to the sense of belonging to the (Western) European family, which President Saakashvili so often refers to.

This paper will try to analyse by which means the European Union and Russia have tried to influence the Georgian system, and which one of the two international actors has prevailed. Thence,

¹ International Election Observation, Georgia – Parliamentary elections, 1 October 2012, OSCE
URL: <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/94593>

the conclusion will be an open question on Georgian future according to the latest Parliamentary elections, which could affect the next course of Georgian politics in a meaningful way, but also change the geopolitical balance in the South Caucasus.

Our hypothesis is that we could actually talk about a kind of ‘Europeanization’ in Georgia, as the cooperation instruments put in place by the European Union have effectively influenced the Georgian institutional system; nonetheless, the European ‘stick and carrot’ policy has not always functioned in the Georgian case, as in that framework the use of conditionality could sometimes be counterproductive or difficult to put in place. In certain conditions, the Russian way of approaching the Georgian issue has been more efficient in terms of outcomes, even though in Georgia more than in other South Caucasus countries Russia had to resort to the use of hard power. This does not mean that Russia and the EU act on two completely different levels, the former resorting to hard power, the latter to soft power: in South Caucasus Russia learned to use the European tools against Europe itself, for example financing civil society NGOs and news media that promote a pro-Russian political message, even though this is partially true in the Georgian case, where the parties are constantly clashing and there is little possibility for Russia to creep into the Georgian society.

A brief historical excursus

The main political linkages between Georgia and Russia date back to the 19th century, when tsarist Russia invaded the Georgian territory, and made it part of the empire. According to some scholars, at that time Russia was perceived by the Georgian elite as a ‘bridge to Europe’, thus the source of a Europeanization of the country, and therefore also a source of modernisation. Thence, it dates back to that time also the cultural and social linkage, as several Georgian generations studied in Russia, and merged the two cultures. All this, though, also made a nationalist sentiment spring among the Georgian elites, which after the creation of the USSR began to feel that the European side of Russia had been left behind with the Bolshevik revolution. Indeed, Georgia was one of the few territories inside the Soviet Union to leave some freedoms to its citizens.²

It was after the end of the Cold War, and the declaration of independence, that Georgia began to look westward, in order to recover that link with Europe and the West which had been severed during the soviet period. The seal to this new course was the membership to the Council of Europe accorded in 1999.

Only with the ‘Rose Revolution’, a peaceful shift in power in 2003 which gave birth to the new government led by Mr Sakaashvili, there was a radical change, which led the Georgian elite to abandon not only the political relations with Russia, but above all to leave behind the Russian culture, trying instead to find a common path with Western democracies. This change was pushed also by the US administration, already active in the country from 2001 – year of the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington – which at that time was fighting its ‘War on Terror’ worldwide, and on the field in Afghanistan and Iraq. Indeed, Georgia took part to the mission in Afghanistan and also to the ‘coalition of the willing’ in Iraq, where it was the most important *per capita* contributor in terms of military forces. The influence of the United States was particularly strong on the economic level, as one of the first reforms in the country was the liberalisation of economy, in order to make Georgia an attractive pole for FDI.

Meanwhile Georgia was also trying to create new linkages with Europe, both with the individual countries and with the EU. In order to understand the importance accorded, at least publicly, to the cooperation with Europe, the new President Saakashvili decided to officially use both the Georgian and the European flag, justifying this move with the fact that the blue flag with twelve stars was the flag of the Council of Europe, thus, as a member, Georgia had the right to use it. The political message of using the flag that the Council of Europe and the European Union share is clear though: Georgia wants to be perceived as a fully European country, therefore as part of the Western world.

² Silvia SERRANO, *Vue des marges : la Russie, un pont vers l'Europe ? L'exemple de la Géorgie*, colloque « La Russie et l'Europe : autres et semblables », Université Paris Sorbonne – Paris IV, 10-12 mai 2007 [en ligne], Lyon, ENS LSH, mis en ligne le 26 novembre 2008. URL : <http://institut-est-ouest.ens-lsh.fr/spip.php?article127>

The EU 'Enlargement-lite' policy

The formal relationship between the European Union and Georgia began in 1999, when the two countries signed the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA), which is still the main framework policy for bilateral cooperation between the EU and Georgia. The PCAs have been signed by ten countries, including Russia, with the EU: the main objectives are the strengthening of democracy and human rights, and the market liberalisation.

Moreover, in 2004 the South Caucasus was included in the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), started in 2003 and including both the Mediterranean and the Eastern neighbouring countries. The ENP is a framework programme for bilateral agreements between the EU and the neighbouring countries: it is structured on the 'Action Plans' which are written by mutual consent, and which delineate the priorities of each country. The ENP is the framework programme for the different aspects of cooperation between the EU and Georgia. It implies: the creation of a market economy and the strengthening of commercial relations between the two; the implementation of the rule of law and democracy in the country, thanks to some initiatives such as the Parliamentary Cooperation Committee, but also to an important cooperation programme in the field of criminal justice and fight against corruption (EUJUST Themis); the cooperation in security matters, for instance in the field of border management, for which the EU has developed the EU Monitoring Mission (EUMM); the promotion of peaceful resolution of internal conflicts, notably in the field of the Abkhazian and South Ossetian independence claims, which brought the EU to establish a Special Representative (EUSR) for the South Caucasus, specifically charged with the Georgian issue since the Russian-Georgian war in August 2008; poverty reduction, in order to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), also through a specific programme for the improvement of the country's agricultural production capacity (European Neighbourhood Programme for Agricultural and Rural Development – ENPARD); the cooperation in the field of energy, which led Georgia to become an observer country in the European Energy Community; the fight against terrorism; the control of illegal immigration.

In order to finance most of these policy commitments, the EU has put in place a European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI), which provides the financial assistance to Georgia on the basis of the 'Country Strategy Paper'. It is important to underline that the interlocutors the EU seeks in Georgia are not only the government and public administration, but also – and in some fields, predominantly – the civil society NGOs, which sometimes receive financial support directly from the EU, and which are an important stakeholder, above all in the secessionist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

Furthermore, following the 2008 war between Russia and Georgia on the South Ossetian territory, the EU has put in place a new and more specific programme for the Eastern partners, which is

included in the framework of the ENP: it is the Eastern Partnership programme (EaP). Its creation in May 2009 in Prague, follows the request of some EU Eastern member states, and the proposal by the Swedish and Polish governments in 2008 to establish a new programme more specifically focused on the Eastern partner countries. As stated in the Eastern Partnership Summit Joint Declaration of September 2011³, the main objectives of the programme are the sharing of common values – i.e. democracy, the rule of law, human rights –, the improvement of commercial interactions among the partner countries, and the implementation of visa-free regimes or of visa facilitations. As another policy linked to the EaP economic dimension, we also find a new EU project, the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements with the same countries of the EaP, which is going through negotiations yet, and which should lead to the integration of third countries into the EU internal market after a period of legislative harmonisation.

Finally, in 2010 the EU and Georgia have also signed a visa facilitation agreement, which makes easier the issuance of visas to Georgian citizens who travel to the EU.

The whole framework of programmes put in place by the EU in order to improve the political, economic, and cultural relations with partner countries in the East has come to be called the ‘Enlargement-lite’ policy⁴, as the objective is not the enlargement of the EU to these countries, rather a deep cooperation, which has some elements in common with the enlargement process in Central and Eastern Europe. The main difference here is that the EU does not ask these countries to comply with the ‘*acquis communautaire*’, but rather the focus is put on the improvement of the democratic political regimes and of the compliance to the international trade rules – for example the main prerequisite for a DCFTA is the conformity to the WTO rules.

Some analysts complained about the «limits of Enlargement-lite», as it is, they say, a «technocratic approach» which follows the principle of the «one-fits-all».⁵ Therefore, according to these analysts, the EU policies do not take into account the specificities of each partner country, while according to every country the same solutions to different domestic problems. Moreover, the EU policies are oriented toward the long-term, while a country like Georgia would need a prompter approach, particularly as far as the conflict management is concerned. According to other analysts, though, it is also true that «the EU has to make it clear that it cannot share the time perspective of the Georgian government with regard to conflict transformation. Programmes in this field cannot be expected to lead to spectacular changes in the short term»⁶. Probably both these points of view are

³ URL : http://www.eu-un.europa.eu/articles/en/article_11451_en.htm

⁴ Nicu POPESCU and Andrew WILSON, *The Limits of Enlargement-lite: European and Russian Power in the Troubled Neighbourhood*, Policy Report, European Council on Foreign Relations, London, June 2009

⁵ Ibid. See also: POPESCU, LEONARD, WILSON, *Can the EU Win the Peace in Georgia?*, Policy Brief, European Council on Foreign Relations, London, August 2008; POPESCU, *Europe's Unrecognised Neighbours. The EU in Abkhazia and South Ossetia*, Working document No 260, Centre for European Policy Studies, Brussels, March 2007

⁶ Bruno COPPIETERS, *The EU and Georgia: Time Perspectives in Conflict Resolution*, Occasional paper No 70, European Union Institute for Security Studies, Paris, December 2007

true in a way, as they underline some difficulties that the EU encounters when it comes to dealing with the South Caucasus partner countries, and in particular Georgia.

Indeed the European Union has developed a multitude of policy instruments, which makes it difficult to put them all together, in order to have a general overview, and which sometimes overlap, at least apparently. Thence the idea that the EU policies are almost impossible to decode for the partner countries. On the other hand, though, the EU cannot be criticised because of its long-term policies, while the partner countries would prefer short-term, fast-enhancing policy solutions: as long as the EU will try to put in place structural change in those countries, in order to promote democracy and stability, one cannot expect that it puts in place some short-term measures, which fit the immediate needs, but which could be ineffective on the long term or even create new problems.

Indeed the EU faces an accountability problem when it comes to its representatives in Georgia, and this certainly creates a timing issue, most important when it needs to handle a crisis situation, as the one in Georgia during the conflict with Russia. The problem, though, does not lie in the unreadiness of the EU in responding to unpredicted events, rather it lies in that accountability problem which leaves the EU without the political will that it is expected from a global actor, as the EU should be. Actually, in Georgia there are both the EU member states and the EU, with its different institutions, which are taking part to the conflict resolution processes. The former are acting in the framework of the group 'Friends of the UN Secretary General' – notably Germany, France and the UK – and also individually, by financing the civil society organizations, in particular in Abkhazia; the latter are mostly active in South Ossetia, as long as the conflict resolution is concerned, and in general act both through the different programmes planned at the EU level, and according to the will of the European Council: this is to say that different EU institution's representatives have different competencies in Georgia, but almost none of them is supported by a strong political will, which could enable it to act promptly and effectively. Here lies the lack of accountability. This same problem could be the reason why sometimes the EU is entangled in the so-called «one-fits-all» policies: as long as every policy issue within the external action of the EU should be approved by 27 member states, it becomes probably difficult to make a change when a programme is already being implemented.

Therefore, in the case of this accountability problem, we can maintain that the EU could play a more important role, thus solving some of its deficiencies, only with a real Ministry of Foreign Affairs, backed by a real EU government. The Treaty of Lisbon, entered into force on December 1st, 2009, had created a lot of expectations as far as the new European External Action Service is concerned; however, even though some of the powers of the High Representative have been increased, it still cannot act without the unanimous consent of the member states.

Russia: a troublesome neighbour

The Russian way to exert its influence in the South Caucasian region and in particular in Georgia broadly differ from the European one.

First of all, the Russian approach does not respect a particular format: Russia does not have a framework policy for each neighbouring region, with the objectives, and the tools to implement them, clearly stated. It generally acts on a case by case basis, and following its own interests without mixing up interests and values. As maintained by Papava, «Russia offers important economic incentives to *political and economic elites*, which contrasts with the EU's efforts to change *economic structures*.»⁷

Secondly, Russia often uses coercive measures in order to convince its partners: this does not mean that it always intervenes militarily, rather that it often adopts a conditionality policy based on retorsion or on the withdrawal of incentives previously granted.

Since the 'Rose Revolution', the relationship between Russia and Georgia has been deteriorating the more and more. The first case of retorsion toward Georgia took place in March 2006, when Russia put an embargo on Georgian wine and mineral water, and then on many other products: the official reason for the ban was that there were problems with some fake products on the market. «The immediate results for Georgia were catastrophic. In 2005, Russia had imported almost 90 percent, or around 52 million bottles, of Georgia's wine. (...) In 2010 Georgia exported just 10 million bottles of wine.»⁸ Since then Georgia has redirected its trade routes toward the European Union, which is now its first commercial partner, with 36.7 % of Georgian export and 30 % of its import in 2010.⁹

In the meanwhile, Russia has been issuing Russian passports to Georgian citizens living in the secessionist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia since 2002: this is perceived by the Georgian government «as a smokescreen for its aggressive designs against Georgia, claiming to be motivated solely by a "desire to protect its own citizens"»¹⁰

In August 2008 the situation in the secessionist region of South Ossetia precipitated: as the Georgian government, induced in part by the Russian behaviour at its borders, decided to restore order in South Ossetia with the military forces, Russia felt obliged to intervene to protect the South Ossetian citizens against the Georgian army. The armed conflict was eventually what Russia was seeking, in order to consolidate its control of the region, politically and militarily. Actually, for

⁷ Vladimer PAPAVALI, *The Essence of economic reforms in post-Revolution Georgia: what about the European choice?*, Georgian International Journal of Science and Technology, 1 (1), 2008, pp. 1-9, cited in Oscar B. PARDO SIERRA, *No man's land? A comparative analysis of the EU and Russian influence in the Southern Caucasus*, Communist and Post-Communist Studies, Volume 44, Issue 3, September 2011, pp. 233-243

⁸ Thomas De Waal, *Georgia's Choices: Charting a Future in Uncertain Times*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington D.C., 2011, p.18

⁹ URL: <http://www.easternpartnership.org/partner-states/georgia> (data as of 2010, sources: International Monetary Fund, Eurostat, CIA World Factbook, National Statistics Office of Georgia)

¹⁰ President of Georgia website. URL: <http://www.president.gov.ge/Georgia/AboutGeorgia/>

Georgia the campaign was a disaster, with damages to the infrastructures not only on the South Ossetian territory, but also South of the border with Georgia. Moreover, the Russian army arrived near the Georgian capital, Tbilisi, and there was a risk of a major conflict. Perhaps, on that occasion the role of the EU was decisive, in order to impose a ceasefire agreement between the parties. According to this agreement, the Russian army should have withdrawn from the Georgian territory, but the plan has not been fully implemented yet. As a result of the conflict, though, both South Ossetia and Abkhazia declared their independence, which was then recognised by Russia.

On that occasion a negotiation framework, the ‘Geneva negotiations’, was sponsored by Switzerland, with the EU holding the role of co-presidency: the aim was to restore peace in Georgia and, then, to find an agreement both for Georgian internal conflicts, and for the Russia-Georgia relationship, which eventually became reciprocally intertwined.

In March 2012, since there were few results from the negotiations with Russia, the Georgian government decided unilaterally to open its borders to the Russian citizens living in the Caucasian region, hoping that this will be a way toward the normalization of the relationship between the two countries. Russia, though, did not approve the decision, which could be seen as a kind of discrimination among Russian citizens, thus it is probable that it will not allow its citizens to travel to Georgia freely.

Nonetheless, the ‘Geneva negotiations’ have given a concrete outcome: in November 2011 Russia and Georgia reached an agreement, which finally enabled Russia to join the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Actually, the negotiations for Russian accession were at a deadlock, since Georgia, already a member of the WTO, did not agree on it. The agreement has its focal point in the introduction of a new way to control the Georgian-Russian border, important because it is a trade corridor, currently occupied by Russian troops: the border control should be carried out by a neutral private company, selected by the two parties together with Switzerland.

The fact that an agreement was finally found on this matter is interesting also because it has reversed the roles compared to the Georgian NATO accession talks. The US President George W. Bush strenuously tried to bring Georgia inside NATO, and as an evidence of this he managed to let the Individual Partnership Action Plan begin in 2006. Russia, on its side, has strenuously tried to avoid a Georgian NATO membership, complaining for the fact that NATO allies were trying to encircle the Russian border. In that case, even though Russia is not a NATO member, thus it has no veto right, the European allies did not want to create more reasons of conflict in an already instable region, and thus decided to postpone the talks about a possible Georgian accession.

The ‘Geneva negotiations’ are still continuing, as a proof of the fact that the appeasement has not led to a shared and permanent agreement between the parties.

Achievements and setbacks

After this brief overview of the policies put in place by the European Union and by Russia in order to influence the Georgian course, we can try to analyse the achievements and the setbacks; this also linked to the importance that the South Caucasian region has for the two challengers – Russia and the EU.

First of all, it is important to focus on the two different approaches of the EU and Russia as far as the ‘democratic issue’ is concerned. It is a fact that the main influence that the EU tries to exert on its partners, in particular on its neighbour countries, is the promotion of democracy, notably it supports the implementation of a democratic process, in order to install democratic procedures, rules, and values. These three objectives are most often identified with the names: democracy, the rule of law, and human rights. Russia, instead, adopts an approach which appears to be slightly different, but which actually is substantially different. Sometimes it has been called ‘sovereign democracy’ or ‘responsible democracy’¹¹: behind this definitions lies the old principle of self-determination. This is a dangerous principle, though, in a region where there are already many ethnic secessionist claims, which make the situation particularly instable. While the EU tries to go beyond the nation-state –that is why the European model has often been called ‘post-sovereignist’–, Russian support for the settlement of a sovereign model of democracy in this region is linked to its direct interests: on the one hand, in Georgia Russia is following the principle of the ‘*divide et impera*’, thus strengthening the secessionist claims in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, in order to restore its supremacy in the South Caucasus; on the other hand, this is also a way for Russia to reaffirm its sovereignist conception of international relations, as opposed to the cooperative European model.

In South Caucasus Russia has already experienced some achievements in this sense. First of all, it managed to bring Georgia to war, and to have a declaration of independence by Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Moreover, in January 2010 Russia launched the “Eurasian Custom Union” – into force since January 2012 – with Belarus and Kazakhstan, and it is trying to convince also Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Armenia, and perhaps Moldova. This is clearly a way to restore its influence in the region.

Nevertheless, also the European Union has reached some substantial goals, in particular with some of the South Caucasian countries. Among the several achievements, we can underline that the EU is the first donor in the two secessionist regions: in Abkhazia the European financial assistance has led to the development of a strong civil society, and to a *de facto* regime which is based on an overall popular consensus. Moreover, the EU has become the first economic partner for Georgia, but also for the majority of the other South Caucasian countries: this implies that the EU managed to lead

¹¹ Nicu POPESCU and Andrew WILSON, *The Limits of Enlargement-lite: European and Russian Power in the Troubled Neighbourhood*, pp. 35-37

these countries to a certain level of market liberalisation, and also to a certain respect of international trade rules. Furthermore, the last parliamentary elections in Georgia constitute an evidence of the positive results of the political change toward the settlement of a democratic regime that the EU has promoted in the country. Lastly, the constitutional reform, which will enter into force after the next presidential elections in 2013, certainly goes in the direction of a clearer division of powers among the state institutions – according a share of the President’s power to the Prime Minister, and more broadly creating a parliamentary system instead of the current presidential one – and introducing the rule of the appointment of judges for life. Even though some issues have been raised by the Venice Commission¹², notably about the trial period for judges, which could affect the judge’s integrity and independence from the political power, this constitutional reform has been welcomed as a positive step toward a more democratic regime.

Nonetheless, we should acknowledge that the EU’s economic achievements in Georgia are somehow exceeding the political ones. One example above all is the September scandal of the tortures perpetrated in the Georgian prisons, apparently with the consents of the government. Certainly, it is positive that some measures were promptly taken by the President in response to those events, but the problem of the weak respect for human rights in the country is an important issue anyway.

The fact that the economic achievements exceed the political ones could find a reason in the difficulty that the EU encounters in using the so-called policy of the ‘stick and carrot’, i.e. the conditionality principle. According to some analysts, before the 2008 conflict the EU had remained behind the front line, acting in the country without making its activity much visible. This kind of approach was probably supported by the will to avoid a direct confrontation with Russia. This situation changed after 2008, since Russia decided unilaterally to heighten the conflict with and within Georgia. However, it is still difficult for the EU to impose some kind of conditionality in this country, as a more structured dialogue with the *de facto* administrators in Abkhazia and South Ossetia could lead to a sort of recognition of their authority. Moreover, in order to implement a structured policy of ‘conflict transformation’¹³ some kind of agreement between the parties is necessary, while in Georgia there is none, and as we said before Georgia is not so keen to respect the EU time schedule.

¹² Venice Commission, On the draft constitutional law, on amendments and changes to the Constitution of Georgia, 15-16 October 2010. URL: <http://www.venice.coe.int/docs/2010/CDL-AD%282010%29028-e.pdf>

¹³ Bruno COPPIETERS, *The EU and Georgia: Time Perspectives in Conflict Resolution*

Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to find an answer to the question: is Russia an obstacle to the ‘Europeanization’ of Georgia? After our research and this brief essay, we could affirm that the South Caucasus is a territory where many different factors influence the politics and the policies, ranging from geopolitics to ethnic issues. Some analysts maintain that one of the reasons why it is difficult both for the EU and for Russia to make the difference in this region is that these countries are playing a ‘neo-Titoist game’, thus swinging between the two spheres of influence according to their individual interests.¹⁴

It is certainly true that Russia has some relevant interests in this region, both geopolitical – that is the importance to recover its influence and supremacy –, and strategic, namely as this region is an important corridor for the transport of energy resources.

However, also the European Union has some important interests in this region. Firstly, we should take into account the proximity factor, thus the fact that Europe needs a stable neighbourhood, certainly not a ‘balkanisation’ of South Caucasus. Secondly, the EU is trying to diversify its energy supply chain: we should remember that the Southern corridor has its focal point in this region, with the two new pipelines passing through Georgia – Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) and Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum (BTE). Finally, we should also consider the broader issue of the promotion of democracy and of cooperation in international relations.

Probably the last Georgian election constitutes a challenge both for Russia and for the EU: the new Prime Minister, Mr. Ivanishvili, will perhaps lead a pro-Russian government, but certainly it will oppose many of the policies undertaken by the previous government. At present, there will not be a great change yet, since Mr. Saakashvili is still the Georgian President, but this could change with the next presidential election in 2013.

Russia is becoming a strong global actor again, and the European Union has many interests at stake in the region. Therefore we can affirm that it is of fundamental importance for the EU to become a strong global actor, with a real foreign policy, in order to be able to tackle the future challenges.

¹⁴ Nicu POPESCU and Andrew WILSON, *The Limits of Enlargement-lite: European and Russian Power in the Troubled Neighbourhood*, p. 32. Nicu POPESCU and Andrew WILSON, *Turning Presence into Power: Lessons from the Eastern Neighbourhood*, Policy brief, European Council on Foreign Relations, London, May 2011, p. 3.

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