

# The European Union's Policy towards Central Asia and South Caucasus: a Coherent Strategy?

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The European Union's Policy towards Central Asia  
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## **Abstract**

In 2007 the European Union (EU) launched the Eastern Partnership, including the South Caucasus, while simultaneously addressing Central Asia through a "Strategy for a New Partnership". As the EU strategy towards Central Asia and South Caucasus (CASC) is being implemented and the Lisbon Treaty has given more tools for the EU to achieve greater coherence in its foreign policy, the question arises to what extent the EU's strategy in the region is indeed coherent. Until now, the EU has not introduced any hierarchy between its objectives, but implements programmes and initiatives at various levels, thus making its strategy neither fully coherent nor sufficiently visible. If the EU wants its growing involvement to be translated into a bigger impact in CASC it has to achieve more coherence in its policy for and in that region. This paper provides both an analysis of the (in)coherence of the EU's policy in the region and some recommendations on how coherence could be further improved.

## Introduction: the EU, a late actor in an unstable region

### *Common challenges*

Central Asia comprises Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, while the South Caucasus region is made up of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. The view of CASC as a region is “defined in terms of its common history, shared strategic assets, common concerns and challenges”.<sup>1</sup> CASC countries face similar challenges: weak states, organised crime, corruption, poverty,<sup>2</sup> high number of internally displaced persons, lack of foreign investment and trade and so forth.<sup>3</sup> CASC states are both a threat – due to their lack of political stability – and partners for attempts to secure the region. Current security issues are obviously related to the geopolitical concerns of the region – mainly the Afghan war – but they are also related to the lack of internal security. Indeed, “the black market economy constitutes from 20 to 50 percent of Central Asian countries' GDP”,<sup>4</sup> a market supplied with drug trafficking, extortion or prostitution. South Caucasus and Central Asia also “have in common the importance of themes like democratisation (more problematic in Central Asia than in the South Caucasus), the stimulation of inter-state cooperation in the region (which is a problem in both regions), education, youth programs, etc”.<sup>5</sup> The collapse of the Soviet Union has created lawless areas in CASC. Finally, energy and security issues matter to all CASC states. These countries provide oil and gas and/or are important transit routes. Both energy producers and transit countries tend to face the same economic difficulties. The European Parliament has underlined the interdependence of the two regions by calling South Caucasus a “genuine gateway to Central Asia”.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> G.C. Maior & M. Mihaela, “The Black Sea region in an enlarged Europe: changing patterns, changing politics”, *Mediterranean Quarterly*, vol. 16, no. 1, winter 2005, p. 33.

<sup>2</sup> In Central Asia forty to eighty percent of the population lives below the poverty rate. See B. Eisenbaum, *Guerres en Asie centrale, luttes d'influence, pétrole, islamisme and mafias 1850-2004*, Paris, Grasset, Avril 2005, p. 150.

<sup>3</sup> B. Babajanian, S. Freizer & D. Stevens, “Introduction: Civil society in Central Asia and the Caucasus”, *Central Asian Survey*, vol. 24, no. 3, September 2005, p. 209.

<sup>4</sup> Translation by the author: “A la fois conséquence et cause de l'état de corruption, l'économie parallèle représente entre 20 et 50% du PIB des pays d'Asie Centrale.” Eisenbaum, *op.cit.*, p. 135.

<sup>5</sup> K. Tchanturia, “It Is More Apt to Speak of ‘Management’ than of ‘Resolution’ of the Conflicts in the South Caucasus”, *Caucas.com*, 26 July 2007.

<sup>6</sup> European Commission, *Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament: the European Union's relations with the South Caucasus, under the partnership and cooperation agreements*, Brussels, COM(1999) 272, 7 June 1999.

## EU presence in CASC

The EU has signed Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCAs) with CASC states, the PCA with Turkmenistan is under ratification. The content of these PCAs illustrates a rather common approach to the region. In addition to these bilateral agreements, the EU has initiated several regional approaches regarding CASC: the "EC-Regional Strategy Paper for Assistance to Central Asia 2007-2013",<sup>7</sup> the "EU and Central Asia: Strategy for a New Partnership" ('New Partnership')<sup>8</sup> and the "Joint Declaration of the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit".<sup>9</sup> Despite the interests at stake for the EU in the region, its willingness to be recognised as a major power and the existing competition with other international actors, the EU has shown little additional public commitment towards CASC. After the collapse of the USSR the EU was mainly concerned with the stability of its direct neighbours in Central and Eastern Europe; it had to deal with its own internal process;<sup>10</sup> and the EU agreed with having the US in charge of the Western presence in the region.<sup>11</sup> The EU opened its first Commission Delegation in 1994 in Kazakhstan and progressively offered PCAs to the countries of CASC.

The increase of violence in the Northern Caucasus – with the Second Chechen war – emphasised the need to strengthen security in the nearer Caucasus region,<sup>12</sup> and the Afghan war broadened the area that the EU considered crucial to stabilise. In 2005 the EU appointed a Special Representative for Central Asia and in 2004 the EU started a regional political dialogue with Central Asian countries.<sup>13</sup> In 2007 the growing interest of the EU towards the region was illustrated by the adoption of two strategies regarding Central Asia, while the region of South Caucasus was specifically addressed through the launch of the Eastern Partnership.

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<sup>7</sup> European Commission, *EC-Regional Strategy Paper for Assistance to Central Asia 2007-2013*, Brussels, European Commission, 31 May 2007.

<sup>8</sup> Council of the European Union, *The EU and Central Asia: Strategy for a New Partnership*, Brussels, Council of the European Union, June 2007.

<sup>9</sup> Council of the European Union, *Joint Declaration of the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit*, Prague, Council of the European Union, 7 May 2009.

<sup>10</sup> E. Efeğil, "The European Union's new Central Asian Strategy", in E. Kavalski (ed.), *The New Central Asia, the Regional Impact of International Actors*, Singapore, World Scientific, 2010, p. 71.

<sup>11</sup> Rahr in T. Paulsen & J. Jörg (ed.), "European policy towards Central Asia", *137<sup>th</sup> Bergedorf Round Table*, 4-6 May 2007, Astana, Hamburg, Körber-Stiftung, 2007, p. 53.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> "The objectives of this dialog are : (a) to assist the regional countries to negotiate the issues of shared concern; (b) to give positive answer to the Central Asian states' demands of having close relations with the Union; and (c) to support the European Union Commission's Central Asia regional strategy", in Efeğil, *op.cit.*, p. 79.

It seems that the EU's policy towards the region "has evolved from a project-based approach to a new strategic partnership"<sup>14</sup> but this strategy has not been much publicised.

### Coherence

The term coherence has been the subject of heated discussions among scholars, its definition remains disputed. The terms coherence and consistency are used interchangeably in the EU treaties (with variations depending on the language<sup>15</sup>). Cremona has defined the principle of coherence as a 'multi-layered' concept:<sup>16</sup> coherence requires rules of hierarchy (the norms should not be conflicting), rules of delimitation (tasks have to be effectively allocated between the various actors) and finally principles of cooperation and complementarity (related to norms, actors and instruments).<sup>17</sup> Cremona addresses both concepts of vertical and horizontal coherences.<sup>18</sup> Vertical coherence "refers to the relationship between member states and Union action, in particular in contexts where the member states and the EU (or EC) may act simultaneously in relation to the same policy or subject matter".<sup>19</sup> Horizontal coherence "is the term used to refer to inter-policy and inter-pillar coherence".<sup>20</sup> As Koehler has rightly pointed out, "coherence is a necessary precondition for the efficacy of foreign policy not only of the EU but of all international actors".<sup>21</sup> Coherence matters for the understanding of a given policy by the internal actors – in this case between the EU institutions, the EU actors on the ground and the member states – but also for its visibility on the ground. By analysing the EU's strategy in CASC through the different layers defining the concept of coherence, this paper will assess the overall coherence of the EU policy towards

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72.

<sup>15</sup> "While consistency is the preferred term in the English version of the EU treaties, the term coherence (Kohärenz, cohérence) is for instance used in the German and French version", L. Den Hertog & S. Stroh, "Policy Coherence in the EU System: Concepts and Legal Rooting of an Ambiguous Term", conference paper *The EU as a Global Player*, Madrid, 7-8 April 2011.

<sup>16</sup> M. Cremona, "Coherence through Law: What difference will the Treaty of Lisbon make?", *Hamburg Review on Social Sciences*, vol. 3, no. 1, June 2008, p. 14.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 14-16.

<sup>18</sup> C. Portela & K. Raube, "(In-)Coherence in EU Foreign policy: exploring sources and remedies", Paper presented at the European Studies Association Bi-annual Convention, Los Angeles, April 2009, p. 2.

<sup>19</sup> Cremona, *op.cit.*, p. 16.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> K. Koehler, "European foreign policy after Lisbon: strengthening the EU as an international actor", *Caucasian Review of International Affairs*, vol. 4, no. 1, winter 2010, p. 57; and P. Gauttier, "Horizontal Coherence and the External Competence of the European Union", *European Law Journal*, vol. 10, no. 1, January 2004, p. 24.

CASC. It is argued that the EU's policy towards CASC faces some reasons to increase its coherence, which exists but is still limited. By doing so, the EU might become a more visible and credible actor in CASC.

The following section introduces the geopolitical game in CASC, and then the paper will analyse the coherence of the strategy, programmes and actors of the EU's policy towards CASC.

### **CASC, the new heartland**

The region has become a key focus in various international relations theories, from the concept of heartland<sup>22</sup> to the idea of a 'great game'.<sup>23</sup> For some authors, these concepts originating from the nineteenth century became once again relevant to describe the status and the 'power game' happening in CASC after the collapse of the USSR, as this created a strategic 'vacuum' that called for a new resolution.<sup>24</sup> The enlargements of 2004 and 2007 were also crucial in strengthening the importance of CASC for the EU as they brought these countries into the EU's 'near abroad'<sup>25</sup> and therefore highlighted possible challenges to Europe's security. After the Eastern enlargement, the EU decided to increase its efforts in the region by solving some 'frozen conflicts' which "form the major obstacle on the region's path towards stability and prosperity".<sup>26</sup> The significant involvement of the EU in efforts to resolve the Georgian war of 2008 has indicated a broader commitment of the EU to bring stability in the region. The high cost of its involvement might have diminished the willingness of the EU to consider military intervention in the region for the time being.<sup>27</sup> The limited response of the EU to the unrest in Kyrgyzstan and its inability to solve the conflict in the region of Nagorno-Karabakh illustrate the limits of the peace-making capacity of the EU.

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<sup>22</sup> H. Mackinder, "The Geographical Pivot of History", *The Geographical Journal*, vol. 23, no. 4, April 1904.

<sup>23</sup> R. Kipling, *Kim*, New York, Doubleday, page and company, 1901.

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Olivier Roy, Professor at the European University Institute, former head of the OSCE mission to Tajikistan, Florence, 28 March 2011.

<sup>25</sup> A. Agh, "Regionalisation as a driving force of EU widening: recovering from the EU 'carrot crisis' in the 'East'", *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 62, no. 8, 29 September 2010, p. 1239.

<sup>26</sup> A. Labedzka, "Southern Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia)", in S. Blockmans (ed.), *The European Union and its neighbours, a legal appraisal of the EU's policies of stabilisation, partnership and integration*, The Hague, T.M.C. Asser Institute, October 2006, p. 583.

<sup>27</sup> Interview with Olivier Roy, *op.cit.*

9/11 and the following invasion of Afghanistan have been crucial in defining the region as the new 'heartland'. In addition to the strategic location of CASC to host military bases, there were also links between some Islamic activists – notably from the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan – in Central Asia and the Afghan conflict.<sup>28</sup> These elements made the region a crucial area to stabilise in order to solve<sup>29</sup> and to avoid a spread of the Afghan conflict.<sup>30</sup> The growing EU interest in improving its energy security also explains to a large extent the renewed European involvement in CASC.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, from 2001 onwards, "Brussels has unfurled the so-called 'Baku Initiative' and the establishment of a European Union Energy Transport Corridor".<sup>32</sup>

According to Oliver Roy, the risk of an Islamic uprising in Central Asia is now very limited,<sup>33</sup> nonetheless the EU – in its willingness to help the implementation of stability in the region – should watch the development of Islamic movements (like jadidism) and start developing an expertise on the subject. The EU could develop a fruitful approach by understanding that the region hosts Islamic movements which could be rather beneficial to the implementation of more democratic<sup>34</sup> and unified states. The EU could increase its relations with these movements to strengthen the civil society and prevent the rise of extremist Islamists coming from outside.<sup>35</sup> Rashid argues that the situation in Central Asia can only improve if the international community understands how this region can impact the future of the rest of the world.<sup>36</sup> European political leaders need to understand the geopolitical interests at stake in the region.<sup>37</sup>

The EU's involvement in CASC is determined by external factors, indeed the EU's role in the region is influenced both by its own relations with the other powers

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<sup>28</sup> A. Rashid, *Asie centrale, champ de guerres, cinq républiques face à l'islam radical*, Yale University, Paris, Autrement, 2002, p. 13.

<sup>29</sup> European military officer interview in Almaty, 10 February 2006, in International Crisis Group, "Central Asia: what role for the European Union?", *Crisis Group Asia Report*, no. 113, 10 April 2006, p. 10.

<sup>30</sup> Rashid, *op.cit.*, p. 50.

<sup>31</sup> Beck in Paulsen & Jörg (ed.), *op.cit.*, p. 55.

<sup>32</sup> Efeşgil, *op.cit.*, p. 79.

<sup>33</sup> Interview with Olivier Roy, *op.cit.*

<sup>34</sup> Rashid, *op.cit.*, p. 39.

<sup>35</sup> International Crisis Group, "Central Asia: what role for the European Union?", *op.cit.*, p. 25.

<sup>36</sup> Rashid, *op.cit.*, p. 7.

<sup>37</sup> "Central Asia is anonymous in the West because it's been relatively stable. If it becomes unstable, it will no longer be anonymous, and people will ask why we weren't interested earlier", interview conducted by ICG in Bishkek January 2006, in International Crisis Group, "Central Asia: what role for the European Union?", *op.cit.*, p. 1.

acting in the region and by the direct influence of these powers on the ground. Despite a growing number of actors in CASC (Turkey, Iran, and India for example) the following section will focus on the main actors in addition to the EU: Russia, the US and China.

In CASC, Russia remains a major power on all levels;<sup>38</sup> it is trying to recover its role in its 'near abroad'.<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, the nature and extent of Russia's will and ability to intervene in CASC is a complex issue despite a new willingness of Russia not to be marginalised.<sup>40</sup> The successive changes of Russia's policy towards Central Asia and the internal contradictions of this policy,<sup>41</sup> as well as external factors, have led Central Asian governments to consider that Russia is no longer the primary ally on a long-term basis.<sup>42</sup> However, the geographical proximity of Russia makes a full withdrawal of Russian influence from the region highly unlikely – despite its cost<sup>43</sup> – so long as Russia is not willing to outsource its role to another international actor such as China. Recently it seems that Russia has adopted a more cooperative approach towards external powers in the region than before.<sup>44</sup>

China's role in the region – especially in Central Asia – has undoubtedly risen these past few years, yet China still appears as an unpredictable<sup>45</sup> cold-hearted partner. According to an adviser of a Kazakh eighteenth century leader, "the Russian yoke is made of leather. It can gradually be worn out. But the Chinese yoke is made of iron. One can never free oneself from it".<sup>46</sup> Kurt Wagner underlines that indeed the fear of China in Central Asia is overwhelming.<sup>47</sup> The main Chinese ploy to

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<sup>38</sup> M. Laruelle, "Russia and Central Asia", in E. Kavalski (ed.), *The New Central Asia, the Regional Impact of International Actors*, Singapore, World Scientific, 2010, p. 149.

<sup>39</sup> "According to the 'Primakov doctrine', part of Russia's attempt to regain its international status involved recovering its role as a center of influence over the post-Soviet space", *ibid.*, p. 157.

<sup>40</sup> R. Menon, "The New Great Game in Central Asia", *Survival*, International Institute for Strategic Studies, vol. 45, no. 2, summer 2003, p. 192.

<sup>41</sup> A. Kazantsev, "Russian policy in Central Asia in 1991-2010: a disappearing power?", *European University Institute working papers*, Florence, RSCAS 2010/59, July 2010, p. 34.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>43</sup> "According to the Agreement of 1992 Kyrgyzstan delegated the issues of protection of the border with China to the border troops of Russia. [...] Russia paid 80% of costs of these troops", *ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>44</sup> Laruelle, *op.cit.*, p. 167.

<sup>45</sup> Rashid, *op.cit.*, p. 178.

<sup>46</sup> The author of this quote was Buhar-Jirau, an advisor to Abulai-Khan, quoted in Kazantsev, *op.cit.*, p. 25.

<sup>47</sup> Interview with Kurt Wagner, Country Director of the GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit) Regional Office in Kyrgyzstan, Bruges, 7 April 2011.

gain greater control over the region has been through the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) – where China's leading influence is clear and where the principle of national sovereignty is emphasised.<sup>48</sup> China's influence is not limited to economic affairs, for example China has been pressuring bordering countries not to give asylum to Uighur 'dissidents'. For some observers China might become – especially in Central Asia – the successor of a colonial Russia: a concern strengthened by the fact that China is stronger than ever in the region<sup>49</sup> and that it builds its strategy on a very long-term approach.<sup>50</sup> International actors in CASC expect China's role in the region to grow in the upcoming years.<sup>51</sup>

"The Southern Caucasus and Central Asia are important parts of the United States' global strategy"<sup>52</sup> and 9/11 increased the geo-strategic importance of the region,<sup>53</sup> an importance that was stressed by President George W. Bush more than any other American administration.<sup>54</sup> Meanwhile, signs of a real American presence on the ground are lacking, and some authors even claim that "the presence and influence of the United States in Central Asia are at a historical low".<sup>55</sup> After 9/11 it became crucial for the US to prevent a spread of the Afghan conflict and the US government had to cooperate with the established governments to obtain military bases on their territory. The US government was thus torn between the necessity to cooperate with authoritarian governments and its role of promoting political and socio-economic reforms: a dilemma that has been hindering US policy in the region since 2005 and damaging the credibility of US foreign policy.<sup>56</sup> By focusing too much on the security aspects in the region, the US has partially failed to deal with some of the other sources of instability. Alongside these and other factors, the lack of coherence of US policy had a negative impact on US influence in CASC.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> M. Clarke, "China and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization: the Dynamics of 'New Regionalism', 'Vassalisation', and Geopolitics in Central Asia", in E. Kavalski (ed.), *The New Central Asia, the Regional Impact of International Actors*, Singapore, World Scientific, 2010, p. 122.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 146.

<sup>50</sup> Interview with Olivier Roy, *op.cit.*

<sup>51</sup> Clarke, *op.cit.*, p. 145.

<sup>52</sup> Labeledzka, *op. cit.*, p. 589.

<sup>53</sup> M. Fumagalli, "The United States and Central Asia", in E. Kavalski (ed.), *The New Central Asia, the Regional Impact of International Actors*, Singapore, World Scientific, 2010, p. 179.

<sup>54</sup> According to Olivier Roy, the Bush administration had an active policy in the region. Interview with Olivier Roy, *op.cit.*

<sup>55</sup> Fumagalli, *op.cit.*, p. 177.

<sup>56</sup> A. Cooley quoted in *ibid.*, p. 184.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 185.

Russia, China or the US have not so far offered a convincing model of multilateral governance for Central Asia or CASC as a whole. This is mainly due to their focus on national interests as a bottom line, their tendency to solve key issues through bilateral deals, and the weaknesses of the CSTO and SCO as regional-building processes. Besides being in accordance with general EU foreign policy principles, a multilateral approach to the region initiated and coordinated by the EU appears as one of the main assets for increasing EU influence in CASC.<sup>58</sup> A multilateral approach is more relevant to the reality of the supposed 'New Great Game' as there is no 'zero-sum game'.<sup>59</sup>

It makes strategic sense for the EU to adopt a 'softer' approach than the other large powers, as it cannot hope to expel any of these powers from an eventual 'great game' and must thus make the best of its 'soft power' image. "One of the main advantages of the European Union, thereby, not least because of its reticence to get involved more proactively in Central Asia during the 1990s, is that it is not perceived as a threat by either external or regional actors".<sup>60</sup> Overall, the general status of the EU as an international power is highly influenced by the evolution of other international powers. "[T]he faster we integrate the states of Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus with the EU, the more likely it will be that Russia itself adopts a pro-European orientation".<sup>61</sup> On the ground, the EU is influenced by the willingness of actors of other countries to cooperate, the staff members of the EU Delegations underline that the individual representatives of these actors impact multilateral cooperation on the ground.<sup>62</sup> In the end, "the Europeans need to ask themselves which of the two images of the region they wish to have at the back of their minds when pursuing their policies for the Central Asian countries – the 'Silk Road' or the 'Great Game'".<sup>63</sup>

The absence of an indisputable leader among the international actors present in CASC, and the failure of Russia, China and the US to appear as trustful actor with a

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<sup>58</sup> Efegil, *op.cit.*, p. 87.

<sup>59</sup> L. Jonson, "The new geopolitical situation in the Caspian region", in G. Chufirin (ed.), *The Security of the Caspian Sea Region*, Oxford, SIPRI, Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 12.

<sup>60</sup> Efegil, *op.cit.*, p. 87.

<sup>61</sup> Statement made by the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs in 2009, Radoslaw Sikorski, quoted in Agh, *op.cit.*, p. 1249.

<sup>62</sup> The head of the operation section in the EU Delegation in Kyrgyzstan explains that currently the local representative of USAID is really open to cooperate with the EU, while in Tajikistan the representative of Russia seems also willing to work with the EU. Interview with Tom Massie, Head of operation section, EU Delegation in Kyrgyzstan, Bishkek, 27 April 2011.

<sup>63</sup> Imanaliev in Paulsen & Jörg (ed.), *op.cit.*, p. 57.

coherent strategy leaves space for a bigger presence of the EU in CASC. The influence of Russia, China and the US in CASC suffers from their a strong and incoherent attitude. As the EU is already perceived as a rather 'soft power', its current approach should be to work on the coherence of its policy. This paper will assess how coherent the EU policy towards CASC is and suggest ways of improving the coherence of this policy.

### **The coherence of the EU strategy towards CASC**

Among the priorities defined in the EU's documents is the idea of promoting integration of the whole region.<sup>64</sup> During the political meetings with leaders of CASC energy and security issues have been mentioned the most.<sup>65</sup> Nevertheless, the various documents about the EU's policy in the region present quite a broad strategy in terms of the subject they deal with. The variety of fields covered by the EU's policy in CASC illustrates the 'soft power' dimension as the EU tries to influence the countries on 'non-hard' security issues such as education or civil society. The head of the operation section in the EU Delegation in Kyrgyzstan reports that in the last multi-annual indicative programme the strategic objective for the Kyrgyz National Indicative Programme in 2011-2013 are: social protection reform and income-generating activities, education reform and judicial reform and the rule of law.<sup>66</sup> The Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI) Indicative Programme for Central Asia for 2011-2013 allocates significant funding for education, rule of law, health, social and economic reforms.

Creating coherence at the implementation level is harder for an EU which is deprived of its main 'carrots' and 'sticks'. By refusing to offer an enlargement prospect to CASC the EU has abandoned its main incentive to make the states comply with the EU principles, the EU might be facing a 'carrot crisis'.<sup>67</sup> In addition to the current lack of incentives, the avoidance of the 'integrative balancing' method used during the enlargement process leaves the EU without a well-known efficient

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<sup>64</sup> Lucas, in *ibid.*, p. 55.

<sup>65</sup> It might be useful to recall that the oil and gas produced in this area are far from being sufficient to feed EU energy needs.

<sup>66</sup> Interview with Tom Massie, *op.cit.*

<sup>67</sup> Agh, *op.cit.*, p. 1241.

mechanism to deal with these countries.<sup>68</sup> These incentives became crucial with the growing awareness among governments of CASC that – in the renewed 'great game' – they are now decisional actors.<sup>69</sup> The reality of this weakness has been illustrated by the inability of the EU to achieve any progress on human rights in Uzbekistan despite the sanctions it imposed on the country after the governmental repression in Andijan in 2005.<sup>70</sup> In Turkmenistan too, the EU has been so far unable to improve a catastrophic situation with regard to human rights. Regarding the possible 'sanctions' for the non-compliance with the EU's requirements in the region, the EU does not have much more than the possibility to reduce its financial contribution.<sup>71</sup> But the existence of significant energy resources in the most authoritarian countries of the region generates high incomes and limits the impact of such sanctions.<sup>72</sup> Despite a clear acceptance in Brussels that the CASC countries are not expected to join the EU on a short-term basis, it seems that the EU still thinks its strategy towards the region is providing enough leverage to influence these countries.<sup>73</sup> This position is strengthened by the statements of the EU actors on the ground which indicate that for Central Asia the EU is still working on the basis of the strategy for a 'New Partnership' of 2007 which will not be reconsidered soon.<sup>74</sup>

The various initiatives of the EU towards CASC illustrate both a growing interest of the EU in the region and its difficulty to encompass in one structure this region stretching from Turkey to Russia. The regional approach the EU has been trying to implement can be qualified as an 'EU outside conception' – that is, a vision of the region imposed from outside – because no regional mechanism pre-existed and the EU has carried out the strategic, conceptual and managerial bulk of the work.<sup>75</sup> The attempts of the EU to promote regional integration, even in such unpromising

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<sup>68</sup> "The EU has not extended the 'integrative balancing' method to the ENP. Integrative balancing implies that the new units have an institutional or structural synergy in which, in the spirit of partnership principle, the composed capacities of the participants create a balanced situation for representing the common interest", *ibid.*, p. 1245.

<sup>69</sup> Rashid, *op.cit.*, p. 181.

<sup>70</sup> S.E. Cornell, "Commentary, so far, Europe's approach to Central Asia has been moralistic and counter-productive", *Europe's World*, spring 2007, p. 19.

<sup>71</sup> S. Füle, European Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy, "Eastern Partnership of the EU", speech at the Bratislava Global Security forum (GLOBSEC Conference), Brussels, 3 March 2011.

<sup>72</sup> Interview with Tom Massie, *op.cit.*

<sup>73</sup> Efegil, *op.cit.*, p. 84.

<sup>74</sup> Interview with an EU official, Dushanbe, 27 April 2011.

<sup>75</sup> F. Tassinari, "A synergy for black sea regional cooperation: guidelines for an EU initiative", *CEPS policy briefs*, no. 105, Brussels, Centre for European Policy Studies, July 2009, p. 3.

environments, can be related to the idea that the EU – as a regional actor – finds it more effective and natural to deal with other regional organisations. Various forms of ‘regional community’ for the EU neighbouring countries can be identified: economic community, fair neighbourhood community (this type of community requires controlled migration among its members), security community, democratic community, cultural community.<sup>76</sup> Yet, it remains unclear from the EU strategy towards CASC which one(s) the EU would like to promote in the region. Though the EU Special Representative in Central Asia has stressed Europe’s wish to see more regional integration in Central Asia,<sup>77</sup> this European desire can be opposed to the lack of CASC willingness to do so.<sup>78</sup>

The EU’s difficulties in approaching the actors of the region are consequently due to the lack of clearly defined regional structures as well as dissensions among the CASC states themselves. The frozen conflict of Nagorno-Karabakh appears as the main issue among CASC, but the Tajik civil war also had some consequences for bordering countries and the recent events in Kyrgyzstan impacted Uzbekistan. For Olivier Roy, there is a lack of trust among Central Asian governments: they have to cooperate on certain matters and they are signing some common agreements, but they are often reticent mainly because their political leaders are obsessed with holding on to power and are afraid of anything that will weaken their position, be it an internal or external threat.<sup>79</sup> In addition, some of the states in the region have been trying to use a possible process of regional integration to their own advantage.<sup>80</sup> Both the regional or the bilateral approach have their advantages and disadvantages in terms of influencing the region, but the lack of explicit choice between one or the other has been hindering the EU’s productivity.<sup>81</sup> By saying that “Brussels must achieve a balance between multilateral and bilateral approaches”, the EU Special Representative for Central Asia indicates that the EU has still not decided on a precise approach.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Agh, *op.cit.*, p. 1243.

<sup>77</sup> Morel in Paulsen & Jörg (ed.), *op.cit.*, p. 48.

<sup>78</sup> Rahr in *ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>79</sup> Interview with Olivier Roy, *op.cit.*

<sup>80</sup> “It seems that Kazakhstan, above all, is particularly interested in regional integration, and this raises the suspicion that the largest country in the region, which also is economically the most powerful, is only interested in creating an instrument to secure its own domination”, Ruhe in Paulsen & Jörg (ed.), *op.cit.*, p. 52.

<sup>81</sup> Efeğil, *op.cit.*, p. 79.

<sup>82</sup> Morel in Paulsen & Jörg (ed.), *op.cit.*, p. 59.

Overall, the EU lacks: a clear set of priorities in its policy towards CASC, real incentives to influence political leaders in CASC and a clearly defined (bilateral or regional) approach. This paper suggests that the EU has to choose its priorities and that it should do so by focusing on issues where the other external powers are absent. The EU should define clear priorities and avoid *ad hoc* responses to crises in the region. The instability of the region may result in future crisis, like the past unrest in Kyrgyzstan or the war in Georgia. These events require short-term reactions which differ from a long-term strategy. The EU needs to work on creating incentives. It could use its rather positive image in the region and try to become a role model. It seems unrealistic that the EU chooses only a regional or a bilateral approach, both are necessary due to the common issues of the region and the different agendas of the leaders in CASC. Nevertheless, EU documents and implementation measures should indicate which issues are being addressed through bilateral or regional policies.

### **The coherence of EU programmes in CASC**

The EU has implemented PCAs in almost all the countries in the region, but their 'one-size-fits-all' character<sup>83</sup> and the slowness of their implementation have made them less efficient than the regional initiatives such as the Central Asia Drug Action programme (CADAP) or Border Management in Central Asia (BOMCA). By focusing on specific issues and region, these programmes have resulted in the implementation of concrete measures that have been quantified. PCAs appear as a sign of political cooperation rather than real commitments to engage in common projects. They represent the earliest and most basic type of EU interaction. The first EU programme implemented in the region was the Technical Aid to the Commonwealth of Independent States (TACIS) which is currently coming to an end, and the main programmes in the region no longer deal with the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) as a whole. TACIS dealt with all members of the CIS but it lacked a political strategy and was functioning as a supplier of development aid. Ultimately, "the TACIS programs had little impact on society as they were dealing mainly with the government and had rather low-profile activity".<sup>84</sup> The principle of

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<sup>83</sup> "A senior Commission official noted that the PCA model (like TACIS) was designed for countries at the level of development of Russia and Ukraine and thus is ill-suited for the significantly less advanced Central Asian states". Interview conducted by ICG in Bishkek, January 2006, in International Crisis Group, "Central Asia: what role for the European Union?", *op.cit.*, p. 18.

<sup>84</sup> L. Alieva, "EU and South Caucasus", *CAP Discussion Paper*, Bertelsmann group for policy research, Munich, December 2006, p. 3.

complementarity is hindered by the nature of these programmes which juxtapose rather than complement each other.

The EU has developed a broad set of programmes which address economic, social and political issues, and to a certain extent security issues. This approach seems to be necessary given the interdependency of the problems in CASC, where stability is increasingly undermined by non-traditional threats. Yet, the EU programmes are quite heterogeneous: on the one hand, the programmes dealing with energy and security occur at a regional level with more cooperation or even leadership by other actors such as Interstate Oil and Gas to Europe (INOGATE). On the other hand, issues of human rights, democracy and rule of law are often part of the EU's bilateral programmes. The EU also leaves some policies to be dealt with by the member states such as health policy.<sup>85</sup> Currently the rules of delimitation between the actors at stake in the implementation of EU policy have been well adhered. The actors in CASC have not shown decreasing or increasing reluctance to cooperate in bilateral nor in multilateral initiatives and there has not been strong disagreement between EU member states and other EU actors. The current allocation of policies to various actors has not resulted in major discrepancies regarding the implementation of EU policies in CASC.

Drug trafficking and corruption, which are part of a 'vicious cycle' leading to the reinforcement of both, should be faced by the EU's programmes as the money made through this trade can be used to destabilise the region. For example, such money funded the Kyrgyz revolution of 2005.<sup>86</sup> The decision of the EU to discuss cooperation regarding environment and water supplies illustrates the strategic role the EU can play concerning important – but little publicised<sup>87</sup> – matters on which other international actors are not yet acting. The EU programmes regarding infrastructure in the region also create an added value which should not be underestimated as they connect the different countries in the region. This aspect has been acknowledged by the EU, as two of the main programmes supported by the EU concerning CASC are TRACECA and INOGATE, both focussing on energy and

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<sup>85</sup> Interview with Tom Massie, *op.cit.*

<sup>86</sup> N. Swanström, "Traditional and non-traditional security threats in Central Asia connecting the old and the new", *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, vol. 8, no. 2, summer 2010, p. 43.

<sup>87</sup> "Environmental, water, economic and other security threats have not received the attention regarding the terrorist threat and the soft and hard implications this threat could have on society", *ibid.*, p. 37.

transportation issues. The awareness that “Europe will encounter difficulties relying only on the Middle East and Mediterranean sources of oil and gas”<sup>88</sup> is currently growing, increasing the role of CASC’s for EU’s energy security. The EU has been quite successful in understanding the broad list of issues to be addressed. This understanding is necessary but not sufficient for establishing a coherent policy.

The analysis of the other international actors’ policies has shown that ambitious comprehensive policies addressing the region as a whole are necessary to impact CASC. This paragraph considers the ability of the EU to fulfil these criteria. The first approach of the EU to the region has consisted in implementing technical programmes without an ambitious political strategy, and it was a failure for various reasons such as the lack of financial investments.<sup>89</sup> The EU’s policy towards CASC benefits from additional funding, the Central Asia DCI Indicative Programme for 2011-2013 foresees a cost of order of € 321 million and the Eastern Partnership has led the Commission to earmark € 600 million for 2010-2013.<sup>90</sup> The Central Asia DCI Indicative Programme underlines that the average annual budget under DCI will increase by around twenty-one per cent in comparison with the Central Asia Indicative Programme of 2007-2010.<sup>91</sup> The EU has increased its contribution to CASC since the ‘New Partnership’ and the Eastern Partnership, but the allocation of the financial resources is far from being optimal. Notably, the EU is losing money by not directly implementing its programmes, as in the case of TRACECA.<sup>92</sup> EU budget support in the region – mainly through the European Commission Humanitarian Office (ECHO) – has also been criticised for being inefficient due to the lack of a systematic evaluation system.<sup>93</sup> The financial crisis does not seem to have significantly impacted EU policy towards CASC, the EU Delegations have not been asked to limit their administrative expenses<sup>94</sup> and the opening of new Delegations in the region – planned by the Lisbon Treaty – has not been postponed by the budget constraints.

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<sup>88</sup> Maior & Matei, *op.cit.*, p. 39.

<sup>89</sup> Rahr in Paulsen & Jörg (ed.), *op.cit.*, p. 53.

<sup>90</sup> European Commission, External Relations Directorate General, *Central Asia, DCI Indicative programme 2011-2013*, Brussels, April 2010.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> Interview with Kurt Wagner, *op.cit.*

<sup>93</sup> International financial institution representative interviewed in Dushanbe, 15 February 2006, quoted in International Crisis Group, “Central Asia: what role for the European Union?”, *op.cit.*, pp. 15-16.

<sup>94</sup> Interview with Hubert Petit, Head of Political Press and Information Section, EU Delegation of Kazakhstan, Astana, 21 June 2011.

The EU programmes do not sufficiently complement each other despite the fact that they are established by EU actors who allocate the tasks and have a rather good understanding of the issues at stake in CASC. This paper suggests that some improvements could be made in establishing a coherent EU policy by increasing the expertise of the EU actors in the region in order to create a comprehensive strategy gathering ambitious complementary programmes.

The recent increase in funding for the region is a positive sign for the influence of the EU policy in the region. The EU has to quicken the mobilisation of the funding as it is a factor for the visibility of the EU. “[A]ccordingly, local observers of EU-Central Asian relations admit that the visibility of the EU and the impact of its engagement are ‘practically zero’. Unlike the EU, Russian and Chinese decision makers are able to quickly mobilise the resources necessary to pursue their foreign policy goals”.<sup>95</sup> Indeed, either in terms of funding invested or programmes launched, the EU remains a ductile actor in comparison to Russia, China and the US. The EU might better understand the inadequacies of this approach if it had decided to implement its programmes through its own representatives,<sup>96</sup> thus acquiring local expertise, rather than resorting to consultancy.<sup>97</sup> A better understanding of the region would likely lead the EU to start new ambitious programmes on other subjects that are crucial for the stability of the region and thus for EU interests. “In order to make sure that its policies have the desired effect, the Union needs to take into account the complex realities on the ground.”<sup>98</sup> Although the programmes focusing on ‘hard’ security issues, like BOMCA and the Central Asia Drug Action Programme (CADAP),<sup>99</sup> have been relatively successful,<sup>100</sup> the EU has to start investing in programmes that have

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<sup>95</sup> A. Schmitz, “Whose conditionality? The failure of EU sanctions in Uzbekistan”, *Central Asia Caucasus Institute, Analyst*, 11 November 2009, p. 18.

<sup>96</sup> Currently the EU Delegations are only political bodies, they are not agencies for the implementation of EU programs.

<sup>97</sup> Interview with Kurt Wagner, *op.cit.*

<sup>98</sup> A. De Vasconcelos (ed.), “A strategy for EU foreign policy”, *European Union Institute for Security Studies*, Report, no. 7, Paris, June 2010, p. 42.

<sup>99</sup> “In January 2001, the EU established CADAP (Central Asia Drug Action Program) to support the anti-trafficking efforts of four of the five Central Asian states (Turkmenistan did not initially participate.) The Border Management in Central Asia (BOMCA) program was launched in 2003, with the objective of strengthening border management and facilitating legal trade and transit. The two projects were merged in February 2004, with a combined budget for 2002-2006 of €38.5 million”. International Crisis Group, “Central Asia: what role for the European Union?”, *op.cit.*, p. 13.

<sup>100</sup> A. Schmitz, “The Central Asia Strategy: an exercise in EU foreign policy”, in A. Warkotsch (ed.), *The European Union and Central Asia*, New York, Routledge Advances in Central Asia Studies, 2011, p. 16.

been neglected until now. For example, the EU should focus more on the management of water in the region because the allocation of water resources is a source of conflict.<sup>101</sup> The launch of the 'Environment and Water Initiative' in 2008 is a good but rather late start in this regard. The EU might also strengthen some of its programmes which are obviously crucial for the future of the region such as the European Education Initiative for Central Asia. Indeed, in a region where more than sixty percent of the population is under twenty-five years old,<sup>102</sup> influencing education would be a significant asset for the EU. Another option would be to focus on health policy,<sup>103</sup> even if it has to be done in cooperation with the member states which have the prerogative for this policy in Central Asia.

### **Coherence among the actors of EU policy towards CASC**

The involvement of the European Commission and the Council in framing and executing EU CASC policy – in addition to the remaining prerogatives of member states – is in itself a source for horizontal incoherence due to the asymmetry between their budget and structure. The 'EU and Central Asia: Strategy for a New Partnership' by the Council and of the 'EC-Regional Strategy Paper for Assistance to Central Asia 2007-2013' by the Commission put forward different priorities. Cremona underlines that there might be "tension that can exist between the different aspects of coherence, on the one hand clarity of rules which allocate tasks, delimit competences and establish priority between rules in order to avoid inconsistency, and on the other coherence through synergy and complementarity".<sup>104</sup>

The EU decision-making process remains highly hierarchical, yet decisions taken at the top level are often difficult to implement on the ground and tend to result in some inconsistencies among EU actors. The political situation in CASC partly explains this difficulty as the EU is supposed to cooperate with the official national actors, but these actors often struggle to keep the control over their whole territory

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<sup>101</sup> Interview with Kurt Wagner, *op.cit.*

<sup>102</sup> Rashid, *op.cit.*, p. 18.

<sup>103</sup> "The social consequences of Central Asia's multiple health crises – in particular the HIV/AIDS epidemic – threaten the overall stability and development prospects of the region, with implications for European security". International Crisis Group, "Central Asia: what role for the European Union?", *op.cit.*, p. 5.

<sup>104</sup> Cremona, *op.cit.*, p. 22.

facing sometimes infiltration of bordering states or terrorist groups.<sup>105</sup> Another obstacle to a direct top-down implementation of EU policies is that actors on the ground have to face some bargaining by the corrupt authorities. In Kyrgyzstan EU actors agreed to “forget about some of the priorities settled by the Council in exchange for the use of military bases in the country”.<sup>106</sup>

The actors on the ground can also establish priorities for EU action that the decision-makers in Brussels are not willing to endorse. In Central Asia, the ‘New Partnership’ underlines seven themes: human rights, rule of law, good governance and democratisation; youth and education; economic development; strengthening energy and transport links; environmental sustainability and water; combating common threats and challenges and intercultural dialogue. Kurt Wagner suggests that the EU should focus on a smaller number of priorities: education, health and economic development.<sup>107</sup> The various topics included in the EU strategy towards CASC and the fact that the EU defines this strategy by looking mainly at the regional level create some room for incoherence between EU actors in Brussels and the ones on the ground. However, actors on the ground benefit from the lack of experts based in Brussels regarding CASC, and they provide information and advice to the actors of the decision-making process.<sup>108</sup>

In addition, the status of Special Representatives remains unclear. Peter Semneby, Special Representative for the South Caucasus, and Pierre Morel, Special Representative for Central Asia, are connected to Brussels but their role is based on multiple interactions with local actors.<sup>109</sup> It seems that the Special Representatives had to create their own jobs. The lack of clearly defined responsibilities hinders the horizontal coherence of the EU.

Discrepancies between the European actors involved in the region create among other things an issue of vertical incoherence. Vertical incoherence has led to periods of ‘non-decision’, namely “a process of mobilizing obstacles which prevent a question – in this case the formulation of a unified mode of operation in the South

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<sup>105</sup> Swanström, *op.cit.*, p. 45. In Kyrgyzstan the head of the operation section indicates that it is indeed rather complicated to work in the South of the country and that there is little control over the region, interview with Tom Massie, *op.cit.*

<sup>106</sup> Interview with Olivier Roy, *op.cit.*

<sup>107</sup> Interview with Kurt Wagner, *op.cit.*

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> In Central Asia Pierre Morel interacts with many actors such as the representatives of the UN, the OSCE or Russia. Interview with Tom Massie, *op.cit.*

Caucasus [...] from appearing on the European common agenda".<sup>110</sup> This phenomenon was particularly obvious in the 1990s. Overall, "the European external action system – through its national mode of operation – has practiced self-censorship".<sup>111</sup> The EU benefits from one advantage: the fact that the member states have been until now relatively absent in the region and that they are facing some internal inconsistency, too.<sup>112</sup> Nevertheless, the big member states do have some interests at stake: Germany is acting as a leader of the European presence in the region while British, French and Dutch companies struggle to control more gas and oil resources. Fortunately, as the member states do not consider that the EU threatens their national interest in the region, there is a real cooperation between the EU and the member states.<sup>113</sup> Considering the weak presence of EU member states in the region, with a focus on energy, it could be expected that a coherent EU policy supported by all member states can easily be implemented but differences regarding the relations between the member states and Russia increase the risks of an incoherent EU foreign policy in CASC.<sup>114</sup> The limited role of the states in the implementation of the overall EU policy has been crucial to keep some vertical coherence between the EU and the member states. When launching its 'New Partnership' the Council has considered that some improvements can still be carried out to increase vertical coherence regarding the programmes and projects being implemented.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Translation by the author : « la non-décision est un processus de mobilisation d'obstacles qui empêche une question, en l'occurrence la formulation d'un mode unifié d'action dans le Caucase du Sud [...] d'arriver sur l'agenda collectif européen". D. Helly, "Les modes d'action extérieure de l'Union Européenne: le cas du Caucase du Sud", *Revue française de science politique*, vol. 5, no. 2, 2005, p. 255.

<sup>111</sup> Translation by the author : "Le système européen d'action extérieure, par son mode d'action national, s'est donc autocensuré". *Ibid.*, p. 258.

<sup>112</sup> The head of the operation section in Kyrgyzstan explained that he realized at some point in the EU Delegation that there were similar programmes launched by the office of the GIZ but that the latter did not even know that these programmes were implemented simultaneously. Interview with Tom Massie, *op.cit.*

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>114</sup> "The division in the EU between countries that perceive Russia as a key partner for EU's Eastern policy (Germany, Italy and France) and those, that see the big neighbour as the main obstacle (Baltic States, Poland, Sweden) is a main hindrance in developing a competitive and functional EU policy towards the South Caucasus". S. Meister, "Recalibrating Germany's and EU's policy in the South Caucasus", *DGAP Analyse*, no. 2, 2010, p. 12.

<sup>115</sup> Schmitz, *op.cit.*, p. 13.

The Treaty of Lisbon aims at improving the institutional cooperation between EU actors.<sup>116</sup> By creating the post of President of the European Council and enhancing the role of the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy – assisted by the European External Action Service (EEAS) – the Treaty of Lisbon is reducing the potential sources of horizontal incoherence between the Commission and the Council.<sup>117</sup> Previously the Council decisions on establishing the external policy agenda were mainly taken by the rotating Presidency of the Council which was suspected of pursuing a national/regional agenda<sup>118</sup> that did not lead to the establishment of a long-term coherent strategy.<sup>119</sup> The High Representative is considered by some EU actors as doing a good job to increase the coherence and the visibility of the EU in the region by issuing rapidly well-informed declarations which bond all EU actors.<sup>120</sup> The horizontal coherence of the EU has been strengthened by the Lisbon Treaty which ends the ‘pillar structure’ and introduces an EU legal personality.<sup>121</sup>

Among the new tools created by the Lisbon Treaty is the Foreign Policy Instruments Service (FPIS) that originally lacked a clear management according to the head of the operation section in Kyrgyzstan.<sup>122</sup> In fact, the FPIS has proven to be useful for the EU action on the ground for some of the countries in CASC as there are now direct offices to contact for Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Georgia, a tool which reduces the time to get an authorisation to implement or modify a policy for the Delegation.<sup>123</sup> In the field, the Lisbon Treaty has eased the work of the EU Delegations by enabling them to create, for example, study groups without any authorisation. According to the head of the political section of the EU Delegation in Kazakhstan, the latitude of the Delegation has grown since the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty as the latter increases the coordination and representation duties of the Delegations.<sup>124</sup> This upgrade of the EU Delegation improves the EU’s visibility on the

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<sup>116</sup> F. Trauner, “The internal-external security nexus: more coherence under Lisbon?”, *European Union Institute for Security Studies, Occasional Paper*, no. 89, Paris, March 2011, p. 19.

<sup>117</sup> Koehler, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

<sup>118</sup> Cremona, *op.cit.*, p. 33.

<sup>119</sup> Trauner, *op.cit.*, p. 22.

<sup>120</sup> Interview with Tom Massie, *op.cit.*

<sup>121</sup> N. Verola, “The New EU foreign policy under the Treaty of Lisbon”, in F. Bindi, *The Foreign Policy of the European Union, Assessing Europe's Role in the World*, Washington, D.C., The Brookings Institution, 2010, p. 41.

<sup>122</sup> Interview with Tom Massie, *op.cit.*

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>124</sup> Interview with Hubert Petit, *op.cit.*; and Koehler, *op.cit.*, pp. 68-69.

ground as there is now one permanent telephone number to join the EU for the local actors.<sup>125</sup> In terms of vertical coherence, the involvement of EU member state diplomats in the EEAS also strengthens the arguments of the EU Delegation to ask for the cooperation of the member states.<sup>126</sup> The Lisbon Treaty also underlines the importance of the neighbourhood policy as “[t]he Union shall develop a special relationship with neighbouring countries”.<sup>127</sup> The Treaty of Lisbon has undoubtedly introduced useful changes able to increase the coherence of EU foreign policy; but only additional political will might bring more coherence in EU external action.<sup>128</sup>

Currently the EU has both an institutional decisional system likely to cause horizontal coherence and a new Treaty likely to increase the vertical and horizontal coherence of the EU policy in CASC. By avoiding the publication of different strategies towards the same region at the same time and by establishing a close and frequent cooperation on the ground between the EU and the members state representatives the overall coherence of the EU policy is likely to increase. In order for the Lisbon Treaty to become an asset of a coherent EU foreign policy, the EU actors need to have the political will to use the Treaty for this purpose.

## Conclusion

This paper has examined to what extent the EU’s policy towards CASC is coherent by analysing the making and implementation of this EU policy. It showed that the EU’s policy towards CASC is not fully coherent nor sufficiently visible. The EU has not introduced any hierarchy between its objectives, but implements programmes and initiatives at various levels. Currently, the Arab Spring is challenging the EU’s role in democratising authoritarian regimes all over the world.<sup>129</sup> The EU has to decide whether it considers that it can impact on or at least prepare for such changes, or whether democratisation is – in the end – an internal process. This decision will influence the creation of a renewed EU interest or a relative disinterest towards the CASC region.

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<sup>125</sup> Interview with an EU official, *op.cit.*

<sup>126</sup> Interview with Tom Massie, *op.cit.*

<sup>127</sup> Article 8, European Union, *Consolidated versions of the Treaty on European Union*, (consolidated text), Brussels, *Official Journal of the European Union*, C 83/13 of 30 March 2010.

<sup>128</sup> Trauner, *op.cit.*, p. 38.

<sup>129</sup> This conclusion has been reached by Olivier Roy as well as by Hubert Petit without any initial mention of these latest revolutions. Interview with Hubert Petit, *op.cit.*, and interview with Olivier Roy, *op.cit.*

The current 'Great Game' in CASC leaves an opportunity for the EU to gain greater influence in the region. The EU already benefits from its 'soft power' status. Russia, China and the US have failed until now in creating and implementing adequate coherent policies towards CASC. The EU has been more successful in establishing the grounds for a possibly coherent policy towards CASC. The EU possesses a rather good understanding of the issues at stake in the region, it has allocated the implementation of its policies without major inconsistencies and it has been able to create successful multilateral initiatives. Overall, the main reason for the relative coherence of the EU policy towards CASC is the modesty of its policy. The limited national interests for the member states in the region, and the focus of the EU on the candidates to EU enlargement have led to a rather coherent and rather limited EU policy towards CASC.

Now that the budget towards the region increases, the geopolitical competition in the region is likely to increase and the EU has to rethink a foreign policy (without the asset of EU enlargement), the ability of the EU policy towards CASC to remain coherent is crucial. According to Koehler, "coherence in the formulation and implementation of foreign policy at national level also constitutes an exception rather than the norm".<sup>130</sup> To the extent that the EU has managed to appear as an actor different from states and different from international organisations, being coherent both in policy and action could become a rather useful trademark.

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<sup>130</sup> Koehler, *op.cit.*, p. 72.

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