

Linking the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership with the Eastern Partnership and the Black Sea

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Two decades after the end of the Cold War, and following three enlargements and the ratification of four treaties, the European Union's (EU) foreign policy has deepened both institutionally, with the creation of the Common Foreign and Security Policy/European Security and Defence Policy (CFSP/ESDP) and the new posts of President of the European Council and "Foreign Policy Chief," and strategically, with the European Security Strategy, the first attempt to postulate a cohesive security vision. At the same time, it has widened both functionally and geographically, as a number of missions – often with a military dimension – have been deployed around the globe. The aforementioned in part also encapsulates the emergence of the Union as a global actor together with its enhanced trade, development and aid policies and the increasingly complex threats and challenges it is facing.

In this context, it is of special interest to assess the EU's policies towards its periphery, given that, in order to be effective and relevant, the starting point for EU Foreign Policy must be its own neighbourhood. The European Union has been quite active in the post-Cold War period in developing neighbourhood policies. This phenomenon has been particularly evident since 2003, when the concept of the 'wider Europe' emerged to account for those countries to the east and south of the Union that would not taste the fruits of accession any time soon (if at all). Undoubtedly, the Union's policies to the south predate those of its *Ostpolitik* due to the lack of integrationist dilemmas posed by most southern part-

ners, barring Cyprus, Malta and Turkey. Also, with the southern frontier of the Union remaining unchanged and the EU's Mediterranean members committed to defining their relations with their southern neighbours, it was to a certain extent easier to attempt to formulate the Union's relations with its Mediterranean neighbours. In other words, the stability of the southern frontier allowed for the development of a partnership as early as 1995. The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) of 2004 added a security element, which was linked, in part, to the changing nature of global terrorism, organised crime and illegal immigration. In 2008, the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) provided not only for renewed political dialogue but also a practical element of joint projects on issues such as maritime security, energy, migration and water.

In contrast, the EU's eastern neighbourhood has been dynamic, changing and more challenging as a result of the enlargement process and its commonality with Russia's western environs. As such, the stabilisation of this neighbourhood has been more complex and challenging for the European Union, as it has had to design different policies for different groups of countries. On the heels of the enlargements of 2004 and 2007, the ENP has been complemented since 2007 with the Black Sea Synergy (BSS), with its emphasis on regional cooperation, and the Eastern Partnership (EaP), with its focus on deepening bilateral cooperation and creating a framework for multilateral cooperation.

The Case of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership: From the EMP to the UfM

The Mediterranean is a geographical space that can hardly be characterised as homogeneous, due to the discrepancies between North and South, the lack of

common interests and priorities among the states, existing security issues and the absence of real regional leadership in the South. The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership/Barcelona Process (EMP), with its three distinct baskets, was the first attempt to institutionalise the EU's external relations with the Mediterranean states. The idea was to enhance cooperation with the region's less developed states at all levels, both vertically (between them and the EU) and horizontally (the establishment of structures and platforms for cooperation among the less developed states themselves). Another innovative feature was the funding process, which allocated resources directly to specific projects and not to the member states or state authorities. Last but not least, the EMP was a differentiated strategy in another sense, too, as it also dealt with various sub-regions within the Mediterranean space (e.g. Turkey) covered by other policies and mechanisms.

The EMP managed to establish and institutionalise a relationship between EU and its southern neighbours based on the concept of conditionality linking financial aid to reforms in governance, human rights and institutions

Nevertheless, the EMP did not manage to fulfil its aims. The asymmetry between North and South, the lack of confidence among the parties involved, the limited sense of ownership of the initiative, and the lack of visibility and sustainability of the projects were the main reasons for its limited success – if not outright failure.

What the EMP did manage to do was to establish an institutionalised relationship between the EU and its southern neighbours. This relationship, based on the concept of conditionality, linked financial aid to reforms in governance, human rights and institutions. The fact that most of the projects were designed and implemented by civil-society actors and that action was taken simultaneously at the regional, sub-regional and bilateral level in many ways fostered a certain degree of decentralisation, which is positive.

The launching of the UfM in July 2008 aimed to infuse the Partnership with new vitality and raise the political level of the strategic relationship between the EU and

its southern neighbours. It could be argued that, while maintaining the *acquis* of its predecessor, the UfM represents a step forward, as it offers more balanced governance, increased visibility for citizens, and a commitment to tangible, regional and trans-national projects. Furthermore, the UfM includes a rotating presidency and a Secretariat based in Barcelona responsible for identifying and promoting projects of regional, sub-regional and transnational value across different sectors.

The Case of the Eastern Neighbourhood: From the Neighbourhood Policy to the Black Sea Synergy and Eastern Partnership

In the 1990s, the Black Sea was perceived as being too far away and too messy for the EU, while at the same time it was considered to be too close to and important for both Russia and Turkey. For this reason, the EU's involvement in the region was limited to economic cooperation and technical assistance, and there was virtually no EU policy towards the region throughout the decade.

This began to change in 2004, when the EU developed a special policy to govern relations with its neighbours – the European Neighbourhood Policy. The basic goal of the ENP was to merge various existing policies towards the EU's vicinity and to establish a coherent policy framework that would bring the countries of the region closer to the EU.

Overall, one could say that the ENP's tacit logic was to blur the boundary between being 'in' and 'out' of the EU. By and large, the ENP seemed to suffer from being *neither enlargement nor foreign policy*, as it neither exercised conditionality as effectively as the former, nor included all the political tools of the latter. At the same time, the appointment of Special Representatives and the deployment of CFSP/ESDP missions did not produce any significant results. Most of the time, there was no political energy left to deal with high politics. A mismatch of expectations between what the EU expected its neighbours to do to come closer and what its neighbours themselves were willing or simply able to deliver was, perhaps, at the heart of the problem.

Despite the institutional paralysis and enlargement fatigue that resulted from the latest enlargements, the EU gradually began to realise that the establishment of a single, coherent policy framework for its new

eastern neighbourhood was a necessity. The accession of Bulgaria and Romania brought the EU to the shores of the Black Sea. Furthermore, in terms of geopolitics, it granted the EU the status of a potential geopolitical actor.

Within this rapidly changing context, the first significant move towards the formation of a coherent policy towards its emerging eastern neighbourhood was the launching of the Black Sea Synergy in 2008. The BSS was regarded as an intermediate step towards a cohesive EU strategic vision for the region. From the very beginning it was identified as complementary to the ENP, the EU-Russia relationship and the accession negotiations with Turkey, and, compared to existing policy initiatives, it was the first document to identify the key areas where regional cooperation in the Union's new eastern neighbourhood could be promoted. In this regard it was a breakthrough.

In contrast, the Eastern Partnership, launched in 2009, differed from the BSS in that it was principally based on the "failures" of the ENP and the limited success of the BSS. Taking advantage of the widespread belief that both the ENP and the BSS could not produce significant results, the idea put forward was rather simple and was – and still is – based on the principle of "more for more." Furthermore, one could argue that the proposals for the EaP are written in more ambitious terms than those of the ENP and the BSS, emphasising the need for both bilateral and multilateral elements. As a matter of fact, the very idea of the EaP draws on the experiences of the Visegrad Group and the Central European Free Trade Agreement, thereby giving the countries concerned the chance to better integrate within a grouping of countries, while simultaneously implementing domestic reforms and adjusting to the *acquis communautaire*. Indeed, one could argue that the EaP goes even further and serves as a quasi pre-accession strategy document, even though the term "enlargement" is not mentioned as a goal.

Emerging Barriers

The debuts of the BSS, the UfM and the EaP between 2007 and 2009 represent a step forward in the process of EU foreign policy making and signal the beginning of a new era. Moreover, these policies reveal the different foreign policy priorities and interests of some of the EU Member States, while raising questions

relating to their successful implementation. The key parameter is that the emerging barriers have a dual nature, i.e. an "internal" one, embedded in the case of the Black Sea, and an "external" one that lies between the Mediterranean and the Black Sea.

Regarding the "internal" barrier, the almost parallel launching of the EaP and the BSS seems to have somewhat complicated the formulation of a coherent EU policy towards its eastern neighbourhood. This has led to the emergence of questions such as: how can the EaP and BSS complement each other; how can funding for the projects be secured; and how can the economic and political processes in the partner countries be stimulated through the use of bilateral, multilateral and regional tracks. In this regard, open issues such as the division of labour, the allocation and distribution of funding, the lack of leadership, limited resources, and Russia's role in the region have dominated the agenda since 2008.

Concerning the "external" nature of the barriers, the problems are largely the same. Amid the ongoing financial crisis, many of the parties involved are asking how funding for these policies will be secured; how it will be distributed among the various initiatives/projects; and how the Union will deal with the various bilateral, multilateral and regional tracks, especially when some countries (e.g. Turkey) are involved in all three. Another question is related to the division of labour, namely, how the new foreign policy chief will manage to implement three different neighbourhood policies with limited means. Recent experience shows that, in the case of the EaP and BSS, most human resources were allocated to the EaP. Last but not least, a broader issue is that of the signals sent to the region's states. Does the launching of these policies represent an upgrade/evolution of the ENP or do these policies, with their different priorities, symbolise something new? Even in foreign policy terms, signals and messages matter – Turkey's initial reception in the UfM and Ukraine's favouring of the EaP over the BSS are cases in point.

Potential Connections

The BSS, the EaP and the UfM were all initiated by the Union to meet the demands of certain Member States with special interests and stakes in the East or South. The two neighbourhoods and the requisite EU policies share a number of similarities, which should be taken into account.

- i. The issues of energy, migration, the environment and maritime transport are priorities in both cases.
- ii. The common goal for both regions is a free trade area. This entails the transfer of know-how from one case to the other.
- iii. In both cases the level of civil-society participation is low.
- iv. There are a number of protracted conflicts, which render cooperation among all actors across levels very difficult.
- v. The funding for both EU policies is (proportionally) more or less the same, and in both cases the private sector is engaged.
- vi. The concrete projects launched under the UfM reflect the concept of sectoral cooperation proposed within the framework of the EU's strategy towards the East. In practice, this shows a tendency of the European Commission to take the lead.

The Way Forward

Nevertheless, given the importance of its new eastern neighbourhood, the EU should take care to enhance its presence and role in the region and foster good neighbourly relations. In order to do so, the EU has to accommodate a number of intersecting policies in the region in order to avoid a duplication of efforts. The way forward thus requires the following:

- Pragmatism: The EU and its partner countries should not have a long list of nominal priorities but rather should focus on a very limited number of projects and objectives that can be implemented and fulfilled within a bilateral, multilateral or regional framework.
- Coordination: The EU should put together a number of partnerships in sectors where international actors and donors are already operating in the prospective regions, pool resources and implement common projects wherever possible (e.g. in neighbouring areas). Furthermore, in terms of coordination, a coordination mechanism or unit for these two regions could also be established within the European Commission in order to regulate and harmonise the relevant actions.
- Ownership: The EU needs to support credible initiatives emerging from the two regions (e.g. the synergies created by the Anna Lindh Foundation in the South or the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) in the East).

- Flexibility: The bilateral, multilateral or regional scope of the various EU initiatives should be adapted depending on the challenges and issues at stake.

Overall, if the EU indeed intends to establish a new upgraded foreign policy towards its peripheries, its approach should be harmonised and balanced. Hence, the implementation of both its "Eastern" and "Southern" policies depends on:

- The firm willingness of the EU and its member states to move forward. To this end, the EU should put its own house in order by aligning the policies that are relevant to the region, in particular with regard to its CFSP and to the routines of "external relations" and the enlargement/pre-accession processes.
- The engagement of the Russian Federation as a more proactive key regional stakeholder.
- The efficient involvement of the relevant EU Member States (Portugal, Spain, France, Italy, Greece, Malta, Cyprus, Romania and Bulgaria) in promoting synergies.
- The performance of all regional stakeholders should be conditioned on a real commitment to the requisite political and economic reforms.

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