

COLLEGIUM CIVITAS

Forging a new European Ostpolitik
– An Assessment of
the Eastern Partnership

edited by
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C O L L E G I U M C I V I T A S

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Introduction

Is the European Union forging a new *Ostpolitik*? This question lies at the core of this *Studies and Analyses* in which we analyse the context of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) and consider the prospects of it leading to a recalibration of relations between Brussels and its six closest Eastern neighbours.

This publication is a result of a one year project carried out by the Centre for Security Studies, Collegium Civitas (CfSS) in 2008 and 2009 entitled “The European Neighbourhood Policy – assessment, status and outlook”, which was completed with the support granted by Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway by means of co-financing from the European Economic Area Financial Mechanism and the Norwegian Financial Mechanism as part of the Scholarship and Training Fund.

A key objective of this project was to meet a growing demand for new knowledge and analysis on the EU’s neighbourhood policies, which we have addressed by paying particular attention to the Eastern Partnership initiative. This volume, together with a high-level international seminar “The European Neighbourhood Policy – assessment and outlook” convened by CfSS in Warsaw on October 27th 2009, hopefully make a major contribution to meeting the demand for new knowledge and expert analysis on the subject in hand. Just as importantly we hope that our activities based at CfSS have made an interesting and valid contribution to debates in the run-up to the Polish EU Presidency in 2011, when the Eastern Partnership will become a key priority.

The goal of EaP is to enhance the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) by creating a regionally designated new structure for relations with Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia.

One might argue that the Eastern Partnership mirrors or even counterbalances the Union for the Mediterranean, which, since its creation in 2008, attempts to fortify the EU’s relations with the large group of neighbours on the EU’s Southern flank. Indeed, one might conclude that the EaP is simply offering the six neighbours in the East the chance to have what the EU already holds out for the southerners, in the way of Association Agreements and free trade, for example.

Though this might be the case, as this volume seeks to explain, the Eastern Partnership holds the potential for a profound shift in the EU’s relations with its neigh-

bours, towards a far more interdependent state of affairs, going well beyond the situation in the South. The prominence of energy security and prospect of far-reaching visa-liberalisation as key points on the EaP agenda testify to the rising prominence of the Eastern neighbourhood. Furthermore, EaP has a palpably more geopolitical character – or at least the potential for this – by virtue of the fact that the EU is becoming more involved in an area where the interests of other major powers in the region remain strong – namely Russia, Turkey and Iran. Finally, the significance of EaP also derives from the idea that it is an expression of solidarity and recognition of the partners' European credentials (European Partners), a factor conspicuously absent from the EU's relations with its southern neighbours (partners of Europe). In relation to this point, those EU member states that favour a further eastern enlargement, want EaP to be regarded as a holding bay for those eastern neighbours that could legitimately become candidates for membership one day. In other words, and this is the perspective from Warsaw, EaP is viewed as a means to keep enlargement on the EU's agenda beyond the current list of candidates.

With these ideas in mind this volume presents four chapters which look at the Eastern Partnership from different angles.

The first chapter looks at the context out of which the Eastern Partnership arose. The significance of the initial Polish-Swedish proposal for a fresh perspective on the East is set against a discussion of the development of the EU's political and economic ties to the East that emerged after the end of Communism and implosion of the Soviet Union. The state of play in ENP and the nature of EU contributions to both southern and eastern neighbourhoods are sketched out as a means to compare the two domains. The rising urgency for energy security, the Georgia-Russia war, the creation of the Union for the Mediterranean as well as the ambiguous relationship between enlargement and ENP, the chapter argues provided important impulses behind the Eastern Partnership, which in its structure and objectives seeks to improve upon the ENP formula.

Chapter two looks at the mirror image of developments in Brussels by identifying the reception of the EaP in the "troubled" neighbourhood. The discussion begins by posing the question as to whether there is enough will and interest inside the EU to continue with the EaP, prior to Poland taking up the EU Presidency in 2011. An overview of the political and economic situation in the Eastern neighbourhood is subsequently sketched out as a means to identify the difficult, yet dynamic context in which this new EU policy is being laid out. The chapter argues, that responses to EaP and willingness to engage on the part of the neighbours have been variable, shaped

mainly by the kind of “future relations” that any given government aspires to have with the EU – which explains the wide gaps between Ukrainian and Belarusian responses, for example. The chapter goes on to identify further variables, such as economic dependence on the EU and relations with Russia, that impact upon the perspectives of all six EaP partners by way of a country by country synopsis.

The subsequent chapter opens the lens wider by considering the development of the Eastern Partnership in the context of other regional groupings. This is an appealing discussion since the promotion of regionalism and regional integration has long been a core feature of EU foreign and security policy – though is arguably only a relatively recent feature of its policy towards the East. The author argues that the implementation of EaP may well be affected by competition with other regional groupings, and of course with the Union for the Mediterranean when it comes to garnering support from member states and for funding. To elaborate on this argument and to situate the EaP amongst other regional fora, the author provides a detailed overview of the “Northern Dimension” and the “Black Sea Synergy” – their structures, roles and strengths and weaknesses.

Chapter four focuses on the question of Russia’s perspective towards the Eastern Partnership. As the author notes, whilst Moscow paid little attention to the announcement of EaP, focussing instead on the issue of NATO enlargement, in the wake of the Georgia-Russia war, the EU’s endeavours became more of a cause for concern by the Kremlin. Thus by the time of the Prague Summit, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov accused the EU of trying to establish its own sphere of influence. Since then, however, Russian perspectives have returned to a more dispassionate view of EaP, though this does not at all preclude the potential for EU-Russia discord in the neighbourhood. As a means to discuss points of divergence the author identifies a number of crucial issues and factors that tend to delineate EU and Russian perspectives in the neighbourhood, namely the interplay of values and pragmatism, the question of reform in Belarus, the politics of energy and territorial conflicts.

The conclusions of this *Studies and Analyses* attempt to bring together the many arguments, standpoints and proposals developed in the four main chapters with the overall objective of responding the question of whether the EU is forging a new *Ostpolitik*?

Kerry Longhurst

Introducing the Eastern Partnership – Implications for the European Neighbourhood Policy

The Eastern Partnership (EaP) represents a new layer of cooperation in the European Union's relations with its six closest eastern neighbours, namely Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia. This new initiative aims to put links with the neighbours to the East on a more dynamic and strategic footing via a strengthening of existing bilateral relations, new multilateral and regional initiatives, together with a stronger accent upon energy security, migration and Free Trade.

The EaP was established in May 2009, six months after the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) came in to being¹. Thus far the full effects of both initiatives remain difficult to forecast, moreover EaP and UfM raise a host of complex questions and not least what they might mean for the coherency of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) – which brings under one roof the EU's neighbours in the South and the East. In short, does the creation of the EaP (and UfM) imply that the EU is shedding its inclusive approach to the neighbourhood and is pursuing a new policy of differentiation towards an “ENP South” and “ENP East”, or in other words a scheme for the “non-European neighbours” and a scheme for the “European neighbours?” EaP also brings into focus the question of the future of EU enlargement beyond the current candidate states². Whether EaP should be linked somehow to the prospect of full EU membership, however far into the distant future, or whether it should be a distinct and permanent alternative to actual membership? Of course linked to this point is the question of whether EaP will satisfy the ambitious expectations that some of the eastern neighbours have of their future relations with the EU.

With these issues in mind this chapter will examine the origins and content of EaP with a view to considering the implications for the EU's broader European Neighbourhood Policy.

¹ The UfM is made up of the EU27 plus Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Mauritania, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, Palestinian National Authority, Syria, Tunisia, Croatia and Turkey.

² The current candidates are Turkey, Macedonia and Croatia. The states of the Western Balkans have already been given a “European perspective” and are thus caught up in the enlargement dynamic as “potential candidates”, http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/balkans_communication/western_balkans_communication_050308_en.pdf.

The European Neighbourhood Policy – Bringing the East and the South Together

The immediate impulse behind both the ENP and EaP was enlargement and the eastward shift in the EU borders that occurred in 2004 and 2006. Enlargement brought the EU into a new neighbourhood made up of ex-Soviet states all of which are profoundly poorer than the EU average and also plagued by political instability with the potential for back-sliding into authoritarianism.

The EC's immediate response to the break-up of the Soviet Union was TACIS (Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States), which from 1991 until 2006 provided the financial framework for relations with Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia³. The goal of TACIS was “to support the process of transition to market economies and democratic societies in the countries of Eastern Europe, South Caucasus and Central Asia”⁴. In its first outing TACIS focused primarily on supporting efforts at privatisation and the creation of market economies, with subsequent reform efforts seeing the EU put a greater emphasis upon installing the rule of law, good governance and democratisation (concepts which were subsequently adopted by the European Neighbourhood Policy). Implicit within TACIS objectives was an assumption, if not a hope on the part of the EU, that CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) would maintain its integrity, including strong economic links amongst the states of the region.

Simultaneous to TACIS the EU embarked upon designing a first generation of legal Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCAs) (to replace the previous agreement of 1989 which had regulated trade between the EC and Soviet Union, when still intact). PCAs for all EaP states, except for Belarus, came into force in 1998. They were negotiated on a bilateral basis, so details vary, but the principal objectives were a) to establish new trade regimes, b) to institutionalise political relations and cooperation, c) to ensure that EU assistance (eg. TACIS) is conditional upon partner countries progress in political and economic reforms.

The road to enlargement was well underway, when in 2002/3 the Commission and Council began serious discussions about the “soon to be” new neighbours and to appraise existing modalities in relations. To be certain, there had already been a growing consensus that relations between the EU and the ex-Soviet states, as described above,

³ TACIS also covered Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Mongolia was also covered by the TACIS from 1991 to 2003.

⁴ Alexander Frenz, *The European Commission's Tacis Programme 1991-2006. A Success Story*, http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/neighbourhood/regional-cooperation/enpi-east/documents/annual_programmes/tacis_success_story_final_en.pdf.

needed invigorating. The prospect of enlargement brought this into clearer focus. To begin, the problems and issues which characterised the eastern neighbourhood were no longer going to be at a distance, but directly on the EU's doorstep. Furthermore, the TACIS formula had been premised on the CIS maintaining its integrity, which some ten years down the line was not the case. Crucially, the former states of the Soviet Union had become more differentiated, with the CIS subsequently losing much of its coherency and purpose. Moreover, during this period a number of these states articulated the desire to advance their relations with the EU on more of an individual bilateral basis, rather than being treated as part of a post-Soviet group. Furthermore, the prospect of actual EU membership was being sought by Ukraine and Moldova, based on their claim to being a part of Europe and thus eligible for membership according to Article 49 of the Treaty of Rome.

Against this evolving background the Commission launched its “Wider Europe: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours” concept in March 2003. Here, the objective of creating a zone of prosperity and a friendly neighbourhood – “a ring of friends” – with whom the “EU enjoys close, peaceful co-operative relations” was given greater form and substance⁵. The ideas presented in the Commission's paper were broad and ambitious; to bring together into a single policy framework the wide range of foreign policies that the EU had: trade, aid, CFSP (Common Foreign and Security Policy), programmes for regional cooperation, crisis management and so on. The document spoke of enhancing regional cooperation, extending the four freedoms and of giving the neighbours a stake in the internal market – to resemble something close to the political and economic links within the European Economic Area (EEA).

The Wider Europe document also laid out what became the organising principle of the ENP – differentiated or “tailor made” action plans (APs), based on a bilateral relationship between the partner and the EU. The content of APs would differ according to the specific needs of a partner (as identified in individual Country Reports drawn up by the Commission prior to the AP), but would also have many common aims and objectives based on the EU's *acquis communautaire*, to greater or lesser extents. In this way ENP uses the methodology of “conditionality” linked to the Copenhagen Criteria (rule of law; market economy etc; the criteria that perspective members must fulfil to join the EU), just like the accession processes that culminated in the enlargements of 2004 and 2006.

⁵ Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament. Wider Europe – Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours, COM (2003) 104, http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/com03_104_en.pdf.

Whilst the original blueprint for ENP was focused purely on the East (specifically Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus), it was subsequently expanded to the EU's Mediterranean neighbours, which were already part of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership or Barcelona Process, created in 1995⁶. This inclusive "balanced approach" aimed at meeting certain member states' concerns that the EU had been too focused on the East in the course of the 1990's to the detriment of relations with the Southern neighbours and that the Barcelona Process was in need of some refreshment. Already in 2000 there was general disquiet about the Barcelona Process and the degree to which it was meeting its objectives. Chris Patten, EU Commissioner for external relations at the time, argued that to make the Barcelona Process more effective more concrete short and medium term goals needed to be met and that ultimately if it were to be successful by any measure, the EU would have to confront the Israeli-Palestinian problem. To beef-up the EU's Mediterranean policies at the Santa Maria de Feira European Council in June 2000 the EU adopted a Common Strategy on the Mediterranean Region.

Attempts at re-launching the Barcelona process in 2005 – the "Year of the Mediterranean" did little to erase the sense that not enough had been achieved, rather it brought into focus the fact that few of the Barcelona Declaration's key objectives had been met. The Charter for Peace had not yet been signed and the Free Trade Area that was supposed to be in place by 2010 remains elusive. Moreover, the EU's approach to the opening of more markets with states of the region is tempered by restrictions on trade; the EU restricts imports from the South but the Southern states have many of their domestic markets fully exposed to the full force of competition with the EU. The wealth-gap between the EU and partner countries, save Israel, got larger over the course of time since 1995; employment has risen, security in the region has arguably diminished and the region as a source of insecurity for the EU has become more pronounced⁷.

In many ways the rationale for bringing these two geographical domains that ring the enlarged EU together made sense. Indeed both sets of neighbours are unlike EU mem-

⁶ Originally it was 12 partners, until Cyprus and Malta became EU members. There are now 10 Mediterranean partners Algeria, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, Syria, Egypt and Tunisia. Libya is an observer. The Barcelona Process was the EU's largest foreign policy financial commitment at its inception and with a strongly normative agenda it was regarded as a template for how the EU could develop relations with other third states and regions. The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership was to a significant degree encouraged by the Oslo accords and amelioration of the situation in the Middle East, this gave the confidence for an ambitious, if not idealistic set of aspirations for regional integration across the Mediterranean area. The underlying rationale was that political, economic and greater cultural dialogue and co-operation in combination would bring stability and security to the region as a whole.

⁷ Miguel Angel Medina-Abellán, *The Common Strategy on the Mediterranean Region: Evidence and Analysis*, Working Paper No 28, Observatori de Política Exterior Europea, Barcelona 2002.

ber states in a variety of ways. Apart from Israel, they are considerably poorer than EU-levels, the majority have political regimes that are either overtly authoritarian or democratically fragile. Consequently, tendencies in the two regions for extremism and unpredictability, political or religious, are considerable. At the same time, the ties that bind the EU to its neighbours are weighty and of consequence. The EU is a major, if not the most important trading partner for ENP states and in turn the neighbouring states represent important markets for EU exports. Both sets of neighbours bring to the EU's door strong migratory pressures, both legal and illegal, and are themselves transit states for movements from further afield. Both neighbourhoods are also plagued by a number of conflicts, which in the East bring to the EU's agenda the often delicate state of relations with Russia. Finally, both the Eastern and Southern neighbourhoods are crucial in terms of the EU's energy needs, for both the supply and transit of gas and oil. Considering such factors it is plain to see that EU states have an irresistible interest in insuring stability in both neighbouring regions.

ENP came into being when Action Plans between the EU and the first seven partners: Moldova, Ukraine, Israel, Jordan, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority and Tunisia were jointly adopted by both parties in 2005, subsequent to this a further five states have joined. Beyond this, Algeria, Syria, Belarus and Libya remain outliers from ENP, though in most cases relations with the EU are generally going in a positive direction with agreements on the horizon. Further afield some advocate the inclusion of Kazakhstan into the ENP, though at present this is not on the EU's agenda.

The EU strived for a “balanced approach” in ENP to keep Eastern and Southern neighbourhoods together. Thus from the outset a mixing of the two eastern neighbourhoods into one pot became a key characteristic of Brussels' approach – which thus far has resisted change.

Despite this comprehensive approach, the EU *has* dealt with the two neighbourhoods in manifestly different ways, which are worth pointing out⁸. In the East the EU pursued an almost exclusively bilateral, country by country approach, shying away from engagement with regional groupings, largely because of the “Russia factor”⁹. This stood in contrast to the South, where, via the multilateral Barcelona Process, the EU pursued an explicit agenda aimed at transnational regional integration. Similarly, whereas the EU adopted a Common Strategy for the Mediterranean as a whole, in the East the EU has a strategy just for Ukraine (and for Russia).

⁸ See Kerry Longhurst, *Injecting More Differentiation in European Neighbourhood Policy: What Consequences for Ukraine?*, *Russie. Nei. Visions* No 32, July 2008.

⁹ *Central European Perspectives on the European Neighbourhood Policy*, CERISciences Po, http://www.ceriscienciaspo.com/themes/ue/conferences/txt_04062008.pdf.

Table 1. European Neighbourhood Policy – ENP PARTNERS

Country	Contract with EU PCA or AA ¹⁰	ENP Action Plan Adopted by EU	ENP Action Plan Adopted by Partner	EU Financing 2007-2010, million euro ¹¹ /per capita calculation ¹²
Israel	AA June 2000	November 2005	November 2005	8/1
Morocco	AA March 2000	February 2005	July 2005	654/19
Palestinian A.	Interim AA July 1997	February 2005	May 2005	632/152
Tunisia	AA March 1998	February 2005	July 2005	300/29
Jordan	AA May 2002	February 2005	January 2005	265/43
Lebanon	AA April 2006	October 2006	January 2007	187/47
Egypt	AA June 2004	March 2007	March 2007	558/7
Moldova	PCA July 1998	February 2005	February 2005	209/48
Ukraine	PCA March 1998	February 2005	February 2005	494/11
Armenia	PCA 1999	November 2006	November 2006	98/33
Azerbaijan	PCA 2006	November 2006	November 2006	92/11
Georgia	PCA 1999	November 2006	November 2006	120/26

Source: the author's calculations and the data of the European Commission available at http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/faq_en.htm.

Table 2. European Neighbourhood Policy – THE OUTLIERS

Country	Contract with EU PCA or AA	Current status
Algeria	AA September 2005 (not yet ratified)	Algeria is a full member in the Barcelona process/UfM. Some discussion is underway regarding possible ENP membership once the AA is ratified by the Algerian government. 220 euros is the amount designated to Algeria 2007-10, which equals 6.5 euros per capita.
Belarus	None	The EU will not proceed with an AA with Belarus until it deems the country democratic with "free and fair" elections. The EU Commission has recently opened a delegation in Minsk. For the EU's strategy towards Belarus and ENP see the Non Paper "What the EU could bring to Belarus" ¹³ Belarus is eligible for ENPI funds 2007-10 allocation is 20 million euros, which equals two euros per capita.
Libya	None	Libya has been an observer in the Barcelona Process, and will need to join the Barcelona Process before moving any further with relations with the EU. Discussions between the EU and Libya on a framework agreement are underway. Libya could join the UfM once such an agreement is in place. Eight million euros have been proposed in the 2007-10 perspective, equalling one euro per capita.
Syria	None	Syria is a full member in the Barcelona Process/UfM. EU-Syria negotiations were concluded in 2004 for an Association Agreement, the agreement has not been ratified. Talks resumed in 2008, and ratification of an updated AA is pending. Syria has been designated 130 million euros through the ENPI, equating to 6.5 euros per capita.

Source: ibidem.

¹⁰ AA=Association Agreement; PCA=Partnership and Cooperation Agreement. For a discussion of the difference between AAs and PCAs see Catherine Flaesch-Mougin, *Differentiation and Association within the PEMA*, in: *The EU's enlargement and mediterranean strategies: A comparative analysis*, (eds) Marc Maresceau, Erwan Lannon, Palgrave, New York 2001, pp. 63-96.

¹¹ In 2007 the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) replaced the previous TA-CIS and MEDA funding instruments, which had been for the East and South respectively.

¹² The per capita calculations are the author's own with population figures taken from the CIA World Fact Book www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/.

¹³ For more on the EU's strategy towards Belarus and the ENP see: *What the EU could bring to Belarus*, Non-Paper, http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/belarus/intro/non_paper_1106.pdf.

Also, whilst in the South the EU readily tries to hook up with sub-regional bodies, such as the Arab Maghreb Union and has eagerly promoted the Agadir Agreement on Free Trade, the EU's engagement with such initiatives in the East has thus far been modest. Although the EU has supported sub-regional fora and cooperation, such as Visegrad, CEFTA, GUAM¹⁴, the CEI and the Black Sea Synergy, the extent of “interregionalism” in the East was not comprehensive nor has it been a strategic objective for Brussels. Indeed, even though the ENPI regional strategy paper of 2006¹⁵, stressed the importance of cooperation between ENP partners to be important the EU did not engage in the type of region building that has been attempted in the South.

From ENP to EaP

Prior to examining the content of the Eastern Partnership it is worth revisiting some of the background factors and impulses that lay behind the initiative.

Perceived Weaknesses in the ENP Formula

Certainly ENP has helped anchor the EU's relations with its eastern neighbours after the 2004/2006 enlargements, but the overall score sheet some five years down the line has been less than stunning. The chief and enduring weakness of the ENP in the eastern domain is arguably that it falls far short of meeting the rising expectations that most states (particularly Ukraine and Moldova) have regarding their future relations with the EU, basically because it side-steps the membership question. Whilst early ENP documents spoke about “not ruling out” the possibility of membership and of “keeping the door open”, over time this has been pushed to the background, not least because of enlargement fatigue. Linked to this is the major disappointment felt by the eastern neighbours of being lumped into the same policy as the “non-European” southern neighbours, who have no membership aspirations.

A problem lies with the fact that ENP uses the methodology of the accession process based on tough conditionality, but without the prospect of actual accession, as mentioned above. The real prospect of membership, which helped spur on the reform

¹⁴ GUAM was created during a summit in Yalta in June 2001 by the four current members (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Moldova) and Uzbekistan, which withdrew in 2005. At its May 2006 summit meeting the group was transformed into GUAM—Organization for Democracy and Economic Development.

¹⁵ European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument Eastern Regional Programme, Strategy Paper 2007-2013, http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/country/enpi_eastern_rsp_en.pdf.

processes in East Central Europe in the 1990's, is not present in ENP, which is in fact highly ambiguous on its end-state of affairs. This being the case, ENP has often proved to be a rather flaccid tool when trying to push reform processes in the Eastern neighbourhood. Essentially, without the prospect of membership, the EU's method of stick and carrot hasn't been effective enough, either to encourage or to punish partners with regards to their reforms. Actions Plans, as seen by the neighbours, serve the EU's vested interests and are lopsided; much is asked of the neighbours, but what is offered in return is deemed insufficient. A consequence of this is that ENP hasn't been able to nurture all-round better governance in the region which remains inconsistent, and even where democracy has been installed it is fragile.

No Regional Strategy

A further perceived weakness is that ENP wasn't structured in such a way that would enable the EU to promote a robust regional strategy in the East. Though numerous ENP documents sang the merits of cross-border cooperation, as noted above, it was not pursued with vigour¹⁶. Because of the strong bilateral strategy pursued by the Commission there has been little possibility for the sharing of information and experiences amongst ENP states. This lack of multilateralism and engagement with regional groupings surely stymied the EU's efforts in the domains of energy (which has hitherto become one of the key drivers behind the EaP), migration and crisis management, to name just a few crucial issues.

Russia and the War in Georgia – Strengthening the EU's Resolve

The apparent ambiguity between ENP and the EU's strategic relationship with Russia has also arguably rendered ENP suboptimal. The development of something resembling a coherent EU strategy towards the eastern neighbourhood has traditionally fallen foul of the diverging policies of EU member states towards Russia, and in particular the often contrasting preferences of Germany and France on the one hand and those of the new EU members, especially Poland and the three Baltic states. Whilst it is important not to assume that Russia and the EU will always be in conflict when it comes to the neighbourhood, it is perhaps fair to say that their perspectives and interests will often be at variance with one another.

¹⁶ Ibidem.

The war in August 2008 in Georgia led to a palpable firming of the EU's resolve towards the eastern neighbourhood and bolstered efforts to set up the Eastern Partnership¹⁷. In the midst of the conflict EU Commissioner for ENP Benita Ferrero-Waldner declared that Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova could count on the EU. She explicitly linked the creation of the EaP to the EU's resolve: "Our June commitments to develop the Eastern partnership and European policy of neighbourhood demonstrate the EU's legal interests in the region. (...) This policy indicates that we will not tolerate new dividing lines in Europe, and that such partners as Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova can count on our support in maintaining their territorial integrity and sovereignty"¹⁸.

Union for the Mediterranean – Towards a Regionalisation of Neighbourhood Policy?

As already noted, an aura of under-achievement has surrounded the Barcelona Process. Core objectives had not been met and the credibility of the EU in the region remained low¹⁹.

The Union for the Mediterranean (UfM)²⁰ created in 2008 sought to address the deficiencies in EU policies and to update its agenda, and in doing so it certainly helped pave the way for a similar regionally-focused new concept for the East. It reflected growing expectations in and outside the EU to bring more differentiation and targeted policy initiatives to the way in which the EU dealt with its neighbours. Crucially, it was a decisive recognition that the Barcelona Process still wasn't working and that ENP wasn't bringing enough added value. The UfM agenda is frontloaded with the following issues: energy security, pollution in the Mediterranean, strengthening the surveil-

¹⁷ Radek Sikorski speech at Conference "EU Foreign Policy and the Quest for Leadership" in Warsaw, 23 October 2008.

¹⁸ Contribution of Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner to a debate in the European Parliament, 1 September 2008, available at <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20080901+ITEM-020+DOC+XML+V0//EN>.

¹⁹ See Fred Halliday, *The "Barcelona Process": Ten Years on*, 11 November 2005, http://www.opendemocracy.net/globalization/barcelona_3019.jsp; Marco Mantonari, *The Barcelona Process and the Political Economy of Euro-Mediterranean Trade Integration*, "Journal of Common Market Studies" 2007, Vol. 45, No 5, pp. 1011-1040; Richard Youngs, *How Europe's Mediterranean Policies Went So Wrong*, "Europe's World" April 2008, <http://www.europeworld.org/NewEnglish/Home/Article/tabid/191/ArticleType/articleview/ArticleID/20363/Default.aspx>.

²⁰ The full title is *The Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean*. The initial idea, posited by Nicolas Sarkozy during his election campaign, was to have Turkey as a leading state in a Mediterranean Union (UM) as a fixed alternative to actual EU membership. This original vision also envisaged that the EU27-bloc would not be a member per se, but rather individual member states could opt to join if they desired. Thus Sarkozy's idea was that the UM would be an additional institution outside of the EU and potentially a rival to the ENP and Barcelona process.

lance of maritime traffic, creating a regional ERASMUS scheme and creating a scientific community between the EU and the southern neighbours. In many ways the priorities of the UfM are not dissimilar to those of the EaP.

Undoubtedly the UfM put the EU's professed "balanced approach" to the two neighbourhoods under stress and resurrected the question as to whether the eastern and southern neighbourhoods should remain in the same framework and financed from the same budget, or whether ENP should be split decisively into two.

It is evident that a multitude of factors explain how and why EaP came into being. But it is argued here, that at the core of the problem is the apparent mismatch between what the EU expected of the neighbours and what the neighbours in the East were able or willing to do in terms of reform.

Fortifying the EU's Approach to the Eastern Neighbourhood

Via the EaP the EU is attempting to recalibrate its relations with its eastern neighbours. As described above, the genesis of EaP lies in a number of factors of both a "structural" (the set-up of ENP and a lack of regionalism) and more recent impulses (war in Georgia, energy crises and the Union for the Mediterranean).

The Polish-Swedish proposal for an Eastern Partnership was presented to EU Foreign Ministers on May 26th 2008. It was, in the main, well received and didn't cause the type of uproar that Sarkozy's vision for a Mediterranean Union (UM) had prompted the year before. Unlike the UM proposal, the Polish-Swedish paper envisaged the Eastern Partnership as being a "specific eastern dimension within ENP", involving the EU27 as a whole and requiring no significant extra finances beyond what was already allocated through existing budget lines. Key areas of activity proposed for EaP eg. migration, energy and free trade were also deemed as important and not too controversial to provoke any significant backlash from member states. The document also sketched out the need for a lightweight "goal oriented" institutional set-up²¹. Finally, the proposal foresaw a combination of a revamped set of bilateral actions, new multilateral endeavours and regional activities.

Subsequent to the Polish-Swedish paper the European Commission fleshed out the proposed plan in a far reaching and enthusiastic document²², echoing the Polish-

²¹ Polish-Swedish Proposal. Eastern Partnership, <http://www.msz.gov.pl/Polish-Swedish,Proposal,19911.html>.

²² Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council. Eastern Partnership, Brussels, 3 December 2008, http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/eastern/docs/com08_823_en.pdf.

Swedish proposal, which also found a favourable response from the European Council in December²³.

The Czech EU Presidency launched EaP at the Summit of the EU27+6 in Prague in May 2009 with the principle goal described as being “to create the necessary conditions to accelerate political association and further economic integration between the European Union and interested partner countries”²⁴.

The Content of the EaP

As already noted, the focus and objectives of the EaP do not deviate significantly from the ideas originally outlined in the Polish-Swedish paper of June 2008. What spearheads the EaP is the idea that the EU needs to meet the desires of the eastern partners for more intensive relations and that this needs to be done in a “proactive and unequivocal” manner²⁵.

In a nutshell EaP calls for deeper bilateral engagement, including new Association Agreements (AAs) and a new generation of ENP Action Plans, coupled with an innovative multilateral strategy to nurture cooperation amongst the neighbours and third, a number of “flagship initiatives”. Four thematic platforms form the overall organising principles: democracy, good governance and stability, Economic integration and convergence with EU policies, energy security and contacts between people.

Enhanced Bilateralism

EaP posits the rolling out of a new generation of contractual relations with the eastern neighbours towards the type of Association Agreement (AA) currently waiting to be signed with Ukraine. PCAs with a number of eastern neighbours are up for renewal anyhow, but whether they are replaced by an enhanced AA will depend heavily on real and sustained progress in terms of democracy, the rule of law and human rights provisions. Such AA’s would usher in the possibility of partners moving closer and closer to EU legislation and standards to include free trade provisions and greater linkages to the EU’s Common Foreign and Security Policy agenda. Crucially, however, given the

²³ Presidency Conclusions Council of the European Union, Brussels European Council, Brussels 12 December 2008, 17217/08, CONCL 5, http://www.ue2008.fr/webdav/site/PFUE/shared/import/1211_Conseil_europeen/European_Council_12-12-2008_Conclusions_EN.pdf.

²⁴ Joint Declaration of the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit, Prague, 7 May 2009: <http://www.eu2009.cz/scripts/file.php?id=46526&down=yes>.

²⁵ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council. Eastern Partnership, http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/eastern/docs/com08_823_en.pdf.

tough demands made by the EU from EaP partners the reality may well be that new AAs could be years away. Moreover, though Ukraine may be on the cusp of having a new AA it has been a long and often torturous process to get this far.

Free Trade and a Neighbourhood Economic Community

A key element of the proposed new AAs is provision for the neighbours' gradual integration into the EU economy. The goal is to create deep and comprehensive free trade areas (DCFTAs) with each EaP partner, contingent on them entering the WTO²⁶. In addition, the proposal sets out the goal of creating a network of bilateral agreements amongst the neighbours themselves – towards a “Neighbourhood Economic Community”.

Mobility

A further priority under the bilateral heading of EaP is that of mobility. The Commission envisages the creation of “mobility and security pacts” geared to foster mobility and at the same time to create and sustain a “secure environment”. The fight against illegal migration, upgrade of asylum systems to EU standards, integrated border management systems aligned to EU *acquis*, together with the enhancement of the Police and judiciary's abilities in this arena will feature in these pacts. Visa policy will be significant here as neighbours have high expectations for greater and speedier liberalisation to free-up the often complex and costly visa processes currently in place. The Commission's concept is for a phased approach beginning with talks on visa facilitation, to include agreements on readmission, which could then be followed by the waiving of visa fees, ultimately towards totally visa-free travel some way down the line. Meanwhile, the Commission would initiate studies on the costs and benefits of labour mobility, the results of which will determine options for the opening up of certain parts of the EU labour market for workers from EaP states.

Energy Security

The overall goal here is to harmonise the energy policies and laws of EaP states in line with energy related EU *acquis communautaire* as part of the EU's broader endeavours of establishing a truly common European energy market.

²⁶ Belarus and Azerbaijan are not in the WTO.

The need to diversify the EU's energy sources is a principle driver behind this aspect of EaP, with EU states seeking to avoid the type of disruption to supply which occurred in the winter of 2008/2009 during the Russian-Ukrainian gas dispute. By bringing energy on to centre stage, EaP intends to ensure the long term development, diversification and security of the EU's energy supplies and to avoid future crises. In terms of bilateral measures EaP spells out the inclusion of "energy interdependence" into the proposed new Association Agreements, as well as membership in the Energy Community for EaP partners, beginning with Ukraine and Moldova. The conclusion of memoranda of understanding on energy issues with Moldova, Georgia and Armenia is also called for, as is the integration of Ukraine's energy market into that of the EU. EaP also calls for better political dialogue with Azerbaijan with a view to its integration into the EU energy market.

Stimulating Regional Cooperation – Multilateral Cooperation

The Commission's vision of EaP sees a role for the EU in "region building". The EaP promises to provide "a forum to share information and experience on partners' steps towards transition, reform and modernisation", to help facilitate common positions and joint activities – elements conspicuously absent from ENP. In this vein EaP will be organised as follows: a) Meetings of EaP Heads of State every two years; b) Annual Spring meetings of Ministers of Foreign Affairs (attached to a GAERC); c) The establishment of four "thematic platforms" (Democracy, good governance and stability; Economic Integration and Convergence with EU Policies; Energy Security; Contacts between People) meetings for which will be held at least twice a year involving senior officials (these platforms will report to the Foreign Ministers annual meetings and will have their agendas prepared by the Commission in collaboration with the EU Presidency and EaP partners); d) Panels, established to support the platforms. Crucially, these new configurations would increase significantly the number of meetings between the EU and the neighbours than was previously the case.

Greater Visibility

EaP will also involve "Flagship Initiatives" including Integrated Border Management Programme; an SME facility; promotion of regional electricity markets, energy efficiency and renewable energy resources; development of the Southern energy corridor; cooperation on prevention of, preparedness for and response to natural and manmade disasters.

The Institutional Setting and Finance

As per the original design there will be no separate secretariat for the EaP, which will be a crucial difference with the Union for the Mediterranean. As the Commission explains, the UfM has a project-based approach and as such does not look for support from the Community budget, but rather for private funding and international financing. As an integral part of EU policies EaP is housed and supported financially by the Commission.

Though the original line was that EaP would be “budget neutral” in actual fact the EaP will benefit from a growth of funds available, coupled with a re-direction of funds from other channels. ENP eastern neighbours currently acquire funding on a bilateral basis via the ENPI, in addition states are able to profit from the Governance Facility, the Cross Border Cooperation fund and the Neighbourhood Investment Facility (NIF). In the context of EaP total assistance for the six neighbours will grow from 450 million euros in 2008 to 785 million euros in 2013²⁷. This will mean allocating a supplementary amount of 350 million euros in addition to the planned resources for the period 2010-2013. Furthermore, 250 million euros that was already allocated to the ENP regional east programme is set to be shifted to initiatives relevant for the implementation of the Eastern Partnership, bringing the total for implementing this new initiative to 600 million euros²⁸, not including possible EIB or EBRD credits or resources from willing EU member states or other interested parties.

Effects on ENP

EaP and UfM challenge the original logic of the European Neighbourhood Policy’s “balanced approach” of keeping the South and East together. But rather than signalling the demise of the ENP these regional initiatives might deliver positive added value to it by bringing in greater focus and more accurately reflecting both sets of neighbours status’ vis a vis the EU. Moreover, member states seem keen to keep ENP as the policy perimeter intact, rather than seeing loose regional groupings emerge that may be devoid of an overall EU perspective. The danger is that a plethora of regional initiatives risks diverting political energy and resources away from existing priorities, thus leading to a situation where EU external relations consist of a series of specific and badly coordinated local initiatives devoid of any overall strategy. This was evident

²⁷ Vademecum on financing in the frame of the Eastern Partnership, last update 16 December 2009, http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/eastern/docs/eap_vademecum_14122009_en.pdf.

²⁸ Ibidem.

when Nicolas Sarkozy first posited his UM idea which challenged the integrity of ENP, caused uproar across the EU and driving a wedge between France and Germany. UM was swiftly reformulated and the EU took ownership of the project within the existing Barcelona Process framework.

Of course overtime if EaP proceeds and delivers on key projects including new Association Agreements, new visa regimes and makes moves towards freer trade, the EU's relations with its eastern neighbours will become qualitatively different to those with the Southerners. At this point ENP may well become a defunct concept.

(Non) Linkages to Enlargement

As noted earlier one of the prime weaknesses of ENP and its ability to nudge reforms along in the eastern neighbourhood was the lack of a membership perspective as the long term prize. Essentially, ENP sought to shape and stabilise its neighbourhood, much the same as it did vis a vis East Central Europe in the 1990's, but offered instead a model of "integration without membership".

EaP emerged as a response to the need for an upgrade to the existing European Neighbourhood Policy framework and to meet the rising expectations of many of the eastern neighbours. Calls for a differentiated and more focused policy for the East also emerged as a consequence of the "enlargement fatigue", which hit the EU soon after 2004. There remains a considerable caucus of EU states that want to keep the enlargement dynamic alive and whilst EaP is not officially a transit zone for prospective members it is a strong recognition that the six states belong to Europe and thus at least qualify for a privileged status, different to that of the southern neighbours.

For the foreseeable future all EaP states will be kept at arm's length on the membership question, including Ukraine. This essentially means that EaP has not really tackled one of the central flaws in the ENP formula. All evidence shows that ultimately any alternative to enlargement policy has failed to work because they do not contain the mechanisms to induce reform. Via EaP the EU might be able to offer more opportunities for the neighbours to benefit from closer association with Brussels, but crucially the lack of a membership perspective may mean that partners will be unmotivated to commit to the types of reforms the EU expects. The EaP can serve as a significant improvement of the ENP, but it remains contingent on the political will on the European side to create attractive inducements for the eastern partners to undergo structural transformation and move closer to the EU. Subsequently, if reforms are not undertaken then deeper integration and proximity between the partner states and the EU will not occur. EaP has effectively sharpened the dividing line between

the candidate states and the potential or “wannabe” candidates, which is a set-back for Ukraine and Moldova.

This being said, Poland, one of the architects of EaP, certainly regards it as a stepping stone towards a future membership perspective, especially when it comes to the case of Ukraine²⁹. Warsaw will thus continue to lobby for EaP not to be severed completely from an enlargement perspective.

All in all the relationship between EaP and enlargement will remain fuzzy and distant, with official EU documents seeking to downgrade the possible linkages between membership in EaP and full membership in the EU. Indeed, in the run up to the Prague Summit some of the language and phrases contained in the declaration were toned down to reflect this. In earlier drafts the six countries were referred to as “European countries”, but in the final text they were renamed “Eastern European Partners”. Though the difference may seem minor, the change reflected a fear on the part of some members states that the earlier version sounded too pro-enlargement.

The Commission proposal says that states join EaP “without prejudice to (their) aspirations for their future relationship with the EU”³⁰, which surely leaves the field open for multiple interpretations and simply reinforces the ambiguity for aspirant members like Ukraine and Moldova. Polish Foreign Minister Sikorski stated that EaP is designed to strengthen the EU’s policies towards those states that *could* eventually join, but at present are held back by enlargement fatigue³¹. Similarly, Czech Deputy Foreign Minister Vondra, argued that EaP should not be a fixed alternative to membership – and that the EU door should stay open³². But as already noted, other member states will want to ensure that EaP acts as a firm break, rather than a precursor to membership. The EU must tackle this uncertainty head-on by confirming unambiguously and in unison whether the door remains open and that EaP puts the ball in the partner’s court by providing them with the opportunity to make themselves “look like candidates”.

Time Frames

Through the Eastern Partnership the EU made pledged to respond “proactively” and “unequivocally” to neighbour’s expectations for more intense relations. Certainly the

²⁹ Renata Goldirova, *Eastern Partnership could lead to enlargement, Poland says*, “EU Observer”, 27 May 2008, available at http://euobserver.com/9/26211?rss_rk=1.

³⁰ Joint Declaration of the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit, op.cit.

³¹ Renata Goldirova, *Eastern Partnership could lead to enlargement, Poland says*, op. cit.

³² Toby Vogel, *EU plans to launch Eastern Partnership*, “European Voice”, 6 November 2008, <http://www.europeanvoice.com/article/imported/eu-plans-to-launch-eastern-partnership-/62947.aspx>.

raft of measures outlined in EaP documents and declarations are bold, but the time frames for delivery are likely to be long, especially when it comes to the most ambitious parts of the agenda. Meaningful deep free trade regimes, mobility and access to EU labour markets will be contentious and tricky policies to develop and implement, not to mention overarching new Association Agreements.

Delays in the delivery of tangible benefits from EaP may stymie its overall effectiveness and thus the EU's ability to nurture reforms in the Eastern neighbourhood.

Enough Differentiation?

The Eastern neighbours were never happy about being lumped together in ENP with the southerners. Indeed even considering the broadly comparable challenges that both sets of neighbours brought to the EU's doorstep, there is arguably more that divides them than unites them. The UfM and EaP initiatives recognise such differences between the two geographical domains, but the question remains as to whether there is enough differentiation.

Ukraine has the most developed relationship with the EU of the EaP partners, with Moldova in second place, moreover they view themselves and want to be viewed by the EU as potential candidates. This being the case Kiev and Chisinau are not happy about being in the same policy framework and thus the same category as Belarus, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia, countries having no membership prospects in the medium or even long term. In this way EaP has also blurred the division between the "wannabe" candidates and those that have not shown an interest in EU membership.

Though the Commission's proposed new regional approach is a positive innovation, this needs to be balanced with an upgrade in bilateralism and national differentiation. Though the six partners share similarities, there is much that divides them. Kiev has already said that it doesn't relish being lumped together with the "troublemakers" of the South Caucasus, not to mention Belarus which still has no contractual relationship with the EU. The obvious qualitative differences between six's relations with the EU need to be reflected in the configuration of EaP to enable the forerunners to move ahead and not be encumbered by a lack of reform and commitment elsewhere in the region.

Roadblocks and Outstanding Questions

Tackling Regional Conflicts?

The war in Georgia in August 2008 bolstered the EU's resolve to deal with neighbourhood conflicts. However, the Joint Declaration of the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit is mute on conflict resolution, stating only "the need for their earliest peaceful settlement on the basis of principles and norms of international law"³³. It seems therefore that through the EaP the EU has given only "timid recognition" of the importance of conflict resolution in the Eastern neighbourhood³⁴. This is despite the EU's own claim that "(...) if the ENP cannot contribute to addressing conflicts in the region, it will have failed in one of its key purposes"³⁵. Time will tell how effective the EU will turn out to be when it comes to other conflicts in the region, for the meantime this remains an outstanding question.

Contrasting Member State Priorities

The controversy over Sarkozy's Mediterranean Union idea illustrated the often diverging priorities held by EU member states when it comes to how to devise regional policy and the neighbourhood. Furthermore, the political weight of EaP was somewhat battered at the time of its inauguration; the Prague summit was not exactly attended by "A-listers" (President Sarkozy sent his Prime Minister Francois Fillon, Spain was represented by its Foreign Minister and Italy by the Minister of Welfare).

Indeed, Angela Merkel, Chancellor of Germany was the only head of a major EU state to attend, which contrasted to the level of representation on the partners' side. 2010 will see Spain and Belgium leading the EU, a year which may see the EaP disappear from view, but to possibly return to the radar when Hungary and then Poland pick up the baton in the following year. In the meantime, diverging priorities amongst EU members will prove to be a roadblock to progress in both the Eastern and Southern neighbourhoods.

³³ Joint Declaration of the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit, op. cit.

³⁴ Dominic Fean, *Making Good Use of the EU in Georgia: the Eastern Partnership and Conflict Policy*, Russia.Nei.Visions No 44, September 2009, available at www.ifri.org/downloads/ifrifeaneuandgeorgiaengsept2009_2.pdf.

³⁵ European Commission. Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on Strengthening the European Neighbourhood Policy, COM (2006) 726 final, Brussels, 4 December 2006.

What *Finalité*?

It has been emphasised throughout this chapter that EaP and enlargement have at best a fuzzy relationship. In this scenario what can be the *finalité* or at least the medium term outcome of EaP? Interestingly some commentators talk about a “Norway Scenario”, meaning that the objectives of EaP if put into operation, would give the partner countries a status *vis a vis* the EU like that of Norway³⁶. Even though it is membership neutral, such an arrangement can click all the right buttons in that it offers Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with the EU and more open and streamlined visa regimes to travel and work in EU states, for example. Whilst this might make sense, by taking the membership prospect out of the equation, such a configuration would inevitably fall far short of neighbour’s expectations and thus prove to be an ineffective tool for reform.

³⁶ Iris Kempe, Tarek Hohberg, Roderick Kefferpütz, *Eastern Partnership and the Caucasus. Strategic Input from the Region*, http://www.boell.cz/downloads/Eastern_Partnership_Paper.pdf.

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The Eastern Partnership – Context and Reactions from a Troubled Neighbourhood

The Eastern Partnership was a response to the desire of some of the neighbours in the East for more “intensive” relations with the EU and a recognition that the European Neighbourhood policy, as originally configured was not working optimally. It was also, as noted elsewhere in this volume, a response to the setting up of the Union for the Mediterranean. Further impulses were provided by the Georgia-Russia war of August 2008 and the Ukrainian/Russian gas crisis of January 2009, which affected the supply of gas into the European Union.

The Commission has been in the driving seat behind the EaP. Certainly member states readily gave approval for the development of an Eastern dimension to ENP, but there was little in-depth discussion amongst them about the detail and delivery of the project. The lack of the type of controversy that surrounded the Mediterranean Union when it was first announced was largely to do with the elegant background diplomacy carried out by the Swedes and Poles and the presentation of the project as an integral part of EU policy. Poland, it should be remembered, had been pushing for a more robust EU eastern policy even before it became an EU member. Because of this, it was not too difficult to build up an intra-EU consensus over the course of 2008.

Unsurprisingly the newer EU member states (and of course Sweden) have been the most proactive in pushing the initiative forward as part of their resolve to keep the enlargement dynamic alive and to hook the eastern neighbours onto the EU’s path. Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary and the Baltic States have been the keenest and continue to push for the establishment of links between EaP and an “open door” policy for the future membership of certain Eastern neighbours. Interestingly, the configuration of the new European Commission will see Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy fused into one DG, but whether this will mean that the Eastern Partnership will inevitably become part of the enlargement process remains an outstanding question and not one that the pro-enlargement member states nor the aspiring members in the East will get a satisfactory answer to in the short to medium term.

In short, over the course of the next Commission, EaP and enlargement policy will reside in the same DG, but will remain discrete processes.

Meanwhile, Bulgaria and Romania, whilst supporting the overall aims of EaP, had reservations about how the initiative would sit with the Black Sea Synergy and relations with Turkey, and were concerned that too many regional groupings in the area might dilute the EU's overall policy in the Eastern neighbourhood. Looking more widely across the EU there was controversy surrounding the allocation of funds for EaP, with concern especially from the net-payers into the EU budget. A number of Southern Member states also tried to link the allocation of any new funds for the East to a rise in funding levels for the Southern neighbours¹.

Meanwhile, member states have generally been in favour of Belarus' inclusion into the EaP and welcomed it as an upgrade of Brussels endeavours to prise Minsk out of isolation – a policy that always proved to be controversial given the authoritarian nature of the regime. The outstanding question though, is how to get the right blend of stick and carrot in the EU's policy towards Belarus – a task thwart with ongoing difficulties. The Russia question proved to be more divisive, with German and French positions stressing the importance of better defining the EU's relationship with Russia alongside the development of EaP. This being said, it is worth noting that the typically pro-Russian tenor of French and German foreign policies became far less resolute since the Georgia-Russia war. Indeed, under Sarkozy France has become a much more engaged player in the Eastern neighbourhood and took the lead in taking the Ukraine-EU association agreement forward during the French EU presidency in 2008².

Of course the success of EaP also depends heavily upon whether elites and key civil society groups in the partner states choose to engage with the initiative or not. Still, for those that do engage, the degree of success will be determined by whether it is regarded as an effective anchor upon which their reform efforts can be hooked and whether it provides a clear road map towards the types of relations they want to have with the EU in the future. Crucially, these perspectives vary across the neighbourhood. With this particular point in mind, this chapter will analyse the context and responses to the EaP from the neighbourhood itself, from the perspective of official government perspectives.

¹ Helen Wallace, *The European Union and its Neighbourhood: Time for a Rethink*, Eliamep Thesis No 4, May 2009, <http://www.eliamap.gr/en/wp-content/uploads/2009/04/eliamap-thesis-4-2009-helen-wallace.pdf>. Germany was also vocal in its concern about the effects on the Black Sea area cooperation given that it was one of the architects of the Black Sea Synergy plan.

² *Eastern Partnership: The Opening Report*, (eds) Beata Wojna, Mateusz Gniazdowski, Polish Institute of International Affairs, Warsaw 2009, pp. 26-31.

Still a Troubled Neighbourhood, Despite ENP

By the EU's own admission 2008 was not a successful year for the ENP and the Eastern neighbourhood, which has, over the course of recent years, arguably deteriorated in terms of democracy and security. In a recent progress report on the implementation of the ENP, the Commission recognised that corruption remained a significant issue in many of the ENP states and also that "the pace of reform has slowed, particularly in democratic reforms and human rights standards"³. In truth the reform momentum has in many cases reversed.

Uncertainty Abound – Democracy in Relapse

The leading ENP state, Ukraine, sunk into political crisis and is among the countries hardest hit by the economic and financial downturn. The success of Viktor Yanokovich in the 2010 Presidential elections in Ukraine might reverse Kiev's rapprochement with the EU, which was set in motion after the Orange revolution in 2004 and see a sharp pro-Russia tilt in Ukrainian foreign policy. However, the results actually indicated that democracy appears to have taken hold in Ukraine, (the elections were deemed fair and carried out according to international democratic standards). Furthermore, whilst the quest for NATO membership will be ditched by the new government, and a more Russia-friendly foreign policy will emerge, it is unlikely that the government will jeopardise the priority of moving closer to the EU⁴.

Moldova, which due to its small size, could, relatively speaking, easily become better integrated into Euro-Atlantic institutions, has also spent much of 2009 locked in an electoral crisis with violent protests erupting in the Spring which the government clamped down on. Although a liberal pro-EU/pro-NATO coalition of parties eventually secured a parliamentary majority in the re-run of the disputed April elections, it is far from certain that this grouping will endure. Furthermore, its parliamentary majority has not been big enough to enable the coalition to elect a similarly pro-European successor to replace President Voronin, who after two terms in office stepped down in September 2009. All in all, the subsequent stalemate in Parliament is likely to frustrate the pro-EU cause in Moldova and has already prevented the election of Marian Lupu

³ Implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy in 2008, COM (2009) 188/3, Brussels, 23 April 2009, http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/progress2009/com09_188_en.pdf.

⁴ See Sabine Fischer, *Has the EU lost Ukraine?*, EUISS Analysis, February 2010, http://www.iss.europa.eu/uploads/media/Has_the_EU_lost_Ukraine.pdf.

(the candidate of the ruling “Alliance for European Integration”) as President. Though Lupu was the sole candidate in the November 10 2009 contest, he failed to gain enough parliamentary votes, due to abstentions from the Communist Party. Perpetual horse-trading between the democratic parties and the Communists continued towards the rerun elections on December 7th, in which Parliament failed again to install Lupu, because of abstentions from the Communists. As a consequence, early Parliamentary elections will need to be held in 2010.

Elsewhere in the region instances of good governance and democracy also remain patchy. Though OSCE and EU observers declared that the Presidential elections of January 2008 in Georgia, which ensured Saakashvili’s second term as President, met democratic standards as “the first genuinely competitive presidential election”, they also recognised that certain problems had still to be addressed, with opposition parties claiming that Saakashvili had used repression to silence the opposition and the media⁵. Anti government fervour continued into 2009 with protestors out on the streets accusing Saakashvili of mishandling the conflict with Russia and of becoming increasingly autocratic⁶. The West has also become more circumspect about Saakashvili over the course of the past year – realising that democracy isn’t all that it should be, in part because of the government’s emerging crackdown on opposition groups, but also because of what is now seen as Saakashvili’s mishandling of the crisis with Russia over South Ossetia in August 2008.

In Azerbaijan, which after Belarus, is the most authoritarian country of the EaP-6, a serious back-step from the successful installation of democracy also occurred when President Ilha Aliyev, won a referendum in March 2009 removing all obstacles to him standing for re-election for the rest of his life. Though Azerbaijan performs well in terms of its business and investment friendly environment, it is certainly an unwilling player when it comes to making political commitments to reform. In its 2008 annual progress report, the Commission saw that there was no or only limited progress in the implementation of the ENP Action Plan across a whole range of political reforms, human rights and security issues⁷.

A weak commitment to democracy is also visible in Armenia, where the government has been increasingly clamping down on public protest and the activities of the

⁵ For comment see (s.n.), *Georgia events of 2008*, Human Rights Watch, <http://www.hrw.org/en/node/79339>.

⁶ Luke Harding, *Thousands gather for street protests against Georgian president*, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/apr/09/georgia-protests-mikheil-saakashvili>.

⁷ See *Progress Report – Azerbaijan – Implementation of the ENP in 2008*, http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/progress2009/sec09_512_en.pdf.

opposition. The most recent round of trouble began after the election of Serzh Sargsyan as President in February 2008, which was strongly contested by opposition parties and which prompted public demonstrations and the deaths of a number of protesters⁸. The government responded by declaring a 20-day state of emergency and effectively banned anti-government demonstrations for this duration. Whilst the government did subsequently authorise an opposition rally to take place in support of former President Levon Ter-Petrosian and his imprisoned loyalists after the end of the state of emergency⁹, the high-profile Municipal elections in Yerevan in May 2009 saw a return of the government's heavy-handedness. Interestingly, though, Council of Europe observers declared that the election had been "largely democratic", opposition parties and civil society groups countered the fairness and legitimacy of the election which saw the ruling Republican Party secure a landslide victory¹⁰.

Belarus remains in a state of non-change as Europe's "last dictatorship". Since coming to power in 1994 on a mandate of pledging to reverse the transformation towards a market economy, Alaksandr Lukashenka has enlarged the power of the presidential office to control all political institutions, and the electoral process. In 2001 he secured a further term in office in an election which attracted much criticism after the disappearance of key opposition figures. Then, in 2004 he removed all constitutional barriers to his perpetual re-election. The most recent Parliamentary elections of September 2008 showed again that Lukashenka prevails over Belarusian politics, despite difficulties in relations with Russia and pressure from the EU and US to democratise. Subsequently, despite fielding 70 candidates no opposition candidate was able to secure a seat in the Parliament, which was again filled with pro-Lukashenka deputies¹¹. At the same time, the government in Minsk made tentative moves towards economic liberalisation and began the release of all political prisoners – a move which was particularly welcomed by the EU.

However, the view from Brussels remains circumspect. The Government's palpable lack of commitment to human rights and democracy prompted the EU to continue with its policy of freezing the government's assets in the European Union and maintaining visa restrictions for the four officials linked to the disappearance of politi-

⁸ Sabrina Tavernise, *Emergency Order Empties Armenian Capital's Streets*, http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/03/world/europe/03armenia.html?_r=1.

⁹ Astghik Bedevian, *Thousands Rally in Yerevan with Rare Government Consent*, <http://www.armenialiberty.org/content/Article/1594627.html>.

¹⁰ (S.n.), *Armenian ruling party sweeps polls in high-profile Yerevan municipal election*, http://www.europeanforam.net/news/616/armenian_ruling_party_sweeps_polls_in_high_profile_yerevan_municipal_election.

¹¹ Luke Harding, *Belarus elections labeled corrupt as Lukashenko backers win all seats*, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/sep/29/belarus>.

cal activists and the head of the country's election commission. In the most recent EU Council conclusions on Belarus it was confirmed that a freeze on restrictions would be continued (to be reviewed once more in October 2010) for other officials, a move aimed at encouraging further progress towards better and ultimately establishing contractual relations between Belarus and the EU¹².

Real reform in Belarus may however, only transpire as a result of changes in Belarus-Russia relations. Change in this sphere, towards a weakening of Russia's unconditional economic and political support for the status quo in Belarus may then compel Minsk to open up to EU overtures more fully¹³. Of course a crucial issue in this dynamic and a key bearing on the possibility of change is that of energy. Belarus is the most energy-dependent of all of the post-Soviet states and one of the most gas-dependent states in the world. The supply of cheap under-market price Russian energy to Belarus shores up the Belarusian economy, since 80% of its exports are energy-intensive products¹⁴.

This being said, even in such circumstances of change in Russian-Belarusian relations and the weakening of the latter's dependence on the former, the type of wholesale democratisation desired by the EU of Belarus would seriously jeopardise the Lukashenka regime's grip on politics and society, and will thus be resisted.

A Conflict-Ridden Region

A relapse in democratic transitions and disregard for the rule of law are often compounded by the numerous conflicts across the region, which as last August in Georgia demonstrated are often far from frozen, and are prone to erupt. And again the example of Georgia shows that in such scenarios ruling elites may use conflict to tighten their grip on power.

Transnistria is generally regarded as the least intractable of the conflicts in the neighbourhood, which as commentators suggest, may be an area where the EU could

¹² *Council conclusions on Belarus*, 2974th EXTERNAL RELATIONS Council meeting Brussels, 17 November 2009, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/gena/111243.pdf. See David Brunnstrom, *EU extends freeze on visa restrictions for Belarus*, <http://www.reuters.com/article/latestCrisis/idUSLH587419>.

¹³ Sabine Fischer, *Introduction*, in: *Back from the Cold? The EU and Belarus in 2009*, (ed.) Sabine Fischer, Chailot Paper 119, Institute for Security Studies, Paris 2009.

¹⁴ Margarita M. Balmaceda, *At a Crossroads: the Belarusian-Russian energy-political model in Crisis*, in: *Back from the Cold? The EU and Belarus in 2009*, (ed.) Sabine Fischer, op. cit., p. 80.

join forces with Russia towards a resolution¹⁵. At the same time, the crisis of democracy and power struggle within Moldova in 2009 has cast a shadow over the prospect of the two tracks of negotiation (the international 5+2 format¹⁶ and the bilateral right bank – left bank dialogue) proceeding¹⁷. Meanwhile, serious risks for open conflict and confrontation with Russia linger in Georgia, with the government in Tbilisi maintaining that South Ossetia and Abkhazia, though now recognised by Russia as independent states, remain integral parts of Georgia.

Despite the 1994 ceasefire, prospects for armed conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh may have returned. Longstanding talks between the two parties sponsored by the OSCE Minsk group, the most recent being in Athens in December 2009, have failed to bring forth the prospect of an acceptable solution as yet. After recent negotiations Azeri President, Ilham Aliyev declared that he had set about a programme of major rearmament and that without progress towards a settlement of the conflict he would have no choice but to try to liberate the separatist region from Armenian control by the use of force¹⁸. Whilst this may just turn out to be just rhetoric (indeed some commentators say that a satisfactory peaceful settlement may be just around the corner), it illustrates the very volatile context in which the EU is trying to operate and to build-up regional cooperation. Brussels has consistently called on both countries to intensify efforts to find a negotiated solution to this conflict¹⁹, but has not actively stepped into negotiations²⁰. In the event of a settlement, EU representatives have envisaged a direct role for the EU, for example by overseeing

¹⁵ Nicu Popescu, Andrew Wilson, *The Limits of Enlargement-Lite: European and Russian Power in the Troubled Neighbourhood*, Policy Report, European Council on Foreign Relations, London 2009, http://ecfr.3cdn.net/befa70d12114c3c2b0_hrm6bv2ek.pdf.

¹⁶ The international 5+2 format refers to principal participants involved in the negotiations – conflict sides: Transnistria, the Republic of Moldova; Ukraine, the Russian Federation and the OSCE as mediators – plus the United States and the European Union as observers.

¹⁷ Vladimir Socor, *Negotiations on the Transnistria Conflict in a Deep Freeze*, <http://politicom.moldova.org/news/negotiations-on-the-transnistria-conflict-in-a-deep-freeze-203987-eng.html>.

¹⁸ (S.n.), *Difficulties reported at latest Armenia-Azerbaijan Summit*, http://www.rferl.org/content/Difficulties_Reported_In_Latest_Armenian_Azerbaijani_Summit/1885966.html.

¹⁹ The EU has always been firm in underlining that it does not recognise the independence of Nagorno-Karabakh – the EU did not recognize the legitimacy of presidential elections held in 2002 and 2007, nor the outcome of the constitutional referendum that took place in Nagorno-Karabakh in 2006.

²⁰ Javier Solana, EU High Representative for the CFSP, met Edward Nalbandian, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia, Brussels, 18 June 2008, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/declarations/101296.pdf; EU – US Summit, Göteborg 14 June 2001, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/er/09934.en1.html; Quadripartite meeting between the Council of Europe and the European Union, Madrid, 11 May 2009, *Conclusions*, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/misc/107794.pdf.

the possible agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan, possibly with a peacekeeping mission²¹.

Though the Commission's proposal is not actually that explicit about ramping up the EU's role in solving the region's unresolved conflicts, it does see that EaP should be capable of promoting stability and multilateral confidence building "with the goal of consolidating the sovereignty and territorial integrity of partners"²². It also foresees the necessity of enhancing early-warning arrangements with a focus on conflict areas, as well as the participation of partner countries in ESDP missions and exercises.

A Region hit hard by the Financial Crisis

The states of the Eastern neighbourhood remain profoundly poorer than the rest of the EU, despite the general increases in GDP per capita that occurred over the years since the end of communism. However, even before the global economic crisis hit, the potential for sustained economic growth remained stymied by local business environments often un-conducive to foreign investors²³. A lack of transparency and incompetence in public administration, the uneven application of the rule of law, coupled with corruption and the possibility of political instability are factors that have often repelled outside investors, as has been the case in Georgia in the aftermath of the August 2008 war. This is a particularly strong difference to the case of East Central Europe in the 1990's when foreign investment flowed into states such as Poland and the Czech Republic and played a significant role in building up national economies and enhancing political stability on route to EU membership.

The financial crisis of 2008/2009 hit the region hard, bringing about the prospect of "failed economies" and in turn the spectre of "failed states" with potential social unrest and geopolitical consequences²⁴.

²¹ Javier Solana, *A common vision for a common neighbourhood*, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/articles/89426.pdf; Speech by Javier Solana, EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, Graduation Ceremony ESDC High Level Training Course Stockholm, 17 March 2006, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/discours/88870.pdf.

²² Eastern Partnership, Memorandum, MEMO 08/762, Brussels, 3 December 2008, http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/eastern/docs/com08_823_en.pdf

²³ According to The World Bank's "Doing Business Ranking": out of a ranking of 175 countries Moldova in 2006 slipped to number 103, Ukraine was placed at 128, Belarus number 129, Georgia 37, Armenia 34 and Azerbaijan 99, <http://www.doingbusiness.org/map/>.

²⁴ Nicu Popescu, Andrew Wilson, *The Limits of Enlargement-Lite: European and Russian Power in the Troubled Neighbourhood*, op. cit.

In Ukraine the collapse of steel exports and a weak banking system hugely reliant on international financing meant that the economy had to be shored up with a huge \$16.4 billion dollar²⁵ loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Further financial support from the IMF in the form of stand-by arrangements and funds from the poverty reduction and growth facility, were subsequently rolled out across the region to all of the EaP states in the course of 2008/2009 as they battled against the crisis²⁶. Falling remittances from workers living abroad have had a particularly marked effect upon the Moldovan and Armenian economies. Meanwhile, energy-rich Azerbaijan has not been completely cushioned from the economic downturn. The downturn in prices for Belarus' refining services and energy-dependent export goods have also hit this country hard and delayed a number of privatisation programmes.

EU Policy Innovations in Difficult Times

Thus it would seem that just as the EU is attempting a step-change in its relations with the closest Eastern neighbours, all of these states are experiencing setbacks in their democratic transitions and many remain conflict-prone. This has been, as noted above, exacerbated by the global economic crisis in which the EU's capacity to help shore-up the Eastern European economies proved to be rather feeble.

Adding to an already difficult context for policy innovation is the fact that the EU has very different types of relations with the six EaP states, which in turn have quite different aspirations for their future relations with Brussels. There are, of course, many factors that shape bilateral relations between the EU and EaP-six, including: their physical proximity to the EU's borders, the state of their relations and level of political and economic dependency on Russia, whether they are engaged in neighbourhood conflicts, the condition of and prospects for democracy and the extent to which there is a domestic consensus with regards to integration with Europe. In short, it is a heterogeneous grouping with relatively insignificant political and economic ties between them and little in the way of existing regional cooperation. Moreover, two of the neighbours – Armenia and Azerbaijan are in conflict over the Nagorno-Karabakh territory, which is located inside Azerbaijan, but ruled by Armenia.

Ukraine has the most developed of relations with the EU, followed by Moldova, which together with Georgia represent the three states that have stated their ambition

²⁵ (S.n.), *IMF Approves US\$16.4 Billion Stand-By Arrangement for Ukraine*, Press Release No. 08/271, 5 November 2008, <http://www.imf.org/external/np/sec/pr/2008/pr08271.htm>.

²⁶ See the individual country reports on the IMF website: <http://www.imf.org/external/country/index.htm>.

to become EU members. In contrast, Belarus currently has no contractual relations with the EU and neither Azerbaijan nor Armenia has declared an intention to join.

Enter the Eastern Partnership – Perspectives from the Region

Overall, the neighbours responded to the Polish-Swedish initiative with quiet interest, with some hoping for a qualitative shift in their relations with the EU. Moldovan and Ukrainian perspectives focused on the hope that EaP would sever the Eastern neighbourhood from the South, and that ENP would be effectively split into two separate geographical domains with the East acquiring a new more privileged position, accelerated integration, coupled with an unambiguous statement on membership. The first official Ukrainian response to the Swedish-Polish proposal argued that “the Eastern partnership should envisage a clear EU membership perspective for those European neighbours of the EU who can demonstrate the seriousness of their European ambitions through concrete actions and tangible achievements”²⁷. The Moldovan reaction to the EaP was a little more muted than that of Ukraine, but nonetheless, like Kiev, Chisinau wanted to ensure that EaP did not put a permanent block on the enlargement dynamic, but would rather facilitate it, through a “clear perspective on accession”²⁸.

Over the course of the following year, however, perspectives from the East became palpably cooler. As the scope and ambitions of the early initiative gradually became less grand, by the time of the Eastern Summit the interest of the partner states – especially Moldova and Ukraine had somewhat petered away. Crucially, whereas the Commission document of October 2008 had raised hopes, the watered down version in the Prague Declaration of May 2009 was met with a sense of disappointment²⁹. This was compounded by the fact that the Summit itself was not attended by many of the big EU personalities – Angela Merkel, Chancellor of Germany, was the only leader of a major EU state in attendance and Belarus’ Lukashenka and Vladimir Voronin of Moldova chose not to attend.

Looking at the background of the drafting of the document and the content of the final declaration one can discern a number of points. First, it is evident that one of the key challenges confronting the EU had to do with reconciling the very different ex-

²⁷ Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine regarding the development of the eastern dimension of the European Union Foreign Policy, 26 May 2008, <http://www.mfa.gov.ua/eu/en/news/detail/13105.html>.

²⁸ (S.n.), Meeting of Andrei Stratan and Radoslaw Sikorski, 11 July 2008, <http://www.mfa.gov.md/news/3012/>.

²⁹ Borut Grgic, *Europe Betrays its Mission in Prague*, “The Wall Street Journal Europe”, 11 May 2009.

pectations of the 27 member states. For example, input from a number of member states led to a tightening of ambitions regarding the prospect of visa-free regimes, which was originally a core idea in the EaP. Though provision remains for this in the final declaration, the emphasis rests upon “liberalisation” as a long term objective. In reality this area may well turn out to be one of the EaP’s weakest promises – as many member states will strongly resist, whilst it is a policy that means a lot to the neighbours and is viewed as a litmus test of the EU’s visible commitment to follow through on its pledges. The document also shows the difficulties of creating a programme that would work for all of the six prospective members, with their different aspirations vis a vis the EU and geopolitical interests. Second, the statement at Prague decouples the Eastern Partnership from the enlargement dynamic, which seems to run counter to the kinds of overtures that were made by Sikorski in 2008.

Ukraine and Moldova – “Eastern Partnership is not a Priority”

Ukraine is the most significant player in the EU’s eastern neighbourhood. It is not only regarded as a regional leader but also has the type of relationship with the EU that Brussels seeks to use as a template for its relations elsewhere in the eastern neighbourhood. Already in 1999 the EU developed a Common Strategy towards Ukraine which acknowledged Ukraine’s “European aspirations and pro-European choice”³⁰ and is on the cusp of finalising an Association Agreement (AA)³¹. By all accounts all dimensions of the agreement are due to be completed by the end of 2009, with only the free trade element outstanding.

As already noted, the initial Ukrainian response to the Swedish-Polish proposal was mainly positive. The most important factor being that EaP seemed to signify an end to the EU’s approach of packaging the southern and eastern neighbourhoods together³². However, beyond this, it became increasingly apparent that the Ukrainian government cherishes its *primus inter pares* position amongst the eastern neighbours and intends to keep pursuing relations with the European Union outside of any new multilateral frameworks provided by EaP. Essentially, pro-EU Ukrainian politicians fear the development of new multilateral relations that might level the playing field

³⁰ European Council Common Strategy of 11 December 1999 on Ukraine, <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/ukEN.pdf>.

³¹ Joint Declaration on the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement, Paris, 9 September 2008, http://www.eu2008.fr/webdav/site/PFUE/shared/import/09/0909_UE_Ukraine/UE_Ukraine_association_agreement_EN.pdf.

³² *Victor Yushchenko: Eastern Partnership is no alternative to Ukraine’s aspiration to join the EU*, Press office of President Victor Yushchenko, 29 April 2009, <http://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/13663.html>

amongst the eastern neighbours, bringing things down to the level of lowest common denominator. Based on this scenario a fear is that EaP may actually have the effect of setting Ukrainian efforts back. Thus, just as Kiev resented the parcelling up of the southern and eastern neighbourhoods within ENP, there is now a strong concern that Ukraine is being grouped together with states with far less advanced relations with the European Union. The Government in Kiev thus seeks assurances that EaP will reflect the differences in democracy in the neighbouring states and their abilities to engage with the EU.

What further dampened the Ukrainian governments' appetite was the attenuated version of the EU's commitment towards visa-free travel apparent in the Prague declaration, as noted above. Kiev has long lobbied for a full annulment of visas for Ukrainians travelling to the EU and expects that mobility will be a key aspect of the forthcoming Ukraine-EU Association Agreement.

Current perspectives on EaP after the December 2009 EU-Ukrainian summit suggest that more than ever, Ukrainian elites want to forge their own way forward with regards to relations with the EU. This does not bode well for the success of the Eastern Partnership. After signing the Ukraine-EU Association Agenda on June 19th, 2009 (replacing the previous ENP Action Plan)³³, Deputy Foreign Minister of Ukraine Konstantin Eliseev said that "Ukraine practically quits the European Neighbourhood Policy"³⁴.

There has been a longstanding commitment in Moldova to moving closer to the EU as part of a general westwards shift since the collapse of the Soviet Union³⁵. However, as already noted, Moldova's progress has been affected by a lack of good governance and clarity in foreign policy. Furthermore, the economy remains weak, based largely on agriculture and is highly dependent on remittances from abroad³⁶. This, and the entrenched position of the communist party, its control over the media and lack of commitment to tackling corruption only served to hold back the types of reforms that the EU expects. Of course, the rather disparate shape of opposition and pro-EU political forces only compounded the country's capacity to move closer to the EU. The

³³ EU – Ukraine Association Agenda, http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/ukraine/docs/2010_eu_ukraine_association_agenda_en.pdf.

³⁴ Having signed the Association Agenda Ukraine quit the European Neighborhood Policy – Deputy Foreign Minister, 19 June 2009, available at <http://www.interfax.com.ua/rus/main/15888/>.

³⁵ Moldovan leaders had harboured hopes to join the enlargement dynamic as part of the Stabilisation & Association Process (SAP) for the five countries of the Western Balkans – a wish rebuked by the EU.

³⁶ Milan Cuc, Erik Lundbäck, Edgardo Ruggiero, *Migration and Remittances in Moldova*, <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/nft/2006/moldova/eng/mrm.pdf>; S. Adam Cardais, *Moldova: Hooked on Remittances*, "Business Week", 22 April 2008, http://www.businessweek.com/globalbiz/content/apr2008/gb20080422_406625.htm?chan=globalbiz_europe+index+page_top+stories.

frozen conflict in Transnistria and the state of relations with Russia also impact upon the Moldovan perspective towards the EU often causing the government to flit between allegiances to Russia and the West. At the same time there are a range of powerful factors that drive EU-Moldova relations towards a more positive destination. The strong cultural and linguistic links with Romania keep Moldova connected to the EU. Second, over 70% of Moldovans³⁷ living in the country support European integration (a difference to the more fractured level of popular support in Ukraine). Third, since Moldova is a very poor country it relies heavily on EU assistance and fourth, the EU is now Moldova's main trade partner³⁸.

The Moldovan response to the EaP was unflustered and palpably underwhelmed. Since EU membership is a strategic policy priority the government's concern with EaP was that it might obviate prospects for actual accession³⁹. Equally there was disquiet that the six EaP countries represented a far too diverse set of states and did not recognise Moldova's advanced status and aspirations vis a vis the EU. Furthermore, as the deal moved closer to the May summit the EU's apparent back tracking on the freeing up of visa regimes, was a source of regret for pro-European Moldovan elites⁴⁰.

After the political violence that followed the contested April parliamentary elections, which caused a bit of a relapse in relations with the EU, and in the light of the Alliance for European Integration gaining a parliamentary majority in July it seemed that EU-Moldova relations were set to find a new anchoring. Newfound optimism was apparent in ENP Commissioner Benita Ferrero Waldner's speech to the Moldovan Parliament in November, in which she said the July elections "sent a strong positive signal about the state of democracy in Moldova. The commitments that we wanted to see on respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law have now been indeed confirmed"⁴¹. Already in October the EU announced that it was ready to start negotiations on a new agreement with Moldova – modelled on the type of Asso-

³⁷ George Dura and Elena Gnedina, *Moldova's "wannabe democracy" is worth rescuing*, CEPS Policy Brief No 185, April 2009.

³⁸ Eurostat data: http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2006/september/tradoc_113419.pdf.

³⁹ (S.n.), Meeting of Andrei Stratan – Radoslaw Sikorski, op. cit.

⁴⁰ This is an area where Moldova's relations with the EU have already advanced. On 1 January 2008 a Visa Facilitation Agreement and a Readmission Agreement between the EU and Moldova entered into force. In June 2008 a Mobility Partnership was launched between the EU and Moldova. It was one of the two pilot countries chosen to test this new sort of initiative which is aimed at better managing migration flows, and in particular to fight illegal migration, in partnership with the EU, in exchange for enhanced possibilities of mobility between Moldova and the EU for its citizens, in terms of legal migration opportunities and of short stay visa issues.

⁴¹ Quoted in *Ferrero-Waldner: Moldova wasted precious time on its march to Europe*, <http://politicom.moldova.org/news/ferrerowaldner-moldova-wasted-precious-time-on-its-march-to-europe-204653-eng.html>, 30 November 2009.

ciation Agreement currently being pursued with Ukraine, to replace the former PCA⁴². This fast-forward in relations may, though, suffer setbacks until a new President is installed, which will only happen after the next round of parliamentary elections next year. The current landscape of Moldovan politics suggests that as and when a new President is elected he will most probably have to pursue a foreign policy of flitting between Russia and the EU, rather than an all out pro-European option⁴³. Lupu (the likely candidate) himself has called for a “balanced foreign policy” and also opposes Moldova’s NATO membership.

To sum up, Ukrainian and Moldovan perspectives on EaP are similar in that they are shaped first and foremost by EU membership aspirations. Parallels continue in the sense that domestic politics cast a shadow on each country’s reform capacities to measure up to EU expectations in a sustained fashion. Indeed the EU side continually berates both countries for the seemingly slow pace of reforms. With this particular point in mind a *leitmotif* of EaP is “more for more”; ie. the notion that the neighbours need “to do more” if they want “to get more” from the EU. A second important point to note is that there is not much added value in EaP for Ukraine and Moldova. Via existing bilateral tracks within ENP both states have proceeded in important domains, including the forthcoming new Association Agreements, extensive discussions on Deep Free Trade and mobility (with Ukraine as the forerunner) – developments that have advanced irrespective of EaP.

Belarus – Still an Outlier

EU-Belarus relations have been complex over the past ten years. Because of its authoritarian regime, oppression of the opposition and poor record on human rights, the PCA, which was actually signed back in 1995 has never been ratified, thus there are no contractual relations with the EU and Belarus does not take part in ENP. In this context, the EU’s efforts over recent years have aimed at normalising relations, to draw Minsk closer to the EU in return for serious efforts at democratisation. To this end, the EU has attempted to spell out to the government and society at large what the EU

⁴² (S.n.), *EU to negotiate a New Agreement with Moldova*, <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/09/1539&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>.

⁴³ (S.n.), *Moldovan opposition vows to boycott repeat presidential election*, <http://politicom.moldova.org/news/moldovan-opposition-vows-to-boycott-repeat-presidential-election-204399-eng.html>.

could offer in exchange for reforms in its “non-paper”⁴⁴, and has sought to heighten the visibility of the EU in Belarus, not least by opening a delegation in Minsk.

Though the EU has tried to be consistent in its expectation of change, as already mentioned, the case of Belarus brings into sharp focus the challenges it confronts of how to optimise the use of both sticks and carrots in its policies and the apparent dilemma between interests and values when dealing with difficult neighbours⁴⁵. With regards to EaP more specifically, the dilemma for the EU has been how to involve Belarus without legitimising the regime and seemingly giving up on the pursuit of democratisation. This quandary had always impacted upon the EU’s endeavours towards Belarus as evidenced in the Commission’s early thinking on the wider Europe⁴⁶. Consequently, when the Commission was busy drafting country reports in preparation for ENP action plans for the southern and eastern neighbours, Belarus was excluded. Where EU-Belarus collaboration did proceed was in the less visible area of “technical cooperation”, especially on matters relating to border controls, transport and energy⁴⁷.

The notion that Belarus should participate in the EaP was not contested within the EU. Belarus was mentioned in the paper-trail that led up to the Prague Summit – of course the outstanding question was the extent and conditions of its involvement. Behind the EU’s drive was a recognition that the use of the “stick” and a regime of sanctions against the country had proved to be less than effective. Moreover during the early planning phase for EaP it seemed that the regime in Minsk was edging towards a degree of reform, when it released a number of political prisoners and also sanctioned the opening of the EU delegation office in Minsk⁴⁸.

The official Belarusian response to the EaP was positive, with a strong signal from the government that they were ready and willing to join the initiative, as an “equal partner”. Of course, what this was meant to translate into is an acceptance from the EU of the ruling regime in Belarus, the lifting of sanctions and ending of diplomat isolation⁴⁹. The government’s apparent positive disposition and the EU’s apparent intent to let Belarus take part in EaP split the pro-European opposition parties in the country. There are those that see Belarus’ EaP membership as something that should

⁴⁴ See *What the European Union could bring to Belarus*, Non-Paper, http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/belarus/intro/non_paper_1106.pdf.

⁴⁵ Sabine Fischer, *Introduction*, in: *Back from the Cold? The EU and Belarus in 2009*, (ed.) Sabine Fischer, op. cit., pp. 18-19.

⁴⁶ Gisselle Bosse, Elena Korosteleva-Polglase, *Changing Belarus? The Limits of EU Governance in Eastern Europe and the Promise of Partnership*, “Cooperation and Conflict” 2009, Vol. 44, No 2, p. 143.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 151.

⁴⁸ Alena Vysotskaya Guedes Vieira, *Opening the European Commission’s delegation in Minsk: Do EU-Belarus relations need a rethink?*, Briefing Paper 18, The Finnish Institute of International Affairs, Helsinki 2008.

⁴⁹ *Eastern Partnership: The Opening Report*, (eds) Beata Wojna, Mateusz Gniazdowski, op. cit., pp. 62-64.

be resisted until the governing regime severs its authoritarian grip and political pluralism is installed. Conversely, there are those that view EaP as a potentially powerful tool which could prise the country out of isolation, bring about democratisation and thus weaken the current regime – the view of Alaksandr Milinkevitch (a former Presidential candidate).

Given the domestic political context in Belarus the EU is proceeding on what it calls a “pragmatic” basis – replete with some “flexibility”⁵⁰. Entailing more frequent high-level EU delegations meeting both government and opposition groups in Minsk, the full inclusion of Belarusian civil society groups in the EaP civil society forum, an EU-Belarus dialogue on human rights, the start of discussions on a “shadow” ENP action plan, involving both government and civil society groups, as well as discussions of visa facilitation issues and mobility – an important area, since Belarusian citizens have to pay twice the price for a Schengen visa than other Eastern neighbours. In all, this deal represents somewhat of a recalibration of EU-Belarus relations: political conditionality remains in place, but at the same time the EU has improved upon the positive incentives it could offer in exchange for democratisation. Thus far, Minsk seems to be disposed to taking the bait, the government has put forward a number of joint projects with Ukraine and Lithuania, on cultural, energy and transport initiatives, notably the modernisation of a transport corridor linking Kiev with the Lithuanian port of Klaipeda via Minsk and Vilnius.

The Southern Caucasus – A Mixed Picture

The three states of the South Caucasus represent a diverse grouping with differentiated expectations of their future relations with the EU. At the same time there are common threads that bring these three countries on to the EU’s radar and the EaP agenda, namely energy, unresolved conflicts (Nagorno Karabakh, Abkhazia and South Ossetia) and problematic, if not absent, transitions to democracy.

Though Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia had all become part of the European Neighbourhood Policy by 2006, when compared with those Eastern neighbours that lie closer to the EU’s borders, Brussels has arguably been less decisive and consistent in this region. Indeed, in the initial conception of ENP the three South Caucasian states were absent – deemed too remote from the EU, rabidly unstable and firmly

⁵⁰ Benita Ferrero-Waldner address to the European Parliament, 16 December 2009, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=//EP//TEXT+CRE+20091216+ITEM-010+DOC+XML+V0//FR&language=FR>.

within Russia's orbit to become part of EU neighbourhood policies. Whilst these factors still remain valid, EU endeavours have taken up a pace over recent years, with EU delegations being set up in Armenia and Azerbaijan in 2008.

It has been argued that EU policy has tended to be driven by “interests” in this region, as opposed to the types of values espoused in ENP declarations – in large part due to energy interests in the context of the long-planned Nabucco pipeline⁵¹. Moreover, as well as the region's relations with Russia to consider, regional relations with Iran and Turkey also have a strong bearing on the EU's manoeuvrability and capacity for agenda setting. Finally, although it varies from country to country the “big personalities” of installed leaders play a crucial role in the political cultures of all three states and represent a significant drag on efforts at democratisation and stymieing the impact of civil society. One of the consequences of all of this is that from a current vantage point the EU seems to be prone to accepting the status quo and is proving to be quite timid at inspiring further democratisation through leverage and conditionality – especially in the case of Azerbaijan⁵².

Georgia – a Willing Participant, but a bit of a Wild Cannon

The Georgian government's broad support for the Eastern Partnership flows from the decidedly pro-EU, pro-NATO course of Georgian foreign policy since the election of Saakashvili in 2003. Events in Georgia have provided important impulses behind the development of EaP. First, it was hoped in the West that the Rose Revolution in Georgia would inspire further democratic transitions across the region and the installation of pro-EU regimes. And second, the Georgian-Russia war of August 2008 brought about a greater urgency to the setting up of the EaP. EU efforts at this time demonstrated solidarity with the Georgian government and subsequently after the war the EU remained in the region in the form of the EU Monitoring Mission (EUMM), which has had its mandate extended to September 2010.

⁵¹ The Nabucco pipeline from Ezurum in Turkey through to Austria is a major part of the EU's intent to diversify its energy sources. It would link up with existing and other planned pipelines in the Caucasus/Central Asia region, specifically the Tabriz–Erzurum pipeline (Iran to Turkey) and the South Caucasus Pipeline (from Baku to Ezurum via Georgia), which would, in turn, link with the planned Trans-Caspian gas pipeline under the Caspian sea from Turkmenistan to Baku in Azerbaijan.

⁵² Leila Alieva, *Azerbaijan: Power in the Petro-State*, in: *Democracy's Plight in the European Neighbourhood Struggling Transitions and Proliferating Dynasties*, (eds) Michael Emerson, Richard Youngs, Centre for European Policy Studies, Brussels 2009, pp. 112-120, <http://www.ceps.eu/book/democracy%E2%80%99s-plight-european-neighbourhood-struggling-transitions-and-proliferating-dynasties>.

However, with late 2009 as a vantage point the bad state of relations between Georgia and Russia, as noted elsewhere in this volume, is actually now less of a driver for the development of the EaP. Moreover, as noted above, the EU is much more circumspect about the Saakashvili government and its commitment to democracy, Georgia's actions (which are now broadly acknowledged as escalating the conflict), may have got the West's attention, secured more funding and an EU presence on the ground, but crucially damaged Georgia's reputation and exposed the President as rather reckless. Thus the state of affairs between the EU and Georgia is arguably less straightforward than it seemed prior to August 2008.

The factors and recent developments mentioned above set the context for the Georgian perspective on the EaP. The Eastern Partnership was positively received in Georgia and was viewed as a means to anchor and advance its own reform project, to disassociate itself further from Russia and rally others to its cause. It is also clear in Georgia's case that while the EaP has the potential to become a more effective Neighborhood Policy, it is not a substitute for an effective conflict policy, neither will it provide a "safe house" for Georgia to pursue a flagrantly anti-Russian policy. Unsurprisingly aside from the normal expectations from EaP, the Georgian government focused on energy and security aspects, with Saakashvili emphasising the importance of completing the Nabucco pipeline, which would enhance Georgia's status as an energy transit country.

Armenia – Modest Expectations

Despite ongoing problems in Armenia, as highlighted above, commentators have argued that the country could be ripe for a democratic transition and possibly greater openness towards EU overtures⁵³. Moreover, EU reporting in 2009 seemed to be broadly satisfied with the general progress being made in the context of the ENP.

The Armenian take on EaP was and remains quite positive, being regarded as a logical step in the development of ENP more broadly. Indeed it can be argued that Armenia is the only ENP neighbour that is overall satisfied with the policy. As argued above, some states want more, some less and others see that their foreign policies do not fit with EaP structures. Of course this highlights Armenia's currently limited ambitions vis-a-vis the EU, but this positive climate also derives from the quiet, yet pro-

⁵³ Richard Giragosian, *Armenia's Crisis for the Non-Democrats*, in: *Democracy's Plight in the European Neighbourhood Struggling Transitions and Proliferating Dynasties*, (eds) Michael Emerson, Richard Youngs, op. cit., pp. 84-92.

ductive forms of cooperation that have been going on between Armenia and the EU in recent times, including the high level technical expertise given to certain governmental departments from the EU advisory group.

Positive overtures from the Armenian government centred on the importance of visa liberalisation, deep free trade and a new Association Agreement. Attention was also drawn to the potential of the proposed regional dimension of EaP, and in particular the capacity for EaP to help address the regions unresolved conflicts, specifically Nagorno Karabakh.

Azerbaijan – Growing Importance of an Energy Provider

The Azeri government's take on EaP was much the same as its overall perspective on ENP, namely positive declarations, but an unwillingness to democratise. Azerbaijan has long since had contractual relations with the EU and formally joined ENP in 2006, but despite the government declaring a convergence of EU and Azeri interests, for a number of reasons Azerbaijan has been the least engaged partner in the South Caucasus region. The presence of energy sources means that Azerbaijan does not have the same type of dependent relationship with the EU as other states – one might argue that there is something of an asymmetric relationship between the EU and Azerbaijan. Moreover, alternative markets for Azerbaijan's energy could arguably be found – thus although the EU has become a top destination for Azeri exports, a sense of real urgency to respond to EU advances and conditionality is not strongly felt by the government in Baku. A convergence on security perspectives is also not to be found.

Although in the ENP action plan for Azerbaijan talks about resolving the Nagorno Karabakh conflict little is given in the way of an actual policy or proposal of how a settlement might be configured, thus the EU is not a partner for Azerbaijan in this important area. The EU defers to the leading role of the OSCE regarding this conflict. These points notwithstanding, the government in Baku outlined its key interests in EaP as security and the fight against terrorism, energy and visa liberalisation. Moves towards a Deep Free Trade Area are also signalled out as a priority, something that can proceed once Azerbaijan joins the WTO.

Table 1. The Eastern Neighbours – Current and Future Perspectives on EaP

Country	Perspective on EaP	EU expectations	Forthcoming Issues and Roadblocks
Moldova	Welcomed as an upgrade in ENP, but concern that EaP may be a policy to permanently side-step the membership question. Bilateral relations with the EU remain the most important. Authorities want the EU to recognise Moldova's progress and leading role in piloting various visa and mobility policies with the EU.	The EU continues to have general expectations for political and economic reforms and continued fight against corruption. An amelioration of the Transnistria impasse is also expected.	Discussions for a new Association Agreement (AA) should proceed in earnest in 2010. The Parliament will hold elections in early 2010 for a new President. If this attempt fails, Moldova's EU integration efforts will be set back.
Ukraine	EaP increasingly disregarded as a basis for EU-Ukraine relations. Ukraine wishes to continue on a strictly bilateral basis as the EU's most important and closest eastern neighbour.	The EU will look to Ukraine for examples of better governance. Brussels will be interested to see how Ukraine-Russia security relations evolve. The fact that Ukraine and Russia have agreed to extend the agreement to keep Russia's Black Sea fleet in place might indicate a tilt towards Moscow.	The results of the 2010 Presidential Election will shape Ukraine's approach to the EU and the West in general. The new Association Agreement will come into being in 2010.
Armenia	Broad satisfaction with EaP	EU expects progress in Armenian-Turkish Rapprochement.	The EU may become bolder in its engagement on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict if a peaceful settlement transpires. The state of Turkish-Armenian relations will have a strong bearing.
Azerbaijan	Unruffled response to EaP. The government has a positive perspective, but is unlikely to make any significant foreign or domestic policy shifts as a result of EaP.	The EU asks for a commitment to human rights, fundamental freedoms, judicial reforms and so on. The EU also expects Azerbaijan to continue to be a predictable and stable energy partner.	The EU may become bolder in its engagement on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The state of Turkish-Armenian relations will have a strong bearing on Azeri foreign policy in the region. Azerbaijan will continue to gain importance on the EU's energy agenda in the context of Nabucco. Hungary's EU Presidency in 2011 will probably pay great attention to Azerbaijan.
Georgia	Positive, but also seeks EU membership.	The EU hopes for a more measured Georgian policy towards Russia over South Ossetia and Abkhazia.	The EU may become less accommodating of the Saakashvili government. But at the same time, stability and predictability in this country (which is also part of the energy transit route to the EU) will remain an EU interest.
Belarus	Interested. The government was keen to engage, but unwilling to accept concomitant calls for reform.	The EU's continued objective is for the installation of democracy. A more flexible, pragmatic EU policy is emerging, which emphasises a more modest step by step approach.	EU-Belarus dialogue could intensify as a result of EaP, but much depends on the latter's relationship with Russia and willingness to democratise. "Technical cooperation" will continue a pace, largely underneath the political radar. Pro-Europe opposition parties and groups will be split on the issue of the EU's engagement with the ruling regime in Minsk.

Source: authors own findings.

Conclusions – A Mixed Reception in the Neighbourhood

When the European Union enlarged in 2004 and again in 2007, the once distant states in Eastern Europe became the EU's immediate neighbours. The prospect of closer proximity prompted a series of shifts in EU foreign policy which saw the neighbours being increasingly treated in differentiated ways and less as a post-Soviet space lumped into the same grouping as Russia. The ENP and more recently the EaP are manifestations of this policy shift, with the latter, alongside the Union for the Mediterranean, also signifying a slackening of the EU's previous position of placing together the eastern and southern neighbourhoods into one policy frame.

As this chapter discussed, EaP has come into being at a time of change and even crisis both inside the EU and in the Eastern neighbourhood. EU member states have been engaged in the protracted process of ratifying and now implementing the Lisbon Treaty, whilst most of the Eastern neighbours have been in the throes of domestic political and economic turmoil. The Eastern neighbourhood remains a domain of instability and irregular democratisation. The potential for a further outbreak of violence in Georgia remains, and other contested territories and regional rivalries pepper the region.

The EaP was well received by all partner states, though over the course of a year initial enthusiasm has waned. Moreover, the neighbours have different types of relations with the EU and hold different visions of how these relations should develop – this is, of course, the prime factor shaping perspectives on EaP.

In a nutshell, for Moldova and Ukraine, which both seek EU membership, EaP offers relatively little that is new and can be already found in ENP Action Plans. The prospect of regional integration and cooperation amongst the six, as posed by EaP, is also not seen as an attractive innovation, but rather a potential drag on their bilateral relations with the EU and individual membership prospects.

The three South Caucasus states, as well as Belarus present a different picture. Since the prospect of membership is not on the radar, perspectives on EaP and cooperative relations with the EU more generally result from a range of other issues. A cruder cost-benefit analysis based on levels of economic dependence/interdependence with the EU, the state of relations with Russia, the salience of energy supply/transit in relations with the EU and whether the EU is (or potentially) a security guarantor with a significant presence on the ground are factors that shape approaches to EaP. The situation with Belarus is also marked by its outlier status and its particular relationship with Russia – the government's attitude to cooperation with the

EU and openness to EaP overtures is dictated by an evaluation as to whether this would undermine the ruling regime's grip on power or help consolidate it.

As posited at the start of this chapter, the success of EaP is premised on commitment from the EU side, but more importantly from the neighbours themselves. The discussion presented above projects a rather mixed picture characterised by mild interest and disappointment from some quarters. But there is also a positive recognition of a set of common agenda points that the EU shares with virtually all of its neighbours, revolving around energy security, mobility and visa liberalisation and the settlement of regional conflicts. This being said, this overview of the reception of EaP in the neighbouring states suggests that there may well be a shortfall between the neighbours' expectations of when significant change will come about and the EU's capacity to deliver.

The Eastern Partnership in the Context of Other EU Regional Initiatives in the East*

On May 7 2009 at the Prague Summit, the European Union (EU) launched its newest initiative directed towards its closest neighbours: the Eastern Partnership (EaP). Just as 2008 saw the countries on the Southern flank of the Union take centre stage with the creation of The Union for the Mediterranean, 2009 undoubtedly belonged to the EU's eastern neighbours. The project is the fruit of efforts on the part of Poland and Sweden, supported by the Czech presidency. Thanks to the determination of its sponsors and a favourable political climate within the EU, it was possible to inaugurate the EaP in a relatively short period of time – by EU standards. For Poland however, the EaP kick-off is the result of a longstanding campaign to embolden the EU's eastern policy, a drive which began when Poland wasn't yet a member of the EU.

Being a very new initiative the Eastern Partnership has immediately attracted the attention of many EU experts and academics, who in a number of papers have attempted to examine its shortcomings and assess the opportunities it proposes. This article looks from a fresh angle; instead of dealing with the project itself, this chapter sets the EaP in a broader context of other EU regional initiatives in the East.

One should not forget that EaP is not the only regional initiative of the EU on its eastern borders. In 2007 the EU initiated the Black Sea Synergy, which encompassing all of the EaP participants (except Belarus) has prompted some to raise concerns about a duplication of efforts, between this organization and EaP. Although the Commission has been consistently stressing the compatibility of the two projects, their competition over funds and political support remains a fact. The same applies to the Northern Dimension. This often discounted initiative is the oldest, but relatively well functioning venture, which could serve as a good example for the other two, especially when it comes to its *modus operandi*. With the growing importance of the Arctic region, the Swedish presidency and its flagship project of the Baltic Sea Strategy, as well as Iceland knocking on the EU's door, it would be no surprise if the Northern Dimen-

* This article is based on my research conducted in Natolin European Centre. Its full results are presented in the research paper *Perfect together? Eastern Partnership in the Context of Other EU Initiatives in the East*, http://www.natolin.edu.pl/pdf/analizy/Natolin_Analiza_5_2009.pdf.

sion was given renewed attention. As this chapter will show, such a development may mean that EaP could face yet more competition.

Although these are not tackled in this particular chapter, one should also keep in mind the EU's other frameworks for relations with its neighbours. The European Economic Area and bilateral relations with Switzerland often serve as a point of reference for the possible future scenarios of relations with EU's eastern and southern neighbours, especially in the area of economic integration. The first has already inspired the European Parliament which in its resolution on enlargement in 2008 proposed a so called EEA+ as one of the options for tightening bonds between the EU and its eastern neighbours¹.

Presenting the EaP in the context of the EU's other eastern regional initiatives, although very different, serves a certain goal. First and foremost it shows the broader context in which EaP will be functioning. In practical terms it means competition for the same funds and resources. On the political level it means competition for support of the member states, with often divergent interests. This competition clearly becomes even more dramatic once the southern dimension of the ENP is taken into account. Secondly, it allows for a clearer definition of opportunities and barriers which can be encountered throughout project implementation, especially since the EaP intends to partially exploit the mechanisms used by the other initiatives. With such thoughts in mind, it is useful to take a closer look at how these mechanisms really function so as to see which solutions are worth emulating.

The Northern Dimension

The Northern Dimension (ND) was originally a Finnish initiative whose aim was to coordinate the actions undertaken by the EU, its member states and Norway and Iceland in their relations with Russia as well as the then EU candidate states: Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Poland. Inaugurated in 1999, geographically the ND initially included the Baltic Sea basin as well as northwestern Russia with Kaliningrad Oblast². Behind the initiative was Finland's desire to create an EU context for those activities concerning this far-flung northeastern peripheral region. Finland was also seeking to

¹ Report on the Commission's 2007 enlargement strategy paper, PE doc. A6-0266/2008, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+REPORT+A6-2008-0266+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>.

² The implementation of a Northern Dimension for the policies of the European Union, Conclusions adopted by the Council on 31 May 1999, http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/north_dim/docs/index_en.htm.

protect its interests in the region ahead of the EU Eastern Bloc enlargement, which was to include countries whose ambitions as regards eastern policy could cause the center of gravity of EU activity to move south³.

The first stage of the ND, which included two action plans for the years 2000-2003 and 2004-2006 and which was based on the classic *modus operandi* of the European Commission, did not bring about the expected results, primarily because of the limited involvement of Russia. Russia was not particularly interested in cooperation with the EU, accusing it of taking a one-dimensional approach in the development of both action plans⁴. After the 2004 enlargement when the entire weight of the ND was resting squarely on Russia's shoulders, Finland – which at the time held the EU presidency – made giving the ND a more open character toward Russia one of its priorities. The ND was recast as a partnership between the sides participating in the initiative – i.e. the EU, Russia, Norway and Iceland – which was the only form of cooperation that Finland believed could lead to constructive cooperation with Russia⁵. Indeed, Russia's attitude toward the initiative became more positive from that point on, especially in relation to other EU regional initiatives. The geographical scope of the ND was also modified, extending it to include the Arctic and the Barents Sea, two regions gaining rapidly in importance. Because of the latter region, Canada and the United States were granted observer status in the ND as well⁶.

The ND, in contrast to the other EU regional initiatives in the east, is not part of the ENP but rather an autonomous EU foreign policy tool. It is also distinguished by a unique philosophy that is equitable in character and treats all sides working together under its auspices as partners, which implies full participation in formulating and implementing projects undertaken within the scope of this initiative. Accordingly, it also operates under the principle of co-financing. It is worth noting that the increased participation of Russia in the revamped ND is in no small part a consequence of Russia's

³ Hiski Haukkala, *Towards a Union of Dimensions: The effects of eastern enlargement on the Northern Dimension*, FIIA Report 2002/2, Finnish Institute of International Affairs, Helsinki 2002, p. 8.

⁴ Pami Aalto, Helge Blakkisrud, Hanna Smith, *Introduction*, in: *The New Northern Dimension of the European Neighbourhood*, (eds) Pami Aalto, Helge Blakkisrud, Hanna Smith, CEPS Paperbacks, Brussels 2009, p. 8, <http://shop.ceps.be/node/1595>.

⁵ *Energising the New Northern Dimension*, (eds) Pami Aalto, Helge Blakkisrud, Hanna Smith, Policy Paper, Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Helsinki 2008, p. 11, http://www.uta.fi/laitokset/iss/monnetcentre/Energising_the_new_northern_dimension.pdf.

⁶ Northern Dimension Policy Framework Document, http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/north_dim/docs/frame_pol_1106_en.pdf.

greater affluence, boosting its ability to amplify its financial contribution to the projects realized within the ND⁷.

Furthermore, the ND to a great extent relies on local and regional actors and institutions, including the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, the Council of the Baltic Sea States, the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Arctic Council, as well as the following financial institutions: the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the European Investment Bank (EIB), the Nordic Investment Bank (NIB) and the World Bank. The great number of and the very active role played by these and other institutions present in the region are an important characteristic of the ND.

Finally, as evidenced by examples given below, the ND focuses on politically marginal issues, tackling matters of practical significance revolving around the subject of the EU – Russian border. This is precisely the reason why the ND is deemed a successful initiative, as it skillfully steers around controversial issues in EU – Russia relations as well as among the EU member states themselves.

By design, the ND is a regional expression of the four EU – Russia Common Spaces instituted in 2003. It is intended to serve as an instrument facilitating the introduction of roadmaps for implementation of the Common Spaces where they relate to the ND geographic scope⁸. The foundation of the priority sectors for cooperation within the ND is comprised of the four Common Spaces, including Common Economic Space, Common Space of Freedom, Security and Justice, Common Space on External Security (civil protection) and Common Space on Research, Education and Culture. It also includes issues beyond the four EU – Russia Common Spaces: environment, nuclear security and natural resources, as well as healthcare and social well-being⁹. And – as a result of the fact that they are the least controversial – it is within the scope of the latter two areas that the greatest number of projects is being realized.

The ND also possesses an institutional structure which guarantees the continuity of the project as well as the political support of the partner countries. This structure is made up of biennial ND foreign affairs ministers' meetings which define the political direction going forward and monitor prior accomplishments (the last one took place in October 2008); senior officials' meetings at the ministerial level that take place at least annually, at a time not concurrent with the foreign affairs ministers' meetings; and the specially established Steering Group, a group of experts consisting of representatives

⁷ Pami Aalto, Helge Blakkisrud, Hanna Smith, *Introduction*, in: *The New Northern Dimension of the European Neighbourhood*, (eds) Pami Aalto, Helge Blakkisrud, Hanna Smith, op. cit., pp. 10-11.

⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁹ *Ibidem*.

from all four sides, which meets three times yearly and manages the activities undertaken within the scope of the ND on an ongoing basis.

The mechanism driving the ND relies on a model of partnership which must enjoy the support of all ND partners, have at its disposal financial resources assigned in advance and, importantly, be autonomously managed. In addition, it must also show measurable results in the ND priority spaces identified above. Currently, there exist two partnerships; one dealing with environmental protection¹⁰ and another one handling healthcare¹¹.

There is also an information system in place within the ND framework. It can be accessed through the European Commission website and contains information on regional projects pursued under the ND initiative and grouped by ND priority spaces. Its purpose is to avoid duplication of effort and boost efficiency¹².

Official ND documents also list a number of other measures not directly implemented as part of the initiative (nor the two partnerships mentioned previously, being the NDEP and NDPHS) but which are comprised within the ND priority spaces¹³. Currently, starting cooperation in the area of energy is also being considered. Meanwhile, actual work is being accomplished on inaugurating a partnership in the area of transport and logistics.

As the longest-running and generally well-received initiative in the region, the ND often serves as a point of reference – especially as regards its mechanics, but also the principles behind it – for the newly created Black Sea Synergy, the Eastern Partnership, and even for the basic premises of the ENP itself. The need to coordinate actions impacting the region taken by various external actors, EU institutions as well as EU member states – which is the cornerstone of the philosophy behind the ND – is also the overarching aim of the ENP and is at the core of the regional initiatives submitted to the ND forum. A defining feature of the ND, especially since its reform during Finland's EU presidency, is the principle of partnership whereby all sides have equal status, as well as the principle of joint ownership between the EU and the beneficiary countries, also applied albeit with mixed results to the ENP¹⁴. Joint

¹⁰ Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership, NDEP, www.ndep.org.

¹¹ Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-being, NDPHS, www.ndphs.org.

¹² Northern Dimension Information System, http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/north_dim/nis/ind_ex_en.htm.

¹³ *Progress Report for the First Ministerial meeting of the Revised Northern Dimension Policy*, http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2004_2009/documents/dv/deca20090225_/deca20090225_09.pdf.

¹⁴ Erwan Lannon, Peter van Elsuwege, *The EU's Northern Dimension and the EMP-ENP: Institutional Frameworks and Decision-Making Processes Compared*, in: *The European Union and the Mediterranean. The Mediterranean's European Challenge*, (ed.) Peter G. Xuereb, University of Malta and Peter G. Xuereb, Malta 2004, p. 69, <http://www.fscpo.unict.it/EuroMed/EDRC5/eunighbours01.pdf>.

ownership implies the active participation of all stakeholders involved, beginning with the stage when the policies are being formulated (as action plans and association agreements). In the case of the ND, joint ownership extends to the co-financing of specific projects.

The ND is nonetheless distinguished from the EaP and the Black Sea Synergy by its unique aims and the region it includes in its scope. Not counting Russia, it encompasses fully democratic countries featuring highly developed economies which can afford to bear the costs of implementing the projects pursued under the auspices of this initiative.

The ND is also not at risk of falling prey to the controversial issue of further EU enlargement. The dissenting positions taken by various EU member states on this issue cast a long shadow on the remaining EU regional initiatives in the east. Meanwhile, Russia – as opposed to for example Ukraine and Georgia – does not seek EU membership, instead choosing to play the role of an EU strategic partner. Employing the principle of joint ownership as the basis for the ENP is thus an attempt to substitute the principle of conditionality, a core concept of the enlargement policy. For the ultimate goal of the enlargement policy – i.e. EU membership – is not offered to the ENP beneficiary countries, although that is precisely what they often aspire to achieve.

This is not to say that the ND has no inherent limitations. Crucially, it lacks the ambition to solve principal problems plaguing EU-Russia relations, instead restricting its scope to merely addressing rather practical issues which do not require making decisions at the highest political level. Cooperation in the area of so-called “hard” security has been consciously omitted from the ND agenda, as have been matters relating to foreign and security policy. Cooperation in the domains of transport, logistics and energy is being potentially considered but as regards the latter area the most controversial issues – i.e. concerning new oil and gas deposits – are shunned. The focus is on adjacent subjects, such as environmental protection, renewable energy sources and perhaps joint initiatives around the exploitation of the above-mentioned resources¹⁵.

The Black Sea Synergy

The third – chronologically, the second – regional initiative which, unlike the other two, operates on the southeastern flank of the EU is the Black Sea Synergy. The Black Sea basin region is a whole mosaic of problems and potential threats, including “hard” security issues as dramatically evidenced by the war in Georgia in August 2008. It is

¹⁵ *Energising the New Northern Dimension*, (eds) Pami Aalto, Helge Blakkisrud, Hanna Smith, op. cit.

also an area boasting great economic potential, especially for growth in the energy sector which incidentally is of strategic importance to the EU member states.

In fact, up until the time when the discussions surrounding the Black Sea Synergy began and the subsequent inauguration of this initiative, energy questions and the gas and oil pipelines crisscrossing the region dominated the interests of the member states¹⁶. The discussion on the need to better coordinate EU activities in the Black Sea basin intensified in view of the impending Eastern Bloc enlargement and especially the accession of Romania and Bulgaria, which was to shift EU borders to the shores of the Black Sea¹⁷. The need for enhanced coordination of the EU policies already being implemented and for increased commitment to the stabilization, democratization and economic development of the region became the direct motivation for the launching of the Black Sea Synergy initiative. Germany led the way, with the new regional initiative in the Black Sea basin becoming one of the priorities of its 2007 EU presidency. The European Commission swiftly seized the baton pointing to the ENP reform plan announced the previous year, which among other items stipulated the expansion of the regional approach¹⁸. Ultimately, the Commission was able to formulate the Synergy and issued a relevant Communication in the same year¹⁹.

Compared to the ND, the Black Sea Synergy is a much more ambitious endeavor. Geographically, it includes the Black Sea countries (i.e. Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania, Georgia, Ukraine and Russia) as well as Armenia, Azerbaijan, Moldova and Greece. Its goal is to coordinate initiatives on the regional level which revolve around problems concerning the Black Sea, especially in such sectors as energy, transport and the environment, as well as movement of persons and security.

Three processes, all mainly relying on bilateral cooperation between the EU and the countries of the Black Sea region, form the basis for relations between both sides. The first one is the ENP, which comprises Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, Armenia and Azerbaijan; the second is the enlargement process which includes Turkey; and the third is the strategic partnership with Russia. The Black Sea Synergy is intended to in-

¹⁶ Mustafa Aydin, *Europe's next shore: the Black Sea region after EU enlargement*, ISS-EU Occasional Paper, June 2004, No 53.

¹⁷ Inter alia ibidem; Terry D. Adams, Michael Emerson, Laurence David Mee, Marius Vahl, *Europe's Black Sea Dimension*, CEPS Paperback, Brussels 2002; Fabrizio Tassinari, *A Synergy for Black Sea Regional Cooperation: Guidelines for an EU Initiative*, CEPS Policy Brief No 105, Brussels 2006.

¹⁸ Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on Strengthening the European Neighbourhood Policy, COM (2006) 726, http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/com06_726_en.pdf.

¹⁹ Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament. Black Sea Synergy – a new regional cooperation initiative, COM (2007) 160, http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/com07_160_en.pdf.

fuse the existing forms of cooperation with a multilateral character in all the areas where it could increase the efficiency of the initiatives being implemented. In addition, the policy aims to enhance coordination between the three processes mentioned above, as well as other projects deployed in the region (such as the Baku Initiative in the energy arena²⁰). Its overarching goal, however, is to develop and strengthen regional cooperation, as well as to encourage and support the cooperation of the Black Sea region as a whole with the EU. That is the reason for exerting pressure on the EU to engage with bodies such as the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC)²¹.

The Commission also emphasizes the collaborative character of the initiative which requires active participation of the beneficiary countries (also with regard to co-financing) and is intended to move the initiative's center of gravity away from Brussels and closer to the Black Sea region itself. Nonetheless, there are no plans to create new institutional structures, unlike the cases of the ND and the EaP. Cooperation within the Black Sea Synergy framework is plainly organized to rely on a thematic approach, defined by the European Commission on the occasion of the announcement of the revamped European Neighbourhood Policy in 2006²². The assumption behind the thematic approach is that developing multilateral cooperation with the ENP beneficiary countries will revolve around specific thematic areas, such as transport, the environment or energy.

In the case of the Black Sea Synergy the Commission defines as many as 12 such areas²³. By defining so many areas the Commission certainly raises the bar for the Black Sea Synergy, especially since it chose not to omit the most sensitive issues such as resolving regional conflicts which today can hardly anymore be referred to as "frozen". Although the Black Sea Synergy definitely fulfills a socializing role, it is nonetheless difficult to imagine that this initiative – moderated for the most part by the European Commission – will become the forum where these conflicts are settled.

²⁰ Inaugurated in 2004 at a ministerial meeting on energy in Baku, with the participation of the European Commission and the Black Sea and Caspian Sea countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Romania, Georgia, Moldova, Turkey, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, as well as Russia and Iran as observers), this initiative aims to promote the process of gradual integration of local energy markets with their EU counterpart as well as to support the efforts to transport Caspian oil and natural gas to Europe. Thematically, the initiative also includes transport. Two specific projects being implemented within its framework is the INOGATE program in the area of energy and the TRACECA program in the area of transport.

²¹ Other than the Black Sea Synergy countries, members of this organization also include Albania and Serbia.

²² Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on Strengthening the European Neighbourhood Policy, COM (2006) 726, op. cit.

²³ Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament. Black Sea Synergy – a new regional cooperation initiative, COM (2007) 160, op. cit.

In the remaining areas much depends on the role of the BSEC, which is meant to sustain cooperation in the region. However, this organization is not especially active in all of the above-mentioned areas, and, worse yet, has to cope with numerous other problems²⁴. Fundamentally, cooperation between the BSEC and the EU is not exactly harmonious as differences have emerged in the interests of individual BSEC members and the EU, which makes these countries reluctant to elevate certain issues from their current bilateral status to the rank of multilateral cooperation²⁵.

At the implementation level – taking the ND as a model – the use of a cooperation mechanism, driven by formulating specific goals and executing specific projects intended to help achieve those goals, has been proposed. Experience shows that the biggest potential for such a *modus operandi* lies in the above-mentioned areas of transport, energy and environmental protection. Because of the fact that these areas happen to be the ones where BSEC is most effective, one can conclude that projects in these areas will constitute the essence of the Black Sea Synergy initiative.

The report summing up the first year of the Black Sea Synergy implementation names activities undertaken in nearly all of the areas mentioned above²⁶. For the most part, however, these activities involve initiatives pre-dating the inauguration of the Synergy, while other activities have not yet moved beyond the study, research or consultation stages. So far, specific new projects exist only in the area of cross-border cooperation where a common operational program (i.e. the Black Sea CBC Program) involving ten countries in the region has begun. Another example is the transnational program for cooperation in the coastal areas between Romania, Bulgaria and Moldova. Moreover, at the initiative of Romania, the Black Sea Forum was established; its focus is to foster civil society in the region. Recently Romania has also circulated a paper proposing establishing a Black Sea cooperation platform on migration and development²⁷.

The report likewise indicates the future development directions of the Black Sea Synergy, pointing to transport, the environment and energy as well as Black Sea security as areas with the greatest potential for cooperation. Referencing the ND, the report also postulates that similar policy mechanics be used, meaning that the activities

²⁴ For example Georgi Kamov, *The EU's Black Sea synergy: From concept to implementation*, in: *The European Neighbourhood Policy: Time to Deliver*, (ed.) Krassimir Y. Nikolov, BЕСSA, Sofia 2008.

²⁵ Mustafa Aydin, *Europe's next shore: the Black Sea region after EU enlargement*, op. cit., p. 29.

²⁶ Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament. Report on the first year of implementation of the Black Sea Synergy, COM (2008) 391, <http://www.delgeco.ec.europa.eu/en/Support/blacksea.pdf>.

²⁷ Council of the European Union, 7241/1/09 Rev 1, <http://www.statewatch.org/news/2009/mar/eu-black-sea-cooperation-platform-7241-rev1-09.pdf>.

pursued by the Black Sea Synergy ought to be based on the model of sector-specific partnerships, especially in the context of financing and the participation of international financial institutions. Bearing in mind that the countries involved in the Black Sea Synergy are considerably less affluent compared with those comprising the EaP, the co-financing principle could present problems in the future. However, there lies significant potential in the various ways in which the different EU financial instruments can be linked together, thus mitigating the risks²⁸.

In a discussion of the future of the Black Sea Synergy, one cannot overlook the issue of further EU enlargement, nor the proposals to substitute the enlargement policy with one that brings the EU Neighbours nearer by establishing a framework for cooperation that is an alternative to outright membership. In the case of the Black Sea Synergy, this issue relates above all to Turkey. In light of the idea of surrounding the EU with a ring of countries more or less closely associated with it – a concept that is especially popular in Germany one can infer that the call for the creation of a Union of the Black Sea in place of the Black Sea Synergy is nothing more than an attempt to devise a way for Turkey to get closer to the EU but not to become a member. Incidentally, the Mediterranean Union supported by Nicolas Sarkozy is intended to play a very similar role²⁹.

In the same vein, even before the Black Sea Synergy was inaugurated, it was billed as a substitute for the need to ultimately define future EU borders³⁰. Meanwhile in Turkey, there are voices that deem full membership too costly and instead advocate an association on preferential terms, although the explicit foreign policy goal of the main political parties remains nothing less than full integration with the EU. If Turkey takes such a tainted view of the Black Sea Synergy, it may simply become entirely discouraged toward the initiative.

Russia's attitude toward the Black Sea Synergy is also problematic. When this initiative was inaugurated, Russia did not see a need to create new structures for cooperation among the countries of the Black Sea region, arguing that even though EU presence in the region increased after the enlargement, both Romania and Bulgaria are

²⁸ Because of the countries involved, the funds for the initiatives can be tapped from sources including the ENPI (European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument), pre-accession funds (whenever they involve Turkey) and the Regional Development Fund (whenever they involve Romania and Bulgaria).

²⁹ Julio Crespo MacLennan, *The EU – Turkey Negotiations: Between the Siege of Vienna and the Reconquest of Constantinople*, in: *Turkey's Accession to the European Union. An Unusual Candidacy*, (ed.) Constantine Arvanitopolous, Springer, Berlin 2009, p. 28.

³⁰ Mustafa Aydin, *Europe's next shore: the Black Sea region after EU enlargement*, op. cit., p. 33.

members of the BSEC which should remain the primary regional cooperative forum³¹. Accordingly, Russia did not take part in preparing a common position during the Black Sea Synergy inaugural meeting in Kiev in February 2008 attended by foreign ministers, instead preferring a joint EU-BSEC declaration³². However, given the launch of the EaP, a new vehicle for cooperation in the region – which although open to Russia’s participation does not explicitly include it – Russia’s attitude toward the Black Sea Synergy may yet change.

In conclusion, it is apparent that – starting with the highest political level – the Black Sea Synergy is faced with considerable challenges. On the one hand, it is confronted with suspicion on the part of the largest EU partners in the region – i.e. Turkey and Russia – both of which play a major role in the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), the purported primary EU partner in the whole endeavor. On the other hand, merely a year after the Black Sea Synergy was inaugurated, a new EU project – the Eastern Partnership – has thrown down the gauntlet to this initiative. The lack of unambiguous political support could in turn directly affect the specific activities undertaken within the Black Sea Synergy framework. As demonstrated by the report summing up the first year of the Black Sea Synergy implementation, the accomplishments are so far rather modest, although in fairness it is difficult to expect meaningful results in such a short period of time.

How does the Eastern Partnership fit in?

From the perspective of the EaP, certainly the most important of all the initiatives is its direct Neighbour, i.e. the Black Sea Synergy. Relations between the two projects have been controversial from the beginning. In her first reaction to the joint Polish-Swedish initiative, European Commissioner for ENP, Ferrero Waldner, warned against a duplication of efforts³³. The working document accompanying the Communication on EaP issued by the Commission brings up this issue, devoting most of its attention to the Black Sea Synergy³⁴. The concern about competition from the EaP

³¹ Andrew Rettman, *EU’s new Black Sea policy faces Russian misgivings*, “EU Observer”, 16 February 2007, available at <http://euobserver.com/?aid=23494>.

³² Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament Report on the first year of implementation of the Black Sea Synergy, COM (2008) 391, op. cit.

³³ Speech by Benita Ferrero-Waldner, European Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighborhood Policy at the Parliamentary Conference on the “European Neighborhood Policy East”, Brussels, 5 June 2008, <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=SPEECH/08/306&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>.

³⁴ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council. Eastern Partnership, SEC (2008) 2974/3, http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/eastern/docs/sec08_2974_en.pdf.

has recently been quite forcefully expressed in the European Parliament, where a demand was submitted to create a Union of the Black Sea, which would be modeled on the Mediterranean Union and which would in the long run absorb the EaP³⁵. Such a measure would definitely strengthen the Black Sea Synergy politically which is what its supporters advocate, but given its poor record it is not certain if it could adequately bind the EU and its eastern Neighbours together.

In the working document the Commission emphasizes that whereas the primary goal of the EaP is to develop the potential for its beneficiary countries to integrate more closely with the EU, the Black Sea Synergy focuses instead on the problems facing a specific region (i.e. the Black Sea basin) requiring a multilateral, regional approach. Accordingly, the main objective of the Synergy is to support regional cooperation. Meanwhile, the direct involvement of the Black Sea Synergy unit director – who oversees its implementation on a daily basis – in the preparations for the EaP within the Commission could indicate that the Commission is interested in maintaining coherence within the ENP framework³⁶.

Nonetheless, a closer look at the initiatives proposed within the multilateral framework of the EaP reveals that in the Commission documents the same tasks are being discussed for the Black Sea Synergy, in the area of energy for instance. The question that presents itself then is whether the EaP genuinely represents added value, even with respect to energy, and thus whether the two projects will bolster one another or merely result in a duplication of efforts. This question is ever more relevant when one takes into account the fact that the inclusion of Belarus in the framework of the Black Sea Synergy is being openly considered. If that came to pass, the Black Sea Synergy would wind up containing the entire geographical scope of the EaP³⁷. At the end of the day and on the most mundane level the main objective will be to obtain financing, and the resources in the ENP budget are limited as it is. Not to mention the political support of member states that somehow found themselves torn apart over the two projects, even if their political interests require involvement in both. Greece for example, together with Romania and Bulgaria, has almost exclusively focused on the Black Sea Synergy, even if – according to the Commission’s stand – it is the EaP that has the potential to genuinely bring about change in the neighbourhood.

³⁵ The contention that the Mediterranean Union would absorb the EaP was included in the amendment no. 50 to the annual European Parliament report on EU foreign policy, http://europarl.europa.eu/meetdoc/2004_2009/documents/am/756/756393/756393pl.pdf.

³⁶ Andrew Rettman, *EU assigns funds and staff to Eastern Partnership*, “EU Observer”, 20 March 2009, <http://euobserver.com/9/27824>.

³⁷ Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament Report on the first year of implementation of the Black Sea Synergy, COM (2008) 391, op. cit.

It is also worth noting that in the not-so-distant past some member states – mostly France and Italy – were advocating EaP to include Turkey and Russia³⁸. In the former case, given Russia's rather questionable role in any international organisation, especially in this region, it would be utterly disastrous for this initiative, especially as it is perceived by it as a threat. Poland is willing to invite Russia into some of the EaP projects, but at a later stage, when everything is up and running³⁹. Turkey however seems to be somewhat underestimated by Poland in the whole process. Taking into account its much more constructive role in the region it would be worth while examining its potential in this regard⁴⁰.

Incidentally, the EaP remains open to both Turkey and Russia on the multilateral level. These kinds of demands, however demonstrate the diverging priorities of the member states as regards regulating relations between the EU and its nearest neighbours, especially those who openly declare their aspirations for membership. This state of affairs directly translates to the challenges faced by the ENP and undoubtedly presents a challenge to the EaP. The controversy around the appropriate term to name the EaP countries in the Prague Declaration⁴¹ was symptomatic of such problems. Ultimately, describing them by the term Eastern European States seems to have pleased both sides, i.e. both the supporters of further eastern EU enlargement because the adjective “European” was used, and the opponents because the prefix “Eastern” sharply distinguishes them from the unqualified European states.

As previously indicated, similar controversies do not plague the ND, although it is worth keeping this initiative in mind for it may serve the EaP and the Black Sea Synergy – both of which are firmly rooted in the ENP – as an example, particularly from a practical point of view (if not the conceptual). The most frequently cited attribute of the ND is its *modus operandi*, i.e. the model of partnership. A similar model is evoked in the documents pertaining to the Black Sea Synergy and the Polish-Swedish EaP proposal⁴². In this model one may find useful examples for the EaP regarding the execution of projects based on a framework involving various sources of finance and

³⁸ Dominika Pszczółkowska, *Partnerstwo Wschodnie na razie bez pieniędzy*, “Gazeta Wyborcza”, 24 February 2009, available at http://wyborcza.pl/1,75477,6310845,Partnerstwo_Wschodnie_na_razie_bez_pieniedzy.html.

³⁹ Information received by author at the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs in June 2009.

⁴⁰ As suggested in Adam Szymanski, *South Caucasus- the Case for Joint Commitment of Turkey and the EU*, PISM, Warsaw 2009, http://www.pism.pl/zalaczniki/Strategic_File_8.pdf.

⁴¹ Joint Declaration of the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit, Prague, 7 May 2009, available at http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/er/107589.pdf.

⁴² Eastern Partnership. Polish-Swedish Proposal, Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2007, <http://www.msz.gov.pl/Polish-Swedish,Proposal,19911.html>; Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament Report on the first year of implementation of the Black Sea Synergy, COM (2008) 391, op. cit.

multiple actors. That said, it is worth noting that within the geographical scope of the ND there exists a well-developed and very active network of regional and local actors whose involvement extends to all project phases, and especially to the implementation phase. Unfortunately, such an extensive network is not present in central and eastern Europe⁴³, and that is precisely the region which the EaP will need to rely on, at least partially, to achieve its objectives. Encouraging civil society's development in the region is one of the most urgent tasks. Accordingly, the Commission's first project to be implemented under the EaP label is the Civil Society Forum, which took place for the first time in November 2009.

Also of interest from the perspective of the EaP are the attempts to engage Belarus within the ND framework. Currently, funds slated for use by Belarus are available only within the NDPHS initiative⁴⁴, however since December 31, 2008 – when an agreement to finance cross-border cooperation was signed – Belarus can also take advantage of funds at the disposal of the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) as part of the Baltic Sea Region Programme 2007-2013, which lies within the scope of the ND Common Spaces. If cooperation in this new area is successful, it will be a useful lesson in working together with the Belarusian local authorities.

From the point of view of the other regional initiatives, what is also important is the growing interest in the Arctic region shown by the ND countries, which could lead to a northwards drift in the ND's center of gravity. These shifting interests primarily have to do with the natural resource deposits abundant in the Arctic region as well as with the strategically important transit corridors which will gradually open up as the Arctic ice cap melts. The European Commission, in its Communication entitled "The European Union and the Arctic Region", suggests that the Arctic should become a regularly discussed subject on the ND agenda⁴⁵.

Conclusions

The current priority is to ensure that the EaP gets off to a good start. This not only involves maintaining solid political support (also on the side of the beneficiary countries) but also ensuring that the appropriate conditions, financial and otherwise, are

⁴³ More on this topic in: Christopher S. Browning, Pertti Joenniemi, *The European Union's Two Dimensions: the Eastern and the Northern*, "Security Dialogue" 2003, Vol. 34, No 4, pp. 463-478.

⁴⁴ *Progress Report for the Ministerial Meeting of the Revised Northern Dimension Policy*, http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/north_dim/doc/progress_report_revisednd_281008_en.pdf.

⁴⁵ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council. The European Union and the Arctic Region, COM (2008) 763, http://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/pdf/com08_763_en.pdf.

created. The Polish-Swedish proposal for EaP financing relied on the resources already available to the ENP, emphasizing that in this manner the EaP will remain neutral to the EU budget. This certainly boosted the idea within the EU forum where many countries are reluctant to increase the amount of resources devoted to the ENP, given the current economic crisis and the fact that any such increase would divert funds from initiatives on the EU's southern flank, favored by some member states. The European Commission, in its Communication on the EaP, pointed however to additional financing without which the implementation of the projects stipulated in the Communication would not be possible. The amount of the additional resources was pegged at 600 million euros for the years 2010-2013, a relatively modest sum but one that nonetheless increases funding for the eastern dimension of the ENP.

Aside from confirming the financing, the European Council declaration also expressed support for the flagship initiatives meant to represent the EaP and enhance its visibility. Similar assurances were repeated in the Prague Declaration. Indeed, it is extremely important to begin implementing these initiatives if the offer of assistance directed at EU eastern Neighbours is to be seen as credible by the intended recipients. Achieving meaningful results quickly would be useful in lending the EaP a sharp clarity of purpose. Taking into account that just a few months after its launch the Commission has managed to organize meetings of all of the EaP platforms one can say that the start is rather promising.

The focus of the EaP, however, revolves around new association agreements with the EU, broadened free trade agreements and the liberalization of the movement of people, all of which are tasks characterized by a long time-horizon. Moreover, the latter issue is particularly politically charged⁴⁶.

Presently, the EU is negotiating a new generation agreement only with Ukraine. The fact that both partners are already two years into the negotiations just serves to show how difficult the whole process is. Although Sweden declared when taking over the seat of EU presidency back in July 2009, that completing these negotiations would be a priority they are still far from being over. Taking that as a reference point, it is clear that judging the EaP will not be possible until some time has elapsed. At the same time however for the initiative to uphold its momentum some concrete action, with tangible results is needed. Officials at the Polish MFA seem to be very aware of

⁴⁶ Marta Kindler, Ewa Matejko, *Monitoring przejść granicznych UE*, Raport z badań 2008, Fundacja im. Stefana Batorego, http://www.batory.org.pl/doc/monitoring_przejsc_granicznych_ue.pdf.

this, keeping in mind the report on the first year of implementation of the Black Sea Synergy as an example of how not to do it⁴⁷.

Given the political controversy surrounding the EaP and the inconsistent support on the part of the EU member states, the only hope for the project in the longer perspective may well prove to be the European Commission. If it succeeds in setting its bureaucratic wheels in motion – implementing specific initiatives and negotiating new agreements binding the recipient countries with the EU, despite the reluctance of some member states for closer cooperation with the countries on the EU eastern flank – it could well be that the process becomes unstoppable, much like the Balkan enlargement process. For this to happen, however, the Commission needs a partner on the other side of the table. And although the internal situation of the individual EaP beneficiary countries and their very different European aspirations are outside the scope of this analysis, the ultimate success of this project depends to a large extent on their attitudes.

⁴⁷ Information received by author at the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs in June 2009.

Pavel K. Baev

Russia and the EU Eastern Partnership: Cannot Stop It but Loath to Join It*

Introduction

The proposition that Russia and the EU are locked in competition for influence in the area stretching from the Caspian to the Baltic Sea is an axiom for students of geopolitics, belonging to the “clash of civilizations” school. But this assertion is nonsense for an observer of bureaucratic behaviour, who knows how little attention is paid in the Berlaymont and Kremlin corridors to the burning issues that fall outside the boundaries of a particular domain. It is fairly obvious that Moscow does not like the Eastern Partnership, but Russia’s own aims and interests in the post-Soviet states, which are not called “near abroad” for the sake of political correctness but are still perceived as subjects of “special relations”, are by no means clear. President Dmitri Medvedev on one occasion proposed the idea of “privileged interests” (which is not mentioned in the Foreign Policy Concept issued the same July 2008¹), but has not found it opportune to elaborate².

The devastating economic crisis, which arrived in Russia a few months later than to the EU, but hit it with greater force, has not prompted elites to revive the stalled bilateral cooperation but has seriously affected strategies regarding the “in-between” geopolitical area stretching from Minsk to Baku. Russia’s ambitions for becoming a “pole” in its own right in the allegedly emerging “multi-polar world” and for gathering a belt of satellite-states have been severely undercut, not just by the steep fall in GDP but more by the apparent failure of the model of petro-prosperity provided by a tightly centralised state. The EU’s “enlargement fatigue” has spread and

* Due to the prolonged process of publishing, the author enriched his text with information from 2010 shortly before printing the book.

¹ Kontsepsiya Vneshney Politiki Rossiiskoi Federatsii, <http://www.scrf.gov.ru/documents/25.html>.

² Responding to the direct question from Madeleine Albright, Medvedev clarified that he did not mean that “this is some kind of exclusive zone of our interests” and explained that “I am referring to the nations that were part of the USSR, part of other state formations previously, countries where Russian is spoken, and that have a similar economic system and share much in terms of culture”, but then expanded the idea to include traditional partners such as “a large number of European countries” and even the USA. For more information visit: http://www.norway.mid.ru/pr08-22_eng.html.

strengthened, and the imperatives to rescue Greece and new members, like Latvia, from dire economic straits have effectively emptied aid packages for candidates in distress³.

These parallel reductions in engagement with the two segments of the abovementioned area in Eastern Europe and Southern Caucasus should have logically eased the tensions between Russia and the EU – but in reality there are few signs of any mutual circumspect. Particular political problems – such as the acrimonious electoral confrontation in Moldova, presidential elections in Ukraine or the high risk of a new conflict in Georgia – provide focal points for the Russia-EU contention. The Russia-EU summit in Stockholm in November 2009 went surprisingly smoothly, but it still didn't help overcome the divergent Russian and EU approaches to the neighbourhood; the summit neither validated Moscow's preference for a delimitation of "spheres of interest" in the region, nor did it set up new opportunities for cooperation within the Eastern Partnership, as the EU would prefer⁴.

This chapter will examine Russian assessments of the EU's plans and intentions related to this fledgling institution and contemplate the scope of its possible counter-offensive. This contemplation aims to provide an informed estimation about possible shifts in Moscow's policy, not so much towards the EU in general, but more in terms of interactions in the common neighbourhood. Each of the six countries in this fluid post-Soviet and pre-European space has its own assortment of issues in Russia-EU orientation but instead of taking them one by one, this analysis will proceed from a snapshot of political manoeuvring as of mid-2009 to evaluating the trajectory of developments in three key directions: political transitions and democracy promotion; economic reforms and energy matters; and conflict management. The underlying assumption that neither Russia nor Ukraine, which is by far the most important state in the area under examination, would experience a major political breakdown in the year-or-so period before this book finds its first reader is by no means solid.

Moscow takes the measure of the Eastern Partnership

During the initial discussions in Brussels of the Polish-Swedish initiative on a new framework for EU relations with three East European (Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine) and three South Caucasian (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus) states in early 2008, Mos-

³ See (s.n.), *Europe must not let Latvia fall*, "Financial Times", 4 June 2009; (s.n.), *No panic, just gloom*, "The Economist", 14 May 2009.

⁴ On the limits of the new "positive momentum" see Аркадий Мошес, *Ждать ли перезагрузки в отношениях России и ЕС?*, "Ежедневный журнал", 23 November 2009, <http://ej.ru/?a=note&id=9650>.

cow paid little attention focussing predominantly on the issue of preventing the eastward expansion of NATO. President Vladimir Putin had good reasons to believe that his assertive performance at the NATO Bucharest summit in April torpedoed the US proposal for issuing “membership action plans” (MAPs) for Georgia and Ukraine, while the promise to accept them into the Alliance was merely face-saving rhetoric. The formal announcement of the Eastern Partnership initiative in May was shrugged off by Moscow as just a re-packaging of the rather inefficient Neighbourhood Policy. That attitude was informed by “insider information” – Germany had refused to co-author this project⁵. It was the Russian-Georgian war in August 2008 that altered this indifferent attitude as the EU discovered the urgency of deterring Russia’s “force projection” and Moscow – smarting after the unexpected victory – saw the need in containing EU activity⁶.

The focal point of this heating-up of political intrigue was the inaugural summit of the Eastern Partnership in Prague on 7 May 2009. The tone of the Russian commentary was set by Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov who accused the EU of trying to establish its own “sphere of influence”⁷. Javier Solana, High Representative for EU’s CFSP, strongly disagreed, and many European officials tried to disprove the accusation as “nonsense”, but it was difficult to expect that Moscow would accept the reasoning of Polish Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski that “our Russian partners at times resort to instruments and formulas from the past, although doing so tends to reflect their helplessness and their problems with adapting to new realities”⁸. Even the more moderate experts in Moscow, playing down the alarmist speculations about a “geopolitical challenge” allegedly shaping up in Prague acknowledged that the six states in question sought to “work in the field of Russian-EU contradictions”⁹.

President Dmitri Medvedev expressed at the Russia-EU summit in Khabarovsk a conciliatory opinion that it is not yet very clear to Russia what shape the EaP will

⁵ The special website for this policy (http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/index_en.htm) shows a picture of incoherent and essentially futile efforts. On the Germany’s role, see Stefan Meister and Marie-Lena May, *Die Östliche Partnerschaft der EU – ein Kooperationsangebot mit Missverständnissen*, DGAP Standpunkt No 7, September 2009, <http://www.dgap.org/publikationen/category/typen-10.html>.

⁶ One balanced assessment of the outcome of the war in the avalanche of biased commentary is Roy Allison, *Russia resurgent? Moscow’s campaign to “coerce Georgia to peace”*, “International Affairs” 2008, Vol. 84, No 6, pp. 1145-1171.

⁷ The argument was made at the Brussels Forum during the “Conversation with Russia” session on 21 March 2009, <http://www.gmfus.org/brusselsforum/2009/transcripts.html>.

⁸ Radoslaw Sikorski, *The EU’s Eastern partnership with former Soviet states holds the key to relations with Russia*, “Europe’s World”, Summer 2009, <http://www.europesworld.org/NewEnglish/Home/Article/tabid/191/ArticleType/articleview/ArticleID/21413/Default.aspx>). See also Jos Boonstra and Natalya Shapovalova, *The EU’s Eastern Partnership: One Year Backwards*, Working Paper 99, FRIDE, Madrid 2010.

⁹ See Дмитрий Данилов, *Новые конкуренты*, “Эксперт”, 8 May 2009.

take, and indicated the key reason for his doubts: “We do not want the Eastern Partnership to turn into a partnership against Russia”¹⁰. It was all too clear that Poland was on the top of the list of those malevolent countries, but Moscow observed with satisfaction that of the leaders of major European states, only Chancellor Angela Merkel chose to attend the Prague summit – and primarily in order to dampen expectations of the six eastern partners. Medvedev was perhaps a bit coquettish saying: “They did try to convince me, but they did not completely succeed”, but in the aftermath of the summit, the tone of Russian mainstream commentary on the Eastern Partnership has distinctly changed to more neutral.

It was not the reassurance provided by the Swedish EU presidency (Foreign Minister Carl Bildt was actually not so keen to water down his initiative) that brought this change of attitude but rather a re-evaluation of the intensity of this political challenge. Moscow took notice of the fact that no institutional structures, not even a secretariat, came into existence after the Prague summit, so the celebrated Partnership would be even less coherent than the Northern Dimension, in which Russia participated in the first half of the 2000s¹¹. The single most significant parameter was the meagre financing of this initiative, and Vladimir Chizhov, Russia’s ambassador to the EU, casually mentioned: “Whatever isn’t supported by a line in the budget usually doesn’t fly very high”¹². In this situation, any counter-offensive from Russia would have only boosted the initiative, so Moscow wisely reduced its efforts. This tolerance, however, has not eliminated the divergence between Russia’s and EU’s fundamental interests in their common neighbourhood.

Values, pragmatism and the Belarus connection

The EU has been very successful in influencing and managing the post-Communist transitions in states as diverse as Estonia, Bulgaria and Slovenia, but there is hardly any doubt that the main instrument of control in this hands-on management was the unambiguous commitment to accept them as full-members of the Union. This instru-

¹⁰ See (s.n.), *EU-Russia summit reveals differences rather than agreement*, <http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,4271011,00.html>.

¹¹ Key parameters of the Northern Dimension are presented at its homepage at http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/north_dim/index_en.htm. See also Susan Stewart and Oleg Alexandrov, *Russia and the EU’s Northern Dimension*, Russian Analytical Digest No 61, June 2009, available at <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/isn/Current-Affairs/Policy-Briefs/Detail/?lng=en&id=100999>.

¹² Tony Barber, *EU prepares to launch a low-flying Eastern Partnership*, BrusselsBlog in “Financial Times”, 17 February 2009, <http://blogs.ft.com/brusselsblog/2009/02/eu-prepares-to-launch-a-low-flying-eastern-partnership/>.

ment is not available for shaping the political processes in the Eastern Partnership, and the EU is trying persistently to dispel any illusions in this regard insisting that Croatia would be the last case in this round of enlargement (unless Iceland opts for taking the fast track in). Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko, for that matter, was told in no uncertain terms in Prague that there was no point in knocking in the closed door knowing that the only possible answer was “No”¹³.

The problem for the EU is how to mobilize sufficient “soft power” for supporting democratic reforms in the eastern partners, which include not only Belarus, often characterized as the “last dictatorship” in Europe, but also Azerbaijan blossoming under the dynastic rule of Ilham Aliyev. It is perfectly possible to engage these two states in a useful political framework pretending that small symbolic concessions to the severely suppressed opposition signify their gradual democratic transformation. Such pragmatic networking, however, inevitably compromises the role of “norm-setter”, which the EU perceives as its natural and unique privilege. This role is eroded by the growth of populist and xenophobic political forces inside the Union, but is still crucial for the advancement of the “European project” portrayed as a model of post-modern non-geopolitical politics. As one influential Russian analyst argues, the application of double standards “would have been a normal manifestation of egoistic pragmatism, traditionally inherent to European politics, if it would not signify an obvious departure from the moral standard, which the EU has upheld since the early 1990s”¹⁴.

Since the start of Putin’s “era”, Russia has never acknowledged the EU’s moral superiority and has been firm set to reject its proselytising of common European values as interference in internal affairs, finding approval from some post-Soviet regimes, including the influential Kazakhstan. The only useful feature of the EU’s focussing on norms, as far as Russia is concerned, is the ensuing quarrels with the US, which reached a spectacular height during George W. Bush’s presidency and have not disappeared with Barack Obama’s arrival to the White House. President Medvedev, while declaring his commitment to the rule of law, seeks to reduce to a minimum any discussion of values in the Russia-EU dialogue, so the preparation of a new Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) remains stalled¹⁵.

¹³ See Виталий Дымарский, *Восточное партнерство – дело тонкое*, “Российская газета”, 14 May 2009.

¹⁴ See Федор Лукьянов, *Проверка реакции*, “Газета.ру”, 7 May 2009, <http://www.gazeta.ru/column/lukeyanov/2983566.shtml>.

¹⁵ See Аркадий Мошес, *Без общих мест и ценностей*, “Газета.ру”, 25 June 2008, http://www.gazeta.ru/comments/2008/06/25_a_2764830.shtml.

Moscow had expected that it would be the issue of embracing or rejecting Belarus as a party to the Eastern Partnership that would be the main stumbling block for the advancement of the idea – and the awkward diplomatic manoeuvring on the eve of the Prague summit did not disappoint those expectations¹⁶. President Aleksandr Lukashenko did the decent thing of not personally accepting the invitation with “great reluctance”, but did not miss the opportunity to add insult to the injury acutely felt by the EU negotiators. His trump card was – and still is – the pending recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states, which the EU desperately wanted to prevent. Many years of experience in negotiating economic support from Russia in exchange for vague promises of political integration in the “Union-state” format have prepared Lukashenko for any kind of bargaining with the EU envoys and he is not unduly worried with delays¹⁷. The very fact of membership in the Eastern Partnership has supplied him with sufficient ammunition to launch a new intrigue aimed at exploiting the differences between Medvedev and Putin¹⁸.

For the EU, the task of “rescuing” East European and South Caucasian states from the seemingly unstoppable spread of Russia’s dominance has become far less urgent in late 2009 than it appeared to be in late 2008, so the political costs of normalizing relations with the habitually scolded Belarus have become less justifiable. Political opposition to the Lukashenko regime has reasons to feel betrayed by the “pragmatic” institution-building in the Eastern Partnership, and is particularly upset with Poland, for whom the fact of authoring a major EU initiative is apparently more important than holding the banner of champion of democratic reforms in the post-Soviet neighbourhood, a region which is often forgotten by Italy and other more Mediterranean-minded Europeans¹⁹. Moscow, from its side, foresees the noisy protests staged by marginalized and divided anti-Lukashenko groups paralyzing the proceedings of the working groups of the Eastern Partnership, but does not expect any real troubles with the EU over the rather improbable sudden destabilization of the political monolith in Belarus. It is Ukraine that looms large as a maturing democracy-building failure.

¹⁶ See Алексей Баусин, *Партнерство вместо соседств*, “Эксперт”, 2 March 2009; Федор Лукьянов, *Диктатор нарастает*, “Газета.ру”, 26 March 2009, <http://www.gazeta.ru/column/lukyanov/2964341.shtml>.

¹⁷ See Антон Ходасевич, *Брюссель пока не до Минска*, “Независимая газета”, 24 September 2009.

¹⁸ See Максим Коновалов, Геннадий Сысоев, *Союзник разглядел противника*, “Коммерсант”, 5 October 2009.

¹⁹ See Vitali Silitiski, *The EU’s Eastern Partnership: Why it may help democracy promotion and how the United States can help move it forward*, PONARS Eurasia Memo 70, Georgetown University, Washington 2009, <http://ceres.georgetown.edu/esp/ponarsmemos/>.

Economic reforms and energy intrigues

The majority view among the Russian political elite is that the real aim of the Eastern Partnership is the advancement of the EU's energy agenda, which is presumed to be at cross-purposes with Russia's interests. Mikhail Margelov, the chairman of the international affairs committee of the Federation Council, argued that the real geopolitical intentions of the European Commission are focused on energy, pointing out that the next day after the Eastern Partnership summit Prague hosted a special meeting on the *Nabucco* gas pipeline²⁰. This train of thought certainly tells more about the orientation of Russian politics, where gas matters dominate decision-making, than about EU priorities. It could be interesting to point out that the *Nabucco* project, which is indeed a key element in the EU energy supply-diversification plan, is in fact rather unhelpful for the building of the Eastern Partnership. Indeed, its "strategic" aim is to reduce dependency on gas transported to markets in Eastern and Central Europe through Ukraine, which will then become a less important partner; if the vague ideas about filling the *Nabucco* pipeline with gas produced in Iraq, or Iran, or indeed Russia materialize, then the importance of the South Caucasus would decline as well²¹.

This poor fit of the *Nabucco* project (which is still far from a reality) into the Eastern Partnership framework does not mean that the latter has no energy or broader economic content. In fact, the EU maintains a basic commitment to supporting liberal economic reforms, including privatization, in the partner-states, and this strategy answers rather than contradicts Russia's economic interests – much to the chagrin of the political elites in the under-reformed "partners". The point is that Russian companies, eager to grab assets in the neighbour-states, stand to benefit from every privatization auction to a greater extent than reluctant European investors or cash-strapped local entrepreneurs. Moscow suspects that in the back rooms of the Eastern Partnership, business deals are pencilled with discriminatory clauses against Russian "oligarchs". Thus, a rare visit to Minsk of Benita Ferrero-Waldner, the EU Commissioner for ENP, prompted comments in the Russian media about conditions allegedly presented

²⁰ See (s.n.), *Маргелов: Повестка для саммита ЕС носит чисто геополитический характер*, "РИА-Новости", 7 May 2009, <http://www.rian.ru/politics/20090507/170289050.html>. A typically scathing comment on the *Nabucco* summit is Сергей Смирнов, *Пражский провал*, "Эксперт", 18 May 2009.

²¹ On the competition between the *Nabucco* project and Russian *South Stream* project, see Михаил Зыгарь, *Война потоков*, "Коммерсант-Власть", 18 May 2009; for my analysis see Pavel Baev, *Competing designs for Caspian energy highways: Russia and the EU face reality checks*, PONARS Eurasia Memo 55, Georgetown University, Washington 2009; for a more recent pro-*Nabucco* argument, see Katinka Barysch, *Should the Nabucco project be shelved?*, CER Policy Brief, London 2010.

by the EU, including granting European companies shares in the Mozyr and Novopolotsk oil refineries²².

As the impact of the economic crisis deepened across Eastern Europe, it has become clear that emergency rescue measures rather than textbook economic reforms have to be prioritized by the newly-launched partnership. The amount of financial resources that the EU is able to channel in this direction is perhaps two orders of magnitude less than the needs of the sinking economies (with the significant exception of Azerbaijan), and cannot compare with the seemingly generous but in fact politically conditional loans that Russia is offering to its allies²³. The European Commission is helpful in securing emergency assistance from the IMF, which is crucial in preventing sovereign default in Ukraine, but cannot claim credit for that, so the perception that the EU is stingy and preoccupied with its own troubles is strengthening in public and elite opinions of troubled partners who are in fact competing for scarce attention from Brussels. An additional problem here is that many advocates of the Eastern Partnership inside the EU, for instance the Baltic states, are particularly affected by the crisis, and so have to cut down many small but significant training and exchange programs. The trajectory of the recession is unforeseeable at the time of this writing in early-2010, but it is clear that the appeals from the advocates of the eastern engagement to turn the crisis into an opportunity and to assume the role of “friend-in-need” in order to “build lasting loyalties” are not finding much response²⁴.

As for energy matters, the key issue in the Eastern Partnership is not the peripheral *Nabucco* project, but the modernization and reorganization of the gas infrastructure in Ukraine, which has seen much abuse but little maintenance since Soviet times. In the long-run, an upgraded system of pipelines, storage and compressor stations transparently operated by an independent company could cover most of energy needs in South-Eastern and Central Europe and make redundant expensive flank “corridors”, including the controversial *Nord Stream*. It is not clear, however, how to get to this technically feasible future, and the first attempt by the European Commission to reach a deal with Ukraine on the initial investment met with furious opposition from Moscow because Putin felt excluded and insulted by this cartel²⁵.

²² See Максим Коновалов, Александр Габуев, *Европа готова стать Россией для Белоруссии*, “Коммерсант”, 23 June 2009.

²³ On Russia’s inconsistent attempts to buy loyalty of its allies, see Сергей Жильцов, *СНГ под натиском Восточного партнерства*, “Независимая газета”, 30 April 2009.

²⁴ See Tomas Valasek, *Economic crisis and the Eastern Partnership*, Centre for European Reform Blog, 10 March 2009, <http://centreforeuropeanreform.blogspot.com/2009/03/economic-crisis-and-eastern-partnership.html>.

²⁵ See Али Алиев, *Обидчивая Россия*, “Эксперт”, 24 March 2009.

Gazprom has for years cherished plans for establishing control over the Ukrainian infrastructure but is not at all averse to setting a joint venture with European “majors” like ENI, *Total* and E.ON, who in turn, have their own issues with the European Commission and its strategy of the liberalization of the gas business. In spring 2010, Putin and Medvedev moved fast to strike economic deals with the newly-elected President Yanukovich, but no plan for upgrading the “strategic” pipelines has emerged so far, so that cuts in the gas price were granted in exchange for the extended access to the far less strategic naval base in Sevastopol²⁶.

Conflict (mis)management and neglect

It is rather remarkable that the same geopolitical space where the EU is seeking to institutionalise partnership with six states is very differently politically organized when looking from Moscow: The number of actors is different, because Abkhazia and South Ossetia are recognized as independent states, while the relations with Georgia are broken, and there is also a not-quite-recognized but effectively protected quasi-state in Transdniestria. Moscow is careful not to establish direct ties with Nagorno Karabakh, trying to play a role of an impartial arbiter between Armenia and Azerbaijan, but it observes with benign interest separatist tendencies in Crimea maintaining – as Putin did at the NATO Bucharest summit – that Ukraine is an inherently unstable construct that came into being through various questionable decisions in Soviet era²⁷.

The conceptualization and formation of the Eastern Partnership in the months following the Russian-Georgian war inevitably shaped its character as an instrument of conflict management for the EU, and a key function of this instrument is to counter-balance and neutralize Russia’s well-established pattern of manipulating and exploiting these conflicts²⁸. Each “hot spot” has a particular set of drivers and triggers, but it is possible to distinguish between three different types of conflict in this troubled area: post-Soviet violent spasms in formation of new states; internal instabilities caused by distortions in democratization; and Russian power projection.

The first set of conflicts used to be spectacular in the first half of the 1990s and then remained “frozen” up until August 2008, when the Russian intervention altered

²⁶ See Аркадий Мошес, *Братская бухгалтерия*, “Газета.ру”, 23 April 2010, http://gazeta.ru/comments/2010/04/23_x_3356536.shtml.

²⁷ On the escalation of tensions between Russia and Ukraine in August 2009, see Владимир Соловьев, *Громы без молний*, “Коммерсант-Власть”, 31 August 2009.

²⁸ A headline in the Bloomberg News Agency reporting on the Prague summit is characteristic in this regard: Tony Czuczka, *EU’s Eastern Partnership aims to settle conflict, boost trade*, http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601095&sid=aqhdpTXDLa_g.

the nature of interactions between Georgia and its two break-away provinces. Currently, there are just two conflicts left in this group: the confrontation between Azerbaijan and Armenia centred on Nagorno Karabakh, and the secession of tiny Transdniestria from Moldova. Nobody expects the EU to make much of a difference in the first one, where Moscow is anxiously monitoring Ankara's complicated manoeuvring in normalizing relations with Armenia. The situation where two members of the Eastern Partnership are on far from friendly terms with one another undermines the cohesion of the institution, and the high risk of a new escalation plays most directly into Russia's interests – but an eruption of hostilities could disrupt its efforts aimed at preserving the status-quo²⁹.

The situation in Moldova looks more promising, as far as the Eastern Partnership is concerned. The conflict of 1990-1992 saw a very low level of violence and did not generate any ethnic cleansing, so the bridge to resolution is not exactly a Golden Gate. Moldova's economy was in a poor shape even in the "fat" years in the middle of this decade and the current recession has brought it to a new low, so even a modest amount of resources could take the EU a long way in strengthening its influence. Russia has only limited stakes in this seat of conflict and maintains a purely symbolic military presence in Transdniestria, while the need to supply this non-adjacent and landlocked enclave with free gas is actually a serious irritant³⁰. After the war with Georgia, Moscow actually tried to revive the deadlocked negotiations seeking to restore its credibility as conflict manager in the post-Soviet space but had to postpone the main push until after the elections in Moldova, which unexpectedly reconfigured the political arena³¹.

There is nothing unusual in angry protests against the authorities in times of economic free-fall, but the mob riot in Chisinau took the government and opposition quite by surprise, and the ensuing political deadlock was only broken by new elections, which removed from power the Communists and established a more pro-Western coalition³². The EU was extremely careful to avoid any interference in this crisis, particularly since the shocked Moldovan authorities blamed Romania for instigating the unrest, but now it has to respond to the pleas of the new government to assume a more active role. Engaging Transdniestria in the Eastern Partnership can be an element of this role, but

²⁹ See Georgi Derluguian, *All quiet on the Karabagh front*, PONARS Eurasia Memo 66, Georgetown University, Washington 2009, <http://ceres.georgetown.edu/esp/ponarsmemos/>.

³⁰ See Светлана Гамова, *Приднестровью при Медведеве лучше, чем при Путине*, "Независимая газета", 23 March 2009.

³¹ See Павел Лукьянченко, *Урегулирование пон-зрата*, "Время новостей", 26 March 2009.

³² See Наталья Морарь, *Технология сопротивления*, "Новое время/The New Times", 13 April 2009.

the main question is inevitably about securing Russia's consent. Moscow appears to be preparing a joint initiative with Ukraine but remains ready to move against any efforts that might be construed as aimed at diminishing its influence³³.

Recent developments in Moldova represent a transfiguration of old secessionist conflicts under the impact of indigenous forces driving an uncertain and often turbulent process of democratization. This process achieved a first major breakthrough in Georgia in late 2003 and reached a peak in Ukraine in late 2004, acquiring the name of "colour revolution"; it did not have any successes since spring 2005, when the corrupt regime in Kyrgyzstan was swept away by competing (and probably even more corrupt) clans, but has not exhausted its potential³⁴. It should be noted in this context that the violent overthrow of the Bakiyev regime in Kyrgyzstan in April 2010 resembles state failure more than a "colour revolution". The EU did much to help the Georgian progress and provided crucially important support to what looked like self-reinvention in Ukraine, while Russia unequivocally took a firm counter-revolutionary course, not least due to fears about the stability of own political regime.

By now, however, the EU has grown disappointed in the evolution of "colour regimes", whilst Russia has grown more confident in its ability to deter the revolutionary menace, and so is not particularly worried that the Eastern Partnership could be instrumentalized for executing "regime change" in, for instance, Azerbaijan. It is indeed far easier for Moscow to provide support for "legitimate authorities" in emotional post-election confrontations, like in Yerevan in February 2008, than for the EU to take any position, and the Kremlin was quite amused by the awkward "perhaps-for-greater-good" hints by European leaders to Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili, who was very nearly toppled by the opposition in spring 2009³⁵. Nevertheless, the strictly opposite basic assessments of the benign/malignant nature of risks inherent to democratization preserve the possibility of another political clash between Russia and the EU in a probable fast-moving revolutionary situation in any of the six common neighbours.

The most difficult challenge, however, is related to the management of the Russian-Georgian conflict, which, now in the second year after the five-days of hostilities, is by no means safely "frozen" – as the incidents with the commercial shipping in-

³³ See Светлана Гамова, *Кишинев выдавливают Москву*, "Независимая газета", 30 September 2009.

³⁴ See Дмитрий Фурман, *От рассвета до заката: "Цветные революции" на просторах СНГ*, "Новое время/The New Times", 13 April 2009.

³⁵ See Геворг Мирзяян, *Весеннее обострение в Тбилиси*, "Эксперт", 10 April 2009.

coming into Abkhazia testify³⁶. The EU has played a crucial role in mediating between the parties to the conflict in August 2008, but its capacity at performing the function of monitoring the ceasefire and observing the situation in the border areas is limited, particularly as the UN and the OSCE missions in Georgia were discontinued³⁷. For Georgia, the main goal of participating in the Eastern Partnership is to secure the EU's support for its uncompromising stance on the issue of territorial integrity.

Keeping life-support for Georgia is certainly a key task for the EU, but it seeks to avoid taking sides in the conflict as this would jeopardize its ability to engage as an impartial provider of peace-services. The remarkably balanced report of the fact-finding mission on the causes of the war was in this sense a rather painful setback for Tbilisi, while Moscow pretended to be perfectly satisfied with the conclusions³⁸. The EU is still unable to open any kind of meaningful dialogue with Abkhazia, and that will remain one of the key obstacles in achieving a meaningful synergy between the Eastern Partnership and the Black Sea cooperation formats advanced by Romania, which are less than warmly welcomed by Russia and Turkey, as well as the essentially moribund Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC)³⁹.

A larger problem that is particularly evident in the case of Georgia but is by no means limited to it, is the lack of any connection between the structures of the Eastern Partnership (feeble as they are) and the mechanisms of US policy in the Caucasus and Ukraine⁴⁰. The most violently unstable area in the entire post-Soviet space is certainly the North Caucasus, and while it falls outside the boundaries of the Eastern Partnership, Russia's inability to pacify this unruly periphery increases the risk of escalation of conflicts in the South Caucasus.

³⁶ In August 2009, Russian Border troops' crafts started patrolling Abkhazia's territorial waters after Georgia intercepted several ships going into Sukhumi, see Юрий Симонян, *Пираты Черного моря*, "Независимая газета", 1 September 2009.

³⁷ The EU Monitoring Mission presents its activity at a well-designed website: <http://www.eumm.eu/>; on the breakdown of the international missions, see David J. Smith, *Georgia after UNOMIG and EUMM*, "New Atlanticist", 17 June 2009, http://www.acus.org/new_atlanticist/georgia-after-unomig-and-eumm.

³⁸ See David Hearst, *Not just another Russian aggression*, "The Guardian", 1 October 2009; Дмитрий Косарев, *Европрава*, "Российская газета", 1 October 2009.

³⁹ See Алла Язькова, *Синергия Черного моря и Восточное партнерство*, "Независимая газета", 15 June 2009.

⁴⁰ As "The Economist" argued: "A year after the EU first mooted its «eastern partnership» to boost western ties with six ex-Soviet countries..., talks on American involvement are only just starting". See *Disquiet on the eastern front*, "The Economist", 28 November 2009, p. 37.

Conclusion

Moscow has overcome its anxiety about the launch of the Eastern Partnership and has no reason to contemplate corrections for its course of ambivalent abstention. President Medvedev would probably not insist on his point – “But to be frank, what concerns us is that some countries view this partnership as a partnership against Russia” – but neither has he found a strong incentive to join this fledgling framework⁴¹. As usual, it was former Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin who articulated this attitude the most clearly: “It does not suit Russia to enter this partnership; if we start entering, we are certain to step into something”⁴². The prevailing assessment is that competition is a natural pattern of interactions with the EU in the common neighbourhood but this competition is currently dampened by the profound economic crisis, so every attempt to exploit opportunities for advancing one’s own interests only increases temptations among the “partners” to play the competitors one against another.

The evolving and still deepening recession determines a constant re-evaluation of the prospects of Russia’s leadership in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS, of which Georgia is no longer a part of) and position vis-a-vis each of its post-Soviet neighbours, not least due to the increasingly sober self-assessment. Moscow has internalized the fact that it cannot spread its influence by offering generous credit as it plans to resume borrowing from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) itself, so the priority of putting its own economic house in order is clearly set⁴³. Renewed efforts at attracting Western investors undertaken by Prime Minister Putin (who even invited them to the Yamal gasfields) creates a competition for their very ambivalent attention. The Russian government assumes that the scale of economic dislocation among the neighbours (including even Latvia, while Azerbaijan makes an exception) is even greater than its own, so the miniscule resources that the EU is prepared to allocate would disappear without a trace, and that quite possibly would mean that the Eastern Partnership project would fade into irrelevance. Foreign Minister Lavrov confirming Russia’s concern about possible damage to its interests from the Eastern Partnership in May 2010, pointed out that he could not see any noticeable results from this initiative⁴⁴.

⁴¹ See footnote 9.

⁴² See (s.n.), *Черномырдин: России не к лицу Восточное партнерство*, “Независимая газета”, 14 May 2009.

⁴³ It was the decision to grant a US \$500 million credit to Moldova that failed to prevent the electoral fiasco of the Communists that proved the need in such a priority, see (s.n.), *Европейский вектор вне конкуренции*, “Независимая газета”, 6 July 2009.

⁴⁴ See (s.n.), *Восточное партнерство» может нанести ущерб интересам России – Лавров*, “РИА-Новости”, 13 May 2010, <http://ua.rian.ru/politics/20100513/78391127.html>.

There is also a significant difference in how the Russian leadership perceives the EU's activities in Eastern Europe and in the South Caucasus, since the former is recognized as indeed the Union's immediate neighbourhood where it has legitimate interests and the latter is not. The Caucasus is considered to be a part of Russia's "natural" sphere of responsibility (or "privileged interests"), where it is prepared to interact with Turkey and, to a lesser degree, with Iran, but will accept only a limited involvement of the EU (not to mention NATO) in performing particular functions, like observing the ceasefire around South Ossetia. Moscow is also very firmly set against any European "interference" in the North Caucasus where instability is on the rise.

Whatever the issues with Belarus and initiatives in settling the Moldova/Transdnistria conflict, the central theme of the Eastern Partnership is managing EU-Ukraine relations and securing an understanding with Russia in this regard, and it is exactly here that the most serious problems are piling up for the near future. The most disappointing result of the "orange revolution" of late 2004 is that it has made Ukraine practically ungovernable, which was unfortunate but acceptable in the years of economic growth but has become destructive with the arrival of the recession. There are few reasons to expect that the Yanukovich leadership established by the presidential elections in February 2010 would significantly improve the efficiency of the structurally dysfunctional political system, and the accumulating public discontent could drive the country into a complex and self-propelling crisis.

The amount of resources and attention that the EU is prepared to spend on managing this crisis is entirely out of proportion with its current scale, but it is clear beyond doubt that a fundamental proposition in the forthcoming emergency response from Europe would be to preserve Ukraine's territorial integrity. Russia is able to invest far more effort and resources, but still nowhere close to what is needed to rescue its most important neighbour from a deepening crisis; Moscow would perhaps also prefer Ukraine to keep its unity – but is open to other options. Coordination of Russian and EU policies would be hard, but not impossible to achieve, but any discrepancy or competition might generate disproportional political resonance. Currently dormant suspicions that the EU is actually pursuing a policy of Russia's exclusion from East European affairs could be awakened and geared up to such a degree that a rational choice regarding its own priorities would be reduced to plan B, if not plan Z⁴⁵.

⁴⁵ Gleb Pavlovsky, well-known Moscow spin-doctor, portrayed the Eastern Partnership as an exercise in EU's "policy of exclusion" or "eliminating Russia from the political map of Europe", see Глеб Павловский, *Сдерживание и суверенитет*, "Русский журнал", 16 December 2008, <http://www.russ.ru/pole/Sderzhivanie-i-suverenitet>.

In a more stable and predictable political and economic situation, like the period of prosperity in 2006-2007 when not a single violent conflict was registered in recession-free Europe, the Eastern Partnership could have been expected to fulfill a marginally useful role and gradually become a minor addendum to the European political architecture. In the current situation, however, it might be called to perform tasks far beyond its timid mandate or scrapped altogether – with much depending on the as yet unsettled pattern of interaction with Russia.

Conclusions – What Prospects for the Eastern Partnership?

The Eastern Partnership aspires to put in place what might be called a new EU *Ostpolitik*. This historical term, implies a foreign policy aimed at bringing about a desired change in a given state or region through increased cooperation and interdependence. Though specifically attached to the Willy Brandt-era of West German politics and in particular his foreign policy efforts towards Eastern Europe, and of course the German Democratic Republic, the notion of *Ostpolitik* holds resonance for the European Union's current endeavours towards its Eastern milieu. The neighbouring states on the eastern flank are already regarded by the EU as "European neighbours" (as opposed to the "neighbours of Europe" in the South) and are viewed as constituent parts of the wider Europe. The EaP marks another step in the EU's recognition of the European identities of the six neighbours and represents an extension of "solidarity" with them. Moreover, the objectives of the Eastern Partnership underpin a re-vamped foreign and security policy pulling the EU deeper into parts of the neighbourhood that traditionally lay within Moscow's orbit.

The neighbours themselves continue to play catch-up with the rest of Europe, but remain plagued with reform trajectories that are both uncertain and prone to backtracking. In this tricky scenario, and given the rising interdependence between the EU and the Eastern neighbours in such crucial issues as trade, migration and energy security, the EU is compelled to "reach out" to the East with the aim of normalising relations and to draw them closer via structured collaboration and integration – building blocks of a possible new *Ostpolitik*.

As noted throughout this volume, the initial Polish-Swedish proposal was driven by a number of factors and events, including the setting up of the Union for the Mediterranean, the growing urgency of energy security, the perceived weaknesses in the ENP formula and the Georgia-Russia war. But there is arguably a longer history to the initiative, which is worth remembering, seen not least in Poland's steady lobbying for a stronger Eastern dimension to the EU's foreign policy, even before it became a member of the EU. A push to fortify ENP had been presented at the end of 2006, but the Commission paper "Strengthening the European Neighbourhood Policy" spoke about ENP in its entirety (Eastern and Southern dimensions).

Greater attention to the Eastern neighbourhood came with the German EU Presidency of 2007, when the imperative of creating a new “European *Ostpolitik*” was presented as a key foreign policy priority. The objectives here were threefold a) strengthening the ENP (with a focus on Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia), b) maintaining the strategic partnership with Russia (first and foremost completing the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement – which still has yet to be signed) and c) developing an EU strategy towards Central Asia. The German Foreign Office also recommended altering the balance of ENP funding in favour of the East: roughly speaking the ENP budget has been divided 30% for the East and 70% for the South. By setting an eastwards-leaning agenda in 2007, by 2008 the scene was set for efforts to construct a dedicated Eastern policy towards the six closest neighbours.

The ideas and arguments presented in this *Studies and Analyses* offer up-to-date analysis of the Eastern Partnership, in terms of its principal components, where it fits into other regional fora, its reception in the neighbourhood and how it is being received in Russia. Though all authors have endeavoured to present arguments based on current data, the study of politics and economics in the neighbourhood is very much a moving target, since as described in this volume, the Eastern neighbourhood is both turbulent and dynamic. The neighbours often make for difficult and unpredictable partners – even those states which are relatively pro-European. The 2010 Ukrainian Presidential elections, which saw a victory for Viktor Yanukowich, were met by the EU with an expectation of change in Ukrainian foreign policy, entailing a less enthusiastic stance towards the West. But as already noted, perhaps the most salient result from these elections was in their democratic and corruption-free nature. This is important. Crucially, developments in Ukraine are highly pertinent for the neighbourhood as a whole. It is here that the fate of democracy and commitment to pursuing a European course is generally viewed as a litmus test for prospects across the region.

Perhaps the principal conclusion made in this *Studies and Analyses* is that the Eastern Partnership represents a much needed boost to the ENP. Naturally, the initiative’s capacity to deliver on its pledges will ultimately determine its success, but in the meantime by injecting further differentiation into the EU’s neighbourhood policies, to counter balance the Union for the Mediterranean, a positive start has been made. Not all of what EaP talks about can be done at once and a multitude of factors and issues need to be confronted and dealt with in the process of its implementation. With this in mind, the following points of conclusion are offered.

The Diversity of EaP – a Strength or a Weakness?

There is a clear *raison d'être* to bring into one policy framework the EU's three closest and the three next closest eastern neighbours, but at the same time these states represent a diverse grouping, which, it is argued here, may become a point of weakness in the implementation of the EaP. Though the core agenda of EaP – energy security, mobility and good governance etc. is relevant for all six partners, their overall relations with the EU and the kind of relations they seek to have in the future differ. This means that for the forerunners – Ukraine and Moldova, what EaP seems to be offering is not qualitatively different to what ENP had on offer.

This may ultimately mean that both Kiev and Chisinau may well disregard EaP, and as suggested above, seek to continue on a strictly bilateral basis with the EU. Furthermore, there is not so much that unites the group of six, in the way of trade or political cooperation, thus the EaP's endeavours to nurture regional integration and multilateral activities may prove challenging if not a distraction from developing the kind of bilateralism that most EaP partner states desire. The message here is that the bilateral tracks at the core of ENP should not be downgraded in favour of a broad regional approach. The obvious qualitative differences between the six's relations with the EU need to be reflected in the configuration of EaP to enable forerunners to move ahead and not be "held back" by the region. If anything, greater and more dynamic differentiation needs to be built into EaP to encourage those states that want to go fast-forward to do so, and to enable the EU to respond more quickly and in a more focused way to partner's efforts.

Untying the Knotty Issue of Enlargement

New Association Agreements, coupled with free trade provisions and the prospect of a liberalisation of visa regimes to facilitate legal mobility certainly hit the spot, but without the prospect of actual membership EaP may remain a flaccid tool to encourage reform in the partner states.

It is argued here that whilst ENP was always distinct from enlargement, EaP sends out a rather mixed signal. In this scenario, and with some neighbours unconvinced about EaP, the EU needs to clarify if and how EaP and enlargement relate to one another, in other words to define an end-game. This is important for internal EU consumption too. The Commission proposal stated that states join EaP "without prejudice to (their) aspirations for their future relationship with the EU", which apparently

leaves the field open to interpretation and reinforces the ambiguity of the situation. Polish Foreign Minister Sikorski stated that EaP is designed to strengthen the EU's policies towards those states that *could* eventually join¹. But other member states want to ensure that EaP puts a break on enlargement. The EU should address this situation head-on by way of articulating an EaP *finalité* and clarifying its relationship to EU membership. Positive clarification here would put the ball in the partner's courts by providing them with an opportunity, even a tangible goal, to make themselves "look like candidates". In this scenario, it is undoubtedly the case that the EU's use of conditionality to exact reforms in the neighbourhood would become far more effective. However, it is unrealistic to assume that the EU will open up a broad discussion on enlargement in the near future. In the absence of this, an EaP road-map with interim goals and expectations (from both sides) as well as timetables, needs to be created to make sure that the initiative does not lose momentum.

Ensuring Tangible Benefits – Towards Swifter Visa Liberalisation?

All of the partner states showed a keen interest in the mobility aspect of the EaP. The prospect of visa-free regimes and access to labour markets for EaP citizens proved to be one of the most attractive ideas on offer. The EaP's capacity to create real mobility options is perhaps the most important and urgent test of the EU's commitment to the region, with high expectations across the neighbourhood. However, it is now the "liberalisation" of visa regimes, as opposed to the notion of visa-free travel, that has become the Leitmotif, a shift which has been met with disappointment in the region. It is argued here that the delivery of tangible benefits to the neighbours in the short term is key to the overall success of EaP, and with this in mind the EU should spell out the detail of its mobility and security pacts, so that governments and relevant agencies know what needs to be done and what they can expect in return from the EU. Realistic, but quite detailed time frames should also be formulated for each EaP state and what the EU means by the "long term" clearly defined. Finally, targeted mobility for certain labour markets should be given priority, based on lessons learnt from the EU-Moldova Mobility Partnership scheme.

¹ Renata Goldirova, *Eastern Partnership could lead to enlargement, Poland says*, "EU Observer", 27 May 2008, http://euobserver.com/9/26211?rss_rk=1.

On Russia

When it comes to the case of Russia, much analysis is fixated on the idea of EU-Russia competition in the Eastern neighbourhood and the notion that the EU's blend of soft power and magnetism is superior and thus destined to prevail. Whilst the current study does not deviate from this view entirely, it is posited here that such a conclusion misses out a whole raft of arguments and negates the attraction that Russia holds for the neighbours and moreover, ignores the rising economic and political roles played by other powers in the neighbourhood, such as China, Turkey and Iran. A conclusion to make here, is that for a new and effective EU *Ostpolitik* to work the "competition" needs to be weighed up, alongside the carrying out of a sober analysis of what the EU currently has on offer and what more could be offered. As noted in a survey of Russian and EU power in the neighbourhood it is far from obvious that the latter holds the upper hand. For example, whilst the EaP offers neighbours opportunities to upgrade their relations with the EU across an array of policy areas, in the context of their relations with Russia, citizens already enjoy visa free travel and access to an open labour market².

Challenging the Integrity of the European Neighbourhood Policy

Much has been made of the challenges posed by both the EaP and the Union for the Mediterranean for the integrity of the ENP as a whole. It is argued here that the emergence of sub-regional bodies within the two neighbourhood domains is a positive and inevitable trend, reflecting the existence of regional interests. Understood in this way, it can be credibly argued that the EaP and UfM may strengthen, rather than destroy the integrity of the ENP, by injecting more differentiation into the EU's typical "balanced approach" to the neighbourhood³.

The option of splitting the ENP into two geographical domains has some appeal, not least since there is already differentiation in the EU's Eastern and Southern approaches. Though reality shows that overall, centrifugal forces, i.e. those that might push the ENP apart are weaker than those that keep ENP as the framework for the East and the South together. Why is this? The explanation is quite straightforward:

² See Nicu Popescu, Andrew Wilson, *The Limits of Enlargement-Lite: European and Russian Power in the Troubled Neighbourhood*, Policy Report, European Council on Foreign Relations, London 2009, http://ecfr3.cdn.net/befa70d12114c3c2b0_hrm6bv2ek.pdf.

³ See Kerry Longhurst, *Injecting More Differentiation in European Neighbourhood Policy: What Consequences for Ukraine?*, *Russie.Nei.Visions* No 32, July 2008.

member states do have different interests in the neighbourhood, but the distances between these interests should not be overestimated. Moreover, it is not the case that southern EU member states have interests only in the Mediterranean, nor that northern EU members are solely interested in the East. In conclusion, the EU will continue to pursue a balanced approach to its neighbourhood, but to sustain this balance, the EU will need to maintain and indeed enhance its “differentiated approach” to its eastern and southern neighbours.

Final Words – Forging a New Ostpolitik?

Increased cooperation and interdependence between the EU and its Eastern neighbours is the objective of the Eastern Partnership. Seen in this way, the EaP is indeed an attempt to forge a new *Ostpolitik*. It is also an expression of the EU’s hallmark foreign policy style, namely of attempting to diffuse norms and values via the use of conditionality to induce change. But the EaP also has strongly pragmatic qualities seen, for example, in its focus on energy security, but is rather timorous when it comes to addressing the neighbourhood’s various conflicts.

The prospects for the EaP to successfully fulfil the categories of an *Ostpolitik*, it is concluded here, depend upon whether EU member states will commit to dealing with the types of questions and queries presented above, namely the implications of diversity, enlargement, tangible reform in visa policy and relations with Russia in the neighbourhood. If such issues remain unaddressed the chances are that the Eastern Partnership will make little difference and add little value to the EU’s existing portfolio of neighbourhood policies.

In final conclusion, just as Brandt’s *Ostpolitik* represented a shift in West German foreign policy thinking in the 1960’s, the EU needs to recognise that a qualitative shift in its approach to the Eastern neighbours needs to occur. This should be led by a clear agenda with expectations of change in the neighbouring states, twinned with a recognition that many of the regimes in the region may be far from perfect, but need to be engaged with, rather than simply isolated, in order to foster cooperation and integration and to bring about change from within.

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