



THE EUROPEAN NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY*

Dr. Dov Lynch, Research Fellow

European Union Institute for Security Studies

Introduction

This discussion is divided into four parts. First, what is at stake in the ENP? Why does it matter? Second, what are the constraints on the ENP? Third, is the ENP a fitting response to these constraints and the issues at stake? Finally, which areas might be included in the Action Plans that may help offset the constraints under which the ENP is operating?

What is at Stake?

The EU has undergone and remains in the process of a revolution. The most important transformation of the geography and politics in Europe since the end of the Cold War has occurred successfully – enlargement to twenty-five member states. Enlargement is tied to a second major transformation associated with the prospect of a European Constitution. While changing the way the EU works internally, these twin processes, combined with other developments, augur also profound changes in the way the EU interacts with the world and especially its neighbours.

* This paper was presented at the workshop “European Neighbourhood Policy: Concepts and Instruments” organised in Prague on June 9-10, 2004 by the European Commission with DGAP, CEFRES and IIR.

There are several levels of impact:

- 1) The EU has new member states, which have different interests than the older members. They will bring urgency to questions which have hitherto only been touched on superficially;
- 2) The EU will have new borders, on Belarus, Ukraine, and Russia, and also on Moldova. These bring also a new urgency to thinking about policies to be adopted in response to potential and actual threats;
- 3) Partly in response, the EU started to think about new policies to the states on its borders. For much for the 1990s, EU 'foreign policy' revolved around the question of membership/non-membership: if membership was on the cards, the EU had a policy to a state; if it was not, then the EU had little policy. This is changing. We are witnessing the birth of the EU as a fuller foreign policy actor, able to act beyond the dichotomy of accession/non-accession, drawing on a range of tools to promote its interests;
- 4) For all the clarion calls of the death of CFSP over Iraq, the EU was born as a security actor last year, with operations in the Balkans and Africa. The Iraqi crisis also stimulated thinking on a Security Strategy, approved in December 2003. A central point of the Strategy is the need to have a belt of well-governed countries on our periphery.

With all this, the EU is developing a strategic view of its borders. ENP reflects these developments and is an integral part of the birth of the EU as foreign policy actor, able to think and act beyond the straitjacket of accession/non-accession to a state on its borders.

Besides, there is real need for the EU do so. If we take the Eastern neighbours as an example, the EU faces an awkward trio, in Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova: one is an

authoritarian state with which the EU has no ties, Ukraine's declared European vocation seems to lose steam by the day, and Moldova is painfully and divided by conflict. EU policy approaches, developed in the 1990s, while not to blame, clearly did little to prevent these dead-ends from arising. In all, a decade of 'transition' resulted in the impoverishment of society, dis-industrialisation, and the rise of oligarchic power structures overlapping opaquely with the public sphere. The logic driving politics and economics is in many ways anathema to the EU model.

The stakes of ENP are therefore VITAL for the EU, its future stability and prosperity, and for the old and new neighbours, which seek to share in the benefits of European integration. Since the publication of the first Commission Communication in March 2003, the Wider Europe process – now ENP – has focused on answering a strategically important question facing the new EU.

How can the EU support the transformation of states on its borders into zones of stability and prosperity without offering the incentive of membership? Can the EU transform a country/countries while keeping it at arm's length?

Constraints on Answering

In themselves, these are difficult questions. They are made all the more difficult by the constraints which lay over any potential answer. Before considering the ENP directly and venues for its potential enhancement, one must understand the nature of the constraints that define the process of answering these questions. Constraints reside with the EU's ability to act and with the neighbouring states' will and ability to act.

The constraints on the EU are three-fold:

- 1) In the current climate, there can be no further talk of enlargement to the neighbours;
- 2) The EU's ability to launch ambitious programmes with its neighbours is limited given its preoccupation with pressing internal questions;

- 3) The financial resources available for the ENP are constrained.

The constraints on the neighbouring states are also threefold – here the focus falls on the Eastern neighbours:

- 1) The logic driving politics and economics in these states is anathema to the EU model, and it is deeply entrenched; no longer in ‘transition,’ these states have ‘arrived,’ in a place quite far from EU concerns. Corruption is entrenched in overlapping public and private spheres;
- 2) These are weak states in institutional and administrative terms, which limits their ability to absorb external support and undertake deep-rooted reform;
- 3) These remain divided states, physically in the case of Moldova, but in terms of foreign orientation in Belarus and Ukraine towards Russia and Europe – also limits elite willingness to undertake EU-directed reform, which is costly politically and painful socially. The European vocation has remained largely in the realm of symbolic politics.

The ENP Response

Faced with these stakes and these constraints, the ENP has sought to answer the question of advancing EU values and interest with neighbours without offering membership.

The ENP response is based on six principles:

- 1) The policy is targeted at states that do not ‘currently’ have the perspective of *membership*. The logic is not that of enlargement but of *inter-dependence*.
- 2) ENP is founded on the concepts of ‘*differentiation*’ and ‘*progressivity*.’
- 3) The project proposes a bargain. In return for progress in demonstrating shared values and effective reform, neighbours may benefit from the prospect of closer economic integration. ENP offers the prospect of a stake in the Internal Market.

- 4) *Action Plans* constitute the basic method.
- 5) The *political and security* role of the EU receives strong emphasis.
- 6) The project contains a notion of *future*. The possibility of moving beyond the PC/AA is raised for those states that fulfil the Action Plan.

The question now becomes: does this response work with the constraints facing the EU and the neighbour states? Certainly, as one would expect, the ENP takes into account EU constraints in terms of what it can offer the neighbours. Does it respond adequately to the entrenched constraints at play in the neighbour states? Not enough. For the ENP to be effective, it must respond to both EU and the target state constraints, and not only the constraints of one of the parties.

Here, one must ask the following questions:

- 1) *Is there enough on offer to justify deep reform in the neighbours?* The Communication leaves unresolved the question of finalite. Can a revolution – and adopting the *acquis* is one – be justified for the sake of joining a neighbourhood?
- 2) *Does the EU assume enough responsibility for monitoring the Action Plan process?* Will there be clear timetables and benchmarks in the AP that could ensure a continual low-level process of engagement and conditionality, or is the burden left to the neighbours?
- 3) *How will the EU act on the declared recognition of a shared responsibility for security in its neighbourhood?* What place will CFSP have in the AP process?

Thoughts for Enhancing ENP

For the EU, the challenge is to follow through on the recognition of its interdependence with its neighbours. The EU faces a tough task to support their transformation without resorting to its most successful tool of conditionality. Brussels needs to craft the Action Plan very carefully to build momentum for change.

The EU may consider the following ideas:

1) Symbolic Capital

Especially for Moldova and Ukraine, the EU should continue to stress that ENP does not close doors but opens horizons. Symbolic capital must be built into the preamble of the AP that opens rather than closes opportunities for these states. There should be no necessarily set path from an AP to an ENA: each state is different, and progress on reforms will bring ever more open horizons. One should not close options now. Tying the Action Plans with a future neighbourhood agreement undermines the notion of differentiation by predetermining a result, thus, weakening the target state's desire/ability to undertake the necessary reform and weakening the EU's leverage to push this through.

Without an open horizon, the EU will send a negative signal that accession is predetermined and off the books. The distorted political and economic systems in Moldova and Ukraine are deeply embedded – a serious shot of adrenaline is required to dislodge them - not miss the opportunity of helping to administer the shot. Raising the option of only a ENA also counters the Council Conclusions of June 2003 to maintain constructive ambiguity in terms of a future contractual agreement – this ambiguity must be maintained.

2) Build Conditionality into the AP

The success of the Action Plan will reside on its incentive strategy. Precise benchmarking, timeframes and monitoring must be written into the document for the EU and the neighbour to share the burden, and to provide tools of low-level conditionality to Brussels.

3) Promote Security

A greater EU security role should be built into the AP. EU political and security engagement is the clearest possible signal of a commitment to the security of neighbours. For example, the EU should increase its role in the settlement of the Transnistria conflict through the OSCE and also through its own means, especially on

the question of the Transnistrian-Ukrainian border (support joint border posts and participate in a monitoring mission).

4) Think Long Term

Events in Georgia since November 2003 show that the real impetus for change in the European direction can only come from support to civil society. Support to civil society must be a vital focus in the Action Plan.

Another long-term focus should be to examine how one might create a EUROMESCO-style network of European and Ukrainian/Belarusian/Moldovan and Russian research institutes to develop regional Euro-expertise and to link strategic communities over the long term.