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The ENP, Security and Democracy in the Context of the European Security Strategy

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INTRODUCTION

‘Even in an era of globalization, geography is still important’, the 2003 European Security Strategy (ESS) states. ‘It is in the European interest that countries on our own borders are well-governed. Neighbours who are engaged in violent conflict, weak states where organized crime flourishes, dysfunctional societies or exploding population growth on its borders all pose problems for Europe’, hence the definition of ‘building security in [the EU’s] neighbourhood’ as one of three strategic objectives for EU foreign policy. The ENP, which was elaborated in the same period as the ESS itself, can be regarded as the operationalization of this objective, translating the holistic approach to foreign policy advocated by the ESS into a concrete policy framework for relations with the Union’s periphery. Bilateral ENP Action Plans with each of the neighbours link together political, economic and social reforms and security cooperation through conditionality mechanisms. The ENP thus fits in perfectly with the strategic orientation chosen. Nonetheless, a number of fundamental, strategic-level choices have yet to be made, revealing that the EU is an emergent, but not yet a fully-fledged strategic actor. These questions arise both as a result of the great difficulties experienced in implementing the ENP and as a consequence of important gaps in the EU’s security thinking itself. Two major issues will be addressed in this chapter.

First, it has proved difficult to reconcile the objective of promoting democracy and human rights with the desire to operate in partnership with the existing regimes, notably as regards the more authoritarian neighbours. As a result, by public opinion and reformist actors in the neighbouring countries the EU is often seen as a status quo actor, which prioritizes good relations with the regimes over fundamental reform. This will always be a difficult balancing act, but it appears that the EU has not yet earnestly confronted the stability versus democracy dilemma. What is the desired end-state of the ENP? Are the EU’s instruments sufficient or is there an upper limit to what can be achieved through the consensual ENP?

Secondly, the ENP, although emphasizing permanent prevention and stabilization, cannot be seen separately from the ‘hard’ security or politico-military dimension. The Action Plans will not lead to many results in a country involved in conflict with its neighbours or in internal strife. Yet the EU’s neighbourhood contains numerous

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areas of tension, dispute and even regular full-blown conflict, notably in the Caucasus and the Middle East. Does the definition of the neighbourhood imply the objective of maintaining peace in that area, including through military means if necessary? Are the EU and its Member States able and willing to commit forces to that end?

POSITIVE POWER

The ESS certainly outlines a very ambitious agenda. The emphasis is on a holistic approach, putting to use the full range of instruments, through partnerships and multilateral institutions, for a permanent policy of prevention and stabilization: 'The best protection for our security is a world of well-governed democratic states. Spreading good governance, supporting social and political reform, dealing with corruption and abuse of power, establishing the rule of law and protecting human rights are the best means of strengthening the international order'.

This approach can be conceptualized through the notion of global public goods (GPG). Physical security or freedom from fear; economic prosperity or freedom from want; political freedom or democracy, human rights and the rule of law; and social wellbeing or education, health services, a clean environment etc.: these 'goods' are global or universal because – at least in the EU view – everybody is entitled to them; and they are public because it is the responsibility of public authorities at all levels of government to provide citizens with access to them. The gap between haves and have-nots in terms of access to these core GPG is at the heart of economic instability, mass migration, frustration, extremism and conflict, from the negative effects of which Europe cannot be insulated. Ultimately therefore, in today's globalized world, Europe can only be secure if everybody is secure, as it is expressed by the subtitle of the ESS: *A Secure Europe in a Better World*. The four core GPG are inextricably related – one needs access to all four in order to enjoy any one – and they are present in every foreign policy issue, hence the need for a holistic approach: all policies must address the four dimensions simultaneously in order to achieve durable results rather than just combat the symptoms of underlying issues. Working proactively to diminish inequality and increase access to GPG is the basis of prevention and stabilization, and because the EU does not want to impose, it does so through partnerships with other States and regions and through rule-based multilateral institutions.

The ESS thus has a very positive, indeed progressive tone to it. Rather than being threat-based, it is aimed at achieving positive objectives, which are of course in the enlightened self-interest of the EU – that is what policy is about and, as the opening quote makes clear, the ESS does not hesitate to state so explicitly. But these objectives at the same time directly benefit others and thus express a feeling of responsibility²

² On this issue, see Hartmut Mayer and Henri Vogt (eds.), *A Responsible Europe? Ethical Foundations of EU External Affairs*. Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2006.

for and solidarity with the have-nots in, in this case, Europe's neighbourhood. In that sense, the EU could be described as a positive power.³

DEMOCRACY VERSUS STABILITY

The EU is very active in prevention and stabilization, notably in its bilateral relations with third countries, via the method of 'positive conditionality'. The ENP undoubtedly is one of the policies in which the translation of the strategic choices of the ESS into concrete actions is the most advanced. By linking them to market access and economic and financial support, the EU aims to stimulate economic, political and social reforms as well as security cooperation, so as to address the root causes and durably change the environment that leads to extremism, crisis and conflict.

Yet, if 'positive conditionality' as a theory seems sounds enough, practice is often lagging behind, certainly in countries that do not – immediately – qualify for EU membership. The proverbial carrots that would potentially be most effective in stimulating reform, such as opening up the European agricultural market or setting up a system for legal economic migration, are those that the EU is not willing to consider – in spite of imperative arguments suggesting that Europe would actually benefit from such measures. At the same time, conditionality is seldom applied very strictly, which means that even if potentially more effective carrots would be offered, the EU's influence on policy-making would remain limited. One reason why increased benefits are not more explicitly linked to the neighbours' performance is the absence of sufficiently specific objectives and clearly defined benchmarks in the Action Plans. It is also a question of leadership and political courage though – it is easier to maintain cordial relations than to adopt a critical stance.

The impression created is that the EU favours stability and economic – and energy – interests over reform, to the detriment of Europe's soft or normative power. Surprisingly perhaps, in the Mediterranean neighbours e.g. public opinion mostly views the EU as a status quo actor, working with the current regimes rather than promoting fundamental change, whereas, perhaps even more surprisingly after the invasion of Iraq, the United States are seen as caring more sincerely about democracy and human rights.

This lack of EU soft power should not be underestimated. Rather than as the benign, multilateralist actor which the EU considers itself – 'the one that did not invade Iraq' – in many southern countries it is first and foremost seen as a very aggressive economic actor. In fact, in the economic sphere the EU often is a very 'traditional' power. For many countries, the negative economic consequences of dumping and protectionism – which often cancel out the positive effects of development aid – are far more important and threatening than the challenges of terrorism and proliferation that dominate the western foreign policy agenda, and therefore far

³ Sven Biscop, *The European Security Strategy – A Global Agenda for Positive Power*. Aldershot, Ashgate Publishing, 2005.

more determining for the image of the EU. In the current difficult international climate, the EU model is urgently in need of enhancing its legitimacy.

The EU must therefore muster the courage to effectively apply conditionality. Admittedly, 'positive conditionality' requires an extremely difficult balancing act, especially vis-à-vis countries with authoritarian regimes – and vis-à-vis great powers like Russia and China: maintaining partnership and being sufficiently critical at the same time. But in that difficult context, the EU could notably show more consistency and resolve in reacting to human rights abuses, which should visibly impact on the relationship with any regime. A much enhanced image and increased legitimacy will follow, notably in the eyes of public opinion, which is a prerequisite for the gradual pursuit of further-reaching political, economic and social reforms.

Even then however the question remains whether there is not an upper limit to what can be achieved through the partnership approach of the ENP. An Action Plan can be considered a contract; even if one of the contracting parties, the EU, carries more weight than the other, the neighbouring State, the latter in the end voluntarily agrees – or not – to subscribe to a number of reforms, in return for the benefits offered by the EU. Through this method, incremental progress can certainly be achieved in the field of human rights, including in authoritarian regimes, because measures can be taken that improve the condition of citizens without fundamentally affecting the power base of the regime: prison reform, abolition of torture etc. Democratization however is much more difficult to achieve – in many States, this would effectively amount to regime change. The existing regimes therefore have no interest at all in promoting democratic reforms, a situation which no degree of economic carrots is likely to change. In recent years peaceful transformation towards democracy has been possible in Georgia and Ukraine; to a significant extent these 'coloured revolutions' have been engineered from the outside. Yet the potential of replicating such peaceful transition in other neighbouring States seems extremely limited, especially in the Mediterranean neighbourhood, in the absence of sufficiently strong local actors and given Europe's limited appeal to local public opinion in the current international climate.

In view of the fact that the objectives of democratization and stability seem to be difficult to reconcile, at least under the current circumstances, a debate seems in order on the desired end-state of the ENP. Perhaps the EU could be satisfied with incremental progress while maintaining the existing regimes, in the interest of stability. Yet, from the perspective of the provision of global public goods, is it not evident that the enormous gap between haves and have-nots in many neighbouring countries means that stability is actually very fragile? In the longer term, this gap will certainly lead to unrest and crises of different types, which first of all threaten the security of people in the neighbouring countries. But, if this appears to indicate that in the long term the objective must be full democratization, then the methodology of promoting democracy is in urgent need of reassessment. This dilemma between democracy and stability is at the heart of the hesitant, even reluctant attitude of the EU towards speaking up for 'human security' in its neighbourhood.

A very important related question is specific to the EU's southern neighbourhood: what is the Union's attitude towards political Islam, which often makes up an important part of opposition and reformist actors – and often are the winners of elections? Here the case of Palestine can serve as an illustration. By breaking off official relations with the Palestinian government after the Hamas election victory of January 2006, apparently under US pressure, possibly in return for the US subscribing to the negotiated approach towards Iran, the EU has missed an opportunity. The Hamas government did play into the hands of those favouring breaking off relations by refusing to condemn suicide attacks. Yet the decision contrasts sharply with established EU policy, which has always been that a lot more influence can be had by dialogue rather than by designating rogue States with whom one does not talk, even if like in the case of Hamas part of their programme is not acceptable. Although Hamas is on the EU list of terrorist organizations, pragmatism should have prevailed. Why after all refuse to speak with Hamas on the ground that it does not recognize Israel, while simultaneously negotiating with Iran, the President of which has declared he would like to see Israel destroyed?

By condemning the results of what probably are the fairest elections in any Arab country, the EU has severely undermined the legitimacy of its democratization project. Furthermore, by immediately breaking off relations, demanding changes in policy, the EU has left the initiative to resume the relationship with the other party and has thus made itself dependent on the most radical elements within Hamas. If alternatively the EU would have continued to work with the Palestinian government, it could potentially have strengthened the more moderate wing of Hamas, which is focussing on the domestic governance of Palestine rather than on the confrontation with Israel and is therefore very interested in continued EU support.⁴ It can safely be argued that Hamas did not win the elections because it was more anti-Israeli than its competitors, but because of its social-economic programme, which had gained credibility thanks to the network of social services that Hamas and affiliated organizations have built in the territories, and, simply, because Fatah, with its record of corruption and ineffectiveness, lost the elections. If the EU is now unforgiving vis-à-vis Hamas, in the past it has perhaps been too soft on conditionality.

Those who are now welcoming the establishment of a Fatah-only government on the West Bank, after Hamas assumed power in Gaza, because a partner for dialogue has again been found, are mistaken. The existence of Gaza cannot be ignored, not only because of the humanitarian plight of its 1.3 million inhabitants, but also because no settlement is possible without Hamas. The EU must therefore open a channel for dialogue with Hamas. One cannot simply pretend they are not there. In Palestine and indeed in the region at large, the EU cannot afford not to have a dialogue with political Islam – a critical dialogue, based on conditionality, just as with the regimes. Given its prominence in politics and in civil society, political Islam must be recognized, perhaps not as a partner but at least as an indispensable actor.

⁴ The author thanks Dr. Claire Spencer for pointing out this argument.

A SECURITY GUARANTEE?

The politico-military dimension constitutes an integral part of the holistic approach of the ENP. Military instruments have a role to play in the permanent policy of conflict prevention and stabilization, notably in the field of security sector reform (SSR) and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) as well as in the field of traditional confidence and security-building measures (CSBMs). Clearly though in countries that are involved in armed conflict or in disputes carrying the risk of conflict, more forceful intervention may be necessary, from the deployment of observers and classic peacekeeping missions to preventive diplomacy and, in extreme cases, crisis management and the use of force. Just like an exclusively military solution that ignores the political, social and economic root causes of conflict will not produce durable results, a root causes approach will come to nought if it ignores existing 'hard security' issues. The Middle East Peace Process, or rather the lack of one, is a case in point, as the ESS itself emphasises: 'Resolution of the Arab/Israeli conflict is a strategic priority for Europe. Without this, there will be little chance of dealing with other problems in the Middle East'.

The question is whether this commitment to a resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict can be considered part of a wider security commitment towards the 'neighbourhood' as a whole. Can the 'neighbourhood' as defined by the ENP be seen as a region in which the EU has committed itself to guarantee peace and security, up to the use of military means if necessary – and feasible? Does the EU have the capacity to live up to such a commitment and, if so, are the Member States willing to engage that capacity? Or does the Union's commitment to its neighbourhood end at the moment military measures are required? An assessment of the EU's security engagement in the region since the coming into existence of the ENP produces a mixed picture.

SECURITY IN THE MEDITERRANEAN NEIGHBOURHOOD

Within the EU's neighbourhood, the Middle East obviously is the most important flash point. Perennial tensions and regular violence and conflict overshadow relations with the whole of the region. Europe has a long history of diplomatic engagement with the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP), to the extent even that it can be said that the need to define a position on the issue was one of the driving forces behind the creation of European Political Cooperation (EPC), the predecessor of the CFSP.⁵ Through increasingly more specific and outspoken positions, the EEC and later the EU played a major role in the recognition of the demands of the Palestinians and of the PLO as negotiating party. Yet, in spite of this record and in spite of the priority accorded to the issue in the ESS, until today Europe is all too often seen as a 'payer' rather than a 'player': indispensable for its economic aid, without which notably the Palestinian Authority would long have collapsed, but sidelined when it comes to 'high politics'. The invasion of Iraq, against the advice of those adhering to the long-standing European view that 'the road to the Middle East

⁵ Costanza Musu, 'The EU and the Middle East Peace Process: A Balance'. In: *Studia Diplomatica*, Vol. 60, 2007, No. 1, pp. 11-28.

goes through Jerusalem' rather than through Baghdad, was a sad low point of EU influence – also of course because the EU itself was deeply divided.

Only recently has there been some evolution, first with the acceptance by Israel of the deployment of an unarmed border assistance mission, EU BAM Rafah, the ESDP operation at the crossing point between Gaza and Egypt that was launched in 2005. On 16 July 2007, President George W. Bush called for an international meeting 'of representatives from nations that support a two-state solution'.⁶ Hopefully, such a conference could revitalize the Quartet, of which the EU is a member with the US, Russia and the UN. The EU remains committed to the two-state solution and still sees that as the key to the wider security problems in the region, but no EU initiative has any chance of success without parallel US engagement, which the conference will hopefully provide. That will also require a more active EU however, for until now the Member States have showed little willingness to try and stimulate peace initiatives. Furthermore, as mentioned above, after the intra-Palestinian conflict between Fatah and Hamas and the separation of the Palestinian Authority into two competing halves, the situation is even more difficult than before. Interestingly though, at the same time there seems to be a widespread consensus that if a settlement would emerge that would include a peacekeeping force, the EU and its Member States would evidently make a substantial contribution.

The EU has shown more activity with regard to Lebanon, but with mixed results. Following the 2006 war in Lebanon, the UN clearly looked to the EU to provide the forces for an enhanced peacekeeping force. If during the war the EU did not always act united, as notably the UK conformed with the US and delayed the call for a cease-fire, now the EU was quick to take up the call from the UN, shocked into action perhaps by the unexpected scale and intensity of the war, and driven by its strong declarations of support for the UN in recent years. In the Political and Security Committee (PSC) the option was sincerely considered to launch an ESDP operation, i.e. with a UN mandate but under EU command. Why indeed not assume command and run the operation under the EU label if EU Member States contribute the bulk of the forces anyway? In the end however – and perhaps not completely to the disappointment of all EU Member States – only the UN framework turned out to be acceptable to all conflict parties, hence the reinforcement of the existing UNIFIL operation rather than a new force. Interestingly, NATO was never an option, because of the connotations it carries in the Middle East – a sound argument for the maintenance of an alternative mechanism to launch operations, i.e. ESDP.

For the EU Member States the decision to contribute to 'UNIFIL-plus' was clearly taken in an EU context. Deliberations on force composition and the force commander took place in the EU institutions, in close coordination with the UN – although EU Member States rejected a Council Secretariat proposal for the EU to act as 'clearing

⁶ 'President Bush discusses the Middle East'. White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 16 July 2007.

house' managing the national contributions to UNIFIL.⁷ On 25 August 2006 UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan participated in an extraordinary meeting of the EU Council, which 'welcome[d] Member States' intentions to commit a substantial number of troops to be deployed in Lebanon'.⁸ Afterwards the Secretary-General declared his satisfaction with this outcome, stating that 'Europe has lived up to its responsibility'.⁹ In spite of the troops wearing the blue helmet, UNIFIL-plus is thus clearly seen as an EU presence, by all relevant parties, and with all the implications that carries for the EU. The Council conclusions themselves state this clearly: 'The significant overall contribution of the Member States to UNIFIL demonstrates that the *European Union* is living up to its responsibilities. [...] This gives a leadership role for the *Union* in UNIFIL [emphasis added]'.

It certainly is a success that the border with Israel is now being controlled by the Lebanese armed forces rather than the Hezbollah militias. For the EU, its large presence in UNIFIL seems to imply increasing acceptance of a politico-military rather than just an economic role, notably by Israel. Yet, UNIFIL will not disarm Hezbollah – it will demilitarize the border region below the Litani river, above which Hezbollah is likely to regroup. UNIFIL thus basically buys time for a political process that should integrate all actors in a democratic Lebanese polity. Only in such a wider political framework can SSR/DDR schemes result in the integration of the armed Hezbollah in a united Lebanese army, which seems the only peaceful way of consolidating Lebanese democracy. Secretary-General Annan explicitly confirmed this after his participation in the EU Council: 'I think it is also generally accepted that the disarmament of Hezbollah cannot be done by force. It has to be a political agreement between the Lebanese; there has to be a Lebanese consensus and an agreement among them to disarm'.¹⁰ Commissioner for External Relations Benita Ferrero-Waldner confirmed the same: 'The disarming of Hezbollah [...] realistically can only be achieved as part of a process of political integration'.¹¹ As the assassination of several Lebanese leading figures since the deployment of UNIFIL-plus and the ensuing general political turmoil have shown, time is preciously short. An initiative to launch the required political process is urgently needed, or the country might plunge into a new civil war. Without it, the positive light in which UNIFIL is seen today can quickly fade away. As in Afghanistan, if insufficient benefits are seen to be forthcoming, the peacekeepers might easily come to be seen as occupiers, and as proxies for Israel. If civil strife would effectively erupt, UNIFIL would be in a most difficult position.

As a security actor in its Mediterranean neighbourhood, the EU thus appears strangely active and hesitant at the same time, simultaneously playing a leading and

⁷ Nicoletta Pirozzi, 'UN Peacekeeping in Lebanon: Europe's Contribution'. In: *European Security Review*, 2006, No. 30.

⁸ Extraordinary EU Council Meeting: Conclusions on Lebanon. 25 August 2006.

⁹ Brussels, Belgium, 25 August 2006 – Secretary-General's Press Conference.

¹⁰ Brussels, Belgium, 25 August 2006 – Secretary-General's Press Conference.

¹¹ Benita Ferrero-Waldner, 'For a Sovereign and Independent Lebanon'. In: *The Wall Street Journal Europe*, 31 August 2006.

a subservient role. The deployment of nearly 8,000 blue helmets from EU Member States undoubtedly is a very significant step towards an enhanced diplomatic and military presence in the region. Yet, the political follow-up to this deployment seems to be lacking, as if the Member States shy away from the expectations and responsibilities which it has brought. In a similar vein, the EU remains very reluctant to translate its long-standing position on the Arab-Israeli conflict in diplomatic initiatives. Important in this regard is the EU's difficult relationship with the US, the other crucial external actor in the region. While it can be argued that only a mutually supported strategy has any chance of success, Brussels and Washington continue to hold very different opinions about how to pursue their largely shared objectives for the reason.¹² Furthermore, the US still seems to seek to avoid an important politico-military role for the EU, while a number of EU Member States give priority to the alliance with the US over the pursuit of a joint European policy.

Security in the Eastern Neighbourhood

In Europe's continental neighbourhood, the 'frozen conflicts' dominate the security agenda. Here the EU as such has played a lesser role, because traditionally the forum to address these issues has been the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), while the focus of the Union is on the Western Balkans. Nevertheless, the eastern neighbourhood has gained prominence in recent years, as is witnessed by the statement in the ESS that 'We should now take a stronger and more active interest in the problems of the Southern Caucasus'. This commitment has been translated in the appointment of a Special Representative for the region, whose staff includes a Border Support Team offering strategic level advice to the Georgian government on matters of SSR. The EU has also deployed an ESDP rule of law mission in Georgia, EUJust Themis (July 2004 – July 2005), supporting Georgia in reforming the criminal justice system. There is also a Special Representative for Moldova, and an EU Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine has been deployed since December 2005, advising the border and customs services.

It seems however that the EU is still unclear about its long-term strategy towards the region, both as regards the definition of its own interests and the eventual membership of neighbours such as Georgia and Ukraine. At the same time, unlike in the Mediterranean neighbourhood, the EU is confronted with Russia, a regional actor – rather than an external actor like the US in the Mediterranean – that is a power in its own right and seeks to maintain and extend its influence in the region. In the face of not too hidden Russian involvement and support for break-away regions in Georgia and Moldova, the EU has adopted a very careful policy, emphasising monitoring and capacity-building rather than grand initiatives aimed at conflict resolution. Naturally, this is at the same time just one dimension of the wider debate about tense EU-Russia relations in general. Again, the EU often divides itself, as

¹² 'For a "More Active" EU in the Middle East: Transatlantic Relations and the Strategic Implications of Europe's Engagements in Iran, Lebanon and Israel-Palestine'. In: Roby Nathanson & Stephan Stetter (eds.), *The Middle East under Fire? EU-Israel Relations in a Region between War and Conflict Resolution*. Berlin, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2007, pp. 65-87.

when the attempt by Javier Solana to discuss in the EU framework the issue of US plans for missile defence and the terse Russian reactions was blocked by a number of transatlantic-oriented Member States.

MULTILATERAL FRAMEWORKS AND THE BROADER REGION

The ENP puts the emphasis on bilateral relations, through the Action Plans. Yet, both in the southern and in the eastern neighbourhood, existing multilateral frameworks might help the EU attain its objectives, notably in the field of security.

In the south, the ENP de facto takes over the bilateral dimension of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) as Action Plans are agreed with successive partner countries. On paper the EMP continues to function as a multilateral complement to the ENP, but in reality it has been moribund ever since 1996, the time when Arab-Israeli relations deteriorated again after the initial success of the Madrid process. With a few exceptions, partner countries have always continued to meet, which is a merit in its own right, but little of substance has been achieved. Yet, a multilateral framework is indispensable when addressing 'hard security' issues in the region, which requires 'south-to-south' confidence-building, between the neighbouring countries. However, the EMP with its 37 participants is at the same time too unwieldy as a forum, and too limited, because it does not include a number of countries that are crucial to security in notably the Middle East, such as Iran and Iraq. A more flexible approach is in order, bringing together relevant actors on a sub-regional basis, including non-EMP countries if necessary, but in the broad framework of the EMP. On the EU side as well, a flexible approach could be imagined, delegating authority to negotiate on behalf of the EU to a limited number of Member States, in function of the issue at hand. Together with High Representative Javier Solana, or perhaps his envoy, the Member States with the most interests and expertise can thus take the lead in preparing and, after receiving a mandate from the Council, implementing policy. Such a more flexible format seems better suited to deal with the 'high politics' of conflict resolution and crisis management, while the overall EMP framework can continue to address some of the 'softer' security issues, such as cooperation on training, civil protection etc.

In the east, the OSCE, as a forum convening all neighbouring countries plus Russia and the United States, could fulfil a similar function. Only by involving Russia can a settlement of the 'frozen conflicts' be achieved – the precondition is of course that Russia refrains from blocking the organization, as it has done in the recent past. In the ESS, the OSCE is mentioned only very briefly, on a par with the Council of Europe: 'For the European Union, the strength and effectiveness of the OSCE and the Council of Europe has a particular significance'. The EU and its Member States could probably make much better use of their prominent position in the OSCE, if there were more effective coordination between the two organizations, not only in the field of 'hard security', but also with regard to the Action Plans.

Not only are the strategic objectives and approaches of the OSCE strikingly similar, but the OSCE can bring a wealth of experience and expertise to the table. In many of

the neighbouring countries, the OSCE has a long-established and large-scale presence; with its norm-setting experience, it could help the EU in designing realistic objectives and benchmarks and in negotiating the Action Plans. Even more importantly, through its missions and delegations, it could then collaborate in a very constructive way with the neighbours in helping them to meet those objectives. The OSCE could thus also profit of the increased leverage resulting from an EU-provided carrot to stimulate cooperation and reform, to the benefit of both organizations' objectives. Such constructive cooperation could meet the criticism by some CIS countries that the OSCE focus too exclusively on monitoring human rights and democratic institutions, to the detriment of supporting the governments of the target States,¹³ although of course political participation, respect for human rights and the rule of law constitute an important dimension of the ENP Action Plans.

Both in the eastern and the southern neighbourhood, there are obvious links with countries that are not covered by the ENP, e.g. in the Gulf region, or the *problématique* is very similar, e.g. in Central Asia. The question could therefore be asked whether the ENP should be extended to these regions, or whether perhaps separate but similar and linked frameworks can be imagined to deepen relations with them. The EU has established relations with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), including annual ministerial meetings, but except for the economic dimension cooperation is limited. In June 2004 The European Council adopted the *EU Strategic Partnership with the Mediterranean and the Middle East*, which sought to apply the holistic approach of the ENP/EMP, without enlarging the frameworks themselves, to relations with the GCC countries, Yemen, Iran and Iraq. The latter have proved to have a very limited interest in this initiative however; hence not a lot has been heard about it since its adoption. The June 2007 European Council adopted *The EU and Central Asia: Strategy for a New Partnership*, a new framework for relations with the five Central Asian countries, focusing on political dialogue, education, rule of law, human rights and energy. Both in Central Asia and the Gulf region the dilemma between democracy and stability presents itself in even starker terms than in the ENP countries. Many of the regimes are even more intransigent and moreover possess important energy assets, which makes the balancing act which a 'critical dialogue' always is even more difficult for the EU, while the desired end-state is even vaguer. Thus, although on the one hand the linkages with the ENP region are evident, on the other hand if the EU wants to earnestly pursue a similar partnership with Central Asia and the Gulf, a thorough assessment of the holistic approach becomes even more pressing, given the additional difficulties which these regions entail. Otherwise the addition of ineffectual policies will further erode the Union's soft power.

CONCLUSION

From one perspective, the field of policies towards the neighbourhood is one in which the translation of the overall orientations of the ESS into sub-strategies, policies and actions has advanced the furthest. The ENP can really be seen as the

¹³ Monika Wohlfeld & Oleksandr Pavlyuk, 'The European Neighbourhood Policy and the OSCE'. In: *Challenge Europe Online Journal*, 2004, No. 12.

implementation of one part of the ESS. In the policy cycle, implementation should be followed by evaluation, the results of which should be fed back into the policy design. In the case of the ENP, implementation has clearly revealed the practical difficulties of translating even a sound concept into practice. As the evaluation above has shown, this is not just a matter of the modalities of implementation – the assessment also reveals a number of remaining questions at the strategic level. These the EU must address in order to maintain the dynamic of the ENP and guarantee its effectiveness.

The priority issues for the success of the ENP include:

- (1) Finding a renewed and more resolute commitment to react firmly to human rights abuses and effectively apply conditionality. Respect for human rights is at the very heart of the EU project and should be seen to be a core element of its foreign policy as well – without that, the EU can have no soft power.
- (2) While more attention for human rights is a *conditio sine qua non*, at a more fundamental level the EU must assess the long-term objectives of the ENP, their feasibility and the effectiveness of the instruments at its disposal. This includes the question of how to interact usefully with authoritarian regimes as well as with religiously inspired political actors without renouncing the Union's values; conditionality should apply to relations with both. Without a more thought-through policy, the democracy versus stability dilemma risks to paralyze the Union.
- (3) A specific 'hard security' strategy for the ENP region would be counterproductive, by creating the perception that the EU sees its neighbours mostly as potential sources of insecurity. At a more general level, the ESS has to be translated into an overall military strategy, one level of abstraction below the ESS, outlining when and where which use of the military instrument the EU aims to make, including the threshold for the use of force, e.g. in a Responsibility to Protect scenario. That will then also make clear how far the EU's security commitment towards its neighbours reaches.
- (4) If multilateralism is one of the core elements of the ESS, the multilateral fora in the ENP region have been paralyzed by conflicts among the neighbours and by the intransigence of major participants. The EU should assess how they can be revitalized, e.g. by introducing a more flexible and sub-regional approach, and how, in the case of the OSCE, it can better coordinate its action with and within that organization.
- (5) The issues above should probably have been addressed first, before creating new frameworks for relations with the Gulf and Central Asia, where the same difficulties are even more present. Without an effective ENP, policies towards these regions cannot be effective either.

Neighbours are just accidentally living next to each other – a neighbourhood does not automatically constitute a community. The first experiences of the ENP demonstrate that creating a community is a very slow and difficult process. But if the EU finds the will to sincerely assess its strategies and policies, and adapt them where necessary, it will at least be an ongoing process.