



**The European
Neighbourhood Policy
in Perspective**
Context, Implementation and Impact

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palgrave
macmillan

Foreword to the Paperback Edition

When the first edition of this volume was completed in 2010 the EU's neighbourhood was exhibiting a high degree of stability and stasis. This situation was to change dramatically in early 2011. The events in North Africa that were subsequently to be dubbed the 'Arab Spring' ushered in changes within the EU's southern neighbourhood that were akin to those in Eastern Europe in 1989.

The EU, alongside other external actors such as the United States, was unprepared for the events of the Arab Spring and struggled to formulate an appropriate policy response. In addressing the events in its Southern neighbourhood the EU grappled with two issues. First, the new foreign policy innovations introduced by the Lisbon Treaty were not yet fully operational, and most particularly the new European External Action Service (EEAS) was still being constructed. This created a capacity deficit in the EU's mechanisms to respond to a foreign policy challenge. Further, it severely constrained the capacity of the High Representative to fully exploit the main innovation of the Lisbon Treaty: that is, the drawing together of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and its external relations.

The second issue was that EU's European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) was not designed as a policy for crisis management but rather as a policy for the EU's medium- and long-term engagement with its neighbours. Consequently, the architecture of the ENP that we described in our previous edition of this book remained largely unchanged by the events across North Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean in 2011 and 2012. Furthermore, the EU's objectives for the region have not changed substantially with the Arab Spring.

The EU's policy design for the region is primarily intended to maintain security for its member states and citizens. As this volume stresses this is primarily because the EU's policy towards its neighbourhood has been largely cast in security terms, defined as a "low probability of damage to acquired values" (Baldwin 1997, 13). The EU prides itself in being a community founded on shared values among its members¹ and its ENP frequently refers to a "vision [of] a ring of countries, sharing the EU's fundamental values and objectives", while realising that the "degree of commitment to common values" may differ across the different partner

countries (European Commission 2004, 5,8). This analysis and broad policy objective has not been altered by the regime changes in the EU's neighbourhood.

As early as 2003 the so-called "Wider Europe" Communication from the European Commission noted that "neighbouring countries are the EU's essential partners...to create an enlarged area of political stability" (European Commission 2003b, 3) and in 2004, the Commission's ENP Strategy Paper emphasised that an "important priority will be the further development of a shared responsibility between the EU and partners for security and stability in the neighbourhood region" (European Commission 2004, 13), reflecting a similar observation in the EU Security Strategy of December 2003 (Council of the European Union 2003a, 7,9,11).

To comprehend why the EU's Neighbourhood Policy has not undergone a fundamental redesign as a consequence of the events in its southern neighbourhood requires an understanding of both how the policy has evolved and how its broad objectives are still maintained by the EU. This volume allows for such an understanding.

Our assertion is that to understand where the ENP currently is, its origins have to be understood as period of two sequential, partially overlapping phases as outlined in the introduction of this book. During the early phase, between 2002 and 2006, ENP was clearly a policy encapsulating the 'alternative to enlargement' more than anything else. During the following period, roughly between 2006 and 2010, the ENP began a transition towards the regional foreign and security policy that it arguably is now. In many ways 2011 presented a major juncture for the ENP: never before did the EU produce as many strategy documents on the ENP in one year as it did in 2011 (Council of the European Union 2011c; European Commission 2011a, 2011c, 2011e, 2011f), nor was the increase in the ENP budget ever as significant in relative and absolute terms, not to mention the fact that it comes at a time of profound economic crisis within the EU.² This was partly in response to the momentous developments in its southern neighbourhood, partly the result of a longer review process triggered by the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty.

The ground for the reinvigoration that the ENP has seen over the past twelve months was partially prepared in the years 2006–2010. Two reviews of the ENP in 2006 and 2007, respectively entitled "On Strengthening the ENP" and "A Strong ENP" (European Commission 2006, 2007) were followed by a flurry of activity in relation to the developing Eastern Partnership (EaP), which had been developed by the Commission following a request by the Council in June 2008 (Council of the European Union 2008) and gained additional significance

following the Russia-Georgia war in August 2008. The EaP took concrete shape with a Communication from the Commission in December 2008 (European Commission 2008a, 2008b) and was officially launched in May 2009 (Council of the European Union 2011c). The importance that this particular element of differentiation within the ENP as a whole took on in the two years following the launch of the EaP is also evident from the two implementation reports in 2009 and 2010, respectively, and the relative progress that was made in relations especially with Moldova, including notably in relation to a more constructive and proactive EU engagement on the conflict in Transnistria, and Ukraine.

Yet, despite another Eastern Partnership Summit in Warsaw in September 2011 (Council of the European Union 2011c), the focus of the ENP decidedly shifted to the southern neighbourhood as the Arab Spring began to engulf the region from early 2011 onwards in developments at least partly reminiscent to the events in Central and Eastern Europe after 1989. The relatively routine policy process of the ENP was thus suddenly presented with significant challenges and opportunities at a time when its place and role in the post-Lisbon environment was still being defined.

On 25 May 2011, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Commission Vice-President, Baroness Catherine Ashton, and the European Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy, Štefan Füle, presented a new communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, underlining the new possibilities for close cooperation between the emerging EEAS and the Enlargement and ENP portfolio (in the Commission). Boldly entitled “A new response to a changing neighbourhood”, the document is the outcome of a review of the ENP that began in summer 2010 in response to the changes of the Union’s new foreign affairs set-up under the Lisbon Treaty. The “New Response” communication proclaims the need for a new approach “to build and consolidate healthy democracies, pursue sustainable economic growth and manage cross-border links” and specifically mentions “stronger political cooperation on...security [and] conflict resolution matters” (European Commission 2011e, 1,3). Crucially, and thus reaffirming a persistent theme across a decade of EU strategy papers on the ENP, the communication insists that “the new approach must be based on mutual accountability and a shared commitment to the universal values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law” (European Commission 2011e, 2) and puts significant emphasis on both positive and negative conditionality (European Commission 2011e, 4).

Comprising the countries on the southern and eastern Mediterranean shores – Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt; and the Palestinian Territories, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria – the EU's southern neighbourhood faces no shortage of challenges that undermine the region's stability and threaten the EU's security. In order to assess how much impact the envisaged outcomes of the new ENP are likely to have in this respect, these challenges first need to be identified. They fall into two broad categories. The first of them is related to instability IN the southern neighbourhood itself:

- Latent/unresolved conflicts between states, primarily evolving around borders in the Middle East between Israel and Syria and Lebanon
- Communal/sectarian/secessionist civil wars, primarily the on/off power struggles in Lebanon and the Palestinian territories, as well as the self-determination struggle in Morocco/Western Sahara
- The Israeli-Palestinian conflict which combines elements of inter-state and intra-state conflicts linked to the broader regional setting of the Arab-Israeli conflict
- The 'Arab Spring', i.e., the popular uprisings against a widely perceived lack of economic opportunity, freedom and dignity in a number of the authoritarian regimes in the Middle East and North Africa – with their largely unpredictable outcomes and consequences, including continuing violence in Egypt, Libya, and Syria

All of these conflicts pose a serious humanitarian challenge (and have in many instances done so for years if not decades), but they also constitute a security challenge to the EU (and more broadly) in that they are an essential part of an environment that is conducive to the proliferation of cross-border security threats. In this second category of security challenges, the issues are of more immediate and direct impact on the EU itself:

- Illegal (trans-) migration to EU member states
- Transnational organised crime, especially related to smuggling of goods and trafficking in humans, arms, and drugs
- International terrorism
- Supply and transit dimensions of European energy security

The new ENP mission statement recognises that addressing these threats is an interest that the EU shares with the countries of the southern neighbourhood, and at least implicitly, also makes a connection between the

two categories in seeing problems IN the neighbourhood among the causes of security threats BEYOND its geographical boundaries, including for the EU. More to the point organised crime, international terrorism, etc., are, to some extent, symptoms of underlying problems, such as the lack of civil and political liberties and economic opportunities, in the countries of the southern and eastern Mediterranean, which may be addressed by the breadth of policies that comprise the ENP, including institution building, economic cooperation, and cooperation on a range of security issues that fall into the areas of CSDP and JHA.

Looking back over close to a decade of ENP, the track record of these policies to achieve their strategic goals of strengthening the prosperity, stability and security of the EU and its neighbours is less than stellar. Among all the countries of the southern neighbourhood, only two—Morocco and Jordan—have fully implemented, and moved beyond, their original action plans. In recognition of this, the EU granted them ‘advanced status’ in 2008 and 2010, respectively. Yet, one might question, for example, how much Morocco really has advanced since the inauguration of the ENP in 2003: the conflict in the Western Sahara – after all, one of the security challenges in the Southern Neighbourhood constantly referred to in EU documents – is nowhere nearer a resolution than it was eight years ago.

Is this likely to change now? The “New Response to a Changing Neighbourhood” signifies a certain degree of continuity in its commitment to democracy, economic development, sub-regional cooperation and regional differentiation that has characterised the ENP since 2003. What is if not new, so at least far more explicit, is a greater emphasis on conditionality and political and security cooperation. Thus, the EU seeks to “enhance [its] involvement in solving protracted conflicts” (European Commission 2011e, 5). However, rather than outlining concrete steps that go beyond the implementation of ENP (and CFSP/CSDP) to date, the emphasis is on continuing what already happens (and has arguably not been very effective): membership in the Middle East Quartet, opposition to violent border changes, using operational presence through existing missions to back reform efforts, and employing instruments that promote economic integration and sectoral reform to support confidence-building measures and conflict resolution objectives (European Commission 2011e). The only, partially innovative new initiative is that the “EU intends to enhance its support for confidence-building and outreach to breakaway territories, for international efforts and structures related to the conflicts, and, once that stage is reached, for the implementation of settlements” (European Commission 2011e, 5).

Here is where the EU may be able to find (yet again) a niche for an effective contribution to stability in its neighbourhood through the instruments that the ENP offers. Consider, briefly, the case of Libya. While the UN-authorized military intervention was a NATO operation almost solely conducted and led by Europeans – first and foremost the UK and France—the EU has not so far played any significant role. Clearly constrained by its economic and financial crisis, the real blow to concerted and unified EU action was dealt by the German abstention during the vote on UN Security Council Resolution 1973(2011).³ Until then, the EU had been fully supportive of UN actions and contributed to enforcing sanctions against the Gadhafi regime. A joint statement by the President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy, and the EU High Representative, Catherine Ashton, on the day the crucial UN resolution was passed already indicated more lukewarm support of the EU, noting its readiness “to implement this Resolution *within its mandate and competences*” (Rompuy and Ashton 2011) and the subsequent Council Conclusions three days later unsurprisingly offered no more than “CSDP *support to humanitarian assistance* in response to a request from OCHA and under the coordinating role of the UN” (Council of the European Union 2011a). At that time, the NATO military operation, carried predominantly by military forces of EU members Britain and France, was already in full swing. A starker contrast could hardly be imagined.

The EU did follow up with a Council Decision on an EU military operation in support of humanitarian assistance operations in Libya, setting up operational headquarters in Rome and preparing various scenarios (Council of the European Union 2011b). Embarrassingly, a request for the activation of EU military assistance was never made. EU Military Staff and assets were, however, involved in the evacuation of EU citizens from Libya and third-country refugees via Tunisia.

While it is easy (and not wrong) to belittle the inability of the EU to offer any substantial military support during the Libyan crisis (even though it did, through its member states, clearly have the necessary capabilities), the EU has been an important player in a different way: by providing significant humanitarian assistance, worth over €150 million by October 2011. An additional €25 million are available for short-term stabilisation needs, as well as a further €60 million for assistance in the transition process. These will include measures decided together with the transitional government to build up state institutions, to support civil society, human rights and democratisation, to provide health services and assist with border management and security sector reform. (European Commission 2011b)

The statement by the High Representative following the fall of Sirte and the death of Gadhafi clearly indicates the Union's willingness to become a strong partner of the new Libya (Ashton 2011). The case of Libya demonstrates in an exemplary way that the countries of the Arab Spring in the southern neighbourhood, which go through a challenging, and at times violent, transition process now, and the EU need each other economically and politically (as did and do the Central and Eastern European countries that joined the EU in 2004 and 2007 or are now covered by the Eastern Partnership). These countries' successful transition to democracy is crucial to stability in the EU's southern neighbourhood, and thus to the EU's security, and it is here where the ENP will have to prove its mettle. An understanding as to whether the ENP is fit for this purpose remains of crucial importance and as a reviewer of the first edition noted "[the] volume is indisputably well-placed to offer a unique and coherent perspective on the nature and utility of EU relations with the 'neighbours'" (Korosteleva-Polglase, 2011).

Notes

1. As per Article 2 of the Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union "The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities."
2. The commission has proposed a total budget for the ENP for the period 2014–2020 of €18.2 billion, reflecting a 40% increase on the current budget (European Commission 2011d).
3. For a record of the 6498th Meeting of the UN Security Council see (UN Security Council 2011).

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