



ENGAGE

Working Paper Series

No. 26 | June 2023

**Mapping Changing Intra-EU and External
Opportunity Structures and Their Impact
on Past EU Neighbourhood Policies**

**Kataryna Wolczuk, Tamar Gamkrelidze,
Henna Kakko & Arto Väisänen**

**ENVISIONING A NEW
GOVERNANCE ARCHITECTURE
FOR A GLOBAL EUROPE**



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement no. 962533.



Executive Summary

This paper provides a comprehensive, detailed and systematic mapping of the changing intra-EU and wider neighbourhood-related opportunity structures resulting from the launch of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). Therefore, in this paper, we explore the shifting internal and external opportunity structures by following the evolution of the ENP over time. We focus first on intra-EU opportunity structures by tracking the ENP's original design, as well as the underpinning legal and institutional architecture, followed by an analysis of its 'toolbox'. Then we explore key intra-EU constraints: first, 'mission creep' from enlargement, which resulted in a rather technocratic, de-securitized design of the ENP and its overall separation from the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP); and second, lack of consensus amongst the Member States on the ENP in general and the EU's role in the security dimension in particular.

After mapping the intra-EU constraints, the paper explores the external opportunity structures by looking at the regional dimensions, which were specifically developed for the Eastern and Southern neighbourhoods. We argue that the complex and shifting regional dynamics expose the inherent limits of the undifferentiated, uniform institutional design of the neighbourhood policy. These led to the subsequent unravelling of the common approach and growing differentiation between the priorities and instruments, not only towards the Eastern and Southern neighbourhoods, but also with regard to individual countries. To illustrate how the shifting opportunity structures impacted the implementation of the ENP, the paper focusses on the receptivity of neighbouring countries and their relations with the EU using two case studies: Georgia and Morocco.

For More Information

EsadeGeo-Center for Global Economy and Geopolitics
ENGAGE
Avenida Pedralbes, 60-62
08034, Barcelona
Email: marie.vandendriessche@esade.edu



Table of Contents

Executive Summary	2
1 Introduction.....	4
2 Challenges of Mapping the ENP.....	5
3 Intra-EU Opportunities	7
3.1 EU's Own Role Conception as a 'Transformative Power'	7
3.2 Legal Basis of the ENP	7
3.3 Institutional Architecture.....	9
3.4 ENP's Methodology and Instruments.....	11
4 Intra-EU Constraints	13
4.1 'Mission Creep' from Enlargement	13
4.2 Lack of Consensus and Commitment from the Member States	14
4.3 What Role for Security in the ENP?.....	15
5 External Opportunities and Constraints.....	17
5.1 Regional Dimension: South	17
5.2 Regional Dimension: East	25
6 Conclusions	37
Reference List.....	39



1 Introduction

This paper aims to examine the EU's development of an integrated and comprehensive policy for neighbouring countries. In the 1990s, the EU focused on two key foreign policy priorities: the CFSP and enlargement. Based on the perceived success of its enlargement policy, the EU felt sufficiently encouraged to extend its 'transformative power' through a dedicated neighbourhood policy, which was to dispel criticism of 'fortress Europe' and weaken the 'in-or-out' dichotomy inherent in the logic of enlargement.

The launch of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) between 2003 and 2004 was designed to strengthen prosperity, stability, and security in the EU's neighbourhood (European Commission 2003, 2004) and to support the neighbouring countries in their political, economic, and institutional reforms. This was a very ambitious agenda with wide-ranging, and sometimes competing objectives, best described as "not a policy in its own right but rather a set of instruments searching for its most appropriate rationale and set-up" (Missiroli, 2008, p. 13).

Indeed, in legal and programmatic terms, the ENP has been a composite policy, consisting of a variety of different frameworks, instruments, and initiatives (Noutcheva, 2015; Keukeleire & Delreux, 2022; Calcan, 2021; Schumacher, 2018). The ENP has been grafted on, and complemented by, a raft of multilateral and bilateral policies. These have included bilateral relations and agreements (such as Association Agreements) and regional frameworks, such as the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and the Eastern Partnership (EaP). Therefore, the ENP is best conceptualised not as a single policy but as a set of diverse and shifting policy objectives and instruments under the common umbrella of the ENP.

The composite nature of the neighbourhood policy was underpinned by the legal and institutional architecture established by the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992. Paradoxically, the ENP was designed to be somewhat divorced from the wider CFSP portfolio. It was situated largely within the Commission's external action portfolio; hence the ENP's policy objectives and methodology were shaped by the Commission's focus on economic and sectoral dimensions of cooperation, such as development policy, with extensive references to the *acquis*. The Lisbon Treaty did not alter this institutional set up in a significant way.

The limits of the EU's engagement reflect the long-standing disagreement amongst the Member States on the role that the Union should play in propping up the security of the Eastern neighbours as well as the limited willingness to bear related political, institutional and economic costs (Batt et al., 2003).

As we argue in this paper, given the intra-EU constraints, the major challenge for the EU was the sheer challenge of accommodating different aspirations and expectations from the partner countries as well as reacting to various conflicts, wars and crises in its vicinity. Addressing these challenges resulted in the *de facto* fragmentation of the policy, not only between the Southern and Eastern neighbourhoods (the two geographical areas of the ENP),



but also in the shape of increased differentiation between individual countries within the neighbourhoods.

2 Challenges of Mapping the ENP

The EU initially implemented a uniform and consistent policy across its diverse neighbourhoods. Nonetheless, it pursued differentiated relations with each of its neighbours and had to respond to the vastly different aspirations of partner countries and crises emerging in the neighbourhood (see below). Over time, this led to the differentiation of the policy and a focus on bilateral ties, thereby almost reverting to the *status quo ante*. The complexity and changing nature of the ENP creates a considerable difficulty in terms of mapping the ENP in a comprehensive and systematic way.

Much research on the ENP has focused on the 'institutional underpinnings and intentions' of the EU's external actions rather than on the recipients (Keuleers et al., 2016, p. 360). Given that the ENP has primarily been viewed as the external projection by the EU of internal solutions (Lavenex, 2008), research on the ENP has focused on the EU's role as the 'hub of the integration process on the whole continent' (Kratochvíl, 2009, p. 9).

Against this backdrop, this paper provides a comprehensive overview of the ENP by combining the analysis of intra-EU and wider neighbourhood opportunity structures, that is, internal and external opportunities and constraints underpinning the design and implementation of the policy.¹ This is because, while external factors matter, EU's responses are highly conditioned by internal factors, given that its capacity to act is underpinned by a complex legal and institutional architecture.

Therefore, in this paper, we map the shifting internal and external opportunity structures by focusing on the evolution of the ENP over time. We focus first on intra-EU opportunity structures by tracking its original design as well as the underpinning legal and institutional architecture as well as the ENP's 'toolbox'. The paper then shifts attention to the key intra-EU constraints. First, it examines the 'mission creep' of enlargement, which resulted in a rather technocratic, de-securitized design of the ENP and its overall separation from the CFSP. Second, we draw attention to the lack of consensus amongst the Member States on the ENP in general and the EU's role in security dimension in particular.

After mapping the intra-EU constraints, the paper explores the external opportunity structures by focusing on the regional dimensions developed for the Eastern and Southern neighbourhood. In contrast to the intra-EU dynamics, relatively little attention has been paid

¹ According to Bretherton and Vogler the concept of opportunity structure "denotes the external environment of ideas and events – the context which frames and shapes EU action or inaction" (2006, p. 24). Opportunity signifies the structural context of action, which is not an "inert background", but rather "a dynamic process where ideas are interpreted and events accorded meaning" (2006, p. 24).



to neighbouring countries' actual perceptions of, and demand for, the EU's role and policies. This matters for two reasons in terms of opportunity structures. First, neighbours' perceptions of, and attitudes towards the EU play a key role in shaping their receptivity and openness to the EU's influence (Delcour & Wolczuk, 2020). Second, the receptivity of the partner countries impacted subsequent policy developments. Neighbours' engagement under the ENP was shaped by their expectations of the EU, which if not satisfied, could have led to the failure of EU policy in these countries. Therefore, the relevance of EU policy and, ultimately, its effectiveness, has become contingent upon the degree to which the EU understood and responded to neighbours' expectations, preferences and priorities.

The regional dynamics and the ENP's implementation phase demonstrate the inherent limits of the uniform institutional design. These led to the subsequent unravelling of the common approach and growing differentiation in policies not only between Eastern and Southern neighbourhoods, but also between individual countries in both regions. Notwithstanding the ENP, the EU has ended up pursuing very different policies in states located next to each other, such as Libya and Tunisia or Belarus and Ukraine.

To account for those significant differences in the external opportunity structures, we adopt an 'outside-in' approach (Keuleers et al., 2016), because effectiveness of any foreign policy is premised on interactions with partner countries. Therefore, the paper explores the receptivity to the ENP of neighbouring countries in general and two case studies – Georgia and Morocco – in particular. These cases have been selected because they represent the Southern and Eastern neighbourhoods, and because for years they were seen as 'frontrunners' in their respective neighbourhoods, and eager to engage with the EU and comply with its demands. Importantly, both countries have unresolved territorial conflicts. At the same time, Georgia and Morocco are also sufficiently distinct in terms of their governance structures and political trajectories. These differences enable us to provide more nuanced insights into the role of the ENP in each country. Even though the EU developed a complex and ambitious approach to conflict resolution, prevention and mediation, its effectiveness could only be gauged by its external application and effectiveness (see Sus et al., 2021 (ENGAGE [Working Paper 3](#))).



3 Intra-EU Opportunities

3.1 EU's Own Role Conception as a 'Transformative Power'

The origins and evolution of the ENP have been extensively covered (Kelley, 2006; Cremona & Hillion, 2006; Smith, 2005, Delcour, 2007). The strategic framing has also been extensively studied (see, for example, Bengtsson, 2008; Gamkrelidze & Väisänen, 2022 (ENGAGE [Working Paper 15](#))). This section will only outline the origins and evolution of the policy to show how diverse preferences resulted in the eventual ambiguity of the ENP.

The idea of the dedicated neighbourhood policy was conceived in 2002 as a Wider Europe initiative, which by March 2003 became known as the New Neighbourhood Policy, evolving finally into the European Neighbourhood Policy in May 2004. Between 2002 and 2004, the geographical scope of the policy widened from the original focus on the Eastern neighbours of the EU, Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus to include a total of 17 states to the south and east of the Union's borders, which were formally not considered as prospective members by the EU (and excluding Russia which declined to participate).

The ENP was launched at the same time as largest enlargement of the EU took place (eight countries joined in 2004 and two more in 2007). The ENP was driven not only by what the EU wanted to achieve but also what the EU Member States wanted to avoid. The ENP stemmed from a desire to extend the EU's transformative power to the south and east, while at the same time preventing any further enlargement and, thereby, reflecting 'enlargement fatigue'.

The inclusion of the Mediterranean neighbour countries was demanded by the EU southern Member States, which were reluctant to support any upgrade of relations with the new Eastern neighbours. Therefore, the inclusion of southern neighbouring countries ensured buy-in from all Member States for the wider integrated neighbourhood policy. Yet, as a result, while policy promised to offer creating a coherent and streamlined framework for conducting relations with EU's all neighbours, it was misnamed: it did not deal with *Europe's* neighbours but rather the EU's neighbours and it did not apply to a *single* neighbourhood (Missiroli, 2008).

The launch of the policy provided an impetus for closer engagement with the neighbouring countries. However, as will be subsequently argued, the challenge for the EU was to try to implement a uniform and consistent policy, driven by a wide range of objectives, vis-à-vis a diverse range of neighbouring countries with vastly different interest in and ambitions towards the EU.

3.2 Legal Basis of the ENP

3.2.1 Role of Soft Law

The ENP has been a high flexible policy owing to the extensive use of soft law to launch and revise the policy. Soft law refers to non-binding instruments such as principles, codes of



conduct or political declarations and is widely used widely in international contexts, owing to its inherent flexibility. According to Abbott and Snidal (2000), soft law differs from hard law in terms of obligation, precision and delegation, making it a way to launch malleable policies without being constrained by precise and binding legal commitments.

With regard to the neighbourhood policy, such a framework was needed to develop an integrated, comprehensive, 'cross-pillar' foreign policy in order to overcome fragmentation along the community and intergovernmental pillars under the Maastricht Treaty (Szép & Wessel, 2021 (ENGAGE [Working Paper 5](#))). Reliance on soft law documents meant that the ENP had no clear legal basis in the then-existing treaties and could be changed by the Conclusions of the Council and/or developed and articulated in various strategy papers from the Commission.

At the same time, the advantage of relying on the soft law political framework allowed the EU to accommodate massive differences in existing contractual, legally binding frameworks governing EU's relations with each individual ENP partner country (Cremona & Hillion, 2007). In essence, the ENP used soft law instruments to enhance and reinvigorate existing contractual relations with neighbouring states. Thus, the ENP Action Plans and Progress Reports drafted by the Commission, were mainly political instruments, but were sanctioned by bilateral bodies established prior to the ENP.

For example, in the case of Morocco, the ENP was grafted onto the EU-Morocco Association Agreement, which came into force in 2000. In contrast, with Ukraine the EU's legal framework was the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA), adopted in 1994 and ratified by 1998. It was the EU-Ukraine Cooperation Council established in the PCA, which approved the ENP Action Plan for Ukraine. In turn, for Belarus, the ENP was developed without a bilateral agreement (Belarus's relations with the EU has been conducted by an extension of the 1989 agreement with the Soviet Union and without an Action Plan). Nevertheless, Belarus initially engaged in a number of bilateral and plurilateral initiatives and programmes, until it suspended its participation in the Eastern Partnership in 2021.

This way, the various political bilateral documents and assistance programmes were able to provide value added to already existing frameworks governing relations with the neighbouring countries (Stetter, 2005; Escribano, 2006). Reliance on soft law and political instruments also meant that the ENP could accommodate the shifting preferences and institutional balance within the EU as well as between the Member States. This enabled the EU to respond to changing circumstances in partner countries, such as in the South Caucasus and later in the North Africa. For example, the South Caucasus was initially excluded from the original Communication from the European Commission (2003). Yet, following the so-called Rose Revolution in Georgia in 2003, the three countries – Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia – in the region were included in the ENP (European Commission, 2004).

This legal flexibility was used to respond to external opportunity structures in a variety of ways. In a similar vein, following the 2004 Orange Revolution in Ukraine, the EU agreed to open negotiations on a comprehensive and ambitious Association Agreement with the Deep and



Comprehensive Free Trade Area (AA-DCFTA) with Ukraine. This bilateral offer of a new agreement was subsequently extended to other Eastern neighbours when the Eastern Partnership was launched (see below). Three out of six countries – Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine – concluded the Association Agreements (with the DCFTA) with the EU. Subsequently, the offer of an Association Agreement and eventual DCFTA was also extended to the Southern neighbours: negotiations were launched (but have not been concluded so far) with Morocco and Tunisia.

Lisbon Treaty

With the Lisbon Treaty, several new provisions on the neighbourhood were added. Yet, the way that the neighbourhood was referred to in the Treaty – both with regard to the content of a relevant article and its place in TEU – codifies and institutionalises the original ambiguity surrounding the ENP (Bechev & Nicolaïdis, 2010). Article 7a of Treaty of the European Union (TEU) refers to a “special relationship” between the EU and its neighbours, thereby feeding diverse interpretations as to the meaning of “special” or “privileged” relations, stopping short of candidate status. Equally intriguing is the place of the article on the ENP in the system of TEU: it is located in “General Provisions” rather than listed with other provisions on external action (e.g. “General Provisions on the Union’s External Action and Specific Provisions on the Common Foreign and Security Policy”). While the Union is obliged to develop a ‘special relationship’ with neighbouring states, the article is vague on the instruments. Ambiguity has led to diverse interpretations on the overarching objectives of the neighbourhood policy.

The provisions of the Lisbon Treaty turned out so general, that in practice that they said “next to nothing” about the ENP, according to Missiroli (2008, p. 11). This led to a continued reliance on soft law instruments to implement and review the policy through regular ENP reviews and allow the growing differentiation along regional lines.

3.3 Institutional Architecture

One of the most important borrowings from of enlargement was the key role of the European Commission in designing and implementing the ENP. Reflecting its own competences, the Commission has favoured the technocratic approach to external action, thereby focusing on the low-politics, consensus-driven policies and eschewing more contentious aspects. This has strongly affected the ENP and its subsequent limited interactions with the CFSP toolbox. The Lisbon Treaty did not alter that approach.

As is well known, under the Lisbon Treaty, the architecture was designed to facilitate coordination of the CFSP and the Commission’s areas of EU’ external action, namely the ENP, the pre-accession process, foreign trade, and development policy, among other things (see Szép & Wessel, 2022 (ENGAGE [Working Paper 6](#))). In institutional terms, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy became simultaneously the Vice-President of the Commission, in order to ensure coherence for the entirety of the EU’s external action. However, when it comes to the ENP, the Commission remained in the driving seat. Following an informal agreement to avoid a competence overlap, the High



Representative played a noticeably weaker role in the ENP than the President of the Commission. This has been the case since 2009 and was also evidenced in EU's responses to Russia's war against Ukraine.

In institutional terms, the Lisbon Treaty did not clarify where leadership of the ENP resided. The institutional configuration for delivering the ENP shared the same characteristics as other external action, such as double-hatting and shared competences. Moreover, like the CFSP, the ENP appeared ring-fenced from other areas of European integration process. In that respect, external action remained more subservient to the will of the Member States than the supranational institutions.

The creation of the European External Action Service (EEAS) under the Lisbon Treaty was, however, more impactful. Combining the weight of the Council with the technical expertise of the Commission through personnel and competencies, the formation of the EEAS carries a promise of a greater coherence and enhanced coordination within the constraints of the existing consensus amongst the Member States. This allowed the EU Delegations in partner countries to be more visible and foster a stronger political and diplomatic role than prior to the Lisbon Treaty. They became better positioned not only to develop stronger 'local knowledge', to overcome the high turnover among delegations' contract staff and to feed this knowledge into decision-making processes within the EU, such as for example, financial programming (Dragneva & Wolczuk, 2011). Through greater visibility and the combination of a political role with technical expertise, the Delegations became more effective in engaging with domestic actors and responding to domestic demands, allowing selective, pragmatic solutions to be worked out which reflected domestic demand and capacity in the context of bilateral relations.

Overall, the creation of the EEAS and stronger EU Delegations offered more opportunities to bring the knowledge of the partner countries and to promote the coordination. Indeed, some key relations developed in an informal and efficient manner, namely between the High Representative and the Commissioner for Enlargement/Neighbourhood, something which was essential in programming for the financial instruments. With informal relations imbued with flexibility, the EU became better positioned to move faster and offer tailored problem solving in changing circumstances. This was evident when the EU swiftly suspended its assistance to Moldova in 2018 amidst the concerns over state capture and democratic backsliding. Therefore, while bringing limited legal changes, the Lisbon Treaty built up greater institutional capacity and commitment from the EU to bolster effectiveness of the ENP in bilateral relations.

Overall, the EU institutions faced the challenge of managing a complex and dynamic set of relations with the neighbouring countries. Challenges were compounded by a lack of consensus on the *finalité* of relations, their legal competences and limited human and financial resources allocated to external relations in general and the ENP in particular within the EU institutions.

Overall, however, with the Member States retaining their control over the policy objectives, a lack of consensus on the end goal of the ENP resulted in repeated adaptations rather than innovation. Incremental adaptation of the ENP provided opportunities for ensuring coherence



between the objectives, instruments and implementation. In particular, there was more flexibility for implementing the policy at the country level, which is where important adaptations have taken place (see below).

3.4 ENP's Methodology and Instruments

The design of the ENP reflects the neo-functional approach to engaging with the neighbourhood. The ENP has represented a concerted effort to export EU's normative order further afield to countries outside its borders. As was the case during the accession process, under the ENP, the neighbours are to benefit from developing and modernising their public policies and economies by anchoring them in the EU model of governance (ENEPO, 2007, p. 9). By emulating the enlargement strategy of creating 'ideal members' during the accession process, the EU seeks to mould ENP partner states into 'ideal neighbours'. In essence, the EU pursued low-politics, technocratic promotion of 'all good things', thereby seeking to simultaneously promote modernisation and economic integration.

To assist with domestic reforms in the partner countries, the new Partnership and Cooperation Instrument, which replaced the regional assistance programmes (TACIS and MEDA), was launched in 2007, later changed to the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) during 2014–2020. The EU allocated €12 billion for 2007–2013 and €15.4 billion during 2014–2020. Subsequently the dedicated instrument was folded into the global assistance fund – the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI – Global Europe). This was interpreted as a degrading of the neighbourhood, even though the allocation increased. Out of the overall allocation for the NDICI – Global Europe at €79.5 billion (2021 prices), €19.3 billion are earmarked for the neighbourhood (2021–2027).

The EU proposed an ambitious reform agenda for each of the partner countries in the jointly negotiated ENP Action Plans. Conditions are extensive and wide-ranging, including, amongst others, democratic standards, judicial and administrative capacity building, energy issues, agriculture, competition, environment, and justice and home affairs. Thus, the reform agenda incorporates not only adherence of the Community norms and values, such as democracy and human rights, but also adopting the legal standards of the Union as a whole, i.e. much of the *acquis*. In the case of neighbours, the approximation of the standards of the Union is made necessary by the fact that much of the *acquis* pertains to the functioning of the internal market, access to which is a key reward for implementing the reforms.

At the same time, the EU's award to the neighbouring countries turned into something of a "moving target". It evolved from the "extension of the four freedoms" in 2003, to a "stake in the internal market" in 2004 to "improved access to goods and services among ENP partners" in 2006 (European Commission, 2003, 2004, 2006). Subsequently, the Eastern Partnership offered "further economic integration centred on the creation of a deep and comprehensive Free Trade Area". Since 2011 the ENP's *finalité* has been defined in terms of "closer economic integration and stronger political co-operation" (European Commission and High Representative, 2011).



The vagueness of the *finalité* affected not only the discursive framing (see Gamkrelidze & Väisänen, 2022) but it had practical implications too. The aim of relations ultimately dictates the functional rationale for the uptake of EU's law: the nature and scope of the *acquis* to be transposed into the countries' legal systems is dependent on the intended level of integration between the EU and non-member states. While the EU regarded the *acquis* as a suitable template for domestic reforms and integration, the take up of the offer has been limited. This reflected a limited interest in the wholesale 'import of the *acquis*' until and unless the countries cherished membership aspirations. This is evident in the suspension of EU-Morocco negotiations AA-DCFTA at the request of Morocco (see below).

Given the relative disinterest amongst the partners, there was a move away from the language of conditionality and emphasised the concepts of 'partnership', 'joint ownership' and 'mutuality'. At the same time, watering down of the notion of conditionality in the ENP allowed a greater degree of flexibility in pursuing relations with individual states, which could be 'rewarded' on the grounds other than comprehensive compliance with EU conditionality.

Therefore, since its inception the ENP has been continuously revised, as evidenced by continuous adaptations to redefine the scope, instruments, principles, and incentives – the changes and adaptations became an intrinsic feature of the policy turning the ENP into a complex array of regional and bilateral policies, initiatives and instruments.

Having said that, even these adaptations were not always enough to engage the neighbouring countries and the different modes of engagement are well illustrated by *de facto* 'cancellations' of cooperation with Syria (2011), Belarus (2020) and scaling down of cooperation with Azerbaijan (since 2008).



4 Intra-EU Constraints

4.1 'Mission Creep' from Enlargement

The ENP design was shaped by a contradiction between aims and methods: on the one hand, the ENP aimed to replicate the success of enlargement in terms of driving domestic change in neighbouring countries (but without the concurrent prospect of membership) and yet at the same time, relied on enlargement-related instruments in the design of the ENP.

Urgency and time pressure to devise a policy for projecting EU's 'transformative' power in the neighbourhood shaped the ENP agenda-setting and policy formulation phases (Delcour, 2009), compelled time-pressed officials in EU institutions to draw upon their enlargement experiences when devising the new neighbourhood policy. Referring to organisational management and policy transfer theories, this amounted to "mechanical borrowing" (Kelley, 2006, p. 32). Transfer of enlargement staff to the neighbourhood portfolio resulted in a more active role for the Commission in EU foreign policy. Kelley (2006) explains the ENP modelling on enlargement policy through strong path dependency, thus stressing a mechanism of policy lock-in within the Commission for shaping the ENP. Reflecting its legal mandate and institutional competence, the Commission favoured a strong focus on economic and sectoral dimensions of cooperation with the neighbouring states. If during enlargement the EU endeavoured to create "ideal members", the ENP aimed to create "ideal neighbours" (Wolczuk, 2018).

The strategy proposed by the European Commission during 2003-2004 centred on fostering gradual economic integration and political cooperation with the neighbouring states. The EU relied on enticing them into accepting EU conditionality by providing a generous, if vague, offer of prospective "stake in the EU's internal market". From its inception, path dependence has shaped the ENP (Kelley, 2006). The reliance on the enlargement templates is evident in the explicit use of conditionality, involving multiple and wide-ranging conditions as well as use of policy instruments, such as Progress Reports and assistance initiatives.

As a result, the EU has faced important disadvantages in its institutional ability to respond to the changing preferences of the partner countries. According to Kelley, "much as the EU has to offer its neighbouring states, the absence of the membership incentives for most countries should require significant adjustment, not just adaptation, of the enlargement strategy" (2006, p. 50).

The policy became a vehicle for the extension of the internal modes of governance beyond the borders of the EU, while trying to minimise its effects on the internal functioning of the Union, including disputes over institutional competences. Therefore, the policy focussed on what the Member States agreed on, such as for example, promoting good governance and export of the *acquis*, and avoiding fields where the Member States disagreed, such as conflict management and the role of Russia. Thus, from the very beginning ambiguities and tensions were built into



what carried the promise of being the most ambitious and multi-layered *foreign* policy ever launched by the EU.

4.2 Lack of Consensus and Commitment from the Member States

One of the key internal constraints in EU's neighbourhood policy has been a lack of consensus and commitment from the Member States. As noted above, while in its design the ENP relied on the enlargement templates, its vague *finalité* reflected divergent preferences of EU Member States. In particular, relations with the post-Soviet states, including Russia, were shaped by competing interests of particular EU Member States, more so than relations with other regions (Cichocki, 2010). The overarching aim of the ENP vis-à-vis the Eastern neighbours – whether a temporary or permanent alternative to membership – remained a matter of contestation between the Member States, as did the question to what extent the EU should prioritise relations with Russia.

The lack of clarity on future relations reflected a continuous disagreement amongst the Member States as to the extent to which the EU could and should become a driver for reforms in general and offer attractive – and thus potentially costly for the Union and its Member States – incentives in particular. This was linked to diverse perceptions of risks emanating from the neighbourhood and the costs of “doing nothing” (Balfour & Missiroli, 2007, p. 33). The question of the nature of the relations and EU's ‘rewards’ in sensitive areas, such agriculture or movement of people, was particular vexed. Tying political rewards to economic benefits complicated decision-making within the EU, especially at the Council level, as foreign ministers had to gain the approval of their counterparts in charge of trade, industry, agriculture, for example, before being able to negotiate and reach consensus on offers to the neighbours (Balfour & Missiroli, 2007). As Thomas (2008) observed, the pursuit of common policies most often involves not implementing a single set of preferences shared by the Member States, but negotiating the differences that persist between them with regard to policy goals and strategy. Given that often the differences could not be reconciled, it was often left to individual Member States to take initiatives on behalf of the EU (see below).

Nevertheless, even though there has been (and still is) no consensus on the actual commitment to create ‘ideal neighbours’, with the launch of the ENP the EU put its own credibility at stake. Making the policy work has depended on the interest of the partner countries. Thus, turning the ENP into a success story required above all on ‘keeping the neighbours onboard’. This imperative is reflected in two-pronged developments. Firstly, within EU institutions, the Commission and individual Member States have been seeking to upgrade the incentive package to motivate the partner countries. Secondly, in interactions with partner countries, the EU has been compelled to tailor the policy to their actual needs and expectations in order to be able to engage the partner countries (see below).



4.3 What Role for Security in the ENP?

Another – and related – intra-EU constrain was an ambivalent approach to security challenges in the neighbourhood. In discursive terms, addressing security risks and threats in the EU's vicinity was presented as a major rationale behind the EU's enhanced involvement in the neighbourhood (Gamkrelidze & Väisänen, 2022 (ENGAGE [Working Paper 15](#))). Through the ENP, the EU explicitly sought to enhance its security by promoting stability and prosperity in neighbouring countries.

Promoting security was deemed necessary because the EU's enlargement brought the security challenges of the neighbourhood closer to the EU, increasing fear that problems such as organised crime, violent conflict, illegal immigration and terrorism could spill over into the EU (Christou, 2010). For example, in the ENP documents, the South Caucasus was singled out as particularly 'in demand' of EU's engagement:

the integration of acceding states increases [the EU's] security but also brings the EU closer to troubled areas.... Even in an era of globalisation, geography is still important. It is in the European interest that countries on our borders are well-governed ... We should now take a stronger and more active interest in the problems of the Southern Caucasus, which will in due course also be a neighbouring region (European Council, 2003).

This indicated the commitment to increase “efforts to promote the settlement of the conflicts in the region” (European Commission, 2004).

However, this ambitious agenda, which was evident in the earlier ENP vision, was soon watered down when actors from within the CFSP – the EU High representative, Council Secretariat, COREPER – became increasingly involved (Christou, 2010). The security dimension was played down, prompting the European Commission to explicitly recognise the policy's shortcomings in terms of conflict settlement and calling for a more proactive approach: “the ENP has achieved little in supporting the resolution of frozen or open conflicts in the region (...). The EU needs to be more active, and more present, in regional or multilateral conflict-resolution mechanisms and in peace-monitoring or peace-keeping efforts” (European Commission, 2006).

However, these calls had only limited resonance in the Council. Such a pattern continued through the evolution of the ENP: the Commission called for a step up in the security dimension and yet it remained under-resourced with a lack of real political interest within the Council when it comes to key issues. Whilst the Commission's original proposals for the European Partnership were quite ambitious, this was diluted by actors within the Council and, once again, largely disconnected from the CFSP and CSDP (Hillion & Mayhew, 2009).

Therefore, the EU's approach shifted away from “the conventional perspective on security” to embrace security-relevant aspects such as civilian operations in various areas, development, environmental issues, humanitarian aid, structural cooperation and diplomacy (Gebhard &



Norheim-Martinsen, 2011). Therefore, the ENP offered “a means of addressing these issues indirectly” (European Commission, 2009). For example, the EU has sought to “contribute to a more positive climate” for conflict settlement and support the “creation of a secure environment linked with democratic norms and institutions” (Sierra, 2009, p. 479). It has done so by promoting good governance as a basis for well-functioning states and hence stability and security. Accordingly, support for multilateral negotiation mechanisms and confidence-building measures, civilian missions under the CSDP, the appointment of EU Special Representatives and European Commission-funded assistance became the main tools for the EU’s role in conflict management. All the CSDP missions in the neighbourhood have been civilian and either monitoring or advisory (see De Man et al., 2022 (ENGAGE [Working Paper 14](#))). Also, when the EU joined the established negotiation formats on protracted conflicts, it did so as a minor, secondary actor and its ambitions focussed on ‘being present’ rather than on shaping outcomes (see the case of Georgia below). This broad vision of security, which targeted a number of levels and sectors, appeared to validate the argument of a distinctive EU approach.

This accounts for the different patterns of EU’s responses to crises, conflicts and wars in the neighbourhood. As argued below, the Arab spring caught the EU by surprise and its implications were slow to work through (Noutcheva, 2015). A more comprehensive review of the ENP took place only in 2015 and focussed on greater differentiation between the countries and EU’s security interests, especially in the South. Thus, it paved a stronger role for the individual Member States, for example, Spain vis-à-vis Morocco. This in turn resulted in a lack of alignment of policies towards Morocco across the EU institutions (see the case study below).

Overall, while it has increased somewhat over time, the EU’s direct engagement in conflict resolution has remained limited and not commensurate with the challenges, especially in comparison to other actors’ actions, such as for example, Turkey, Iran or Russia. Amidst growing security-related challenges, the EU has relied on the long-term benefits of modernisation and integration to promote reconciliation and peace in its vicinity.



5 External Opportunities and Constraints

The neighbourhood countries offered the EU an array of diverse opportunities to act. One of the key roles was in conflict management, because the ENP included countries with both pre-existing (pre-ENP) crises and conflicts, such as Transnistria in the case of Moldova and Western Saharan conflict in the case of Morocco as well as new wars and conflicts (for example, Russia's invasion in the Donbas and the Syria war).

Given the instability in the neighbourhood and owing to EU's ambitious objectives in the neighbourhood, the ENP increased the demand and expectation of a role for the EU, especially with regard to security in general and in conflict management in particular (for example, on the South Caucasus see Delcour & Wolczuk, 2020). Given the diverse nature of the conflicts and crises and the potential and actual role of the EU, these conflicts are best analysed on an individual basis to highlight the opportunities for the EU to engage. This is especially so because the very nature of the conflict was often interpreted differently by the EU institutions, Member States and the partner countries, resulting in proposals for conflict management strategies, which were at odds with the needs and expectations of the partner countries (as will be explored in the regional sections below).

One of the constraining factors was that the fact that the ENP was launched and implemented in isolation from the wider regional context. This 'blind spot' had grave implications for the EU and partner countries. The role of other regional actors, such as Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Iran or Russia, profoundly shaped the developments in the neighbourhood making it more difficult for the EU to develop a common position, let alone to counteract their actions. This happened for two reasons. Firstly, EU Member States differed in terms of their preferences vis-à-vis those regional actors. Secondly, the EU's relations with other regional power were often multi-layered and touched on a number of priorities and policies. For example, relations with Turkey were conducted in the context of Turkey's faltered accession negotiations, democratic backsliding, its role in mitigating migration flows and as a military force engaged in the Southern neighbourhood in the case of Syria and Libya. Reconciling diverse preferences and priorities of the EU and its Member States vis-à-vis other regional actors has been a major challenge when dealing with individual crises and conflicts (on Russia – see the section on the Eastern dimension).

Given the sheer complexity and shifting nature of the opportunities for the EU to engage with the two neighbourhoods and individual countries, the next sections map the two regional dimensions of the ENP - Southern and Eastern - and within these dimensions focuses on two selected case studies (Morocco in the south and Georgia in the east) in order to provide an outside-in perspective on EU's engagement at the country level.

5.1 Regional Dimension: South

The ENP-South region covers ten Mediterranean countries located to the south of the EU: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, and Tunisia. The ENP



launched in 2004 was one of a number of initiatives to engage with the Southern neighbouring states (see, for example, Schumacher, 2018), in contrast to the post-Soviet states where there had been no such initiatives. In the 1990s the Mediterranean area was part of an ambitious set of partnerships and strategies, first with the establishment of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), the so-called 'Barcelona Process', in 1995. The 'Barcelona Process' was already based on the principles of joint ownership, dialogue and cooperation, seeking to create a Mediterranean region of peace, security and shared prosperity. The ENP of 2004, was followed in 2008, by the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) which was launched on France's initiative by a decision of the UfM Heads of State and Government. The UfM had the aim of giving a new impetus to the Barcelona Process and to enhance regional cooperation, dialogue and the implementation of concrete projects and initiatives with tangible impact on the lives of the citizens. The added value of this approach lay in the interrelation created between the policy dimension and its operational translation into concrete projects (Union for the Mediterranean, 2023). The UfM included all Member States of the EU and 16 partner states from North Africa, the Middle East, and the Balkans. In addition to the ENP-South region countries, the new participating countries included Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mauritania, Monaco, Montenegro, and Turkey. Additionally, North Macedonia joined the UfM in 2022. However, the relationship between the policies of the UfM and the ENP is unclear, and the UfM has been largely viewed as repackaged version of what already existed. The overlapping policies – EMP, ENP, UfM, bilateral Association Agreements – in the Southern neighbourhood are indicative of the fragmented EU approach to the region, and its shifting priorities (Cardwell, 2011; Gstöhl, 2016; Tömmel, 2013).

5.1.1 The Arab Spring

Despite the plethora of frameworks, the so-called Arab Spring caught the EU by surprise. Between 2010 and 2011, a wave of pro-democracy protests and uprisings took place in the Middle East and North Africa, challenging the region's authoritarian regimes. The wave began with protests in Tunisia and Egypt, inspiring similar events in other Arab countries, notably in Yemen, Libya, and Syria, where the uprisings ended in civil war. Demonstrators expressing political and economic grievances were often met with violent repression by the countries' security forces. The EU's slow and timid response to the dramatic events of the Arab Spring illustrated the limits of the ENP. The EU seemed to struggle formulating unified foreign policies and to choose whether to use coercive measures or diplomacy and mediation.

In the events following the Arab Spring, the EU adopted quite different approaches. During the Libyan civil war, some European countries took part in military intervention under NATO umbrella, which was followed by a small CSDP mission. However, there was no intervention by the EU during the Syrian civil war. Neither the Yemen civil war nor the uprisings in Bahrain were addressed by the EU. The inadequate and occasional failure of the EU to respond led to questions about the CFSP's or CSDP's efficiency in the Southern neighbourhood. The Arab Spring revealed that it was often unclear whether responsibility to act in certain situations fell within the remit of the ENP or CSDP, and what added value the multiple overlapping policy initiatives had.



More fundamentally, the ENP was not adequately designed to tackle the root causes of the protracted conflicts in the south: poverty, lack of education, and unemployment (Tömmel, 2013; Blockmans, 2017; Keukeleire & Delreux, 2022; Seeberg, 2015). The EU quickly reacted to the upheavals by reformulating its policy and promising more effective implementation, especially when it came to democracy promotion. When the upheavals succeeded in overthrowing authoritarian rule in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya, there were high hopes that the EU would offer support with democratisation. Yet, these hopes were not fulfilled (Tömmel, 2013). The failure to address the uprisings led to a Joint Communication by the Commission and the EEAS released in May 2011, proposing a more differentiated approach to the neighbours, based on the principle of “more for more” conditionality, meaning rewarding reform by financial assistance. In 2015, the EU recognised the existence of weak points in its strategy, acknowledging, that most of the countries involved in the ENP were less stable than 10 years ago (European Commission, 2015a). Instead of “more for more”, the EU’s policy seemed in many respects to be rather “more of the same” (Noutcheva, 2015).

5.1.2 Regional Players

The EU’s inability to provide stability and security in its Southern neighbourhood has opened the way for competing regional powers such as Turkey, Iran, the Gulf states, and various Islamic movements to present themselves as more credible allies and security providers. The EU has been also confronted with Russia’s return to power politics in the region (where the Soviet Union was active during the Cold War). In the Southern neighbourhood, Russia, through proxies such as Wagner private military company, has increasingly presented itself as an alternative to the EU and provided military support in the southern conflicts. The EU has been increasingly side-lined by the regional powers that cooperate with each other in several coalitions through direct support or through proxies, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, Hezbollah, and other hybrid actors. Given the bureaucratic and top-down nature of the ENP and the limited hard security instruments available to the EU institutions, the EU remains poorly equipped to compete with these local actors. In addition, the EU’s views on the separation of politics and religion tend not to match with popular support for Islamic parties and for religiously rooted democracy (Teti et al., 2020; Pace & Wolff, 2018; Wolff, 2021). The EU’s reluctance to deal with democratically elected Islamic actors has posed difficulties in connecting with key actors in these countries, which potentially has undermined the legitimacy and effectivity of the EU’s policies. As such, arguably the regional powers have been better positioned than the EU through the ENP, to exert influence in the region. (Teti et al., 2020; Keukeleire & Delreux, 2022; Gstöhl et al., 2018; Schumacher, 2018; Pace & Wolff, 2018; Lecocq, 2021).

5.1.3 Trade and Economic Integration

As noted above, within the ENP, the neighbouring countries were offered an opportunity for economic integration with the EU. Thus, when it comes to trade, the EU’s trade agreements with the Southern neighbours evolved by moving from a focus on ‘shallow’ trade agreements to ‘deeper’ trade agreements – that also lead to a liberalisation of trade in services, public



procurement markets and cross-border investment. This shift has been evident within the ENP, which allowed interested governments to negotiate a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) between the EU and partner countries. In the post-Arab Spring period, the EU has championed DCFTAs as a model for wealth generation in the Southern neighbourhood, borrowing from its experience with the Eastern neighbours. In principle, the EU is well positioned to support economic development through trade, as it is a key trade partner for the majority of ENP countries (Eurostat, 2013; Noutcheva, 2015). However, in contrast to the Eastern neighbourhood, the EU has not been very successful in promoting the DCFTAs in the South. Only two of the Southern neighbours, Morocco, and Tunisia, entered negotiations, and neither negotiation has been completed (Hoekman, 2018).

It remains debatable whether the DCFTA formula has the potential to generate economic growth in the neighbourhood (Escribano, 2006). First of all, estimates of the DCFTAs suggest that they result in costly regulatory convergence for the neighbours in the short term, which the EU financial assistance cannot compensate for. Consequently, adjustment costs for the neighbours are unjustifiably high and their economies may take years to fully benefit from regulatory approximation with the EU. And while countries from the Eastern neighbourhood may have an implicit incentive to adopt the EU *acquis* in the hope of acceding to the EU one day, the Mediterranean neighbours have no such prospect (Noutcheva, 2015). Analysts predict that liberalisation under DCFTAs will also worsen current political tensions and social inequalities (see Langan, 2015). According to some, the EU's trade policies are based on rather neoliberal economic goals which fail to answer demands for "bread", "dignity" and "social justice" of the Arab uprising (Teti et al., 2020). The European Commission emphasises the role of the DCFTAs and the ENP in delivering 'win-win' outcomes for both the EU and its Maghreb partners. Despite such claims by the Commission, it appears that North African citizens would suffer upon implementation of this liberalisation agenda, at least in the short term. The imposition of premature free market opening in the Maghreb probably poses risks for the EU as de-industrialisation and substantial job losses will likely affect local people. There will also be an increase the likelihood of political instability, radicalisation, and higher migration (Langan, 2015).

The EU's inside-out approach together with the 'one-size-fits-all' approach and above-mentioned weak institutional and policy framework has rendered the EU a relatively marginal actor in the Southern neighbourhood. Overall, the ENP has not fundamentally changed the pre-existing shortcomings of the EU's foreign policy towards the Southern neighbourhood. The ENP has largely failed in achieving some major objectives of promoting prosperity, security, and stability in the neighbourhood. The EU in pursuit of its own security interests has contributed to preference for stabilising authoritarian rule in the south more often than promoting democratic reform.

Finally, the ENP is deemed as too euro-centric: the EU's attempt to engage more with societies has also proven to be problematic due to its interpretation of 'civil society'. This interpretation does not always suit the various preferences of the civil societies in the neighbouring countries, which can be more nationalist, traditional, or religious than the European



perceptions of civil society. By promoting civil society from the point of view of western conceptualisation, the EU has risked dismissing potential grassroots actors capable of social and political change. The EU's Mediterranean policy is criticised for being over-focused on the EU itself, its domestic politics, and societal changes within EU Member States rather than on the partner countries themselves (Blockmans, 2017; Colombo & Shapovalova, 2018; Keukeleire & Delreux, 2022; Seeberg, 2015).

5.1.4 Case Study of Morocco

Morocco has been regarded as one of the few European relative successes in terms of neighbourhood policy. The country has emphasised its image as a progressive partner with the EU by distinguishing itself from the other partners Europe has in North Africa and the Arab world. With ongoing reforms, a stable, but authoritarian political system, and ambitious economic plans, Morocco's has become a "model student" (Fakir, 2019; Calcan, 2021). However, the EU-Morocco relationship has become more tense lately. In January 2023, the European Parliament adopted, for the first time in 25 years, a resolution calling on Morocco to respect media freedom and to release all political prisoners and jailed journalists. Moroccans have been unhappy with the resolution, arguing that it is just the EU's way of reducing Morocco's growing influence in Sub-Saharan and western Africa. (Hami, 2023; Pitchers, 2023). Moroccan legislators called the resolution an unacceptable attack on the kingdom's sovereignty and the independence of its judicial institutions (Middle East News Agency, 2023).

Morocco is the largest trading partner of the EU amongst the Southern neighbours.² The Morocco-EU partnership is legally based on the Association Agreement which entered into force in 2000. With the launch of the ENP and by building on the Association Agreement Morocco gradually became a privileged partner of the EU. Morocco was granted advanced cooperation status in 2008, being the first Southern ENP country to benefit from a position which gives the possibility to work on a common economic area (Calcan, 2021). The joint declaration for a partnership for mobility in 2013, followed by the action plan for the implementation of the advanced status in 2015, marked important steps in the political, human, technical and financial convergence between the two parties. Negotiations for a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) between the EU and Morocco started in 2013. However, negotiations with Morocco were halted in July 2014 at the initiative of the Moroccan government, reflecting concerns about the benefits of a DCFTA (Hoekman, 2018) but also due to dispute over Western Sahara. Even though Morocco already has a free trade agreement with

² Trade and investment relations between the EU and Morocco are intense. the EU is Morocco's leading trade partner, accounting for 56% of its goods trade in 2019. Consequently, Morocco is the EU's biggest trade partner among the Southern Neighbourhood. The EU is also the biggest foreign investor in Morocco, accounting for more than half of the country's FDI stock. The EU and Morocco established a Free Trade Area as part of the [EU-Morocco Association Agreement](#), signed in 1996, which entered into force in March 2000. They also signed an [Agreement on additional liberalization of trade in agricultural products](#), processed agricultural products, and fish and fisheries products, which entered into force in October 2012.



the EU, the DCFTA would expand that to the services sector and guarantee Morocco's further integration into the European market (Fakir, 2019). The Association Council, which brings together the Ministers of the EU and Morocco, frames the EU-Morocco relationship, including the political dialogue and cooperation priorities. (European Commission, n.d.; EEAS, 2023).

After the Arab Spring, security has become the dominant element in the EU-Morocco relationship. As North Africa and the wider Mediterranean region has become a more unpredictable region, Morocco has remained a reliable partner of the EU in the Southern Mediterranean (Fakir, 2019). For Europe, Morocco functions as an essential security buffer and ally. Europe's approach has been driven in part by the belief that currently Morocco might be the most accessible and stable partner in the region (Fakir, 2019). The cooperation on migration and fighting against terrorism has been mutually beneficial. Europe's increased concern over security and stability since 2011 and 2015, benefits Morocco. This is because a focus on security concerns reinforces the Moroccan position with its European partners, while also helping to ensure Morocco's own stability. Morocco's effective preventative and intelligence-gathering capabilities are among its most valuable contributions to Europe. Security cooperation includes several different initiatives covering terrorism, trafficking, transnational organised crime, and border management (Calcan, 2021).

Although Morocco has been perceived as a model example of a successful neighbourhood policy, the country continues to face domestic challenges. Over the past few years, the monarchy has reclaimed the political space that it ceded in the aftermath of the 2011 protests. Freedom of the press and freedom of expression have been increasingly closed down. At the same time, an increasing number of Moroccans have expressed dissatisfaction over the state's inability to boost the economy in an inclusive way and to respond to the basic needs of most of the population (Fakir, 2019). Despite the EU's concerns over the domestic situation, EU-Morocco cooperation continues, and each ENP revision has promised deeper engagement with Morocco. Morocco remains one of the largest recipients of EU funds under the ENP. The EU committed €1.4 billion to bilateral assistance for Morocco for the period 2014-2020, under the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI). The kingdom is the largest beneficiary of European loans and aid packages through the ENI, even though Morocco's real record for reforms has been questionable. Indeed, Morocco received funding with Egypt and Tunisia under the "more for more" Support to Partnership, Reform, and Inclusive Growth (SPRING) programme despite the country's lack of any structural change of regime. However, Morocco's failure to reform has not trigger much of a reaction from the EU as economic and security-related considerations remain as a priority for the Union (Calcan, 2021; Fakir, 2019; European Commission, 2023).

Migration

Overall, migration issues have increasingly influenced, if not dominated, the political relations of the EU and its Southern neighbours. The EU has been concerned about managing migration flows from the neighbourhood, both before and after 2011. Currently, migration-related projects count half the ENP's spending (Trauner & Cassarino, 2018; Noutcheva, 2015). On the one hand the EU has a clear interest in cooperating with Morocco, for curbing the illegal



migration from Sub-Saharan Africa towards Europe. According to figures presented by the Moroccan authorities, Morocco prevented, in 2019, around 74 000 illegal migration attempts towards Spain, dismantled 208 human trafficking rings, while rescuing 19 554 migrants at sea (Peregil & Martín, 2020). In terms of Morocco's EU-specific framework for current cooperation on migration, the two parties have entered into several bilateral and multilateral agreements. For example, Morocco benefits from bilateral and regional funding currently amounting to €236 million under the North of Africa window of the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa which supports the implementation of the Moroccan Strategy on Migration and Asylum (European Commission, 2023). The EU's current Action Plan for Morocco highlights several objectives specific to migration, from "better-organised legal migration to helping strengthen Morocco's own migration framework". The Action Plan mentions EU-Morocco Mobility Partnership, which was signed in 2013 (Calcan, 2021; Fakir, 2019).

However, such policies were not without controversies, especially with regard to the construction of the major fence at the border between Morocco and Spain, indicating the difficulty to reconcile various competing values and objectives when implementing the policy with regard to individual countries.

Conflict

The Western Sahara conflict has heavily impacted on EU-Morocco relations. Once known as Spanish Sahara, the area was the last vestige of Spain's colonial empire. The conflict escalated after Spain's withdrawal from the region in 1975, leaving Mauritania, Morocco, and the indigenous Sahrawi people, led by Polisario Front and supported by Algeria, in a deeply rooted conflict over its sovereignty. Morocco asserts a historical right to control the region dating back to the time before the Spanish colonisation. In contrast, the Sahrawi people insist that they have largely governed themselves for hundreds of years. Mauritania withdrew from the conflict in 1979, while fighting between the Polisario Front and Morocco continued until 1991. In 1991, the two parties reached an agreement which called for a referendum to be held, while preserving the status quo and the implementation of an UN-backed buffer zone. After the 1991 agreement, Morocco controlled the majority of Western Sahara. To date, a referendum has not been held. Following several failed rounds of negotiations over the years, the Polisario Front has been trying to gain international support to reopen talks for a referendum. Neither the 16 years of fighting, nor the last 30 years of ceasefire and talks between Morocco and Polisario, has resolved the conflict. (BBC, 2023; The Economist, 2021; Al Jazeera, 2020; Benabdallah, 2009).

The EU supports the UN process in identifying a just, long-lasting solution, acceptable to both parties involved in the Western Sahara conflict. However, none of the EU countries have recognised the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR), which the Polisario Front established as a state in 1976. Europe's position on Western Sahara has remained purposefully ambiguous. France and Spain have been backing Morocco's position on this issue. In the beginning of this year, the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, stated that the European bloc values both Morocco's "serious



and credible” efforts as well as the UN process, when it comes to the Western Sahara dispute (Aamari, 2023).

The specific administrative architecture of the EU enables the co-existence of ambivalent positions towards Western Sahara. This is because the EU institutions have adopted different positions on the Western Saharan conflict. The European Court of Justice (CJEU) has continuously rejected efforts by the Council of the EU and the European Commission to extend the provisions of the EU-Morocco agricultural and fishery agreements to the territory of Western Sahara. While the EU does not recognise Moroccan sovereignty over the area, it has not adopted the UN’s characterisation of it as an occupied territory. On the one hand, EU is bound by its duty in international law not to recognise Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara and to uphold the right to self-determination of the Sahrawi people. On the other, EU’s economic, geopolitical and security interests in Morocco make the EU favour the territory’s inclusion in their bilateral trading relations (Calcan, 2021; Fakir, 2019; Lovatt, 2020; Lovatt, 2021).

A related and important dimension of the EU-Morocco relation is represented by resource exploitation, with a particular focus on the fisheries. By treating Morocco as the de facto administrative power of the Western Sahara, the EU has allowed Morocco to include the territory in its bilateral agreements. This has enabled Moroccan and European businesses to profit from the Western Sahara’s natural resources – including rich fishery stocks, phosphates, and green energy – to the detriment of Sahrawis (Lovatt, 2020). The EU and Morocco concluded fisheries agreements in 1988, 1992, 1995 and 2006. The EU decided not to extend the agreement in 2011, based on economic, ecological, and legal issues. A new agreement was reached in 2014 (European Parliament, 2019), valid until 2018, which also constituted a decision of the European Court of Justice (ECJ). In February 2018, the ECJ again ruled on the fisheries agreement. The Court decided that the EU-Morocco fisheries agreement was valid only when referring to Moroccan territorial waters. The Court stated that while Western Sahara is not Moroccan territory, the fisheries agreement appliance to Western Sahara’s waters would be contrary to international law and to the self-determination principle (Calcan, 2021; Fakir 2019; Lovatt, 2020).

The Western Sahara Dispute strongly impacts in Morocco’s relations with the outside world. In March 2022, Spain took a major step in Morocco’s direction by backing its plan for resolving the long-running conflict in Western Sahara. Madrid clearly designed this move to improve relations between the two countries, after a year in which their relationship had been particularly strained. Spain is now the strongest European supporter of Morocco’s autonomy plan on Western Sahara. The sudden move caused real anger in Algeria, which has long supported the Polisario Front, and tensions between Morocco and Algeria have risen lately. The EU, especially Italy, has become increasingly reliant on Algeria for its energy resources and counter-terrorism partnership in the Sahel region. Therefore, Spain’s move can be seen as a risky move for the whole of the EU (Lebovich & Lovatt, 2022). While Morocco has been enjoying its role as a model EU-partner, Algeria, after a traumatic and extremely violent decolonisation war against France for independence, has pursued an anti-imperialist foreign



policy and distanced itself from France and the European community in general (Delcour & Soler i Lecha, 2018). Both countries wish to become a more influential actor in Africa, and they have been fighting for influence in the region as demonstrated by the Moroccan decision to re-join the African Union in 2017 (Guardian, 2017; Fakir, 2019).

Conclusions

Arguably, EU-Morocco cooperation is likely to proceed if Morocco bolsters the EU's security and if the EU provides necessary financial and political support to Morocco (Fakir, 2019). Nonetheless, despite the external opportunities arising from the wider regional geopolitical tensions, internal constraints continue to limit the development of the relationship for a number of reasons. Firstly, the ENP has had limited effectiveness due to EU's prioritisation of own security interests instead of profound efforts for economic, social, and political programmes that directly target the Moroccan population and therefore reduce the lack of domestic legitimacy. The EU has not been credible in demanding political reforms under the "more for more" principle. Secondly, it will be challenging for the EU, on the one hand, to keep Morocco as an important ally, and on the other, to stick to the ENP principles of conditionality (see above). It is unlikely that the DCFTA negotiations will resume while there is no final decision on the Western Sahara issue (Calcan, 2021). Finally, while it would be economically important to get a solution to the matter, above all, it is arguably crucial for the image of the EU. As the ECJ has pointed out, it is not possible to separate EU-Morocco relations from the broader Western Sahara conflict, which indicates that a more through thinking is needed at the EU-level on how to address the conflict, instead of the prevailing national interest-driven process.

5.2 Regional Dimension: East

In the wake of the launch of the Mediterranean Union in 2008, an Eastern dimension was developed upon the initiative of Poland and Sweden. Amidst much resistance to any privileged engagement with Eastern European countries, the eastern dimension took on renewed importance as a result of the Russian-Georgian conflict in August 2008, paving a way for the launch of the Eastern Partnership. Targeted at the six post-Soviet states (Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus, Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan), the Eastern Partnership was designed to "accelerate political association and further economic integration between the Union and partner countries" (European Council, 2009). This was to be achieved by supporting political and socio-economic reforms, facilitating approximation towards the European Union in bilateral engagement and multilateral cooperation.

The novelty of the Partnership is that the path of integration offered only to Ukraine at first became also available to other Eastern neighbours. All six states were offered Association Agreements with DCFTA, Visa Facilitation Agreements and full Visa Liberalisation in the long-term. Therefore, the prospects of political cooperation and economic integration became open to all of them without a priori differentiation between them in terms of objectives and instruments, as was initially the case under the ENP.



The Eastern Partnership introduced a new additional feature into the EU's policy towards the Eastern neighbours' states - a multilateral track. The multilateral dimension consisted of both high-level political meetings and expert working groups; the European Parliament created the EURONEST assembly, bringing together members of the European Parliament and national parliaments (apart from Belarus).³ Like with the ENP as a whole, within the Eastern Partnership the multilateral format of relations was developed between the states in the Eastern neighbourhood, which shared many common legacies but also some essential differences, not least their geography, political systems and preferences *vis-à-vis* the EU and/or Russia. This resulted in a limited value added of the multilateral track, given the vastly different types of engagement.

Overall, the Eastern Partnership offered continuity with the previous approach, though perhaps with a degree of greater intensity. The EU continued to promote long-term, low politic 'technocratic' engagement to facilitate domestic reforms in the Eastern neighbourhood to encourage them to converge with the EU. That the ENP and the Eastern Partnership envisage convergence with the standards of the Union as a whole (the *acquis*) is not surprising given that much of the *acquis* pertains to the functioning of the internal market, access to which was a key incentive for concluding the Association Agreements with DCFTA.

The Eastern Partnership confirmed that the readiness to apply the EU's transformative power in the Eastern neighbourhood had clear limits. While eastern countries are offered economic integration, the Partnership eschewed addressing their most pressing political and security concerns, namely prospects for membership and conflict resolution. Without an agreement amongst the EU Member States, none of the three Eastern neighbours that actually aspired to membership – Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine - could be offered a membership perspective (European Council, 2009). In a similar vein, the Partnership downplayed the issue of security of the Eastern neighbours.

5.2.1 Integration with Security under the Eastern Partnership

Paradoxically, even though the war between Russia and Georgia in August 2008 demonstrated the gaps of the EU's governance of the Eastern neighbourhood, the Eastern Partnership did not enhance the EU's role in conflict management.

In the Russia-Georgia war, Member States disagreed on the nature of the conflict: some saw it a game changer, whilst others were more fearful of antagonising Russia. Therefore, with the Eastern Partnership the EU once again avoided active involvement in territorial conflicts, such as that of Transnistria in Moldova, South Ossetia and Abkhazia in Georgia or Nagorno-Karabakh involving Armenia and Azerbaijan, or indeed any references to the Russian-Georgian war of August 2008. Tellingly, the notion of 'conflict' was referred to in the key Declaration on

³ The multilateral framework focused on four thematic platforms: (1) democracy, good governance and stability; (2) economic integration and convergence with EU sectoral policies; (3) energy security; and (4) contacts between people. The security dimension was not explicitly covered in the multilateral track.



the Eastern Partnership only in the general context of “the need for their earliest peaceful settlement on the basis of principles and norms of international law” (Council of the EU, 2009). Instead, the EU endeavoured to address security problems facing the Eastern neighbours through the promotion of ‘good governance’ rather than direct engagement in unresolved conflicts in general and addressing the role of Russia in the persistence of the conflicts in particular (see below).

As such, the Eastern Partnership did not envisage an increased role for the EU in conflict settlement, but instead aimed to enhance confidence among neighbours by setting up an Eastern Partnership multilateral track. The EU’s strategic documents also suggest increasing dialogue and cooperation on defence-related matters and enhancing early warning mechanisms in conflicts.

This technocratic approach to security was not without value, however. For example, the EU institutions worked more in tandem with regard to Ukraine following the annexation of Crimea, to promote domestic reforms and resilience. After 2014 the EU institutions (DG NEAR, EEAS, the Delegation and the European Parliament) became heavily involved in promoting and supporting domestic reforms in Ukraine, ranging from democracy and capacity building to decentralisation and anti-corruption reforms. DG NEAR created a dedicated task force for Ukraine (the Support Group for Ukraine), which spearheaded the EU’s tailored support, which was then implemented in close coordination with the EEAS and the Delegation. Thanks to this informal cooperation and timely, demand-driven support, the EU became an innovative actor, involved in a raft of reform programmes, which strengthened Ukraine’s resilience (Mathernova & Wolczuk, 2019). The EU often coordinated international donor assistance to support an integrated approach and use conditionality to enhance its leverage. This was a clear example of joint ‘problem solving’ between the EU and the partner country, something which allowed Ukraine to develop capacity to “resist, respond and regenerate” during Russia’s war on Ukraine (Sus et al., 2021 (ENGAGE [Working Paper 3](#)), p. 18).

Also, such a focus on technocratic and functional governance has borne some success in Transnistria through the EU Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM). Being a Commission-led mission, the EUBAM focused on customs and border management. The mission was overall instrumental in reducing smuggling between Transnistria and Ukraine, thereby creating incentives for the Tiraspol authorities to engage in economic cooperation with Moldova. As a result, despite initial reluctance, Transnistria took advantage of the access to the single market. This was thanks to the EU’s flexible extension of the Association Agreement with DCFTA to Transnistria exporters (without having to adopt any *acquis*).

However, the EU did not capitalise on this opening, and economic integration did not translate into a political settlement in Moldova. The enhanced export opportunity provided an economic lifeline to the Transnistrian economy, actually strengthening the authorities and reduced their interest in any political settlement. The military presence of the Russian so-called peacekeepers was not addressed either. The EU became involved in the 5+2 negotiating format (Moldova, Transnistria, Russia and Ukraine as parties, the OSCE as a mediator and the US and EU as observers), but as an observer played a lesser role in this format. The EU was



'present', but its presence was not commensurate with the opportunities and needs. In particular, the EU's reluctance to 'politicise' its approach to the Transnistria question meant the key issue of Russian withdrawal (de-securitisation) was not effectively addressed within the bilateral negotiations and the multilateral frameworks (Christou, 2010).

Thus, in late 2015 the ENP Review noted that protracted conflicts remained a key obstacle to the region's development, thereby implicitly acknowledging the EU's shortcomings in contributing to their settlement. To address these drawbacks, it placed an emphasis on early warning and preventative measures, including support to the security sector reform, security and defence dialogues with the partner countries, and CSDP missions (Joint Communication, 2015). Thereby, the EU institutions called for the full use of the conflict management tools available under the CFSP/CSDP policies.

Incidentally, however, security tensions were 'imported' into the multilateral fora of the Eastern Partnership. From its outset, the multilateral track has been plagued by regional tensions around the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.⁴

Despite EU's proclamations, in cases of escalation of conflicts, mediation efforts were mainly initiated and conducted by individual Member States (in the case of Georgia in 2008 – France; in the case of Ukraine in 2014–2021 – Germany and France). This provided them with opportunities to prioritise their own preferences with regard to the individual Eastern partners but also with regard to Russia. Therefore, the EU's perceived inability to act strongly and coherently in conflict resolution resulted in a weakening of its standing as a security actor (Delcour & Wolczuk, 2020).

However, ultimately, it was the role of Russia which shaped the attitudes towards and the perceptions of the EU in the Eastern neighbourhood. Notwithstanding the EU's de-securitised approach, Ukraine and Georgia sought integration with the EU as a pivotal counterbalance to Russia's aggressive actions. Ironically, even though the EU lacked a unified position on the Eastern neighbourhood in general and Russia in particular, integration with the EU was perceived as crucial in counterbalancing Russia's aggressive policies in the countries, which were most interested in integration, especially Ukraine and Georgia (Delcour & Wolczuk, 2015).

5.2.2 The Role of Russia in the Eastern Neighbourhood

The divergent views within the Union on the strategy towards the Eastern neighbours have been only accentuated by differences on relations with Russia. Some Member States, such as Germany, France and Italy, by favouring solid bilateral relations with Russia, have ended up relegating their policy towards their Eastern neighbours to the background. From their

⁴ The very first plenary session of the EURONEST Assembly – gathering members of the European Parliament and Eastern partners' assemblies (except Belarus) – failed to adopt a common statement owing to these tensions. Subsequently, the Azerbaijani delegation refused to attend Euronest Parliamentary Assembly meeting that was organised in Yerevan in 2015. EURONEST has become often overwhelmed by the Armenia-Azerbaijan tensions.



perspective, stability in the Eastern Partnership countries was an objective which could be achieved by respecting Russia's 'sphere of interest' rather than nurturing the pro-European orientation of these states. Therefore, the fact that Ukraine and Georgia were seeking closer ties with Europe to counterbalance Russian domination made these EU Member States particularly wary of infringing on Russia's interests (Popescu & Wilson, 2009).

Therefore, EU's reluctance to engage in conflict management was directly related to the intra-EU divergences regarding relations with the role of Russia. Being defined as a strategic partner, the EU's policy towards Russia was conducted in a separate track under the CFSP. Hence, EU-Russia relations and the ENP represented different portfolios in EU's foreign policy, rendering Russia's role in the Eastern and Southern neighbourhood 'too difficult to handle'. The ENP Review of 2015 simply avoided a reference to Russia and only referred to "neighbours of neighbours" (European Commission, 2015b), notwithstanding Russia's ongoing actions in Georgia, Ukraine as well as Syria.

The EU's policy towards Russia revolved around a Strategic Partnership based on four common spaces: Economic, External Security, Freedom, Security and Justice, and Research and Education. This two-track resulted in considerable ambivalence and inertia when dealing with Russia's actions in the Southern and Eastern neighbourhoods.

This is despite the fact the EU's objectives in the Eastern Partnership were fundamentally at odds with the Russian objectives in the so-called 'near abroad', which included promoting authoritarianism, clientelism and corruption and using economic and energy dependency to derail the neighbour countries' integration with the EU. Moreover, when political and economic leverage failed to achieve these aims, Russia resorted to military power to undermine their sovereignty, change borders by force and creating and/or supporting the pro-Russian enclaves within the target countries. And yet, Russia's role in the neighbourhood, including its use of hybrid warfare against the Eastern Partnership countries, was largely glossed over till Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

For example, the Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy continued to define Russia as a strategic partner, while enumerating the challenges presented by the destabilisation of Crimea, the Black Sea and Ukraine (although neither the annexation nor its military role in Syria were mentioned, see Muftuler-Bac et al., 2022, (ENGAGE [Working Paper 13](#))). This illustrates the essential 'blind spot' of the neighbourhood in EU's policy towards Russia. It was only in the 2022 Strategic Compass, that Russia was defined as a military aggressor in Georgia and in the annexation of Crimea, as having de facto control over Belarus, as utilising Wagner mercenaries in Syria, Libya, Central African Republic and Mali (Council of the European Union, 2022). Thus, notwithstanding the ENP, it took 15 years to recognise and acknowledge the aggressive nature of Russia across the neighbourhoods.⁵

⁵ Amongst the EU institutions, the European Parliament was much more outspoken in its assessment of Russia's policy than the Council or the Commission.



The problems and ineffectiveness of this governance framework for EU-Russia relations aside, the EU's influence in the Eastern neighbourhood was severely constrained by its ambivalence towards Russia, meaning that the EU's credibility and efficacy was frequently undermined not only by the contradictions and inconsistencies of the neighbourhood policy per se, but also by failing to acknowledge and counteract Russia's aims and strategies.

5.2.3 The Case of Georgia

This is well illustrated with regard to the South Caucasus, which was regarded as 'in demand' of the EU's security role. While the EU was engaged in the conflict settlement process in the 1990s, by the early 2000s, it had stepped up its engagement in economic issues. In 2003, an EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus was appointed in 2003 primarily to support reform policies. His initial mandate envisaged "assisting with conflict settlement"; it was only expanded at a later stage to contribute to the resolution of conflicts (Whitman & Wolf, 2010).

Georgia's Aspiration vis-à-vis the EU

Georgia's aspiration to integrate into the Euro-Atlantic structures has been enshrined in the Georgian constitution since 2017. In Georgian political discourse Europe is framed "as a place of historical dislocation and, therefore, a place of final destination" (Gamkrelidze, 2019a p. 1; see also Gamkrelidze, 2019b). However, even though the subject dominates political discourse in Georgia, the actual understanding and acceptance of the values of freedom, pluralism, equality has always been problematic for both the political elite and society. Therefore, there is disparity between the willingness to 'return to Europe' and the readiness by society to accept some of the 'European values'.

Political Developments and Tensions

Thanks to reform launched in mid-2002, the country was originally perceived by the EU as on the right trajectory and something of a front runner. However, the coming to power of the Georgian Dream (GDDG) government in 2012 led to a gradual erosion of that position. Even with the EU-Georgia Association Agreement in place, there were increasing problems with political pluralism, such as harassment of the opposition politicians, parties and the media, which boosted polarisation of Georgian society. While the EU was steadfast on the need to maintain judicial reform, strengthen democratic institutions and open political space for pluralism, successive Georgian governments have largely ignored these messages.

The Georgian governments' neglect of these the commitments was in fact accompanied by efforts to isolate and leave the opposition parties outside of the decision-making process. In the view of the political elites, inclusive politics as promoted by the EU is at odds with their overarching objective of maintaining power at all costs. Indeed, it is perceived as threatening the very existence of ruling party, which in general controls all branches of power in the country. In Georgia, the political elite operates on the basis of the principle of 'winner takes it all', an enduring feature of Georgian political culture in which losers are excluded from all power.



Georgia's Attitudes Towards the EU

Notwithstanding concern over certain values, the EU achieves high popular approval ratings in a population which is largely pro-European and aspires to see the country as a member of the EU. Moreover, the Union is deemed the key international partner of the country (NDI, 2022). In 2011, 33 % of respondents judged the EU to be Georgia's primary partner, second only to the US (IRI, 2012); by 2021 the figure for the EU had reached 56% (Kartozia, 2021) probably due to increased financial and technical support and engagement by the EU, something which included a greater presence in the country (owing to, the AA-DCFTA and visa liberalisation). Positive public perceptions towards the EU have ensured strong support for European integration in Georgia. According to the public opinion polls of November 2022: 85% of respondents approved of Georgia's goal to become a member of the EU (IRI, 2022). In stark contrast, 88% of respondents named Russia as the main threat to Georgian statehood (IRI, 2021), a view no doubt based on the August 2008 war as a result of which Russia is regarded as the number one threat to the statehood of the country.

Unresolved Conflicts

With the launch of the ENP, Georgia's inclusion meant that the EU was accused of encroaching on Russia's 'sphere of influence'. This 'sphere of influence' was manifested not only in Russia's support of the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia but also Russia's invasion of Georgia in August 2008, which was interpreted as an attack on the country's European aspiration and progress in European integration (Saakashvili, 2012a, 2012b).⁶ While it was expected that the collective West and in particular the EU would step in and resolve the conflict – given the EU's commitment to “now take a stronger and more active interest in the problems of the Southern Caucasus” (European Council 2003, p. 8) – the actual response of the EU was not commensurate with the challenges. Great hope was placed on the French President Nicolas Sarkozy, (with France holding the presidency of the EU), who undertook the role of mediator. After five days of the conflict President Sarkozy in his capacity as President of the European Council negotiated a six-point *protocole d'accord* (de facto ceasefire agreement) between President Medvedev of Russia and President Saakashvili. The agreement provided for the immediate cessation of hostilities and withdrawal of forces to the positions occupied prior to the armed conflict. The fact that Sarkozy “stood side-by-side with us, when our country was in greatest hardship” (Saakashvili, 2011) was deeply appreciated, yet ultimately lead to dashed hopes. For example, the Russian and South Ossetian forces continued their advances for some days after the August ceasefire was declared and occupied additional territories (Fact-Finding Mission Report, 2009 p. 22). Moreover, on 26 August 2008 the Kremlin recognised the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Up to now, Russia continues to

⁶ According to President Saakashvili ‘the goal of the enemy had been very concrete [...] to change the democratic order of Georgia; to stall its course towards the European institutions and NATO. [...] He [Putin] knows it better than us that if Georgia fully makes it, develops as we intend it, enters all the leading international institutions and organizations, it will have to de-occupy our territories and withdraw its troops from here’ (Saakashvili, 2012a).



ignore the 3rd (free access to humanitarian aid) and 5th (withdrawal of the Russian forces to the lines held prior to the August war) points of the six-point ceasefire agreement.

In September 2008 the EU leaders decided to link the EU-Russia partnership talks to the implementation of the ceasefire agreement by the Kremlin. The EU effectively postponed talks with Russia on a new partnership pact unless the Kremlin fulfilled its commitment on the withdrawal of “its troops to pre-conflict positions in Georgia” (Ennis & Grajewski, 2008). However, in December 2008, having considered the conflict sufficiently resolved, the EU resumed negotiations on the new agreement with Russia (despite Lithuania’s opposition), even though Russia did not comply – the Kremlin still maintained troops in the breakaway regions, including areas “where there was no Russian military presence before the August war” (Civil Georgia, 2008). Since 2008, the EU has condemned “Russia’s recognition of and continued military presence in the Georgian territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia” (EU Delegation in Georgia, 2022).

The Geneva Process (Geneva International Discussions)

Furthermore, as a follow-up to the ‘partially fulfilled ceasefire agreement’ the Geneva International Discussions (GID) (also known as the Geneva Process) was initiated in September 2008. Later in October the GID was set up as a multilateral mediation forum co-led by the EU, OSCE and UN (see below). The Geneva Process is the sole negotiating format dealing with the invasion. It is composed of representatives from Georgia, Russia, US, as well as members of both Russia-backed authorities from Georgia's two breakaway regions and the Georgian exiled administrations of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.⁷

The mediation potential of the GID format was crippled right from the beginning due to the disagreement on the questions such as “which conflict is being mediated: that between Russia and Georgia in 2008, pre-existing conflicts in Georgia’s provinces of Abkhazia and South Ossetia or both?”, and also “who the parties to the conflict are – while Georgia sees Russia as an aggressor and an occupying power, Russia asserts [it is]... a ‘facilitator’ to the GID (alongside the US)” (Giuashvili & Devdariani, 2016, p. 382). A lack of clarity regarding the objectives and status of the participants in the GID hinders progress towards “larger goals” such as Russia's non-use-of-force commitment, agreement both on international security measures and internally displaced persons and refugees (Giuashvili & Devdariani, 2016, p. 387).

⁷ The meetings under the Geneva Process co-chaired by the EU, UN and OSCE takes places in two parallel working groups - one addressing security and stability related issues in the occupied territories and the other focused on the humanitarian impacts of the conflict, namely ‘the issues related to the safe and dignified return of internally displaced people and refugees to the places of their origin (also cultural heritage issues, freedom of movement etc.)’ (Office of State Minister of Georgia, 2019b). The GID was set up to convene four times in a year, however different factors and players affected the frequency and effectiveness of the meetings. For instance, in 2022 the meeting took place only once - on in October – due to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine (Civil Georgia, 2022).



Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism

Similar disagreements partially derailed the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM) as well, which was created both in South Ossetia and Abkhazia in February 2009 following a GID meeting. The IPRM serves as a tool to set up meetings between the parties, identify potential risks, follow up incidents near the administrative borders, exchange information and discuss “problems affecting the communities on a daily basis” (Office of State Minister of Georgia, 2019a). The IPRM meetings are co-facilitated by the OSCE and the EUMM (Office of State Minister of Georgia 2019a). Since 2018 the IPRM in Abkhazia has been suspended due to the disagreement between Georgian officials and representatives from Russia and de-facto Abkhazia. Within the framework of the IPRM, the EUMM launched the Hotline in March 2009 to ensure “the rapid response on concrete and specific incidents” (Office of State Minister of Georgia, 2019a), but also “to enable a reliable and instant communication between the parties [...] around the clock, seven days” both in English and Russian (EUMM, 2016, p. 1). IPRM works to provide tangible benefits to those living in conflict-affected areas. This includes the release of civilians through the EUMM Hotline who have been detained for illegal border crossing, as well as the temporary reopening of crossing points (US Mission in the OSCE, 2022).

EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia

One of the key conflict management measures, following the ceasefire agreement, was the European Union Monitoring Mission to Georgia (EUMM), which is an unarmed civil mission under the CFSP, put in place in September 2008. The EUMM was designed “to contribute to the reduction of tensions through liaison, the facilitation of contacts between parties (of the conflict) and other confidence building measures” (Council of the EU, 2008). This was the only international monitoring mission in the South Caucasus permissible since Russia’s veto on the extension of the OSCE and UN missions in Georgia in June 2009. The EUMM’s field offices stationed in three different Tbilisi-controlled locations were tasked with monitoring the situation at the administrative border of breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia (See Table 1). The EUMM had two main tasks: a) peace-making (making peace through negotiations) and b) peacekeeping (monitoring and maintaining the ceasefire) (Giushvili & Devdariani, 2016, p. 383) to be achieved through four objectives:

- 1) prevention of a return to hostilities;
- 2) resumption of a safe and normal life for the local communities,
- 3) confidence-building among the conflict parties;
- 4) distribution of information on EU policy in Georgia and the wider region.

The EUMM also installed the negotiation mechanisms such as the Geneva International Discussions (GID) and the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM). Despite certain shortcomings, the GID and IPRM kept communications channels open between the parties in conflict.

However, the EUMM suffered under a number of constraints. Firstly, it had “restricted possibilities to monitor in the breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia” (EUMM,



2023), meaning that it could not collect information on the situation within the breakaway regions. Secondly, it had to deal with the ambiguity caused by the fact that the ceasefire agreement has not been fully implemented by all parties (as has been noted, Russia had failed “to withdraw its forces to pre-conflict positions, as well as to uphold its commitments to allow unfettered access for the delivery of humanitarian assistance and not to impede creation of international security arrangements on the ground” (US Mission in the OSCE, 2022) as had been agreed). Thirdly, in the absence of a mutually acceptable security mechanism, the ongoing military presence of the protagonists was not conducive to peacekeeping (Giuashvili & Devdariani, 2016, p. 382–384).

Table 1: EUMM Mission Factsheet

EU Mission	Mandate	Mission Strength	Field Offices	Headquarter	Extensions
European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia (EUMM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure that there is no return to hostilities; • To facilitate the resumption of a safe and normal life for the local communities in Abkhazia and South Ossetia; • To build confidence among the conflict parties; • To inform EU policy in Georgia and the wider region. 	253 monitors from 26 EU countries	Gori, Mstkheta, Zugdidi.	Tbilisi (the staff is supported by two officers in Brussels).	<p>Launched in October 2008</p> <p>Annual extensions till 2014</p> <p>Bi-annual extensions since 2014 (i.e. 2016; 2018; 2020; 2022)</p>

Source: EUMM Factsheet and Figures

The Kremlin-Driven Borderisation

Even though the EU brokered agreement ended the military confrontation, hostilities did not end in Georgia. This was despite the fact that border installations were meant to impose and maintain a border regime between Georgia and Russia across the occupation lines in the breakaway regions (Komakhia, 2017). In fact, Russia has continued to move into Georgian territory and annex additional territories on a continuous basis in what became known as the ‘borderisation’ policy.⁸

⁸ Borderisation is [...] ‘the continuing Russian attempts to move the border from north to south from within the de-facto South Ossetia right into the Georgian territory; it represents ‘a forceful expansion of



The process started in August 2009 – almost a year after the war – when border markings were installed 500 meters into Georgia-controlled territories and has continued unabated ever since.⁹ In 2021 the SSG recorded 9 cases of borderisation in Abkhazia and 130 cases in South Ossetia (Parliament of Georgia, 2022). The border installations appear in number of different locations and include the Russia-controlled checkpoints, observation towers, barbed wire and security fences, trenches, surveillance technologies (EUMM, 2017).

The border regime was leveraged against the residents of “Tbilisi-administered territory” when they were detained for illegal “border” crossing near “the Administrative Boundary Line” (EUMM, 2017). In 2021, the SSG recorded 11 illegal detentions in Abkhazia and 70 in South Ossetia (Parliament of Georgia, 2022). The cases of detention get reported to the EUMM and “in most cases, the release of detainees was enabled” through the EUMM-facilitated Hotline (EUMM, 2017). However, there were the cases of imprisonment, torture and even murder of detainees by the Russian military forces in South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

Conclusion

As noted above, the Russian invasion of Georgia in August 2008 prompted the launch of the Eastern Partnership which aimed to strengthen the EU's ties with its Eastern neighbours. In December 2008 the Commission prepared a draft outline for an Eastern Partnership in response to the need for a clearer signal of EU commitment after the conflict in Georgia. (European Commission, 2008). However, despite its intended purpose, the Eastern Partnership actually weakened the overall weight of the security dimension in the Eastern neighbourhood. Instead, the Partnership focused on functional integration and external governance with little overall value added with regard to security.

Since 2008 the EU has regularly reaffirmed its political commitment to mediate the conflict by renewing the EUMM mission at regular intervals. However, the extensions of the mandate did not envisage adaptation of the conflict mediation mechanism. Russian activities are recorded by the EUMM, thought without any follow-up to stop further annexation of the Georgian territories.

Up until the full-scale military attack against Ukraine by Russia on in February 2022, the EU's policy towards the Kremlin remained unchanged with little done to deter Russia from aggressive actions in the Eastern neighbourhood. Instead, the perception across the Southern Caucasus was that Brussels seemed to tacitly accept the Kremlin's politics in the region as the 'new normal'. Therefore, the EU's limited action and de facto appeasement of Russia left

the occupied part of Georgia in favour of the de-facto Republic of South Ossetia' by the installation of border marks and fencing (Ruhadze, 2019).

⁹ By 2017 the State Security Service of Georgia registered roughly 52km of border fences and wires across the 353km occupation line in Tbilisi-controlled areas of South Ossetia, whereas in Abkhazia such installations amounted approximately to 49km of the 145km occupation line (SSG, 2017). In turn, in 2018 the EUMM reported 'more than 60km' of the fences in South Ossetia and in Abkhazia 'observed' 32km of fences (EUMM, 2018).



Georgia feeling betrayed as the EU prioritised energy security and good neighbourly relations with Russia.

The borderisation policy has attracted a great deal of public attention in Georgia. This creeping 'land-grab' has happened under the watch of the EUMM. The EU's enhanced role in Georgia has been regarded as a success story in the EU. However, the mere monitoring and recording of instances of borderisation has significantly weakened the standing of the EU in general and as a security actor in Georgia, in particular.

The EU's own perception of success was conditioned by a relatively weak commitment to the South Caucasus to start with. As noted above, during the launch of the ENP, the South Caucasus was not, at first, included in the ENP. Given that hesitant start, the EU's engagement in mediating the August 2008 war between Georgia and Russia appeared to represent a significant step up in its approach to conflict.

Clearly, from the EU perspective, its response to the war – including France's mediation, the ceasefire agreement, an CFSP mission and launching of the Eastern Partnership – was a success. An assessment report the Council of the EU positively evaluated EU's role, claiming that

since 2003, the EU has increasingly made a difference in addressing crisis and conflict, in places such as [...] Georgia. [...] Our Georgia mission has demonstrated what can be achieved when we act collectively with the necessary political will. [...] The EU led the international response, through mediation between the parties, humanitarian assistance, a civilian monitoring mission, and substantial financial support. Our engagement will continue, with the EU leading the Geneva Process (Council of the European Union, 2009b, pp. 7–21).

This was at odds with Georgia's perception of EU's role of a monitor and by-stander. The EU engagement in the mediation of the conflict did not lead to the rapprochement of the perceptions on Russia between the EU and Georgia. On the one hand, the EU displayed support and sympathy towards Georgia as a result of the Russian invasion in 2008. On the other, the EU's policy towards the Kremlin as a 'strategic partner' and the glossing over of Russia's role as an aggressive actor were starkly at odds with the perceptions of Russia in Georgia. The EU's perceived weakness in turn enabled the Georgian Dream government to claim that Georgia had no choice but to tread carefully vis-à-vis Russia and that it could not support the EU's sanctions nor express solidarity with Ukraine since 2022.



6 Conclusions

In its neighbourhood, the EU has projected itself as a force for good – a power that 'behaves differently'. Through the ENP, the EU has exported "its own vision of the problems affecting the neighbourhood" and hence the solutions, based upon its own experience (Di Puppò, 2009, p. 109). The ENP was based on the premise that the neighbouring countries would benefit from developing and modernising their public policies and economies by anchoring them in the EU model of governance, regardless of their actual interests and aspirations to do so. Nevertheless, the EU's own self-identification as an ambitious and multi-faceted transformative power has been subjected to a severe test. Yet, this inside-out approach was based on a functionalist logic that failed to match the expectations of partner countries of more direct engagement in conflict resolution and promotion of security of the neighbouring countries. The EU's long-term agenda of 'good governance' and economic integration combined with an indirect approach to conflict resolution turned out to be at odds with the neighbouring countries' prioritisation of security due to wars, conflicts and invasions.

However, the launch of the ENP raised the expectations of the ENP countries in terms of their demand for greater EU engagement. It is clear that there has been a strong demand for engagement with the EU on security issues from at least some of the neighbouring states (for example, Ukraine and Georgia). Yet, this external opportunity structure did not trigger greater involvement in conflict management due to intra-EU constraints, above all a lack of consensus amongst the Member States. The EU has had little influence, if any, on the evolution of conflicts, and their resolution, in the neighbourhood. As a result, most neighbourhood countries came only to expect a *presence* - rather than *influence* - from the EU in terms of security and conflict management.

Therefore, it can be concluded that while the ENP created both opportunities and considerable expectations, they exceeded the EU's own capacity and willingness to deliver on its security-related narrative, due to intra-EU constraints. The overall neglect of the security dimension in the ENP has gravely impacted on European security in a variety of ways, ranging from migration to a failure to deter Russia's aggression. In the south, the ENP turned the EU into a bystander in the collapse of the Libyan and Syrian regimes, which in turn led to an increase in migration through the Mediterranean and exacerbated the economic and governance challenges facing it (Lannon, 2021; Koenig, 2017). The rise of migration and deterioration of the Southern neighbourhood in the aftermath of the Arab spring contributed to a more stability- and resilience-oriented approach, as evidenced by the 2015 ENP Review. This entailed a more short-term EU perspective, driven by the Member States and the de facto abandonment of the neighbourhood-wide approach initially championed by the ENP.

Overall, this mismatch led to considerable disillusionment with the EU's role as a security actor in the neighbourhood, which in turn impacted on the weakening of the EU's 'transformative power'. Especially in the south, the EU's standing was directly hindered by its low profile as a 'pacific bystander' vis-à-vis other regional powers. It remains to be seen if the 'geopolitical awakening' triggered by Russia's invasion of Ukraine will change the long-established pattern



of the EU's ambitious proclamations followed by a more circumspect 'presence'. It will need to do so in order to become a truly 'transformative power' in its vicinity.

This working paper corresponds to Deliverable 8.2 of the H2020 project ENGAGE



Reference List

- Aamari, O. (2023, January 6). Western Sahara: Josep Borrell Reiterates EU's Support for UN Process. *Morocco World News*. January 6.
<https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2023/01/353409/western-sahara-josep-borrell-reiterates-eus-support-of-un-process>
- Abbott, K. W. & Snidal, D. (2000). Hard and Soft Law in International Governance. *International Organization*, 54(3), 421–456
- Al Jazeera. (2020, December 11). *Western Sahara Conflict in 500 Words*.
<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/12/11/western-sahara-conflict-in-500-words>
- Balfour, R. & Missiroli, A. (2007). *Reassessing the European Neighbourhood Policy* (Issue Paper No. 54). European Policy Centre.
<https://www.epc.eu/en/Publications/Reassessing-the-European-Neighbourhood-Policy~2356e0>
- Batt, J., Lynch, D., Missiroli, A., Ortega, M. & Triantaphyllou, D. (2003). *Partners and Neighbours: a CFSP for a Wider Europe* (Chaillot Paper, No.64). Institute for Security Studies. <https://www.iss.europa.eu/content/partners-and-neighbours-cfsp-wider-europe>
- BBC. (2023, January 31). *Western Sahara profile*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-14115273>
- Bechev, D. & Nicolaidis, K. (2010). From Policy to Polity: Can the EU's Special Relations with its 'Neighbourhood' be Decentred? *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 48(3), 475–500
- Benabdallah, K. (2009). The Position of the European Union on the Western Sahara Conflict. *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, 17(3), 417–435
- Bengtsson, R. (2008). Constructing Interfaces: The Neighbourhood Discourse in EU External Policy. *Journal of European Integration*, 30(5), 597–616
- Blockman, S. (2017). *The Obsolescence of the European Neighbourhood Policy*. Brussels: CEPS
- Calcan, D. (2021). The mixed legacy of the European Neighbourhood Policy. The Moroccan exception. *CES Working Papers, Centre for European Studies, Alexandru Ioan Cuza University*, 12(4), 322–336
- Cardwell, P. (2011). EuroMed, European Neighbourhood Policy and the Union for the Mediterranean: Overlapping Policy Frames in the EU's Governance of the Mediterranean. *Journal of Common Market Studies* 49(2), 219–241



- Christou, G. (2010). European Union security logics to the east: the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Eastern Partnership. *European Security*, 19(3), 413–430
- Cichocki, M. (2010). European Neighbourhood Policy or Neighbourhood Policies, in K. Henderson, K. & C. Weaver (Eds). *The Black Sea Region and EU policy: the Challenge of Divergent Agendas*, Ashgate, 9–27
- Civil Georgia. (2008, November 11). *EU to Resume Talks with Russia*.
<https://civil.ge/archives/117873>
- Civil Georgia. (2022, October 6). *56th Round of Geneva International Discussions*.
<https://civil.ge/archives/510717>
- Colombo, S. & Shapovalova, N. (2018). The European Neighbourhood Policy Promotion of Civil Society. In T. Demmelhuber, A. Marchetti, & T. Schumacher (Eds.) *The Routledge Handbook on the European Neighbourhood Policy*. Routledge, 494–505
- Council of the European Union. (2022). *A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence - For a European Union that protects its citizens, values and interests and contributes to international peace and security*. 7371/22.
<https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-7371-2022-INIT/en/pdf>
- Council of the European Union. (2008). *Council Joint Action 2008/736/CFSP of 15 September 2008 on the European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia, EUMM Georgia*. L248/26.
<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32008E0736>
- Council of the EU. (2009, May 7). *Joint Declaration of the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit* [Press Release]. 8435/09 (Presse 78).
https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/PRES_09_78
- Council of the European Union. (2019, June 27). *Joint declaration by the European Union and Morocco for the fourteenth meeting of the Association Council*. [Press Release]
<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2019/06/27/joint-declaration-by-the-european-union-and-the-kingdom-of-morocco-for-the-fourteenth-meeting-of-the-association-council/>
- Cremona, M. & Hillion, C. (2006). *L'Union Fait la Force? Potential and Limitations of the European Neighbourhood Policy as an Integrated EU Foreign and Security Policy* (EUI Working Papers, Law, 2006/39). European University Institute
- Delcour, L. (2007). Does the European Neighbourhood Policy Make a Difference? Policy Patterns and Reception in Ukraine and Russia. *European Political Economy Review*, (7), 118–155
- Delcour, L. (2009). The Eastern Partnership and Security in the Eastern Neighbourhood. *Paper to International Conference 'Russia: A Part of Europe or Apart from Europe? The University of Birmingham*, 27–28



- Delcour, L. & Soler i Lecha, E. (2018). European Neighbourhood Policy mechanisms - Conditionality, socialisation and differentiation. In T. Schumacher, A. Marchetti & T. Demmelhuber (Eds): *The Routledge Handbook on the European Neighbourhood Policy*. Routledge, 445–455
- Delcour, L. & Wolczuk, K. (2015). Spoiler or facilitator of democratization? Russia's role in Georgia and Ukraine. *Democratization*, 22(3), 459–478
- Delcour, L. & Wolczuk, K. (2020). Mind the Gap: Role Expectations and Perceived Performance of the EU in the South Caucasus. *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, 62(2), 156–177
- De Man, P., Müller, G. & Tyushka, A. (2022). *The EU's Engagement in Conflict Resolution, Prevention and Mediation: A Framework* (Working Paper No. 14). ENGAGE H2020 Project. <https://www.engage-eu.eu/publications/the-eus-engagement-in-conflict-resolution-prevention-and-mediation>
- Dragneva, R. & Wolczuk, K. (2011). EU Law Export to the Eastern Neighbourhood and an Elusive Demand for Law. In P. Cardwell, (Ed.) *EU External Relations Law and Policy in the Post-Lisbon Era*. TMC Asser Press, 217–240
- EU Eastern Neighbourhood: Economic Potential and Future Development (ENEPO). (2007). *Working Paper on concepts and definitions of institutional development (harmonisation) and methodology of measuring them* (Deliverable 25). <https://cost.ua/content/uploads/2020/09/Working-paper-on-concepts-and-definitions-of-institutional-development.pdf>
- Ennis, D. & Grajewski, M. (2008, September 1). EU threatens to postpone talks on Russian pact. *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-georgia-ossetia1-idUSLV23341620080901>
- Escribano, G. (2006). *Europeanisation without Europe? The Mediterranean and the Neighbourhood Policy* (EUI RSCAS Working Papers, No. 2006/19.). Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, European University Institute. <https://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/6071/?sequence=1>
- EU Delegation in Georgia. (2022, August 7). *Remarks by the Acting Head of EU Delegation 14 years after the August 2008 Russia-Georgia war*. [Press Release] https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/georgia/remarks-acting-head-eu-delegation-14-years-after-august-2008-russia-georgia-war_en?s=221
- EUMM. (2016). *The EUMM Monitor*. A bulletin from the European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia. Issue 3. https://www.eumm.eu/data/file/5666/The_EUMM_Monitor_Issue____December____ENG.eBVExcNZkf.pdf



- EUMM. (2017). *The EUMM Monitor*. A bulletin from the European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia. Issue 4.
https://www.eumm.eu/data/file/5774/The_EUMM_Monitor_Issue_April_ENG.M1UBLiudw.PDF
- EUMM. (2018, October 19). *EUMM Mission Briefing*. [PowerPoint Slides]. <https://eap-csf.eu/wp-content/uploads/Combined-Presentations-EU.pdf>
- EUMM. (2023). *Factsheet and Figures*.
https://www.eumm.eu/en/about_eumm/facts_and_figures
- European Commission. (2003). *Wider Europe – Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with Our Eastern and Southern Neighbours*, COM(2003) 104 final. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/ALL/?uri=celex:52003DC0104>
- European Commission. (2004). *The European Neighbourhood Policy. Strategy Paper*. COM(2004) 373 final. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2004:0373:FIN:EN:PDF>
- European Commission (2006) *Strengthening the European Neighbourhood Policy*, COM(2006) 726 final. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2006:0726:FIN:EN:PDF>
- European Commission. (2008). *Eastern partnership*; COM(2008) 823 final.
[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/219089/EaP_COM\(2008\)823.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/219089/EaP_COM(2008)823.pdf)
- European Commission. (2011). *EU response to the Arab Spring: the SPRING Programme*.
https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/MEMO_11_636
- European Commission. (2015a). *Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP): Stronger Partnerships for a Stronger Neighbourhood*, [Press release].
https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_15_6121
- European Commission (2015b). *Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy*. SWD (2015) 500 final. https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2019-01/151118_joint-communication_review-of-the-enp_en.pdf
- European Commission. (2022). *Basic figures on the European Neighbourhood Policy-South countries.*, Publications Office of the European Union.
<https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2785/671801>
- European Commission. (2023, September 27). *EU trade relations with Morocco. Facts, figures and latest development*. MEMO/11/636. https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/eu-trade-relationships-country-and-region/countries-and-regions/morocco_en
- European Commission. (n.d.). *European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations*.
https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/european-neighbourhood-policy/countries-region/morocco_en



- European Commission and High Representative. (2011). *A New Response to the Changing Neighbourhood*, COM(2011) 303. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52011DC0303>
- European Commission and High Representative. (2015). *Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy*, JOIN(2015) 50 final. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/GA/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52015JC0050>
- European Commission and High Representative (2021) *Renewed partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood, A new Agenda for the Mediterranean*, JOIN (2021) 2 final. https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/joint_communication_renewed_partnership_southern_neighbourhood.pdf
- European Council. (2003). *A Secure Europe in a Better World: European Security Strategy*. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/30823/qc7809568enc.pdf>
- European Council. (2009). *Declaration on the Eastern Partnership*. D/09/1. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/DOC_09_1
- Eurostat. (2013). *European Neighbourhood policy countries: essential macro-economic indicators*. Luxembourg: European Commission
- Fakir, I. (2019). EU-Morocco Relations – Finding a New Balance. In A. A. Ghafar (Ed.). *The European Union and North Africa: Prospects and Challenges*. Brookings Institution Press
- Gamkrelidze, T. (2019a). The project of Europe: a robust attempt to redefine Georgian identity. *East European Politics*, 35(3), 351–371
- Gamkrelidze, T. (2019b). Hegemony of the European Project in Georgia: From Foreign Policy Initiative to the Logic of State Building and Development. *Demokratizatsiya: The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization*, Volume 27(2), 163–185
- Gamkrelidze, T. & Väisänen, A. (2022). *Securitisation of the Neighbourhood: EU-Driven Frame Alignment and Projection on Southern and Eastern Neighbourhood Partner Countries* (Working Paper 15). ENGAGE H2020 Project. <https://www.engage-eu.eu/publications/securitisation-of-the-neighbourhood>
- Gebhard, C. & Norheim-Martinsen, P. (2011). Making sense of EU comprehensive security towards conceptual and analytical clarity. *European Security*, 20(2), 221–241
- Giushvili, T. & Devdariani, J. (2016). Geneva International Discussions – Negotiating the Possible. *Security and Human Rights*, 27, 381–402
- Gstühl, S. (2016). *The European Neighbourhood Policy in a Comparative Perspective: Models, Challenges, Lessons*. London: Routledge



- Gstöhl, S., Schunz, S. & Van Langenhove, L. (eds.). (2018). Between Cooperation and Competition: Major Powers in Shared Neighbourhoods, *Contemporary Politics*, 24(1), 1–13
- Hami, H. (2023, February 2). Europe and Morocco: The End of an Asymmetrical Partnership. *Morocco World News*.
<https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2023/02/353833/europe-and-morocco-the-end-of-an-asymmetrical-partnership>
- Hillion, C. & Mayhew, A. (2009). *The Eastern Partnership – Something New or Window-Dressing* (SEI Working Paper No. 109). Sussex European Institute.
<https://www.sussex.ac.uk/webteam/gateway/file.php?name=sei-working-paper-no-109.pdf&site=266>
- Hoekman, B. (2018). Deep and comprehensive free trade agreements. In T. Demmelhuber, A. Marchetti, & Schumacher, T. (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook on the European Neighbourhood Policy*. Routledge
- Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia report. (2009). *Report*. Volume I.
https://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/HUDOC_38263_08_Annexes_ENG.pdf
- International Republican Institute (IRI). (2012, January 5). *IRI Releases Expanded Nationwide Survey of Georgian Public Opinion*. <https://www.iri.org/resources/iri-releases-expanded-nationwide-survey-of-georgian-public-opinion/>
- International Republican Institute (IRI). (2021). *IRI: Public Opinion Survey: Residents of Georgia*. Center for Insights in Survey Research.
https://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/iri_poll_presentation-georgia_february_2021_1.pdf
- International Republican Institute (IRI). (2022, November 7). *IRI Georgia Poll Finds Strong Support for EU Membership, Disapproval of Russian Presence, Distrust in Political Parties*. <https://www.iri.org/news/iri-georgia-poll-finds-strong-support-for-eu-membership-disapproval-of-russian-presence-distrust-in-political-parties/>
- Kartozia, M. (2021, August 2). *IRI Poll: 68% of Georgians Support Joining EU, 77% - NATO Membership*. First Channel, Georgian Public Broadcaster.
<https://1tv.ge/lang/en/news/iri-poll-68-of-georgians-support-joining-eu-77-nato-membership/>
- Kelley, J. (2006). New Wine in Old Wineskins: Promoting Political Reforms through the New European Neighbourhood Policy. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 44(1), 29–55
- Keukeleire, S. & Delreux, T. (2022). *The Foreign Policy of the European Union*. Bloomsbury Publishing Plc



- Keuleers, F. Fonck, D. & Keukeleire, S. (2016). Beyond EU navel-gazing: Taking stock of EU-centrism in the analysis of EU foreign Policy. *Cooperation and Conflict*, 51(3), pp. 345–364
- Koenig, N. (2017). Libya and Syria: Inserting the European neighbourhood policy in the European Union’s crisis response cycle. *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 22(1), 19–38
- Komakhia, M. (2017, November 15). Russia’s Influence Over the Field of Security in Tskhinvali Region is Growing: Support for Full Integration. *Rondeli Foundation*. <https://www.gfsis.org/blog/view/766>
- Kratochvíl, P. (2009). Discursive Constructions of the EU’s Identity in the Neighbourhood: An Equal Among Equals or the Power Centre? *European Political Economy Review*, 9(9), 5–23
- Langan, M. (2015). The moral economy of EU relations with North African states: DCFTAs under the European Neighbourhood Policy. *Third world quarterly*, 36(10), 1827-1844
- Lannon, E. (2021). The externalization of EU policies in the renewed partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood: the potential impact of the New Mediterranean Agenda. In *IEMed Mediterranean Yearbook 2021*. IEMed, 17–23
- Lavenex, S. (2008). A Governance Perspective on the European Neighbourhood Policy: Integration Beyond Conditionality? *Journal of European Public Policy* 15(6), 938–955
- Lebovich, A. & Lovatt, H. (2022). *Endless concessions: Spain’s tilt to Morocco*. European Council on Foreign Relations: <https://ecfr.eu/article/endless-concessions-spains-tilt-to-morocco/>
- Lecocq, S. (2021). EU Foreign Policy and Hybrid Actors in the Middle East: Ready for Geopolitical Contestation? *Global Affairs*. 6(4-5), 363–380
- Lovatt, H. (2020). *From trade to international law: Why the EU should untangle its relationships with Morocco and Western Sahara*. European Council on Foreign Relations: <https://ecfr.eu/article/from-trade-to-international-law-why-the-eu-should-untangle-its-relationships-with-morocco-and-western-sahara/>
- Lovatt, H. (2021). *Western Sahara, Morocco, and the EU: How good law makes good politics*. European Council on Foreign Relations. <https://ecfr.eu/article/western-sahara-morocco-and-the-eu-how-good-law-makes-good-politics/>
- Mathernova, K. & Wolczuk, K. (2020). The Eastern Partnership: Between fundamentals and integration, *New Eastern Europe*, (5), 108–114
- Missiroli, A. (2008, July 3–6). *The ENP five years on: looking backward – and forward* [Paper presentation]. The EU and its Neighbours: In Search for New Forms of Partnership: Sounio, Greece



- Muftuler-Bac, M., Aydin-Duzgit, S., Uzun, E., Martill, B., Mesarovich, A. & Schnitzler, G. (2022). *Conceptually Defining “Global Strategic Partner(ship)”* (Working Paper no. 13). ENGAGE H2020 Project. <https://www.engage-eu.eu/publications/conceptually-defining-global-strategic-partnership>
- National Democratic Institute (NDI). (2022). *Taking Georgians’ Pulse: Key Findings From December 2021 Telephone Survey*. [PowerPoint Slides]. CRRC Georgia. https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/NDI%20Georgia%20-%20December%202021%20poll_Eng_vf.pdf
- Noutcheva, G. (2015). Institutional Governance of European Neighbourhood Policy in the Wake of the Arab Spring. *Journal of European Integration*, 37(1), 19–36
- Office of State Minister of Georgia for Reconciliation and Civic Equality. (2019a). *The Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM)*. <https://smr.gov.ge/en/page/27/incident-prevention-and-response-mechanism>
- Pace, M. (2007). Norm shifting from EMP to ENP: the EU as a norm entrepreneur in the south? *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 20(4), 659–675
- Pace, M. & Wolff, S. (2018). The European Neighbourhood Policy and Islamist actors in the southern neighbourhood. In T. Demmelhuber, A. Marchetti, & T. Schumacher (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook on the European Neighbourhood Policy*. Routledge
- Parliament of Georgia. (2022, June 17). *Parliamentary Committees Discussed the 2021 activities by the State Security Service of Georgia*. <https://parliament.ge/media/news/saparlamento-komitetebma-sakhelmtsifo-usaftrtkhoebis-samsakhuris-2021-tslis-sakmianobis-shesakheb-angarishi-ganikhiles>
- Peregil, F. & Martin, M. (2020, February 4). *Morocco says it prevented 70,000 attempts at irregular migration in 2019*. El País. <https://english.elpais.com/international/2020-02-04/morocco-says-it-prevented-70000-attempts-at-irregular-migration-in-2019.html>
- Pitchers, C. (2023, January 19). European Parliament condemns Morocco for first time in 25 years, after vote on human rights. *Euronews*. <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2023/01/19/european-parliament-condemns-morocco-for-first-time-in-25-years-after-vote-on-human-rights>
- Press and information team of the Delegation to Morocco. (2023, August 3). *European Union and Morocco*. European External Action Service. https://www.eeas.europa.eu/morocco/european-union-and-morocco_en?s=204
- di Puppò, L. (2009). The Externalisation of JHA Policies in Georgia: Partner or Hotbed of Threats?. *European Integration*, 31(1), 103–118
- Ruhadze, N. B. (2019, October 24). Borderization. *Georgia Today*. <http://gtarchive.georgiatoday.ge/news/17878/>



- Saakashvili, M. (2011, June 18). *President of Georgia awarded French Minister of Cooperation Henri de Raincourt with Saint George's Order of Victory* [Speech transcript]. Archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library
- Saakashvili, M. (2012a, August 8). *The President of Georgia addressed the public gathered at the Poti port* [Speech transcript]. Archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library
- Saakashvili, M. (2012b, August 12). *The President of Georgia: Our Didgori still lies ahead of us!* [Speech transcript]. Archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library
- Schumacher, T. (2018). The EU, Middle Eastern Powers and Milieu-Shaping in the 'Shared' Arab Mediterranean Neighbourhood: A Story of Mutual Neglect. *Contemporary Politics*, 24(1), 46–64
- Schumacher, T., Marchetti, A. & Demmelhuber, T. (2018). *The Routledge Handbook on the European Neighbourhood Policy*, London and New York: Routledge
- Seeberg, P. (2015). Regime Adaptability and Political Reconfigurations Following the Arab Spring: New Challenges for EU Foreign Policies Toward the Mediterranean. *Middle East Critique*, 24(1): 41–53
- Sierra, O. P. (2009). Stabilizing the Neighbourhood? The EU's Contribution to SSR in Georgia. *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 14(4), 479–500
- Smith, K. (2005). The Outsiders: The European Neighbourhood Policy. *International Affairs*, 81(4), 757–773
- Sus, M., Vandendriessche, M., Saz-Carranza, A., Gruni, G. & de Esperanza, C. (2021). *Towards Effective, Coherent and Sustainable EU External Action: Laying the Ground for the ENGAGE White Paper* (Working Paper No. 3). ENGAGE H2020 Project. <https://www.engage-eu.eu/publications/towards-effective-coherent-and-sustainable-eu-external-action>
- Stetter, S. (2005). *Theorising the European Neighbourhood Policy: Debordering and Rebordering in the Mediterranean* (EUI Working Papers RSCAS No. 2005/34). European University Institute. <https://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/3830/2005?sequence=1>
- Szép, V. & Wessel, R.A. (2021). *Mapping the Current Legal Basis and Governance Structures of the EU's CFSP* (Working Paper No. 5). ENGAGE H2020 Project. <https://www.engage-eu.eu/publications/mapping-the-current-legal-basis-and-governance-structures-of-the-eus-cfsp>
- Szép, V. & Wessel, R. A. (2022). *The Current Legal Basis and Governance Structures of the EU's External Action* (Working Paper No. 6). ENGAGE H2020 Project. <https://www.engage-eu.eu/publications/the-current-legal-basis-and-governance-structures-of-the-eus-external-action>



- Teti, A., Abbott, P., Talbot, V. & Maggiolini, P. (Eds.). (2020). *Democratisation against Democracy: How EU Foreign Policy Fails the Middle East*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan
- The Economist. (2021, January 13). *Who Should Control Western Sahara?*
<https://www.economist.com/the-economist-explains/2021/01/13/who-should-control-western-sahara>
- The Guardian. (2017, January 31). *Morocco rejoins African Union after more than 30 years*.
<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2017/jan/31/morocco-rejoins-african-union-after-more-than-30-years>
- Thomas, D. (2008). *The Negotiation of EU Foreign Policy: Normative Institutionalism and Alternative Approaches* (Working Paper 08-4). UCD Dublin European Institute
- Tömmel, I. (2013). The New Neighbourhood Policy of the EU: An Appropriate Response to the Arab Spring? *Democracy and Security*, 9(1-2), 19–39
- Trauner, F. & Cassarino, J. (2018). Migration – Moving to the centre of the European Neighbourhood Policy. In T. Demmelhuber, A. Marchetti & T. Schumacher (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook on the European Neighbourhood Policy*. Routledge
- U.S. Mission to the OSCE. (2022, October 13). *On the 56th Round of the Geneva International Discussions on the Conflict in Georgia* [Press Release].
<https://osce.usmission.gov/on-the-56th-round-of-the-geneva-international-discussions-on-the-conflict-in-georgia/>
- Union for the Mediterranean. (2023). *Frequently asked questions on the Barcelona Process and the Union for the Mediterranean*. <https://ufmsecretariat.org/25faqs/>
- Whitman, R. & Wolf, S. (2010). The EU as a Conflict Manager? The Case of Georgia and its Implications. *International Affairs*, 86(1), 87–107
- Wilson, A. & Popescu, N. (2009). Sovereign Neighbourhood: Weak Statehood Strategies in Eastern Europe. *The International Spectator*, 44(1), 7–12
- Wolczuk, K. (2018). Demystifying the Association Agreements. In M. Emerson, D. Cenusă, T. Kovzirdze & V. Movchan (Eds.), *The Struggle for Good Governance in Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova*. Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS), 277–297
- Wolff, S. (2021). *Secular Power Europe and Islam: Identity and Foreign Policy*. University of Michigan Press



Authors

Kataryna Wolczuk is professor of Politics at the Centre for Russian, European and Eurasian Studies (CREES), the University of Birmingham, UK, professorial fellow, ENP Chair at the College of Europe. Her research focuses on EU's relations with the post-Soviet states as well as on Eurasian integration. She has published widely on Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus and EU's policy towards these countries and has extensive experience in working with international organisations. She is an associate fellow at the Russia and Eurasian Programme, Chatham House, London.

Tamar Gamkrelidze is a postdoctoral fellow at the European Neighbourhood Policy Chair of the College of Europe in Natolin. She holds a PhD in Political Science from Ilia State University and a Master's degree in European Studies from Maastricht University. She is an alumna of Academic Swiss Caucasus Net, Erasmus Mundus EUROEAST, Latvian State Research Fellowship, DAAD, EUCACIS and Open Society Institute scholarship networks. Her research interests lie in the fields of identity politics, EU external affairs, EU integration, and discourse theory. She has published with *Journal of State and Church*, *East European Politics, Security and Democracy*, *Demokratizatsiya*, and *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*.

Arto Väisänen is researcher at Tampere University and at the ENGAGE project. He has previously worked at the European Institute of Peace and European Parliament and received degrees from the College of Europe, Bruges and the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva. His research focuses on European foreign, security and defence policy as well as EU climate policy, climate security and EU-Africa relations.

Henna Kakko is a young, internationally oriented political scientist who has recently obtained a master's degree from the University of Bologna, Italy, in the field of International Relations. She is currently working as a researcher in the Tampere University, Finland, mainly focusing on the ENGAGE ("Envisioning a New Governance Architecture for a Global Europe") project. Her main academic interests include foreign- security- and defence policies, both from the Nordic and the European perspective.



ENGAGE

ENVISIONING A NEW
GOVERNANCE ARCHITECTURE
FOR A GLOBAL EUROPE

Working
Paper
Series

The ENGAGE Working Papers are peer-reviewed publications based on research from the EU Horizon 2020 funded project no. 962533, entitled *Envisioning a New Governance Architecture for a Global Europe*, which runs from January 2021 to June 2024.

ENGAGE examines how the EU can effectively and sustainably meet strategic challenges by harnessing all of its tools to become a stronger global actor. As a starting point, the project defines the challenges of global governance and international relations, as well as the acceptability of advancing EU external action among citizens and policymakers. Taking a comprehensive approach, ENGAGE also maps and assesses the EU's capabilities, governance structures and strategic objectives in the realms of CSDP, CFSP, external action and 'external action plus'.

Thirteen leading universities and think tanks work together within ENGAGE to facilitate knowledge exchange between researchers and foreign policy practitioners. Through this convergence of expertise and backgrounds, ENGAGE is uniquely placed to offer policy advice on how the EU can more effectively engage with strategic partners and neighbourhoods, support conflict prevention, mediation and resolution, and ultimately have a stronger voice in the world.

© Copyright ENGAGE Consortium

This paper is reusable under a creative commons license ShareAlike under attribution (CC BY-NC-SA 3.0) details of which can be found at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/>.

All rights, amongst which the copyright, on the materials described in this document rest with the original authors of the text, except where referenced. Without prior permission in writing from the authors and the Fundación ESADE, this document may not be used, in whole or in part, for the lodging of claims, for conducting proceedings, for publicity and/or for the benefit or acquisition in a more general sense.

The European Commission's support does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which only reflect the views of the author. The Commission is not responsible for any use of the information contained therein.



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement no. 962533.