

Towards a new European Neighbourhood Policy

TOPIC: *Should the ENP be maintained? Should a single framework continue to cover both East and South?*

On March 2015, the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission, Mrs. Federica Mogherini, and the Commissioner for the European Neighborhood Policy and Enlargement Johannes Hahn launched jointly a public consultation on the future of the ENP. The ENP has been launched in 2003 to develop closer relations with European neighboring countries in the East (the Caucasus, Belarus, Ukraine) and in the South (Algeria, Egypt, Libya etc). After the Arab Spring and the recent developments in Ukraine, following the Maidan Square protests in Kiev and the – from my personal point of view – legitimate (not illegal) referendum in Crimea, the EU has begun to question the need to maintain the ENP and, if so, to maintain a single framework to cover both East and South.

On the first point, i.e. the need to maintain the ENP, my answer is negative. I reckon the ENP has failed to address all the main goals for which it was established. First, the ENP failed to develop a good neighborliness, founded on the values of the European Union. Indeed, our ENP countries are too different and, despite some progress (i.e. a very limited change in the North African countries after the so-called Arab Spring), they are far from achieving, both internally and externally, a degree of cooperation among them and with the EU. Second, despite some general and very broad provisions in the Treaty of Lisbon, I still have to figure out which values can be called “European values”. The spread of democracy and of human rights, the rule of law, freedom of speech etc. are surely values Europe has conquered and it is natural that they have been embodied in the Treaties. The EU effort to spread them is undeniable and even appreciated but we have not asked ourselves the main questions. First, why we are talking about shared values without having a common shared idea about what constitutes an “European identity” (we should recall the failure to recognize the Christian-Judaic Roots in the so-called “European Constitution”)? Secondly, how we can tell a country from being a Neighbor or from being simply a country which can, in the future, join the EU? In other words, how we can call Serbia or Montenegro candidate countries while calling, at the same time Armenia or Azerbaijan neighbors? Where is the dividing line?

I do not see it. Thus, in my reasoning, the ENP main weakness is that the European Union has failed to define itself and, therefore, to define clearly what is Europe and what is not Europe; to define how we can tell a neighbor from a candidate to enlargement. Thus, the ENP should not be maintained.

On the second point, i.e. a single framework from the East and the South, my answer is still negative. First, East European countries under a variety of aspects (history, culture, political regimes) are totally different from the countries of the South. They have nothing, in my view, in common. Thus, a single framework is not the best option. Due to the differences of those countries, I think that the best way to deal with them is not through the ENP but rather with the instruments provided for by the regional policies. We should be aware of the existence of strong cultural, historical and political identities. For instance, the Balkans are closer to Central and East European Countries (i.e. Germany, Austria, Czech Republic) than to other countries; while the South countries (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and even Libya) have always had very close ties with the Mediterranean Basin (i.e. Italy, Spain, France). In my view, if we want to deal with those countries, despite the weaknesses of the ENP and the CSFP, we have to use different tools and to treat them as separate entities.

Last, but not least, the European Union is making a huge mistake by following the US policy towards Russia. As I said before, the “annexation” of Crimea is not “illegal” but is legitimate. If it is not legitimate, so does the Kosovo unilateral declaration of independence in 2008. Second, whether we like or not, the Russian Federation, both historically and culturally, has always had an undeniable link with both the East and the South. If we want a “new deal” with our neighbors, we cannot ignore Russia, its legitimate sovereignty and its legitimate territorial ambitions – simply put, why we allow the US (a non-EU country) to tighten its interests in Europe through NATO while denying the Russian Federation the legitimacy to build a Eurasian Community? While we are depriving ourselves of our closest (economically, culturally, historically and politically) pivotal country in the Eurasian region?

My conclusions are clear and straightforward. First, we cannot have an ENP without having a European identity. Second, if we want to deal with our neighbors we should deal with them with different instruments (i.e. regional policy) and by dividing them in two distinct groups (the East and the South) in order to better achieve our goals and to better address their different needs and specificities. Third, we cannot simply ignore the importance of the Russian Federation as a pivotal actor for both the East and the South. This surge of US-led Cold War is detrimental to the interests of both the European Union and its close neighbors

of the East and of the South. The sooner we can define a European identity, the sooner we can learn to deal distinctly with our neighbors, the sooner we recognize Russia as our main ally, the better for our fate.

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