



Security and Integration in the EU Neighbourhood

The Case for Regionalism

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Abstract

Over the past fifty years, the power constellation that has taken shape in Europe has blended security concerns and integration in a new, different correlation that was previously unknown in international relations. There is probably no better way to understand the challenges posed by European security and integration than by observing how the EU has been relating to its neighbours over time. Until 2004, the EU addressed the neighbourhood challenge essentially by oscillating between integration and security. It either focused on security – by stabilising its peripheries and largely by keeping neighbours at arm's length – or it focused on integration – by promising membership, and thus by inviting neighbours into the European project. With the last enlargement round, as the boundaries of the EU stretched out to their geographical and political limits, the need to address the security-integration nexus re-emerged. In response, this paper makes the case for regionalism as a possible conceptual framework and policy instrument to address the challenges posed by Europe's new, diverse neighbourhood. It explains why, where and how regionalism can emerge as a political practice and policy instrument that contributes to tackling the correlation between security and integration in the wider European space. A set of recommendations to develop regionalism is then proposed and applied to the emerging case of the Black Sea Region.

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Europe is not where it is supposed to be.

(R.B.J. Walker, 2000)

In October 2004, *The Economist* ran an editorial entitled “How terrorism trumped federalism”.¹ The article dealt mostly with the debate on the prospect of Turkey’s accession to the European Union. However, the title of that piece, and indeed the issues it raised, crystallise the more general debate on how Europe’s paramount quest for *security* (of which terrorism is but one facet) affects, and is affected by, its equally vital process of *integration* (which the notion of federalism incarnates at its utmost).

Policy-makers and analysts have addressed the question of security and integration in Europe in several, contrasting ways. If two sides of a spectrum characterising this debate were to be identified, one would put on the one hand the ultra-federalist integrationist idea of the ‘superstate’. On the other, there would be a looser, mostly intergovernmental framework of cooperative security in its wider sense, based upon enhanced economic ties: dubbed by pundits as a ‘regional United Nations’ model.

The way in which the European project has unfolded, however, does not quite resemble either of these two models. In fact, it would be more appropriate to argue that the construction of Europe contains both models without resembling either of them. This is quite simply because Europe’s power constellation has concerned both security questions *and* integration and, more importantly, their inextricable correlation. As a result, Europe contains elements of both the superstate *and* the regional UN model, but in a new, original discursive context.

There is probably no better way to understand and exemplify this peculiarity of European security and integration than by observing how the EU has related to its neighbours over time. For the past fifty years and until 2004, the EU addressed the neighbourhood challenge essentially by oscillating between the two ends of the integration-security spectrum. It either focused on security, by stabilising its peripheries and largely by keeping its neighbours at arm’s length, or it has focused on integration, by promising membership, and thus by inviting neighbours *into* the European project. Yet, with the last enlargement round, as the boundaries of the EU stretch out to their geographical and political limits, the need to address the security-integration nexus re-emerged. Can/should the EU embark into further enlargement processes? Can/should it keep its neighbours indefinitely outside? And most importantly: Is there no other way to approach this dilemma?

This article tackles these questions by conceptualising the tension between security and integration in the EU neighbourhood strategy, and by making the case for transnational

¹ *The Economist*, “How terrorism trumped federalism”, 2 October 2004, p. 31.

regionalism as a possible conceptual and policy-related contribution to reconcile this tension. By assessing shortcomings and assets of regionalism in Europe's periphery, this paper explains why, where and how regionalism can emerge as the inclusive political practice and policy instrument with which to tackle the challenges of the EU's diverse new neighbourhood. A set of recommendations to develop regionalism is then proposed and applied to the emerging case of the Black Sea region.

1. Inside, Outside and the Figure of Europe

In order to unfold the security/integration spectrum, and to problematise the elements of this spectrum, the first step is to reflect on the figure of Europe, and particularly on the distinction between inside and outside in the context of European power dynamics.

In the EU-Europe, the inside/outside dichotomy has gradually taken the shape of an identity project. This is because, on the one hand, Europe has been defined by trying to make sense of what has been part of it: the Franco-German reconciliation; Europe's liberal and social-democratic roots; and its different layers of governance. More interestingly, however, Europe has also been defined in negative terms: i.e. by looking at what is *not* part of it and by identifying what Europe is not: its 'other'.

Security discourses have played a central role in this 'othering' practice. Europe's 'other', initially, was Europe's own past: the two world wars, the Franco-German rivalry and totalitarian ideologies.² The initial push for integration, in this sense, came from security concerns because it focused on the need to protect Europe from ever again incurring into its own past. Over the decades, this 'othering' practice has taken more geopolitical and civilisational connotations, and reflected the tension between Europe's paramount need to protect all that it achieved in terms of integration on the one hand, and its inherent mission to spread these achievements to the rest of the continent on the other. Europe's vast neighbourhood has thus come to be regarded as the 'other', and as a sort of litmus-test against which to compare that which European integration has accomplished: Turkey, Russia, Northern Africa and the Balkans have taken turns in incarnating in the European imagination examples of what Europe is not: Europe is *not* authoritarian, *not* violent, *not* poor and so forth.

If one takes this inside/outside characterisation of the European power dynamics, a peculiar image of European security and integration emerges. Security practices *within* the EU have strived to make security no longer an issue, and the integration process has provided the means necessary to achieve this goal. The European experiment has been about dealing with threats and risks in a more politicised manner, rather than by using force; it has been about revisiting the modernist principles of state sovereignty, and thus embedding the values of liberal democracy into 'post-modern' multilevel governance. In this way, European integration has created a 'multi-perspectival polity',³ pushed transnational socialisation up to uncharted levels and turned the EU into a 'security community'.

The paradox of this otherwise unique experiment is that what has been achieved inside the EU 'freezes' as soon as Europe approaches its normative and spatial borders. Beyond these limits, policies regress – more or less gradually – to being exclusionary; social interaction is re-'securitised', and Europe returns to be a dynamic based on sovereignty, borders and territory. The integration project, in this context, is no longer perceived as an experiment of peace,

² See Ole Wæver, "European Security Identities", *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 34:1, 1996.

³ Ruggie, John Gerard, "Territoriality and Beyond: Problematizing Modernity in International Relations" *International Organization*, 47(1), p. 172.

prosperity and well-being to be shared and spread across the continent, but rather becomes an oasis to be protected. For those who are inside or who have prospects to enter, the EU marks the shift from the modernist phraseology of confrontation and negotiation to the post-modern lexicon of dialogue and socialisation. But for those who are not given a chance to make this shift, for those who are bound to remain outside, the EU-Europe is perceived as an insurmountable wall.

This inside/outside dilemma in Europe comes with one important corollary. This can be portrayed by elaborating on the metaphor of the concentric-circled ‘gradated’ empire.⁴

Table 1. Distribution of Europe’s concentric circles

	Countries in the Wider Europe
Circle No. 1. EU core	Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain
Circle No. 2. ‘Opt-out’ EU member states	Denmark, Ireland, Sweden, UK
Circle No. 3. New EU member states	Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia
Circle No. 4. EEA countries	Iceland, Norway, Switzerland
Circle No. 5. Negotiating, non-negotiating and prospective EU candidate countries	Bulgaria and Romania; Croatia and Turkey; Macedonia (FYROM), Serbia-Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Albania
Circle No. 6. European neighbours	Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Russia, Ukraine
Circle No. 7. Non-European neighbours	Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Libya, Morocco, Palestinian Authority, Syria, Tunisia.

According to this representation, the international structure, especially in the European case, is gradually taking the shape of a post-statist formation. It defines a vision of sovereignty and territory that goes beyond the nation-state as the primary unit of international relations, and is characterised by a hierarchical system of progressively decreasing power, where the power of the centre diminishes the farther away an actor stands from it: hence, the image of the concentric circles.

The EU is an outstanding example of this post-statist empire model with its network politics, multi-ethnic diversity and cross-border cooperation. In the EU context, however, state-actors remain a defining component, and their ‘distance from the centre’ is measured not only in geographical terms, but also, and more importantly, in institutional ones. Institutional and administrative ‘distance’ is measured on the basis of their degree of integration into the EU, as explained in the table above.

The corollary, therefore, is that, although the power constellation defined by European integration largely subscribes to this concentric circle scheme, institutional and administrative distance defines an inside/outside architecture that is much more exclusionary. On the one hand, states have so far had a reasonable flexibility to choose their own positioning in relation to the

⁴ See Ole Wæver, “Europe’s Three Empires: A Watsonian Interpretation of Post-Wall European Security” in R. Fawn and J. Larkins (eds), *International Society after the Cold War: Anarchy and Order Reconsidered* (London: MacMillan, 1996).

‘core’ of this quasi-empire. Countries like the UK are EU members, without being part of the eurozone; Denmark and Sweden are integrated in the Schengen system, but are not in the eurozone. Norway is not even an EU member, but it is integrated in the EU single market. The new member states are *pro-tempore* ‘discriminated’, but will in due time be given the opportunity to decide their positioning within the EU. Those countries that are not integrated, on the other hand, do not merely occupy the outermost circles of Europe’s power constellation. They are cut out by the institutional barrier, although they are increasingly influenced by policies made in Brussels. For current or prospective candidate countries (circle no. 5), there are reasonable expectations to cross the institutional barrier at some point. Other European neighbours (circle no. 6) may be hopefully waiting for a ‘go-ahead’ from Brussels in the medium-to-long term. The other non-European neighbours are left out in the cold.

2. Membership, Partnership and the EU Neighbourhood Strategy

The point, therefore, is that the institutional barrier constitutes the ultimate hindrance in an already rather hierarchical concentric-circled structuration. The EU has devised several, and quite different, policies that reflect this inside/outside tension in Europe’s construction. In keeping with this dichotomic rationale, ‘membership’ and ‘partnership’ constitute the two main paths chosen by the EU to address such tension. Admittedly, this dichotomy is not perfect. There are countries, like the EEA group, that are clearly integrated in the EU power constellation, but are not members. Likewise, there are cases in which partnership has undergone major setbacks, like that with Belarus. More often, Brussels has adopted a two-tier strategy, where partnership (and stabilisation before that) precedes membership, as in the case of the new EU members from Central Europe. This notwithstanding, the two approaches remain distinct. Membership and partnership abide by their own separate rules, have their own structures and instruments, and follow different procedures.

The promise of *membership* has constituted the EU’s most powerful foreign policy tool. In the conceptual context proposed here, membership has in fact become a sort of ‘internalisation’ ritual, in which the enlargement process, with its negotiating mechanisms based on conditionality and its legal set-up based on the Copenhagen criteria, delineates the way in which European norms, values and institutions permeate the domestic realm of prospective members. Membership, therefore, is not only a foreign policy instrument, but it marks the passage from ‘outside’ to ‘inside’ of EU-Europe’s power constellation, thus becoming a major crossroads for the dynamics of European security and integration.

What lies behind this passage from the outside to the inside is the tension between the deepening and the widening of the Union. The pro-enlargement argument is built upon security concerns as well as moral grounds. Widening brings security to the EU by making prospective members more prosperous and democratic and thus by ‘desecuritisating’ potential threats coming from them. On the other hand, because of the perennially fluid state of the integration process, enlargement constitutes also a formidable challenge to the solidity of the European project and to the very legitimacy of the EU as a political entity. New members’ poorer economic conditions, or their contrasting domestic and foreign policy postures, may in fact bring *insecurity* into the EU and impact dramatically on the ‘deepening’ of the Union.

Current debates on future enlargements are symptomatic of how the integration/security dilemma unfolds in the EU neighbourhood. The Western Balkans constitute a painful remainder of Europe’s foreign and security policy failures during the civil war in the former Yugoslavia. In this case, the EU has offered the long-term prospect of membership also because this is the only answer that it can provide against the possibility of renewed instability in the heart of Europe. The dilemma is also boldly present in the passionate debates across Europe concerning the prospects of Turkey’s EU membership, which focus on Europe’s civilisational roots, on the

stability of its secular societies and on the economic implications of Turkey's poor and large population. Even without dwelling on any of these important matters, it is apparent that the security component is central in the question of the EU enlargement to Turkey, which ultimately concerns Europe's ability to deal with a large, moderate Muslim country as an antidote against violent Islamic fundamentalism.

The *partnership* approach has pursued a different goal and obtained different results from the enlargement, although it shared its conceptual roots. The conceptual rationale of both the membership and partnership approaches is indeed that Brussels is an inherently civilian and 'soft' power: the EU does not aim to impose but to persuade its neighbours; it does not aim to coerce them but to attract them. The major point of difference between partnership and membership is, of course, that partnership has in most cases not aimed at internalising neighbours, but at stabilising them. The EU has sought stabilisation by devising a variety of unilateral (e.g. the Common Strategies), bilateral (e.g. Association Agreements) and multilateral (e.g. the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe) schemes. This remarkable range of instruments is designed to respond to the specific and very different needs and challenges in the neighbourhood. What is common to all these approaches, however, is that partnership has so far firmly kept neighbours *outside* the EU-European project. Despite the term, 'partnership' assumes by definition the existence of, and interaction between, more than one party, it is mostly the EU that sets the terms and determines the conditions of the relation. Neighbours (with some notable exceptions, like Russia) may receive rather substantial and attractive offers of cooperation, but are hardly in a position to negotiate them. They may be consulted, but planning and decision-making, as well as the conditions for cooperation, are rarely a shared process. In other words, the paradox is that EU partnership programmes aim to engage neighbours but they do so through practices of securitisation and 'othering'. It should thus be apparent why partnership is exposed from the outset to severe shortcomings. A 'soft' power that aims to exert influence in its neighbourhood will need to offer substantial incentives in order to attract their interest, and will need to focus on participation rather than coercion if it has to be persuasive. The EU partnership approach, instead, is understandably composed of numerous 'sticks' – 'othering', veiled unilateralism and a degree of conditionality – while it excludes the main 'carrot' that Brussels has so far been able to offer: integration.

In sum, when the EU talks membership to its neighbours, it is inclusive: it sets conditions, offers significant incentives and most of all signals the strength of its integration process. When Brussels talks partnership to its neighbours, it is exclusive: it is often ineffective, rather unattractive and unable to exert influence or to preserve security on the continent.

This dichotomic way of presenting the dynamic of European security and integration has the disadvantage of simplifying mightily the fluid nature of European security and integration as well as individual neighbourhood cases. Yet, one can still fit inside this continuum the major trends of European security and integration, or at least the inclusive and exclusive rationale behind them. Focusing on these two sides of this analytical spectrum, on the other hand, has the advantage of underlining the limits of the EU neighbourhood strategy until the 2004 EU enlargement, which is what this study goes on to address.

3. Europe's Quest for 'Difference' in the Neighbourhood ...

The dyadic manner in which European security and integration has been introduced thus far is instrumental to identify the major conceptual underpinning of this article. These dichotomies indeed reflect visions of the European reality that are based on different premises and aim at different goals. The construction of Europe, however, does not have fixed goals: the EU is neither aiming at the superstate model, nor at the regional UN one; but it doesn't aim to subsume the two models either. It is an experiment that contains several social and political

units but does not quite resemble any of them: the EU is much more than an object, but is still less than a subject of international relations; it has secularist roots co-existing with religious diversity; it has a (growing) neo-liberal ‘Anglo-Saxon’ component blended into the Franco-German social-democratic tradition. And although one may tip the scale in favour of one option or the other, the EU remains an open-ended process.

Open-endedness, however, does not mean formlessness. The EU (and the EEC before that) has been about shaping a new political subjectivity out of the existing political realities, without denying the legitimacy of any of them. Its distinctiveness is enshrined in its ‘transformative power’,⁵ in its ability to ‘widen the context’, as Robert Cooper put it: to contain, rather than resolve, the divisions characterising European social and political reality.⁶ This embodies Europe’s concern with what French philosopher Jacques Derrida called *difference*.⁷

This quest for difference is probably nowhere more challenging than in the EU periphery. The EU neighbourhood is the geographical and conceptual lieu where the Union’s quest for security and its push for further integration are measured against each other. The neighbourhood is where the EU’s ability to exert influence is weaker and Europe’s power structuration becomes more fuzzy, a sort of intermediate category between inside and outside, where internal and external security interdependences tend to “become one”.⁸ The EU neighbourhood is not directly concerned with integration, but is directly linked to the EU political and ethical *mission civilizatrice* to extend peace and well-being to the whole continent. It may well qualify as an ‘other’, but its vicinity makes it close to ‘us’. It is not inside, but is not firmly outside either, especially in security terms. At the same time, as the analysis above highlighted, the EU periphery is also where the Union’s political and normative limits are approached, and the EU’s ‘post-modern’ ability to pursue its ‘different’ project clashes with the more traditionalist forces of modernity: borders, territory and sovereignty. Here is where Europe’s idealism based on the unfaltering optimism vis-à-vis multilateralism, multiculturalism, the rule of law, respect for human rights and free market meets with the very real(ist) need of protecting these values from the broad range of threats arising at Europe’s doorstep. As a result, the neighbourhood is where the quest for compatibility between ‘inside’ and ‘outside’, between ‘widening’ and ‘deepening’, and, ultimately between ‘security’ and ‘integration’ becomes a more daunting project.

The argument can be made that, up until the 2004 enlargement round came to a close, the EU chose *not to address* systematically the interdependence between security and integration considerations in its neighbourhood. It has let the two dynamics unfold in parallel and has postponed facing them. The neighbourhood strategy for countries that were blessed with Brussels’ ‘go-ahead’ saw partnership as a long-term pre-enlargement strategy. All the others were offered somewhat less attractive, and more ‘othering’, partnership packages. Yet, at the dawn of the 2004 enlargement to Central and Eastern Europe, it became all the more apparent that such a double strategy could not continue to be perpetuated. The ‘Big Bang’ enlargement, with its outstanding economic, social and political implications, magnified the EU proverbial conservatism in relation to its ‘golden’ carrot – the promise of membership – and at the same time exposed Brussels to the deficiencies of its partnership programmes.

⁵ Mark Leonard, *Why Europe will Run the 21st Century* (London: 4th Estate, , 2005, p. 5).

⁶ Robert Cooper, *The Breaking of Nations: Order and Chaos in the 21st Century* (London: Atlantic Books, 2003, 138ff).

⁷ See for instance, Jacques Derrida, *The Other Heading: Reflections on Today’s Europe* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1992, pp. 9-10).

⁸ Didier Bigo, “When Two Become One: Internal and External Securitisations in Europe”, in Morten Kelstrup and Michael C. Williams (eds), *International Relations Theory and the Politics of European Integration, Power, Security and Community* (London: Routledge, 2000).

The launch of a new neighbourhood strategy was thus motivated by the need to come out of the blind alley into which the membership/partnership dichotomy had ended. Already in 1998, the government of Poland, at the time still an applicant country, addressed the neighbourhood conundrum by calling for a new Eastern policy of the Union. In 2002, the pressure became more consistent as Great Britain and Sweden urged the European Commission to think of a more substantial strategy vis-à-vis the EU prospective neighbours. It was then in 2003, that the Commission put forward some concrete proposals for a new approach of the Union towards its prospective neighbourhood, which resulted in the establishment of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP).⁹

The ENP calls for a comprehensive single strategy for the neighbours of the enlarged EU, which former EU Commission President Romano Prodi referred to as a ‘ring of friends’ surrounding the Union. The lexicon introduced by the ENP, and even more by the introductory ‘Wider Europe’ concept before that, was initially hailed by observers and policy-makers as ambitious and even visionary. The reasons for this optimism arguably resided in its innovative approach to Europe’s ‘difference’ and in the strategy devised to address it.

‘Difference’, in the case of the ENP, means first of all *differentiation*. The countries addressed by the policy present different social, political and economic patterns and cleavages. The ENP accounts for this diversity by dealing with each of the partners individually, in a bilateral way, negotiating and agreeing upon specific country programmes and 3-to-5 years Action Plans for each of the neighbours.

Difference in the ENP, however, is also contained in the very idea of devising a single policy that aims at giving a *holistic* approach to this diversity characterising the EU new neighbourhood. Despite the irreconcilable differences among EU neighbours, the European Commission argues that “the key cooperation objectives to be addressed are broadly valid for all”.¹⁰ This goal is substantiated by the prospective creation of a European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI). The Instrument – whose date of launching is synchronised with the new EU budgetary term in 2007 – will replace existing financial instruments for neighbours (such as MEDA and TACIS) and will grant a progressive increase to the financial means allocated for the ENP until 2013. It will be composed of two windows, one devoted to bilateral and cross-border projects and the other to financing multilateral projects. Most importantly, it will finance actions both inside and outside the Union, which represents a telling signal of the ENP’s ambition to move beyond the binary divisions characterising the EU’s previous neighbourhood strategies.

Even more revealing of the centrality of difference in the ENP is the wording chosen to introduce the policy that, according to former EU Commission President Romano Prodi, is designed to offer ‘more than a partnership and less than a membership’, and to share with the partner countries ‘everything but institutions’ in exchange for internal reforms.¹¹ Such lexicon explicitly signals the novelty of the new approach. The ENP does not quite resemble any of the existing strategies, but picks elements from many of them and attempts to complement their

⁹ European Commission, *European Neighbourhood Policy*, Strategy Paper, Brussels, 12 May 2004.

¹⁰ European Commission, *Communication from the Commission Paving the Way for a New Neighbourhood Instrument*, Brussels, 1 July 2003, p. 18.

¹¹ Romano Prodi, “Europe and the Mediterranean: Time for Action”, speech by Romano Prodi, President of the European Commission at the Belgian Université Catholique de Louvain-la-Neuve, 26 November 2002. In fact, in the 2003 Wider Europe Communication, neighbours were even offered the possibility of having a stake in the EU internal market and enjoying its ‘four freedoms’, an offer that was later watered down by the European Council. This is rightly to be regarded as getting as close to being a member of the Union as is possible without being a member.

inputs. The ENP aims to introduce elements of the EU enlargement strategy within those of more traditional partnership. It offers a degree of integration but not the promise of membership. In sum, it promises to blur the contraposition between inside and outside, in tune with the overall dynamics of European security and integration.

4. ... and its Perils

Although these ambitious proposals attest to the EU's pursuit of a Europe without dichotomies – and a continent without dividing lines – the reality of the EU neighbourhood strategy is more controversial. One paramount rationale behind the policy indeed remains that neighbours are a source of instability to the Union, which needs to be contained. This automatically retrieves the inside/outside othering practice: quite symptomatically, the very denomination 'European' Neighbourhood Policy suggests that EU partner countries – some of them lying geographically in Europe – are *Europe's*, and not the EU's, neighbours, thus confirming Brussels' well-established practice of 'copyrighting' the meaning of Europe, while othering the outsiders.

The EU's continued inability to tackle Europe's security and integration conundrum is however more substantial than that, and can be observed in three major shortcomings of the ENP. The main peril of the ENP is its *ambiguity*. The ENP's ultimate goals remain hybrid and the policy can be regarded both as a potential long-term pre-accession strategy and an enhanced partnership framework. As Prodi initially argued, this quest for striking a balance between partnership and membership should not 'exclude the latter'. The European Commission has later played down – and even explicitly excluded – such an option.¹² But this formulation is in fact emblematic of the very dangerous oxymoron contained in the ENP. A truly innovative neighbourhood strategy is one that makes enhanced partnership valuable in itself, without needing to wave the membership option. The elusive membership prospect kills the 'difference' of the policy from the outset, quite simply because membership remains, in the eyes of the neighbours, far more appealing than any conceivable partnership proposal. Moreover, such phraseology is in sharp contrast with established historical developments within the EU: it does not ring true to partner countries like Morocco, which saw its membership aspirations turned down in 1987. For other hopeful neighbours, instead, the ENP looks like a temporary substitute for something that the EU will in the long run not be in the position to deny. This is apparent in cases like Ukraine, whose EU membership aspirations have grown exponentially since last year's Orange Revolution, and are legitimate, following Art. 49 of the Treaty of the European Union. And while some analysts acknowledge the long-term inevitability of Ukraine's membership, the EU Commission prefers to stick to a possibly upgraded version of the ENP. As a result, instead of solving the security/integration dilemma, the ENP resembles just another attempt *to buy Brussels some time*, until the EU will no longer be able to postpone the membership question, e.g. for Moldova or Ukraine.

A second, and not unrelated, peril of the ENP is contained in its very rationale of pursuing holism and differentiation, and most importantly in the interdependence between these two factors. Without a clear *finalité*, indeed, the ENP risks undermining the value of its own most innovative resources. The idea of a single policy framework for all neighbours is very ambitious since it presupposes a high degree of coordination and harmonisation of the proposed policy instruments. The ENPI constitutes the concrete measure devised to fulfil this ambition, but it remains for the time being a work in progress, whose bill and final structure remain to be defined. And apart from that – and some vague statements by the Commission – the holism of the ENP appears in dire need of more substance: What are, concretely, "the key cooperation

¹² Benita Ferrero-Waldner, press conference to launch first seven Action Plans under the European Neighbourhood Policy, Brussels, 9 December 2004.

objectives that are broadly valid for all”? And is Brussels really “offering the same opportunities across the wider neighbourhood”?¹³ The task is particularly daunting if one considers that the ENP also pursues differentiation. Given the striking heterogeneity and diversity of the various neighbours, differentiation is as fundamental a goal as holism. Yet, it also, and inevitably so, draws distinctions and calls for a more diversified ‘hub-and-spoke’ geometry, which may eventually work against holism itself, if it is not reconnected to a policy framework that is unambiguous as far as its ultimate objectives are concerned.

A third shortcoming is the veiled *unilateralism* that pervades the ENP. Instead of being a policy *with* neighbours, as the initial lexicon seemed to imply, the ENP is a policy for neighbours or, rather, *towards* them. The mechanism here is that of conditionality, which takes place in two ways. On the one hand, there is the more traditional sectoral conditionality, which is the contractual relation where aid to neighbours is contingent on specific reforms. On the other hand, there is positive conditionality, under which, as Commissioner for External Relations Benita Ferrero-Waldner put it: “the further a partner is ready to go in taking practical steps to implement common values, the further the EU will be ready to go in strengthening our links with them.”¹⁴ This, in principle, appears to encourage a sort of virtuous cycle to the partnership, which makes partners masters of their own integration destiny. The reality with positive conditionality, and in fact with conditionality in general, however, is that the EU places itself in a contractual position of almost exclusive control: It is Brussels that decides the meaning of ‘common values’; Brussels decides whether or not, and to what extent, partners have taken ‘practical steps’ towards them; and it decides if and when it is time to strengthen links with them. This form of unilateralism may be justified by political and managerial reasons. After all, the ENP is emanating from, and financed by, Brussels, and conditionality is instrumental to benchmark progress of the partner countries and to facilitate the implementation of the policy. Conditionality, however, also imposes the more subtle quasi-imperial logic, which Brussels sometimes fails to grasp. This not only impinges heavily on the neighbours’ progress, but also fundamentally alters the finality of the policy. Indeed, while the Commission stresses joint ownership, reciprocity and enhanced partnership as paramount innovations of the policy, conditionality defines criteria, draws limits and is bound to become the most stringent criterion of the ENP.

These factors help to explain why the ENP in its current format appears inadequate to address the broad array of security and integration challenges that the EU is confronted with in its neighbours. Of no less importance, however, is the fact that this policy also fails to match the expectations of some of its neighbours. For the partners in the South Mediterranean, the Middle East and the Southern Caucasus, the ENP is a largely welcome development, because of their more limited prospects of further integration. Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus and Russia, on the other hand, have met the ENP with less enthusiasm or even open opposition. The cases of Ukraine and Moldova were referred to above when expounding the reasons for the ENP partnership/membership ambiguity. Lukashenka’s Belarus is a case to be considered frozen for the time being (if one excludes the EU’s promised support for the Belarusian civil society). Russia, instead, removed itself from the ENP from its outset because, on the one hand, it does not consider itself as ‘a’ mere neighbour but as a strategic partner, which deals with the EU from a position of equality. Moreover, Russia tacitly opposes enhanced relations between the

¹³ European Commission, Communication from the Commission to the Council and the Parliament Wider Europe – Neighbourhood: a new Framework for Relations with our Southern and Eastern Neighbours, Brussels, 11 March 2003, p. 16.

¹⁴ Ferrero-Waldner, *op. cit.*

EU and its former Soviet Union neighbours, which Moscow still regards as its traditional sphere of influence.

In keeping with the framework proposed here, most of the neighbours will perhaps agree that the EU is ‘different’ in the sense that it is neither a powerful superstate (which is how they all regard the United States) nor a looser regional UN-like network of cooperative security (which most of them have joined already through their membership in the OSCE and Council of Europe, not to mention the UN itself). However, they will explain the EU ‘difference’ less by the conceptual underpinnings of its post-modern power constellation than by the well-being and prosperity that the EU has managed to generate within its borders. The ENP, although it is designed to do so, fails to export this, and rather appears to export Brussels’ own security and integration dilemmas. While some conditionality is unavoidable to push implementation, the ENP’s vague promise of enhanced cooperation does not seem generous enough to justify painful EU-styled domestic reforms. On the other hand, Brussels’ inability (or unwillingness) to substantiate the finality of the ENP makes the policy resemble a loose security *cordone sanitaire*, rather than a strategy. The combination of the policy’s quasi-imperial logic with its manifest inconsistency risks becoming a source of alienation from, rather than of attraction to, the EU.

5. Enter Regionalism: Why?

On the basis of these reflections on the challenges and perils of Europe’s difference, this study suggests that the formation and development of transnational schemes of regional security and cooperation at the periphery of the enlarged EU can provide a valuable format to address the shortcomings of the EU neighbourhood strategy. The following sections will explain *why* this is so, *where* and to what extent regionalism has emerged in Europe’s periphery, and, lastly, *how* regionalism should enter the EU neighbourhood strategy.

The term ‘region-building approach’, originally coined by Norwegian scholar Iver B. Neumann,¹⁵ is a good reference point to unfold the more conceptual aspects of why regionalism is a valuable format to address the questions posed by the EU neighbourhood strategy. Region-building is to be understood as the practice of actors constructing a region. Regions are generated by a variety of actors carrying out different political projects: they can emerge from outside and above – at the initiative of countries, international institutions, or more generally foreign policy elites or they can form from within and below, as a result of networking by grassroots movements, firms or sub-national authorities. Regions, especially in Europe, have characteristically been multi-level and multi-dimensional phenomena: they can form for functionalistic, interest-based or community-building purposes, and can pursue goals as diverse as cultural cooperation, civil society development, trade or cooperative security in various sectors. These various options are, on the one hand, a testament to the increasingly post-national character of the European political arena and to the progressive ‘de-territorialisation’ of social interaction. On the other hand, they are also meant to suggest that, as this more fluid character of political interaction in the era of globalisation eventually ‘re-territorialises’ to tackle practical questions, the regional framework, rather than the nation-state, emerges as a more suitable format of social aggregation in Europe’s political space.

¹⁵ Iver B. Neumann, “A Region-Building Approach to Northern Europe”, *Review of International Studies*, No. 20, 1994.

Regionalism, in this sense, becomes a paramount example of ‘difference’.¹⁶ It is a ‘different’ power representation because it does not necessarily build on the primacy of the nation states, but it defines a constellation that is not diluted in the global dynamic either. Regionalism emerges out of existing units (nation states, sub-national authorities, international organisations, etc.) and yet, it does not quite resemble any of them: it is not merely a functional practice meant to address the needs of its participants. But it is not about building a ‘region state’ either,¹⁷ because regions do not necessarily need to develop common norms and complex institutional arrangements in order to function. And still, by routinising political practices at the regional level, region-building generates a *sui-generis* form of political identification among its participants.

For the purpose of this analysis, such ‘new’ conceptualisations of regionalism (as opposed to the ‘old’ functional state-centric, balance-of-power type) may thus contribute to overcome the dyadic divisions of European security and integration, as well as the shortcomings of the ENP. Regionalism is inclusive but not binding; multilevel but not anti-statist; ‘European’ but not necessarily ‘EU-centric’.

Going back to the perils that were identified above for the ENP, these features *do not make regionalism ambiguous*, quite simply because regionalism is a practice and a format and does not have a specific goal, e.g. EU integration. Functioning regionalism, as we will see, may achieve remarkable goals for its participants, but it is not necessarily designed to advance EU membership prospects. It is a phenomenon on its own, decoupled from enlargement. The inherent diversity of regionalism *favours cohesion and diversification* at the same time. It provides the meeting place for variable geometries of social and political interaction; it can create a forum in which the various agendas of its various participants can be pursued; and it can support the transition of some actors and prevent the exclusion of others, and thus reduce economic and social disparities within the region. Regions are, in other words, platforms that host multi-level, cooperative interdependence in its wider sense (e.g. environmental questions, energy, migration, economic cooperation, confidence-building measures, etc.), thus becoming what Barry Buzan calls ‘security complexes’.¹⁸ Lastly, regionalism is, almost by definition, not *unilateral*. Its openness contributes to a blurring of the distinction between inside and outside and favours spontaneous bilateral and multilateral interaction. And at the same time, it benefits from the participation of normally ‘othering’ actors, such as states and institutions – *in casu*, the EU – which provide strategies, visibility and funding to the regional projects.

The EU has largely subscribed to such arguments. The very emergence of the European Communities can be regarded as an elaborated and sophisticated form of region-building. Regionalism, therefore, has always constituted a remarkable feature of Brussels’ neighbourhood strategy over the years, because it represents a way to encourage partners to follow the EU’s own integration path. Brussels has thus promoted regional cooperation as an established *modus operandi* that underlies “the EU’s own philosophy that deeper cooperation with neighbouring countries is a route to national as well as regional stability and growth and that such cooperation serves their mutual interests”.¹⁹

¹⁶ See also Pierre Bourdieu, “Identity and Representation: Elements for a Critical Reflection on the Idea of Region”, in Pierre Bourdieu (ed.), *Language and Social Power* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991).

¹⁷ Kenichi Ohmae, “The Rise of the Region State”, *Foreign Affairs*, 72:2, 1993.

¹⁸ Barry Buzan, *People, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era* (Brighton: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991).

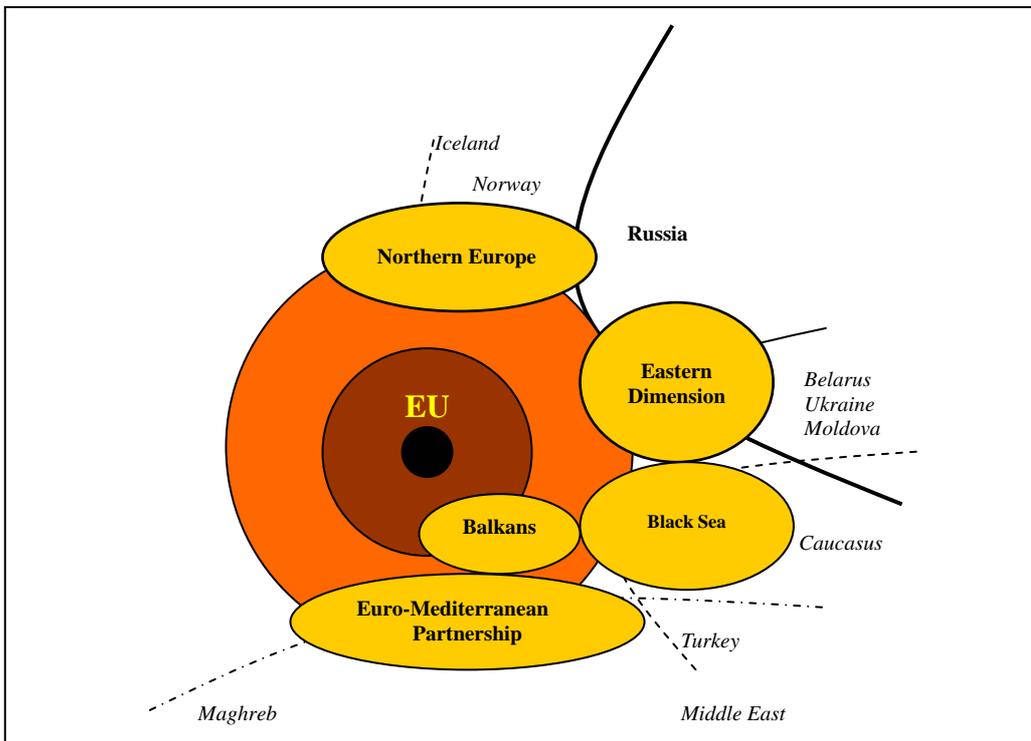
¹⁹ European Commission, *Euro-Med Partnership*, Regional Strategy Paper, p. 6.

6. Where?

From this focus on the political construction of regions, it follows that the mapping of regionalism in Europe can become a rather contested exercise, since regional actors often identify with several, partly overlapping regions depending on how identity is construed and interests are formed, or on whether more contingent circumstances emerge. Hence, for instance, a country like Lithuania, normally considered part of the Baltic region, is often included by its policy-makers in the Central European region, mostly because of its historical and cultural ties to Poland; or it is attached by some analysts to the Eastern European region (i.e. the Western CIS countries), because of its recent Soviet past and because of foreign policy priorities in Ukraine or Belarus. Likewise, Turkey is at the confluence of the Mediterranean, Middle Eastern and Black Sea regions, and can identify with all of them. While acknowledging the limits of this exercise, therefore, the following sketch aims to map and problematise those regional patterns in the EU neighbourhood that are better established in the European political debate. Accordingly, five regional clusters can be identified in the post-2004 European neighbourhood:

1. Northern Europe
2. Mediterranean
3. Balkans
4. Black Sea Region and
5. Eastern Dimension.

Figure 1. Europe's Neighbourhood and its regions



1. Over the past fifteen years, *Europe's North* has undergone an intense process of multi-dimensional and multi-level regional cooperation. This has contributed to guide the transition of Poland and the Baltic states towards EU membership; it has pursued the inclusion of Russia in cooperative efforts; and it has encouraged the participation of non-state grassroots actors in the

regional framework. This region experienced a typical bottom-up rise in the late 1980s, when contacts among municipalities, NGOs and firms enhanced regional linkages, and created the premises for a marked institutional involvement. Institutionalisation culminated in the early 1990s, when a number of region-wide organisations were established, most importantly the Council of the Baltic Sea States. The 1990s were the years of Europeanisation, which progressively drew the North out of the periphery of Europe's power constellation and into the continent's core structures. These were the years of Finland and Sweden's accession in the EU (1995), of Poland and the Baltic states' Europe Agreements, ultimately paving their way to EU membership. More specifically, the linkage between Europeanisation and this peculiar praxis of regionalism is well incarnated by the Northern Dimension initiative, an EU policy that has been promoted by Finland since 1997, and that is devoted to add value to EU foreign and security policy by enhancing regional cooperation in the European North and by actively integrating Russia in different policy sectors, such as environment, social well-being and economic development.

2. Since the early 1990s, the *Mediterranean* has also developed a significant pattern of regional cooperation that is to some extent comparable to that in the North. There are geo-political reasons to justify this claim: like in the North, also the Mediterranean cooperation involves EU member states (in the Mediterranean case: France, Italy, Spain and Greece), non-members (North African and the Middle Eastern countries) and new/'would be' member countries (Cyprus and Malta, and, in the longer run, Turkey and the Balkans); in both cases, moreover, the EU has been significantly engaged in fostering cooperation and synergies. Beyond these basic similarities, however, regionalisation in Northern Europe and in the Mediterranean also presents significant differences. First, despite its rich common historical heritage, the Mediterranean has not developed a discernible pattern of regional cooperation from the inside-out. The EU role has been pivotal in fostering regionalism. This has materialised most notably in the establishment of a Euro-Mediterranean Partnership framework since 1995, also known as the Barcelona process, in which regional cooperation proceeds along three 'baskets': the political and security basket; the economic basket; and the social, cultural and humanitarian affairs basket. Secondly, the Mediterranean has not quite followed the path of region-building that characterised Northern Europe: while post-Cold War Northern Europe was a relatively blank paper on which to draw experimental cooperative initiatives, cooperation in the Mediterranean has always been influenced by North-South but also South-South power cleavages among actors in the region. A third question is that the Mediterranean dimension has been rather deficient with respect to inclusiveness of non-governmental actors and multi-level participation. This is partly because of its more marked state-centric character, and partly because this area is a more heterogeneous microcosm that can itself be divided into a number of sub-dimensions (the Aegean Sea, the Mashrek sub-regions etc.), each of them characterised by different challenges and priorities. Lastly, the Mediterranean has witnessed rather modest progress in the political and security dialogue, possibly the most deficient of all three 'baskets' of the Barcelona process. This suggests that even though the 'Euro-Mediterranean' dialogue has aspired to a more holistic approach to security, this region continues to remain a bold dividing line between Europe and non-Europe and, more sensitively still, between Christianity and Islam.

3. The *Balkan region* has followed a different path, because of the outstanding post-conflict priorities after the war in former Yugoslavia, and in the light of the long-term EU membership prospect that has been promised to the countries in the region.²⁰ Regionalism, in this context,

²⁰ Slovenia is already a member, while Bulgaria and Romania will be shortly. The remaining countries in the Balkan region – Albania, Serbia and Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina, FYR of Macedonia and Croatia – have been offered the prospect of EU membership, and are therefore not included in the ENP.

has been regarded as a most important means to bring security and stability, assist the reconstruction and to drive the long EU integration process of the area.

The 1999 Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe remains to this day the most important regional initiative in the Balkans. The Pact was launched at the EU's initiative and gathers the countries in the Balkan region, EU actors, other countries (most notably Russia, Turkey and the US), international organisations and financial institutions; and other regional initiatives. The works of the Stability Pact are organised around three working tables: on democratisation and human rights; on economic reconstruction, cooperation and development; and on security issues. A bilateral dynamic is also attached to this regional process. This substantiates the 'European perspective' of the Balkan states and is characterised by the stipulation of Stability and Association Agreements between the EU and the individual Balkan countries, which constitute the stepping stone towards membership.

The marked top-down drive of the Stability Pact is emblematic of the Balkan regionalism as a whole. The promotion of regional cooperation in the Balkans comes for the most part from external actors, primarily the EU, because the international community regards regionalism as a fundamental component upon which to base both security and EU integration prospects.²¹ Local initiatives, however, remain weak at best. This is because several countries in the region consider regionalism as a diversion from the paramount goal of EU integration. Moreover, ethnic fragmentation and symbolic politics that caused and followed the war in former Yugoslavia has so far prevented the emergence of a strong bottom-up drive.

4. The other European 'mare clausum', *the Black Sea*, has also been the focus of regional cooperation, to some extent comparable to the Baltic and Mediterranean Seas. As will be discussed more thoroughly below, the Black Sea area is also surrounded by prospective/'would be' EU members (Turkey, Romania, and Bulgaria), non-members (Ukraine, Russia and Georgia), and, enlarging the focus somewhat, one member (Greece). As in the other two seas, the limited Black Sea cooperation has focused mainly on the coordination of 'soft' non-military activities, e.g. by establishing the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) Pact, a regional body in some respects similar to the Council of the Baltic Sea States. The differences among these regions, however, seem to outweigh the similarities: the Black Sea region shares little in historical heritage, being at the confluence of the Persian, Ottoman and Orthodox civilisations; the EU presence is much more timid in the Black Sea than it is in the other regions, and there is no real caucus within the EU to support this region. Lastly, the level of BSEC's action does not match the magnitude of the region's problems, also because the littoral countries themselves seem to be only marginally interested in its activities.

5. Our last regional group, *the Eastern Dimension* is centred on the EU's new Eastern neighbours – Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus – and on the countries surrounding them – most notably Poland, Lithuania and Russia. This region has yet to come to light, but the idea has been gaining some ground among policy-makers and analysts, also because its main sponsor has been Poland, the most 'weighty' among the countries that accessed the EU in the 2004 enlargement round. This attention, however, is also owing to the fact that the focus of the proposal is in fact a rather intricate cocktail of primary interests and demanding challenges of EU foreign policy, such as economic and political stabilisation of the three new neighbours, energy cooperation and also EU-Russia relations.

The logic of power and threats within the context of the Eastern Dimension seems to define a rather peculiar constellation. The Western CIS are countries still afflicted by latent conflicts (the

²¹ See for instance the report by the International Commission on the Balkans, headed by former Italian Prime Minister Giuliano Amato, *The Balkans in Europe's Future*, 2005, pp. 31-32.

Transnistria region in Moldova), authoritarianism (in Belarus), poverty (Moldova and Ukraine) and, last but not least, heavy dependence on Russia. Moreover, bottom-up participation in the Eastern Dimension has been rather weak thus far, while the institutional level is rather uncoordinated: the Central European Initiative, which includes all three Western CIS countries, is a much broader organisation that reaches out to countries in Western Europe as far as Italy, while it excludes Russia. The recently revived GUAM cooperation – which groups together Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova – does not seem to serve the regional purpose either, being anti-Russian in essence.

7. How?

In the March 2003 ‘Wider Europe’ Communication by the Commission, which constitutes the first formulation of the ENP, the EU Commission stated that within the policy, “the EU must act to promote the regional and sub-regional cooperation and integration”. More specifically, the Commission stated that “new initiatives to encourage regional cooperation between Russia and the countries of the Western NIS might [be] considered. These could draw upon the Northern Dimension concept to take a broader and more inclusive approach to dealing with neighbourhood issues.”²² Other similar suggestions by the Commission have followed in 2004, together with more specific indications about policy priorities and financing.²³ But these documents – and, arguably, a majority of existing analytical works – fail to systematise the considerable regionalist experience that the EU has acquired so far in its neighbourhood and to explain how regionalism should in practice enter the picture of the ENP.

Before the inception of the ENP, EU support for regionalism in Europe's periphery has followed three broad trends:

- The first and more straightforward approach has been that of supporting *inside-out regional formations*. In cases like the Baltics, Barents Sea region or, to a lesser extent, the Black Sea cooperation, the EU found established practices of regional cooperation. The fact that these regions formed at the initiative of local actors has its advantages and disadvantages for the EU. Most obviously, inside-out regionalism gives the EU opportunity and time to calibrate its role in, and support for, the region (this is testified to by the fact that the Northern Dimension was not formally established until the year 2000, and that the EU still does not participate in the work of the BSEC). In reality, however, with or without a full-scale involvement in the region, the EU is already heavily involved in each of its neighbouring regions in unilateral, bilateral or multilateral ways, and a lack of impetus to support inside-out regionalism is often perceived by local actors as a lack of EU interest in the region (again, the BSEC case stands out). On the other hand, the existence of a caucus of regional actors acting in concert, often through regional institutions, may in some cases complicate the EU agenda in a given region. The region is thus no longer a forum of cooperation, but a counterpart, with its own agenda and goals. This has been especially the case in Northern Europe, where the existence of established regional institutions and a ‘generous’ Scandinavian core, has often made coordination of regional activities with the EU rather complicated, as the repeated calls for rationalisation and streamlining of cooperation

²² European Commission, Communication from the Commission to the Council and the Parliament Wider Europe – Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Southern and Eastern Neighbours, Brussels, 11 March 2003, pp. 3 and 8.

²³ European Commission, *European Neighbourhood Policy*, Strategy Paper, Brussels, 12 May 2004, pp. 20-22. European Commission, Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and the Council Laying Down General Provisions Establishing a European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument, Brussels, 29 September 2004.

confirm.

- The second pattern of EU support for regionalism has been that of creating *dimensions from the outside-in*. This has been the case for the Northern Dimension, the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe, and the Barcelona process. In these cases, the initiative comes primarily from the EU. The input of member or partner countries (such as Finland in the Northern Dimension) is fundamental and provides the region with a certain legitimacy locally, but the strategic, conceptual and managerial bulk of the work is done in Brussels. Such an approach has several advantages. First, an EU direct action gives the region a remarkable visibility on the European stage: Brussels contributes to put the region ‘on the map’, brings the discussion on the region right to the centre of the European forum and not least, provides funding. The EU direct involvement, moreover, brings Brussels’ expertise and capabilities to the regions, which are important for handling the various tasks that the regional cooperation entails. Finally, the creation of ‘dimensions’ sends neighbours a clear signal: that, notwithstanding the nature and state of the bilateral relations with the individual states, the EU is committed to the well-being of the area as a whole. The minuses of the ‘dimensionalist’ approach are equally remarkable: for one, EU-promoted regionalism often risks giving local actors the impression that the establishment of an EU dimension equals a full-scale EU takeover of the region, which renders partners rather ‘passive’ (to some extent, this is what happened in the Mediterranean and the Balkans). Moreover, if Brussels’ impetus in regionalising is more powerful than that of local actors, then the initiative risks becoming empty at its core and unsustainable in the long run. Secondly, the EU-centric regionalist logic often clashes with diverging interests among EU member states. This results in the formation of caucuses within the EU and in a weakening of the regional development. For example, the lack of support among Southern EU member states has limited progress of the Northern Dimension, while one of the reasons for the EU’s poor regional involvement in the Black Sea and in the Eastern Dimension is the opposition of some Russia-friendly EU member states to a deeper EU engagement in the CIS space.
- The third type of EU support for regionalism is that of *sectoral dialogues*. This approach is not exclusive, in the sense that it has most often been combined with one of the other two approaches. This is the case in several aid and financial assistance programmes like CARDS for the Balkans, MEDA for the Barcelona process, PHARE for pre-enlargement Central Europe or TACIS for the CIS countries. In sectoral dialogues, the way regional groupings are organised may be broader than the actual regional formation. Yet, the establishment of regional coordination and dialogue in e.g. energy, environment or various JHA-related fields provides the real substance to the regional framework. Less frequently, these sectoral dialogues constitute an approach on their own, which builds on, and somehow bypasses, other regional initiatives. This is the case for the so-called Northern Dimension ‘Partnerships’ in the fields of environment, public health and social well-being, and, to a lesser extent, of the INOGATE and TRANCECA networks in the Southeastern periphery. Admittedly, the specificity and technicalities of some of these schemes makes it difficult to regard them as ‘dialogues’, since the contacts are often limited to (and known by) the specific actors operating in each policy field. This notwithstanding, sectoral dialogues have constituted a major contribution to coordination and effectiveness in tackling EU and partner countries’ common challenges at the regional level.

What should the ENP derive from these three models? First, that they all constitute valuable tools to achieve the paramount goal of the EU Neighbourhood Policy. As controversial as Prodi’s ‘more than a partnership, less than a membership’ adage may sound, this is precisely what regional cooperation is meant to contribute. Regionalism does not ‘call on’ actors, but is about inviting them to decide upon their degree of participation. Regionalism provides a flexible

format to blur divisions between inside and outside, and places the onus on the partners to decide the pace of their own transition towards the inside, with no EU conditionality pressuring them to comply. Equally obvious is that all three models have the advantage of bypassing specific, and often sensitive, questions that the ENP is faced with in the hub-and-spoke bilateral dynamic. Regionalism is less burdened by conditionality than the mainstream bilateral component of the ENP framework, and therefore is a good tool to provide aid without compromising the EU's firm stands in some specific bilateral situations.

In other words, no matter which of its three regional recipes the EU should test in the ENP, the basic rationale is that regionalism should be regarded as one part of a three-level strategy for the ENP. First, there is the bilateral Action Plans based on conditionality through which the EU aims to steer the partners' transition to democracy and market economy. Then, there is the overall single ENP structure, which provides cohesion and gives a more strategic outlook to the policy. In between, there is regionalism, which softens the obligations given by conditionality, facilitates their realisation, and constitutes a valuable stepping-stone to enhance the ENP's 'holism'.

There is no ideal model the EU can follow when considering how to support regionalism in the ENP. Each region faces specific challenges and it may well be that a outside-in 'dimensionalist' model proves valuable in one region, while the support for 'inside-out regionalism' is more appropriate in another. For instance, the idea of an institutionalised Eastern Dimension could turn against the very idea of pushing regionalism in the Western NIS, because Russia would most likely oppose the EU-centric logic behind it. There are, however, *five* broad considerations that can be made to ponder a sound EU regional strategy in the neighbourhood.

- 1) *The region should be as inclusive as possible.* The broadest range of actors – non-governmental, business, local authorities, international institutions and donors – and all potential partners, including those who have normally proven more hostile to EU-centrism, should feel encouraged to participate and not be threatened by exclusion. This is in line with the ENP's original inspiration that stresses the importance of joint ownership and shared values. In this sense, whenever inside-out regionalism emerges, the ENP should substantially put its weight behind it.
- 2) *The EU should support the 'generous core' of member countries willing to push for certain regions.* 'Generous' states in a region play a crucial role and usually have the lion's share in: defining priorities and putting issues of common interest on the agenda; gathering consensus among regional players; keeping up the momentum of the cooperation over time; fundraising; supporting the creation of regional institutions; and promoting the 'added value' of the region in and outside Europe. As noted, the problem with these 'leaderships' is that the existence of contrasting local interests within the EU has in the past led member states to obstruct each other: the need to find a balanced consensus or at least a tacit understanding within the European Council that all regions needs EU support, proportional to their needs and their strategic importance, is thus imperative.
- 3) *Regionalism in the EU neighbourhood should value the role of Russia.* In the Russian case, what is at stake is not limited to the EU's quest for stability, or to the strengthening of its neighbourhood relations. When it comes to Russia, a strategic dimension is also at stake, because Russia plays a defining role in at least three of our five regions: the Northern, Eastern and Black Sea regions. Despite Moscow's fading influence on what it used to call its 'near abroad', Russia can still heavily affect developments in a number of contexts. Russia still has troops in Georgia and Moldova and claims to play the role of mediator in the frozen conflicts in these two countries; it continues to support Lukashenka's authoritarian regime in Belarus, and to represent a social and political force in Ukraine, despite the

debacle on the occasion of the Orange Revolution; its outpost in Kaliningrad is a source of security concerns for the surrounding countries and the EU; not least, Russia is a major oil and gas supplier to the EU. The combination of these crucial questions naturally makes Russia's role in Europe's neighbourhood very important. The European Commission initially envisaged the ENP as a new pillar of the bilateral strategic partnership. This proposal, however, was rejected by Russia. Russian Deputy Foreign Minister V.A. Chizhov accounted for the reasons of this opposition, explaining that Russia has a neighbourhood doctrine of its own and that the ENP has the 'inherent conceptual deficiency' of grouping very different countries and has a too wide geographical reach.²⁴ Brussels responded to these objections by suggesting that "Russia be offered support for implementing relevant parts of the strategic partnership from the proposed European Neighbourhood Instrument, in addition to existing forms of support."²⁵ This is a rather common-sensical suggestion, especially because the ENPI will replace TACIS, from which Russia has benefited so far. This proposal, however, does not amount to a satisfactory answer when it comes to understanding how the EU plans to step up its relations with CIS countries, while ignoring Russia's enduring role in these regions. Brussels could go ahead with enhancing its engagement with Ukraine, Moldova and the Southern Caucasus without involving Russia. Yet, a genuine EU commitment in these countries cannot be achieved without seriously tackling major outstanding issues, especially those relating to conflict resolution. In this context, the creation of well-funded regional dimensions could represent a low-profile, win-win strategy to engage Russia, which declares itself concerned with "the future of existing formats of regional cooperation where the EU is a participant – the Northern Dimension, the Council of the Baltic Sea States, the Barents/Euroarctic Council, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, just to mention a few – as well as the future EU policy towards them, including the financial aspect".²⁶ An upgrading and further support of regional activities in the ENP could thus provide a further channel of dialogue for the EU-Russia strategic partnership.

- 4) *Regionalism in the EU neighbourhood should initially focus on soft security.* The case of Northern Europe is instrumental to explain this fourth recommendation. This case, in many respects, provides a remarkable example of the potential of regionalism, but also suggests that political and military aspects (e.g. the case of Kaliningrad and the question of the Russia-speaking minority in the Baltic States) have not been dealt with at the regional level and have tended to coalesce in the wider European framework. The regional framework of cooperation did remarkably well in defusing tensions, building confidence among actors and 'desecuritising' the handling of the issues at stake. Yet, it has proven fruitless in tackling 'hard' security questions, which have been mainly dealt with in the context of the EU-Russia bilateral cooperation. In this sense, military and political security has somehow perpetuated two of the more traditionalist logical dictums of European security: that of the centralising 'concentric circle' and the EU-Russia 'othering' one. On the other hand, as noted, regional cooperation has proven momentous to tackle soft-security matters like environmental security, public health, organised crime and economic cooperation. The recommendation for the other four regions is to follow the same path. The political and security basket has been the most unsuccessful one in the Euro-Mediterranean partnership.

²⁴ Statement by V.A. Chizhov, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation at the International Conference on Wider Europe: Enlarging trans-border cooperation in Central and Eastern Europe, 11 November 2003 (available at: <http://www.ln.mid.ru/bl.nsf/0/bad7fec519a73ec343256ddb0047f328?OpenDocument>).

²⁵ European Commission, *European Neighbourhood Policy*, Strategy Paper, Brussels, 12 May 2004, p. 6.

²⁶ Chizhov, op. cit.

Likewise, a regional dimension could hardly contribute to resolve the Transdnistria or the Abkhazia questions, and it may well be unproductive to bring about domestic changes in Belarus or Libya. Yet, by providing an inclusive milieu dealing successfully with environmental, economic and civil security matters, regionalism could build the kind of confidence and favour people-to-people contacts also in the rest of the neighbourhood. The Northern European experience suggests that although regionalism may not solve the most sensitive and thorny military and political security issues, it brings about the kind of dialogue and inclusion that is conducive to a more politicised – and less securitised – approach by actors that can in the long run spill over to hard-security matters by other means.

- 5) *The EU should elaborate a new generation of regional Action Plans.* Besides the more conceptual considerations on their social construction, it was argued that the existence of common interests is also what drives the emergence of regions. The existence of functional types of regional sectoral dialogues that address these common interests thus constitutes a fundamental pillar on which to structure regionalism in the ENP, especially at the level of management and implementation. In most cases, the EU has already identified in which regions and in which sectors these more functional concerns reside. Financial instruments currently addressing regionalism in the EU neighbourhood, such as MEDA or TACIS, follow such a rationale. The ENP will replace existing financial instruments with the ENPI, which fits nicely with the regional thesis expounded here especially in relation to the possibility to finance both inside and outside the EU. Yet, the Commission has so far not explained in detail how the ENPI will replace the regional component of existing instruments, or create new ones for that purpose. In principle, the so-called ‘Second Window’ within the ENPI will be devoted to multilateral projects within the ENP. This study recommends that a more marked regional focus is given to this second window.

Box 1. Priorities in the Second Northern Dimension Action Plan

- 1) Economy, Business and Infrastructure
 - Trade, Investment Promotion and Business Cooperation
 - Energy
 - Transport
 - Telecommunications and Information Society
- 2) Human Resources, Education, Scientific Research and Health
- 3) The Environment, Nuclear Safety and Natural Resources
- 4) Cross Border Cooperation and Regional Development
- 5) Justice and Home Affairs
 - Combating Organised Crime
 - Integrated Border Management
 - Civil Protection
- 6) Cross-Cutting themes
 - Kaliningrad
 - The Arctic Region

Source: European Commission, *The Second Northern Dimension Action Plan*, Commission Working Document, Brussels, 2003.

This could be attained by drafting and implementing a new generation of *regional Action Plans* for each of the regions concerned. These plans would follow up on the ENP country-based Action Plans already underway and, more aptly, along the already-existing regional Action Plans. The current second Northern Dimension Action Plan (NDAP) provides a valuable and timely example on how to model other Action Plans as well. The list of desiderata in the NDAP is quite detailed, amounting to 138 specific activities. But they are well structured into five groups (plus one for cross-cutting themes), as shown in the box above. In recent times, critics have repeatedly lashed out at the Northern Dimension, arguing that it has lost much of its original impetus, and that has failed in accomplishing its main goal: Russia's engagement. In support of such view, detractors adduce that the NDAP is a very technical document whose scope of action is too wide, compared to its strategic vision and substance. Now the ENP can provide both the strategic vision (its overall framework) and policy-relevant content (its bilateral component). These detailed regional action plans can in fact emerge as the missing link between the overall ENP strategic context and its bilateral substance. The second NDAP, like the current Euro-Med Programme will expire in 2006, together with the financial instruments that support them. The renewal of these instruments would offer a good occasion to launch a new generation of Regional Action Plans within the ENPI.²⁷

8. Applying the Framework: The Black Sea Region

As Alyson Bailes persuasively put it, the Black Sea region is both a bridge and a boundary.²⁸ It is a civilisational bridge, bringing together Turkey, the Caucasus, the Eastern Balkans and Russia; it is an energy bridge, through which passes oil and gas that Western countries import; and it is a strategic bridge, where many sources of instability in today's Europe converge. At the same time, the region can also be regarded as a boundary: it is a boundary protecting Europe from illicit drugs and weapons trades that use the ancient routes of the Silk Road to reach Europe; it protects Europe from adjacent areas that are torn by 'frozen' conflicts (in Georgia and Moldova) or even open war (in Chechnya); lastly, the region is a geo-political boundary dividing Europe from the Greater Middle East. The Black Sea Region is thus a suitable candidate to test the relevance of the five recommendations that were proposed above to enhance regionalism in Europe's periphery:

i. *Black Sea region-building*. The embryonic inside-out Black Sea regionalism would clearly benefit from more convinced support from Brussels. The EU is already actively engaged in and around the region: promoting the four 'Common Spaces' with Russia, stepping up its presence in the Southern Caucasus, finalising the negotiations for Bulgaria and Romania's EU accession; and debating Turkey's membership prospect. But it is surprisingly deficient when it comes to regional activities proper. Supporting inside-out Black Sea regionalism means contributing to, and participating in, its activities. An EU 'take over' of the regional development counters the rationale of the existing initiatives, i.e. that of creating a Black Sea region regardless of EU membership prospects. The EU may eventually resolve to launch 'dimensionalism' from the outside-in, should local or EU actors request it, or in case inside-out regionalism continues to under-perform in certain aspects of the cooperation for which EU-managed dimensionalism is

²⁷ This is also advocated in the proposed Art. 12 of the ENPI; see European Commission, Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and the Council Laying Down General Provisions Establishing a European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument, p. 6

²⁸ Alyson Bailes, "Opening Remarks" in *The Black Sea as Boundary or Bridge? Implications of EU and NATO Enlargement, and the Regional Security*", SIPRI seminar report, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 28 November 2003 (available at <http://www.sipri.org/contents/conflict/BlackSeaPaper2.doc.pdf>).

better placed (like coordination and streamlining of implementation). But for the time being, stepping up EU support for the timid inside-out Black Sea regionalism – e.g., through formal participation in the BSEC activities – would be a most welcome move.

ii. *Regional powerhouses.* Among the present and prospective EU member states, Greece, Bulgaria and Romania are the possible advocates of the Black Sea Region in Brussels. Initially it was Greece, in its capacity as the only EU member state in the region that was in the position to take the lead in steering regional developments. Athens' commitment, however, has proven rather inconsistent so far. A telling example of this inconsistency can be seen in the Greek EU Presidency in the first half of 2003. The presidency is traditionally the occasion for member states to push items of the European agenda that are close to their national interests and priorities. Yet, Greece, occupied as it was to oversee major pan-European questions such as the then forthcoming enlargement to Central Europe, did not use that occasion to vigorously lobby the Black Sea cause.

The other potential advocates of this region in EU circles are Romania and Bulgaria. Undoubtedly, their upcoming EU membership comes at a very difficult time for Europe, and it is not coincidental that in the immediate aftermath of the Constitutional debacle in France and the Netherlands, pundits and politicians began to reason against all talks of future EU enlargements. As a result, even countries such as Romania and Bulgaria, whose membership is largely a *fait accompli*, have begun to be referred to with undue suspicion. One possible way for Bucharest and Sofia to overcome these suspicions (besides completing the remaining and long-overdue reforms that are asked to them) is to capitalise on their geopolitical position as the outermost EU promontory in South-Eastern Europe, and thus to promote the Black Sea Region.

What is advocated here is that Greece, Bulgaria and Romania (with the possible support of Turkey) replicate what Denmark, Sweden and Finland (with the support of Germany) did for regionalism in Northern Europe in the 1990s. In this sense, a rather striking parallel between the two regions is also that the three Nordics succeeded in pulling Poland and the three Baltic states into the Northern European regionalism, and the same could happen for Ukraine and three South Caucasian republics in the Black Sea region. At the centre of the 'Nordic job', however, was not only favourable geopolitics, but a shared commitment to take initiatives and devote resources to launch the region and to promote the regional cause in Brussels, Washington and even Moscow. These factors would be of fundamental importance also for the emergence of a Black Sea lobby in Brussels.

iii. *Russia's position* poses major geopolitical and geo-economic challenges to the prospects of a Black Sea regionalism. The EU's reluctance to take a seat at the BSEC table, and the parallel refusal of this Organisation to accept the US request to take part in it, are symptomatic of this state of affairs. The former matter can indeed be reconnected to the deference of a number of old EU member states towards Moscow, while the latter results from the opposition of Russia (a BSEC member state) to a further upgrade of America's presence in the region.

The foreign-policy posture of countries in the 'new Europe' is nonetheless bound to rebalance the geopolitics in the region: their blatant Russo-phobia will further weaken the 'Russia-first' component of EU policy towards the former Soviet space, while their enthusiastic pro-Americanism will strengthen the transatlantic component. The talks of a prospective Bucharest-London-Washington axis by Romania's Traian Basescu should be interpreted along these lines, and so should the revival of the GUAM constellation, which is of particular interest in this context. Throughout the 1990s, this dormant US-backed organisation seemed doomed to failure because of the cumbersome influence of Russia on most its member states. The Rose and Orange revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine, and the recent, remarkable changes in the foreign policy orientation of the Moldovan government changed dramatically the geopolitical balance of the region. To sanction this transformation and to amplify its resonance in the former Soviet

space, a GUAM Summit was convened in April 2005. Ukraine made the impression of using this and other similar occasions to assert itself as the new power hub in the region (as confirmed, for instance, by Kiev's renewed activism in solving the Moldovan frozen conflict), while Georgia's Mikhail Saakashvili has called for a Baltic-Black Sea axis to promote a new wave of democratic changes in the former Soviet-space.²⁹ These signals coming from Kiev and Tbilisi are interpreted in Moscow as aiming at encircling Russia and at enhancing US dominance in the area. What is argued in this study, instead, is that avoiding Russia's isolation should be one of the goals an inclusive Black Sea region should strive for, despite the major, mostly bilateral questions that obstruct Moscow's productive participation. The creation of subgroups within the region counters the very rationale of regionalism, and is likely to embitter already strained relations among the littoral countries. The recent talk of a Turkish-Russian 'holy alliance' to push America out of the Black Sea region³⁰ would seem to confirm such worrying trend.

iv. *Soft security.* Against this scenario of possible fragmentation and renewed tension, it is apparent why Black Sea regionalism should steer clear of military and political security questions for the time being. The frozen conflicts in the South Caucasus and in Moldova, and the forthright aspirations of Ukraine and Georgia to join NATO are divisive arguments among the countries around the Sea. Less obviously, Black Sea regional actors should also acknowledge the 'hard security' nature of energy questions. The production, transit and marketing of oil and gas are of obvious strategic relevance in this region, which can only be expected to grow in the future, in the light of the increasing dependence of the Russian economy on its petro-rubles, and of the continued political instability of the Caspian Sea basin and the greater Middle East. As a result, initiatives such as INOGATE and major infrastructural projects such as the new Baku-Ceyhan oil pipeline – which runs from Azerbaijan to Turkey, bypassing the congested Bosphorous straits and Russia's Black Sea ports – are likely to remain rather sensitive items for regional negotiators. Instead, for the time being, a number of other softer questions should be squarely put at the centre of the regional discussion, and should in fact constitute the very bulk of enhanced sectoral dialogues in this region. Economic development of the region could greatly gain from more cooperation. A comprehensive Black Sea free trade area may not be feasible, also because of the commitments that some littoral states have taken with the EU. Yet, much can still be done to promote and facilitate economic cooperation in the region, for instance with respect to key questions such as transport infrastructures, telecommunications, SMEs and fisheries. Secondly, the Black Sea, like the other European closed seas, is a recognised environmental hotspot. The sustainability of the Black Sea environment is threatened by the worrying, though unavoidable, structural pattern of transition that all Black Sea economies are undergoing, not to mention the risks posed by overloaded ships transporting oil from one shore of the Sea to the other. This makes the emergence of a broad consensus of all the regional actors and external donors to tackle the environmental problems of the Black Sea all the more urgent. The same sort of argument can be made in relation to several civil security questions such as illicit drugs and weapons trade, which use the Black Sea Region, and some of its corrupted regimes, as a stepping stone to connect Central Asia to Western Europe.

²⁹ Vladimir Socor, "Baltic Sea-Black Sea Axis Adumbrated", *Euroasia Daily Monitor*, 28 March 2005.

³⁰ See for instance the testimony of Bruce Jackson at hearings on the Future of Democracy in the Black Sea Region presented to the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee's Subcommittee on European Affairs, and quoted in *The Economist*, "A Survey of the EU's Eastern Borders", 25 June 2005, p. 14.

v. *Black Sea Action Plan*. A full-scale Black Sea Dimension of the EU, as advocated by some EU actors,³¹ is probably not feasible in the short term, given the current inward-looking mood of the EU. As noted above, moreover, a Black Sea dimension would probably not even be desirable, since its EU-centric nature would dissuade those willing, mostly non-EU regional actors from undertaking major regional efforts. Without dramatically changing, and in fact in order to fully implement, the rationale of ENP, Brussels could instead launch a dialogue with all the regional and external actors for the purpose of coordinating and implementing a Black Sea Action Plan. A three-step procedure for the elaboration of an Action Plan would look like this.

First, the European Commission invites the BSEC, its member states, representatives of international donors, non-governmental and business communities to contribute ideas of actions, if possible, in the form of actual 'shadow' Action Plans. Secondly, on the basis of these inputs, the European Commission drafts its three-year Plan, in which a detailed list of actions is organised into a half dozen policy priorities, in which actors and partners responsible for their implementation are clearly identified. Third, following the experience of the Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership, a plenary event is convened with all the parties and international donors to present the Action Plan and to 'pledge' appropriate funding, which will add up to the funds allocated for it under the ENP. This whole process should ideally take place during 2006-07, in order to endorse the Action Plan in synch with the launching of the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument.

Conclusions

This study started off by offering a dyadic picture of power in Europe, a dialectics that is often typified, or rather simplified, by the 'superstate' model vs. the 'regional UN' one. This way of presenting the debate contains a grain of truth, to the extent that the history and development of the EU has in fact oscillated across a spectrum containing the contrasting trends characterising Europe's power constellation: outside vs. inside; membership vs. partnership; and ultimately, integration vs. security. This article argued that Europe's paramount quest has not been about choosing one model over the other, but it has been about bringing together these dynamics in a different way.

There is probably no better example than the relations between the EU and its neighbours to understand how this challenge has functioned in practice. Especially after the 2004 'Big Bang' enlargement, as the geographical and conceptual borders of the Union expand and approach their ultimate limits, the EU has been 'forced' to finally address its security and integration dilemma in the neighbourhood and to devise an approach that would not mean enlargement but would not even signal an unattractive and 'othering' partnership.

This is the rationale behind the ENP: breaking the border between inside and outside; being "more than a partnership and less than a membership"; and, ultimately, incarnating what this article has described as Europe's 'difference'. In its present state, however, the policy has yet to fulfil these high aspirations on three main accounts: ambiguity as to the finality of the policy; correlation between holism and hub-and-spoke differentiation in the policy; and the consequences of conditionality.

³¹ For instance, the European Parliament speaks in its 2000 Oostlander Report (*Implementation of the Common Strategy of the European Union on Russia*, 29 November 2000, p. 19), of a 'South Eastern Dimension' encompassing the region between the Black and the Caspian Seas.

To address these three weaknesses of the ENP, this study makes the case for a more substantial regional component in the policy, which goes in the direction of overcoming ambiguity, softening unilateralism and bridging cohesion and differentiation in the policy. There are five established or emerging regions in the European neighbourhood: the Northern periphery; the Mediterranean; the Balkans; the Black Sea Region; and the Eastern Dimension. These five regions present a very different set of challenges and problems, which the EU has approached in at least three ways: 1) by supporting inside-out regionalist initiatives; 2) by creating 'dimensions' from the outside-in; and 3) by creating sectoral dialogues and partnerships.

The way each of these approaches should enter the ENP depends upon the specific set of conditions and challenges in each region. Five recommendations, which are valid for all, have been proposed and have been applied to the emerging case of the Black Sea region. This set of recommendations can be summarised as follows:

- The EU should support inside-out regionalism. In the Black Sea, this translates first and foremost into EU membership of BSEC.
- The EU should support 'regional powerhouses' willing to develop regional cooperation. This translates into the emergence of Greece, Bulgaria and Romania as a Black Sea lobby inside the EU.
- The EU should include Russia in regional initiatives. Anti-Russian projects such as the GUAM are counterproductive for regionalism in the Black Sea.
- Regionalism should be centred on soft security cooperation. In the Black Sea, this implies a focus on economic development, the environment and civil security.
- The EU should include regional Action Plans in the ENP/ENPI. A Black Sea Action Plan should be compiled and endorsed by 2007.

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