

20

The EU's Relations with its Mediterranean Neighbours in a Regional Perspective

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“Besides, we have our stability to think of. We don't want to change. Every change is a menace to stability.”

-Aldous Huxley: *Brave New World*-

I. Introduction: A neighbour is a neighbour is a neighbour

“Even in an era of globalisation, geography is still important.”² What holds true for the European Union, after the turn of the century, has been true throughout European history. Although the often common state of war in Europe has been overcome after the Second World War, the European Communities, and later the European Union, have always paid particular attention to their geographic proximity, aware of neighbours' potential contribution or threat to peace, security, stability and prosperity in Europe. Hence, neighbours have long been a particular European preoccupation, despite the fact that the European Union (EU) has only recently been endowed with explicit foreign policy tools at its disposal. Over time, relations have shifted from European dominance in former colonies and dependent territories, over dealing with potential allies or perceived enemies during the Cold War, to identifying potential partners or members after the fall of the Iron Curtain. Although, perhaps more evident to the East, Europe's changing view of neighbours can also be identified in the Mediterranean. After the inauguration of the European

¹ The views expressed in this article are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent an official position of any institution.

² European Council, 2003: *A Secure Europe in a Better World: European Security Strategy* (Brussels: European Union): 7.

Communities in the 1950s, privileged bilateral relations were first established with Morocco and Tunisia, at the time French protectorates, soon to be complemented by the conclusion of agreements with other Mediterranean countries.³ From the 1970s onwards, due to Southern demands and the necessity to adapt existing agreements in view of the first ever enlargement of the Communities in 1973, Europe undertook a streamlining of its barely coherent Mediterranean policy by installing a close network of cooperation agreements with Mediterranean countries.⁴ It was only until after the end of the Cold War, that Euro-Mediterranean relations witnessed a profound renewal with the inauguration of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. Its launch and further policy initiatives – directly or indirectly addressing the Mediterranean – reflect a certain set of European ambitions for its relations with the region. These interest-based ambitions can mainly be subsumed under two main areas, namely security/stability and norms/values. However, the combination of the two in the reality of EU policy conduct displays a clear dichotomy, as focus on the first seems to weaken the second, and vice versa. This dichotomy in the EU’s dealings with the region has particularly been coming to the fore, in light of the revolutionary changes in the Mediterranean since December 2010.

II. European ambitions: A “ring of friends”

II.a. Post-Cold War adaptations

With the end of the Cold War and Europe’s – at least potential – emancipation of its forced and unprecedented “political absence”⁵ from the first row of world politics, European

³ Masala, Carlo, 2000: *Die Euro-Mediterrane Partnerschaft: Geschichte – Struktur – Prozeß* (Bonn: ZEI): 5.

⁴ *Ibid.*: 6f.

⁵ Sloterdijk, Peter, 1994: *Falls Europa erwacht: Gedanken zum Programm einer Weltmacht am Ende des Zeitalters ihrer politischen Absence* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp).

integration not only headed for a leap in integration but went as far as re-inventing itself by founding the European Union, establishing a three-pillar system consisting of the European Communities, the newly created Common Foreign and Security Policy and Cooperation in the Fields of Justice and Home Affairs. In the wake of the historical transformations throughout Europe, and the structural changes put in place with the Treaty of Maastricht, the European Union soon seized the new geopolitical possibilities offered following the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union, by officially considering future EU membership for a considerable number of Central and Eastern European countries in 1993 in order to – finally – realize the “reunification” of Europe, after the already successful “reunification” of Germany. In parallel, the European Union also developed mechanisms to support and stabilize the countries of Eastern Europe not considered for EU membership. The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), established already in 1991 as a *de facto* Russian Commonwealth, was soon identified as an addressee of Western European foreign policy after the bipolar confrontation. In order to stimulate relations with the – mostly newly founded – countries of the CIS, the EU launched the Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States (TACIS), an instrument intended to respond to the particular needs of these countries.⁶

With political thaw also setting in the Middle East in the mid 1990s and – particularly in Southern Europe – demands to equilibrate the envisaged Eastern enlargement of the Union to the South, enthusiasm was high to give Euro-Mediterranean relations a new basis as well. The Barcelona Conference in late 1995 brought together EU and Mediterranean partner countries’ (MPCs) foreign ministers to mark the beginning of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP). Hence, the partnership – or ‘Barcelona-Process’ as it became called – comprised all riparian states of the Mediterranean from the very beginning, with the exception of the

⁶ Although not having been part of the Soviet Union, Mongolia was included into TACIS.

Western Balkan states and Libya.⁷ During the founding conference, all parties involved agreed on a set of central aims for this new regional cooperation scheme, namely the “objective of turning the Mediterranean basin into an area of dialogue, exchange and cooperation guaranteeing peace, stability and prosperity”,⁸ as stated in the Barcelona Declaration issued after the Conference. The same document stresses the importance of “strengthening [...] democracy and [the] respect for human rights” in order to achieve these goals. By doing so, the EU – proposing, rather than elaborating, these goals and priorities on equal footing with Mediterranean partners – chose a global approach of ‘one partnership serves all interests’. It intended to ensure security and stability in a broad sense and also to promote certain norms and values in the region. Although not necessarily functionally linked at first sight, the rationale behind this approach is clear, as the idea of achieving security by “strengthening democracy” follows the theory of democratic peace, that suggests that democratically organised societies – guaranteeing numerous democratic requisites as individual and collective freedoms, human rights protection and the rule of law etc. – behave less aggressively, and therefore guarantee a more peaceful international order, eventually also allowing for an increase in prosperity.

The entire setup of “Barcelona” reflected this linkage in the establishment of three partnerships within the EMP: 1) a Political and Security Partnership with normative ambitions aiming at *inter alia* human rights improvement, rule of law and democracy, 2) an Economic and Financial Partnership with the perspective of establishing a free-trade area as a central element, and 3) a Partnership in Social, Cultural and Human Affairs, intending to not only address MPCs’ governments but civil societies as well. On this basis, Association Agreements were negotiated with MPCs, to also reflect the new status of the partnership and in order

⁷ Jordan, without direct access to the Mediterranean, was also included, Libya followed in 1999 as associated member.

⁸ Barcelona declaration adopted at the Euro-Mediterranean Conference –27-28/11/95.

to establish a sound – and coherent – legal basis between the EU and partner governments. With the *Mesures d'accompagnement financières et techniques* (MEDA), the EU also created a specific instrument to serve the 'Barcelona' aims.

Hence, by 1995, the EU had established or launched special – albeit different – foreign policy schemes for its relations with its (wider) neighbourhood, going as far as Central Asia. In addition, the EU had also consolidated – and reduced – the areas in between the newly identified neighbourhood and Union borders. Several decades of “neutrality” ended for Finland, Sweden and Austria upon them joining the EU in 1995. Accordingly, all Western European territorial states (with the exception of Switzerland) were by then members of the Union or of NATO, most of them even of both organisations. This led to the clear demarcation of four distinct types of states in the wider Europe: Adjacent to 1) the EU and other Western European states are 2) membership candidates and the Western Balkan states as potential members. These border on 3) the CIS – including Russia – to the East and MPCs to the South, which then – from a European viewpoint – open up to 4) the periphery, to which the EU has not established a comparable set of relations after the end of the Cold War.

II.b. European Neighbourhood Policy

Although to be seen in the wider context of Europe's adaptations to the post-Cold War era, the “Barcelona-Process” became the exclusive and more or less undisputed policy framework for Euro-Mediterranean relations until the turn of the century. However, with enlargement policy as the European Union's most successful neighbourhood policy *avant la lettre* slowly heading for a loss in momentum already prior to Eastern enlargement, the EMP did not remain the only game in the region.⁹ With the most ambitious ever accession round advancing

⁹ Devrim, Deniz; Schulz, Evelina, 2009: *Enlargement Fatigue in the European Union: From Enlargement to Many Unions* (Madrid: Real Instituto Elcano).

completion, the demand to develop a special policy to govern relations with future direct neighbours to the East became more and more vocal.¹⁰ In the end, the eventually developed European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) was not only designed to encompass the ‘new neighbours’ Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova, but the Southern neighbours as well.¹¹ By doing so, the EU had made a significant move to harmonise its policies towards the East and the South by their incorporation into the ENP framework, without – yet – touching on the existing financial instruments MEDA and TACIS, and without really consulting MPCs in an effort to convince them of the potential added value of ENP.¹²

With the realisation of the “big bang” enlargement from 15 to 27 members in May 2004 and January 2007, political geography changed once more. Only the Western Balkans and Turkey have remained between the EU and neighbours. In addition, a final distinction was made between the TACIS-beneficiaries, that should be regarded as future neighbours, and those that would remain peripheral even after the accession of all potential candidates to the EU. The three South Caucasus states, considered peripheral in the beginning of the ENP,¹³ were officially integrated in the ENP in June 2004, due to their strategic importance and their relevance for European access to energy resources. Since the merger of TACIS and MEDA in 2007 into the

¹⁰ This followed the suggestion of a “policy aimed at all our neighbours” by the Commission of the European Communities, 2001: *The Commission’s Work Programme for 2002, COM (2001) 620 final* (Brussels: European Union):9.

¹¹ In more detail see Comelli, Michele, 2004: “The Challenges of the European Neighbourhood Policy”, in: *The International Spectator*, 39,3: 97-110: 98-101. Relations with Russia remain on a strictly bilateral basis and are therefore excluded from ENP.

¹² As for the Mediterranean, the acceding countries Malta and Cyprus as well as Turkey, candidate since 1999, were not included on the neighbour side of the scheme, because all three of them had already reached a higher level of affiliation to the EU.

¹³ Coppieters, Bruno, 2003: “An EU Special Representative to a new periphery”, in: Lynch, Dov (Ed.): *The South Caucasus: A Challenge for the EU* (Paris: EU ISS): 159-170: 164-168.

European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI),¹⁴ assistance to the Central Asian CIS-countries Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan has mainly been covered by the instrument for development cooperation and economic cooperation, instead of the ENPI.

With these geographic specifications, the broad concept of neighbourhood has now been reduced to the neighbourhood, strictly speaking. ENP countries now form a “ring” around the enlarged EU and all current candidates,¹⁵ and therefore now demarcate the Union’s – at least medium-term – borders. In addition, and more importantly, these countries located around the EU and potential EU members, have been assigned specific functions, in line with the Union’s Mediterranean and Eastern policies already formulated. The European Security Strategy (ESS), elaborated in the course of 2003, reaffirms the double approach of linking “hard” security and “soft” norms, with particular reference to neighbours. Indeed, “the integration of acceding states increases our security, but also brings the EU closer to troubled areas. Our task is to promote a ring of well governed countries to the East of the European Union and on the borders of the Mediterranean with whom we can enjoy close and cooperative relations”.¹⁶

Whereas in the context of the ESS, ENP countries mainly appear as sources of threats, official communications on the ENP – despite articulating similar concerns¹⁷ – rather, strike a more cooperative note, promoting the idea of “creating a ‘ring of

¹⁴ ENPI has also become the EU’s instrument for Russia.

¹⁵ Only Turkey interrupts the ‘ring’ in its present form as it also borders on Iran and Iraq.

¹⁶ European Council, 2003: *A Secure Europe in a Better World: European Security Strategy* (Brussels: European Union):8; also Smith, Karen E., 2005: “The outsiders: the European Neighbourhood Policy”, in: *International Affairs*, 81,4: 757-773. She accordingly speaks of an EU intending “to create good neighbours”: 763.

¹⁷ Commission of the European Communities, 2004: *European Neighbourhood Policy: Strategy Paper, COM (2004) 373 final* (Brussels: European Union).

friends' stretching from Moscow to Marrakesh".¹⁸ Here, the pursuit of security, stability, prosperity, and good governance are presented as shared values, aims and therefore interests of the EU and its neighbours, although these are first and foremost Union priorities.¹⁹

According to the characteristics attributed and functions assigned to neighbours, the basic principle behind the ENP follows a geopolitical logic, already identified by some observers in an early stage of the policy's elaboration.²⁰ The ENP can therefore be considered to be just one element in an EU effort to pursue a "hegemonic strategy"²¹ as it factually aims at establishing a "semi-periphery"²², or privileged "buffer", between the EU and the "periphery".²³ With the further political and geographic refinement of the ENP, these analyses seem to be increasingly

¹⁸ Commission of the European Communities, 2003a: *Annual Policy Strategy for 2004, COM (2003) 83 final* (Brussels: European Union):12.

For the continuous use of the term "ring of friends" see Commission of the European Communities, 2003b: *Wider Europe – Neighbourhood: A New Framework with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours, COM (2003) 104 final* (Brussels: European Union): 4 as well as General Affairs and External Relations, Council 2007: *Strengthening the European Neighbourhood Policy. Presidency Conclusions* (Brussels: European Union).

¹⁹ See del Sarto, Raffaella; Schumacher, Tobias, 2005: "From EMP to ENP: What's at Stake with the European Neighbourhood Policy towards the Southern Mediterranean?", in: *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 10,1: 17-38: 23-24 and Marchetti, Andreas, 2006: *The European Neighbourhood Policy: Foreign Policy at the EU's Periphery* (Bonn: ZEI):14-15.

²⁰ Guérot, Ulrike; Witt, Andrea, 2004: "Europas neue Geostrategie", in: *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, 54,17: 6-12: 11. For a differentiation of geostrategic approaches in ENP, see Browning, Christopher S.; Joenniemi, Pertti, 2008: "Geostrategies of the European Neighbourhood Policy", in: *European Journal of International Relations*, 14,3: 519-551.

²¹ See also Commission of the European Communities 2006 clearly spelling out the wish to be an important player on the world stage. Commission of the European Communities, 2006: *Europe in the World – some Practical Proposals for Greater Coherence, Effectiveness and Visibility, COM (2006) 278 final* (Brussels: European Union)

²² Marchetti, Andreas 2006: art.cit.:17.

²³ del Sarto; Schumacher, 2005: art.cit.: 26-27, identify a "buffering logic" and a "centre-periphery approach" in the ENP.

validated as they are also officially undisputed. Besides acknowledging the importance of the ENP in the Union's foreign policy, the 2007 Progress Report on the ENP openly reaffirms the central goals and the strategic imperatives of the Union: "The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) remains a core priority of the EU's foreign policy. There is a clear geopolitical imperative to foster stability, the rule of law and human rights, better governance and economic modernization in our neighbourhood. This is critical to address our strategic objectives, to tackle the challenges we face and to reap the substantial benefits of closer political and economic ties".²⁴

In order to ensure that ENP countries can fulfil their function as 'semi-periphery', the EU – at least initially – identified substantial incentives by offering 'all but institutions' to neighbours, implying a "stake in the EU's Internal Market and further integration to promote the free movement of [...] persons, goods, services and capital (four freedoms)."²⁵ Although withdrawing, to a certain degree, from these offers in later communications, ENP – as a mainly bilateral supplement to 'Barcelona' – puts in place a 'differentiated bilateralism', intending to make advancement in the bilateral relationship conditional on partners' commitments and efforts.

III. Euro-Mediterranean realities

The ambitions of the EU and formal procedures of the EMP and ENP policies' functioning has been as clear, as their confrontation with reality has been problematic. On the structural side, the EU failed to allow the structures and policies installed to consolidate, but rather constantly re-invented, or at least complemented, relevant elements. As far as content is concerned, the dichotomy between security and norms clearly created a dilemma for the EU in concrete policy-making.

²⁴ Commission of the European Communities, 2003b: art. cit.: 4.

²⁵ Ibid.

III.a. Multitude of neighbourhood policies

Although the basic policy framework for Mediterranean partners has a clear regional (EMP) and an additional, mainly bilateral (ENP) dimension, one could already observe further differentiation within the ENP in its subsequent realisation. With regard to the heterogeneous structure of countries brought together under its umbrella, it was more than logical to opt for a pragmatic distinction between ENP-countries to the South and ENP-countries to the East, by elaborating distinct regional strategies to accompany the bilateral national strategy papers – although it might already be problematic to even consider MPCs as a region.²⁶

Politically more problematic than the diversity of ENP-countries sharing mainly the fact of being neighbours of the EU and its – potential – future members, is the fear of individual EU member states witnessing ‘their’ particular region falling behind within ENP. Accordingly, policy initiatives by ‘Southern’ EU members to strengthen North-South relations, alternated with ‘Eastern’ EU member states’ ambitions to enhance West-East relations. The intention to relaunch ‘Barcelona’ after a sobering decade of existence in 2005²⁷ was followed by failed German plans to create an ‘ENP plus’ to better respond to – higher – Eastern demands and ambitions. Soon after, France advanced the idea of a ‘Mediterranean Union’, boiled down – after *inter alia* German interventions – to the ‘Union for the Mediterranean’ (UfM), founded in 2008 on the basis of ‘Barcelona’, only to be complemented by the launch of the ‘Eastern Partnership’ in 2009.²⁸ In sum, constant structural oscillation between holism and

²⁶ Pace, Michelle, 2005: *The Politics of Regional Identity. Meddling with the Mediterranean* (Oxon, Routledge).

²⁷ Amirah Fernández, Haizam; Youngs, Richard (Ed.), 2005: *The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership: Assessing the First Decade* (Madrid: Real Instituto Elcano; FRIDE).

²⁸ Marchetti, Andreas; Schmid, Dorothée, 2010: “La politique européenne de voisinage: potentiels d’une ‘concurrence’ franco-allemande”, in: Demesmay,

differentiation, with frequent European priority re-shifting between the South and the East, cast doubts on the European Union's substantial commitment in either direction, and therefore hampered the consolidation of the policy.²⁹

III.b. Overtaken by events? The 'failure' of European Mediterranean policies

More problematic than the structural obstacle to coherence – in the absence of the consolidation of neighbourhood policies in general and Mediterranean policy in particular – have been, however, the frictions between concrete, and also short-term, security and stability interests of a pragmatic EU, and the rather long-term promotion of norms and values of an EU perceiving, and also presenting, itself as a normative actor. As has been criticised on numerous occasions and in diverse forums, the European Union has not been as much of a promoter of norms and values as solemn declarations have suggested.³⁰

As can already be derived from the Barcelona Declaration, the fundamental and strategic interest of the European Union has been the stability of the Mediterranean region, particularly with growing security concerns, such as terrorism and migration, for instance. For the realisation of stability, the Union has largely been dependent on the compliance of partner governments and therefore, more often than not, turned a blind eye on deficiencies

Claire; Marchetti, Andreas (Ed.): *La France et l'Allemagne face aux crises européennes* (Pessac: Presses Universitaires de Bordeaux): 147-167, 154-159.

²⁹ Marchetti, Andreas, 2008: "Consolidation in Times of Crisis? The Setup of the European Neighbourhood Policy and its Challenges", in: Delcour, Laure; Tulmets, Elsa (Ed.): *Pioneer Europe? Testing EU Foreign Policy in the Neighbourhood* (Baden-Baden: Nomos): 21-34:34.

³⁰ Johansson-Nogués, Elisabeth, 2008: "The 'Normative Power EU' Argument Revisited: The EU and the European Neighbourhood Policy", in: Delcour, Laure; Tulmets, Elsa (Ed.): *Pioneer Europe? Testing EU Foreign Policy in the Neighbourhood* (Baden-Baden: Nomos): 121-132.

in the realisation of democracy and human rights. After all, partners and major interlocutors in the framework of the ‘Barcelona Process’ – and its subsequent alterations up to the UfM – have been the governments of MPCs, a considerable number of which had, or still have, a rather mixed track record related to these issues. Understandably, many of them have not been very inclined to press for concrete steps towards “strengthening democracy”.

“Strengthening democracy” in MPCs would have also implied introducing substantial elements of change into their political systems. Change, however, more or less inevitably leads – at least in the medium-term – to a certain degree of instability, and consequently yet another increase in security concerns. Therefore, the European Union has also not been very inclined to press too hard towards this goal. Not without reason, France, in promoting the idea of a ‘Mediterranean Union’ and later pushing the UfM, presented ‘Barcelona’ as a ‘failure’. One of the reasons for this assessment had been the conviction that the process had been overly politicised and, therefore, not been able to meet expectations.

Consequently, the UfM with its focus on pragmatic projects, stepping back from the – rhetoric – importance given to the EMP’s first Partnership, strived for a clear depoliticisation of relations in order to attain concrete results.³¹ However, although realising the outstanding feature of UfM ‘co-ownership’ with a North-South co-presidency, the UfM saw itself politically ‘hijacked’ by MPCs, who used their new role to obstruct progress on various occasions.

The major problem arising from failing to address the substantial governance deficiencies in the region, but rather adhering to the status quo, lies in negative development perspectives. Despite perhaps short-term stability, this approach

³¹ Demmelhuber, Thomas; Marchetti, Andreas, 2011: “Die Union für das Mittelmeer: Ambitionen und Realität – eine ernüchternde Zwischenbilanz der französisch-ägyptischen Präsidentschaft”, in: *integration*, i. p.

can sooner or later lead to fundamentally challenging present systems, as can be witnessed in numerous MPCs today. As transition is still ongoing, and the eventual outcomes are more than unclear, it is evident that in a long-term perspective, the Union’s approach has – for now – led to less stability. The EU’s neglect has proven to be a disservice to European strategic objectives, as well as to MPC societies’ – and even governments’ – interests: Although positive transitions seem to be under way in Tunisia and Egypt, leaders have seen themselves ousted as they evidently ignored “the aspirations of the peoples”,³² for too long. At least in Tunisia and Egypt, the ‘Arabellion’ seems to have opened the way to leave the downward slope of political standstill with negative security and stability effects, and to initiate political reforms, in order to enhance security and stability in the medium- to long-term. In the case of Libya or Syria, however, regime persistence has led to significant violent and bloody confrontations, leading neither to positive change nor to an increase in regional security and stability.

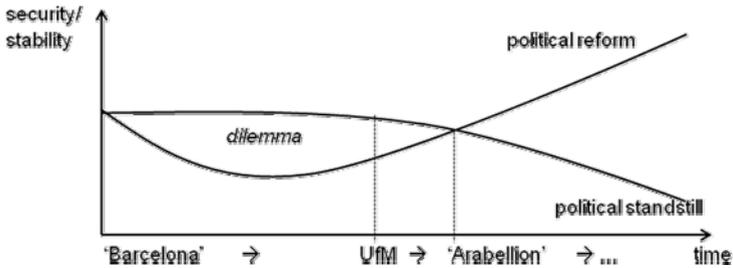


Figure 20.1: Dilemma between transformation and security/stability

Source: Adapted from Marchetti, Andreas, 2005: “Promoting Good Governance: The Keystone to a Sustainable Mediterranean Policy”, in: Marchetti, Andreas (Ed.): *Ten Years Euro-Mediterranean Partnership: Defining European Interests for the Next Decade*. Bonn: ZEI): 47-58.

³² European Commission; High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, 2011: *A Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean, COM (2011) 200 final* (Brussels: European Union):13.

All in all, the ‘Arabellion’ has shown that the ‘pragmatic’ approach of UfM also has had its limits. The lesson already learned after ten years of ‘Barcelona’ was that the EU “does, and should not, sit in the driver’s seat” but “may offer [...] assistance [...] or more [...] support”.³³ Recognising the realism of such a ‘moderate’ vision allows for a two-fold assessment, another five years down the road. While ‘Barcelona’ – at least on paper, not necessarily in the concrete policy conduct – might have been over-ambitious, the UfM clearly has been under-ambitious. The difficult task for the European Union will now be to define a medium approach, avoiding either design’s faults.

IV. Towards a new regional perspective?

With ‘failures’ – or only minor progress – paving the way for Europe’s Mediterranean policies³⁴, the central question for the EU now is ‘Where to go from here?’. Indeed, Europe cannot and must not impose itself; if it is serious about being a ‘normative actor’, it needs to act in line with its idea(l)s. Hence, the EU will increasingly have to refrain from misleading language and to abolish ‘double standards’ in its own conduct, as well as in dealing with neighbours. Only by acting credibly, the EU can assume a moderate leadership role,³⁵ finding a balance between ‘too much’

³³ Calleya, Stephen, 2005: “The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and the Concept of the Greater Middle East”, in: Marchetti, Andreas (Ed.): *Ten Years Euro-Mediterranean Partnership: Defining European Interests for the Next Decade* (Bonn: ZEI): 7-23, 16.

³⁴ For a recent assessment among experts and actors see Florensa, Senén; Ferré, Josep, 2010: *Euromed Survey of Experts and Actors: Assessment of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership: Perceptions and Realities* (Barcelona: IEMed). See also European Commission/High Representative 2011 art.cit. 11 with reference to the UfM: “we have to recognise that its implementation did not deliver the results we expected.”

³⁵ For the underlying concept of “leadership by credibility” see Clouet, Louis-Marie; Marchetti, Andreas (Ed.), 2011: *L’Europe et le monde en 2020: Essai de prospective franco-allemande* (Villeneuve d’Ascq: Presses Universitaires de Septentrion).

and ‘too little’, as has already been acknowledged by the Commission and the High Representative in early 2011 as well. “The European Union has a proud tradition of supporting countries in transition from autocratic regimes to democracy, first in the South and more recently in Central and Eastern Europe. While respecting what are primarily internal transformation processes, the EU can offer expertise”.³⁶

With the ongoing revolutionary challenge or reconfiguration of many political systems in the region, the European Union cannot stand aside because of evident interdependencies. It will eventually need the courage to admit – and even encourage – change. Perhaps the newly proposed “Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity” can adequately live up to ‘Northern’ and ‘Southern’ expectations. In an even broader perspective, despite the challenges to stability posed by the ‘Arabellion’ at present, the ‘wind of change’ in many Arab countries also offers a major ‘window of opportunity’, to potentially counter the logic of a “clash of civilizations” (Huntington 1996) by realising some norms that – despite existing (cultural) differences – evidently possess universal attraction.

Structurally, the EU will have to consider possibilities of increasing cooperation incentives by opening up the European integration project to its neighbours. Up to now, the EU has refrained from doing so, launching the ENP in a particular effort to serve as a substitute to enlargement. However, if differentiation has long been possible inside the EU (Schengen, Euro, Fundamental Rights, etc.), it is questionable to maintain a rather strict regime of ‘ins’ and ‘outs’ to the outside of the EU-27. What has long been discussed in the context of Turkey’s membership bid,³⁷ may also have to be seriously considered in the

³⁶ European Commission, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, 2011, art.cit.: 3.

³⁷ Karakas, Cemal, 2005: *Für eine Abgestufte Integration: Zur Debatte um den EU-Beitritt der Türkei* (Frankfurt: HSFK).

neighbourhood;³⁸ a European “association area”³⁹ could allow the European Union to transform – in a positive sense – into a “European Onion”,⁴⁰ finding the right balance between aims and incentives, in order to finally make a difference in the region. ‘All but institutions’ could subsequently imply, not only the reduction of persisting barriers (trade, travel, etc.), but also the cautious opening of decision making procedures – if not formally, at least politically by having important issues discussed in a larger “European Association Council”, prior to formal EU decision-making. The EU disposes of the necessary resources to take the lead; thus there remains the question if whether the EU, currently preoccupied with its own problems, possesses the sufficient political will to embark on such an appealing, yet ambitious, endeavour.

³⁸ For early considerations along these lines, see Emerson, Michael, 2004: *The Wider Europe Matrix* (Brussels: CEPS).

³⁹ Fischer, Sabine; Lannon, Erwan, 2011: *The ENP Strategic Review: The EU and its Neighbourhood at a Crossroads* (Paris: EU ISS): 6.

⁴⁰ de Neve, Jan-Emmanuel, 2007: “The European Onion? How Differentiated Integration is Reshaping the EU”, in: *European Integration*, 29,4: 503-521.
Varwick, Johannes, 2011: “Krise und Zukunft der Europäischen Integration: Von der ‘Europäischen Union’ zur ‘European Onion’”, in: *politische bildung*, 44,1: 11-31.