



Remarks for discussion for the conference:

“How to improve the European Neighbourhood Policy? Concepts, perceptions and policy recommendations for its Eastern dimension”

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The EU's Eastern Partnership and human security in its eastern and southeastern neighbourhood

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The European neighbours in the east and southeast pose some significant regional security challenges.¹ The neighbouring states struggle with weak institutional capacity, corruption, and the lack of the rule of law and profound territorial and political disagreements.² As the Georgian war of August 2008 demonstrated, the highly charged protracted conflicts could easily flare up.

However, even in the absence of direct military action, the threats to regional stability are serious: weak and poor states with disputed uncontrolled zones and internally displaced persons are fruitful seeding ground for organised crime, human trafficking, irregular migration. All these threats are transnational in character and thus they reflect directly on the EU area.³ Even more serious is the fact that people in the region do not have the luxury of 'normality': many are displaced, corruption is widespread and human rights violations and feeling of political powerlessness are an every-day reality for many living in the region.⁴

The EU's southeast neighbourhood remains unstable as long as human insecurity reigns there. This tangled skein of interlinked problems is not resolved before the states in the region are able to establish a secure enough environment for individuals to realize their economic, political and social capabilities. It is obvious that states such as Moldova, Georgia

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¹ The states included in the Eastern Partnership include Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan.

² See, for example, Svante Cornell, Anna Jonsson, Niklas Nilsson, Per Häggström, *The Wider Black Sea Region: An Emerging Hub in European Security*. Available at http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/docs/Silkroadpapers/0612Blacksea_P.pdf. Last accessed: 28 October 2009.

³ On the nature of "new" transnational threats, see for example Didier Bigo, "Internal and External Security(ies): The Möbius Ribbon", in Mathias Albert, David Jacobson, and Yosef Lapid (eds.), *Identities, Borders and Orders*, Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2001.

⁴ See, for example, Country Summaries on Georgia, Belarus, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Ukraine in Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2009* at <http://www.hrw.org/world-report-2009>. Last accessed: 28 October 2009.

and Azerbaijan are not capable of making it on their own; they will need outside assistance for years to come.

In principle, the EU is fully aware of the multidimensional threat that regional instability and human insecurity in the neighbourhood poses to it. The European Security Strategy (ESS, 2003) calls for a 'ring of well-governed countries to the east'. It argues that '*Security is a precondition of development. Conflict not only destroys infrastructure, including social infrastructure; it also encourages criminality, deters investment and makes normal economic activity impossible. A number of countries and regions are caught in a cycle of conflict, insecurity and poverty.*'⁵

The security strategy does not mention anything about the lack of democracy being a particular problem in the Caucasus but related to the Balkans it does claim that 'fostering democracy' and 'restoring good governance' are some of the most effective ways of 'fighting organized crime within the EU'.⁶

Hence, ideally the EU policy towards the neighbouring states would include effective instruments targeting conflicts, poverty, criminality and human rights violations as well as bad governance and non-democratic developments in the region. How well do the EU policies towards the eastern and southeastern neighbourhood reflect its comprehensive security concerns?

The EU's Eastern Partnership – adopted in May 2009 – was basically born out of the frustration with the wide geographical scope and the lack of clear priorities of European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP, 2004).⁷ The general perception was that despite pro-human rights and democracy rhetoric of the ENP documents, the framework was unable to address the multidimensional challenges of deteriorating security and democracy in the eastern neighbourhood. The EU wanted to offer stronger and more custom-made incentives for the Eastern neighbours to pursue democratic, economic and administrative reforms and thus offered the EaP that builds upon the more general framework of ENP.⁸

Despite the fact that many observers have greeted the EaP with ample dose of scepticism and claimed that it will only 'duplicate the Eastern Neighbourhood Policy's lack of

⁵ *A Secure Europe in a Better World: European Security Strategy*, Brussels, 12 December 2003. Available at <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/78367.pdf>. Last accessed: 28 October 2009.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ On ENP critique, see for example Karen E. Smith, *The Outsiders: The European Neighbourhood Policy*, *International Affairs*, vol. 81, issue 4, pp. 757-773.

⁸ Cf. the Union for the Mediterranean (2008) in the EU's southern neighbourhood.

effectiveness in promoting reform⁹, the EaP does include some novel features that aim to streamline its efforts in encouraging stability and human security in the eastern and southeastern neighbourhood.

First, the EaP will create multilateral thematic platforms. These include the topics of democracy, good governance and stability; economic integration and convergence with EU sectoral policies; energy security; and contacts between people. Although only time will tell if these platforms will be useful or not, the idea as such is a good one. Until now, the ENP has suffered from the lack of multilateral, regional incentives that would encourage exchange of ideas and cooperation among the neighbours themselves.¹⁰

Second, the EaP framework includes the initiative to establish a Civil Society Forum that would regularly bring together civil society actors acting in the region. This initiative is a welcome one: it will increase local and regional multi-level involvement and ownership, promote common knowledge and media attention on the EaP issues and encourage exchange of ideas and experience-sharing on EaP issues. Again, we are able to assess the success of the Forum only after some time but at least in principle the Forum concept sounds novel and rather promising. The first Civil Society Forum will be organised in mid-November.

Third, the EaP includes a promise to develop comprehensive institution-building programmes with the partners. The idea is to increase the EU's involvement in the reform process of each partner state in a more individualized, custom-made fashion. This is clearly a response to the worrisome political developments in the region during the past few years. The initiative reflects the EU's awareness of the weaknesses of current policies and its desire to improve its performance.

Effective policy towards the neighbourhood would target many levels and issues simultaneously. This is important because unlike the functionalist theory would suggest, everything depends on everything. Due to the intertwined nature of regional dynamics and threats, it is simply not possible to concentrate exclusively on 'technical' issues such as, for example, energy security.¹¹

The EaP does partly reflect this philosophy – but only partly. It does address multiple issues such as energy, economic development, institution-building, democracy, visa-issues, socio-economic problems. However, it seems that the EaP has its emphasis on the 'softer' issues

⁹ Natalia Shapavalova, 'The EU's Eastern partnership: still-born?', *FRIDE Policy Brief*, May 2009. Available at <http://www.fride.org/publication/608/the-eus-eastern-partnership-still-born>. Last accessed: 28 October 2009.

¹⁰ See for example Smith 2005, p. 773.

¹¹ This approach has sometimes been suggested by theory-oriented researchers. See, for example, the argument in the analysis of EU-Russia relations by Pami Aalto in his contribution to Henri Vogt and Hartmut Mayer (eds.): *Responsible Europe? Ethical Foundations of EU External Affairs*. Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke, 2006.

of democracy and economic development. Conflict resolution and the fight against crime receive much less attention in the EaP than they would deserve. The human security approach does not entail that the more traditional security issues can be ignored. Indeed, these are crucial issues that reflect on other fields directly and hence the EU needs to address these issues also in the EaP documents.

Another EaP shortcoming is that it – just like the ENP – fails to set clear benchmarks and to offer a clear incentive structure for the partner states. This is a major shortcoming that could make all the promising and novel additions futile in practice. This would truly be a tragedy for the EU and the people living in its eastern and southeastern neighbouring states.