

Partnership and Security – Towards European Neighbourhood Policy 2.0

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News

As expected throughout 2015 a review of the European Union's European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) was finally presented. On the 18th of November a so-called Joint Communication from the European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions brought forward the review, which has been work in progress for most of the year.

Summary

The Press Conference at which High Representative Federica Mogherini and Commissioner Johannes Hahn presented the revised ENP took place only a few days after the terror attack in Paris. This was probably a part of the reason why they so emphatically emphasized the security dimension. Added to that a more explicit focus on partnership can be identified in the document, implying a new focus where the notion of neighbourhood seems to be toned down. The partnership will focus on soft values and promote common values and interests – and furthermore the focus will be on working together on security sector reform, border protection, tackling terrorism, radicalisation and crisis management. This is, given the recent developments in Mediterranean migration and not least the terrorist attacks in Paris, Beirut etc., quite understandable and underlines security as significant dimension of EU's foreign policy.

Key Words

European Neighbourhood Policy, review, partnership, security, stabilization, good governance, economic development, job creation.

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Analysis:

Introduction

As the Barcelona Process reflected the strategic concerns of the EU of the mid-1990s, so the ENP captured the concerns and reflective self-identity of the EU of the mid-2000s. From its launching in 2004 the ENP aimed at developing closer relations between the EU and its neighbouring countries to the south and east, offering the opportunity of closer economic integration with the EU. The basic idea was through positive conditionality to motivate partners to implement political, economic and institutional reforms – and to accept a commitment to common values.¹ The concerns of the EU have changed since then. The Arab uprisings from late 2010 and onwards took the EU by surprise and called for new answers. The internal war in Syria causing millions of Syrians refugees to leave the country and the chaotic and threatening development in Libya have added new dimensions to the challenges for the EU. Recently the terror attacks in Paris on 13th of November again placed the EU's relations with its neighbours in sharp focus, and were not surprisingly mentioned in connection with the official launching of the review of the ENP 18th of November 2015 – almost as if there was a direct connection between the tragedy in Paris and the release of the main points of the new ENP: “The terrorist attacks in Paris on Friday, but also recent attacks in Lebanon, Egypt, Turkey and Iraq, show once more that we are confronted with threats that are global and have to be tackled by the international community united. We have to build together a safer environment, try to solve the many crises of our common region, support the development and the growth of the poorest areas, and address the root causes of migration. This is precisely the purpose of the current review of the ENP which will promote our common values and interests, and will also engage partners in increased cooperation in security matters.”²

The ENP and the Background for the Review

The ambitions of reviewing the ENP are not new, but should be seen as long-term political processes, which go years back but have gained momentum in connection with the EU's recent “changing of the guards” – i.e. when Jean Claude Juncker, Federica Mogherini, and Donald Tusk took office. The President of the Commission Jean Claude Juncker made reviewing the ENP a priority for the first year of his mandate as it could

¹ Tobias Schumacher, "The European Union and Democracy Promotion," in *Routledge Handbook of the Arab Spring. Rethinking Democratization*, ed. Larbi Sadiki (London and New York: Routledge, 2015).

² EU-Commission, "Press Release: Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP): Stronger Partnerships for a Stronger Neighbourhood, 18 Nov.," (Brussels: European Commission, 2015).

be seen in an official EU-Commission document of March 2015.³ The document listed the most important areas to which the implementation of the ENP in the year before had contributed, starting with democracy and good governance. It was noticed that the recent development in Tunisia had demonstrated that democratic transition in the southern neighbourhood can work – proven by holding parliamentary and presidential elections and by adopting a new, democratic constitution, and also that Morocco had continued a process of modernization and democratization. The achievements were obviously not seen as results of EU democracy promotion policies, but it was stated that the EU had supported relevant developments of this kind and that consultation processes for the review of the ENP dealing with adjustment of the EU policies in order to maintain the support for these activities would be continued in the years ahead.

Within the same realm the recent developments in Egypt were seen as representing more negative tendencies, first of all as a result of the stagnation in terms of democratization there. And added to that the problematic situation concerning Israeli-Palestinian relations, where the confrontations between Israel and the Hamas in Gaza remained an unsolved issue. Regarding Libya the EU had not been able to influence the deterioration of the security situation, which even put the country's statehood in jeopardy, but it was of course, given the geographic proximity of Libya, considered a significant security issue. And on an even larger scale the humanitarian disaster and grave security conditions in Syria represented a situation, which the EU had not been able to influence.

Obviously security-related challenges have risen significantly as a result of the threats emanating from the IS (or Daesh) operating in Syria, Iraq and Libya. Furthermore security related issues are attached to uncontrolled migratory movements in the Arab Mediterranean states and/or movements passing through those in connection with transit migration, heading for Europe. For decades migration constituted a significant field of cooperation, with legal migration originating from several of the southern Mediterranean countries. But added to that significant flows of irregular migration continued to pass the Mediterranean, recently even to an increasing degree – and unfortunately with many losses due to boat accidents while sailing across the sea on the way to Europe.

Another dimension focused on economic integration between the EU and the partner states. The EU is the main trading partner for most of the southern countries and it is noticed in ENP assessment documents that some improvements have taken place. This goes for trade measures, elimination or reductions of EU tariffs on imports or direct financial support for (some of) the partner countries – and also within different types of physical networks (transport, energy etc.). Economic integration is an area in which

³ "Towards a New European Neighbourhood Policy: The EU Launches a Consultation on the Future of Its Relations with Neighbouring Countries.," (Brussels: European Commission, 4 March, 2015).

there hasn't been much progress. Only in a few states, among those Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia, it has been possible to see some minor improvements.

The New ENP – Partnership and Security

It is these very different themes the reviewed ENP have to deal with. Added to the traditional EU procedures related to the assessments of the action plans and other cooperation agreements, a public consultation process has taken place over the last year, where member states, partner governments, EU institutions, international organizations, NGOs, private companies, think tanks, academia etc. have contributed with comments and suggestions. The public consultations have pointed out that the offers of closer relations between the EU and specific countries which have undertaken governance reform in some cases have encouraged change, by other countries have been perceived more negatively, too prescriptive and not sufficiently reflecting their aspirations. Furthermore the consultations have suggested that a higher level of ownership among the partner states and also among the European member states would be useful and that there is a need for ways in which democratic and accountable governance can be promoted together with justice reforms committed to the rule of law and human rights.

Moreover the reviewed ENP will increase the focus on security sector reforms, conflict prevention, counter-terrorism and anti-radicalisation policies. And, mentioned in the same context, the new ENP will focus on safe and legal mobility, tackling irregular migration, trafficking and human smuggling. A key word in the information, which so far has come out, is stabilisation. In the next three to five years, as stated in the communication from the EU-Commission launching the review, "the most urgent challenge in many parts of the neighbourhood is stabilisation." And it is emphasized that this does not necessary lie within the explicit security domain. Rather the EU's approach will seek "to comprehensively address sources of instability across sectors. Poverty, inequality, a perceived sense of injustice, corruption, weak economic and social development and lack of opportunity, particularly for young people, can be roots of instability, increasing vulnerability to radicalisation."⁴

Following this argument it therefore seems relevant that the launching document present the following policy areas as the most significant in connection with the review: economic development, job creation; energy cooperation; terrorism, countering radicalization, and migration, protection of refugees, regular and irregular migration. A new di-

⁴ "Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy, 18 Nov.," (Brussels: European Commission, 2015).

mension is termed “the neighbours of the neighbours”, the point being that the consultations have confirmed a strong interest in developing new ways of working beyond the boundaries of the ENP area. This means for instance that “the EU should increase its outreach to partners in sub-Saharan Africa and the Sahel region” and also include relevant regional organizations like the Arab League, OIC, GCC, the African Union, the Arab Maghreb Union etc. – aiming at promoting regional cooperation south and east of the Mediterranean.

Conclusion

Summing up it seems obvious that the review of the ENP is still work in progress. What so far have been revealed have mainly been declarations of intent, ambitions which might be fulfilled given that the general situation in the Middle East does not become (even) more unstable. The emphasis on *neighbourhood* from the launching of the ENP in 2004 – anything but membership in the context of positive conditionality – seems to have been replaced by a more soft narrative with *partnership* as the main keyword. The *partnership*, however, will not only focus on soft values and promote common values and interests. The ambition is, as mentioned, to engage the partners in increased cooperation regarding security matters, to work together on security sector reforms, border protection, tackling terrorism, radicalisation and crisis management. This is understandable, taking the recent developments in Mediterranean migration and not least the terrorist attacks in Paris, Beirut etc. into consideration, but might not exactly be a novelty.

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