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# Change or Continuity: Is the Eastern Partnership an Adequate Tool for the European Neighbourhood?

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## Abstract

This article examines the discourse of the EU's relations with eastern Europe under the recently launched Eastern Partnership (EaP) initiative. First, it evaluates the EaP's conceptual framework to suggest that there seems to be more continuity than change in the EU's *modus operandi* with its neighbours. More crucially, the notion of 'partnership', central to the new philosophy of cooperation with the outsiders, continues to be ill defined, causing a number of problems for the effective and legitimate realisation of the European Neighbourhood Policy/Eastern Partnership in the region. Second, drawing on the empirical investigations of the official discourses in Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova, the article reveals an increasing gap between EU rhetoric and east European expectations. In the absence of adequate partnership response to the needs and interests of 'the other', the policy is unlikely to find anticipated legitimisation in the neighbourhood.

## Keywords

Belarus, European Union, governance, Moldova, Russia, Ukraine

The Eastern Partnership is a project in the making. In order to succeed this ambitious endeavour we must deliver lasting and visible results for the *citizens of our partner countries* and the EU<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction: EU neighbourhood intentions

On 7 May 2009, the Eastern Partnership (EaP) was launched to strengthen the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) in the eastern European region.<sup>2</sup> The new initiative followed the European Commission's recommendations for a 'Strong ENP'<sup>3</sup> and sought to

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revamp the policy's appeal in the area. It offered further differentiation, ownership and focus which were emblematically lacking in the eastern partners' commitment to reform and implementation of the ENP. The EaP's added value was unambiguously seen in the pursuit of a '*more ambitious partnership* between the European Union and the partner countries'<sup>4</sup> to ensure the policy's effectiveness and legitimacy in the neighbourhood.

Logistically, as posited by its founding documents,<sup>5</sup> the EaP foresees a number of positive changes to ensure the eastern neighbourhood's deeper integration into the EU. In particular, the policy offers a novel two-track approach by adding multilateral cooperation, with a regional focus on conventional bilateral relations with the EU. In order to develop a legal basis for cooperation, the EaP grants countries that are already in the ENP new concessions, while offering countries which currently lack structured relations with the EU (i.e. Belarus) a fast track into the framework. The policy also ambitiously outlines four thematic platforms of political, economic, energy security and civic reforms to be embedded through new Association Agreements, and a range of specific projects, which aim to bring the partners into 'ever closer' Union. It also envisions five potential flagship initiatives to be developed on a needs-serving basis, and through intensive engagement with the region's civil society. In summary, the EaP appears timely and seemingly more versatile than the ENP, and it aims to amplify the latter's effectiveness in the region.

In substantive terms, however, the EaP remains strikingly similar to the original ENP. There appears to be marked continuity under the EaP in both the format of engagement and the prioritisation of EU ownership of rhetoric and actions. More crucially and more surprisingly, though, for a policy explicitly intended to be a '*more ambitious partnership*', there persists the same conceptual ambiguity regarding the notion of '*partnership*' that is central to the framing of the EU's relations with its neighbours.<sup>6</sup>

Confusion arises not only in the lack of detail (after all, it is still a '*project in the making*'), but also the lack of attention to the existing conceptual deficiencies of the original ENP.<sup>7</sup> If these deficiencies are transferred to the EaP without being addressed, they would make the policy a priori ineffective and illegitimate in the region. In particular, two crucial elements are embedded in the ENP, which form the basis for a new philosophy of partnership: those of joint ownership and common values. Currently they remain as obscure and even less pronounced than they were in the original policy. The philosophy of partnership, conceptually premised on the process of '*othering*' – construction of '*self*' through '*the other*' – is included to make the EU's approach to its neighbours more effective and sustainable. As the notion of partnership remains ill defined in the EU's rhetoric and actions, this may have profound implications, not only for the effectiveness of the EaP and the legitimacy of the ENP as a whole, but, more critically, for the prospect of the EU becoming a '*force for good*'<sup>8</sup> in international relations.

Thus this article addresses some conceptual and methodological discrepancies within the ENP/EaP by way of an empirical examination of the EU's rhetoric and eastern responses to it captured through interviews with policymakers and government officials across the border.<sup>9</sup> The article proceeds in two parts. The first evaluates the ENP/EaP's conceptual foundations to reveal tensions within the policy, owing to the lack of an explicitly defined notion of partnership in the EU's modus operandi with its neighbours. Notably, the article highlights some discrepancies related to (i) the increasing subversion and appropriation of the idea of '*partnership*' into the EU-centred normative agenda;

(ii) policy fragmentation and incoherence, revealing deep horizontal and vertical discrepancies in the discourse of EU multifaceted foreign policymaking; and, more critically, (iii) the application of external governance as a tool of enlargement with partner countries who, at least in the immediate future, lack any prospect of EU membership.

The second part examines the rhetorical responses of the EU's eastern neighbours, and demonstrates how the absence of 'othering' in the process of EU partnership-building with them may jeopardise the ENP/EaP's effectiveness and legitimacy in the region, as well as critically inhibiting the realisation of the EU's aspirations to become a truly transformative power, a 'credible force for good'<sup>10</sup> in international relations.

## From ENP to EaP: conceptual and methodological tensions

### *The notion of partnership in the ENP/EaP*

The concept of partnership, in substantive terms, is a new philosophy of cooperation developed by the EU for framing its relations with those neighbours who lack the immediate prospect of membership. This infers that this relationship is voluntary, partner-conscious and non-binding, presuming an equal share of learning (socialising) for both sides in the pursuit of their norm-driven foreign policies and national interests. Although an essential concept for the EU's relations with outsiders, 'partnership' has nevertheless found only limited elaboration in the EU's discourse and practices hitherto.

The concept of partnership is not entirely new for the EU, and was initially developed in the mid-1990s, during the process of enlargement.<sup>11</sup> However, at that time it was concentrating more on overcoming the emerging criticism of the EU's unilateralism and asymmetry in relations with candidate countries, premised on their mandatory adoption of the *acquis communautaire* as the basis of the accession process.<sup>12</sup> As Tulmets<sup>13</sup> points out, the main objectives of that kind of partnership were to facilitate the deconcentration, decentralisation and participation of the relevant sides in order to enhance responsibility and a sense of 'belonging' for the applicant countries in their long and non-negotiable path to the EU.

The concept of partnership gained a new rhetorical momentum with the launch of the ENP in 2004. Although still only circuitously articulated, it assumed a new direction in EU relations with outsiders (partnership as alternative to membership), and also became a more nuanced tool for EU foreign policy: 'The new neighbourhood policy should not override the existing framework for EU relations with [third] countries ... Instead, it should supplement and build on existing policies and arrangements.'<sup>14</sup> This inferred that partnership 'where possible' should not replace, but complement 'the traditional "conditionality"' applied by the EU in the process of enlargement, and should develop 'in close cooperation with the partner countries themselves, in order to ensure national ownership and commitment'.<sup>15</sup> There, at least on a discourse level, seems to have been an important conceptual shift in viewing 'partnership' not merely as an act of unquestionable compliance in the process of transference of EU rules and norms, but, more essentially, as an act of negotiated compliance, thus affording some forum for discussion, and in this way certainly aspiring to bring 'the other' into the process of the EU's construction of 'self' in international relations.<sup>16</sup> The EU's traditional *acquis* approach to third countries has now, at least in theory, foreseen some room for more voluntary measures and mutual

initiatives, thus giving ‘joint ownership’ a proper place. In summary, with the launch of the ENP, the philosophy of partnership has clearly been given a new meaning, which by many standards exceeds the EU traditional unilateral approach to third countries, but which still falls short of approximating its true axiological value. Notably, the ENP ‘partnership’ rhetorically affords neighbours the right to consent to the EU’s vision of reforms, and also gives them the right to negotiate a pre-set body of *acquis* in the process of EU ‘partnership-building’ in the neighbourhood. As the ENP practices have shown, this was not enough, and the framework of ‘partnership’ if it were to be effective, needed further concretisation and enhancement.

The EaP, envisaged as a ‘more ambitious partnership’, should have further accentuated the notion of ‘partnership’, in light of the Commission’s recommendations to differentiate and to increase ownership for partners under the ENP.<sup>17</sup> This however, does not seem to be the case either conceptually or methodologically. Instead partnership per se remains amorphous, and its constitutive elements – of ‘shared values’ and ‘joint ownership’ – see further rhetorical reduction in official texts. The EaP appears to concentrate more on extensive procedural measures to achieve its policy goals.

In the absence of a clearly defined notion of partnership, some conceptual tensions and discrepancies emerge, which may inhibit the effectiveness of the new policy on the ground. The following three are worth noting here as being more critical for the longevity and effectiveness of the EaP:

1. While lacking the anchoring definition of partnership, the EU appears to increasingly be privatising the elements of ‘joint ownership’ and ‘shared values’, thus ascribing ‘the other’ a role of compliant ‘norm-taker’ rather than a ‘negotiator’ or ‘owner’, as initially conceived;
2. stemming from the same premise, EU policymaking towards eastern Europe reveals a number of critical discrepancies in EU official discourse and actions, primarily associated with the ambiguous interpretation of policy goals and the contradictory utilisation of available means by a multi-actor EU;
3. and, finally, the idea of partnership is in practice being replaced by top-down conditional governance, a tool of enlargement that ultimately contradicts the principles of partnership and the EU rhetoric of engagement with non-member states.

### *The subversion of ‘partnership’*

Although the notion of ‘partnership’ remains ill defined in ENP/EaP official documents, its two constitutive elements of ‘shared values’ and ‘joint ownership’ have received some elaboration, both in rhetoric and practice.

*Rhetoric.* The ENP Strategy Paper<sup>18</sup> contains a whole section dedicated to the discussion of ‘shared values’. In practice, however, these are western values defined here as ‘respect for human dignity, liberty, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights’ – in other words, the kind of ‘abstract values’ that require further contextualisation in order to clarify their axiomatic<sup>19</sup> and relational value.<sup>20</sup> Putting these epistemological ambiguities aside, the section clearly fails to elaborate on what exactly might constitute

‘shared values’ with neighbouring countries, and how these ‘shared values’, if lacking, should be cultivated (should they be imposed or internally gestated?). Instead, the Commission states that ‘in its relations with the wider world, [the EU] aims at upholding and promoting these values’<sup>21</sup> – that is, the EU ‘universal values’ – thus clearly intimating the EU-centred focus of relation-building with the outside world.

In the EaP founding document, the notion of ‘shared values’ is sidelined, even substituting the notion of ‘mutual *commitments* to the rule of law, good governance, respect for human rights, respect for and protection of minorities, and the principles of market economy and sustainable development’.<sup>22</sup> This subtle shift from ‘shared values’ to ‘mutual responsibilities’ is profound in its implications. It certainly adds an ethical dimension to the process (a sense of responsibility and moral conduct), but it also indicates the EU’s increasing ownership of the ‘normative’ side of ‘partnership’, requiring commitment and compliance from the partner states. Overall, however, the truncated definition of ‘mutual values’ and ‘commitments’ yet again leaves ample room for the diversity of perceptions, and falls short of elaborating their reciprocal nature.

‘Joint ownership’, conversely, builds on the implicit understanding of ‘shared values’ and interests, contending that it is not only the outcome but the actual *process* of partnership-building that should be able to satisfy all parties equally:

Joint ownership of the process, based on the awareness of shared values and common interests, is essential. The EU does not seek to impose priorities or conditions on its partners. The Action Plans depend, for their success, on the clear recognition of mutual interests ... There can be no question of asking partners to accept a pre-determined set of priorities. These will be defined by common consent.<sup>23</sup>

The EaP further underscores the importance of ‘joint ownership’ by adding that it ‘is essential, and both sides of the EaP have their responsibilities’.<sup>24</sup> However, the conceptual uncertainties of ‘what’ – and more essentially ‘whose’ – values, as well as ‘how much reciprocity is allowed’, still remain, leaving the mechanics of partnership-building open-ended. In practice, however, ‘shared values’ yield to the pressure of the non-negotiable transference of EU-centred norms and rules.

**Actions.** Given the considerable degree of ambiguity in the EU’s rhetoric concerning ‘shared values’ and ‘joint ownership’, it comes as no surprise that the EU’s actions on the ground are fraught with contradictions and difficulties, exposing an explicit EU bias towards ‘ownership’ of the reform process. When analysing EU relations with the wider neighbourhood, many scholars critically note how ‘instrumentalist security-oriented dynamics’ often pervade the ideational discourse of the EU, and in fact ‘how certain norms have been conceived and incorporated into the [EU’s] external policy’ to reveal its ‘security-predicated rationalism’.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, regional experts clearly indicate how ‘EU norms and interests are inextricably linked’,<sup>26</sup> and how the ‘EU seems unable to stick to one strategy, namely, *either* fostering its image as a normative power through EU–Mediterranean relations *or* pursuing its political and economic interests in the region’.<sup>27</sup>

The EU appears equally confused and contradictory in its relations with its eastern neighbours and fails to discriminate between the EU-laden agenda and the idea of ‘joint

ownership' premised on 'shared values'. As the examination of EU official discourse indicates, 'shared values' are unequivocally EU-owned and never questioned: 'It is about injecting our values into the neighbourhood'; after all, 'it is about them aligning with us, rather than vice versa'.<sup>28</sup> 'Mutual interests' are normally defined by the EU-predicated security dynamic: 'The cooperation is most effective regarding security issues because this is and has always been the EU's priority.'<sup>29</sup> Finally, 'joint ownership', normally realised through conditionality and the top-down adoption of the EU *acquis*, clearly equates 'partnership' to a mere act of 'negotiated' compliance with the EU's pre-set body of rules and norms: 'It will always be a top-down approach with EU realist interests [prevailing], but the EU will increasingly come under pressure to acknowledge the horizontal character of partnership.'<sup>30</sup>

To sum up, the notion of partnership, in the absence of clearly stipulated rules of reciprocal engagement, becomes subverted into the unilateral modality of the EU's vision and actions, thus leaving 'the other' out of the equation. The absence of 'partner' in partnership, however, is problematic on at least two levels: (i) it may invalidate the practical implementation of the EU's external policies, but, more importantly, (ii) it may inhibit the development of the EU's image as a 'force for good' in the international arena, the image that unassailably rests on the consensus between Europe's collective 'self' and 'the others'.

### *Horizontal and vertical policy discrepancies*

In the absence of a defined framework of partnership stipulating clear rules for reciprocal engagement, the policy is burdened with rhetorical and empirical inconsistencies.<sup>31</sup> Some scholars suggest that this discrepancy may be an unavoidable result of EU collective decision-making: 'It may be asking too much of the EU to coordinate its multifaceted foreign activities given its decentralized policy-making structure.'<sup>32</sup> Conversely, 'the case could be made that the importance and complexity of the relationship with certain ENP partners require a strategic coordination across institutions that is currently lacking'.<sup>33</sup> The absence of a clear framework for equal and participatory engagement with neighbours results in discrepancies in both horizontal and vertical channels of EU policymaking, thus de-fragmenting a conceptually weak policy even further.

*Horizontal discrepancy.* Analysis reveals substantial critical differences in official discourse between the European Commission (EC), the European Parliament and member states' representatives in their understanding of the EaP's particular role and its conceptual foundations. In particular, the Commission perceives the EaP more 'technically' – that is, as an opportunity to progress and to 'engage rather than to simply give aid'.<sup>34</sup> The Commission does not normally differentiate between the notions of partnership and governance;<sup>35</sup> however, when it does, the governance approach is explicitly favoured. In all cases, the notion of partnership is residual, being unequivocally associated with 'projecting *our* model into the neighbourhood' or otherwise 'you decide for us and you have to reform us'.<sup>36</sup> Relations with neighbours are seen as determined by the EU's own strategic interests (especially those of security); and partners are seen as 'needy' – either 'wanting membership or wanting money'.<sup>37</sup> The European parliament and the member states, in contrast, have a more subtle view of the relationship with neighbouring countries, taking a more questioning approach towards defining partnership, values and interests: 'The



ENP has primarily been an attempt of governance, but in practice ... was forced to accept more partnership elements.<sup>38</sup> They also seem to have been more aware of the potential ‘cultural gap’ between ‘us and them’, and clearly consider Russia as a serious contender, as well as a strategic partner in the area. The perceptions of ‘the other’ nevertheless are similar – not as interdependent, as rhetorically claimed, but as ‘needy’: ‘They always want more than the EU can offer’, ‘they will never be satisfied’.<sup>39</sup>

Overall, the analysis points at certain conceptual discrepancies related to policy perception and implementation. The Commission takes more of an ‘executive approach’, geared towards outcomes and governed by EU strategic interests. The European parliament and member states seem more cautious, especially in framing their relationship with Russia over the ‘contested neighbourhood’.

*Vertical discrepancy.* Inconsistencies in vision and action between officials in Brussels and their representatives in neighbouring states become more pronounced on the ground. Off-the-record comments by EU officials in partner states indicate a lack of ‘strong and consistent EU foreign policy’ conditioned by the EU’s rotating presidencies and limited resources. Officials show no awareness of possible tensions within the ENP’s framework, clearly taking rational top-down rule transfer and conditionality for granted. They also reveal a clear ‘value-based’ attitude to policy implementation (‘values come first’), which is strikingly different from the strategic interest-based approach articulated by the Commission’s officials. However, their perception of partners as ‘needy and never satisfied’ evinces remarkable continuity with the views of Brussels. The member states’ representatives in eastern Europe demonstrate a more nuanced understanding of partner countries and are explicitly concerned with Russia’s influence in the region. They seem to be more aware of the practical consequences of the conditionality approach, and demonstrate greater value discrimination than their Commission counterparts: ‘EaP is not a programme of technical interests, it is values-based’, and ‘We can develop common values ... However whether they should be imported or home grown is a big question.’<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, the member states’ representatives were far more critical of the EaP as a new initiative, describing it as ‘a policy lacking teeth’, having ‘no difference to the ENP’ and with ‘limited visibility on the ground’.<sup>41</sup> They also express a better understanding of differences and limitations (especially of a cultural and geopolitical nature) for the EaP to be fully effective, but never consider them to be insurmountable.

The analysis of vertical relations has demonstrated a continuing policy incoherence. What was revealing was that off the record in-country officials – whether a representative of the Commission or of a member state – were very critical of the ENP/EaP, pointing to the lack of clarity and coherence, the heavy bureaucracy and a reactive (rather than prospective) engagement. Overall, the observations highlight two important conclusions:

1. the conceptual gap between ‘inspirational partnership’ and ‘practical actions’ persists and widens. Paradoxically there is absolutely no articulation of the problem by the Commission and its representatives;
2. The difference in the perceptions of ‘the other’ between EU officials in Brussels and those on the ground demonstrates that in order to make ‘partnership’ real, there should be engagement and communication with ‘the other’. This will

certainly facilitate the process of learning regarding partners, and of their gradual involvement in the EU's construction of 'self' as a global player in international relations.

### *The return of governance*

In the absence of a well-defined partnership, the traditional governance framework, which the EU has hitherto used for external action, fills the gap between EU rhetoric and actions.

Essentially, the external governance framework is an 'inside-out' approach whereby the EU effectively applies internal solutions to its external problems: for example, by using pre-accession methodology and enlargement conditionality for non-members who may never wish to join or indeed to be granted the prospect of membership. In substantive terms, external governance presumes a 'selective extension of EU norms, rules and policies [to the neighbourhood] while precluding the opening of membership'.<sup>42</sup> In the view of some scholars,<sup>43</sup> the application of governance to non-member states is a perfectly legitimate attempt by the EU not only to 'benevolently project' its 'acquired civilian virtues' to third countries – the EU's civilising mission – but also, and more importantly, it is a 'strategic attempt to gain control over policy developments' in the neighbourhood.<sup>44</sup> From this perspective of perceived interdependence and the EU's virtuous attractiveness, its foreign policies in the neighbourhood 'need not ... be new'. Instead:

EU external relations may exhibit many features of 'old governance', including the highly asymmetrical relationship between insiders and *outsiders*; the imposition of predetermined formal rules; the exclusive participation of bureaucratic actors; and top-down communication structures<sup>45</sup>

The notion of external governance explicitly draws on a compulsory element of conditionality. Its effective implementation unambiguously measures the degree of the EU's engagement with partner countries, which is clearly at odds with voluntarism and equality of partnership. In the absence of a workable notion of partnership, the EU, owing to the perceived legitimacy of external governance,<sup>46</sup> combined with its past effectiveness with candidate countries, continues to rely both conceptually and methodologically on the same framework when building its relations with its neighbours.

There is a plethora of governance approaches,<sup>47</sup> but they all, in their construction of external engagement, place the EU at the centre of the framework. However, this gives the partner the right of either 'non-negotiable' compliance, as in the case of enlargement, or 'participated/negotiated' compliance, as in the case of neighbouring countries, with EU rules and norms. External governance may have been practical for the EU to promote its vision of global order to the candidate countries,<sup>48</sup> but it is evidently not always reciprocal or sufficiently motivating for the outsiders, even if it driven by a sense of interdependency. External governance is inherently one-sided and Eurocentric. Although its objectives – to bring stability, prosperity and security beyond the borders of the EU – are highly commendable, they are nevertheless unambiguously EU-owned. They are clearly focused on the dissemination of EU norms, rules and policies to the neighbouring countries, without the presence or prospect of 'the other' in the equation.<sup>49</sup>

The empirical hold of governance over the rhetorical partnership causes a number of conceptual tensions. The critical limitation of governance as a sustainable framework is its one-dimensional modality which sees the EU's interaction with its external environment as naturally a one-way traffic, or donor–recipient relationship,<sup>50</sup> premised on extending 'best' practices and EU norms/values to (less civilised) third countries. This 'one-way' modality is further reinforced by the 'enlargement means' presuming compliance and allegiance rather than negotiation and alliance. What this logic fails to recognise is the existence and construction of boundaries in communication with non-member countries. These form a two-way and mutually constitutive process, whereby the EU is not only an actor, but also subject to boundary construction itself – in this case undertaken by its neighbours.<sup>51</sup> Thus, the EU calculations that a largely non-negotiable extension of rules and norms to partner states may enhance 'shared norms' and 'joint ownership', is not only questionable but is clearly erroneous. Furthermore, governance by definition is not concerned with the boundaries of 'the other', and therefore becomes an impractical concept for evaluating issues beyond the procedural modes of interaction. Governance is simply unable to respond to 'bigger' questions like 'Why is the ENP not effective?'; 'Why does there seem to be resistance on the ground?'; and 'Why is ENP legitimacy eroding?'

Furthermore, the application of governance as a substitute for partnership may lead to the problematic disjuncture between the EU's rhetoric and its practical actions. In its rhetoric the EU pledges to pursue partnership-building relations with its neighbours. However, not knowing how to achieve this conceptually and methodologically, the EU reverts to the 'old governance approach', with its 'one-size-fits-all' philosophy of installing pre-made solutions and executive practices.<sup>52</sup> It is unsurprising that so many partner countries faced with the choice of either giving allegiance to the EU or otherwise facing exclusion find such a 'reciprocal partnership' uneasy and often intrusive.<sup>53</sup> This kind of engagement is evidently devoid of a true understanding of partners' own boundaries (values/interests), especially those of culture and geopolitics.

Finally, methodological tensions between inspirational partnership and empirical governance may affect the process of EU construction of 'self' as a 'force for good'. As Diez observes, a notion such as a 'normative power Europe', which the EU clearly aspires to, is not at all an objective category, but rather 'a practice of discursive representation',<sup>54</sup> which involves construction of 'self' *through the other*. 'The other' can take different forms – from being seen as inferior, existential or a direct threat to simply as being different – but invariably it will have an impact on the process of the EU's construction of 'self'. Being seen as 'different' is perhaps 'preferable to the other three in that it reduces the possibility to legitimise harmful interference with the other'.<sup>55</sup> In external governance the process of 'othering' is circumvented: it is either removed entirely from EU external actions by simply concentrating on the promotion of the EU as an attractive model, or it is limited to treating 'the other' as a threat or inferior, thus securitising EU relations with outsiders. In either case, the EU behaves less as a normative actor and more as a civilising/securitising actor<sup>56</sup> in an attempt to make its neighbours – 'the objects of governance' – *like* Europe, to ensure access and control. This path to becoming a 'force for good', however, is a priori erroneous: it works for the EU's interests of security and stability, but it excludes 'the other' from their representation in the EU identity.

The following section explores partners' 'discursive responses' to the ill-defined framework of partnership under the ENP/EaP to argue that 'the other' should be given better representation and brought back into the equation for the purpose of building sustainable reciprocal relations with a wider Europe.

### **Eastern European response: the missing 'other'**

The discourse of discrepancies and misinterpretations continues at the partners' level in response to the uncertainties of 'partnership'-building with the EU. It is known that the EaP has not received a welcome in neighbouring countries. Both Ukraine and Moldova clearly perceive the policy as derogatory or, in the words of some Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) officials, a 'direct insult' to them, not least for throwing all six EaP partners into one basket regardless of their experience or aspirations. Belarus, an all but impossible 'partner' to the EU,<sup>57</sup> seems to be the only exception in the region: it has welcomed its inclusion in the multilateral element of partnership, but, unsurprisingly, is already sabotaging many of the EU's concessions in search of a better accommodation of its national needs and interests.<sup>58</sup> Brussels is taking a very long time to convince partner countries of the legitimacy and the potential usefulness of the new initiative. Some negotiations have been more successful than others, owing to the critical economic state of partner countries. However, the prospects for a 'more ambitious' and inclusive partnership remains equivocal. In the following section, I will explore the discourse of the EU and national officials on the degree of their convergence and understanding of the partnership-building process.

### ***Belarus: towards legitimisation of the ENP?***

The dissonance of opinions between EU officials, member state representatives and the Belarus officials is striking. The EU delegation is the only in-country actor that views with any optimism the EaP's potential to influence Belarus, the only country which presently does not have any structured relations with the EU, thus in a way delegitimising the ENP's conceptual foundations in the region. The introduction of the EaP is perceived by EU officials to be a tailor-made opportunity for an outlier like Belarus to develop legal ties with the EU to ensure the latter's access and control. Relations are clearly interest-driven, technical, and mostly apolitical, with only infrequent reference to the EU's political *acquis*. One of the principal concerns of EU officials is the lack of unity in the positions on Belarus within EU institutions, which impedes the progress of decision-making, and, more critically, may 'lose positive but fragile momentum in EU–Belarus relations'.<sup>59</sup> An obvious disjuncture is the issue of 'shared values' and 'shared interests'. Although there is an implicit recognition of the mutual-interest approach, and an understanding that 'values should not be imported, but developed',<sup>60</sup> the Commission, in order to avoid accusations of double standards, occasionally slips into the dogmatic and ineffective insistence that Belarus implements the EU's twelve principles and its political *acquis*.<sup>61</sup> This is further compromised by the EC's denial of 'unique Slavic values', which, as viewed by Belarusians themselves, is what makes them different and resilient to 'alien' western influence, and which should be better understood by the EU if cooperation is to continue.<sup>62</sup>

It is interesting to note that, in opposition to the Commission's officials, member states' representatives take a far more cautious and ambiguous approach to Belarus. All interviewees point to the importance of partnership over governance, but also accept that the *'acquis'* is the EU's intrinsic tool, and may be hard to alter. All agree that Belarus must not be pressured, insisting that 'we must first understand how the partner works'.<sup>63</sup> Discrepancies in opinions emerge yet again on the issue of 'shared values' versus 'mutual interests', revealing a deep clash of visions and solutions. There is a clear rift between the new and old member states, with the former emphasising the salience of values ('we cannot betray our values'; 'EaP is not a programme of technical interests, it is values-based'), and with the latter underscoring the effectiveness of short-term tactics over a more principled approach ('interests are long-term values'). The other difference relates to member states' acute awareness of the strong presence of Russia, and the need to treat Belarus 'not as a bridge to Russia', but as an independent entity. This has been dismissed by Commission officials as a nuisance, in light of their perception of the EaP as a 'win-win' situation for all parties concerned.<sup>64</sup>

Finally, Belarusian officials see the EaP as a pragmatic step towards dialogue with the EU; however, if the EaP is 'about imposing alien values', it is likely to fail.<sup>65</sup> Furthermore, Belarus clearly perceives itself to be an equal partner with Europe, and is ready 'to negotiate as equals to reach common ground'. However, criticism is already mounting to suggest that the EU chooses partners to its liking, 'whereas we are different and conscious of our national interests, and the EU finds it difficult to swallow'.<sup>66</sup> Also, 'even with the stretch of imagination, our relations are not yet of equals: The EU has many demands and conditions and is still driven by a lot of stereotypes, which is not a promising start for our effective cooperation.'<sup>67</sup> In the view of Belarus there are a lot of internal boundaries that currently prevent the development of effective apolitical cooperation with the EU, including organisational ones (obsolete bureaucracy and a defensive legal system); financial ones (insufficient resources) and personnel problems (lack of adequately trained specialists). The main obstacle, however, remains ideological: 'if the EU comes here to teach us how to live, this would give the wrong footing for cooperation'.<sup>68</sup> Opinions about the role of Russia in Belarus' relations with the EU have markedly diverged, reflecting the current political indecisiveness towards their traditional eastern ally: some interviewees suggest that Belarus should be treated independently (and not as a bridge, or the window between two civilisations); others insisted that Belarus should 'come to Europe' with Russia ('we are too interdependent to be apart').<sup>69</sup> In either case, the sensitivity of being part of the 'contested neighbourhood' is high, and is presently underacknowledged by EU officials. As far as 'shared values' are concerned, Belarusian officials remain pragmatic and adamant: 'partnership in politics should be premised on interests ... Joint interests and long track record of cooperation may generate common values, norms and understanding.'<sup>70</sup>

To conclude, when triangulating the discourses of Commission officials, member states representatives and Belarusian authorities, the picture of engagement becomes rather fragmented. However, two important corollaries prevail: all sides realise that the only way forward is through the partnership of mutual interests and the acceptance of 'the other' as different, but not as a 'threat' or 'inferior'.

### *Ukraine: a deadlock of ambitions?*

A similar narrative of discrepancies and misconceptions is observed in Ukraine, this time, however, with a far deeper gulf between EU capabilities and Ukrainian expectations. If not addressed, these could have extensive consequences for the region.

Contrary to its other representations in the region, off-the-record comments by the EU delegation in Kiev were very sceptical regarding the added value of the new initiative and critical of the Brussels bureaucracy, especially when it comes to the daily management of EU–Ukrainian flagship relations. One of the few advantages the delegation’s officials see for Ukraine under the EaP is the development of its regional leadership as part of the multilateral dimension, presented to the partners as a *fait accompli*. The multilateral dimension is clearly seen by Brussels as an opportunity for the region to unite under the banner of the ENP, and in this way break away from Russia. This decision, however, has found little support either amongst the member states or national officials (see below). Furthermore, although in rhetoric EU–Ukraine relations are generally seen as those of equals based on shared principles, in reality off-the-record comments from the delegation’s officials have indicated that ‘equal partnership’ could only emerge with a membership perspective. The EC officials also explicitly entertained a ‘principled’ rather than interest-based approach towards building cooperation, which is at odds with the EC’s hard bargaining especially on energy and immigration issues: ‘Norms and interests can be reconciled, whereas values not, therefore for real partnership – values are the key.’<sup>71</sup>

Member states display a divergent attitude to Ukraine. They clearly view the country as an equal and important partner for Europe, ‘who in fact *should be* in Europe’.<sup>72</sup> They also convey more doubts about the success of the EaP, especially in Ukraine, suggesting that ‘Ukraine either will take it or bury it’.<sup>73</sup> As with their counterparts in Belarus, they see limitations to effective cooperation in Ukraine’s domestic politics and with Russia. Discrepancies emerge on ‘shared values’. Although ostensibly agreeing that Ukraine had now become a European country, with a clear European ethos, respondents also indicate some conspicuous (and possibly irreconcilable) differences in culture and traditions which remain quintessentially Soviet.

Ukrainian officials, however, explicitly expressed their dissatisfaction with the EaP: ‘the ENP was conceptually unsuited for Ukraine, and the EaP repeats the story’.<sup>74</sup> According to Ukrainian officials, the EaP offers ‘no sense of direction’, ‘no coordination’, ‘no adequate resources’ and, more importantly, no awareness of ‘*how* to achieve the posited aims’.<sup>75</sup> Furthermore, they were also critical of the EU–Ukrainian relations of partnership: ‘There is no partnership, the idea of joint ownership is not working’; ‘We are not equal by definition, or at least that is what we are led to believe’; ‘The EU does not want to see Ukraine as an equal partner. We have no trust and no concrete objectives. If we had a prospect of membership, we would have allowed the EU to dictate.’<sup>76</sup>

In opposition to the EU’s vision, national officials contend that ‘relations should be based on common rules, not values, which would make cooperation far more effective’.<sup>77</sup> Furthermore, the interest-based relationship should be of equals, and this is what Ukraine has finally come to realise: ‘We initially had a sense of inferiority, now we have become more pragmatic.’<sup>78</sup> Russia has been named as one of the potential obstacles that may impede EU–Ukrainian relations. Ukraine acutely feels the potentially ‘divisive’

politics of its greater neighbours, which the EU currently refuses to admit: 'Russia is a key player: we should balance our security interests, and work with Russia more.'<sup>79</sup>

In conclusion, on triangulation of EU and Ukrainian official discourses, it emerges that no party is optimistic about the EaP's success in the country. All comment that it lacks vision, direction and resources. Discrepancies are especially felt on the issues of partnership and values. A growing sense of disillusionment in the EU has permeated the official Ukrainian discourse, giving rise to a novel phenomenon, Euroscepticism,<sup>80</sup> in a previously Euro-enthusiastic country.

### *Moldova: a showground for success?*

Although revealing similar misgivings to its neighbours, Moldova nevertheless stands out in the region as a country ready to comply with EU requirements.<sup>81</sup> EU officials in turn seem to appreciate Moldova's new government commitment but fear the potential outcome of such enthusiastic engagement.

The EU delegation's officials assess the potential of the EaP positively, as 'a "more" approach: more money, more focus, more assistance and opportunities'.<sup>82</sup> However, they show no awareness of partnership/governance tensions, and explicitly accept that there can be no equal relations with Moldova given the size and the superiority of the EU. Discrepancies emerge on the issue of 'shared values'. Although it is agreed that Moldova is more European than some EU countries, there is no understanding of real European values at a mass level.

Member states, yet again, seem to contradict the Commission's view. They believe that although the EaP may indeed be in theory 'best-tailored' for Moldova, in practice it 'lacks teeth' and has 'no visibility on the ground'. The vision of partnership, however, is the same: it is 'either you take it or leave it', and Moldova seems to be wanting 'to take it', and even to 'be guided through'.<sup>83</sup> All interviewees acknowledged Russia as serious player in the region, which will not allow easy solutions for the Transdnistrian conflict on the Moldovan border.<sup>84</sup>

Finally, Moldovan officials see the EaP as a policy of 'abstract phrases and no commitment': 'If it is not clear "where we go", then "how we can get there" is problematic. Also it offers limited advice, financial assistance and empty promises. We are simply losing time;<sup>85</sup> 'EaP is an odd attempt to show, bureaucratically, that something is being done without any specific purpose';<sup>86</sup> 'It is a rather shallow policy, but time will show. For now, we simply need to accept what is offered given the circumstances.'<sup>87</sup>

The question of partnership in Moldova has been dismissed as irrelevant, as 'it is clear that the EU governs here', even suggesting that 'the EU is too soft and needs to be more concrete and critical'.<sup>88</sup> Moldovan officials explicitly point out that the EU has limited knowledge of local situations and that its policies in the region were divisive. They stated that 'Russia is not a hindrance; [the] internal situation is a problem. We need to bring Russia into the equation too.'<sup>89</sup> There was also a clear gap in common values, which are conditioned by the Soviet past: 'We repeat phrases and create illusions of values, without their real understanding.'<sup>90</sup>

On triangulation of discourses it emerges that although Moldova is favoured as a small and cooperative partner, which with the right attitude could achieve great success,

there is also an acute awareness, in both Moldova and the EU, of the EU's excessive bureaucratisation, sluggishness (especially at a time of crisis) and reactive engagement. This leaves a gap between the expectations on the ground and the capacity to deliver at the top. In addition, the Russian factor, as elsewhere in the neighbourhood, will continue to play a decisive role in steering Moldova towards European integration.

## Conclusion: An adequate tool for the neighbours?

The Eastern Partnership was launched in 2009 to address the limitations of the European Neighbourhood Policy, including its poor differentiation and legitimisation in the eastern European region. Rhetorically it aimed to shift the focus away from its own agenda and to offer a more discriminating approach to the EU's eastern neighbours. So far, however, the EU has struggled to accomplish this in practice.

With the launch of the EaP, the EU clearly intended to provide a whole gamut of new tools, instruments and structural opportunities in an attempt to further incentivise the front-runners (Ukraine and Moldova), and to engage those who initially rejected or struggled with the policy (Belarus, Armenia and Azerbaijan). Furthermore, a new emphasis on regional cooperation between the neighbouring countries themselves was added to increase cohesion and policy effectiveness in the area. Despite all these efforts, the article has argued, the EU is nevertheless likely to fail to legitimately increase its presence in the region, due to considerable conceptual limitations of the policy, partly inherited from the ENP.

This article has opened up a discussion of the new policy's deficiencies, especially concerning the ill-defined notion of 'partnership' as the focal point of the initiative. It has demonstrated that partnership cannot exist without the sufficient presence of 'the other' in the equation, to adequately gauge 'joint interests' and gestate 'shared values' – the ENP/EaP's core constitutive elements – in the pursuit of a mutually beneficial and secure future. If the rhetoric of partnership is not realised, the discourse of discrepancies between the neighbours' expectations and the EU's own actions will lead to the policy's lack of efficiency and its further delegitimation in the region.

It has been observed that despite a number of procedural novelties and the EaP's differentiated regional focus, the conceptual continuity between the ENP and the EaP persists, thus prejudicing the policy from the outset. This is expressed in the EU's avoidance of a clear definition of the partnership framework for the outsiders, which causes a number of tensions:

1. In the absence of a workable concept of partnership, there is a tendency within the EU to appropriate the notions of 'values' and 'joint ownership' – two constitutive elements of partnership-building – and substitute them with EU-centric rhetoric and means.
2. In the absence of clearly defined notions of 'values' and 'means', the policy is permeated with inconsistencies and horizontal/vertical discrepancies, thus inhibiting the implementation of the policy on the ground. This has been further exacerbated by institutional restructuring within the EU under the Lisbon Treaty, leaving key decision-making ambiguous and ill defined.



3. In the absence of partnership as an instrument for cooperation, external governance, a successful tool of enlargement, has filled the gap between EU rhetoric and actions; however, this has proven to be an illegitimate and unproductive tool for the EU's closer cooperation with neighbouring countries.
4. Eastern European responses recognise inconsistencies within the new policy, and reveal limited commitment and opportunism, which to some degree have been caused by the EU itself.

The notion of partnership has far more at stake than is currently understood. It is not simply about making the policy more effective. It is about the EU's aspirations to become a 'credible force for good'<sup>91</sup> for the neighbourhood (and the world) that will be questioned by the outsiders, and this is something the EU cannot afford to disregard.

The EU's current behaviour as an aspiring global transformative force, with the ambition to 'shape conceptions of "normal" in international relations',<sup>92</sup> reveals a strong mixture of conflicting interests, ideas and norms. These are generated by the EU's heterogeneous multi-actor institutional landscape, and often critical unawareness and lack of reflection in making the distinction between 'the promotion of universal norms' and the 'projection of its own understanding of norms to the rest of the world'.<sup>93</sup> Such contradictory practices and the increasing gap between its rhetoric and its action deliver ambiguity to those aspiring to EU norms, thus risking accusations of double standards and a lack of legitimacy by the outsiders. More crucially, however, the lack of critical awareness of its own transformative force (of what it is and how to achieve it) clearly inhibits the development of a progressive image of Europe as a global 'force for good', residing in the consensus between the EU's collective 'self' as a multifaceted actor and 'the others'. Without the knowledge of its transformative force, and especially its shortcomings, it would be difficult, if not impossible, for the EU to identify an effective and measurable path for becoming a legitimate and credible 'force for good' in the international arena.

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### Notes

- 1 Benita Ferrero-Waldner, 'Civil Society Forum Strengthens the Eastern Partnership', speech at Eastern Partnership Civil Society forum, SPEECH/09/538, Brussels, 17 November 2009, available at: [www.eumonitor.net/print.php?sid=139874](http://www.eumonitor.net/print.php?sid=139874) (emphasis added).
- 2 This initiative included six countries of the former Soviet Union: Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova to the east and Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia in the South Caucasus. It was primarily launched to address the ENP's limitations by adding a specific focus to the region. The regionalisation of the policy sought to offer further differentiation to account for contextual differences between the already participating partner states and those who had initially rejected or been hesitant to engage with the ENP (Belarus, Azerbaijan and Armenia). The EaP was also a competitive response by some member states (Poland, Sweden and Germany) to the realisation of the French proposal for the Union of the Mediterranean.

- 3 Commission of the European Communities, *A Strong Neighbourhood Policy*, Communication from the Commission, COM (2007) 774 final, Brussels, 5 December 2007.
- 4 Council of the European Union, *Joint Declaration of the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit*, Prague, 7 May, 8435/09 (Presse 78), Brussels 2009 (emphasis added).
- 5 Commission of the European Communities, *Eastern Partnership*, COM 823 final, Brussels, 3 December 2008; Commission of the European Communities, *Eastern Partnership: Staff Working Document*, SEC (2008) 2974/3, 2008.
- 6 Contrary to the enlargement method of promising 'accession for convergence', the ENP was envisaged to offer convergence *without* accession. The intention was to incentivise the neighbouring countries towards painful reforms by EU design, without committing sufficient resources or indeed accounting for the countries' geopolitics. This naturally produced the effect of delegitimising EU policy in the region, with Belarus surprisingly acting as a catalyst for its re-conceptualisation. The EaP was sought to redress the problem by underscoring partnership and shifting the emphasis away from the EU's agenda to partners' ownership in the pursuit of joint interests. However, as this research demonstrates, these intentions remain declaratory, in practice still prioritising the EU's interests and imposing geopolitical 'security dilemmas' onto the neighbourhood. Such actions explicitly contradict the notion of partnership, and, more critically, steer the EU in the direction of neo-colonialism rather than its legitimisation as a 'force for good'. For more discussion on the EU's concept of partnership see Michelle Pace, 'The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and the Common Mediterranean Strategy? European Union Policy from a Discursive Perspective', *Geopolitics*, 9(2), 2004, pp. 292–309; Dimitar Bechev and Kalypso Nicolaidis, 'From Policy to Polity: Can the EU's Special Relations with its "Neighbourhood" be Decentred?', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 48(3), 2010, pp. 47–500; Chris Bickerton, 'From Brezhnev to Brussels: Transformations of Sovereignty in Eastern Europe', *International Politics*, 46(6), 2009, pp. 73–52.
- 7 These first and foremost include a critically disincentivised form of partnership, which continues to be ill defined and EU-owned, thus causing further EU-isation of the region and so precipitating security dilemmas for the contested neighbourhood.
- 8 Javier Solana, 'Countering Globalisation's Dark Side', *Europe's World*, policy dossier 2007, available at: [www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/EN/articles/96791.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/articles/96791.pdf).
- 9 Interviews, upon which the current analysis is premised, were conducted in September–October 2009. The interview fieldwork was organised concurrently in two phases: (i) interviews in Brussels and Strasburg conducted by the project's research assistant; and (ii) interviews in eastern Europe conducted by the author, the principal investigator of the project. Interviewees in the EU included officials of the European Commission, members of the European Parliament and permanent member states representatives. EU respondents were targeted on the basis of their expertise and relevance to the ENP/EaP. In eastern Europe (Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova) interviewees consisted of members of foreign affairs committees in parliament, senior officials of Ministries of Foreign Affairs and presidential administrations, as well as in-country senior officials of EU delegations and member states' representatives chosen by expertise and relevance (e.g. officials from the Polish and Swedish embassies were targeted as policy initiators; UK and German embassies were included as influential member states in the region, etc.). Interviews were semi-structured, in-depth, audio-recorded when permitted, anonymised when requested, and lasted on average 40–50 minutes. Please note that only those interviewees are named or their official status divulged when explicit permission was given to do so. Interviews were conducted in English or the local language. Over 100 interviews were conducted in total, and included the following breakdown per country: EU (11 interviews); Belarus (25 interviews); Ukraine (27 interviews); Moldova (18 interviews); and Russia (23 interviews). The questionnaire for eastern Europe included three thematic blocks to address the

- following issues: (i) the country's foreign policy priorities (EU vis-à-vis Russia); (ii) relations with the EU (knowledge, perceptions, type of relations); and (iii) the ENP/EaP's effectiveness (knowledge, perceptions, problems and future). The questionnaire for the EU officials pursued the following themes: (i) the type of relationship (governance/partnership); (ii) the foundations of the relationship (values versus interests); and (iii) partner perceptions and expectations. These interviews form part of a larger ESRC-funded project (RES-061-25-0001). A brief synopsis of fieldwork findings is available on the project's website: [www.aber.ac.uk/interpol/en/research/EKPproject/index.htm](http://www.aber.ac.uk/interpol/en/research/EKPproject/index.htm).
- 10 Solana, 'Countering Globalisation's Dark Side'.
  - 11 It has also been utilised in the context of EU relations with its southern neighbours. For more see Michelle Pace, 'The Ugly Duckling of Europe: The Mediterranean in the Foreign Policy of the European Union', *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, 10(2) 2002, pp. 189–209.
  - 12 Heather Grabbe, *The EU's Transformative Power: Europeanization through Conditionality in Central and Eastern Europe* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Judith Kelley, 'New Wine in Old Wineskins: Promoting Political Reform through the New European Neighbourhood Policy', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 44(1), 2006, pp. 29–55; Jan Zielonka, *Europe as Empire: The Nature of the Enlarged European Union* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).
  - 13 Elsa Tulmets, 'New Modes of Governance in EU's External Relations', 14 June 2006, available at: [www.forumvilnius.lt/print.php?news.29](http://www.forumvilnius.lt/print.php?news.29).
  - 14 Commission of the European Communities, *Wider Europe – Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours*, COM (2003) 104 final, Brussels, 11 March 2003, p. 15.
  - 15 Commission, *Wider Europe*, p. 16.
  - 16 For more discussion of similar issues see Bechev and Nicolaidis, 'From Policy to Polity'.
  - 17 Commission, *A Strong Neighbourhood Policy*.
  - 18 Commission of the European Communities, *European Neighbourhood Policy: Strategy Paper*, COM 373 final, Brussels, 12 May 2004, especially pp. 12–13.
  - 19 For more on the contradictory EU discourse of values, see Giselle Bosse, 'Challenges for EU Governance through Neighbourhood Policy and Eastern Partnership: The Values/Security Nexus in EU–Belarus Relations', *Contemporary Politics*, 15(2), 2009, pp. 215–29.
  - 20 On the need to contextualise and pluralise democratic values, see the discussion by Milja Kurki, 'Democracy and Conceptual Contestability: Reconsidering Conceptions of Democracy in Democracy Promotion', *International Studies Review*, 12(3), 2010, pp. 362–86.
  - 21 Commission, *European Neighbourhood Policy: Strategy Paper*, p. 12.
  - 22 Commission, *Eastern Partnership*, p. 3 (emphasis added).
  - 23 Commission, *European Neighbourhood Policy: Strategy Paper*, p. 8.
  - 24 Commission, *Eastern Partnership*, p. 3.
  - 25 Richard Youngs, 'Normative Dynamics and Strategic Interests in the EU's External Identity', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 42(2), 2004, pp. 415–35, at p. 421.
  - 26 Michelle Pace, 'Paradoxes and Contradictions in EU Democracy Promotion in the Mediterranean: The Limits of EU Normative Power', *Democratization*, 16(1), 2009, pp. 39–58, at p. 7.
  - 27 Michelle Pace, 'The Construction of EU Normative Power', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 45(5), 2007, pp. 1041–64, at p. 671.
  - 28 Interview with a senior official, RELEX DDG2 E2, 6 October 2009.
  - 29 Interview with a member of the European Parliament (MEP), Strasburg, 2 October 2009.
  - 30 Interview with an MEP, 2 October 2009.
  - 31 The situation is currently exacerbated further by the EU's changing institutional layout due to the Lisbon Treaty not being enacted. For example, the new reforms have left some key decision-making roles in the Commission and the Council ill defined and some restructuring

- of EU foreign missions open-ended. For more information listen to a critical evaluation of Baroness Ashton's position by the BBC, podcast available at: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/today/hi/today/newsid\\_8559000/8559141.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/today/hi/today/newsid_8559000/8559141.stm).
- 32 Michael E. Smith and Mark Webber, 'Political Dialogue and Security in the European Neighbourhood: The Virtues and Limits of New Partnership Perspective', *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 13, 2008, pp. 73–95, at p. 81.
  - 33 Smith and Webber, 'Political Dialogue and Security', p. 81.
  - 34 Interview with a senior official, DG EuropeAid Cooperation Office, Unit A.3, Brussels, 8 October 2009.
  - 35 Here it implies a process of conditional top-down rule-transfer executed by the EU in relation to outsiders.
  - 36 Interview with a senior official, RELEX DDG2 E2, 6 October 2009.
  - 37 Interview with a senior official, DG RELEX DDG2 Task Force 'Eastern Partnership', 28 October 2010.
  - 38 Interview with an MEP, Strasbourg, 8 October 2009.
  - 39 Interview with a senior diplomat, permanent representation, Brussels, 1 October 2009.
  - 40 Interview with a member of the Political Section, German Embassy, Kiev, 28 September 2009.
  - 41 These comments were commonplace, especially among senior diplomats from British embassies.
  - 42 Sandra Lavenex, 'EU External Governance in "Wider Europe"', *Journal for European Public Policy*, 11(4), pp. 680–70, at p. 694.
  - 43 Lavenex, 'EU External Governance'; Ian Manners, 'Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?' *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 40(2), 2002, pp. 235–58; Ian Manners, 'Normative Power Europe Reconsidered: Beyond the Crossroads', *Journal of European Public Policy*, 13(2), 2006, pp. 182–99; Sonia Lucarelli and Ian Manners (eds), *Values and Principles in European Union Foreign Policy* (London: Routledge, 2006); Helen Sjørnsen, 'The EU as a "Normative Power": How Can This Be?' *Journal of European Public Policy*, 13(2), 2006, pp. 235–51; Harmut Mayer and Henri Vogt (eds), *A Responsible Europe? Ethical Foundations of EU External Affairs* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).
  - 44 Lavenex, 'EU External Governance', p. 685.
  - 45 Quoted in Lavenex, 'EU External Governance', p. 682.
  - 46 Manners, 'Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?'
  - 47 Sandra Lavenex, 'A Governance Perspective on the European Neighbourhood Policy: Integration beyond Conditionality?' *Journal of European Public Policy*, 15(6), 2009, pp. 938–55; Sandra Lavenex, and Frank Schimmelfennig, 'EU Rules beyond EU Borders: Theorizing External Governance in European Politics', *Journal of European Public Policy*, 16(6), 2009, pp. 791–812; Stepan Gänzle, 'EU Governance and the European Neighbourhood Policy: A Framework for Analysis', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 61(10), 2009, pp. 1715–34; Lykke Friis and Anna Murphy, 'The European Union and Central and Eastern Europe', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 37(2), 1999, pp. 211–32; Oliver Treib, Bahr Holger and Gerda Falkner, 'Modes of Governance: Towards a Conceptual Clarification', *Journal of European Public Policy*, 14(1), 2007, pp. 1–20.
  - 48 The EU methodology and embedded asymmetry in its relations with candidate countries, however, have been strongly criticised by Grabbe, *The EU's Transformative Power*; Geoffrey Pridham, *Designing Democracy: EU Enlargement and Regime Change in Postcommunist Europe* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Elsa Tulmets, 'Can the Discourse on "Soft Power" Help the EU to Bridge its Capability-Expectations Gap?' *European Political Economy Review*, 7, 2007, pp. 195–226.
  - 49 For more conceptual discussion of tensions and solutions, see Bechev and Nikolaidis, 'From Policy to Polity'.

- 50 For a critical perspective on this, see Tanya Börzel, 'Europeanization: How the European Union Interacts with its Member States', in C. Lequesne and S. Bulmer (eds), *Member States and the European Union* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 45–77.
- 51 For more discussion see Giselle Bosse and Elena Korosteleva, 'Changing Belarus? The Limits of EU Governance in Eastern Europe', *Conflict and Cooperation*, 44(2), 2009, pp. 143–65; Elena Korosteleva, 'The Limits of the EU Governance: Belarus' Response to the European Neighbourhood Policy', *Contemporary Politics*, 15(2), 2009, pp. 229–45.
- 52 For more information see Federica Bicchì, "'One Size Fits All": Normative Power Europe and the Mediterranean', *Journal of European Public Policy*, 13(2), 2006, pp. 286–303.
- 53 Derek Averre, 'Competing Rationalities: Russia, the EU and the "Shared Neighbourhood"', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 61(10), 2009, pp. 1689–1713; Elena Korosteleva, 'The Eastern Partnership Initiative: A New Opportunity for Neighbours?', *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, 27(1), 2011, pp. 1–21; Margot Light, 'Russia and the EU: Strategic Partners or Strategic Rivals?' *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 46, 2009, Annual Review, pp. 7–27.
- 54 Thomas Diez, 'Constructing the Self and Changing Others: Reconsidering "Normative Power Europe"', *Millennium*, 33(3), 2005, pp. 613–36, at p. 626.
- 55 Diez, 'Constructing the Self and Changing Others', p. 629.
- 56 For more debate on the nature of EU transformative power, see special issue of *International Affairs*, 84(1), 2008.
- 57 Belarus is the only one of the neighbouring countries that does not have any legal provisions for cooperation with the EU; it is also the only country which does not have any aspirations to a future in Europe. For more discussion, see Elena Korosteleva, 'The Limits of EU Governance'.
- 58 For more information see Pavol Demeš, 'Belarus's Aleksander Lukashenko, European Chessmaster', 4 March 2010, available at: <http://blog.gmfus.org/2010/03/04/belarus%E2%80%99-aleksander-lukashenko-european-chessmaster/>; Kastus' Lashkevich, 'Belarus–ES: Pochti kak v Gollivude' [Belarus–EU: Almost like in Hollywood], 10 February 2010, available at: <http://news.tut.by/politics/160522.html>.
- 59 Interview with a senior official of the EU delegation in Minsk, 23 September 2009.
- 60 Interview with a senior official of the EU delegation in Minsk.
- 61 The document succinctly embodies the EU political *acquis*, with explicit references to liberal democracy and human rights. 'What the EU Could Bring to Belarus?', Commission's Non-paper, November 2006, available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/external\\_relations/belarus/intro/non\\_paper\\_1106.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/belarus/intro/non_paper_1106.pdf).
- 62 For more discussion and commentary on Belarus' path to Europe see Belarusian Institute for Security Studies, 3rd annual conference held on 9–10 February 2010 in Minsk, available at: [www.belinstitute.eu/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=category&id=42&Itemid=35&language=en&layout=blog](http://www.belinstitute.eu/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&id=42&Itemid=35&language=en&layout=blog).
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- 66 Interview with a senior government official, MFA, Minsk, 21 September 2009.
- 67 Interview with a chairman, FAC, Parliament, Minsk, 22 September 2009.
- 68 Interview with a chairman, FAC, Parliament, Minsk.
- 69 Interview with a chairman, FAC, Parliament, Minsk.
- 70 Interview with an official, Department for Europe, MFA, Minsk, 21 September 2009.
- 71 Interview with a senior official, European delegation, Kiev, 29 September 2009.

- 72 Interview with an official of the Political Section, British embassy, Kiev, 28 September 2009 (emphasis added).
- 73 Interview with an official of the Political Section, British embassy, Kiev.
- 74 Interview with a senior official, Department for European Integration, MFA, Kiev, 29 September 2009.
- 75 Interview with a senior official, Department for European Integration. Similar opinions were expressed by members of the presidential administration and the Rada (the Ukrainian parliament).
- 76 Interviews with a senior official, Department for European Integration, with similar opinions expressed by interviewees from the Rada and the presidential administration.
- 77 Interview with a deputy chairman, FAC, Rada.
- 78 Interview a senior official, Department for European Integration.
- 79 Interview with a deputy chairman, FAC, Rada.
- 80 Kataryna Wolchuk, 'The EU Strategy towards the Post-Soviet States: Lessons from Ukraine', paper to the BASEES-UACES International Conference, 'Russia: A Part of Europe or Apart from Europe?', University of Birmingham, 27–28 November 2009.
- 81 For more detailed information see Elena Korosteleva, 'Moldova's European Choice: Between Two Stools', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 62(8), 2010, pp. 1267–89.
- 82 Interview with a senior official, Political and Economic Section, EU Delegation, Chisinau, 1 October 2009
- 83 Interview with a senior official, German Embassy, Chisinau, 1 October 2009.
- 84 For more on EU–Moldova relations see Elena Korosteleva, 'Moldova's European Choice'.
- 85 Interview with a former Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, MFA, 2 October 2009
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- 87 Interview with a chairman, Committee of Foreign Affairs and European Integration, Parliament, Chisinau, 1 October 2009.
- 88 Interview with a chairman, Committee of Foreign Affairs and European Integration, Chisinau.
- 89 Interview with a chairman, Committee of Foreign Affairs and European Integration, Chisinau.
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- 91 Solana, 'Countering Globalisation's Dark Side'.
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