

RESHAPING EUROPEAN IDENTITY AND ITS REFLECTIONS ON TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONS: EUROPEAN NEIGHBORHOOD POLICY AND U.S. POSITION

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Abstract

The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) was established with the aim of developing closer relations with the EU's neighbours to the East and the South. The main objective revolves around developing policies in the area of rule of law, good governance, the respect for human rights, principles of market economy and sustainable development. Although an EU initiative, the support for the development of these policies is largely supported by the U.S. This paper, therefore, seeks to examine the extent and the nature of U.S. policy interventions in both Eastern and Southern flanks of ENP and make broader geopolitical observations of the current situation in two regions.

Keywords: European Neighbourhood Policy, Eastern Partnership, Middle East and North Africa, U.S. Foreign Policy, European Union, Security

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Avrupa Kimliğinin Yeniden Şekillendirilmesinin Transatlantik İlişkilere Etkisi: Avrupa Komşuluk Politikası ve ABD'nin Duruşu

Öz

Avrupa Komşuluk Politikası AB'nin Doğu ve Güney'de yer alan komşuları ile daha yakın ilişki tesis etmesi hedefiyle oluşturulmuştur. Ana amaç hukukun üstünlüğü, iyi yönetim, insan haklarına saygı ve serbest piyasa ekonomisinin prensiplerine dayalı politikaların üretilmesi ve sürdürülebilir kalkınmanın sağlanmasıdır. Avrupa Komşuluk Politikası, AB'nin bir inisiyatif olması rağmen söz konusu girişimin ve bu kapsamda geliştirilen politikaların ABD tarafından desteklendiği görülmektedir. Bu çalışmada, Avrupa'nın Doğu ve Güney sınırlarına yönelik ABD'nin politikalara müdahale süreçleri incelenmiş ve söz konusu iki bölgeye ilişkin jeopolitik gözlemlerde bulunulmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Avrupa Komşuluk Politikası, Doğu Ortaklığı, Orta Doğu ve Kuzey Afrika, Amerikan Dış Politikası, Avrupa Birliği, Güvenlik

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1. Introduction

The partnership between the U.S. and Europe has been the anchor of stability and has maintained international security for decades (Lewis et al., 2018: 4). “A strong, united Europe is a necessity for the world because an integrated Europe remains vital to our international order.” Europe helps to uphold the norms and rules that can maintain peace and promote prosperity around the world, were the exact words of ex-president Obama during his visit to Germany in April 2016. The transatlantic relationship has been one of the key features of international relations since the end of World War II (Riddervold & Newsome 2018: 506). Being the dominant global power, the U.S. is also impacted by the ever-growing security threats that are looming over Europe. It is for this reason that the EU initiatives in its neighbourhood have to be assessed also through the lens of the U.S. foreign policy and Washington’s interests, especially when considering security threats that have no regard for borders.

Being the main foreign policy instrument to deal with Southern and Eastern neighbours of the EU, the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) was developed and envisaged to govern the EU’s relations with its close neighbours so as to reap benefits in favour of both sides. Designed to soften the existing dividing lines between the south and the east, the EU aims at conducting policies in various areas to help countries cope with the domestic political, economic and foreign pressures. Despite the fact that the ENP talks of enhancing democracy, integration, welfare and security in all the partner countries, it is important to remember that the ENP was a policy initially formulated to respond to perceived problems arising in the East following the enlargement (Browning & Joenniemi, 2007: 24). Only after consistent pressure from the Southern neighbours, the ENP was extended to cover the Southern dimension. The predominance of the Eastern flank over the southern can also be felt in the EU’s actions towards the countries since the Eastern Partnership initiative – aimed at bringing the Eastern partners closer to the EU – seems to catch much more attention than their counterparts in the East. One reason for this might lie in Russia – a regional power – which purposefully seeks to obstruct NATO and interfere in democratic processes the EU is trying to undertake in the six Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries. One of the major concerns of Russia has been the launch of the EaP, despite prior assurances from the former EU foreign policy chief that the initiative had not been designed against Russia (Babayan 2015 :

85). While the EaP was not designed as a security institution, its geographical position close to Russia means that security issues will always form a part of its policy planning (Bulakh & Verschoor-Kirss, 2014 :1).

Following the 9/11 attacks, however, the international limelight moved from the “Russian threat” to the idea of “War on Terror”, initiated by the George W. Bush administration. The new U.S. foreign policy objective in the EU neighbourhood significantly changed the geostrategic environment as well as it made the EU think about possible ways to address the looming challenges now not only in the Eastern but also in the Southern neighbourhood. With the establishment of ENP, the EU embarked on a path to develop a platform via which the technical, financial and democratic support would be provided to its neighbours with the aim of bringing about changes and move the countries closer to the EU (not necessarily in the EU). The U.S. stance, on the other hand, was rather different – supportive of EU measures and actions in the “near abroad” while considering ENP to be a complementary part of U.S. regional policies.

In this respect, this paper seeks to explain the concept of the European Neighbourhood Policy through the U.S. perspective, shedding light on U.S. priorities and interests in the region. The difference in approaches between the EU and the U.S. will also be assessed. The first chapter introduces the topic, whereas the second chapter explains the main concepts of ENP through a concise literature review. The main part of the paper explains the nature of European Neighbourhood Policy, from its establishment to different nuances between its Eastern and Southern flanks. The final chapter concludes the discussion and gives final remarks.

2. Literature Review

The ENP has been a widely discussed concept among scholars in the past fifteen years. Due to its unusual concept which extends not only to the EU external relations but also touches upon the realms of accession, the ENP can be accessed through many lenses. Monastiriotis and Borrell (2012) define the three issues with which ENP literature deals with, mainly in the sphere of the political economy and institutionalisation. Firstly, the literature examines the conflicting goals of the EU’s efforts to both develop a comprehensive common security policy toward the regions and manage EU aspirations of EaP countries. Secondly, the

question of reconciling the promotion of European values and normative power in the neighbourhood while assessing the EU's economic policy and market gains and political objectives is of crucial importance for the understanding of the whole process. Last but not least, the third question concerns the effectiveness of conditionality policy undertaken by the EU (Monastiriotis & Borrell, 2012 : 1).

In this respect, the literature on ENP pays particular attention to the conditionality principle connected to the EU's ENP. In broad terms, scholars define "conditionality" as the core strategy applied by international organizations with the aim of encouraging non-member states to comply with the fundamental values (Schimmelfennig, Engert & Knobel, 2002 :1). Thepaut (2011 : 4) sees political conditionality as crucial in the European Neighbourhood Policy and defines it as the provision of assistance in exchange for democratization and respect for human rights. He also argues that the EU is capable of using only "soft conditionality" – which defines general guidelines for the EU when dealing with ENP countries – rather than "hard conditionality" which presupposed using systematic reforms to punish unfavourable behaviour of EU partner countries. Sasse (2008) goes along these lines and argues that the EU conditionality towards ENP countries is "vague" and "in flux". The reason for this lies in the concept of ENP policy which tends to be non-obligatory in a sense that domestic political actors may choose when to and when not to align with EU standards according to their own preferences, given that the policies are not binding and the process, as such, is different from EU accession.

In light of this, conditionality works on a selective basis and does not yield desired results in the neighbouring countries. Van Hüllen (2015) argues that the transformative power of ENP is only marginal, as authoritarian nature of these states, especially in the Mediterranean, impedes any progress in promoting both political and economic change. On the other hand, this transformative power is more visible in the Eastern neighbourhood as several states underwent the transition, notably Georgia and Ukraine, while others never showed any interest in transforming their countries in line with the ENP policies. Aliboni (2009) argues in favour of a differentiated policy towards two facets of ENP. The transformative power is directly connected with the concept of "Normative Power Europe" which has been elaborated by Manners (2002). He argues that principles, EU norms and beliefs are shared with EU's neighbours and translated into domestic practices of these countries. Most critics of the Normative Power Europe approach claim that the EU is often not capable of

convincing third states to adopt these norms, thus resulting in the EU finding other ways to support this process by additional economic or military arguments (Skolimowska, 2015 : 121).

The ENP includes under the same umbrella two distinct strategies of inclusion and cooperation, respectively geared to Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean, which can hardly be integrated and thus necessitates coming up with a comprehensive strategy and link up these two areas (Aliboni, 2009 :28). It is often argued that the Eastern Neighbourhood receives substantially more attention and reaps more positive benefits than their Southern counterparts. The reason for the better impact in the Eastern Neighbourhood lies also in the fact that these countries aim for the EU membership, which drives their policies towards the EU. Although in the past decade, the EU has not offered a clear perspective to these countries in terms of ultimate EU membership, which is why scholars blamed the ENP failure – its Eastern facet – on the lack of this membership perspective (Börzel & Böttger, 2012; Haukkala, 2010). While the EU pays considerably more attention to the Eastern rather than Southern facet, the U.S. policy towards the Eastern Europe is moved down the list of priorities. Silitski (2009) argues that the U.S. has not, however, abandoned its interests in the region but rather has supported the EU's efforts more to reflect its transformative power than taking on the task of promoting democracy in these countries. Further elaboration of the U.S. strategy towards the Eastern and Southern flanks of the ENP in this paper will show U.S. vested interests in both regions but with slightly different policy objectives to be achieved in each of them.

3. ENP: Towards a More Integrated and Stable Neighborhood

The ENP represents EU's foreign policy strategy for governing relations with their closest neighbours to the East and South. In total 16 countries, 10 to the South: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine*, Syria and Tunisia, and six to the East: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine participate in EU programmes designed to promote policies that would bring countries closer to the EU and enjoy privileged relations with EU Member States. Being based on the principles of rule of law, human rights and democracy, the ENP seeks to trigger positive transformation in neighbouring countries by offering expertise, know-how, financial and technical assistance.

The EU's Neighbourhood Policy Strategy Paper (2004) envisages building mutual commitment towards common values in the field of the rule of law, good governance, human rights protection, market economy and sustainable development, placing a special emphasis on fighting against terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The reasoning behind the creation of the ENP is to share benefits of 2004 EU enlargement with neighbouring countries with a view to strengthen stability, security and well-being for all concerned (Commission of the European Communities, 2004). Having a common goal of defining a set of priorities under agreed principles, the EU seeks to work with each and every country on an individual basis and develop a tailor-made approach which would take into account country's specific context and the its relations with the EU.

In order to institutionalize relations with neighbouring countries and, in addition, strengthen bilateral links with each country, the European Commission has established Partnership and Cooperation Agreements or Association Agreements within which, through Action Plans, progress on agreed deliverables and priorities is reported. The Association Agreements are concluded with the respective country in exchange for reforms that are to be undertaken across a wide variety of fields, including but not limited to political, economic, trade and democratic. The ENP Action plans (or Association agendas for EaP countries) set out country's agenda regarding political and economic reforms, clearly delineating short and medium-term priorities within the 3 to 5-year time frame. They also reflect the country's needs and capacities, as well as serve as a platform for advocating EU's interest in the process (European Union External Action, 2015).

The idea to develop a strategy towards EU's Eastern and Southern neighbours was conceived following the 2004 enlargement of the EU, when 10 countries joined the EU at the same time, thus making it the largest single expansion in the European history. The intake of 10 new members to the EU created not only institutional changes, necessitating further internal reforms to take place, but also created additional security concerns due to the fact that the borders of the EU expanded significantly and revealed new neighbours to the East and the South. A particular concern was given to the mobility across external borders of the EU with neighbouring states, where the EU was supposed to ensure additional resources to manage migration through cohesion funds and neighbourhood instruments, especially given the close relations between new Member States and neighbours to the East (Romania-Moldova, for instance) (Traser, 2008 : 44).

Following these concerns but also the open conflict in 2008 between Russia and Georgia over the regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, resulting in violent actions taken by Russia, in June 2008, the European Council welcomed the proposal to develop the Eastern dimension of the ENP, which would aim at enhancing multilateral and bilateral relations among all parties involved as well as further promoting the regional cooperation on the basis of differentiation and an individual approach (Council of the European Union, 2008:19). In exchange for political and economic reforms, the EaP offered new contractual relations with six neighbouring countries, deep and comprehensive free trade agreements and steps toward visa liberalisation and a multilateral framework to discuss open issues (Council of the European Union, 2019). The relationship between the EaP countries and the EU was brought to a new level during Prague Summit in 2009, when the Heads of State and Governments and representatives of the six EaP countries agreed to adopt the declaration and subscribe to commitments based on the rule of law, the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, market economy, sustainable development and good governance (Council of the European Union, 2009:5). One of the key challenges in dealing with EaP countries is their diversity in terms of geography (Eastern Europe and Southern Caucasus), security (separatist conflicts in Azerbaijan, Georgia and Moldova), geostrategy (EU aspirations) and minority issues (apart from Armenia and Azerbaijan which are homogenous, in other countries minorities comprise around 20% of the population) (Parmentier, 2013: 4). The strategy to overcome these diversities when cooperating with these countries and further deepening bilateral relations remain of strategic importance for both the EU and the U.S. policy-makers.

Countries belonging to the Southern flank were already engaged in a Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (also known as the Barcelona Process) that was initiated in 1995, aiming at creating a common platform for cooperation across several components: political and security, economic and financial, cultural and human. With the launch of the ENP in 2004, those countries involved in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership gained an opportunity to develop an even closer link with the EU in exchange for more progress in their institutional reforms (Jordán, 2015:158). However, starting from late 2010, peaceful mass protests across several Southern neighbouring countries, namely Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, began to draw the international attention due to the security situation in the region. The world perceived these protests as positive accomplishments towards the democracy (Mushtaq & Afzal, 2017:

9). Given that most of the Arab countries were ruled by authoritarian rulers who held the power for decades, one of the objectives of the protests was to remove them from power and enable a more democratic representation. Peaceful mass protests, also known as “Arab Spring” started to prompt political changes of the regimes in the respective countries and resulted with the resignation of presidents from Tunisia, Libya and Egypt, Zine al-Abidin Ben Ali, Muammar al-Qaddafi and Hosni Mubarak, respectively. It was the first time since the 1950s and 1960s that Arab regimes were challenged to such extent and led to the overthrow of leaders that led the country for many decades (Kienle, 2013: 6).

In light of the above-mentioned development in both the Southern and Eastern flanks of EU’s neighbourhood, in 2011, the European Commission decided to bring about a new approach towards the ENP with the aim to reinforce engagement with its neighbours. This new approach came as a result of transformational processes that were occurring mostly in the Middle East. As a consequence, the European Commission held it important to accommodate these changes and apply a more differentiated approach towards countries. Back then the European Commissioner for Enlargement and ENP, Stefan Fülle emphasised that “the EU needs to respond with determination and ambition, through a new approach to the ENP, drawing the right lessons from our experience so far and addressing the challenges of a fast-changing neighbourhood” (European Commission, 2011). As he put it “this [the new approach] is not a one size fits all approach. Increased EU support to its neighbours is conditional, depending on progress in building and consolidating democracy and respect for the rule of law. The more and the faster a country progresses in its internal reforms, the more support it will get from the EU” (European Commission, 2011). By doing so, the European Commission envisaged more financial assistance for countries which prove that they are serious when undertaking necessary reforms to promote more freedom and a better life for their citizens. It also implied that the domestic context of countries in question has to be scrutinized, as well as bilateral relations build up more in order to garner positive results and achieve democratic impact.

3.1 EU’s Eastern flank – Eastern Partnership countries.

The ENP, set out by the EU as an instrument to coordinate external relations with their neighbours to the East and the South, is more than convenient for the U.S. policy in these

regions. A strong, united and integrated Europe envisioned by the EU founders benefits not only European but also the U.S. Europe's security and stability is linked to that of North America, especially when it comes to upholding the universal norms, maintaining stability and promoting prosperity (U.S. Mission to the European Union, n.d.). During the EU-U.S. Summit in 2014, the U.S. reiterated their commitment to support process of political and economic integration within the EaP initiative and expressed support to far reaching political and socio-economic reforms that lead to the adoption of European values and principles (Council of the European Union, 2014: 6). Given that the U.S. and the EU share the same values of democracy, individual freedoms, the rule of law and respect for human rights, the EU's initiative to promote these values in close neighbourhood not only goes in favour of the U.S. policy in the region but also contributes to bolstering American influence in promoting security, stability and prosperity in volatile regions in general.

The establishment of the EaP initiative in 2009 coincided with U.S. ex-president Barack Obama's "reset policy" towards Russia. When president Obama assumed his office in 2009, the developments in Eastern Europe were everything but promising. By 2008, U.S.-Russia relations became trapped in a dead end around the issue of missile defence and NATO enlargement as well as the 2008 Russian invasion of Georgia (Gvosdev, 2016). During his first presidential visit to Moscow, president Obama noted that "America wants a strong, peaceful and prosperous Russia ... on the fundamental issues that will shape this century, Americans and Russians share common interests that form a basis for co-operation" (Harding & Weaver, 2009).

The EaP initiative therefore needs to be analysed considering Russia as the most powerful regional actor. Russia's interest in the post-Soviet countries, especially in those six falling into the realm of the EaP initiative, dictates to a substantial extent EU's success in the region. Russia perceives the EaP to be the main hindrance to closer cooperation between EaP countries and the Russian Federation thus causing significant disadvantages to Kremlin's foreign policy in the neighbourhood (Zagorski, 2011: 41). The EaP countries provide a common ground for both the West and Russia to project their power. Although different in nature, interests of these powers coincide as both sides deploy various techniques and methods in pursuance of deeper cooperation with the EaP countries. Russia, being strategically and military dominant in the region continues to exercise its prevalent status and engages in a hybrid war with the EU over the EaP countries. Eurasian Economic Union

(EAEU) came as a response to actions of several countries to sign Association Agreements and Deep Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements. The EAEU was established in 2015 and at the moment comprises Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan. Apart from Belarus and Armenia who are already members, other EaP countries have a sound possibility to join EAEU (Konopelko, 2017: 1-2).

Several EaP countries have territorial problems which include Russia's role. Moldova has the Transnistria problem, 20% of Georgian land is occupied by Russia through South Ossetia and Abkhazia, whereas Ukraine has territorial claims on annexed Crimea by Russia (Maglakelidze, 2017: 27). Armenia is the most loyal ally out of six EaP countries, which was proved in 2016 when Russia and Armenia agreed to form a joint Russian-Armenian force to counter the threats in case of an attack against one of the parties. The agreement allowed Russia to allocate 5000 armed forces in Armenia, install a military base in Gyumri and an airbase in Erebuni on the outskirts of Yerevan. Azerbaijan, on the other hand, has pursued a foreign policy of maintaining balanced relations with competing for regional and global powers. Since Azerbaijan centers its foreign policy on oil and gas revenues, the Russian influence in Baku has decreased. Relations between Baku and Moscow are mostly centered on Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, where Russia plays an ambiguous role by selling weapons to both Armenia and Azerbaijan.

The U.S. role in the EaP initiative is nothing big, rather boiling down to supporting the overall EU's goal and cause to bring about democratic transformation and reforms in general for the sake of regional stability and security. While Washington is shifting Eastern Europe down the list of its priorities, it has not abandoned U.S. interests in the region. Consequently, the White House would welcome and support a robust "Eastern" policy developed and promoted by the EU (Silitski, 2009: 4). Similar to the EU approach, the U.S. would like to see the Eastern neighbourhood free of Russia's meddling, spurring conflicts and conducting disinformation campaigns. In 2019, during his visit to Poland, U.S. Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, announced U.S. enhanced engagement in the region, making a point that the decade of U.S. "disengagement in Central and Eastern Europe created a vacuum Russia and China have exploited" (Lee, 2019).

Throughout the years, the U.S. approach in the Eastern Europe mostly boiled down to active response to Russia's foreign policy, rather than focusing on institution and capacity building (which the EU aims for within the framework of the EaP initiative). The formation of EaP

coincided with Russian aggression in Georgia, to which U.S. responded immediately. According to the words of ex Secretary of State, the U.S. and Germany recognized the looming danger of Russian military action in Georgia and sought to “negotiate a de-escalation of the growing tensions in the separatist regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia” (Rice, 2018). Even before the Russo-Georgian war, Georgia was the leading recipient of U.S. foreign and military aid in Europe and Eurasia. Following the outbreak of war in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, the U.S. gave increased amounts of military, financial and humanitarian assistance in the amount of \$38 million (Congressional Research Service, 2019:13).

Another country which the U.S. paid particular attention to is Ukraine. Ukraine is not only the largest country and the key partner within the Eastern Partnership initiative but also the country’s inextricably connected history with Russia additionally complicates the situation in the region. Following the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014, the U.S. unequivocal support for Ukraine’s territorial integrity and sovereignty only enhanced. Only in 2018, non-military and non-humanitarian assistance to Ukraine totalled \$201 million, whereas for military assistance, the number was even higher - \$150 million (Welt 2017: 12-13). Non-recognition of Crimea was the leitmotif of president Obama’s administration, as he repeatedly noted that “Russia’s actions pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States” (Radio Free Europe, 2017).

3.2 Southern flank of European Neighborhood Policy

Unlike the EaP initiative, in which several countries strive to join the EU in due time, the countries of Southern neighbourhood do not have such possibility. Consequently, the nature of relations of EU with these countries is substantially different. Following the Arab Spring uprisings, the EU developed a more tailored approach to cope with challenges that arose amid the mass protests: mass migration, terrorism and radicalisation. Although the attention in relations with the Southern neighbours is placed mainly on security concerns – migration flows and terrorism threats – the EU remains dedicated also to addressing broader policies of mutual interests (agriculture and fisheries, balanced trade, human rights, democracy and the rule of law) (European Movement International, 2017). These EU efforts to promote peace, security and stability in its proximity fall into U.S. plan of advocating for democracy worldwide, especially in fragile societies.

As a result of the EU-U.S. Summit in 2006, the U.S. committed to supporting political, economic and institutional reforms in Mediterranean and the Middle East through, among others, ENP instrument (The White House, 2006: 1-2). In the Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review 2015, the U.S. subscribed to protecting democracy, accountable governance and respect for human rights as the fundamental tenets of U.S. foreign policy (U.S. Department of State & U.S. Agency for International Development, 2015). Emphasis was particularly placed on Tunisia and Burma as examples of countries in the midst of significant transformations in which disturbing reactionary responses could be observed. Over time, the technical cooperation developed under ENP framework would help to improve the dialogue between the West and Islamic countries in the Mediterranean (Brimmer, 2008: 29).

One of the key reasons for U.S. support for ENP and its engagement with all ten countries lies in the fact that the Middle East and North Africa are particularly vulnerable to terrorism with all ENP countries being affected by terrorism to different degrees. The vast majority of deaths caused by terrorism occurred in non-European countries, among which are many Southern neighbourhood countries. The Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review, published in 2015, sets out “Preventing and Mitigating Conflict and Violent Extremism” as the first of four strategic priorities for the Department of State and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). The document outlines steps to enhance U.S. capacity to prevent and mitigate conflict, and place greater emphasis on countering violent extremism by partnering with host governments, agencies and departments, supporting vulnerable communities and challenging extremist messaging, as well as investing more in conflict prevention and implementing a strategic framework for fragile states (U.S. Department of State & USAID, 2015:10). In this respect, the U.S. foreign policy objective entails fighting and defeating ISIL in the Middle East via building broader coalitions with the aim to achieve both regional and international security.

Especially after 9/11 attacks, the fight against terrorism and its repercussions in the Middle East reached its peak. Yemen became centre for terrorism in the shape of Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, and Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb was active in North Africa and parts of sub-Saharan Africa (Lutz & Lutz, 2015: 34). Seventy-two percent of all global terrorist attacks in 2015 took place in Iraq, Nigeria, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Syria. Countries that were also high on the terrorism index were Yemen, Egypt, Libya, Lebanon,

the Palestinian territories, Israel, and Tunisia (European Parliament, 2017: 5). As the U.S. Department of State (2018) deliberates, Syria has been on the U.S. list of state sponsors of terrorism since the list's inception in 1979, thus necessitating a specialised approach when dealing with the issues of particular concern for the U.S., notably terrorism, occupation of Lebanon, weapons of mass destruction and missile programmes. In 2017, the U.S. Department of State analysed the nature of the terrorist threats confronting U.S. and other allies and concluded that the immediate dynamics that led terrorists to flock to Iraq and Syria since 2014 have diminished, but other factors that terrorists exploit to recruit new followers remained a challenge, such as sectarianism, failing states, and conflict zones (U.S. Department of State, 2017).

In this respect, it remains the U.S.'s priority to tackle these challenges and put a stop to terrorist adversaries. According to the U.S. National Defense Strategy (2018), terrorism is perceived as the persistent condition driven by ideology and unstable political economic structures – all ingredients that are to be found in the Middle East and North Africa. During his visit to Germany in 2016, president Obama named ISIL as “the most urgent threat to our nations” which makes EU and U.S. “united in their determination to destroy” (The White House, 2016). He also announced the U.S. decision to increase military support for local forces fighting ISIL in Syria and support for Iraqi forces against ISIL. Therefore, the dominant U.S. approach in the Middle East and North Africa is mainly focused on security issues and preventing the spread of terrorism globally.

4. Conclusion

For decades, close EU-U.S. relations have been the main guarantee of the regional stability and security. The deep and functional relations between the U.S. and the EU is important now more than ever, mostly due to many challenges both powers are facing in a globalized world. One of the reasons for the establishment of the ENP by the EU was to foster deeper relations with third countries in the “near abroad” and stand ready for threats looming over the EU's external borders. The U.S. has been supportive of the initiative, arguing that the vital and secure Europe is crucial for the U.S. interests.

While both the EU and the U.S. have their vested interests in Eastern Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, their priorities diverge to a significant extent. The EU is more

concerned with the external borders and security issues, especially due to the lack of internal borders within the Member States. Geographically speaking, the U.S. is miles away and its priorities are not necessarily connected with the hard borders but rather with the security situation overall. This is particularly true for the Southern neighbourhood, where the U.S. foreign activity started to take shape after the 9/11 attacks and amid the announced “War on Terror.” Even with these priorities, the U.S. foreign policy in the Southern region is more based on the bilateral relations with each of the concerned state, rather than on the development of an overall strategy that would facilitate the relationship with all 10 countries at once. One of the main reasons for the U.S. to continue its active engagement in the region is the fight against terrorism and defeating terrorism globally. These objectives are enshrined in the U.S. National Defense Strategy and constitute one of the main foreign policy objectives abroad.

When it comes to the Eastern neighbourhood, however, the U.S. is more concerned with the Russian regional hegemony and the pressure Kremlin puts on these countries, rather than on a broader framework via which the EU already cooperates with these countries. While the U.S. is a major financial donor to the EaP countries and supports their pro-Atlantic aspirations, especially those of Ukraine and Georgia, the fact is that U.S. moves are also triggered by Russia’s activity in the region which strives to achieve regional hegemony and have these countries succumbed to the Kremlin’s interests. As it is the case with the countries of Southern neighbourhood, the U.S. mostly works on a bilateral basis with Eastern neighbourhood countries and assists them in democracy building, improving political and economic situation through financial and military means. The most significant support offered by the U.S. was received by Ukraine and Georgia – both countries which have bilateral issues with Russia.

In conclusion, the U.S. priorities are of a more strategic nature, whereas the EU is interested in energy ties, trade volumes and democratization of the countries concerned (Cebeci, 2011: 275). Whilst the EU seeks to conduct a comprehensive foreign policy, including but not limited to enhancing security and stability, democracy and institution building as well as promoting the fundamental freedoms, the U.S. tends to analyse the issues in the global context and see these regions as part of a broader global strategy. This difference in perspectives between the U.S. and the EU reflects deep historical and geographical realities, which have been nurtured throughout decades. What is more, although driven by common

interests, geopolitical realities are also not the same. The U.S. sees the ENP within a broader perspective, while regional instability is of primary concern for the EU, as it is the EU Member States that share the external borders with these countries, which tend to show weaknesses in terms of economic insecurity and political instability and challenging democracy.

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