

DIFFERENTIATION OF THE EASTERN AND SOUTHERN DIMENSIONS IN THE EUROPEAN NEIGHBORHOOD POLICY BEYOND 2020¹

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ABSTRACT: *The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) took its conceptual roots in 2003 and was officially implemented in 2004 in response to the evolving boundaries of the European Union. This comprehensive policy framework encompasses two distinct regions labeled as the "Eastern Neighborhood Policy" and the "Southern Neighborhood Policy," covering a total of sixteen countries. Managed by the Directorate-General for Neighborhood and Enlargement under the European Commission, this entity oversees the EU's relations, negotiation processes, and budget planning with partner countries and those within the ENP framework. The ENP serves as a political framework for EU foreign policy, derived from the totality of bilateral relations.*

The Southern Neighborhood framework predominantly revolves around economic and security relationships with Mediterranean countries, many of which were former European colonies. A significant milestone in the establishment of the Southern Neighborhood is the 1995 Barcelona Declaration. By 2008, the Union for the Mediterranean initiative was launched under France's leadership, decided by Heads of State and Government in Paris. This initiative acts as an operational institution, enhancing regional dialogue and supporting projects that directly impact citizens' lives.

The Eastern Partnership Initiative, as an extension of the ENP, emphasizes the significance of bilateral agreements and provides a framework that reinforces countries' ownership tendencies through multilateral institutions. It brought to the forefront a feature lacking in the ENP until 2009, extending neighborhood relations beyond regional forums.

In 2020, the European Commission unveiled its latest policy documents for these regions. The Southern dimension focuses on the concept of a "renewed partnership," while the Eastern dimension places emphasis on the theme of "resilience for all." This study aims to comparatively highlight the differences and similarities in the Eastern and Southern regions of the ENP and analyze the EU's foreign policy in these areas.

KEYWORDS: *European Neighbourhood Policy, Union For The Mediterranean, Eastern Partnership, EU Foreign Policy*

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1. INTRODUCTION

The conceptual foundations of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) were laid in 2003 and officially put into practice in 2004 as a response to the changing boundaries of the European Union. This all-encompassing policy framework comprises two distinct regions known as the "Eastern Neighborhood Policy" and the "Southern Neighborhood Policy," covering a total of sixteen countries. Administered by the Directorate-General for Neighborhood and Enlargement within the European Commission, this entity oversees the EU's relations, negotiation processes, and budget planning with partner countries and those falling under the ENP framework. The ENP functions as a political framework for EU foreign policy, emanating from the entirety of bilateral relations.

The Southern Neighborhood framework primarily focuses on economic and security relationships with Mediterranean countries, many of which were former European colonies (Alper, 2011, 28). A pivotal moment in the establishment of the Southern Neighborhood is the 1995 Barcelona Declaration. By 2008, the Union for the Mediterranean initiative was inaugurated under France's leadership, as determined by Heads of State and Government in Paris. This initiative serves as an operational institution, fostering regional dialogue and supporting projects that directly impact the lives of citizens.

¹ This full text has been derived from the doctoral dissertation entitled "The European Union as a Liberal Actor: A Critical Analysis of the European Neighborhood Policy."

The Eastern Partnership Initiative was formed within the framework of the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) and includes the countries of Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus. The pioneers of this initiative, Poland and Sweden, submitted a proposal to the General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC) of the EU on May 26, 2008 (Şevenk, 2023:41). The historical significance of this proposal lies in Poland, still a relatively new member, successfully advocating for a plan that would impact Union policy, with the support of Sweden. According to the plan, the aid packages allocated for the Eastern Partnership would be covered from the existing ENP budget, and no additional institution, such as a "secretariat," would be established (Cianciara, 2008: 2).

2. METHODOLOGY

This research employs a descriptive research methodology to provide a comprehensive overview of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), with a specific focus on its two regional frameworks – the "Eastern Neighborhood Policy" and the "Southern Neighborhood Policy." The descriptive approach aims to present a detailed account of the policy's conceptual foundations, historical developments, and key initiatives within both regions.

Performing a thorough examination of scholarly literature, official reports, and policy documents associated with the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), placing a specific focus on materials dated from 2020 onward. This comprehensive literature review will serve as the foundation for grasping the theoretical foundations distinguishing the southern and eastern dimensions of the ENP.

3. DIFFERENTIATION IN THE EUROPEAN NEIGHBORHOOD POLICY: THE SOUTH AND THE EAST

Giselle Bosse has argued that a political framework was established in Europe during the Cold War era to address Russia's concerns and prevent the re-emergence of division, i.e., the Iron Curtain. According to the author, the initial inclusion of Russia in the ENP framework was designed, particularly, to strengthen relations with Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine (Bosse, 2012: 319-320). For EU foreign policy, the ENP constitutes a political framework consisting of bilateral relations. The Eastern Partnership Initiative, an extension of the ENP, emphasized the importance of bilateral agreements while providing a framework that reinforced countries' ownership tendencies through multilateral institutions. Thus, until 2009, an aspect lacking in the ENP came to the forefront, and neighborhood relations transcended regional forums (Kratochvíl and Tulmets, 2010: 1). The declaration of the first Eastern Partnership Summit in May 2009 included a separate section focusing on multilateralism. Under the heading "Focusing on Multilateralism," seven articles out of a total of twenty-one in the document addressed how multilateralism would be established, allocating one-third of the policy to this aspect (Council of European Union, 8435/09, May 7, 2009).

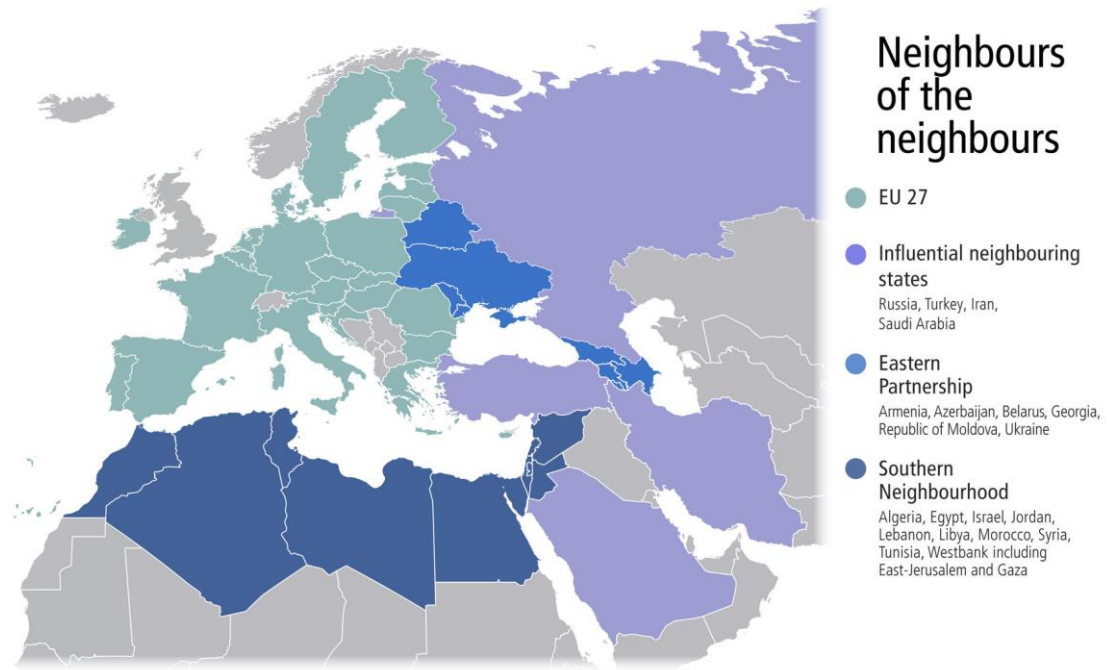


Figure 1: Map of the European Neighborhood Policy

Source: Bertelsmann Stiftung, "Strategies for the EU Neighbourhood." <https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/en/our-projects/strategies-for-the-eu-neighbourhood/project-description> (Access Date: 11.12.2023)

The map above illustrates the East and South neighbors of the EU. As seen on the map, the EU is surrounded by a geographically conflicted area until it reaches the Atlantic Ocean. In this regard, it cannot be considered a sanctified region like the United States. According to an alleged statement by a French diplomat in the 1910s, the U.S. has weak neighbors to the north and south, fish to the east, and fish again to the west (Stephen Walt, Foreign Policy, 21.11.2013).

Considering that this situation does not apply to the EU, the desire to shape its surroundings is natural. The ENP is a policy put forth by the EU to regulate its relations with countries beyond its expanding borders. With the ENP, the EU aims to share security, political stability, and prosperity in its vicinity.

So, what are the criteria for being a neighbor or transitioning from neighborliness to membership? The year 2022 has shown us that neighboring countries can also apply for membership. Although this situation suggests a possible evolution from the "partnership" theme to the "equality" theme, the countries on the path to membership have a long way to go to achieve this equality. The fifth and sixth sections of the study analyze the data on the themes and conditions under which the EU engages with neighboring countries.

3.1. Southern Neighborhood and Union for the Mediterranean

While the EU has maintained relations with its Southern Neighbors since the 1970s, its engagement with Eastern neighbors has been considerably delayed. For instance, prior to the Neighborhood Policy, it is known that there were only two diplomatic representatives in six Eastern countries. The appointment of a special representative for the South Caucasus region by the EU occurred as late as 2003 (Štrítecký, 2007, 218). When considering the Eastern neighborhood, the EU's initiatives regarding the Black Sea, a region of significant economic cooperation and conflict, have been quite limited. With Romania and Bulgaria becoming Union members in 2007, the EU, now having a political structure with a coastline on the Black Sea, does not aim to develop institutional bilateral relations with the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) organization. This is due to the EU already having existing bilateral relations with BSEC member countries (Emerson and Vahl, 2002, 20). Relations with BSEC, a regional cooperation organization established without the EU's initiative, make it challenging for the EU to conduct institutional-level relations. The EU and BSEC do not share

the same institutional perspective, with the latter focusing more on economic cooperation than political collaboration. The Black Sea Synergy, published four years after the Neighborhood Policy, also supports this view. The general tendency of the EU is to continue its existing bilateral relations with BSEC member countries and to keep its relations with BSEC at a minimum (Oktay, 2012, 297).

The Southern Neighborhood framework of the EU primarily constitutes the continuity of bilateral relations established with the Mediterranean countries, a significant portion of which were former colonies of European powers, in economic and security contexts (Alper, 2011, 28). Relations with this region, whether in the Southern Neighborhood, the Mediterranean region, or the Arab world, have been ongoing since the 1970s. These relations are continually redefined and transformed due to the changing interests and priorities of the EU. The colonial history with North African countries and the initiatives by the Mediterranean members of the EU have contributed to the development of Mediterranean relations (Cardwell, 2011, 224-230). Different processes under a common umbrella have been observed for bilateral relations. The successes and failures of these policies are subject to debate. Critical authors often perceive these policies as a result of the EU's efforts to construct a new region in the area with a Euro-centric perspective (Cebeci, 2017, 6).

In these established relations, for instance, based on the higher number of economic and financial partnership clauses compared to political stability and human rights clauses in the declaration signed during the Barcelona Process, it is argued that the EU continues traditional center-periphery relations in the Mediterranean region, prioritizing economic relationships in its dealings with the region (Yeşilyurt Gündüz, 2012, 152-154).

When considering the EU's relations with the Mediterranean region, it is crucial to take into account the complex factors. Economically, prioritized issues for the EU at its southern borders include the development of trade, development aid, and migration governance. Assistance to the Mediterranean region is provided within the framework of the ENP and Cooperation for the Mediterranean. Although the aid is theoretically based on the principle of conditionality, partnership agreements are not suspended. For example, in progress reports for the year 2010, it is observed that external aid increased to North African countries (Tunisia, Egypt, Morocco) despite no progress in terms of democratization (Kınacıoğlu, 2015, 146). Another issue that looms over Europe's Mediterranean policy like the Sword of Damocles is the Arab-Israeli conflict. The unresolved instability in the region hampers Mediterranean Policy. While the EU, as an actor advocating for a two-state solution and providing financial aid to the Palestinian Authority, gains significant credibility among Arab states, the ongoing conflicts in the region have a direct impact on the EU's Mediterranean Policy (Aşkar-Karakır and Aknur, 2015, 35-36).

The Barcelona Process, initiated in 1995, aims to strengthen relations between Europe and Southern Mediterranean countries. This process seeks to establish a Euro-Mediterranean relationship contributing to peace and security in the region (Euro-Mediterranean Conference, 27-28.11.1995). In 2008, the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) was launched. Established by a decision taken by Heads of State and Government in Paris, this union is an operational institution that strengthens regional dialogue and supports projects directly impacting citizens' lives. The UfM does not deny the achievements of the Barcelona Process but is established in continuity with this process. In fact, the title of the first policy document published in 2008 is "Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean" (European Commission, 2008, COM(2008) 319 final).

3.2. Southern Neighborhood Policy Beyond 2020: *"Renewed Partnership with the Southern Neighborhood: A New Agenda for the Mediterranean – 2021"*

On February 9, 2021, the European Commission and the High Representative adopted a joint communication to the European Parliament and Council regarding a Renewed Partnership with the Southern Neighborhood. On April 19, 2021, the Council approved the renewed partnership to unlock the economic potential of the region and address 'common challenges.' The title and content of the policy document are ambitious; however, criticisms exist, suggesting it does not promise a new agenda. According to Mark Furness, the transition emphasized the risks associated with the types of

reforms encouraged by the EU in neighboring countries, the incentives the EU is ready to offer, and the challenges of standing firm on its principles when needed (Furness, February 23, 2021, ETTG).

Indeed, at the beginning of the document, emphasis is placed on the underdevelopment of the Southern Neighborhood and its failure to meet expectations. The overall situation of the region is summarized as follows (European Commission, 2021: 1, JOIN (2021) 2 final):

"In the Southern Neighborhood, economic growth has failed to keep up with demographic growth. The region has one of the lowest levels of regional economic integration globally. Unsustainable natural resource use and climate change threaten water, food, and energy access, accelerating desertification and biodiversity loss, endangering lives and livelihoods. Significant economic and gender inequalities persist, and governments struggle to meet the expectations of today's youth."

As understood from this text, the EU's Mediterranean relations, pursued for over twenty-five years since the Barcelona Process, have clearly failed. However, the Union's mistakes in this matter are not acknowledged in the text, and new policy frameworks such as green transformation and digitalization are imposed on a region that is already underdeveloped.

The central focus of the text is sustainable development. The development discussions in the text encompass economic, social, and environmental dimensions, emphasizing development strategies for the region. Regional cooperation is another crucial point. The discussions in the text also highlight the security needs of the region. Particularly, the text touches upon the need for regional stability, especially in Libya, by working in collaboration with UN forces. The primary areas of focus in the new policy document are digitalization and green transformation. The "New Agenda" aims for a green, digital, resilient, and fair recovery guided by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement, and the European Green Deal. Security concerns, terrorism, migration, border protection, and instability are addressed. A separate section titled "Peace and Security" has been opened, emphasizing the necessity of ensuring security in Sub-Saharan Africa. It is stated that actions will be taken to ensure security and peace within the framework of international law and norms.

3.3. The Eastern Partnership

Presenting the Eastern Partnership expenditures in a way that would not create an extra burden on the Union budget was an effort to endorse the "eastern dimension" idea that Poland had been trying to promote since its enlargement negotiations as an EU member in 2004. The foundation of Poland's advocacy for the eastern dimension in the early 2000s was its perception of the Russian threat within its borders. Former Polish Foreign Minister Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz emphasized his country's unique knowledge about the eastern countries in his speech in February 2002, arguing that Poland could not only be a bridge between the EU and Eastern Europe but also a strong advocate for the region. During this period, Poland limited its cooperation to Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, and Russia. Additionally, it argued that each country should be approached differently, considering their individual capabilities and goals (Piskorska, 2013: 66). This perspective was in line with the thoughts expressed in documents circulating within the EU at that time, and eventually, the ENP framework was outlined more comprehensively in 2004 than Poland had anticipated. With the budget allocated for the ENP, Poland needed to act more modestly and cautiously.

Poland's initiative coincided with the period when France held the presidency and sought support for the Mediterranean initiative. At a time when a new agreement had just been reached for the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), Poland and Sweden presented an Eastern plan that would involve all member states and establish close ties with the Commission. The cautious approach of Poland and Sweden, along with their inclusion of "old" members in this project, significantly facilitated their support. Notably, the strategic priority of Poland, which was the "membership of Ukraine," was not emphasized in the proposed plan (Copsey and Pomorska, 2013: 15). This period also witnessed member states voting in favor of each other and making concessions in their foreign policies to achieve their desired outcomes. According to Wodka, France's approval of the Eastern Partnership had

largely tactical motives: to garner support from Poland and other Central European countries for the UfM project (2010: 154). Poland seized this opportunity to play a "balancing" role and implement the Eastern initiative. Consequently, Germany's reservations about the prominence of the Mediterranean were alleviated, and France secured support from Poland, ensuring backing for the Mediterranean initiative (Adamczyk, 2010: 200). Moreover, this plan, like France's efforts for the UfM, was not just a prestige display by a single country

In the declaration of the first Eastern Partnership Summit held in May 2009, a separate heading was opened in the name of multilateralism. There are seven articles under the title "Focus on Multilateralism" of the document consisting of a total of twenty-one articles, so one-third of the policy is allocated to how multilateralism will be established (Council of European Union, 8435/09, May 7, 2009). The difference between EaP and UfM is that the six countries included in EaP are also part of AKP/ENP. UfM, on the other hand, accommodates a total of forty-three countries, surpassing AKP/ENP. The importance of UfM in the formation process of EaP to be discussed in the Southern Neighborhood section is not only a trigger for a consensus within the Union around the same dates but also serves as an example of the necessity of EaP. On the other hand, the difference of EaP from the Mediterranean region is expressed by the Polish Foreign Minister as follows:

"In Poland, we distinguish between the southern and eastern neighbors of the European Union: while there are neighbors of Europe in the south, in the east, there are European neighbors of the European Union, and if they meet certain criteria, they can apply for membership one day."

With the Eastern Partnership Initiative, each region, the Eastern and Southern, developed its own policy, diverging from the European Neighborhood Policy's attempt to merge them. In the subsequent years' strategic documents of the ENP, separate references to these two regions began to appear. The Eastern Partnership focused on four key areas of cooperation (Ahmedov, 2015:109): a. Democracy, b. Good governance and stability, c. Economic integration and integration into the EU acquis and policy, energy security, d. Civil society mobility and people-to-people contacts.

3.4. Eastern Partnership Policy Beyond 2020: "Reinforcing Resilience - an Eastern Partnership that delivers for all"

In 2020, a new vision document was published for the Eastern Partnership countries, emphasizing "results for everyone" in its title. It is evident from this document that this new vision signifies a significant shift for both the EU and the Eastern Partnership countries. The document highlights the "20 Deliverables for 2020" framework agreed upon at the 2017 Eastern Partnership Summit. It is stated that this initiative produces tangible results for society and makes a difference in priority areas. The initiative sets goals for a stronger economy, stronger connections, and a stronger society, and progresses in these areas (European Commission, 2020: 2, JOIN(2020) 7 final). The table below summarizes the 2020 goals:

Table 1: Eastern Partnership Goals Beyond 2020

Goals	Objectives
Stronger Economy	Investment and improvement of the business environment, unlocking the growth potential of small and medium-sized enterprises, addressing gaps in access to financial infrastructure, and supporting regional trade
Stronger Governance	Strengthening the rule of law, enhancing mechanisms to combat corruption, supporting public administration reform, and strengthening security cooperation.

Goals	Objectives
Stronger Connections	Improving transportation, increasing energy supply security, enhancing energy efficiency, increasing the use of renewable energy, and supporting adaptation to the environment and climate change
Stronger Society	Progress in visa liberalization dialogues and partnerships for human mobility, investing in the skills and employability of young people, establishing the Eastern Partnership European School, and integrating research and innovation systems between the Eastern Partnership and the EU.

The objectives outlined in Table 1 serve as a comprehensive roadmap, encapsulating the Eastern Partnership's unwavering dedication to tackling diverse challenges and propelling collective well-being. The collaboration framework, extending beyond 2020, reveals a strategic and integrated approach that intricately weaves together economic, governance, connectivity, and societal dimensions. This interconnected strategy is designed to yield enduring positive impacts across the expansive Eastern Partnership region.

These objectives reflect the Eastern Partnership's efforts to achieve tangible results in different areas and create positive impacts for society. 2020 Eastern Partnership Document outlines the long-term policy objectives for the Eastern Partnership beyond 2020, where the EU, member states, and partner countries will collaborate in the following areas (European Commission, 2020: JOIN (2020) 7 final):

1. *Collaborate for resilient, sustainable, and integrated economies.*
2. *Collaborate for accountable institutions, the rule of law, and security.*
3. *Collaborate for environmental and climate resilience.*
4. *Collaborate for resilient digital transformation.*
5. *Collaborate for resilient, fair, and inclusive societies.*

In essence, these collaborative objectives embody a forward-looking vision for the Eastern Partnership, signaling a commitment to comprehensive development and resilience. By addressing the diverse facets of societal progress, the Eastern Partnership aspires to forge a path towards a more stable, sustainable, and prosperous future for the region.

4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the dynamic landscape of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) is underscored by its adaptability to evolving circumstances and the adept incorporation of changing needs within the EU, Eastern Partnership, and Southern Neighbourhood regions. The strategic foresight demonstrated by the European Commission, the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, and the Vice-President of the European Commission has enabled the formulation of flexible visions that account for unforeseen challenges, including the unprecedented impact of the global pandemic.

Throughout the covered period, a series of consultation meetings, future-oriented planning, and decisive actions have transpired, culminating in substantial measures such as legal reforms, digital transformation initiatives, and ambitious green economy plans. The Eastern Partnership Initiative, with its outlined objectives for 2020 and beyond, stands as a testament to the commitment to progress, reinforced by promised incentives like financial support and the fortification of civil society to attain these set goals. Meanwhile, the updated Southern Neighbourhood Partnership embraces multifaceted

objectives, including the fortification of both bilateral and multilateral relationships, financial incentives, green transformation endeavors, and digitization initiatives.

At the heart of these diverse endeavors, a unifying thread emerges in the form of common policy themes spanning economic cooperation, the promotion of democratic values, security collaboration, and steadfast support for regional development. These overarching objectives epitomize the European Union's steadfast dedication to fostering closer cooperation with neighboring nations and ensuring the stability of regional development. While regional differentiations have been strategically employed to cater to specific needs, the underlying objectives have remained steadfast, with the means adapted to the unique demands of each context.

Analyzing these developments, it becomes evident that the ENP undergoes regional metamorphoses, reflecting a nuanced approach that accommodates diverse agendas. Despite regional variations, there exists a notable continuity in crucial areas such as cooperation, security assurance, and the upholding of fundamental values. Consequently, the European Union emerges as a transformative actor, driving positive change through the ENP.

However, a nuanced observation surfaces regarding the application of policies in neighboring regions, revealing a potential incongruity with the principle of *equality*. The EU, at times, appears to assert a certain level of superiority over its designated "*partner*" countries. This apparent imbalance calls for continued scrutiny and a commitment to fostering genuinely equal and reciprocal relationships as the EU seeks to navigate the complex terrain of regional diplomacy. In the pursuit of a truly collaborative and mutually beneficial partnership, it is imperative for the EU to address these disparities and further refine its approach to ensure the sustainability and success of the European Neighbourhood Policy.

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