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## Securing EU neighbourhood – an ideational approach to EU-neighbourhood relations

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Abstract:

This paper analyses the interrelationship between internal and external security discourses in the field of European Union's neighbourhood policy. The European Union can be observed to actively use security concepts developed in the internal policy-field of Justice and Home Affairs as guiding principles of its foreign policy. This development can be traced at least to the beginning of the enlargement process in the turn of the 1990s. The paper firstly examines how those discourses infuse the new domain of neighbourhood policy that starts to take shape in the early 2000s. It concludes that especially since the European Security Strategy (2003) started to talk of the neighbourhood as a security issue, the policy can be considered to have become an inherent part of the Union's security priorities.

Secondly, the paper examines from a theoretical point of view the role of ideas for institutional identity-building. Using the empirical analysis of the neighbourhood discourses as its departure point, the paper considers what this particular type of discourse can tell about the political entity that has emitted it. The research thus rejects the rationalist assumption of separable structure and agency. Instead it subscribes to the discursive institutionalist theory according to which institutions themselves are ideational structures that cannot be treated separately from actors who constitute them. Building its argument on the theses of critical security studies, the work concludes that by conceptualising the neighbourhood in terms of security threat the Union constructs itself as a political community with societal accountability.

## Introduction

The political system governing an increasingly wide field of European politics, the European Union (EU), has proved a difficult subject for political theory. In its present form it seems to defy definitions since it cannot be unambiguously conceptualized as either an international organization or as a state in the traditional understanding. Accordingly, a typical way of conceptualizing the EU is to describe it as being one of its kind, a *sui generis*. This conceptualization is, however, unsatisfactory if one wants to compare the EU with other known forms of political organization and to learn more about its behaviour. Governance theories of the EU have addressed this shortcoming by analysing the EU in terms of political community (Hix 1994, 2005). Their problem is however, that while elaborately describing the composition of the Union's decision-making structure they do not say much about the political nature of the system. Social constructivist approaches to European integration have, for their part, thoroughly addressed the issue of European political identity and its constructed nature (Christiansen et al. 2001). What seems to be missing in these approaches as well, however, is an effort to discuss the implications of the observed identity-building patterns to the definition of the EU as a political community.

This paper tries to grasp something of the EU's nature by looking at the way it addresses its neighbourhood. This will be done by combining explanations from the discursive institutionalist theory and from the critical approaches to security studies. The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) provides a particularly fruitful ground for analysis because it is an original creation of the EU and differs significantly from the traditional modes associated with foreign policy activity. The way in which the Union formulates this policy can thus be taken as a unique manifestation of the role the Union has envisaged for itself both in relation to the neighbouring countries and in relation to its constituency. In principle any features of the discourse produced by the EU in this context can be taken as examples of how it wants to portray itself. In the specific case of the ENP, as is demonstrated in the empirical part, the most prominent discourse concerns issues of security. Indeed, especially in the aftermath of the 2004 Eastern enlargement and since the broadening of the Union's internal security agenda through the Hague Programme (also in 2004), the policies carried out in the neighbourhood have become increasingly linked with concerns about security and stability. This observation, however, calls for a few reserves. Despite a focus on security, the paper does not subscribe to the neo-realist claim according to which threats and their sources are objectively generated and external to the subjects conceptualizing them (Glarbo 2001). At the same time it does by no means deny the EU's present geopolitical situation in which it is surrounded both to the east and to the south by countries easily prone to either internal or external conflict. Nonetheless, this paper maintains that a geopolitical situation cannot in itself be expected to

translate into an automatised political response. To the contrary, it perceives any approach adopted by the EU not as automatic or fortuitous but as based in rational calculation of the situation in question. However, the rationality of the EU is not believed to be based on any universal grounds. Instead, this paper argues, that it reveals the internal logic of the Union thus being a telling example of the way it identifies itself. For this reason the empirical analysis of the neighbourhood documents plays a crucial role and is placed in the first part of the paper.

By looking at policy documents, the paper will demonstrate that the discourse used by the Union can reveal a lot in terms of the Union's political identity. The study proceeds in two parts. In the first part, the paper will focus on discerning the dominant discourse emerging from the documents. Concretely, it will study how the Union conceptualizes its neighbourhood. It will show that in its way of addressing the neighbourhood the EU goes further than a traditional international organization because it formulates a cause for its action in terms of a common purpose. More precisely, the whole policy is justified through the pursuit of internal security. The second part will discuss the implications of such conceptualization for the identity of the European Union. The paper presents two main claims. Firstly it argues that the EU constructs itself as an independent political community. Evidence for this argument are several. They include, firstly, the Union's ambition to formulate a specific policy domain distinct from the more traditional type of foreign policy practised by states. Secondly, the Union's way of addressing the neighbourhood through security discourse shows its willingness to assert itself on the international arena. And thirdly, the way in which the Union has decided to use its internal security agenda as a motivating factor for external relations gives grounds to argue that it attempts to surpass the member states and to gain legitimacy directly from its citizens. The second analytical claim of the paper consists in saying that the EU constructs its political identity on a societal basis. A novel observation is the fact that the discourse legitimating the neighbourhood policy actually relies on threat images targeted at the level of societies. The way in which citizens' interests, and not those of the member states', are placed at the centre of the Union's political identity constitute a strong evidence in proving this point.

## **Part I**

### **The European Neighbourhood Policy and the policy documents**

European Union's policies addressing the neighbourhood can in general terms be classified as belonging to the Union's foreign policies. The distinction between foreign policies of the Union and other related policies is, however, ambiguous as is the distribution of powers and responsibilities in the domain. Due to its incremental development throughout the integration history, the field of foreign policy-making has not been explicitly codified to the same extent as most other EU policy fields. EU foreign policy actually developed for a long time through informal cooperation before gaining treaty status, and relied more on shared understanding than legally binding rules. As a consequence, the institutionalization of foreign policy in European integration was mainly achieved through the daily work of officials working in the field instead of high-level inter-state bargaining (Smith 2001). Although this feature of the EU foreign policy practice has now significantly diminished, member state governments still do not entirely control the domain and the Brussels bureaucracy continues to play a central role.

Indeed, even with increased codification between 1993-1999<sup>1</sup>, and the introduction of the new Common Foreign and Security Policy pillar, the foreign policy of the EU still continued to be a mix of intergovernmental and community approach with a complex division of competencies. For instance, most agreements with third parties were still mixed agreements covering policy areas that fell under both the EC and the member states' competencies (Keukeleire and MacNaughtan 2008: 104). The pillar structure was eventually abandoned on December 1<sup>st</sup> 2009 with the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon. The most significant innovation of the Treaty of Lisbon from the point of view of foreign policy-making was the creation of the position of the new 'High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy'. The purpose of this position is to achieve greater coherence across the whole domain of external relations and to overcome institutional fragmentation. Most essentially, the High Representative, assisted by the European External Action Service, is expected to streamline the EU external policies by bringing together all those involved in foreign affairs<sup>2</sup> (Dagand 2008: 5-9). During the period under study (late 1990s to present) the European Council, the Council and the European Commission were all actively involved in the shaping of the Union's external relations making it sometimes difficult to trace the origins of the new ideas brought to the policy field. Thus the paper analyses the statements made by these actors as belonging to the same general EU external relations discourse.

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<sup>1</sup> Foreign policy only first gained treaty status with the 1986 Single European Act. The Treaty on European Union (1993) and the Treaty of Amsterdam (1998) subsequently consolidated the institutional basis of foreign policy cooperation of the EU.

<sup>2</sup> The External Action Service hosts officials from the Council, the Commission and the diplomatic services of Member States.

### *The institutional basis of cooperation in the field of neighbourhood policies*

The somewhat nebulous development of the European Union's foreign policy structure also influences the way the policies are formulated towards third countries closest to the Union. The European Neighbourhood Policy is a prime example of the mixing up of both internal and external policy objectives as well as internal and external policy tools. The ENP was first formally initiated in 2003 through the Commission Communication on Wider Europe which laid down the basic principles behind the policy and was later developed with a strategy paper in 2004<sup>3</sup>. It has since been the main framework through which the Union has organised its relations with its immediate neighbours. Officially, the policy's objective is to provide for a deeper political relationship and economic integration with the partner countries without offering them the prospect of full membership (COM 2003a).

Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCAs) establish the legal and institutional framework for bilateral relations between the EU and the partner countries. Based on a common structure they address a broad range of issues covering political and economic reforms, co-operation in the area of justice, liberty and security, infrastructure networks and people-to-people contacts. In practice, the main implementation instruments of the ENP are the Action Plans that aim at explaining what the PCA commitments consist of, and how they should be complied with (Hillion 2005). Action Plans are political instruments used for listing reforms and steering relations between the EU and its neighbours in all areas of cooperation and are formally agreed upon in cooperation between the EU and each partner country. The advancement of the ENP policies is reviewed by the Commission through ENP progress reports that offer both a general as well as country specific reports<sup>4</sup>.

The set up of the neighbourhood policy as well as the tools used for its implementation have to a large extent been derived from existing EU policies and in particular from the experiences of the Eastern enlargement (Kelley 2006; Gebhard 2007; Sasse 2008). Indeed at its initiation, the ENP mainly complemented rather than superseded the existing bilateral Partnership and Cooperation Agreements that were concluded in the late 1990s with the CIS countries. As a consequence, the relations with the neighbours were developed mainly in the domain of the former first pillar and remained largely a contractual type of foreign policy instead of developing into a full-fledged CFSP

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<sup>3</sup> The policy is currently directed towards 16 neighbouring states (Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus (observer), Egypt, Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya (observer), Moldova, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, Syria, Tunisia and Ukraine). Russia, despite being the EU's largest neighbour is not currently involved in the ENP actions but has a specific status as a strategic partner. (Commission's web page on ENP: [http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/index_en.htm); last consulted 16.11.2010)

<sup>4</sup> Progress reports have been issued approximately once a year since December 2006 (the following ones being issued in April 2008, April 2009 and May 2010).

action. The policy was managed through the European Commission's Directorate-General for External Relations. To overcome what was perceived as a lack of political significance, attempts were made to elevate the ENP to a higher political awareness and relevance. These initiatives have included the creation of the Union for the Mediterranean as well as the Eastern Partnership initiative in 2008.

Similarly to the foreign policy field in general, the status of the European Neighbourhood Policy was supposed to change following the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon. With the new treaty, issues of the Commission Directorate-General for External Relations were due to be transferred under the authority of the new post of the High Representative. The European Commission President José Manuel Barroso moved, however, the European Neighbourhood Policy from the External Relations to the Enlargement portfolio thus keeping it within the Commission. As a consequence, the ENP has to date remained under the competence of the Commission. Barroso's decision has been particularly deplored for the problems it poses to the much needed combination of supranational with intergovernmental instruments in the ENP (Misteli 2009). It serves, however, as an interesting indication of the way the Union sees its role in relation to the policy field.

#### *How the neighbourhood documents conceptualize the policy*

The content of the European Neighbourhood Policy has been expressed through a number of policy documents officially starting from the Commission Communication on Wider Europe in 2003. However, since the enlargement process lasted over a decade (from 1993 to 2004), one could have expected some sort of analysis about the its external implications. Quite evidently, the process was about to extend the frontiers of the Union, and border it in the east with a set of new countries. As a matter of fact, documents preceding the actual formulation of the neighbourhood policy can give some indications about what the Union perceived as essential in its relationship with the neighbours. For example the Presidency Conclusions of the Tampere European Council (October 1999) that set down the "milestones" for a Union of Freedom, Security and Justice also contained a section on external action. In that document external relations of the Union, including the neighbourhood policies, are subjected to the goal of building an area of freedom, security and justice. The document states that: "Justice and Home Affairs concerns must be integrated in the definition and implementation of other Union policies and activities" (European Council 1999). However, the European Council does not develop a more elaborate vision on the role of the neighbours at this stage. In general terms though, and despite the self-evident implications that the enlargement was about to bring, EU documents did not address the question of a neighbourhood policy comprehensively during the enlargement negotiations.

The idea of a neighbourhood policy was first approved by the Copenhagen European Council in December 2002. The Presidency Conclusions of the European Council, that also marked the successful conclusion of the enlargement negotiations, illustrate well the neighbourhood discourse on the eve of enlargement. They duly acknowledge the new geographical situation of the Union but do not yet formulate any advanced plan for the new relationship. They merely assert that the enlargement presents an "important opportunity to take forward relations with neighbouring countries based on shared political and economic values" (European Council 2002: 6). Actually, the European Council appears less than visionary when it promises to encourage and support "the further development of cross-border and regional cooperation inter alia through enhancing transport infrastructure, including appropriate instruments, with and among neighbouring countries in order to develop the regions' potential to the full." (ibid: 7). The substance of the proposed cooperation tools is not further explained. So the neighbourhood in the Copenhagen Presidency Conclusions appears merely an area whose existence is recognized but for which no plan is yet developed<sup>5</sup>. Indeed the European Council expresses its interest in a proposal that the Commission and the Council Secretary-General / High Representative are expected to formulate.

The relative insignificance of the neighbourhood at the end of the enlargement process would not necessarily be so surprising if it wasn't for the brusque change of tone that happened in subsequent EU discourse. As implied by the Copenhagen Presidency Conclusions, the Commission and the High Representative were expected to present a more elaborate plan for a new neighbourhood policy. The planning of the policy had actually already started with a joint letter on the Common Foreign and Security Policy on Wider Europe given by the High Representative Javier Solana and the Commissioner for External Relations Chris Patten in August 2002. Already at this stage it is noteworthy that relations with the neighbours were essentially conceptualized in terms of security. Indeed, as Cremona and Hillion (2006: 4) note, the security dimension of the ENP was not merely an incidental component but was, since the beginning of the planning process, fundamental to the policy as a whole.

The subsequent documents and texts dealing with the EU's neighbourhood reveal the full scale of the security concerns associated with the new neighbours<sup>6</sup>. The tone is set by the launching document of the European Neighbourhood Policy *Wider Europe A Neighbourhood* which starts by

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<sup>5</sup> The document does, however, outline the geographical scope of the new neighbourhood by mentioning Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus and the Mediterranean countries as the future partners of "enhanced relations" (European Council 2002: 7).

<sup>6</sup> In this paper I focus only on the documents that can be regarded as covering the policy field in its entirety and thus will not analyse country-specific Partnership and Cooperation / Association Agreements, Action Plans or Progress Reports.



conceptualizing the neighbourhood as a challenge<sup>7</sup> and by declaring that: "Over the coming decade and beyond, the Union's capacity to provide security, stability and sustainable development to its citizens will no longer be distinguishable from its interest in close cooperation with the neighbours." (COM 2003a: 3). The EU shows itself as carrying a responsibility towards its citizens in terms of security and economic development and justifies the engagement in the neighbourhood precisely through this internal responsibility. It characterises the neighbours as all sharing a set of "challenges and opportunities" somewhat cryptically termed as "proximity, prosperity and poverty". What the document actually means is that the geographic proximity of the neighbouring countries increases the Union's concerns about the appropriate way of border management, and that the Union wants to enhance prosperity and decrease poverty in the hope that it would replace conflict with stability: "The EU must act to promote the regional and subregional cooperation and integration that are preconditions for political stability, economic development and the reduction of poverty and social divisions in our shared environment." (ibid.). Indeed, as noted in the text, political instability and conflict can lead to negative effects that are not only domestic: "so long as conflicts persist there is a danger of spill over" (ibid: 9) both within the region and to the EU. The "new vision" and the "new offer" proposed by the policy paper maintain the EU-centric and security-conscious approach. The EU proposals are marked by two overarching assumptions. Firstly, the approach is based on the faith in favourable effects of economic integration<sup>8</sup> realized through the harmonization of trading markets. And secondly it draws its inspiration from the Union's justice and home affairs policies that serve as a basis for formulating the "common security threats". As a whole, the first official EU document on the European Neighbourhood Policy can be described as relatively pragmatic and not overly value-laden. It does, however, clearly show that the EU sees its relations with the neighbours mainly in terms of security and threat containment.

It can be argued that the Commission Communication started a trend that subsequent EU statements only reinforced. For example, the European Council that had previously mostly addressed the question of the neighbourhood through the more positive idea of avoiding dividing lines in Europe, formulated its new vision the Presidency Conclusions of Thessaloniki (June 2003): "[The neighbours'] stability and prosperity is inextricably linked to ours. To reinforce our shared values and promote our common interests, we have been developing new policies toward Wider Europe, our New Neighbourhood." (European Council 2003a). The guidelines for the implementation of the European Neighbourhood Instrument (a new financial instrument of the policy) illustrate the matter further with a particularly articulate security discourse:

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<sup>7</sup> The first chapter of the document is headlined: "Wider Europe: Accepting the Challenge" (COM 2003a: 3)

<sup>8</sup> The document states that the long term goal of the policy is to achieve a level of integration between the EU and the neighbours that would resemble the Union's current relationship with the European Economic Area (ibid: 15).

[...] [T]he new opportunities brought by enlargement will be accompanied by new challenges: existing differences in living standards across the Union's borders with its neighbours may be accentuated as a result of faster growth in the new Member States than in their external neighbours; common challenges in fields such as the environment, public health, and the prevention of and fight against organised crime will have to be addressed; efficient and secure border management will be essential both to protect our shared borders and to facilitate legitimate trade and passage. (COM 2003b: 4)

The Union's objective to contribute with the neighbourhood policy to increased mutual stability, security and prosperity has subsequently been reiterated on several occasions (see e.g. Council of the European Union 2004: 11). The most significant move by which the neighbourhood was transferred to the realm of security happened, however, with the publishing of the European Security Strategy (December 2003).

The European Security Strategy (ESS) is the first document that wrote out the EU's security priorities in a coherent and comprehensive way. Drafted (just like the ENP) by the EU High Representative Javier Solana, it was a response to feelings that the Union needed a common expression of its ambitions in the field of security and defence policy. It was also seen as an opening for a new debate among the Member States about the Union's security identity (Berenskoetter 2005: 73). From this perspective the document carries more weight than the more action-oriented policy documents. It is thus especially interesting to see how the document speaks of the neighbours and of the approach the Union should take towards them. After situating the Union in the contemporary global security context, the document enumerates five key threats: terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, regional conflicts, state failure and organized crime. Addressing those threats is then (quite predictably) advanced as the first of the Union's "strategic objectives". What is interesting, however, is that the second strategic objective formulated by the strategy is "building security in our neighbourhood" (European Council 2003b: 7)<sup>9</sup>. The priority of building security in the neighbourhood is quite clearly defined as stemming from the Union's own security-related interests:

It is in the European interest that countries on our borders are well-governed. Neighbours who are engaged in a violent conflict, weak states where organised crime flourishes, dysfunctional societies or exploding population growth all pose problems for Europe. (ibid.)

The way in which the strategy associates the addressing of threats and the neighbourhood policy

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<sup>9</sup> However, the ESS takes a rather large view of the neighbourhood area including for instance the Southern Caucasus which was not addressed by the actual ENP policy until a later stage. On the other hand, the strategy does not elaborate on the means of the potential "security building" in the neighbourhood.

can lead to the conclusion that both are equally important for countering the key threats faced by the Union. Relations with the neighbourhood are thus firmly placed in the realm of security and defence policy. Indeed, as has been paraphrased by Biscop, the Union can almost be heard thinking: "a stable neighbourhood is a necessity for our own security *and* promoting stability in our area is our duty, since we are the local actor with the means to do so" (2004: 19, emphasis in original). He thus proposes the application of the concept of regional security complexes to the European Union and its neighbours (especially those on the European continent) (ibid.). The possibilities of that theory will be observed in the next chapter.

After the European Security Strategy, the EU's neighbourhood policy became to an increasing extent rooted in the security discourse. The European Commission's Strategy Paper for the European Neighbourhood Policy (April 2004) states that besides tackling the new geopolitical environment created by the enlargement, the ENP is also a response to the objectives set by the ESS. Moreover, it repeats the EU's "vision" of a ring of friendly neighbours that, if successful, "will bring enormous gains to all involved in terms of increased stability, security and well being." (COM 2004: 5)<sup>10</sup>. In addition, the Strategy Paper links the Union's internal security agenda and the neighbourhood policy in a previously unprecedented way. Whereas the earlier ENP documents had only made brief allusions to the Justice and Home Affairs priorities of the Union<sup>11</sup>, the Strategy Paper uses the concept much more widely and to an extent to make it look as one of the policy's main sources of inspiration<sup>12</sup>. It appears for the first time in the chapter sketching the principles and scope of the new policy: "The ENP can also help the Union's objectives in the area of Justice and Home Affairs [...]" (COM 2004: 6). The association between the Union's internal security agenda and the neighbourhood policy is further spelled out when Justice and Home Affairs are presented as one of the headlines that will figure in the country-specific Action Plans. Without hiding its preference for firm action against illegal migration, human and drugs trafficking and terrorism, the EU presents the issues as "matters of common interest" (ibid.: 16-17). Finally, an extension of the Union's security agenda can be detected in the way in which the document speaks out the Union's commitment to a set of values. The document reminds that these values<sup>13</sup> are "common to the

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<sup>10</sup> The administrative language of the Commission also bears a military connotation when it conceptualizes the ENP officials as "Wider Europe Task Force" (COM 2003c; COM 2004: 2)

<sup>11</sup> The *Wider Europe* communication only mentions the existing Justice and Home Affairs Action Plan for Ukraine as an example of an approach that *could* be taken (COM 2003a: 12). Similarly the ENPI guidelines also only mention Justice and Home Affairs in passing and as one of the many actions that *could* be part of the "Neighbourhood Programmes" *proposed* by the Commission. (COM 2003b: 8). The European Security Strategy does not link Justice and Home Affairs issues and the neighbourhood in any explicit way.

<sup>12</sup> The term is mentioned six times (once as a headline) in 29 pages of text as opposed to one or zero times in earlier documents.

<sup>13</sup> In this document they are listed as follows: respect for human dignity, liberty, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights (COM 2004: 12).

Member States" and that the neighbours "have pledged adherence to fundamental human rights and freedoms, through their adherence to a number of multilateral treaties as well as through their bilateral agreements with the EU." (COM 2004: 12). The EU reminds the partner countries on two other occasions (in the same sub-chapter) about their commitment to these values and makes clear that their adoption is a condition for an improved relationship: "The level of the EU's ambition in developing links with each partner through the ENP will take into account the extent to which common values are effectively shared." (ibid.: 13). It almost seems that the Union which sees itself as a value community is fearful of partners that do not comply with its norms; an issue that will be further discussed in the next chapter.

The internal security priorities based on the Justice and Home Affairs agenda did not only enter with force the realm of the ENP. The connection was also made the other way around, i.e. documents outlining the Union's internal security policy started to show increased interest in the external dimension of this policy area. The EU had launched in November 2004 the so called Hague Programme, a five-year programme that outlined the agenda for strengthening the "area of freedom, security and justice"<sup>14</sup>. In October 2005 the programme was complemented by a new strategy from the Commission that highlighted the interconnectedness of internal and external security questions<sup>15</sup>. The document called *A Strategy on the External Dimension of the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice* concluded that the Union's own policies within the domain had "matured considerably", and for that reason it was necessary to also address the "external challenges" faced by the area<sup>16</sup>. The strategy recognises that: "External policies have a crucial role in promoting security and stability." (COM 2005: 5). Besides the enlargement and pre-accession policy during which candidate countries must directly adopt EU legislation, the Union sees the Neighbourhood Policy as one of the main policy instruments by which it can achieve its goals of increased internal security. Indeed justice, freedom and security are "significant components" of the Actions Plans agreed with the neighbours. Thus, not only does the EU securitize its policies towards the neighbourhood, it also extends its domestic security policies beyond its borders to the neighbours: "The main tenets of a strategy covering external aspects of the EU's policy on freedom, security and justice are largely in place, notably as regards neighbouring countries which are the first natural partners for closer cooperation." (ibid.: 9). Similarly, in a 2006 document called *Europe in the World – Some Practical Proposals for Greater Coherence, Effectiveness and Visibility* the

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<sup>14</sup> Already initially drafted in the 1999 Tampere "milestones", see above.

<sup>15</sup> Concern about the external dimension of internal security was not entirely new for the EU since it was already expressed at the European Council in Feira in 2000. However the Commission strategy in 2005 was the first document that took a more principled view of the issue by linking it to the Union's norm-based political objectives.

<sup>16</sup> The challenges outlined by the document were the by now familiar ones of terrorism, organised crime, illegal immigration and weak states (COM 2005: 3-4).

Commission notes that: "Increasingly the EU's internal policies [...] impact on international relationships and play a vital part in the EU's external influence. Conversely, many of Europe's internal policy goals depend on the effective use of external policies." (COM 2006a: 2).

So already the two first years (2003-2005) of the European Neighbourhood Policy showed that security-related concerns were one of the main motivating factors for the Union to pursue a closer relationship with the neighbours. The subsequent documents did not change this trend. In December 2006 the Commission published a communication on "Strengthening of the European Neighbourhood Policy" together with assessments of the partner countries' progress (i.e. progress reports). Listing both achievements and things to improve, the text argues for the necessity of strengthening the policy because: "[The problems faced by the neighbours] risk producing major spillovers for the EU, such as illegal immigration, unreliable energy supplies, environmental degradation and terrorism." (COM 2006b: 2). These risks serve thus as an impetus for enhanced measures. In practice, however, the proposals made by the document remain remarkably moderate and focus on traditional "low-policy" EU methods (e.g. enhanced economic and trade relations, facilitation of mobility, people-to-people contacts, etc.). The Council, however, in its assessment of the Commission communication, defines the strategic aims and principles of the policy in much sharper terms:

There is a clear geopolitical imperative to foster stability, the rule of law and human rights, better governance and economic modernization in our neighbourhood. This is critical to address our strategic objectives, to tackle the challenges we face and to reap the substantial benefits of closer political and economic ties. [...] Political instability and weak governance in our neighbourhood could impact on the EU. At the same time, risks to Europe's energy security, environmental threats and rising flows of illegal migration, to name but a few, also have a growing influence on our security and prosperity. (Council of the European Union 2007: 2).

Indeed, the Council literally conceptualizes the ENP as a security policy by stating that: "The strengthened ENP is thus a security and prosperity policy for Europe's citizens." (ibid.: 3).

Since 2006 the production of general framework documents regarding the European Neighbourhood Policy has slowed down. The Council commented on the evolution of the policy in two conclusions (June 2007 and February 2008) and the Commission published its latest strategy paper *A Strong European Neighbourhood Policy* in December 2007. In addition, the Commission has published yearly progress reports as well as working papers concerning some specific aspect of the policy<sup>17</sup>. The European Security Strategy was also reviewed in 2008 by the High Representative

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<sup>17</sup> E.g. A paper on "Governance Facility" was published in February 2008 to explain the EU's priorities in the field of governance.

Javier Solana. However, the proposals made in the review focused on the implementation side of the strategy thus leaving the basic principles in place. The document actually reiterated the argument made five years earlier about the interconnectedness of prosperity and stability: "As the ESS and the 2005 Consensus on Development have acknowledged, there cannot be sustainable development without peace and security, and without development and poverty eradication there will be no sustainable peace." (Solana 2008: 8). None of the latest documents brought any essential new features to the policy priorities but rather confined themselves in echoing the established discourse<sup>18</sup>. It seems thus that the policy had entered an implementation phase where the general framework and principles are more or less fixed and in which the focus is on lower-level practical work. Consequently, there is no reason to expect significant discursive changes.

The reason for the slowing down of the European Neighbourhood Policy can be at least partly explained by a change in the Union's general approach towards the neighbouring area. Whereas the ENP was based on highly structured and demanding bilateral partnerships with each of the neighbouring countries, the Union has lately shifted towards a more regional approach. It launched in 2007-2008 three new regional initiatives: the Black Sea Synergy, the Eastern Partnership and the Union for the Mediterranean. It is not the place here to observe these initiatives in their detail nor to enter in the discussion of the political motivations behind them. It will suffice to note that while the new approaches undoubtedly sought to bring more political weight to a policy area dominated by technical Action Plans, they have also contributed to its fragmentation and to a certain loss of salience. Indeed, there is a risk that the proliferation of initiatives in the neighbourhood area could divert focus away from existing priorities and weaken the EU's overall strategy. Some observers even suggest that the ENP will become entirely void of content (Mayhew and Hillion 2009: 28). Since 2008 the EU has not published any general policy papers about the ENP but has mainly produced country-specific strategy papers and progress reports.

The above account gives firm grounds to affirm that, in general terms, the policies towards neighbours have been marked by a strong security discourse at least since the publication of the European Security Strategy in 2003. One could even advance a claim that the Union's meta-goal for the whole region has become the consolidation of stability. This does naturally not mean that the neighbourhood policy (or other related policies dealing with neighbouring countries) would have been treated exclusively in terms of security. Indeed, the major part of the neighbourhood-related documents focused on outlining concrete measures concerning diverse issues<sup>19</sup>. In addition, the

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<sup>18</sup> The only minor change of tone can be noted in the Commission's strategy paper that is more attentive to the partner countries than before and thus points out that also the Union needs to make improvements: "Sustained effort is required to ensure that the offer made to ENP partner countries comes up to their expectations." (COM 2007: 11).

<sup>19</sup> Issues dealt by the policy initiative included *inter alia* media freedom and freedom of expression; enhanced consultation on crisis management; enhanced co-operation in the field of disarmament, non-proliferation and

documents repeatedly stress the Union's wish to avoid dividing lines in Europe and to engage in a mutually beneficial relationship. There is no reason to dismiss that side of the discourse as fake. Indeed, the concern of this paper is not to prove that one or the other discourse is more widely used and for that reason more "genuine" than the other. As established in this chapter, security *is* a highly visible and persistent feature of the Union's neighbourhood discourse. This observation alone is enough for this paper to move forward and to reflect on the question of what this discourse can tell about the Union as a political entity.

## **Part II**

### **Neighbourhood policies offering an explanation about the EU**

The previous part outlined the discursive evolution of the European Neighbourhood Policy documents. It showed how that discourse had come about and the ways in which it had evolved in a period of ten years (approximately from 1999 to 2008). The main findings concerned the notable rise of security rhetoric following the European Security Strategy (2003) and the increasing spill-over of internal security concerns into the foreign policy domain. In general terms, that part established clearly the existence of a security discourse in the field of ENP. The purpose of this second part is to interpret the results of the empirical chapter. This part is interested to find out what does the discourse analysed in part one tell about the political entity that emits it. It will thus reflect on the question: *what can be said about the European Union in the light of the existing neighbourhood discourse?* To find an answer to this question I will focus my attention on theoretical models of explanation concerning identity-building and the role of discourses.

However, before entering the analysis proper, I will briefly explain the focus of this analytical chapter by pointing out the aspects in which it is not interested. The general aim of this part is theoretical in the sense that it tries to select and apply an adequate theoretical framework that would take into account both the interest in discourse as well as the strong presence of security concerns. Accordingly, it does not contain many of the features commonly present in ENP literature. Firstly, this part is not meant to assess the appropriateness or the fairness of the European Neighbourhood Policy. In contrast with for instance Gebhard (2007) it does not evaluate the Union's "actorness" in the field of neighbourhood relations and does not offer an assessment on the successes or failures of the policy. By the same token, the paper also does not assess how suitable

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regional security; WTO accession; gradual removal of trade restrictions, improvement of the investment climate; tax reforms; preparing negotiations for a visa facilitation agreement; gradual legislative approximation and dialogue on employment issues. (For a more comprehensive list see country-specific Action Plans).

the policy instruments of the Neighbourhood Policy have been nor does it give any recommendations on how the policy could be improved or what should be done. Secondly, the paper does not analyse the target countries' perception of the policy and does not take a stance on whether it has met their expectations<sup>20</sup>. Instead the focus is entirely on the European Union in the sense that discourses produced by the Union's institutions are seen as representing a specific ideational construction that also influences the identity of the Union. I do not claim by any means that the discourses would not affect the target countries. However, their effect is seen as an external "side-effect" of the discursive process and thus are not the prime centre of interest of this research.

As implied by the negation of the normative and the practical implementation perspectives, the descriptive method adopted in many studies concerning this specific policy field is not satisfactory for the purposes of this paper. As this chapter is mostly interested in questions concerning the political nature of the EU, or at least in the image that ENP discourses give about the EU as a political entity, it will have to search for an appropriate theoretical frame for its analysis. Below, I will first review a number of traditional integration theories and their updated variants before moving on to critical discourse theories that, in my view, present the most promising grounds for analysing discourse based identity-building.

#### *Traditional integration theories and the political nature of the European Union*

The so called traditional theories of European integration, i.e. the theories that were first formulated to analyse the specific phenomenon of European integration, approach the question of the political nature of the Union essentially in a similar way. The starting point for their analysis is that the EC / EU, at its base, is an international organization and that it is in constant evolution. Determining the emergence of the Euro-polity and the forces driving its evolution is the main concern of the classical integration theories: neofunctionalism and (liberal) intergovernmentalism. The prominent questions featured by these theories concern the distribution of power within the Union, the internal decision-making structures and governance in general terms. However the question concerning the definition of the nature of the European Union does not in general occupy a very central position in these theories. As a consequence, the Union is often described as being a *sui generis* type of political structure meaning that it is one of its kind and thus not comparable to other existing or known types of political organization (Øhrgaard 1997).

One reason for this situation can be found in the history of the integration process. Indeed, what we today observe as a relatively well established and to a certain extent consolidated political structure appeared more as an ongoing process to those such as Ernst B. Haas who in the late 1950s

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<sup>20</sup> For an example of an analysis on the impact of the ENP see Wolczuk 2009.



and early 1960s started to write about the phenomenon of integration. Thus the theory most associated with his work, neofunctionalism, essentially focuses on describing the evolution patterns of the process rather than trying to define the end product at any given time. Its main goal is to find out which actors provide the main dynamics that further integration (Schmitter 2004: 46). The competing argument of the neofunctionalist theory's main rival, the liberal intergovernmentalist approach, is based on an implicit recognition of the neofunctionalist logic of explanation. While arguing that strong states and influential national leaders are the drivers of integration instead of the supranational institutions favoured by the neofunctionalists, the liberal intergovernmentalist theory also focuses its attention on the process rather than the outcome. In doing so, it does not actually depart very much from the neofunctionalist perspective. Essentially, both these theories explain why states choose to empower the EU to perform certain tasks in specific areas. Although they present two competing reasons for the phenomenon, a society-centred and a state-centred one, both their explanations concern integration as a process but not the European Union as a political entity.

Since the late 1980s which saw a significant increase in the activities of the European Community the theoretical approaches to European integration have also diversified substantially. Jachtenfuchs and Kohler-Koch (2004: 98-99) point out at two broad strands supplementing the existing traditional theories. The empirically driven policy analysis focuses on studying how problems are solved in different institutional contexts and has contributed to a better understanding of the workings of the EU's multi-level system. At the same time, however, it suffers from a lack of generalizability. The other strand, labelled the constitutional debate by Jachtenfuchs and Kohler-Koch, is more concerned with the question of what a political entity such as the EU should look like. Accordingly, it consists mainly of normative accounts about the legitimate and effective form of governance for the EU polity. The new approach suggested by the same authors and variably called either multilevel governance or just governance aims to address the shortcomings of the older integration theories. Its novelty lies in the way it conceptualizes the EU as a comprehensive institution in which individual member states are embedded in a larger political structure. However, the governance theory focuses mainly on the institutional rules governing the EU. Thus it is not particularly interested in finding out what are the effects of those rules on the identities of institutional actors. As such, although providing some helpful insights into the competence sharing within the institutions, it does not give substantial help in trying to answer the question *how can the current EU-polity be characterised?* In the end, both the traditional and many of the newer theories of European integration still rely on the notion of the EU as a *sui generis*. They do not conceptualize it as identical or comparable to a state or a political community more in general thus depriving it from the insights of comparative politics.

### *Discursive institutionalist theory and critical security studies*

As explained above, the mainstream integration theories do not provide satisfactory tools for analysing the phenomena observed in the empirical material of this paper. To reiterate, the first part showed that the use of the notion of security has significantly increased in context of the European Neighbourhood Policy. This study is interested to analyse this observation by asking what can be said about the political entity that makes such a frequent use of that concept.

The first step in interpreting the EU's security discourse is contrasting the role of security discourses of the EU to that of other political entities. This departure point is, however, problematic for the traditional integration theories. Neofunctionalism and liberal inter-governmentalism perceive the EU as a specific type of polity, a *sui generis*. As a consequence, for them it does not make sense to compare it to other existing polities. This, in turn, makes comparative study impossible. This conundrum was addressed by Hix (1994; 2005) who was the first to characterise the EU as a political community in its own right and to study it with the means of comparative politics<sup>21</sup>. Conceptualizing the EU as a political community opens new paths of comparative analysis with other existing polities. One such approach is the institutionalist theory that focuses on describing and analysing the rules, norms, routines and other constraints that guide social behaviour. It seems indeed logical to study one of the world's most regulated political systems in these terms. The theory, however, is not homogeneous and it is divided in diverse strands that all differ in their contention about the ontological basis of the institutional constraints. Thus the rational-choice institutionalism is characterised by the rationalist assumptions about actors who pursue their preferences following a 'logic of calculation'; the historical institutionalism focuses on the ways in which a given set of institutions can influence or constrain the behaviour of the actors following the 'logic of path-dependence'; and the sociological institutionalism concentrates on social agents who act according to a 'logic of appropriateness' within the institutions (Pollack 2004). They all, however, share the common feature of separating agency and structure. As a consequence, they end up paying only limited attention to ideas and do not account fully for the role of identities for institution-building.

The strand of institutionalist theory that refutes the separation of agency and structure is the discursive institutionalist approach. Like the other strands of the institutionalist theories the discursive institutionalist theory is also interested in the internal composition, the development and the functioning of institutions. Its original contribution comes from the assertion that institutions are

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<sup>21</sup> Hix's argument for seeing the EU as a suitable object of the institutionalist theories stems from the developments of the EC during the late 1980s when the community significantly developed the reach and the efficiency of its legislation (examples include the Single European Act and the Common Market programme). Rasmussen (2009 and Knudsen and Rasmussen 2008), however, claims that the notion of political community can even be applied to the case of the EU already much earlier.

ideational structures that cannot be treated separately from actors who constitute them (Schmidt 2008, 2010). For Schmidt institutions are "structures and constructs of meaning internal to agents" (2010: 1). This approach wants to place ideas into their meaning context and to treat them as empirical subjects. Ideas held by actors acting within institutions are in themselves the formative basis of institutions and should be studied in their own right. In short, the discursive institutionalist theory considers the study of institutional structures alone, without attention to the ideas of the actors constituting those institutions, as unsatisfactory and flawed.

The method this approach proposes for recognizing and analysing ideas is to study them as a part of a discourse. For Schmidt, discourse is a versatile and overarching concept that simultaneously indicates the ideas represented in the discourse and the interactive processes by which ideas are conveyed (2008: 309). Thus the discursive institutionalist approach is not only interested in describing ideas in a given discourse but also in the presentation, deliberation, and legitimation of political ideas that constitute the essence of political action. Discourses convey ideas both within a policy sphere i.e. between different policy actors and towards the outside of the policy sphere i.e. to the general public<sup>22</sup>. Since this study is interested in answering the question *what can be said about the European Union in the light of the existing neighbourhood discourse?* an approach that views discourses as the means of both expressing and of conveying ideas seems like a natural choice.

Naturally, this work is not the first one in the field of European integration to turn towards ideational explanations. A focus on ideas can be observed as an increasing trend both in the field of IR and in European integration. A thoroughly developed empirical research on the role of ideas in the process of integration can be found in Parsons (2003). He bases his argument on the statement that the whole integration process builds on the institutionalization of specific ideas (Parsons 2003: 2). Moreover, his understanding of ideas implies that they can be empirically studied and that they all have a history that can be uncovered. The specificity of the EU, according to him, is the weight of the institutional structure and the impact of the ideas that manage to penetrate that structure. Thus he argues that even ideas that do not have an immediate causal impact may develop to form constitutive norms for the whole community. As a consequence, ideas do not only cause actors to make certain choices but "the institutionalization of certain ideas gradually reconstructs the interests of powerful actors" (ibid: 6). Another empirical study that illustrates the importance of ideas in the EU context is Sedelmeier's (2005) work on the EU's eastern enlargement<sup>23</sup>. While using a different terminology than Parsons, Sedelmeier essentially argues that a constructed collective identity

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<sup>22</sup> Schmidt calls the message-conveying discourse aimed towards the inside of the polity the "coordinative discourse" and the one aimed towards the outside the "communicative discourse" (2008: 310).

<sup>23</sup> Schmidt (2008: 309) also mentions the study of Jabko (2006) on the role of ideas in European market integration.

directs EU policy and that a number of specific ideas or "roles" (Sedelmeier 2005: 9) are at the basis of that collective identity. He maintains that those ideas or roles emerge in specific historical contexts. In addition, he notes that even the most influential ideas are not evenly distributed among decision-makers. To demonstrate his thesis he conducts a thorough analysis on the evolution the idea that "the EU has a responsibility towards the Central and Eastern European Countries".

Inspired by the examples of Parsons and Sedelmeier and equipped with the tools of the discursive institutionalist approach, this work also focuses its attention on the role of ideas in one specific domain of EU policy-making, namely the European Neighbourhood Policy. The idea that is the central focus of analysis is that of security since it occupies such a prominent position in the empirical material. However, many traditional approaches to International Relations would not buy the claim that security can be treated in ideational terms in the first place. Thus it is necessary to explain this argument as well. The justification for studying security as an ideational construct comes from the work of critical security theories. The general claim of those theories is to underline the contextuality of the use of security rhetoric. By defining security a socio-spatial consciousness (Laitinen 2003), the post-positivist security theories underline the malleability of the concept. In this understanding, security does not have an essential meaning but its meaning is always constructed and it can thus only be understood in the specific context in which it has been used. The Copenhagen School of International Relations has systematized this contention by formulating the so called *securitization* approach. Securitization refers to a process through which an issue is lifted from the realm of normal politics and described as having absolute priority over other issues. This process happens not because of a real existential threat but because a certain issue is successfully presented and named as such by a relevant actor (Buzan et al. 1998: 24). In other words, security is a specific way of framing a particular issue (Waever 1996: 106). Accordingly, the actor(s) who have the capability to elevate an issue to the level of security hold significant power over other actors who do not have this capability. Identifying those actors can help to understand power structures both in domestic as well as in inter-state relations. By extension, the use of security discourse can thus also serve as an indicator of the ways in which powerful actors perceive their situation in relation to their environment. It is indeed this aspect of security that is most interesting for the purposes of this research. However, it is not the aim of this paper to theorise on the concept of security as such but rather ponder on the implications the use of such term<sup>24</sup>.

Waever (1996) shows that the conventional approach to security always defines an

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<sup>24</sup> Actually, I do not entirely agree on many aspects of the securitization approach. I especially reject its tendency of portraying security mainly as a tool for repression and the ensuing emancipatory agenda. In contrast, I prefer a more neutral approach to security as a simple signifier whose meaning has to be analysed in the context in which it occurs. I believe that the self-referential aspect of the use of security can actually be stronger than the negation of the other and that the use of the term can reveal important aspects of its users' identification.

"objective" reference object to which the use of security refers. For example, if the state is taken as the referent object, the survival of the state (i.e. its sovereignty) becomes the prime security issue. In the case of an individual, his own survival constitutes the reference against which different threats can be measured. Trying to establish an objective reference object against which different threats can be assessed limits, however, the applicability of the concept. For this reason Waever proposes to detach security from a stable reference object (state, nation or individual) and instead view it as a self-referential practice (Waever 1996: 106). What this means is that security does not acquire its meaning in reference to a real-world object, but that the linguistic use of the term alone constitutes the content of security. Thus while not intrinsically attached to a specific referent object, the use of the term security can serve as a cue for understanding and analysing the actor that has used it. This point of view can be summarised in the formula: "tell me what you fear and I'll tell you who you are". In other words, the security discourse of an actor can be used to understand and define its identity. As explained by Waever, finding out who or what is constituted as the reference of the European Union's security discourse will not only tell something about European security, "but also about what Europe *is* politically" (ibid: 110, emphasis in original).

#### *The neighbourhood discourse and the EU's identity construction*

To analyse the contents of the empirical material presented in the first part, I have thus opted to combine insights from both discursive institutionalist theory and critical security approaches. Following the discursive institutionalist theory this work understands institutions (including the EU) first and foremost as constructs built from the ideas held by the actors that make up the institutions. The theory also maintains that the analysis of discourses is the best way of finding out which ideas are central to a specific institution. Needless to say, discourses can be detected in many various forms, policy documents being one of the most central sources. Others may include speeches, internal briefings, interviews or other instances in which people representing the institution express ideas concerning its workings. In this paper, attention is limited to official published documents of the European Neighbourhood Policy. The analysis of the material presented in part one proceeds in two steps. Firstly, I will establish whether or not there are grounds to claim that the EU presents itself as an independent political community. This analysis is based on the theoretical claims outlined above concerning the role of discourses in the construction of a political entity. Secondly, the paper will reflect on the question what type of political community does the EU seem to be in light of the neighbourhood discourse. Arguments about identity-building will guide this part of the analysis.

In the first instance, I will analyse what the neighbourhood discourse can tell about the

nature of the EU as a political entity. My main claim is that the EU purposefully attempts to construct an image of itself through which it would appear as a strong and unified political community. The first evidence that can be advanced to support this claim is the sheer existence of the neighbourhood policy in the present form. Although created at the request of the European Council, the Commission has played a central role in the development and steering of the policy. The policy has to a large extent been formulated in Brussels in cooperation with the different institutions and it has proved flexible enough to incorporate a growing number of issues as they have gained importance on the Union's agenda (e.g. external security and the expansion of the area of freedom, security and justice). It is also noteworthy that the Commission has even resisted letting go of the ENP during the institutional changes brought by the Treaty of Lisbon. There is thus reason to affirm, that the policy represents indeed a "community" vision of foreign policy and differs from the Union's general approach in this field which is usually much more controlled by the member states. In effect, the EU's efforts at cross-pillarization (i.e. in bringing policies of the three former pillars closer to each other) have even been seen as deliberate efforts in developing more coherent external action (Cremona and Hillion 2006). In addition, none of the present member states even has any similar policy initiatives thus making the ENP an original creation of the EU. Other more detailed aspects of the discourse present in the ENP documents can further strengthen the claim of ENP being a way for the EU to construct itself as a unified political community.

As observed above (p. 6), concerns about the EU's capability of action in the post-enlargement neighbourhood were not significantly developed until the conclusion of the enlargement negotiations in 2002. At that time the existence of the neighbourhood was simply asserted but the Union did not yet show interest in developing its actorness in relation to this region. The first real step in that direction comes when the Commission and the High Representative are tasked to draft a plan on how to deal with the new neighbourhood by the Copenhagen European Council in 2002. Already the first official European Neighbourhood Policy document, the Commission's plan for *Wider Europe A Neighbourhood* gives insights of the way the EU sees itself vis-à-vis the neighbours. From the very beginning, the document shows a very EU-centred discourse that clearly portrays the interests of the Union. The foundation of the policy is the EU's will to satisfy what it perceives to be the demands of its citizens: "Over the coming decade and beyond, the Union's capacity to provide security, stability and sustainable development to its citizens will no longer be distinguishable from its interest in close cooperation with the neighbours." (COM 2003a: 3). The interesting phenomenon here is that the EU positions itself as being directly responsible to its citizens in this new policy field that has been delegated to it by the member states. It shows itself as empowered by the citizens and supposedly also directly accountable to them,

which of course in the present institutional set up is not the case. By making this claim the EU clearly shows its strife to appear as an independent political actor in a way a traditional international organization could never be. An interesting question is whether this move was anticipated by the member states that commissioned the policy document or whether the "Brussels bureaucracy" expressly overtook the agents who officially hold exclusive powers in the foreign policy field. Anyhow, from this departure point the EU goes about to give its own account of how it sees the neighbourhood and how, according to its view, the area should be addressed. Thus the document singles out issues which from the EU's perspective appear as either challenges or opportunities. The Union does not hesitate to portray itself as the actor that has the best capability to tackle the challenges giving little or no account for the partner countries' actions: "The EU *must act* to promote the regional and subregional cooperation and integration" (ibid. emphasis added).

The EU's answer to the challenges posed by the neighbourhood are twofold: it relies firstly on the advancement of market integration and secondly on the security vision of the Union's justice and home affairs policies (p. 7 above). This feature provides additional ground for the argument according to which the EU wants to show itself to be an independent political actor. Both of the methods that have been chosen to address the neighbourhood can be characterised as being typical of the EU. Indeed, the faith in liberal market economy as a means to manage inter-state relations is synonymous with the whole European integration project. The fact that the EU resorts to this approach also in its external relations indicates that it has become so deeply internalized that it forms a part of who the EU is not just what it does. However, the same cannot be said about the internal security agenda formulated through the justice and home affairs policies. Actually, the whole policy area of justice and home affairs policies (JHA) was first spelled out in the Maastricht Treaty that established the European Union in 1993 (Hix 2005: 347). The project of building an area of freedom, security and justice is even more recent since it was first formulated by the Tampere European Council in 1999. It is thus only recently that the EU has started to portray itself as a guarantor of its citizens security, one of the central features of a nation state. Moreover, it has proven difficult to the EU to gain legitimacy over an area so strongly associated with state authority and its whose policies in the field have been harshly criticised (see e.g. Anderson and Apap 2002, Guild and Carrera 2006). It seems thus that Union may have taken the neighbourhood policy as an opportunity to assert its right to establish and develop this field. This view becomes increasingly plausible in the light of subsequent ENP documents.

Before analysing more closely what the extension of the JHA discourse to the field of the neighbourhood policy can tell about the aims and ambitions of the EU, I'll first focus on the ways in which external security is linked to ENP discourse. As noticed in the empirical chapter, the notion

of security enters the EU rhetoric with force with the introduction of the European Security Strategy in 2003. In addition to formulating a general strategy for the Union's dealings with third countries and the threats they may pose, the strategy puts specific emphasis on the role of the neighbourhood. Indeed, the document proclaims that "building security in our neighbourhood" is one of three strategic objectives for the EU. It puts particular emphasis on the geographic proximity of the neighbourhood by expressing the idea that while the security issues arising in this area are global and not specific to this region, their potential effects on the EU are greater because of the proximity. The strategy suggests that the most imminent threat from the neighbourhood would come from the possibility of internal and inter-state conflicts that could spill over into the Union. Thus the Union clearly sees the proper management of the neighbourhood relations as essential to the preservation of its security. However, the strategy does not confine itself to the description of potential threats to the Union's security nor does it suggest the delegation of responsibility in this area to any other actor (i.e. the member states). To the contrary, the EU presents itself as being alone responsible for the peace and security of its citizens thus promoting a vision of it being a leading power in the region and a full-fledged political community. The strategy does not present security as a sum of the member states' separate security concerns but as surpassing them and necessitating joint action that only the EU can deliver<sup>25</sup>. The fact that the Union has had until now only minimal experience in providing security with military means does not seem to bother the drafters of the strategy. Indeed, the Union shows pride in pioneering the non-military security tools which, for better or for worse, have become its trademark. It seems thus that the Union has actually deeply internalized what has been characterised as the "soft security method" to the extent that it is ready to adopt that approach as a general guideline for its external action. Addressing the neighbours through this framework is thus not at all a failure for the Union although some other political actors may have been expected to deliver something more tangible also in the field of military defence. The EU, however, seems proud to showcase its self-assurance by embracing a unique approach. All these features give increasing weight to the argument that the EU attempts to construct itself as an independent political actor.

The empirical material has made it clear that with each new document the neighbourhood policy has become increasingly rooted in the Union's security discourse, both the external one embodied by the European Security Strategy as well as the internal one stemming from the project

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<sup>25</sup> It is however noteworthy that the reference object in the European Security Strategy is "Europe" and not the citizens as in the case of the majority of ENP documents. The document speaks of *European* interests and problems faced by *Europe* and when explaining the objectives of the strategy: "It is in the European interest that countries on our borders are well-governed. Neighbours who are engaged in a violent conflict, weak states where organised crime flourishes, dysfunctional societies or exploding population growth all pose problems for Europe" (European Council 2003b: 7).



for the area of freedom, security and justice<sup>26</sup>. However the use of the term security can be slightly confusing in this context since the EU is not very explicit when distinguishing between "external" and "internal" security. As a matter of fact, critical security scholars analysing EU security policies have negated that differentiation from the outset (Wolf et al. 2009). Nonetheless, this paper tries to follow the internal logic of argumentation of the EU. Thus it observes both lines of argumentation and their implications separately. It is especially with the European Commission's Strategy Paper for the European Neighbourhood Policy (April 2004) that the Union makes a decisive move in incorporating the ENP in the agenda of the internal security policies. In essence, that document shows the Union's goal to extend to the neighbours the security agenda that until now had been conceptualized in terms of intra-EU relations. The principal objectives of the policy had been from the outset to improve the security, the rights and the free movement of people within the European Union. Only five years after its launch (in 1999) did the EU start to also consider the external environment as a potential threat for its internal security goals. That concern is particularly clearly outlined in the 2005 *Strategy on the External Dimension of the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice* that places the neighbourhood policy among the top three policy instruments through which it aims to address the threats. The emergence of an external dimension to EU internal security cooperation has been characterised as being part of a post-cold war trend whereby the Union has gradually extended its policies to associated non-member states (Lavenex and Wichmann 2009: 83-84). What is interesting, however, is that the first concrete and comprehensive document spelling out this policy is published at a time when the development of the neighbourhood policy is the most intense. This move can for its part reinforce the argument about the Union's attempt to position itself as a distinct political actor. By treating external and internal security concerns simultaneously, the EU wants to show its capacity to coordinate issues across various policy fields, not a feature for which it has customarily been known for.

Moreover, the externalization of internal security objectives also gives a power advantage to the EU vis-à-vis the partner countries. The principles, the objectives and the measures concerning the area of freedom, security and justice are formulated in a strictly "domestic" decision-making process from which the outside partners are absent. When those policies are then extended to the partner countries through the neighbourhood policy which, in principle is based on reciprocity, the partner countries have *de facto* very little say since the content of the policies have already been formulated by the EU. In other words, the measures embedded in the ENP policies require other countries to conform to the Union's own practices for example in matters of judicial and penal

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<sup>26</sup> Although this review focuses on the documents setting the general parameters of the neighbourhood policy, Hillion notes that both the common foreign and security dimension as well as the justice and home affairs dimension have also been developed and strengthened in the country-specific Action Plans (2005: 18).

reform, sharing police information and border controls and the trafficking of people. This practice actually amounts in purposeful efforts of influence by the EU (Haukkala 2003, Rees 2008). In the context of international relations this kind of practice could easily be seen as an infringement upon the partner countries' sovereignty. Interestingly, in the case of the EU's relations with neighbours such objections have not been heard.

The analysis has by now shown that the ENP discourse contains elements that quite convincingly support the argument made in the beginning of this chapter i.e. that the EU purposefully attempts to construct an image of itself through which it would appear as a strong and unified political community. Security has obviously played a role since the project that started off as an initiative for "building a ring of friends" (COM 2003a: 4) turned into a "security and prosperity policy for Europe's citizens" (Council of the European Union 2007: 3) in a matter of four years. The question is, however, what can this discourse tell more precisely about the EU. The existence of a constructed identity being established, follow-up question arises concerning the content of that constructed identity. The second part of this chapter will thus focus on the question: what type of polity does the EU appear to be in the light of the ENP discourse?

The concept of identity is not heavily theorised in this paper. In fact it is simply understood as a narrative, a developing story that has been created with the help of a coherent conceptual apparatus (Stråth 2002). It is thus the story that an actor, in this case the European Union, tells about itself. This conceptualization of identity actually comes very close to the definition discursive institutionalism gives about institutions. Since that theory sees institutions as structures of meaning internal to agents and since Stråth, on the other hand, conceptualizes identities as narratives held by actors then, it seems that the two can actually be equated. An institution is thus equal to its identity: the narrative it chooses to tell about itself. Of course such a story is rarely told explicitly. For this reason, any direct statements such as official documents can provide important information about the actor. Institutions, however, rarely describe their perceptions of identity in an open self-reflective manner<sup>27</sup>. For that reason, all the official discourse that publicly communicates the views of the actor have to be approached cautiously since it can only give clues for understanding the identity not a direct description.

The first thing that can be said about the type of identity which emerges through the ENP discourse is that it is based on fear. Security, in its different manifestations is at the origin of much of the discourse. The source of the fear does not, however, appear to be the neighbours themselves. The documents do not at any occasion present the neighbours as being threatening *per se*. They do

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<sup>27</sup> The only occurrence when the EU has openly reflected on its identity was with the "Declaration on European Identity" given at the Copenhagen European Summit in December 1973 (European Summit 1973).

not conceptualize the neighbours as opposing the EU or as having competing objectives. To the contrary, the documents actually present the neighbours as partners and sharing both the values and the concerns of the EU. Indeed, it would be difficult to imagine that any of the neighbours (perhaps with the exception of the authoritarian Belarus) could pose a direct military threat to the European Union (Aliboni 2005). By contrast, the type of threat that emanates from the neighbours comes from their weak state structure and the potential instability they can transmit to the Union. The Union portrays them as possible and even probable vehicles of negative externalities that can take the form of for example uncontrolled and/or illegal immigration, disease and organized crime. The neighbours are thus threatening because of their weakness and their inability to serve as effective buffer zone. In this sense the neighbourhood appears more as being instrumental for the preservation of EU security rather than a source of immanent threat.

The issues that most seem to dominate the ENP agenda, particularly since 2004-2005, are actually formulated under the Justice and Home Affairs agenda. What seems most threatening to the EU and what, in effect, justifies the whole policy is that the neighbours may transmit things that carry a negative impact on the Union's *citizens*. Citizens thus become the more or less explicit referent objects of the discourse<sup>28</sup>. Problems caused by the stark differences in living standards at the two sides of the EU border do not threaten the sovereignty of the Union which rests in the hands of the member states. The Union would not cease to exist even if immigration increased, environment was damaged or organized crime gained more ground within its borders. However, the increase of the potential threats enumerated in the ENP documents could certainly play a role in the mood of EU citizens. Dissatisfaction, although generally first manifest at the national level could easily spread to the EU level. The dramatic results of the 2005 constitutional referenda indicate for their part that citizen dissatisfaction can be damaging to the EU (Milner 2006). It seems thus that although it is not officially directly accountable to its citizens, the EU, through the creation of a policy aiming to protect their interests, tries to position itself as their champion.

It is interesting to discover that the neighbourhood discourse actually reveals a Union for which societal concerns weigh more than geopolitical or strategic ones. Had the Union argued forcefully against the neighbours as rival or threatening polities, its image would have appeared as that of a state apprehensive about its own survival. An explicit exclusion of the "other" on nationalistic grounds would have meant that the EU still subscribes to a traditional spatial view of political identity that underlines the importance of territorial integrity (Jukarainen 1999: 57). This is not to say, that the EU does not perform any sort of othering. Quite to the contrary, the material

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<sup>28</sup> The documents speak variably about "citizens", "us" or "Europe" as the ones having an interest in the type of policy they advocate.

shows a Union that is very apprehensive about the negative effects the neighbours could bring to its internal stability. Thus the Union's identity construction, the narrative it tells about itself, is heavily based on the perception of a threat coming from an outside source. From this standpoint the Union's identity-building process does actually follow a traditional pattern of distinguishing oneself from a threatening outside world (Delanty 1995, Neumann 1999). Crucially, however, the things that the EU sees as being the most threatening to its stability do not target its political or military machinery but its social structures. The fact that the Union places the citizens and the society as the referent object of its security discourse can be taken as a strong evidence for it wanting to appear as a societal political community.

## **Conclusion**

The European Neighbourhood Policy has been the first attempt by the EU to extend its governance to countries outside its immediate borders while explicitly excluding them from the possibility of membership. The result has been a discourse that on the one hand has asserted the common objectives and the similarity of value-basis both in the EU and the neighbours but which, on the other hand, has relied heavily on security as the legitimate basis for the policy. This apparent discrepancy becomes more understandable when it is realized that the ENP, rather than being a genuine foreign policy, is actually an extension of the EU's domestic policy concerns. As shown throughout the paper, the neighbourhood countries were actually only instrumental to the security concerns motivating the EU rhetoric. In fact, the origin of those fears is not external to the Union but internal. Domestic instability that could be caused by external triggers seem to be the main motivating factor of the whole policy.

This paper has studied documents related to the European Union's Neighbourhood Policy and, based on that study, it has advanced a claim that the EU can be characterised as a political community conscious of its societal dimension. Obviously, complex institutional structures such as the EU never construct their identity from a single source but base them on a variety of contrasting and some times contradicting ideas. The decision to study security related perceptions in the ENP documents is however justified for two distinct reasons. Firstly, as showed by the empirical part, that discourse was strongly present in the documents. Indeed, the analysis of the paper covered the entirety of the general policy documents produced by the Union in relation to this policy field as well as documents in the field of Justice and Home Affairs which had a direct link with the external policies of the Union. Secondly, the interest in security rhetoric can be justified from an identity-building perspective. As pointed out by Campbell (1992), a policy that warns of threats is central in

constituting an identity (via Waever 1996). What is interesting in the case of the ENP and what was revealed through a close analysis of the discourse was that, contrary to expectations, the security rhetoric was not directly directed against the neighbours.

The method selected in this paper thus proved its usefulness. The paper had chosen to focus on discourses because it believed that their analysis gives the best result when trying to figure out the cognitive structures that make up individual and collective identities (Appleby et al. 1994: 4-11). After discovering that the neighbours *per se* were not the source of threat in the eyes of the EU, the next step for the paper was to find out who or what were its sources. By extension this meant pondering on the question of *what kind* of identity was the EU constructing with the security discourse observed in the neighbourhood documents. The answer could have been sought in the IR theories on security communities. However Adler and Barnett's definition of a security community as being a community whose members entertain dependable expectations of peaceful change (1998: 34) was not suitable to describe the situation at hand between the EU and the neighbouring countries. As stated on several occasions and despite its external appearance, the neighbourhood policy is actually less about the neighbouring countries than it is about the EU. In the light of the documents, the EU looks like an actor that wants to be able to control developments to its internal security also by means of external policy. For that reason stabilizing the neighbouring area is of utmost importance. The Union does not, however, aim at creating a security community together with those countries as was the case in the Eastern enlargement. Instead, it seems that the logic of the security community is confined to the EU borders and that outside of those borders the normal rules of international relations apply. Nonetheless, the EU, apparently still apprehensive of its internal security or at least too cautious to risk damaging it with negative externalities coming from the neighbours, makes significant efforts to try to extend its influence beyond the borders. The rationale for this kind of action is found in the Union's internal identification as being a political community with societal accountability.

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