Herausgegeben von Werner Weidenfeld

Edmund Ratka | Olga A. Spaiser (eds.)

Understanding European Neighbourhood Policies

Concepts, Actors, Perceptions

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Introduction: Understanding European Neighbourhood Policies

Edmund Ratka/Olga A. Spaiser

1. Approach and structure of the book[1]

The European neighbourhood policies can be considered a focal point of European foreign policy in general. They constitute a complex web of policies woven both by the European Union and its member states, which paradigmatically exemplifies the characteristics, principles, cleavages and challenges of Europe's international actorness.

Bringing together scholars from a broad range of European universities and research institutions, this volume aims at analysing the making, implementation and effectiveness of the European policies towards the EU's Southern and Eastern neighbourhood, and distinguishes itself by:

- a broad understanding of 'neighbourhood' and 'neighbourhood policy', exceeding both the geographical scope and the policy content of the official 'European Neighbourhood Policy' of the European Union;
- a multi-level and multi-actor approach, taking into account the EU, member state and sub-state dimensions as well as the interactions between these dimensions;
- a focus on perceptions, social constructions and interests that underlie and drive the neighbourhood policies of the EU and its member states;
- a combination of both theoretically-informed and policy-oriented studies that review, develop and apply different analytical and methodological concepts to analyse European neighbourhood policies.

This opening chapter will contextualise the contributions to the volume within this general approach and synthesise their major findings. It is followed by an overview of the European Union's international role by Werner Weidenfeld. His contribution traces the emergence of the EU as a foreign policy actor and pinpoints the current strategic deficit. Weidenfeld contends that it is possible to overcome what he calls a 'second Eurosclerosis' and argues for differentiated integration as an opportunity to reinforce the EU's internal and international actorness.

The following four parts of the book reflect both its conceptional ambition and its geographical scope. The first provides an explicit discussion of the analytical concepts

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1 For their insightful comments on this chapter we thank Manuela Glaab, Holger Drössler, Daniel Grotzky, Giulia Romano, Sabrina Sohbi, Viktoria Spaiser and in particular Reinhardt Rummel.

and research frameworks, that can be applied to the analysis of European neighbourhood policies, which includes the concept of Europeanisation and its different variations (Müller, Normann), a review of how to measure the effectiveness of neighbourhood policies (Weber) and a discussion of the concept of 'strategy' as an analytical tool (Schulz).

The contributions in the second part dwell on the policies towards the Southern neighbourhood, with a special focus on the 'Arab Spring' (Laïdi), the Barcelona process (Ratka), the Middle East conflict and relations with Israel (Busse; du Plessix) and on the Gulf region (Bauer/Rieger). The third part is then dedicated to the Eastern neighbourhood and provides case studies on the European policies towards the Black Sea region (Homorozean), the Southern Caucasus (Rinnert), Russia (Schäffer; Siddi) and Central Asia (Spaiser).

The fourth part of the book focuses on the analysis of the promotion of democracy and civil society, which is one of the main 'trans-regional' and often contested issues within European neighbourhood policies. Paving the way for a systematic reflection on this issue, the first chapter in this part develops a categorisation of different paths the EU has established to promote democracy in its neighbourhood (Hahn), whereas the second chapter approaches democracy promotion from a legal perspective (Bismarck Coelho). The following contributions then demonstrate the role of sub-state actors in the target states for the EU's democracy promotion efforts (Wunsch) and reveal the 'othering' in the EU's democracy discourse (Grotzky). Finally, the concluding chapter illustrates that EU democracy promotion has been conceived differently concerning the different target regions and discusses whether the 'Arab Spring' will change the delicate balance of the EU's approaches towards the Eastern and Southern neighbourhood (Parmentier).

2. *The analysis of European neighbourhood policies: A conceptional and empirical overview*

Synthesising the contributions to this volume, four central themes regarding the analysis of European neighbourhood policies emerge, which concern the object of study itself, the actors involved in the policy-making process, explanatory factors as well as theoretical and methodological approaches. These issues are further developed in the following.

2.1 Redefining the object of study: Who is a neighbour and what is a neighbourhood policy?

'Neighbour' and 'neighbourhood' have emerged as key notions when discussing the European Union's policies towards its Southern and Eastern vicinity. However, they are far from being uncontroversial. From a cultural-linguistic perspective, the meaning of 'neighbour' diverges regarding its connotation and valorisation in different cultural contexts (Meloni 2007: 24-37). In the Anglo-Saxon tradition, the term 'neighbour' has a meaning of 'fellow' and thus a positive connotation.[2] The same holds true for the Arab world, where the term *jâr* signifies not only neighbour, but also 'friend' and 'associate'. In contrast, in the post-communist space where Slavic languages dominate, the 'neighbourhood' as a concept of space is not only non-existent, it even has a negative connotation, as 'neighbour' is associated with a foreigner rather than with a fellow; for instance, the Russian word for neighbour, *sosed*, implies someone who enters another's private space with little legitimacy.

However, who is considered a neighbour is not only a question of cultural and linguistic conditioning or subjective perceptions, but also a crucial question of power politics as a brief look on the genesis of the so-called 'European Neighbourhood Policy' (ENP) demonstrates. Adopted in 2004 in the wake of a large part of Central and Eastern Europe's accession to the European Union, this EU programme was, at its conceptional origins in 2002, destined for the EU's 'new neighbours' in the East. Only due to the pressure by southern member states such as France the countries bordering the Southern Mediterranean were subsequently also included into this policy framework The initiative was then further extended to Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia after the 'Rose Revolution' in Georgia and considerable lobbying, including by the Caucasian republics themselves (Smith 2011: 318; Irrera 2008).

This episode illustrates that an EU-wide conception of who the EU's near or far neighbours are is still lacking; the political consequences are emphasised by several contributions to this volume. Christine Normann, for instance, argues that France's initiatives for the Union for the Mediterranean and Poland's initiative for the Eastern Partnership were motivated by their respective national understandings of their specifics links with their neighbouring regions. Olga A. Spaiser, in her contribution, shows how Germany managed to shape the European perception of Central Asia as being the 'neighbour of the neighbours' during the preparatory phase of the EU Strategy for Central Asia, thus laying the ground for a stronger EU commitment in the region.

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2 Meloni argues that this meaning can probably be traced back to the Christian philosophy of 'loving thy neighbour as oneself', which presumes the existence of a single community of fellow humans.

In order to obtain a complete picture of the European Union as a 'regional actor', one should adopt an extended understanding of 'neighbourhood' that goes beyond the 16 countries the European Commission included in the ENP.[3] Such a broad definition also takes the countries of the 'immediate neighbourhood' that are not a part of the ENP into consideration (such as Russia, but countries with a membership perspective, such as those in the Balkans, as well), including those countries that do not have a common border with the EU, but may be considered a part of the 'wider neighbourhood' (such as Central Asia and the Gulf region).

A comprehensive analysis of European regional actorness necessitates not only a broad definition of 'neighbourhood', but of 'neighbourhood policy' as well. When it comes to European foreign policy, the literature has long since argued for an extensive definition that includes the intergovernmental Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), the supranational external policies which are administered by the European Commission (formerly known as 'first pillar' policies), and the foreign policies of the various member states (cf. Rummel 1982; White 2001: 36-39; Wong/Hill 2011: 3). The same scope should be applied to 'European neighbourhood policies', which can thus be understood as the sum of all policies that the EU and its member states pursue towards the EU's vicinity.

Such a broad understanding of 'neighbourhood policies' allows to take the European Union's fragmentation in external relations into consideration and to specify the EU's overall actorness in its vicinity. In this sense, Zaki Laïdi extends the research focus in his contribution on both EU institutions and member states to evaluate the 'European response' to the Arab Spring, especially to the crisis in Libya. He concludes that Europeans were present in this crisis, but not within the institutional framework of the EU. To assess the European Union's approach to the Black Sea region, Alina Homorozean advocates revealing the interactions and the level of complementarity among the various and partly overlapping EU-led cooperation initiatives towards this region.

2.2 Identifying actors, exploring interactions: Who makes European neighbourhood policies?

It has been clear for a long time that policy-making within the European Union is a multi-level, multi-actor and multi-issue enterprise (Pfetsch 1997: 121). Helen Wallace has noted that the EU "operates through an evolving political process, which engages its member states in a system of shared governance" (Wallace 2005: 26). Concerning

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3 These are Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Egypt, Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, the Republic of Moldova, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, Syria, Tunisia and Ukraine.

the levels of analysis, research approaches that want to examine European neighbour-hood policies can indeed focus on the European Union level, the member state level and/or the sub-state level. It seems especially appropriate to take into consideration more than one level and to aim at revealing the multi-faceted interaction between these levels in order to gain an understanding of how European neighbourhood policies are made.

Such a multi-level approach does justice to what could be described as the vertical and horizontal fragmentation of European neighbourhood policies. Vertical fragmen-tation refers to the distinction between the actions of individual member states on the one hand and the actions of EU institutions (or the EU as such) on the other hand, while horizontal fragmentation refers to the fact that several EU policies towards the same region or the same country often exist.[4] These elements or dimensions of European foreign policy are usually interwoven, as member states influence policy-making on the European level, and at the same time have to take into account existing EU insti-tutions and policies. Moreover, both the EU and member state levels are exposed to influences from the sub-state level.

Several chapters in this book demonstrate how member states and their particular-ities play a determining role in the making and evolution of European neighbourhood policies. Caroline du Plessix argues in her contribution that France, Great Britain and Germany are the main actors shaping EU-Israeli relations and that special attention therefore has to be given to these countries' particular historical experiences with Is-rael. Laïdi, meanwhile, shows how the European response to the escalation of violence in Libya in March 2011 was marked by the position of individual member states, es-pecially by France's activism.

Such an 'opening of the black box EU' must include not only a focus on member states, but also on actors on the European level, especially on EU institutions. While member states dominate the formation of strategy or interest in the EU's policies towards its vicinity, it is worth remembering that, in the end, it is the European Commission that is in charge of evaluation by setting its own criteria. Filipa Coelho Bismarck, for in-stance, discusses the Commission's 'standard-setting' role with regard to the promo-tion of democracy. David Rinnert contends that, alongside several member states, the Commission has an important role in shaping EU-Georgia relations. The respective weight of EU institutions can indeed have a decisive influence on the shaping of EU policies. In her contribution, Irene Hahn puts forward the hypothesis that the stronger the role of the Council in the formulation of EU policies, the lesser the importance

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4   Using a similar terminology, Mathias Jopp and Peter Schlotter (2008: 11-14) speak of horizontal and vertical coherence in European foreign policy.

accorded to democracy promotion. In contrast to the Commission and to the Council, this volume's empirical case studies do not reveal any considerable influence on the part of the European Parliament on the making or evolution of European neighbourhood policies. This does, however, not exclude the possibility of at least some informal influence on framing the respective EU discourse and agenda-setting. Additionally, also non-state actors on the European level can play a role in the making of European neighbourhood policies, as Alina Homorozean notes with regard to the influence of a Brussel-based think tank on the naming of the Black Sea Synergy.

2.3 Revealing perceptions, social constructions and interests: What drives European neighbourhood policies?

Perceptions, social constructions and interests have emerged from the contributions to this volume as the major driving forces for the making and evolution of European neighbourhood policies.

Both social constructivist research and approaches of foreign policy analysis often pay special attention to perceptions (cf. Ulbert 2005; Laïdi 2008; Weidenfeld 1995). In this volume, while pursuing a social constructivist approach, Spaiser draws on the perception of Central Asia by German foreign policy-makers and Edmund Ratka discusses how the Arab Spring has changed Germany's perception of the Southern Mediterranean, and thus the definition of its interests in the region. Du Plessix identifies mutual perceptions as crucial for explaining EU-Israeli relations while, according to Sebastian Schäffer, misperceptions between Russia and the EU contribute to their flawed relationship. Juxtaposing European policies towards the East and the South, Florent Parmentier examines how these policies have been shaped to a great extent along the 'democratic narrative' and the EU's perception of political revolutions in its vicinity.

Besides a focus on perceptions, the contributions following constructivist ontology put forward social constructions as being crucial for the making and evolution of European neighbourhood policies. Since the end of the 1990s, constructivism has seen its breakthrough in foreign policy analysis (cf. Katzenstein 1996; Rittberger 2001) and European integration research (cf. Christiansen/Jørgensen/Wiener 2001), pinpointing concepts such as identity, norms, role conceptions or discourses as driving forces – or at least as important conditions – for foreign policy-making.

In this volume, Marco Siddi contends that the difficulty in formulating a coherent and cooperative European foreign policy towards Russia is rooted in the specific identity constructions and historical memories of certain EU member states. Drawing on the examples of Lithuania and Poland, he shows the extent to which traumatic expe-

riences with Russia can spill over to the EU level and how they can negatively affect EU-Russian relations. However, this is not the case for Germany, which is one of the main supporters of a cooperative approach to Russia. Applying a discourse analytical framework, Daniel Grotzky shows how a certain conception of 'democracy' can impact the EU's understanding of transformation processes in its neighbourhood.

The notion of interests is again shared both by theoretically-informed and policy-oriented contributions to this volume. Contributions rooted in social constructivism, such as those by Busse, Ratka and Spaiser, analyse the contingent definition of interests within member states and their potential 'uploading' to the EU. In contrast, studies that focus on the EU-level, such as the chapter by Michael Bauer and René Rieger and the chapter by Schäffer, identify the EU's interests towards a target region and examine how they could best be achieved. Bismarck Coelho dwells equally on the European level and discusses how democracy promotion as a normative foreign policy interest has been institutionalised in the treaties of the European Union.

2.4 Recognising and combining different research perspectives: How to examine European neighbourhood policies?

The European Union's foreign policy has been described as an "ongoing puzzle" (Tonra/Christiansen 2004:1), and indeed its analysis constitutes a challenging endeavour for researchers. This is particularly true for European foreign policy towards the neighbourhood, where member states' 'special relations' and preferences are often more pronounced than elsewhere and where several policy approaches usually overlap.

Integrating – or at least reconciling – different analytical perspectives can contribute to a better understanding of this complex phenomenon; this book therefore unites both policy-oriented analyses with theoretically-informed contributions. The latter are generally inspired by social constructivism and put, as mentioned above, a special focus on social constructions. However, they are of a problem-driven rather than of a method-driven character. Instead of testing competing theories, they aim at explaining the making or implementation of European neighbourhood policies and further develop the analytical tools of social constructivism or integrate social constructivism with other approaches. Jan Busse, for instance, formulates an approach that is inspired by constructivist foreign policy analysis to examine the German position towards the Middle East conflict and takes into account historical responsibility, interests, public opinion, individual leadership and the external environment. Normann and Ratka both propose a combination of social constructivism with, among others, the concept of Europeanisation.

Europeanisation as an analytical concept is used in various ways in the literature.[5] With regard to European neighbourhood policies, one can at bottom distinguish between internal and external Europeanisation. Internal Europeanisation refers to the interaction between the member state and the European levels in the making of European foreign policy; external Europeanisation, however, refers to the impact of European foreign policies on neighbouring countries. Focusing on internal Europeanisation, Patrick Müller gives an overview of this concept, discusses methodological challenges and outlines how they could be solved by future research. Whereas Müller concentrates on 'bottom-up' and 'top-down' Europeanisation between the European and member state levels, Normann, in her contribution, puts forward the 'cross-loading' variant of Europeanisation, which refers to the interaction among member states and that she considers crucial to understand the ENP's evolution.

A specific analytical framework to analyse external Europeanisation is proposed by Natasha Wunsch. She conceives Europeanisation as a triangular process that involves not only the EU and the state level of the neighbouring country, but also sub-state actors within this country. Also focusing on external Europeanisation, Bernd Weber reviews three models that were developed to measure the effectiveness of European neighbourhood policies: the external incentives model, external governance, and the policy convergence approach. He concludes that a combination of these models would be a promising avenue for developing a more adequate analytical framework to examine the effectiveness of European neighbourhood policies 'beyond enlargement'. Finally, Ludwig Schulz also draws on different branches of political science literature in order to operationalise the concept of 'strategy' as analytical tool to examine the making, implementation and the effectiveness of the EU's foreign policy.

The contributions to this volume show that there is still a horizon of possibilities to refine, systematise and – at least partly – integrate the theoretical, methodological and analytical concepts that are currently employed to examine European neighbourhood policies. As these policies constitute a focal point for the European Union's external relations, at least to a certain degree, further research on European neighbourhood policies could also contribute to developing an integrated theory of European foreign policy in general.

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5   Different branches of the Europeanisation literature are reviewed in particular in the chapters by Müller, Normann and Weber.

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