The European Neighbourhood Policy: Catalyst for Transformation or Paper Tiger?

Stefani Weiss

I Of Sweet Dreams and Rude Awakenings

Contrary to the prevailing view that Europe was old and ailing, the European Union got off to a bright and promising start in the new millennium. In 2004, the EU successfully concluded its biggest enlargement ever when Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia became new member states. Accession negotiations with Bulgaria and Romania were well under way. After years of war, even the situation in the Balkans had eased considerably, not least because the EU had firmly committed itself to the European perspective of the Western Balkan countries and their ultimate accession.

Given the amazing speed with which the eight former communist countries had transformed into democracies and market economies, the EU had every reason to feel irresistibly attractive. Accordingly, many people felt that the decades-long division of the continent was a thing of the past, while the future would see a peaceful, free and united Europe. The dreams did not stop there, since many nurtured the vision of a Europe surrounded by neighbors who all abided by, or were at least sympathetic to, the values of democracy, rule of law, respect for human rights, and social cohesion.

1. Departure in High Spirits

It was in this elated state that the EU launched its European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). Modeled on the enlargement policy, the ENP aimed at promoting structural economic changes through trade agreements, technical and financial support and visa liberalization, with the ultimate goal of removing all trade barriers and integrating the EU’s neighboring countries into the single market. At the same time, the policy was meant to support these countries in becoming well-governed democratic states. Alas, membership in the EU was not on the ENP agenda.

Initially, only the four new eastern neighbors – Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine – were to become ENP partners. At the insistence of southern EU member states, Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria and Tunisia were also included, and eventually even Armenia and Azerbaijan were added. The result was to be nothing less than a “ring of friends” spanning from the shores of the Mediterranean to the Southern Caucasus to Eastern Europe.

The ENP got off to a dynamic start. Two years after its inception, action plans were concluded with almost all 16 ENP countries. These plans encapsulated the agreed-upon reform agendas and the timelines for their implementation. To track what had been achieved, progress reports for each ENP country were published every year. Successful reforms were to be honored with closer political association and economic integration in the form of Association Agreements (AAs) and Free Trade Agreements (FTAs). By 2005 such agreements were already in place with most of the southern neighbors.
In addition to the bilateral association and free trade agendas, two multilateral dialogue forums for closer regional cooperation were set up: the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM)\(^2\) and the Eastern Partnership (EaP)\(^3\). They were intended not only to facilitate a better understanding of the differences between the eastern and southern neighborhoods, but also the strong differences in strategic interests and regional preferences of different EU member states.

Beginning in 2009, the ENP was enhanced by so-called Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements (DCFTAs) which were to allow for virtually full access to the EU’s market. Initially available only to countries in the eastern neighborhood, the agreements were introduced to lend new momentum to the ENP and were to be reserved for those partners who shared the EU’s worldview and values.

2. Landing in Hangover
   Only a decade later, not much is left of the optimism that guided the ENP in its first days.

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\(^2\) The UfM was founded as an enhanced continuation of the preceding Euro-Med/Barcelona process on the initiative of France in 2008 and encompassed 45 states.  
http://ufmsecretariat.org/history/.

\(^3\) The EaP was introduced in 2009.  
Instead of economically prospering and democratically transformed countries, the neighborhood is literally on fire. Of 16 ENP countries, 12 are exposed to frozen conflicts, civil wars, territorial occupation and interstate war.

Bad governance and ineffective state institutions have made corruption endemic, human rights abuses prevalent and autocratic rule the daily fare.

For a moment only, the Arab Spring in 2011 instilled new hopes for a democratic transformation of the Middle East and North Africa. After years of silent or even open complicity with Arab authoritarian regimes, the EU and its member states were embarrassed by the region’s revolutionary awakening. To restore credibility, a review of the ENP was ordered that put fresh emphasis on promoting democracy and working with civil society. Above all, the EU tried to revitalize the conditionality that it had attached to the ENP but mostly had let slide. In the future, the “more for more” principle was to apply, granting closer economic cooperation only if ENP countries delivered on democratic reforms. Unfortunately, the new policy effort did not turn the tide: The political developments in the EU’s neighborhood were already too dynamic and crisis-driven.

To the south, the brief flirt with freedom and democracy was either crushed by new military dictatorships as in Egypt, or the ensuing civil wars allowed radical Islamist movements to advance into the power vacuum left by the ousting of autocrats like Muammar al-Gaddafi in Libya and Zine El-Abidene Ben Ali in Tunisia. The terrorist militia ISIS/ISIL was able to overrun and gain control of entire sections of Iraqi, Syrian and Libyan territory. Since then, the Caliphate state it established has been spreading jihadist terror throughout the Arab world and into Europe. Millions began fleeing the Syrian war, putting enormous pressure on neighboring Jordan and Lebanon which, together with Turkey, have taken in most of the refugees. The repercussions of the refugee crisis are now being felt in the heart of Europe. Over one million migrants arrived in 2015 alone. The only hope left for positive change in the region is Tunisia, while Morocco and Algeria, both firmly under autocratic rule, appear stable, but are only so on the surface.

The situation does not look any better to the east. There the EU’s eastern neighborhood crisis erupted fully in 2013, when Armenia submitted its just-concluded Association Agreement for membership in the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union (EEU). The crisis culminated with the Russian military intervention in Ukraine, which, unlike Armenia, had not been subdued by Moscow’s bullying. Instead, the Ukrainian people ousted their government and chose instead a democratic restart and closer cooperation with the EU.

3. The Review of the Review
Against the backdrop of an ever-deteriorating security situation on the EU’s border, one of the first steps of the new European Commission under President Jean-Claude Juncker was to call for a second overhaul of the neighborhood policy. The results were presented in November 2015 and marked a significant departure from the original. Rather than transforming its neighbors into functioning market economies and democracies, a much less idealistic policy was proposed. Stabilization of the neighboring countries was now identified as the key strategic priority. Accordingly, security cooperation in areas of conflict prevention, border protection, terrorism, organized crime and anti-radicalization efforts were put high on the new policy agenda, as was migration, mobility and economic development capable of creating jobs for youth.

Above all, the notion that a uniform set of instruments and standards could be applicable to all 16 ENP partners was dropped once and for all. Instead, more tailor-made approaches were to inform
the relations with the 16 ENP countries, approaches that were to reflect both the aspirations of the partners as much as the interests (and less the values) of the EU. The ENP’s traditional enlargement-derived instruments will come to bear only with those states that have already signed advanced AAs and FTAs (Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia) or are moving in this direction (Tunisia, Morocco).

II  Facing Up to the Challenges?

The major achievement of the second ENP review lies in its acknowledgment of the huge gap that existed between the ENP’s ambitious goals and its rather poor performance.4

The EU’s new modesty is certainly welcome, but it will not suffice on its own. What is still missing – and the ENP review did not have the mandate of addressing this crucial problem – is a sound foreign and security policy strategy that spells out what the long-term goals of the EU are in its neighborhood and, accordingly, what policies and instruments need to be introduced to achieve these goals. Quite clearly, the ENP – no matter how often and in what manner it might be improved and streamlined – cannot substitute for a wholesale foreign policy approach. It remains to be seen if the new EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy (EUGS) can close the gap. The new strategy was brought to the attention of heads of state and government during the European Council of June 28–29, 2016. The timing could not have been worse. With the summit dominated by the British decision to leave the EU, the strategy took back seat and was merely welcomed. Given the unwillingness, especially of the larger member states, to delegate to the EU

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4 Valuable input on the Bertelsmann Transformation Index was received from Dr. Hauke Hartmann and Sabine Donner. For further information: https://www.bti-project.org/en/home/.
responsibilities for issues touching on war and peace, the chances are rather dim that the new strategy proposal will become the basis for a true common foreign and security policy. Many experts are already calling the EUGS yet another “mission impossible.”

1. Too Many Actors and No Strategy
The first problem is how ownership of the ENP policy is organized within the EU itself. Some have maliciously suggested that the ENP was created only to give further employment to the 1,000 or so Commission officials who had achieved the big-bang enlargement in 2004. However the Commission managed it, it became responsible for the neighborhood dossier. This assignment is the source of many of the deficiencies the ENP has been associated with over the years. With the Commission having no immediate competences in the realm of foreign and security policy, the ENP could not be designed other than as enlargement policy “lite.” As such, the policy was well suited to helping harmonize industrial norms and standards and negotiating comprehensive trade agreements with neighboring countries, but it was not suited to dealing with the growing security threats.

This applies to the MENA region in particular, with its longstanding inter-state conflicts and the increasing intra-state cleavages or proxy wars that have occurred in the aftermath of the Arab Spring. The ENP’s soft-power practices might be effective in a secure environment and might help to prevent conflicts, but they are toothless when conflicts are already in full swing, as there can be no sustainable development in a hostile and insecure environment.

Another drawback of such a narrow approach became obvious during the Ukrainian crisis, when Moscow opposed closer cooperation between Kiev and Brussels and intervened militarily to guard what it considered its sphere of influence. It is, of course, wrong to blame the Commission, as some have done, for causing the crisis by not taking into account Russia’s growing objections to Ukraine signing an AA and DCFTA with the EU. Still, an aftertaste remains. Trade relations are hardly an apolitical issue and, accordingly, no free lunches can be expected when international affairs are still driven by the logic of zero-sum games.

Unfortunately, the EU missed the chance in 2010 to use the newly established European External Action Service (EEAS) as the foreign policy framework to politicize the ENP. In the negotiations on the distribution of tasks and instruments between the Commission and the new service, the Commission retained the upper hand and the Commissioner for Enlargement remained in charge of the ENP dossier and its budget. Even though Commission officials began to feel that, compared to the enlargement policy, they lacked authority in implementing the neighborhood policy, the turf battles only began to diminish when the Juncker Commission took office. Federica Mogherini, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign and Security Policy, clearly became primus inter pares among the Commissioners dealing with external affairs. Nevertheless, the master of the keys for the neighborhood is still the Commissioner for Enlargement.

Since then, Mogherini and her Commission colleagues have been working hard to join forces inside the Commission and the EEAS, as well as with member states, the other EU agencies involved

5 The Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG Near) currently has 1,650 staff members in Brussels and in the EU Delegations in partner countries.

6 Examples include the Israeli-Palestinian dispute and the conflict over Western Sahara between Algeria and Morocco.
and the relevant international organizations. However, the plethora of policy actors and programs active in the ENP makes it difficult to create a cohesive and uniform policy. On the contrary, over the years the abundance of contact points and policy instruments has made it easy for ENP countries to pick and choose or even to ignore the Commission and turn directly to those EU member states with which they have historically had closer economic or cultural ties.

The crucial role that member states play in any meaningful EU policy towards the neighborhood cannot be overstated. Unfortunately, the member states have not wholeheartedly endorsed the ENP, but mostly pursued their own policies instead – often in outright contradiction to the ENP objectives they subscribed to while in Brussels. The armament exports of Germany, France and other member states to Egypt are only the latest example. They are in outright violation of a ban on weapons deliveries that the EU imposed in 2013 with the support of the member states after Egyptian security forces killed hundreds of civilian protesters.

That the member states’ support is lukewarm at best might be due to the fact that the ENP is a Commission-led policy in which the member states have little say. Whatever the reason, the deep division that exists between member states – which ranges from different threat assessments and strategic priorities to, not least, the question of further EU enlargement – is contributing to the gap between original intention and actual performance in the neighborhood.

2. Values Versus Interests

In the past as well, double standards prevailed and conditionality was applied rather selectively and inconsistently, especially when the economic interests of the EU or member states were involved. A prime example is Azerbaijan, which was treated as an important energy partner and was granted considerable leniency regarding its human rights accord. The Arab states are another case in point. In the aftermath of 9/11, the EU’s foremost concern was combating international terrorism, regardless of whether the partners in this undertaking were authoritarian leaders like Libya’s Gaddafi or Tunisia’s Ben Ali. It also seemed questionable that a Ukrainian government as reform-averse and corrupt as Viktor Yanukovych’s should be honored with an AA/DCFTA, which was only be granted as the capstone to a country’s deep and sustainable democratic transformation.

Given the former inconsistencies, the new pragmatism that is to guide the ENP in the future is bound to be met with skepticism. The question is how often the EU can turn a blind eye to bad governance and human rights abuses without losing further credibility in the region – as well as at home. Human rights organizations in the EU are already alarmed. They fear that the prioritization of stability over democratic standards will again lead to cooperation with illiberal political leaders to the detriment of the nascent and widely repressed civil society organizations in the region and their fight for human and civil rights. On the other hand, questions exist as to whether the EU can stand for long a “realpolitik” that runs counter to its own founding principles and calls into question the very basis of the EU as a values-based project.

The EU has lost credibility not only because it has not always been the proclaimed steadfast advocate of its own values in the region, but also because it is not living up to its values at home. Growing populist and Islamophobic movements in the member states make the EU look neither enlightened nor liberal. Together with a burdensome colonial heritage, the political radicalization in the EU has cast doubt among the predominantly Islamic countries in the south as to whether Europe can be a trustworthy partner. Likewise, it is difficult to see how the EU can serve as a role model in its neighborhood when some of its member states’ governments themselves feel inclined to limit press freedoms, weaken parliamentarian rights and interfere with judicial independence.
After being hit hard by the global financial crises, the EU today no longer looks as economically powerful as it did, making it harder to impress its neighborhood to the point that the countries there wish to follow the EU’s lead. As it struggles to manage the euro crisis, much of the EU’s former glamour is gone. Other states less affected by the crisis have caught up and are competing with the EU for power, influence and resources in the region.

3. Conditionality and Funding

The ENP is based on the assumption that the EU’s neighbors are ready and willing to share its values, if not immediately then at least in the longer run. As it turned out, the governments in the neighborhood were keen to share in western living standards but less willing to adopt democratic values. In the meantime, with political Islam gaining ground to the south and a new nation-centered, partly xenophobic orthodoxy spreading in the east, the EU has to admit that beneficiaries of the ENP are increasingly turning to other non-western models and ideologies.

Even under the most favorable conditions, the carrot of gaining the closest possible political and economic association – but no membership – was not sufficient for achieving real change on the ground. Given the neighborhood’s point of departure economically, politically and socially, the ENP’s reform agenda was too demanding by far. Only true optimists would have expected quick fixes.

To the south, the dominant sources of income are tourism and agriculture. In terms of the latter, the EU, eager to protect its own farmers, was only prepared to open its market gradually and selectively. Moreover, the North African states were becoming less interested in deregulating the industries that form a convenient source of income for their governments, something that also does not provide much leverage for the EU.

On the one hand, the situation in the eastern neighborhood was in principle more favorable for applying conditionality, as Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova and, up to a certain point, Armenia did and still do see the AAs as a first step towards full EU membership, even though the EU has repeatedly signaled the opposite. On the other hand, transforming these centrally planned economies, which rely foremost on old Soviet-style heavy industries, into free market economies was likely to be much more difficult and protracted than reforming the paternalistic economies to the south, with their largely colonial past. Above all, the eastern economies are largely under the control of oligarchs who fear not only the loss of access to their traditional Russian market, but also the loss of power once a genuine free market economy is introduced. Even before Moscow’s intervention made things worse, it was difficult to imagine what kind of new business models these countries could adopt – at least in the short and medium run – to compete in the European market and secure growth and jobs at home. Accordingly, even the most EU-friendly governments in the eastern neighborhood were following the EU more hesitantly and slowing their efforts to liberalize markets.

Against this backdrop, an important instrument for inducing reforms and keeping ENP partners in line is, certainly, money. In the period from 2007 to 2013\textsuperscript{7}, the financial assistance offered through the ENP to the 16 neighborhood countries was €11 billion, the same amount the EU has spent on the six pre-accession countries\textsuperscript{8}. Many experts have therefore questioned if that is really sufficient

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{7} http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/funding/european-neighbourhood-and-partnership-instrument-enpi_en.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{8} The beneficiaries of the EU’s pre-accession assistance (IPA) are currently Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey. http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/instruments/overview/index_en.htm.}
for the ENP cause, given that other actors like Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States, which have interests that oppose those of the EU, have started investing heavily in the region.

Moreover, the financial assistance is being spread across a wide variety of programs, putting too many objectives on the agenda that address too many issues in too many geographical areas, making it too little money to be effective. If no additional financial resources can be found, an effective remedy would be to prioritize and to increase coherence among the diverse actors in the EU.

Unfortunately, the latest ENP review did not result in more financial assistance, although the deteriorating security situation would have more than justified a different outcome. With no more than €128 million\(^9\) per country and year at hand until 2020, it was indeed only realistic to suspend conditionality. However, abandoning the “more for more” principle does not answer the question of how the EU can influence the ENP countries in a way that produces a stabilized neighborhood. Likewise, it is an open question as to how the EU will deal with those neighboring countries who turned away from the EU, as Armenia did, or all the countries burdened by conflicts and wars, whose deadly repercussions can now be felt in the heart of Europe.

### III Special Problem: Refugee and Migrant Crisis

The refugee crisis is exacerbating the problems the EU faces in its neighborhood. Greece is unable to live up to international asylum standards and the preceding policies of closing borders has not improved its reputation but made the EU look weak and divided once again. Only after considerable time had passed did the EU start to support the neighbors in coping with the enormous additional burden that the millions of refugees have put on already weak countries like Jordan, Lebanon and the Western Balkan states. A recent evaluation by the European Court of Auditors\(^10\) concluded that the ENP’s migration policies leave room for improvement. This was mildly put.

In the first place, a peaceful, stable and prosperous neighborhood would give people less reason to flee their country and seek a better future in the EU. With these goals ever less attainable, the 2011 ENP review unavoidably shifted its focus to security issues, with the dominant features terrorism, human trafficking, smuggling and migration-related organized crime. Many critics saw in this move the threat that a “fortress Europe” could be consolidating, instead of efforts to improve the means for legal migration and visa-free travel from the region.

Yet the situation in the immediate neighborhood is only part of an even bigger problem that threatens Europe: The EU also needs a stable and capable neighborhood in order to manage migration flows that transit the ENP countries. Poor living and health conditions and various forms of violence and oppression are leading more people in Africa to leave their home country. According to recent estimates, more than 200,000 people crossed the Mediterranean in the first half of 2016. Many more are waiting on the shores of Egypt, Libya and other North African countries for their chance to come to Europe. Currently, more than 1,000 migrants are rescued from decrepit vessels every day, and thousands have drowned since the beginning of the year.

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Since the EU member states are not able to agree on a fair burden-sharing approach to dealing with the refugee and migration crises, the situation is now almost entirely in the hands of the EU's southern neighbors. Everything will depend on their willingness to cooperate and to help stop the flow of migrants to Europe.

It is too early to judge if the new Migration Partnership Framework\(^1\) that is to reinforce cooperation with third countries can make a difference to this end. At least €8 billion will be on hand over the coming five years to support third countries, especially in Africa, to tackle the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement, and to forestall migration and improve reallocation and the readmission rate in these countries.\(^2\) The Commission is also working on an External Investment Plan for Africa that, with the help of the European Investment Bank (EIB) and donations from member states, should trigger €61 billion to improve the business environment in African nations. The cooperation with African leaders who have problematic credentials will come at a price, as the EU-Turkey deal on the readmission of refugees made clear; it will make the EU look reckless, inhumane and highly unprincipled in light of its own values.

### IV Neighbors of Neighbors

The shortcomings of the neighborhood policy became obvious during the Ukrainian crisis. Russia is trying to rewrite the rules of the European security order and expand its sphere of influence both by using military force to change borders and by intervening militarily, even “out of area” as in Syria. For a long time now, Russia’s support for separatist and secessionist movements – encapsulated in the “frozen conflicts” between Georgia and both Ossetia and Abkhazia, between Moldova and Transnistria and between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh – have been confronting and undermining the EU’s eastern neighborhood policy. Wherever possible, Moscow is supporting “spoilers” in these regions by promoting anti-western or populist narratives that exacerbate latent tensions in order to slow democratization processes.

The Russian invasion of Georgia in 2008 suggested old-style power politics had returned to Europe and it created a security environment in the east which the ENP had never been designed to cope with. In consequence, the EU’s eastern neighbors find themselves squeezed between an ever more hegemonic Russia that uses force to revive its idea of a “near abroad,” on the one hand, and the vague idea of a “wider Europe” that does not yet offer EU membership, on the other.

Under President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Turkey has turned into an ever more self-assertive and nationalist foreign policy actor. Driven by the Kurdish question, it has enmeshed itself deeply in the ensuing power conflicts of the region. Turkey’s role in the war in Syria must be seen very critically. It is supporting the ISIS insurgency in Syria whilst fighting the Kurdish militias that are part of the US-led global coalition combating ISIS. Furthermore, Erdogan is investing considerable funds to promote Sunni Islam in the Middle East, Central Asia and the Balkans. Building on the sympathies of local Muslim communities, support for Erdogan is especially strong in Kosovo, where people took to the streets to celebrate his party’s victory.


Today it seems that Erdogan, in reaction to the military coup of July 15, is destroying the very democracy his people defended in the streets that day. By arresting thousands of soldiers, prosecutors, judges, policemen, academics, teachers, civil servants and journalists, he is staging his own coup against a democratic and pluralist Turkish society, one that will ultimately lead to more conflict within Turkey but also in its already war-torn and destabilized neighborhood. Political Islam combined with highly centralized rule and no regard for human rights and the freedom of the press is the opposite of what the EU wishes to see spreading in the Western Balkans or taken up as a model in the other Muslim countries in the southern neighborhood.

The politics practiced in the EU’s southern neighborhood have long been held victim to the Middle East conflict and the impossibility, thus far, of brokering peace between Israelis and Palestinians. Today, a second and even more acute power struggle over regional supremacy is shaking up the region, namely the one between Saudi Arabia and Iran. Both countries are trying to take advantage of each other by fuelling conflict and civil war in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Libya, thereby antagonizing any attempts by the EU and the wider international community to stabilize these countries.

With the US taking the side of Israel, and Saudi Arabia and Russia supporting Iran and Syria, we seem to be heading backwards to the days of the Cold War, with its nuclear standoff and proxy wars. Currently, however, there seems to be one decisive difference: Neither the US nor Russia appears to be capable of controlling its allies in a way that would open up the path for political solutions and stop further political radicalization and Islamic terrorism from spreading globally.

### V Key Lessons Learned – Recommendations

What the ENP has achieved has fallen well below Europe’s initial expectations. The ENP has not been the catalyst for true democratic and economic reforms and, accordingly, the neighborhood has not been turned into a ring of friends – quite the opposite. Nonetheless, it would be unfair to call the ENP a paper tiger. It would be more appropriate to call it a proxy policy that – contrary to all rhetoric – was overburdened from the beginning and merely concealed the unwillingness of the EU member states to forge a meaningful foreign and security policy.

To that extent, the EU should not give up on the ENP’s underlying convictions. There are still strong arguments in favor of a policy in support of free trade and closer political and economic relations, one that can foster relations and begin encouraging Arab rulers, among others, to enact reform. Yet if the ENP is not embedded in a broader policy concept and if other instruments are not added to the toolbox for addressing the mounting regional power struggles and security challenges that permeate the neighborhood, it will become even harder to make and keep friends.

In sum:

- Neighborhood policy is and will remain foreign policy, one that has to deal with the prevailing pitfalls of an international system which, unlike the EU, is not rule-based.
- It is therefore questionable if the European Commission, which shares competences for foreign affairs with the EU member states only to a limited degree, can successfully handle the neighborhood dossier.
- A first step for giving the ENP more impact would be to hand over the task fully to the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and to the Vice-President of the European Commission.
• Equally important will be aligning EU member states behind the ENP and securing their ownership by assigning special responsibilities to member-state groupings for certain neighborhood countries.
• The aforementioned steps are only complementary. They are not a substitute for the EU developing a common foreign and security policy that is worthy of its name.
• The EU will only be successful in influencing its neighbors if it lives up to its own values at home and runs a principled but realistic foreign policy, one that might be deemed “pragmatic idealism.”
• To achieve such a policy approach, the EU must not discard its values but must become less Euro-centric and pay more attention to the interests, constraints and opportunities of its partners.
• Regional cooperation can only be productive if the parties involved have enough in common, otherwise the EU should build on bilateral relations.
• In an environment marked by accelerating change, setting short-term goals is a more promising approach than embarking on a transformational agenda.
• Financial aid (in whatever form), economic cooperation and foreign direct investment are important tools for making friends and gaining influence, but they can only take effect when they are strategically focused and serve both sides, and when aid is not thinly spread over a multitude of programs and projects.