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New Frontiers and New Policies in Europe

~~Check Against Delivery
Seul le texte prononcé fait foi
Es gilt das gesprochene Wort~~

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Enlargement is taking Europe into a completely new dimension. It also makes it more urgent to develop new policies -- institutional policies, economic and social policies, and “global” policies.

After enlargement, Europe will need further integration and it will have to play a twofold role that is both global *and* regional. The enlarged European Union will need to develop a new regional strategy based on a new concept of frontier. This implies a fundamental change -- not only in regional strategy but also in the very idea of frontier.

The word “frontier” conjures up images of war, conflict and division. The word originally meant “to go to the front”, to expand through war. In its classical legal meaning, “frontier” means political discontinuity, the demarcation of territory. As Claudio Magris said “the frontier is an idol which demands human sacrifices.”

Historically, frontiers have served to determine territory, to separate, to oppose. Some frontiers have functioned both as points of contact and as lines of separation. But only the latter function was recognised officially in law, whereas the former was useful for fostering trade, for establishing social contacts, for the exchange of images and ideas.

Clearly the Union cannot base a new regional strategy on this sort of frontier. The Union needs to forge a new idea of frontier to base itself on.

Within the Union, the concept of frontier has taken on a relative value. Robert Schuman used to speak quite rightly of “*frontières dévaluées*” – devalued frontiers. The Union has dismantled its internal borders and the task of controlling its frontier has shifted to other places -- customs centres, airports, etc.

Outside the Union, the concept of frontier must evolve for several reasons.

First of all, the Union's power of attraction is growing steadily today from the economic and non-military viewpoints. It could attract from the security and defence point of view too if it continued to progressively define a common defence policy. This would bring considerable influence and great political potential for Europe in its relations with the region on its borders.

Secondly, it is also clear that enlargement does not simply mean moving the "Iron Curtain" a few hundred kilometres eastward. Nor does it just mean shifting the burden of controlling borders onto the new members. Tomorrow's Union must look at those borders that are "half open" -- in eastern Poland and along the Baltic, Adriatic and Mediterranean coasts -- and transform them into scope for positive political action.

Let me be clear on this point: this does not imply weakening the EU's capacity to combat illegal activities on the seas, rivers and lakes along its borders. It involves transforming the frontiers of a unified Europe so they are transformed into areas of cooperation, and are no longer dividing lines.

As it assumes pan-European responsibilities, the EU must develop a strategic area of shared peace, prosperity, security and democracy.

In fact, the EU has a great power of attraction and of projection. A power attraction it owes to the success of its economic model, the unique character of its institutional structure and its potential.

At the same time and probably for the same reasons, the EU already projects stability well beyond the borders of the new members and it is giving rise to legitimate expectations among its future neighbours.

So the Union needs to offer them incentives, injecting fresh impetus into current processes and developing an open and evolving partnership.

This is the goal of the EU's new neighbourhood policy *vis-à-vis* all the immediate neighbours of the new enlarged Europe -- from Russia to Morocco, including Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova and all the southern Mediterranean neighbours.

Of course, each bilateral relationship will have its own features and will develop along the lines decided by Europe's partners. But the strategy towards the EU's neighbours as a whole aims to supersede the "In" or "Out" dilemma -- whereby one is either "In" the Union -- as a member or with recognised candidate-country status and enjoying the right incentives to implement the necessary reforms -- or "Out" of the Union and excluded from its political and economic benefits.

Plainly the EU cannot go on expanding indefinitely, so its institutional and political structure needs consolidating. And, according to the Treaty, the EU cannot refuse any European state prospects of membership and the Union cannot be opened up to countries that are not European. But this must not bring a watering-down of the EU through the speeding-up of further enlargements or rule any out -- one day, after the Balkans.

As President Prodi has asserted several times, *"the integration of the Balkans into the European Union will complete the unification of the continent. Although there is still a long way to go, the Balkans belong to Europe. The process of integrating them will create a sort of bridge between enlargement and neighbourhood policy... I want to see a "ring of friends" surrounding the Union and its closest European neighbours, from Morocco to Russia and the Black Sea. This encircling band of friendly countries will be diverse. The quality of our relations with them will largely depend on their performance and the political will on either side. Of course, geography will play a role too".*¹

NEIGHBOURHOOD AND EU MEMBERSHIP: MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE?

¹ Speech by President Prodi at the 6th ECSA-World Conference, Brussels, 6th December 2002.

- The aim of the new Neighbourhood Policy is to provide a framework for the development of relations over the coming 5-10 years or so, not to set the geographical limits of the Union or to exclude eventual membership.
- Article 49 of the Treaty on European Union stipulates that any European State may apply to become a member of the European Union.
- The prospect of accession has been ruled out for the non-candidate Mediterranean partners. Ukraine and Moldova have repeatedly expressed their desire to join the EU.
- The incentive for reform created by the prospect of membership has proved to be strong – enlargement has unarguably been the Union’s most successful foreign policy instrument.
- In reality, however, any decision on further EU expansion awaits a debate on the ultimate limits of the Union. This is a debate in which the current candidates must be in a position to play a full role.
- Moreover, prospective candidates must meet the criteria for membership: democracy, the rule of law, human rights, respect for minorities; a functioning market economy, and the capacity to cope with competitive pressures; the ability to take on the obligations of membership (meaning to apply effectively the EU’s rules and policies).
- A new relationship, as discussed in this paper, would therefore not, in the medium-term, include a perspective of membership or a role in the Union’s institutions. A response to the practical issues posed by proximity and neighbourhood should be seen as separate from the question of prospects for EU accession.

Source: *European Commission – Communication on “Wider Europe” – COM (2003)104.*

In the foreseeable future, therefore, Europe’s relations with the neighbouring region could be based on the idea of “proximity”.

This new policy must harness all the convergence factors between the EU and its neighbours. It must also prevent any divergences from remaining or becoming serious obstacles on the path towards a relationship which, to quote President Prodi again, aims to “*share everything but (EU) institutions*”. This will imply offering something more than a partnership but less than membership, without ruling the latter out if and when the neighbouring countries qualify for it.

Take the case of Russia, for instance. There is a fundamental affinity between Russia and the other countries of Europe that covers geographical proximity, culture and history. There is a shared need to overcome the distrust and fears arising from the last fifteen years of the EU’s history. And there is considerable economic, human and political potential that could be generated by a new EU-Russia *rapprochement*. Such a *rapprochement* is also vital for the far-reaching transformation of society needed in Russia.

There are the examples of Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova, where there can be no prospect of accession for the foreseeable future. But these countries could draw substantial benefit from a relationship with the EU that is based on clear mutual advantages and reciprocal obligations, and from a well-structured process with clearly defined goals and a legally and politically binding framework.

And take the Mediterranean area. In addition to Euro-Mediterranean economic integration, there is a clear need to consider the social concerns of the southern partners, the potential that a fresh intercultural dialogue could bring and the lack of political initiative that Europe must ultimately make good.

The Mediterranean is vital to Europe because of its geographic position, its resources, its social, economic and cultural links with Europe and also because of the dangers it holds.

The Mediterranean is also the area where it is most urgent to link the processes of globalisation, internationalisation and regionalisation. For Europe -- because the Mediterranean Sea needs to be transformed into an area of shared stability, prosperity and security. For the Mediterranean partners -- because the alternative would be to remain on the periphery of Europe's new regional policy, relegated to secondary importance by the EU in its bilateral relations with the United States and marginalised on the world scene.

From a new political perspective -- the perspective of a new regional political and economic strategy unique in the world -- these new goals would have positive effects and act as a stimulus for reform, for assistance and for the conception of new joint policy initiatives involving the EU and these countries.

The new political deal the EU should propose must be attractive, offering new prospects of close partnership that can help our neighbours to embark on the difficult processes of internal reform. From this point of view, attractiveness should

also act as an “external constraint”: “to get closer to Europe, these reforms must be applied.” Such reforms are necessary in any case, but the European perspective can accompany and strengthen motivation to undertake the internal process of persuasion and implementation. And it should be a dynamic and process-oriented strategy, based on a common agenda and on gradual advances on both sides.

The recent European Commission Communication on a Wider Europe provides the framework for building such a new kind of regional strategy.² It aims to create a new area of cooperation and integration around the new borders and it could ultimately give rise to a new regional bloc based on a sort of “*evolutionary governance*”.

According to the Communication, the two main objectives of this new strategy are:

- *To work with the partners to reduce poverty and create an area of shared prosperity and values based on deeper economic integration, intensified political and cultural relations, enhanced cross-border co-operation and shared responsibility for conflict prevention between the EU and its neighbours.*
- *To anchor the EU’s offer of concrete benefits and preferential relations within a differentiated framework which responds to progress made by the partner countries in political and economic reform.*

The main objective is to create an open and integrated market at pan-European level within a well-defined political, regulatory and trading framework. Such a market would also enhance our European neighbours’ attractiveness to investors and reduce their vulnerability to external shocks. At the same time, free-trade areas should be established between the neighbours, according to a clear and binding timetable.

Around this pan-European single market, the EU *acquis* and the four fundamental freedoms, the Union will have to fully exploit all the “external potential” of its common policies, applying them as far as possible to all its new neighbours. The application of these policies -- ranging from environment to transport and energy, from education, culture and research to telecommunications -- would bring the EU’s

² Cf. Communication of the European Commission “Wider Europe — Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours”, COM (2003) 104, 11 March 2002.

new neighbours as close to the Union as possible without actual membership and would give substance to the political goal of “sharing everything but institutions”. Of course, we will have to make provision for “European” institutions. In fact, there is nothing to prevent the Union from proposing new joint institutions to strengthen existing processes -- such as Euro-Mediterranean cooperation -- based on the idea of “co-ownership” and equality between the EU and its partners. The Commission’s proposals to establish a Foundation for dialogue between cultures in the Mediterranean and a Euro-Mediterranean Bank are good examples of what could be done.

Furthermore, the new external border must not be a barrier to trade, social or cultural interchange or regional cooperation.

As stressed in the Communication of the Commission: *“The impact of ageing and demographic decline, globalisation and specialisation means the EU and its neighbours can profit from putting in place mechanisms that allow workers to move from one territory to another where skills are needed most – although the free movement of people and labour remains the long-term objective. Significant additional opportunities for cultural and technical interchange could be facilitated by a long-stay visa policy on the part of the EU member states.”*

To this end, various actions will have to be considered:

- facilitating the crossing of external borders for *bona fide* third-country nationals living in the border areas that have legitimate and valid grounds for regularly crossing the border and do not pose any security threat;
- facilitating the movement of citizens of neighbouring countries participating in EU programmes and activities;
- granting visa-free access to holders of diplomatic and service passports;
- once the necessary conditions are in place, examining a wider application of visa free regimes;
- Cooperation in the fight against illegal immigration, the establishment of effective mechanisms for return and the conclusion of readmission agreements.

The strategy could be bolstered by new forms of assistance to encourage cross-border and transnational cooperation and development, both locally and regionally.

Based on experience with programmes like Phare, Tacis and Interreg, a new “proximity instrument” could be introduced to encourage regional and subregional cooperation and cross-border initiatives.

This kind of approach also calls for the Union to take on greater political responsibility in dealing with regional conflicts and in playing a much more active role in conflict prevention and management. This is obviously linked to the EU’s will and capacity to agree on new institutional structures for a more effective Common Foreign and Security Policy, which should be one of the main results of the ongoing constitutional process.

But it also depends on the EU’s political will and vision in promoting human rights, intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding.

The new Europe -- the post-enlargement Europe -- needs above all to be creative, open and reassuring.

Creative -- because its capacity to attract carries a duty to offer the right response to the new strategic challenges Europe faces.

Open -- because Europe would betray its own nature if it became a fortress isolated from its neighbours, abandoning any meaningful role on the international scene.

And reassuring -- because an open society needs to find satisfactory solutions to the growing demand for security from within the various European societies.

By applying such a policy beyond its new frontiers, Europe would make a substantial contribution to a new multilateral world order, organised around regional blocs that would be much more than mere free-trade areas. Europe’s new regional strategy in the post-Iraq period could provide a reference for those who reject the emergence of a unipolar world hegemony. For that would mean Europe would have to lower its sights and become nothing more than a wide area of economic prosperity -- until when one may ask?

To shoulder its global responsibilities, Europe must project the same concept of integration around its borders that has ensured its own success. This means it must surmount the famous “Chinese Wall” dividing internal and external politics, and develop a new “structural policy” that can reduce the degree of anarchy that surrounds it.

A new neighbourhood policy can provide a suitable framework for regulating the relationship of interdependence that exists between Europe and its neighbours. It can prevent fragmentation, and it can exploit the full potential of this new “broad European regional strategy”.

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