UNU-CRIS Working Papers

W-2013/2

Analysis of the EU in the Context of the European Neighbourhood Policy:

Regional or Global Leadership in Peace and Security

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Abstract

This paper examines the European Union's prospect to exert influence in the domain of peace and security within the ambit of its neighbourhood in the context of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). The analysis is conducted at two levels. First a canvas of three determinants of regional leadership (willingness, capacity and legitimacy) are delimited. Secondly these factors, to which regional leadership is a function, are applied to the European Union in the area of peace and security at the global stage. Subsequently, the analysis focuses on the regional context dealing with the sixteen countries that are covered by the ENP. The discussions are further fine tuned through the presentation of a case study discussing the territorial dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh from the point of view of the EU. The author notes that while there seems to be acceptable levels of legitimacy of EU actions in the area of peace and security in its neighbourhood there is also a mismatch as between willingness expressed in EU policies and hard power capacity to realize declared goals.

Introduction

Although leadership is a psychological construct originally applied to human beings, metaphorically states or regional organisations (ROs) can also be classified through its lenses. The application of the concept to states and ROs however has generated an extensive amount of muddle thinking concerning how best to conceptualise leadership in this second sense. Scholars ranging from Maxi Schoeman (Schoeman, 2003, pp. 353) to Alan Henrikson (Henrikson, 1995, pp. 124) and Christopher Hill (Hill, 1993, pp. 314) have all set different frameworks and introduced multiple criteria to explain leadership as exercised by states or ROs. In a view of this diverse cluster of views that features the discussion on the notion and determinants of regional leadership (RL), this paper subscribes to the view of Van Langenhove et al. who understand RL as a 'concept used to describe the power of an actor to influence certain aspects of the international relations and/or the internal functioning of actors in its regional neighbourhood', and single out three qualitative benchmarks of regional leadership (willingness, capacity and legitimacy) (Van Langenhove and Zwartjes, 2012, pp. 1). Whilst effective regional leadership, in theory, can be exercised by multiple actors at various levels, this is not necessarily the case in practice. Instead, one can argue that regional leadership is overwhelmingly exercised by states and a limited host of regional organisations (Prys, 2012, pp. 3-4). RL cannot be exclusively confined to states that have the endowment necessary to act 'out of area', the door is also open to ROs and as a result they may become a regional, or even global, power in certain issue areas (Kingah, 2012, pp. 197).

In order to grasp the essence of RL of non-human actors, be it a state or an RO, discussing the structural dimensions thereof serves as a reasonable point of departure. In this respect, Dent singles out three sub-dimensions of RL: governance, issue area and a geospatial domain. To begin with, the governance aspect raises questions as to the mechanisms and structures through which RL is carried out. Given that states and ROs in the role of a regional leader are composed of multiple actors, a broad variety of domestic governance mechanisms exist that are influenced by the particular norms and structures of that actor. This creates a number of ways in which regional leadership projects can be conducted (Dent, 2008, pp. 286-290).

The second structural dimension signifies the issue area in which leadership is exercised. Arguably, an actor's leadership can be tied to different issue areas (Ravenhill, 2001, pp. 20). Whereas China, for instance, has been increasingly seen as having the capacity and ambition to act 'out-of-area' concerning economic matters, it is, - as yet - far from playing a comparable role with respect to military or human rights issues, and will remain so in the years to come. It follows that leadership can be taken up by, and attributed to, multiple actors within a region or at the global stage depending on the issue area in question. Therefore, RL is a composite concept consisting of a variety of elements over which leadership cannot be appropriated purely by one actor. So the analysis of any actors' potential for RL should be restricted to and coupled with a particular issue area.

Lastly, the conception of the region in politico-geographic terms is determined by the geospatial structural dimension. Building on the definition that regions are territorial units created by states that have conferred some statehood properties upon them (Van Langenhove, 2011), one can detect a variety of overlapping regions ranging from the micro to the macro level with distinct forms of RL. In summary, outlining the structural dimensions of RL reveals the complexity of the concept, throwing light on the different configurations or outcomes in which it can exist (Van Langenhove and Zwartjes, 2012, pp. 3).

With a view to the subject of this paper, most pertinent of the above implications is that RL is always contingent upon the issue area in question. For this very reason, this paper focuses exclusively on the field of peace and security, examining the European Union's prospect to exert influence in this domain. In order to set the stage for a comparative approach, the analysis shall be made at two levels. The paper first presents an analytical framework that understands regional leadership as a function of three determinants. The paper then goes on to draw on the work of those who have applied these determinants to the European Union in the area of peace and security at the global stage. Subsequently, in order to ascertain how the modification of the scope impinges on the EU's aptness to qualify as a regional/global actor in peace and security, the analysis shall be limited to a regional context made up of the sixteen countries addressed under the European Neighbourhood Policy. Finally, the paper ends with the presentation of a case study discussing a territorial dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh from the point of view of the EU.

The European Union as a global leader in peace and security?

As noted previously, ROs as well as states, can engage in actions beyond their own regions, in so far as they possess certain capabilities coupled with the ambition to use them externally (Kingah, 2012, pp. 197). According to Van Langenhove et al., the success of ROs in exercising leadership 'out-of-area' and consequently becoming a global power, is influenced by its willingness and capacity to act as a leader, as well as according to its acceptance by others, irrespective of the issue area. In other words, RL can be conceptualised as a function of three determinants: (1) the willingness to act as a leader; (2) the leadership capacity; and (3) the acceptance or legitimacy of the leadership claim beyond its own region (Van Langenhove and Zwartjes, 2012).

Despite the importance attributed to security and defence concerns from the inception of the European integration, initial attempts to bring a defence union into existence were doomed to fail. However, the atmosphere after the Cold War proved conducive to reinvigorate the interest of member states in forming closer cooperation on security and defence related issues. According to Van Langenhove, this cooperation has unambiguously led to an EU that is resolute in its intention to play a vital role in safeguarding global and regional peace in the new multilateral order (Van Langenhove and Maes, 2012, pp. 2). In order to find out whether this premise holds up, the paper proceeds to analyse the EU's engagement in the above issue area through the application of the conceptual background introduced above.

Willingness

The EU's willingness to act, to begin with, is closely linked to the mandate member states confer upon the Union. Despite the EU being a project driven by economic considerations, its Lisbon Treaty ascribes equal significance to the promotion of peace. Yet, this is not designed to challenge the economic goals also pursued by the entity, rather it rests on the fundamental recognition that peace and economic stability, as demonstrated by two utterly ruinous and disastrous World Wars, are closely interlinked. Indeed, the initial impetus for European integration was to eliminate the conditions that unleashed the Second World War through a project of long-term friendship and cooperation. As recent treaties and incentives have shown, security concerns continue to play an extremely prominent role in the mind of European

observers, which has been further strengthened by the European Security Strategy of 2003, underlying the EU's overt aspiration to tackle regional and even global security concerns. Consequently, it is reasonable to argue that the EU has a firm textual basis and appropriate mandate to promote peace and security 'out-of-area' (Kingah, 2012, pp. 210-211).

At the same time, decisions falling under the scope of the Common Security and Foreign Policy are made by member states themselves, which are ultimately led by their respective national interests. It follows that the lack of convergence in stances taken by member states is the principal contributory factor to the EU's ineffectiveness in conducting actions as a unitary actor. In this regard, Van Langenhove suggests that, if strong enough, the European institutions may act to leverage the position of member states in a way that would achieve higher degrees of contributions in the form of financial and military assets on their part. This relates to the significance of having competent supranational bodies that are eager to activate the mandate and power of the RO in question (Van Langenhove and Maes, 2012, pp. 4). In the European context, there are indeed already several institutions to take on this role. Of these, the most prominent is the European Commission, which has already provided support for a range of EU peace-related operations likewise the European Council and the European Parliament whose input has proved equally central. Nonetheless, further consolidation of these institutions, along with augmented inter-institutional coordination, would arguably intensify the EU's effectiveness in reaching common strategic decisions at the community level and therefore speak with one voice on security-related issues.

Aside from regional bodies, the EU constitutes a quintessence of a regional integration process explicitly driven by a group of countries undertaking leadership with a strong visionary sense. In particular, France and Germany have done the most to set the stage for collaboration between European nations, giving priority to regional concerns over the interest of their own states and inciting others to follow suit. As the emergence of this visionary leadership (provided by leaders such as Adenauer, Kohl, Schuman, Monnet) dates back to the origins of the 'European project', today a range of elaborate mechanisms – i.e. the training of proper human resources – are to ensure that the institutional formation of the Union is continuously moving forward. With regard to peace and security, this leadership in backing EU involvement in conflicts outside its territory has manifested repeatedly of late, most recently by the deployment of the Border Assistance

Mission in Rafah in 2005 as well as the Union's involvement in the Great Lakes region of Africa (Kingah, 2012, pp. 211).

Capacity

The institutional security and defence framework of the EU has certainly undergone a series of reforms since the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), with the purpose of harmonising the foreign policy of member states brought into existence by the Treaty of Maastricht (1992). Within that framework, the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) would emerge later on, which, in part, was meant to bolster the EU's capacity and presence in crisis zones. Following the identification of a range of drawbacks deriving from its inconsistent nature, the policy was overhauled by the Treaty of Lisbon (2007), changing the ESDP's name to the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). Driven by the underlying goal to diminish inter-institutional tensions and make the EU a coherent actor in its external relations, the Treaty created the function of the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, along with the inauguration of the European External Action Service (EEAS). As a result of these developments, the EU has now been arguably endowed with strengthened capabilities in terms of political control and strategic command (Quinn, 2012, pp. 45-62). In addition, improved capability efforts have also been made by a certain group of member states within the EU, allowing them to forge closer ties with regard to defence cooperation (Kingah, 2012, pp. 213).

Respecting material, human and operational considerations, more remains to be done. Despite the increasingly broad variety of EU missions conducted under the CSDP since 2003, military capability, either human or material, continues to be seen as insufficient. Although, in principle EU standby groups are available on short notice, they have not yet been deployed; whereas the Permanent Structured Cooperation that was sought to address the capability deficit has bogged down. The lack of common operational structures for coordinating efforts and deployments on the ground constitutes another hindrance. Furthermore, Van Langenhove observes that a contradiction exists between the prevailing and the desired steering attitude to be applied in the context of crisis management. That is to say, the reactive nature of the CSDP to conflicts and crises arguably detracts from the efficiency of military interventions carried out by the EU. In

this regard, it has been argued that immense benefits could be drawn from the creation of a contingency planning capability, whose focus is not limited to the responsibility of intervention, but also encompasses the duty of knowledge and anticipation, prevention, and deterrence (Van Langenhove and Maes, 2012, pp. 3).

Finally, the Eurozone crisis may further complicate the zeal and desire to build up a more robust hardware in terms of arsenal and even troop constellations. As a result of the lack of a military planning capability and hence the absence of military presence, the EU's hard capabilities remain meagre. This has increasingly led some academic circles to regard the EU as deferring its wherewithal in the field of peace and security to its civilian or soft power (Kingah, 2012, pp. 212).

Acceptance

The acceptance of leadership should be considered from internal and external perspectives alike. The former is particularly important in the European context. This is best demonstrated by the German government's position on the recent military intervention in Libya. In the view of the forthcoming elections, the rather moderate support for involvement in the actions taken by the international community on the part of the German citizens led to the country's government being deterred from participation in the military operations (Van Langenhove and Maes, 2012, pp. 4).

Nevertheless, an RO not only needs to obtain internal endorsement, it must also gain legitimacy for its actions externally in the field of peace and security through constant cooperation with the UN. In spite of the trends showing that this cooperation is more likely to occur between the ROs and the UN Secretariat, the EU – as opposed to other ROs – has also built close ties with the UN General Assembly resulting in its observer status, including speaking rights, in that body. Accordingly, the EU in principle has the opportunity to obtain the consent of the UNGA to its activities related to the maintenance of peace and security and therefore enrich its actions with the crucial element of legitimacy (De Lombaerde and Baert, 2012, pp. 2). The other channel of collaboration manifests itself in the UNSC turning to a particular RO's assistance in order to strengthen its enforcement action. Such co-deployment by the UN and the EU, as occurred in

Kosovo in the mid-1990s and in the DRC under the Artemis Operation of 2003, brings massive benefits to the EU's legitimacy for 'out-of-area' actions in the realm of peace and security (Biscop and Gibney, 2010, pp. 9).

Furthermore, should an RO seek to embark on an enforcement action relying exclusively on its own forces, acknowledgement thereof by at least four permanent members of the UNSC is vital. Although scarce, empirical evidence has shown that regional entities, with the aspiration to intervene, are unlikely to be challenged by the UNSC unless one of the members' has interests at stake. Nonetheless, EU peace-related actions in the context of Serbia and Kosovo present a case in point for an action being hampered by the UNSC due to the interests of Russia in the Balkans (Kingah, 2012, pp. 212).

In summary, it is reasonable to contend that the EU shows signs of leadership in the maintenance of international peace and security. Even if it can hardly be contested that the EU is a truly willing, capable and accepted leader, which is able to wield considerable influence through its actions at the global level, much remains to be done. Regardless of whether this leadership is mainly sought to be exercised on the basis of material or ideational resources, the EU cannot cease to build on its hard power as it serves, in many ways, to buttress and reinforce its soft power (Richardson, 2008).

Contextual analysis

In a nutshell, drawing on the implications of the previous analysis, it can be deduced that the EU, as yet, is far from reigning globally in the maintenance of global peace and security. Nevertheless, it is argued that this finding does not inherently deny a potentially more – or less – pronounced leadership in a narrower, regional context in the same issue area in the future. Therefore, the point of departure for the second part of this paper is formed by the presumption that it is worth applying the previously introduced determinants to the EU by placing a limit on the scope of the enquiry.

To streamline the scope and designate the area of focus, several divisions of the world can be used. First, one can concentrate on a geographical region, such as Africa and Asia. Second, more specific analysis can be conducted by centring one's attention on one of the components of such

regions, for instance, Eastern Africa and Central Asia (UNSTATS, 2012). Third, not only can a division be made based on geography, one may look at a cluster of countries addressed under the various policy frameworks of the EU aimed at enhancing cooperation between the former and the latter, such as the Eastern Partnership, the Euro Mediterranean Partnership and the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) (European Commission, 2012).

The second part of the paper will build on this third strand to establish a limited context and reconsider the leadership which the EU may have therein in the same issue area. In doing so, the scale of enquiry shall be exclusively confined to sixteen countries involved in the ENP: Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Egypt, Georgia, Israel, Jordan,Lebanon, Libya, Moldova, Morocco, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Syria, Tunisia and Ukraine (European Commission, 2012).

The ENP was developed in 2004. It was designed to promote a zone of friends around the borders of the EU through increased prosperity, stability and security (Cameron, 2006). In the words of Esther Barbé, through the launch of the policy the EU aims to 'live up to its image as a force for good in its dealings with neighbouring countries'. For this very reason, it appears to underpin the priorities set out in the European Security Strategy (ESS) of 2003 that had foreseen the Union as 'a world seen as offering justice and opportunity for everyone' that implied the securing of a stable neighbourhood for the EU (Barbé and Johansson-Nogués, 2008, pp. 81).

The space made up by this group of countries will not be understood as a geographical region, but as sixteen neighbours of the EU treated under the ENP framework. Consequently, in judging the EU's performance based on any of the three determinants, the principles, priorities, and objectives laid down in the ENP framework shall be used as a major point of reference. In other words, it is suggested that the ENP serves as the institutionalised form of the regional leadership of the EU in the region in a range of issue areas, and thus the most pertinent allusions in respect of peace and security are to be found in the official texts of the policy, as opposed to the global level where this role is attributed to the Lisbon Treaty.

Before proceeding to the second analysis, it is important to dwell on why the ENP area is thought to offer an interesting platform for the above three determinants to be applied in a regional

context. In the '*Soft Power, Hard Power, and Leadership*' in 2006 Nye argued that leadership styles are changing in today's information age. He noted that

> Globalization, the information revolution and democratization are long term trends that are changing the macro context of political and organizational leadership in post-industrial societies…. Successful leaders are using a more integrative and participatory style that places greater emphasis on the soft power of attraction rather than the hard power of command'.

He added that

> the most important skill for leaders will be contextual intelligence, a broad political skill that allows them successfully to combine hard and soft power into smart power and to choose the right mix of an inspirational and transactional style according to the needs of followers in different micro contexts. Appropriate choice of style depends on such questions as whether a situation is autocratic or democratic, whether conditions are normal or in crisis, whether problems are routine or novel, and what degree of change is necessary or desirable (Nye, 2006, pp. 20-21).

Although these particular remarks are concerned with individuals, it has been clarified above that they are equally applicable to states and ROs. The regional leadership exercised by an RO must involve a certain degree of hard as well as soft power as none of them is sufficient separately to be the basis of any leadership claims. Whether regional leadership leans more on one than on the other will, ideally, be determined by a range of contextual factors on the area where leadership is to be exercised. This would include the would-be leader's conceptual intelligence to reflect those through a fitting combination of its soft and hard power. Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to ascertain whether material or ideational resources should take precedence in the configuration of the EU's leadership in certain regional contexts, it will be sufficient to see what sort of leadership the EU has designed for its neighbourhood as it should be reactive to the circumstances identified therein.

One way to discern the use of soft and hard power elements in the leadership an actor attempts to exercise in a particular context is to classify security functions into three fundamental groups.

According to Kirchner, the EU's position as a security provider, irrespective of the level of scrutiny, is contingent upon the type of security threat considered. By taking into consideration non-military threats in addition to the traditionally considered military ones, the extent to which the EU is capable of providing adequate response arguably extends. In this regard, Kirchner distinguishes between three fundamental security functions: conflict prevention, peace enforcement/peace-keeping and peace-building. While a response to a threat in the form of conflict prevention and peace-building does not entail resort to military means, peace enforcement/peace-keeping arguably does involve a military dimension. One can talk about conflict prevention when the breakout of a violent conflict can yet be prevented by way of financial and technical assistance; economic co-operation through trade and association; or enlargement provisions; nation-building and democratisation efforts. Peace-building is aimed at assisting and facilitating post-conflict reconstruction and the re-establishment of peace on a permanent basis. This said, by resorting to the security functions of conflict prevention and peace-building, regional leadership is mainly exercised through ideational resources (Kirchner, 2006, pp. 952). Even without having analysed the factors reigning globally, it is reasonable to contend that any actor's global leadership in peace and security remain a matter of hard power, in the first instance. There is, however, more ambiguity as to whether the contextual factors present in the ENP area justify or allow for leadership that is focused on either soft or hard power. Instead, one may consider how the EU has configured its leadership in the area of peace and security vis-à-vis the ENP countries in terms of the aforementioned three security functions.

Although the ENP came to be launched with a high normative component, it may hardly have been a novel step by the Union considering that democracy, human rights and the rule of law had been promulgated through many of the EU's previously outlined external policies . Instead, what caused quite a stir around the EU was the strong language of the ENP framework regarding political conditionality. The Commission appeared resolute in making the relations with neighbouring countries not only contingent upon their ability to converge towards EU norms, but also a function of concrete progress in demonstrating shared values. This effort by the EU to increase the emphasis on value promotion among its neighbours was deepened further through the adoption of the ESS, which foresaw the stabilisation (conflict prevention and peace-building) of neighbouring states by way of spreading the above values over them (Johansson-Nogués,

2007). Accordingly, it can be reasoned that in the context of the ENP, the EU appears to base its leadership aspirations on its soft power more than on its material resources in the domain of peace and security. However, the ENP area sets the stage for an analysis of the EU's leadership in a context where, in contrast to the global stage, emphasis is placed explicitly on its soft power. This is not to say that its leadership aspirations exclude material resources, but that the increased emphasis on ideational resources can simply be deemed the result of what Nye calls the 'contextual intelligence' of the EU. As Nye observes leadership needs a certain degree of both hard and soft power.

European Union as a regional leader in peace and security?

The European Neighbourhood Policy

Despite the fact that the ENP was originally envisaged 'to reinforce stability and security and contribute to efforts at conflict resolution' and to strengthen 'the EU's contribution to promoting the settlement of regional conflicts', conflict management strategies were not articulated in a separate heading which is why they have dissolved into that of political dialogue in each action plan (Barbé and Johansson-Nogués, 2008, pp. 95; Cameron, 2006, pp. 17).

At the core of the policy is the underlying goal to eliminate the dividing lines between the EU and its new neighbours following the 2004 enlargement and obviate the potential threats posed by the expanded borders and the ensuing proximity of Belarus, Ukraine, Russia and eventually of Moldova and the South Caucasus (Lynch, 2005, pp. 33). Nonetheless, building closer ties between the EU and its new neighbours was not intertwined with the prospect of newly granted membership, resulting in the separation of the EU's foreign policy towards its neighbours from a vision of enlargement that had been the prevalent approach throughout the 1990s. Instead, the essence of policy was in the promotion of mutual interests in advocating reforms and modernisation (Peter van Elsuwege, 2012). Through the ENP, as Lynch suggests, 'the EU is emerging as a foreign policy actor able to act beyond the dichotomy of accession/non-accession drawing on a range of tools to promote its interests' (Lynch, 2005, pp. 81-82). Although each ENP partner has its own agreed action plan that, which in theory reflects its needs and priorities,

the ENP actions are similar in outline. They include: political dialogue; economic and social cooperation; trade-related issues, market and regulatory reform; cooperation in justice and home affairs; sectoral issues such as transport, energy, information society, research and development; the human dimension including people-to-people contacts, civil society, education and public health. While the ENP is not specifically meant to enable the EU to exercise security functions in the countries involved therein, it has been commonly viewed since its inception as endowed with tools to allow for such a role (Cameron, 2006, pp. 5, 16-17). The assumption would be that these tendencies, coupled with the domination of soft power tools in the policy, set a different climate for a discussion on the EU's leadership in peace and security where valuable insights can potentially be gained.

Willingness

In analysing the action plans agreed upon under the ENP framework to date, one can detect varying degrees of commitment to conflict resolution in nearly all of them. A sense of willingness arguably appears most explicitly in the action plan for Moldova, in which the EU overtly declares its willingness to assume a more energetic role in conflict resolution in the region of Transnistria. According to the respective action plans, this is to be achieved through Moldova's constructive participation; effective cooperation between Moldova and the EU; increased EU support for missions mandated by OSCE for border control; preparation for engagement in the post-settlement scenario; elevating EU-Moldavian political dialogue; and active engagement in trilateral talks including Moldova, Ukraine and the European Commission (Cameron, 2006, pp. 17). Lynch observes that, not only did the EU manage to successfully sway decisions made by the previous Moldovan President Vladimir Voronin on Transnistria through this approach, but it also assisted the EU in getting through its interests when negotiating the Action Plan with the country (Lynch, 2005, pp. 37). Aside from its involvement in trilateral expert talks, a further sense of commitment to solving the Transnistria conflict can be observed in the action plan for Ukraine. In order to preserve and strengthen Ukraine's position as a mediator and incite the development of cooperation between the country and Moldova, the EU commits itself to providing supports to these ends (Cameron, 2006, pp. 17).

In sharp contrast to the countries involved in the Transnistria conflict, where the EU appears to have successfully overcome the diverging preferences and interests of its member states and speak with one voice, its actions aimed at the settlement of conflicts in the countries of the Caucasus have proved far less promising. This was best exemplified during the German EU presidency in the first semester of 2007. At first glance German diplomacy appeared to direct more attention towards the countries of the region, the primary reason being that the region had become of great geopolitical and economic significance as both a supplier of energy to the EU and an energy transit zone. Nonetheless, the escalating conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia over Nagorno-Karabakh notwithstanding, this effort was not meant to raise awareness of this issue. Nor did the statement of Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev regarding a potential solution to the conflict by military means provoke the German diplomacy into making derogatory remarks on the Azerbaijani position (Barbé and Johansson-Nogués 2008, pp. 94-95). The lack of effort on the part of the German presidency to stimulate the two sides to put an end to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict certainly runs at cross purposes with the stance that the EU has successfully taken towards Moldova. Furthermore, it can also be seen as inconsistent with conflict resolution purposes embedded to varying degrees in the previously finalised action plans and therefore undermine the EU's willingness to act in favour of peace and security in its neighbourhood.

The promotion of political and economic reforms takes precedence over direct involvement in conflict issues in ENP countries. It is hoped that this approach will set the stage for conflict resolution in the long run by creating a gradually evolving conducive climate to it. This appears to reinforce the fact that in aiming to wield influence beyond its borders and achieve the objectives set out in action plans, the EU predominantly relies on its norms and values. Yet, as the case of the Caucasus has shown, even such display of civilian outreach has not been etched in stone given the deviating priorities of member states. Even if the difficulty faced by member states in various EU bodies when trying to ensure coherence in the external relations of the Union has been overcome, particular member states may act contrary to the values that should feature in all of the EU's engagement, by conceiving the presidency as a key tool of interest promotion. In the context of the ENP, – as demonstrated by the case of Germany – this has meant that the holder of the presidency can concentrate its efforts on certain aspects of the policy

and severely neglect others, such as conflict prevention. This is a clear indication of how problematic it is to manage and coordinate the conflict prevention acts of multiple actors, at multiple power levels in accordance with EU actions. In summary, the series of contradictory actions presented above certainly generates ambivalent feelings as to the willingness of the EU to act as a regional peace and security actor in its neighbourhood.

Capacity

At the most basic level, the capacity of an actor to lead can be assessed from two perspectives. First, one may look at leadership capacity from a soft power point of view, focusing on the actor's ability to exercise leadership through ideational resources; or through the lens of hard power gauging its material means to do so (Van Langenhove et. al, 2012, pp.12). As the analysis of the EU's prospective leadership in the maintenance of global peace and security has shown, the Union's military planning capability is still embryonic entailing the lack of strong military presence around the world that, in turn, questions and undermines the Union's hard capabilities. This argument unequivocally holds up regardless of whether its hard power is examined at the global or regional level. But as noted above, not only is the EU bereft of the endowment to address peace and security issues in ENP countries, relying primarily on its material resources, it does not even appear inclined to do as much. Instead, the EU appears to base its leadership claims on its soft power, which rests on a range of common values, namely representative democracy, social justice and the respect for human rights, amongst others.

As regards conflict resolution, Kirchner contends that the ENP is led by the same objective as the 2004 enlargement. Through the affiliation of eight formerly communist countries, facing a series of internal challenges, that is, economic instability, weak institutions and ethnic conflicts, 'the EU has transformed external security matters into internal ones'. Although the decision to give the green light to these countries was unambiguously affected by security and material interests, normative considerations, such as collective identity and common European heritage, played a more prominent role in the process. This very approach, that is the combination of rational power calculations with normative and constructive thoughts, forms the backbone of the ENP too. In Kirchner's words the policy 'materializes as primarily pure collective good in that the funding of

the policy, the overall ambit and the basis for the policy, e.g. existing association agreements (AAs) and partnership and co-operation agreements (PCAs), require and subside in EU initiatives and frameworks'. Given that the framework draws on existing agreements put in place previously between the EU and its neighbours and raises their standards for economic and political reform, it signifies a cumulative effect (Kirchner, 2006, pp. 956-957).

So does the EU have the soft power necessary to live up to the objectives laid down in the Strategy Paper of the policy and the action plans concerning conflict prevention? In principle, it does. The EU possesses ideational resources which, if converted into political influence through instruments such as discourse control, enable the EU to exert influence by non-military means. The World War is greatly attributed to the attractiveness of this soft power, but the EU has been increasingly regarded as a global leading actor in the area of peace security which derives most of its influence from its civilian and soft power (Zielonka, 2008; Van Langenhove and Zwartjes, 2012).

The soft approach taken towards Moldova and Ukraine through the respective action plans has arguably delivered results by setting the stage towards the resolution of the Transnistria conflict. Nevertheless, ideational resources have not always proved apt to be the means of conflict prevention. Although no violent conflict in the narrow meaning of the term is expected to arise in Belarus in the foreseeable future, the country does raise several security challenges to the EU in terms of 'soft security'. In spite of a range of favourable measures offered by the EU to Minsk, including the full activation of the ENP, Belarus has not shown willingness to accommodate European criticisms on the logic upon which its politics and economics rest. Hence, as Lynch puts is, 'the EU finds itself caught in the demarche trap, which lies in the grey zone between action and non-action, with declaration after declaration criticizing developments in Belarus emitted with no impact'. As of 2012, the ENP remains non activated in Belarus and that creates a situation in which the EU can do little other than to retreat from the elements of its soft power applied with relative success elsewhere in the ENP area, and endeavour to review and streamline its approach within the spectrum of possibilities its ideational resources allow for (Lynch, 2005, pp. 40-41).

Furthermore, the EU's engagement in the Middle East can be seen as having served to aggravate rather than to alleviate the Israeli – Palestinian conflict. Facing the outcome of the 2006 elections that culminated in the democratically elected government of Hamas in Gaza, the EU found itself in a situation in which reaction in the form of adherence to its values came to be challenged by its interests to secure its credibility in the Middle East peace process. However, the Union's inability to find a sufficient solution to the dilemma over whether to abide by the principle of democracy (values) or reinforce its position in the Middle East peace process (interest) by sticking to its commitment and not recognise organisations that have been deemed 'terrorist' by numerous western countries, including the EU itself. This failure has come to be seen as an apparent manifestation of political insincerity giving rise to the view that the 'rules of the game' are inconsistently applied in the Arab world. As a result, not only has the EU's status weakened as an ethical actor in the Israeli – Palestinian conflict, but the interest amongst the countries of the region in taking EU funds devoted to value promotion has also undergone a considerable setback (Barbé and Johansson-Nogués 2008, pp. 94). Given that the EU's capacity to be a leading security actor in the ENP area is highly dependent on its soft power, the above developments can be seen as having undercut the capability of the Union to flow into and steer the foremost conflict in its wider neighbourhood. Nevertheless, this can also be interpreted as demonstrating a case in point for the success of the soft power approach as its capacity has come to be challenged as a result of the defiant attitude towards its own values.

However, not only does the EU need to generate interests for its funds to be received in the target ENP country, it must also make sure that it has the capacity to provide that assistance. This leads to the aspect of financial resources that, although generally discussed when capacity is understood in terms of hard power, is closely related to the aspects of soft power. The endowment of the EU in this regard is hardly comparable to that of any other RO. While the EU has appeared resolute in allocating funds through various channels aimed at tackling security concerns at the global level, this commitment is not necessarily reflected in the ENP's budget provisions. With only 12 million euros available for the financial instrument of the ENP in the course of the 2007-2013 budgetary period it is fair to say that these resources are too scarce for the EU to promote security adequately in sixteen countries (European Commission, 2012).

Moreover, given the ongoing Euro crisis, the Union is unlikely to be compelled to increase financial resources devoted to the ENP in the next budget cycle.

Acceptance

According to Van Langenhove, an organisation with the aspiration to play a leading role can gain support behind its actions and thus enforce its leadership in four ways. In view of the nature of the ENP framework, two of them are worth mentioning. First, the followership ideally must be centred upon mutual interests as well as on measures that are beneficial to leaders and followers alike. Second, acceptance can be enhanced by way of projecting norms and values that comprise ideational characteristics of potential followers. These two aspects of 'followership' set the scene for enquiring further into whether the leader-follower relationship between the EU and the ENP countries resembles the dynamics portrayed above (Van Langenhove et al., 2012, pp. 18-19).

According to the Strategy Paper that gives full and particular account of the principles and objectives governing the ENP, the underlying goal of the policy is to 'share the benefits of the EU's enlargement in 2004' by way of obviating 'the emergence of new dividing lines in Europe'. While it was envisaged that the policy would address the security concerns that arose parallel to the establishment of the Schengen-borders through the stabilisation of the EU neighbourhood, it is also meant to enable its partner countries to get involved 'in various EU activities through greater political, security and economic and cultural cooperation – albeit below the membership line.'. Moreover, given the Commission's declaration on the ENP being a process led by the principle of 'joint ownership' based on common interests, it can be argued that this relationship, in theory, presents a quintessential case for meeting the first of the above criteria of 'true' followership (Gänzle, 2006, pp. 4).

At the same time, the realisation of the purposes enshrined in the Strategy Paper is foreseen through the extension of a set of principles, values, and standards which, according to former Commission president Romano Prodi, 'define the very essence of the European Union.' But, in order to live up to the principle of 'joint ownership', the action plans, though comprehensive, are negotiated bilaterally with each country taking into consideration the interests and priorities of both sides (Gänzle, 2006, pp. 4-5). This serves to ease the pressure on ENP partners to

accommodate these expectations and prevents the EU from being seen as imposing its values upon its closest neighbours. Although the ultimate goal of the Union is to incite convergence towards its normative model, the fact that three-quarters of the proposed action plans have already been finalised indicates that this avenue of interaction is, by and large, able to generate acceptance for European norms and values in ENP countries. Consequently, it is fair to conclude that the second of the above mentioned criteria of effective followership also appears to have been met.

So what inferences are to be drawn from the preceding paragraphs? It has been demonstrated that in forming its relationship with the countries in question, the EU draws heavily on the principles which are central to the acceptance of its leading role. Yet, the degree of its success in 'enforcing' its leadership is tempered by the failure to put an end to the circular reasoning over the action plans with four of the sixteen neighbours targeted under the ENP: Algeria, Belarus, Libya, Syria (European Commission, 2012). The aforementioned case of Belarus, for instance, indicates a dilution of the EU's wherewithal mirrored by restraints to the applicability of the general thinking that imbues the ENP. As the recalcitrant position of Belarus is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future, the EU will inevitably have to remain on a quest for new paths to approach this neighbour. Nevertheless, given that the soft approach that is at the heart of the ENP policy appears to be doomed to failure towards Minsk, it remains to be seen how the EU will overcome the challenge of establishing capacity by conforming to its ideational resources and subsequently obtaining consent for its leadership aspirations.

Challenges to the acceptance of the EU's regional leadership can also be detected in countries with 'activated' ENP action plans. The Israeli – Palestinian conflict, as briefly discussed above, illustrates the close link between the capacity and acceptance of regional leadership. By not recognising the democratically elected Hamas government in 2006, the EU appeared to base its decision upon its conflict-related interests and preferences, relegating the commitment to its norms and values. Following the declaration, the EU was seen to have turned a blind eye on the very soft approach that had been arguably a key to reaching a compromise on the installation of the ENP action plan in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and its role as an ethical actor in the region has come to be discredited. This being said, not only has the dilution of its own values

undermined the leadership capability of the EU in the region, but it has also set its acceptance on a downward trajectory.

Although it is difficult to identify or quantify change, there are certain indicators to draw on in this regard. Of particular relevance is the 'followers' acceptance of help from the regional leader rather than from extra-regional actors (Prys, 2008, pp. 10). In the immediate aftermath in the above inconsistency in the EU's approach, some of those having interests in driving a permanent wedge between the West and the Arab World appeared to be prompted enough to swing into action. This was best exemplified by Jordan's pro-Islamist movement which used this perceived EU bias to confront the Jordanian civil society that had relied on a considerable amount of EU funds for projects in the country. Accordingly, this has led to the EU finding it increasingly difficult to allocate its funds for value promotion in the Middle-East which presents an explicit manifestation of the declining acceptance of its leadership in the region, including the issue area of peace and security (Barbé and Johansson-Nogués, 2008, pp. 94).

In summary, it is arguable that the major impediment to the EU being a dominant guard of security in the ENP area is constituted by the fact that its conflict resolution efforts have largely fallen by the wayside, becoming just one of the many priorities set out under the framework. Although the security aspect of the ENP has certainly had a positive impact in certain cases, such as the Transnistria conflict as well as the border cooperation between Moldova and Ukraine, the EU has yet to engage actively and coherently in conflict resolution in its neighbourhood by incorporating the main political priorities of partner countries. The risks of not doing so will bring discredit on its reputation as an ethically sound, consistent actor further undermining the acceptance of its conflict resolution efforts.

Case study: the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict

The unresolved dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the majority Armenian-populated enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh is one of the most worrying unresolved conflicts in the Caucasus region and the neighbourhood of the EU. In addition to the ever-rising tension between the two sovereign states, the contradiction in the stance of the three major regional actors – Russia,

Turkey and Iran – brings further stress to those affected by the outcome of the conflict. Indeed, the *status quo* arguably acts to polarise the regional powers, with Russian sympathy for Armenia and Turkey's strategic partnership with Azerbaijan. This division of the Caucasus region into two blocs entails the risk that the conflict could rapidly escalate onto the international stage in case of a re-eruption of fighting between Azerbaijan and Armenia. Despite the coming-into-force of the cease fire agreement eighteen years ago, the deadlock that followed has hitherto prevented the parties from reaching compromise on the disputed area over which war officially continues to be waged. Although the fighting may have come to an end, the conflict is teetering on the edge of deterioration owing to several fundamental issues that remain unresolved (German, 2012, pp. 1).

It is arguable that not only does this unsolved conflict serve as a serious impediment to regional stability and cooperation but it also presents the greatest obstacle to whatever hopes there are to transform the South Caucasus into a transportation hub between East, West, North, and South. In view of the limited options of the EU when it comes to securing access to the energy resources of the Caspian region by bypassing Russia, the South Caucasus is certainly of paramount importance due to the energy transit corridor it could offer to Europe. Nevertheless, stability in the region remains a crucial prerequisite to the realisation of any of the three possible alternative gas transit routes from the Caspian Sea to the EU — the Nabucco, Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum, and trans-Black Sea pipeline projects — that have been discussed of late. A possible war over Nagorno-Karabakh would unambiguously be highly detrimental to the region's fragile stability and jeopardise the security of energy supplies from the Caspian to the international markets, including the prospects of the southern gas corridor between the Caspian producers and the gas market of the EU (Poghosyan, 2010). Yet, certain recent developments appear to have run counter to the scenario Brussels may have envisaged regarding the conflict. First, both Armenia and Azerbaijan have significantly increased defence spending in recent years, giving rise to fears of an arms race between the two. This rise is particularly dramatic in case of Baku, whose defence budget rose from US$175m in 2004 to an estimated US$ 3.1bn in 2011. Second, an escalation of violence has been seen along the line of contact in Nagorno-Karabakh carrying the characteristic of a sniper war (Nezavisimaya Gazeta, 2011). The extradition of Ramil Safarov, an Azerbaijani soldier who had been convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment for murdering an

Armenian solider in Budapest, by Hungary to Azerbaijan in September 2012, where he was immediately pardoned fired up further emotions in the area. These appear to underpin the fact that the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, if unresolved, has the potential to translate into a full-fledged war in Europe's neighbourhood.

As regards the involvement of the EU in the conflict in question, its relationship has gradually evolved with the countries of the region since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Whereas the initial engagement was exclusively confined to providing economic and technical assistance, subsequent developments, particularly those involving the ENP, ushered in a new phase in the EU's engagement with the countries of the South Caucasus. The action plans agreed with Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia have given a clear sense of determination on the part of the EU to participate in the resolution of regional conflicts through a more robust political dialogue, identifying these objectives among the main priorities. The appointment of Peter Semneby as the EU's Special Representative (EUSR) to the South Caucasus was subsequently meant to further this action which was widely acclaimed and taken by regional stakeholders as a sign of increasing EU interest in the South Caucasus. Yet, these efforts have fallen very short of delivering the results the EU hoped for.

According to Huseynli, the major reason has been the tensions between the principles comprised in the respective action plans, which effectively preclude any coherent approach to be applied by the EU in its quest for viable solution: "territorial integrity" in the case of Azerbaijan and the "right of nations for self-determination" for Armenia. In addition, there is the Minsk Group of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe – co-chaired by France, the Russian Federation and the United States – that is 'mandated' to take on the mediating role between the conflicting parties (Huseynli, 2011). This said, the EU as a unitary actor is not involved in the process and nor has it succeeded in getting more space within this format attributable to the resistance of the three co-chairs, including France.

The launch of the Eastern Partnership of 2009, regarded as a successor to the ENP, has further clouded the EU's role in Nagorno-Karabakh. In spite of Brussels' intention to upgrade bilateral relations with the countries involved in the project, this effort has tended to concentrate on

economic relations, directing less attention towards conflict management. More specifically, as demonstrated through the actions of the German EU presidency of 2007 above, the primary attention on the side of the EU has been devoted to the issue of 'energy security' and thus the diversification of supply routes. Therefore, it can be reasoned that the Eastern Partnership project has brought about tangible results in the EU's bilateral relations with the region only in the energy realm, undercutting its effort to play a more assertive role in the conflict resolution process.

The establishment of the European External Action Service (EEAS) is also of crucial importance. In spite of the innumerable calls for a greater EU role, the mandate of the EUSR for the South Caucasus was abolished in pursuance of a decision made by Catherine Ashton that rang an alarm bell among regional stakeholders. This was followed by an overhaul of priorities within the OSCE Minsk Group that entailed the takeover of the leading role by Russia from the US which had previously been the major driving force in the process in preceding years. This latter development arguably makes it even more complicated for the EU to make its voice heard. Yet, by reason of the inability of three co-chairs to make progress over the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in the most recent meetings, Brussels' awareness has repeatedly come to be raised. The failure to achieve a major outcome at the meeting of the presidents of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia in Tatarstan in June 2011 effectively provoked Catherine Ashton into making strong, alarming statements in the ensuing Plenary Session of the EP, warning the conflicting parties that the lack of progress in the matter of conflict resolution will impinge on the way the EU forms its policy towards the countries concerned. In the repercussions that ensued Ashton's speech, issues of territorial integrity and liberation of the territories surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh were particularly embraced (Huseynli, 2011).

There have been hopes that the *status quo* will stimulate the parties to seek solutions 'voluntarily' through the upgrade of their administrative contacts with EU institutions paving the way for the adoption of certain values. Indeed, not only do a number of EU member states offer a prominent example of making transition into free market economies and democratic societies, there have also been some remarkable cases of successful conflict resolution within its confines.

Yet, the practice shows that EU rules have held little appeal for Armenia and Azerbaijan, beyond adopting principles in more technical fields, such as economic legislation.

Bearing in mind that the political system of both countries has many of the same features as authoritarian regimes, the transferability of the EU's democratic standards becomes extremely problematic. That is to say, while the EU has successfully proved to be a 'pattern to be followed' concerning low-politics issues such as adoption of legislation and standards in technical fields, it has wielded little – if any – influence in high-politics issues such as conflict resolution. This is because public dissatisfaction notwithstanding, the political classes of the two countries appear to have come to terms with the current state of affairs that runs counter to the EU's interest and endeavour to find a satisfactory solution to both sides setting the stage for stability and economic welfare in the region (Janssen, 2012, pp. 160-161). In addition, there hardly exists an ideal scenario for the EU to promote reconciliation and the drawbacks of a real resolution would arguably outweigh the benefits for one of the sides. As for the political elite of Armenia, backing down on the pursuit of independence for the conquered territories would epitomise a radically different tune compared to the policy of the post-Cold War era, and thus signify a strategic defeat. Besides, given that the Armenian public would be unlikely to accept Azerbaijani authority over the disputed area in a view of the violent past, such a step would risk the loss of power for the Armenian government. As regards Azerbaijan, backtracking on the territorial claims towards Nagorno-Karabakh is also not an option. Not only does the conflict serve as a major linchpin of the regime, a retreat could also incite national sections in the military to seize power in a coup.

The EU's ineffectiveness to bring about change in the domestic structure of Armenia and Azerbaijan illuminates a wider deficiency in its external interactions. The EU is not yet capable of transforming domestic structures to suit its needs in third countries without having the prospect of enlargement on the table. Nor, as the case of Nagorno-Karabakh shows, can it generate appeal for its values and norms to be adopted in its direct neighbourhood. Whereas the regimes of both Azerbaijan and Armenia have certainly achieved a significant degree of cooperation in the economic field, where mutual interests are strong, democratic reforms remain to be achieved.

In summary, despite the utmost will of Brussels, the EU has clearly fallen short of establishing itself as an active unitary actor in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and its engagement continues to be diluted by the lack of coherence among its member states. This case also well demonstrates how insufficient it is for the EU to rely exclusively on soft power when it engages in conflict resolution processes in regions which are out of the remit of enlargement. However, the meagre military capability the EU has built in recent years is insufficient to underpin its leadership aspirations in the context of Nagorno-Karabakh and its neighbourhood. So long as this remains so, calls from within the region for a more energetic and agile EU role in the South Caucasus will not go beyond economic considerations, thus having little direct impact on the peace-building process.

Concluding remarks

This paper has analysed the actions executed by the EU in the domain of peace and security at the global and regional level, drawing on three determinants that are fundamental conditions for an actor's regional leadership. At the global scene, the results of the investigation in this study show that, even if security and peace related issues fall under the inter-governmental pillar, this has not proved to be a significant hindrance to acting 'out-of-area'. Not only does the Lisbon treaty accord a strong mandate to the EU, it has been successfully activated in several instances owing to the commitment of certain leading actors – be they member state or a citizen – and various supranational institutions to involving the EU in conflicts beyond its confines. Yet, the EU's leadership has been significantly hampered by its limited capacity to perform security functions on the international stage that necessitate the use of hard power, largely due to its lack of military planning capability. Finally, as a result of the legitimacy the EU has gained through its engagement with the UN, it has earned decent levels of legitimacy in its actions especially when those are sanctioned by the UN Security Council.

The analysis of the EU's leadership in the context of the ENP and particularly the case study on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has cast light on more precise deficiencies the EU needs to overcome before establishing itself as a global unitary actor in peace and security. Despite a

degree of commitment to conflict resolution included in the respective action plans under the ENP, this aspect of the policy has been profoundly neglected. It is fair to suggest that strong language used at the inception of the policy in favour of normative promotion is yet to deliver the expected results. Evidence has shown in several instances that in the event of a clash between particular interests and obligations undertaken by the EU, member states have tended to prioritise the former. Furthermore, the investigation has demonstrated that not even the EU's direct neighbourhood can be influenced on the basis of a leadership that is predominantly nurtured by soft power. This demands the EU to strike a new balance between ideational and material resources to underpin its leadership aspirations in the region, and boost its military capabilities accordingly. The risks of not doing so imply a solely economy-based cooperation with the ENP partners, leaving no space for manoeuvre for the EU to have its voice heard in conflict resolution processes in the ENP area.

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