

Putin, Syria and the Arab Spring: Challenges for EU Foreign Policy in the Near Neighborhood



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Introduction

RQ : *Does the EU still matter in its neighborhood?*

- I. What kind of Power?
- II. The Neighborhood: The Primary Stage of EU Foreign Policy
- III. The Challenges in the Neighborhood
 - A. Russia under Putin
 - B. The Syrian Crisis
 - C. The Arab Spring

The EU: What Kind of Power?

I. The EU is a different sort of actor in IR...*sui generis*.

- Not a state, nor an international organization...but something in between.
- How does it present itself to the world??
Actorness...qualitatively different from traditional states. A continuing problem in IR.
- How do we conceptualize the EU as an actor?
This problematique has generated lots of academic debate...

The EU: What Kind of Power?

II. The EU's Actorness: Civilian, Normative or Soft Power?

- Because of its lack of material power often was seen as a civilian power.
- Today, EU is often conceptualized as a normative power: uses its norms, values, ideas to affect structural change to the international system. It leads by example and soft power attraction....the “power of attraction”.
- A transformative power? During a time of economic turmoil (Euro Crisis), does it remain so??

The EU: What Kind of Power?

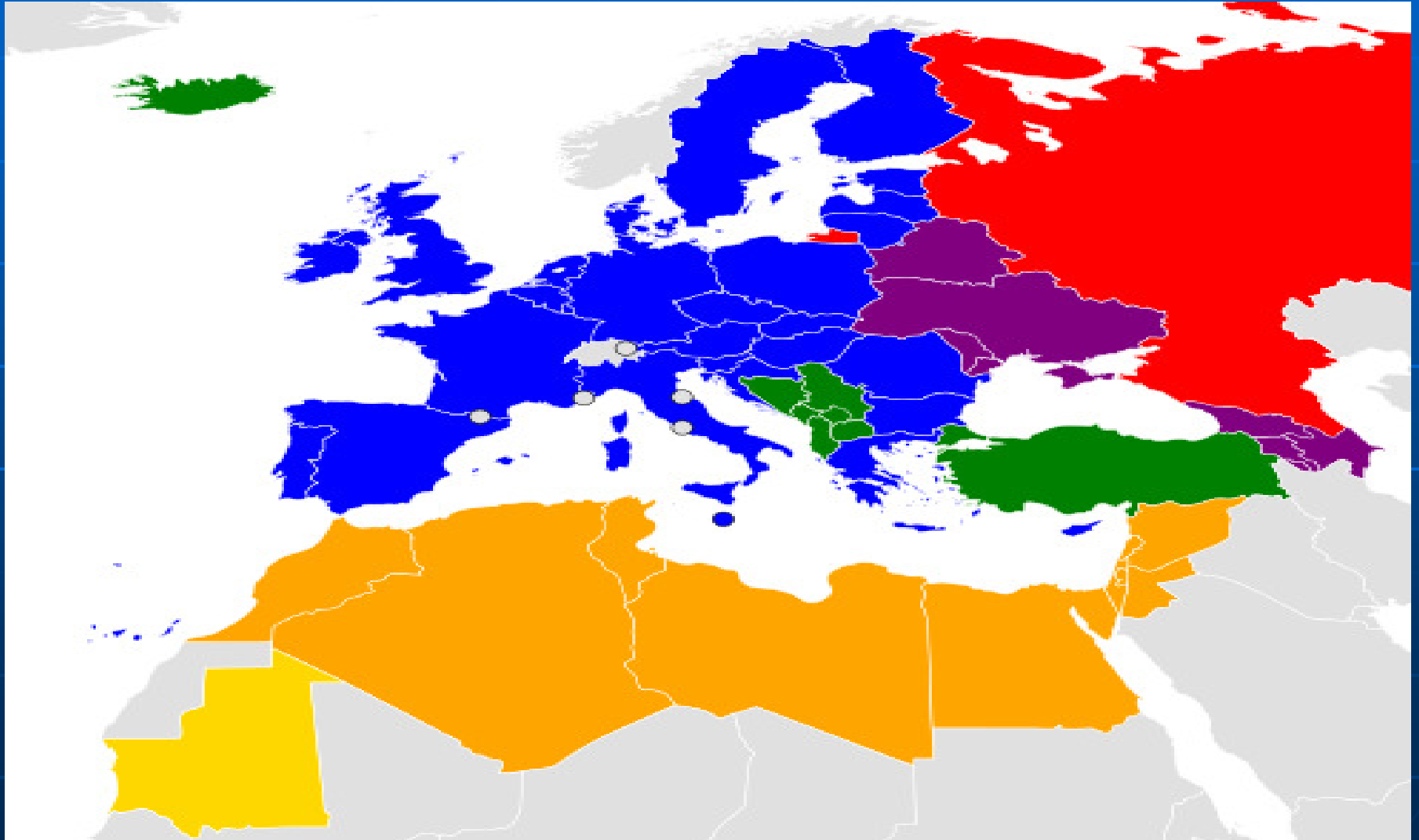
III. Foreign Policy is an evolving concept - Two contemporary conceptualizations of FP

- **Dominant (traditional) foreign policy:**
 - Orientated towards interstate relations, military security, crises and conflicts.
- **Structural foreign policy:**
 - FP conducted over the long term, seeks to influence or shape sustainable political, legal, socio-economic, security and mental structures.
 - Key foreign policy/strategic goal = Security and Stability in Neighborhood

The Neighborhood: The Primary Stage of EU Foreign Policy

- I. Where? The immediate area circle around the EU (from Belarus and Ukraine, through the Caucasus into Turkey, the Levant and over through North Africa).

The Neighborhood: The Primary Stage of EU Foreign Policy



The Neighborhood: The Primary Stage of EU Foreign Policy

II. Why?

- a. Key goal for EU - Stability at its borders
- b. Create a ring of stable, secure, prosperous and hopefully democratic states around the EU (Stated goal of ESS 2003).

III. *European Neighborhood Policy* (ENP) -2004-

- a. Foreign policy tool of the EU
- b. Seeks to tie states south and east of the EU to the Union through trade and market access
 - 1. Association Agreements, or
 - 2. PCAs
- c. in exchange for
 - 1. Democratic reform
 - 2. Economic reform
 - 3. Human rights
 - 4. Good governance
- d. All based on conditionality and strongly structural.

Russia under Putin: Partner or Nemesis?

I. EU maintains close ties with Moscow (seen in Europe as key actor in foreign and security policy).

- *EU-Russia Strategic Partnership* (Based on PCA in 1997)
- *Partnership for Modernisation* (2010) –seeks to reinforce dialogue on the rule of law and judiciary reform
- EU- Russia summits twice yearly

II. Traditional EU policy towards Russia is two-fold:

- Trade (Energy!!!)
- Foster democratic reform and human right

Russia under Putin: Partner or Nemesis?

III. Reality - EU policy has been a failure

- Russia uses its energy resources as a political weapon (EU and Neighborhood).
- Impact on democratic reform and human rights has been quite limited.
 1. Short-term gains often override promotion of values
 2. Many EU states have strong economic and energy ties with Russia (Germany, UK, Italy, etc).

Russia under Putin: Partner or Nemesis?

IV. Vladimir Putin

- Sees Russia returning to a sovereign great power
 - Cares little about the EU and its normative agenda.
 - Sees the EU as a competitor for influence in the former Soviet space west of Russia.
 - Actively minimizes EU influence domestically and in the neighborhood.
- This had led to deteriorating political relations with EU as interests and values diverge.

Russia under Putin: Partner or Nemesis?

v. His impact is two-fold here:

1. Domestic

i. Hard stance on civil society

- Laws that limit human rights (freedom of expression, media and assembly).
- Restrict and eliminate civil society organizations.

ii. Restrict progress on modernization of governance, focus on modernization of industry.

Russia under Putin: Partner or Nemesis?

2. Neighborhood

- a. Grand design to destroy the EU's Eastern Partnership
 - i. Force eastern states to not sign the new Association Agreements (Armenia, Azerbaijan).
 - ii. Practice economic and security extortion
- b. Creating a Russian neighborhood policy (Eurasian Union).
 - i. A zero-sum game has developed between EU and Russia over development models of the neighborhood.
 - ii. The greater hold Russia has over these states the more vulnerable the pro-western democratic movements become.
 - iii. Direct impact on the EU's goal of having vibrant democracies to its east.

Russia under Putin: Partner or Nemesis?

VI. What can EU do??

1. Domestically, it can pay more attention to four areas:

- i. Economic and Political Conditionality
- ii. Engage Russia on human rights
- iii. Increase support for Russia's Civil Society
- iv. Open up visa program for Russian visitors

2. In the neighborhood,

- i. Ensure that all AA will be signed at the Eastern Partnership's Summit in Vilnius next month (particularly Ukraine).
 - 1. This means signing with them even if all preconditions are not met.
 - 2. EU will not have any more leverage over them after the summit
 - 3. Russian repercussions toward EU will be short term.

Russia under Putin: Partner or Nemesis?

- ii. Beyond Vilnius: Four concrete steps
 1. EU should work swiftly to remove internal obstacles for reverse gas flow to Ukraine (and other Eastern partners).
 2. Ensure that Kiev implements its obligations under the Energy Community Treaty, thus removing any obstacles to EU exports on Ukraine side.
 3. Give full support to modernizing Ukraine's pipeline system.
 4. EU should coordinate with Washington and rapidly conclude the TTIP (Increase LNG to Europe from U.S.).

The Syrian Crisis

- I. Officially, EU has supported a political solution since the beginning of the crisis two half years ago but has done little to nothing to contribute to a solution....this is troubling.
 - a) More recently it has backed proposal for Syria to give up chemical weapons
 - b) But EU involvement needs to go beyond the chemical weapons incident.

The Syrian Crisis

- I. Just like Libya in 2011, Syria has illustrated the difficulties of a “common” action by the EU members.
 - UK-Cameron & House of Commons.
 - France
 - Germany, the Netherlands and others continued to prevaricate and say they had not been asked to support a military strike, or – like Poland – did not have relevant military capabilities.
 - Other European states, including Italy, Spain and Belgium, believed the UN should act. Only Denmark backed the French.
- II. EU’s response even less coherent before the chemical strike. Lots of declarations, sanctions levied and then rescinded, ambassadors sent home and then recalled.
- III. EU’s main problem is the lack of a “political will”....has allowed the U.S. and Russia to determine the international response to the Syrian crisis.

The Arab Spring

A. A revolutionary event on the EU's doorstep...

I. To the Europeans, comparable to the end of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe.

II. Why?

1. Ends the “Arab Exception” to the proposition of democracy and human rights as universal values.
2. Demonstrates the value of new technologies of social networking in undermining authoritarian regimes.
3. Challenge to both political scientists and practitioners to work out feasible political reform strategies for bridging the transition between authoritarianism and sound democratic governance.

The Arab Spring

- III. But this early enthusiasm has become gloom for an “Arab winter.”
- IV. Fear that Tunisia will become a “lone rather than leading star”
- v. Multiple factors:
 - Harsh resistance of the Syrian regime
 - A step back in Egypt.
 - The growing fear of nuclear proliferation in the ME
 - General uncertainty over political events in the region.
 - Sense that region might not democratize soon.

The Arab Spring

■ The EU's Response

- i. EU perceived as not reacting very rapidly or effectively.
- ii. Validates the underpinning idea of the ENP and the EU's general normative discourse...that only through good governance (human security, prosperity, freedom and equality) can there be security or stability...otherwise you get revolts.
- iii. But in practice, in this region, the EU has acted precisely in the opposite manner.... Arab Spring is occurring in spite rather than thanks to EU policy.

The Arab Spring

- iv. Response has been marked by recognition that previous policy paradigms have been overturned:
 - 1. Regime stability would deliver greater security for the regions and the EU
 - 2. Economic reform would lead to more political pluralism...did not!
 - 3. Exposed as myth the idea of “Arab Exceptionalism” (Islam not compatible to democracy). EU’s status quo policies were mistaken.

The Arab Spring

- v. This has led to a reshaping of EU policy doctrine towards the region.
 - Several elements in a revised ENP (May 2011):
 - Stronger political conditionality...push for democracy and change but with greater incentives (“more for more”).
 - New tools for democracy promotion
 - Emphasis on **three Ms** – Money, Markets, Mobility.
- vi. But revisions have to be evaluated in light of their actual implementation (not more talk!)
- vii. An increase emphasis on conditionality on paper does not show whether the EU continues to enjoy the leverage, attraction, incentives and relevance to be able to exercise it (Euro crisis and the loss of soft power?).