

Variable Geometries

Mapping Ideas, Institutions and Power in the Wider Europe

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Fabrizio Tassinari

Abstract

The controversies and ambiguities characterising the EU neighbourhood strategy are ultimately due to the fact that the wider Europe concerns the conceptual, strategic and spatial limits of Europe. It is in this wider Europe that the EU as process meets the EU as actor. It is here that its 'gravitational power' meets its 'normative power'. It is here that the *sui-generis* EU governance system meets its foreign policy capabilities.

By exploring the meanings and possible usages of the term 'variable geometry', this study sets out to interpret how the deepening of relations between the European Union and its neighbours in the East, South-East and South shapes the conceptual political and strategic map of the wider European space.

Three dimensions of variable geometries are distinguished. The first dimension relates to ideas and focuses on the way in which the EU as a polity affects, and is affected by, deeper relations with its neighbours. Second, the focus is on institutions and illustrates the rationale behind and options for deeper institutional integration of neighbours into the EU. Lastly, the study ventures into an analysis of the wider Europe as a power constellation and thus explains what variable geometry means in relation to security and stability in the European neighbourhood.

This basic tri-partition is then applied to two topical cases: Turkey and Ukraine.

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VARIABLE GEOMETRIES

MAPPING IDEAS, INSTITUTIONS AND POWER IN THE WIDER EUROPE

FABRIZIO TASSINARI*

A growingly inward-looking mood pervades the debate on the future of the European Union. In recent years, sluggish economic growth, stubbornly high unemployment rates and a public opinion increasingly critical about multiculturalism have ranked high among the reasons behind popular disenchantment.

Perhaps more surprisingly, accounting for this widespread pessimism is also one of the single-most spectacular success stories of the EU: its historic enlargement towards ten, mostly Central and Eastern European, countries in 2004. This has generated concerns within older EU member states, particularly in relation to a much-feared wave of migrants moving from the East. It has featured prominently, and mostly in negative terms, in the debate that preceded the failed referenda on the Constitutional Treaty in the Netherlands and France. Most importantly for the purpose of this study, the 2004 enlargement has led many European leaders to question the ability of the EU to engage and pursue further integration in the wider European neighbourhood.¹

In the often quixotic EU jargon, this uncertainty has been termed ‘absorption capacity’. This means that future enlargements will not only depend on the candidates’ democratic credentials, economic standards and adoption of the 80,000 pages-long set of rules that compose the *acquis communautaire*. Further expansion, argue EU leaders, might in the future also have to account for factors such as the way in which enlargement affects decision-making mechanisms in the EU, its single market and finances and, last but not least, European citizens. The debate on absorption capacity has prominently made its way into the mainstream EU discourse, but mostly in a negative way. It has been represented as a “dishonest” way to approach the dilemma between deepening and widening, as “it refers to supposed empirical limits that have not been defined and have very weak theoretical and practical underpinnings” (Vibert, 2006).

This paper contends that a possibly more constructive way to elaborate on this uncertainty surrounding the Wider Europe is to unravel the meaning and usages of the term ‘variable geometries’.

The debate on variable geometries has long entertained political and intellectual elites in Europe. It has emerged and thrived in response to the tension between continuing widening of the EU on the one hand, and the EU’s internal functioning on the other. Some observers refer to

* Fabrizio Tassinari, PhD is an Assistant Professor of Political Science in the University of Copenhagen and an Associate Research Fellow at CEPS. He gratefully acknowledges the financial support received from the Riksbankens Jubileumsfond for his research at CEPS.

¹ The meaning initially given by the European Commission to the term ‘wider Europe’ (European Commission, 2003) included EU neighbours in the East (Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova) and in the South (North African and Middle Eastern countries), but it excluded the South-Caucasian republics and, of course, Turkey and the Western Balkans, which have an EU membership perspective. In order to address comprehensively the political, strategic and conceptual dynamics unfolding in the wider European space, the term ‘wider Europe’ here refers to all of the above: Eastern, South-Eastern and Southern neighbours of the EU, in addition to the enlarged EU itself.

it with pejorative connotations, i.e. the preference for a primarily intergovernmental, *à la carte* EU, in which member states cherry-pick aspects of European integration that best suit their national interests.² For others, and not less controversially, variable geometries have also been advocated to signal the drive for a more determined, cohesive and pragmatic ‘core Europe’ (Habermas & Derrida, 2005; Verhofstadt, 2006). This would take the form of an avant-garde group of countries committed to deepening political integration before the rest of the EU. At other times, variable geometry has been used simply to describe a de facto state of affairs within the EU, in which some countries have voluntarily chosen to opt out of a number of landmark elements of European integration, e.g. the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) or the Schengen system on free movement of people.

The rationale behind this study is to extend this debate on variable geometries to countries lying at the EU’s doorstep. In this context, the term is both descriptive and prescriptive. It is descriptive, as it constitutes a prism through which to observe the heterogeneous pattern of political, economic and social integration of the wider European neighbourhood into the EU. It is prescriptive, as it illustrates how a gradual, sustainable and deeper integration of neighbours into the EU can take shape.

Contrary to the most common usage of the term, therefore, variable geometries here does not refer to differentiated and flexible degrees of integration within the EU, but rather to the possibility of EU neighbours being attached more deeply to the Union. It does not concern EU member states wishing to ‘opt out’, but neighbouring countries’ desire to ‘opt in’ certain aspects of European integration. It should not be regarded as a disruptive factor of the EU enlargement rationale. Nor should it be considered as an permanent evolution (or involution) of EU power constellation.

By mapping ‘variable geometries’, this study aims to systematise the sort of ‘gravitational’ power through which the EU has succeeded in attracting, persuading and transforming its neighbours over the past decades. More to the point, it sets out to explain how and to what extent the map of the wider Europe changes as a result of the deepening of relations between the EU and its neighbours.

In order to do so, three dimensions of variable geometries will be distinguished. The first dimension is termed variable geometries of *ideas*. Here the focus is on the very nature of the EU as a polity, and on the way in which this shapes, and is shaped by, deeper relations with its neighbours. Second, the focus will be on *institutions*, by illustrating options for, and the rationale behind, deeper institutional integration in the wider European space. Lastly, the study ventures into an analysis of wider Europe as a *power* constellation and thus attempts to explain what variable geometries means in relation to security interdependence in the European neighbourhood.

In order to illustrate the implications of variable geometries for both the EU and the countries concerned, this basic tri-partition is then applied to the cases of Turkey and Ukraine. These countries are regarded as pertinent, not only because of their size and population, but also because of the key conceptual, political, and strategic questions arising from the deepening of their relations with the EU.

² Recent instances illustrating this trend are the seven signatories of the May 2005 Treaty of Prüm on internal security; the French-German-British initiative on Iran; or the enhanced cooperation among Britain, France, Germany, Spain and Italy on counter-terrorism.

1. Variable Geometries of Ideas

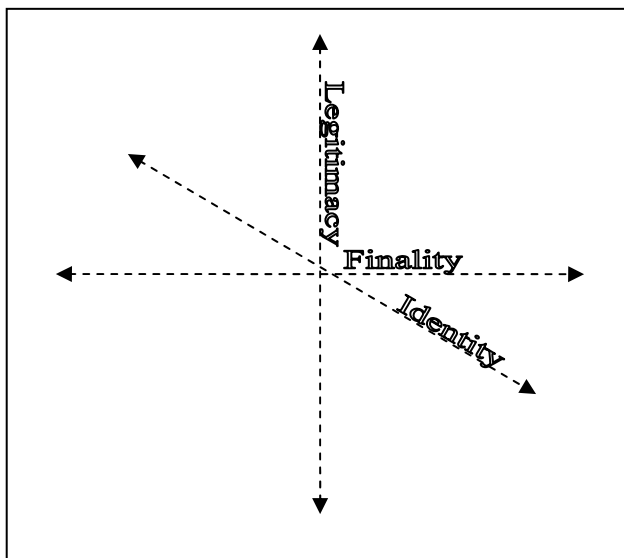
Variable geometries of ideas concern the extent to which the very nature of the EU as a polity affects, and is affected by, the deepening of relations with its neighbours.

There has grown a vast body of scholarly literature aimed at unravelling the nature of EU as a polity (see, for instance, Pagden, 1992; Derrida, 1992; Habermas & Derrida, 2005; Baumann, 2004). These works insightfully dwell on the underlying ‘difference’ of the EU from other international actors and in and ‘with itself’ (Derrida, 1992, p. 9). They spell out the Union’s contested, *sui-generis* and fluid nature and its ability to ‘contain’ (Cooper, 2003) a very heterogeneous set of ideas, entities and positions.

Most notably for the purpose of this study, these analyses also share the view that the foundations of the EU as a polity lie in the set of values and rules defining liberal democracy: the rule of law, protection of human rights and minorities, functioning market economy and so forth.

This is arguably at the heart of the ideational challenge facing the wider Europe. Virtually no country in the EU neighbourhood is a mature, functioning liberal democracy. According to Freedom House, none of these countries – with the exception of Israel – can be categorised as ‘free’. Some of them, in North Africa, the Middle East and the former Soviet republics, may claim to be moving towards a free and fair system of elections. Notwithstanding the credibility of such claims, the guiding principles of liberal constitutionalism – division of powers, the rule of law, independence of the judiciary, etc. – are generally still not complied with. Moreover, in a majority of these countries, there is no mature, established middle class, which has historically been a building block for the consolidation of liberal democratic institutions (see e.g. Zakaria, 2003).

Figure. 1 Variable geometries of ideas



To illustrate how this fundamental gap between the EU and its neighbours is correlated to the nature of the EU polity, the discussion will revolve around three themes: identity, finality and legitimacy. Each of these themes is deeply intertwined with the other two and can be portrayed as a spectrum containing a variegated set of positions and articulations (see Figure 1). A delimitation of the conceptual borders of each spectrum can thus provide an outline of the varying map of ideas in the wider European space.

In the language of identity studies, the paramount question concerning EU *identity* is framed by the distinction between ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ (Walker, 1993). Europe’s identity, the argument goes, is not to be traced back only to what has been a part of it. One constitutive marker of Europe’s identity is also in what has *not* been part of it: its ‘other’ (Neumann, 1993).

Some scholars (e.g. Wæver, 1996a, p. 122) have noted that Europe’s ‘other’ was initially Europe’s own past: the Franco-German rivalry, totalitarian ideologies, war, etc. The initial momentum for integration came from the need to shield Europe from ever again entering into what it experienced in the past.

Over time, this inside/outside dialectic has assumed broader geographical connotations, which are particularly useful when portraying varying understandings of identity vis-à-vis the wider European space. In this respect, indeed, the ‘other’ is identified with Europe’s neighbourhood: Europe is not authoritarian like Russia (Neumann, 1993); not ruthless like the Balkans (Todorova, 1997); not imperial and ‘unilateral’ like the United States (Garton Ash, 2004, pp. 54-94).

The binary nature of EU neighbourhood policies corroborates this inside/outside characterisation of identity. When EU policies externalise partners – as in the case of the EU partnership agreements – then neighbours tend to be perceived as a ‘hostile other’, to be kept at an arm’s length. When policies are inclusive – e.g. in the case of the enlargement – then neighbours are rather as a ‘transient other’, i.e. “somebody who will, in due course, be welcomed into the ‘family’” (Møller, 2005, p. 12).

The more the Union reaches out to its geographical and conceptual limits, however, the more this approach risks triggering a short-circuit. One notable example in this respect is Turkey, where an inclusive approach – the enlargement prospect – is producing an ever-more ‘hostile’ othering within the EU. We will dwell on this case more thoroughly below. For the purpose of this section, however, this example is useful for singling out the complex and controversial question of the relations between the EU and its Arab-Muslim neighbours.

Europe’s ‘othering’ of Islam is complex because it has both internal and external facets. It is internal, as it relates to the role of sizable Muslim minorities in the life of a large number of EU member states. It is external, as it relates to the ascent of radical political Islam in the EU’s Southern neighbourhood (e.g. the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Hezbollah in Lebanon or Hamas in Palestine).

Europe’s ‘othering’ of Islam is controversial because these internal and external facets are increasingly interdependent. Developments taking place inside the EU produce repercussions in the Arab-Muslim neighbourhood, and vice-versa. The recent case of the Mohammed cartoons published in Danish newspapers and of the consequent outburst of violence in the broader Middle East is most emblematic in this respect.

Certainly, this nexus between inside and outside in the case of our Islamic neighbours goes well beyond a question of identity. For one, the economic and social conditions of the countries concerned and of Muslim communities in Europe greatly account for this divide. So do the poor and disappointing experiences that the Arab-Muslim world has had until now with secularism, modernity and democracy.

Yet, the identity question remains an important factor to frame relations between the EU and its Muslim neighbours in the wider Europe context. It is a defining factor shaping European multiculturalism, as the reference to a ‘European Muslim’ identity testifies (see e.g. Ramadan, 1998). And it has made its way into the political debate, most notably in relation to Europe’s Christian roots, a question that was hotly debated during the discussions on the EU’s Constitutional Treaty.

The second theme concerns the way in which the deepening of relations with neighbours is correlated to the *finality* of the EU polity. When it comes to finality, neighbourhood becomes the particular geographical and conceptual *lieu* where different visions about the EU as an international actor ought to be measured up against those about its governance system. It is where the ‘gravitational’ power of the EU, its ability to attract neighbours, meets its ‘normative’ power (see Manners, 2002, p. 252), the ability to act as an agent of change of norms in the international system.

The distinction between ‘old’ and ‘new’ Europe has provided one way to interpret the finality question. Because it was famously popularised by US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, the old/new distinction is now most often applied to those EU member states that tilt the Union’s posture in international affairs in a pro-American direction.

Before and apart from Rumsfeld, however, this categorisation has also fed the debate on other important matters setting the EU governance agenda. For example, the vibrant economies of new EU member states have brought fresh evidence to the debate opposing the ‘cradle-to-grave’ social models of continental Europe to the more minimalist, ‘anglo-saxon’ recipe of some of the newer member states.

More importantly, a broader understanding of the old/new distinction may provide some useful elements on the finality of the wider European space. ‘New Europe’, for one, may refer to the post-national, integrated, rule-setting Europe, in opposition to the more traditional, balance-of-power ‘Old Europe’ of nation-states. While ‘Old Europe’ is generally portrayed as cautious and reluctant to alter the continental power equilibrium, ‘New Europe’ remains open about the ultimate objectives, scope and extension of European integration and engages more inclusively and comprehensively with the wider European neighbourhood (Makarychev, 2006).

Alternatively, this old/new characterisation is interpreted through certain geographical markers and policies. Newer EU countries, here comprising also Britain and the Scandinavian states, have been more vocal than older member states in supporting a Union that engages deeply and boldly in its neighbourhood. This has translated in official positions that are generally in favour of further enlargement towards Turkey, the Balkans and even Ukraine, and of more pro-active democracy-promotion policies vis-à-vis the Arab-Muslim world or Belarus.

When compared to the more conservative, at times even acquiescent, positions of some older member states, one obtains a rather polarised map of EU finality. On the one hand, new EU member states tend to support the view that the EU should exploit its integration successes and expand them towards the outermost edges of Europe, however these are defined. The EU neighbourhood strategy, in this sense, is interpreted as an instrument of integration that aims not only at spreading democracy and good governance, but also at extending the EU internal market freedoms to the EU neighbourhood. That the EU as a governance system might suffer as a result is perceived as a sort of necessary side-effect. The Union’s continuing expansion might have to be synchronised with internal adjustments, but the EU cannot shy away from what are perceived to be strategic as well as moral imperatives.

For other member states, most notably some of its founding members, the goal is also one of projecting the EU’s prosperity, stability and peace in the neighbourhood. But it is just as important that the Union performs as efficiently as possible; that its citizens are protected from unforeseeable consequences of closer relations with their neighbours and that the Union preserves its vital strategic interests, for instance in relation to Russia’s energy supplies.

The last theme, *legitimacy*, concerns the authority that a political system exercises over a community. More specifically, it concerns the principles and processes that regulate this authority. At the governmental and constitutional levels, these features have normally applied to the most salient type of modern political system, the nation-state. Not being a state, the EU does

not appeal to a *demos*, at least not in a traditional sense. Nor it is not characterised by the symbolism of a common culture, shared past, and ethnic kinship. Hence, it has to find the sources of its legitimacy elsewhere.

One source of legitimacy is provided by the very structure of the EU's governance system. The set of rules and practices that make the EU function, represents the yardsticks to measure its efficiency, accountability and representation vis-à-vis the political community (Moravcsik, 2002). A second source relates to the benefits deriving from European integration. Legitimacy here is of a rather functional nature and relates to the ability of the EU to deliver results and to act as a problem-solver. Thirdly, the EU can draw legitimacy from its own values and from its vision. These relate to the gradual construction of a community that identifies with the Union's political project (Friis & Murphy, 2000, pp. 230-231).

The deepening of relations between the EU and its new neighbourhood can be a double-edged sword for legitimacy. The conception of neighbourhood policies, especially if these are credible and effective, may enhance EU legitimacy as a provider of security and as a foreign policy player. The ability to shape developments in conflict-ridden areas of the Eastern Mediterranean and the Caucasus, or to influence the transition in the former Soviet Union, the Balkans and Turkey would send a powerful signal about the policy-making capabilities of the Union. More than that, it would boost the credibility of the values and vision underlying the EU political project.

Conversely, ineffective, ambiguous neighbourhood policies would reinforce the tattered image that the EU has often portrayed in the field of foreign affairs. The result would be a weakening of EU legitimacy both within its borders and without.

In this context, the possibility that certain neighbouring countries will eventually qualify for EU membership features as a borderline case to test these opposing views on legitimacy. Further enlargement would undoubtedly strengthen the case for EU capabilities and international actorness. Moreover, as Moravcsik (2002) has convincingly argued, enlargement does not intrinsically alter the functioning of EU institutions. At the same time, the accession of new, especially large countries would put under further strain the sustainability and democratic accountability of EU decision-making mechanisms. That continuing enlargement is inversely proportional to the EU legitimacy is, after all, one of the main arguments underlying the 'absorption capacity' debate.

The three dimensions of identity, finality and legitimacy in the EU neighbourhood strategy were sketched here by identifying the two extremes of a more diversified continuum of positions. This dialectic way of portraying the wider Europe is illustrative to delimit the varying articulations of the EU polity vis-à-vis the wider European neighbourhood. In the last instance, it is out of nuances and combinations of these basic positions that Europe's constitutive 'difference' is shaped.

2. Variable Geometries of Institutions

The institutional dimension relates to the legal, economic and political nature of the relations between the EU and its neighbours.

In order to spell out options for variable geometries of institutional integration, and the extent to which these can be regarded as alternatives to full integration, one ought to necessarily measure them up against the EU's most successful integration strategy for neighbours: the enlargement process.

In the case of enlargement, the EU has sought to enhance its stability by transferring its norms and rules to neighbours and has persuaded them to enact overarching reforms. In order to study

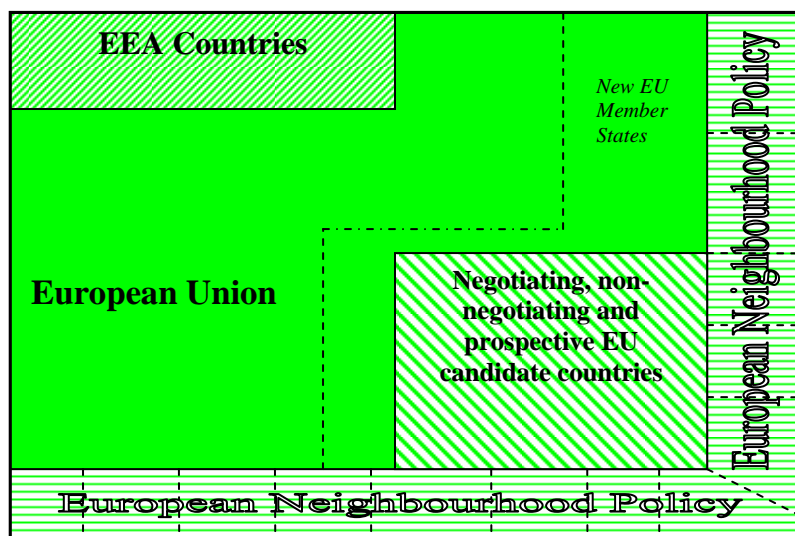
these practices, enlargement is typically explained either as the material instrument employed by the EU to attain security by stabilising its periphery, and is thus treated as a case of foreign policy analysis. Or, enlargement reflects the social and normative factors that shape the EU constitutive identity and their impact on countries in its proximity (Sedelmeier, 2003).

The correlation between conditionality and socialisation is instrumental to encompass both these conceptual interpretations. Conditionality is defined as the contractual relation where aid and institutional ties to the EU are contingent on specific reforms in the candidate countries. Socialisation refers to the multi-levelled process inducing behavioural changes in candidate countries through social learning.

Conditionality and socialisation are not mutually exclusive but have to be considered as complementary in explaining the enlargement dynamic (see e.g. Schimmelfenig & Sedelmeier, 2004). A general argument in the governance literature is that benefits coming from EU membership perspective are regarded by candidate countries as greater than the costs imposed by the EU through conditionality. At the same time, socialisation-driven compliance has resulted from the high degree of legitimacy that the EU has enjoyed in the candidate countries (see e.g. Noutcheva, 2006).

In order to map the institutional dimension of variable geometries, what is of interest here is to follow up on this line of argument and to observe how the nexus between conditionality and socialisation plays out in the wider European context (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Variable geometries of institutions



The present EU approach towards the Western Balkans and Turkey does not fundamentally alter this basic correlation between conditionality and socialisation. These countries have a medium-to-long term EU membership perspective and their relation with the EU is largely framed by the traditional enlargement strategy.

What differs from the last enlargement round, however, is the current uncertainty within the EU about further expansions. Countries in the Western Balkans and Turkey now perceive the distinct possibility that their membership aspirations will at some point be turned down or postponed indefinitely (for instance, as the result of a popular referendum in an EU country). This risks initiating a vicious cycle severely impinging on the conditionality/socialisation nexus. Uncertainty and ambiguity weaken the credibility of the EU offer. Governments in the candidate countries perceive the costs of compliance as too high or less defensible vis-à-vis their domestic

constituencies. The impetus to enact EU-styled domestic reforms slows down or, in the worst case, reverses.

Such a turnaround would have major consequences for the state of affairs both within the EU and in the candidate countries themselves, about which it is somewhat premature to speculate at this stage. What instead can be argued is that in these circumstances the *de facto* status of the relations between these countries and the EU would not be too different from the one that countries such as Ukraine or Moldova might have in the coming years.

For these other countries, the question is how to elaborate alternative offers of integration that maintain (or achieve) a sustainable balance between conditionality and socialisation without having the membership option in sight. The range of options is not very wide.

The EU signed bilateral Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCAs) with former Soviet Republics, including Russia, and Association Agreements (AAs) with its North African neighbours. Because these instruments have not been regarded – neither by the EU nor by the countries concerned – as leading to full membership, the extent to which the EU has been able to persuade these neighbours to enact EU-style reforms has proven more limited (see, for instance, Smith, 1998).

Given these limitations, there are two main institutional models that the EU has devised so far as explicitly stated, alternative options to full EU integration.

The first one is the European Economic Area (EEA), which concerns relations between the EU on the one hand, and Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein on the other. In this context, the three countries are included in the EU Single Market (except for specific sectoral policies such as trade, agriculture and fisheries), but do not have the possibility to influence EU decision-making bodies on the issues concerned.

The balance between conditionality and socialisation shifts dramatically in the EEA context. EEA countries did not really have to radically transform their economic governance institutions in order to adopt the set of rules of the EU Single Market *acquis*. These are wealthy, small countries that have already met, and in some case even exceeded, EU standards on the issues at stake. The question is much more pronouncedly about socialisation.

EEA countries – and more generally Northern European countries – are famously characterised by high-level standards of accountability and transparency of their public administrations, which they do not seem to find at the EU level. Largely because of this, their populations have proven reluctant to relinquish or ‘dilute’ state sovereignty in favour of a higher institutional entity. Thus, the choice not to enter the EU or to be excluded from some defining aspect of European integration (e.g. Schengen or EMU) has been eminently strategic and political.³

When discussing alternative options to EU membership, it is patently clear that the EEA model can hardly apply to the countries in question here. The degree of EU integration characterising the EEA results from a low level of both conditionality and socialisation. Conversely, as noted above, these factors are an intrinsic part of the ongoing enlargement negotiations with Turkey and the Western Balkan countries, and would have to remain so in order to ensure compliance in the wider Europe countries.

³ A variation to this model is the one characterising Switzerland. Like the EEA countries, Switzerland is part of the European Free Trade Agreement (EFTA). As also in the case of EEA countries, “the EU is policy-maker and the associate is the policy-taker” (Vahl & Grolimund, 2006, p. 2). In contrast to the EEA, Switzerland’s adoption of the EU Single Market *acquis* is more restricted, as it does not include most notably the service sector (ibid., p. 3).

The second model that the countries concerned here can most closely refer to as an alternative to membership is the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP).

Since its inception, the ENP has been intentionally designed to provide the EU and its neighbours in the East and in the South with a framework of closer and deeper integration. It has a holistic multilateral rationale, epitomised by the foreseen establishment of the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI), which will finance all the ENP in the 2007-2013 Financial Perspective. At the same time, the ENP focuses on differentiation, i.e. by dealing with each country individually by means of a jointly-agreed, non-binding Action Plan.

The formula originally coined for the policy – that the EU should offer its neighbours “more than partnership and less than membership” (Prodi, 2002) – indicates the goal of achieving a degree of integration that closely resembles EU accession and is particularly apt for understanding how conditionality and socialisation work and interact in the ENP.

In the ENP, the sector-specific conditionality turns into ‘positive conditionality’, in which: “the further a partner is ready to go in taking practical steps to implement common values, the further the EU will be ready to go in strengthening our links with them” (Ferrero-Waldner, 2004). Much more than in the enlargement context, therefore, whether this (positive) conditionality can be a driver for integration will depend on socialisation mechanisms. It will depend on the extent to which the ENP will be able to foster a sense of belonging to European norms and values without the ‘carrot’ of EU membership.

Second, there is a question of geography. ENP countries in the South (Maghreb and Mashrek countries), appear to welcome the ENP, as they have much to benefit from the proposed model, if compared to the relatively poor results delivered by the existing partnership agreements. The ENP, on the other hand, is not regarded as an alternative to membership in those Eastern European countries for which it was originally designed, but only a palliative to be followed by some sort of bolder integration policy.

Both positive conditionality and the geographical reach of the ENP highlight the underlying ambiguity of the new policy. This is perhaps most evident in relation to the prospective benefits and ultimate objectives of the policy. In the 2003 ‘Wider Europe’ Communication of the Commission, neighbours were generously offered the possibility of being gradually integrated into the EU’s ‘four freedoms’ of capital, goods, services and people. In the Commission’s Strategy Paper (2004) that established the ENP, this mention disappeared and the offer was watered down to a less specified “stake in the EU’s internal market”.

According to EU Commission officials, this ambiguity is a deliberate choice. It underlines the ‘joint ownership’ of the policy and empowers neighbours to customise the pace and degree of their integration into the EU. At the same time, it is also self-evident that the EU holds greater negotiating power than its counterparts when defining objectives and the ultimate purpose of the bilateral relations. It is, after all, Brussels that defines criteria, benchmarks progress and monitors implementation.

In either case, this ambiguity is unlikely to turn the ENP into the underlying institutional instrument for wider European integration. The main conclusion one can draw so far is that the more a country is willing to comply and the EU is willing to accommodate its ambitions, the closer the ENP could resemble a waiting-room for membership. The more a country shies away from implementation, the more bilateral relations will remain at the partnership level. Put another way, the ENP in its present form does not alter the basic correlation between conditionality and socialisation underlying the EU’s previous neighbourhood policies.

If neighbours should be really empowered to customise the degree and pace of their integration into the EU, then “the stake in the internal market” ought to be clearly defined. In this respect,

some scholars have advocated a sector-by sector, country-specific ‘handbook’ for optimal degree of integration (Carrera et al., 2006).

By defining the ‘stake’, the ENP would become the toolbox containing a whole set of possible contractual relations ranging from mere partnership to virtual membership, and thereby a viable institutional mechanism for variable geometries in the wider European neighbourhood.⁴

3. Variable Geometries of Power

This dimension of variable geometries concerns the way in which EU relations with its neighbours shapes the wider European power constellation.

The twin quest for security and integration in Europe offers a suitable angle to address this question. Security and integration have constituted two paramount and deeply intertwined priorities in the EU neighbourhood. The EU has worked at making its periphery more secure and at spreading the benefits of its integration process to the whole continent. In fact, the nexus between security concerns on the one hand and the push for integration on the other has been at the centre of the EU neighbourhood strategy (Tassinari, 2005). Two narratives have been predominantly employed to illustrate this correlation and how it plays out in practice.

The first narrative stresses an inherently ‘Westphalian’ character of EU integration (see, on this point, Caporaso, 1996). According to this interpretation, the EU resembles a state-like actor in the making. Strict conditions are set to enter and benchmarks monitor implementation. Virtual administrative barriers are erected to protect it, as in the case Schengen regime on the movement of people. Put another way, security is attained by safeguarding the integration that has been achieved inside the EU.

The second narrative can be portrayed by elaborating on the metaphor of the EU as a ‘Neo-medieval’ empire (see Zielonka, 2001; Wæver, 1996b). According to this representation, European states have chosen to pursue their security goals by pooling sovereignty in a more diluted power structure. The resulting constellation is a hierarchical system with a single power centre, whose influence progressively decreases the more the system approaches its periphery, in a concentric-circle sort of fashion.

One can argue that, until 2004, the EU neighbourhood strategy typified the ‘Westphalian’ model. In its most effective policy, the enlargement, security questions have been addressed by attracting neighbours into the EU, i.e. the promise of full integration. The other way to pursue security was by offering neighbours a variety of more or less effective partnership and association packages. Hence, the Westphalian pattern: with the enlargement, the EU attained security by ‘internalising’ neighbours into the EU; with the other neighbours, by keeping them outside.

In the aftermath of the 2004 enlargement, the EU neighbourhood strategy partially shifted to a more neo-medieval path. In truth, this turn was made necessary by two inescapable strategic

⁴ An additional institutional option of variable geometry here could be *enhanced cooperation*. Under the Treaty of Nice, deeper cooperation can be established in certain sectors among those EU member states wishing to do so on the condition that the European Council does not object to it. In principle, enhanced cooperation would also apply to foreign policy and could thus allow a deepening of relations between a number of like-minded EU member states and third countries. Enhanced cooperation has never been used so far in internal EU policy-making, let alone EU foreign policy, and thus not included among the options in this presentation. Moreover, differently from the other options proposed here, enhanced cooperation would not lead to a comprehensive institutional model for relations with neighbours, but rather to case-by-case, *ad hoc* arrangements with some EU countries.

imperatives. On the one hand, a much more diverse range of threats and challenges arising at its doorstep needs to be tackled: political instability, unresolved conflicts, organised crime and Islamic fundamentalism. On the other hand, with the expansion to Central and Eastern Europe, it became apparent that the EU could not continue to expand indefinitely and that the enlargement process could not feature as the only effective neighbourhood policy. The inclusive rhetoric and ambitious objectives with which the European Neighbourhood Policy was introduced are meant to reflect a deliberate strategic choice for a more ‘graduated’ interpretation of power in the wider Europe. As noted above, however, the shortcomings and uncertainties surrounding the ENP make this goal elusive for the time being.

These different ways of portraying the figure of Europe provide numerous insights about the conceptualisation of space and borders and on the very identity and finality of the EU, as we saw in section 1. Of interest here is that the Westphalian and Neo-medieval models suggest two different interpretations about the varying shape of power in the wider European space. The Westphalian model denotes a preference for hub-and-spoke bilateralism, differentiation and clear distinction between insiders and outsiders. The neo-medieval model depicts a more fluid, fuzzy map of Europe, where border are porous and multiple political loyalties are allowed to coexist.

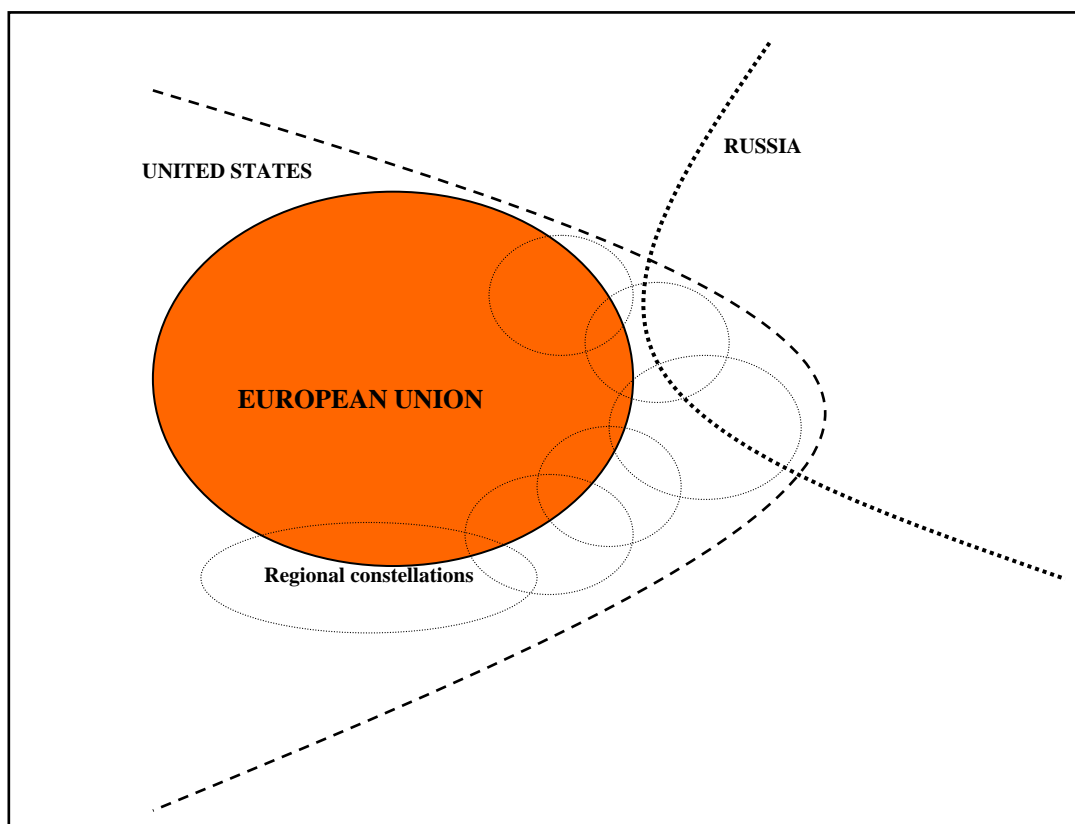
This interpretation, however, does not suffice to illustrate the broader strategic implications of EU neighbourhood strategy. When mapping power constellations in the wider European space, one ought to account also for broader geopolitical considerations. These concern, first, the posture of outside powers and, second, of the role of the countries themselves in their salient environment.

The former question can be addressed by juxtaposing the EU neighbourhood strategy with that of the two other major power actors in the wider European space: the US and Russia.

As to the *United States*, the powerful message *en vogue* in the 1990s was that of a Europe ‘whole and free’, in which dividing lines inherited from the Cold War would gradually disappear by the transition to a market economy and democratic transformations. The underlying rationale behind this approach is still largely valid within the EU. Yet, this message no longer seems to resonate in many European capitals as loudly as it used to, especially since the infamous rift over the US-led war in Iraq in 2003.

Since then, a growing number of intellectuals has joined the heated discussion surrounding the strategic differences between America and Europe. ‘Power vs. paradise’, ‘hard vs. soft’; ‘Mars vs. Venus’ have become bestselling terms which hardly need to be restated here (Kagan, 2003). It suffices to note that a majority of these analyses emphasise the diverging strategic cultures and visions that currently separate the transatlantic alliance. The US discourse tends to stress ‘threats’, and the need to address security issues in a straightforward, rational, and if necessary, ‘unilateral’ manner. The European side addresses ‘challenges’, and deals with security issues by placing greater emphasis on dialogue, consultation and ‘joint ownership’. Irrespective of the conclusions that one can draw from these lines of thinking, a transatlantic gap exists and ought to be accounted for when mapping power in the wider European space.

Figure 3. Variable Geometries of Power



For one, the divergence between the US and the EU appears to be widening as far as the rationale and ultimate purpose of European integration are concerned. In recent times, this has been highlighted by America's pressure for Turkey's entrance into the EU or by the possible accession of Ukraine and Georgia into NATO. These instances confirm the impression that, notwithstanding the growing strategic ambitions of the EU, Americans still largely underestimate the EU geopolitical role (see Kupchan, 2002, p. 132). In the US, European integration continues to be regarded as an economic project inextricably attached to peace and stability in the Continent.

This view is increasingly shared by new EU member states and many of their Eastern neighbours. For them, NATO (and America therein) remains the main external guarantee for their national security and territorial integrity. Conversely, the EU is portrayed as bureaucratized and aloof from the priorities and interests of its members.

This notwithstanding, EU and US approaches to the European neighbourhood are not necessarily irreconcilable (Asmus, 2003). The two may differ considerably about short-term objectives or the means to be employed to attain them. But the values and norms of liberal democracy provide the most solid basis for consensus (Garton Ash, 2004). This is not just token Wilsonian idealism. It was vividly on display during the last decade in Central Europe and it is re-emerging, albeit not without difficulties, in parts of the wider European neighbourhood. A notable example is the Western Balkans where, after the shameful bloodshed of the 1990s, the EU and the US are cooperating more fruitfully to address the various challenges facing the region, from peacekeeping to state-building.

The case of *Russia* is equally contentious. The EU and Russia have committed themselves to the principles and vision of a 'strategy partnership'. This is motivated by the fact that the two

parties are the primary actors for the security and stability of Europe, and each other's most important partner on the continent. But strategic partnership is arguably a misnomer: the bilateral relations rarely resemble a partnership and, so far, the strategic content of it has been hardly detectable (Tassinari, 2005a). The reasons for this state of affairs can be traced back to a fundamental misperception over what the EU and Russia aim and stand for – a question that produces inevitable repercussions in the wider European space.

On the one hand, Russia has struggled to reclaim its role as a great power. After the erratic tenure of President Boris Yeltsin in the 1990s, it has to a great extent succeeded at doing that under Vladimir Putin. The state is stronger – although at the peril of Russia's fragile democratic institutions. The economy is booming – although primarily thanks to high prices of hydrocarbons, of which Russia is richly endowed. This political and economic recovery has shaped Russia's attitude vis-à-vis the EU. Russia demands to be treated by the EU as an equal partner. At the same time, it has a tendency to delegitimise the Union as a geopolitical actor, preferring to deal with certain, and often more deferent, member states instead. Moscow has welcomed the principle of European integration and its enlargement. But it frequently laments alleged economic imbalances and political inequalities that have been caused by it.

On the other hand, the EU and its member states know that good relations with Russia are of vital importance, primarily because of the Union's increasing dependence on oil and gas imports. Yet, its often condescending attitude vis-à-vis domestic developments in Russia resembles more closely a donor-recipient relationship than a partnership. The convoluted mechanisms of its foreign policy-making further complicate the matter, as they expose the EU position to the often-diverging national interests and priorities of its member states.⁵ This produces a blurred and fragmented image of the EU standing on several key issues – from energy security, to human rights violations in Chechnya, to Russia's democratic standards (Tassinari, 2005a).

The fortunes of countries lying in the EU-Russia 'common neighbourhood' are closely connected to this state of affairs. Both the EU and Russia have vital common interests in this region, among the most important of them is the state of affairs in countries like Ukraine or even Belarus, which depend much of the transit of oil and gas flowing from Russia to Europe. But the strategies of the EU and Russia to achieve this stability greatly diverge.

The EU has sought, so far not very effectively, to support democratic transition of the region. In practice, this has meant, e.g. support for the democratically elected administrations of Ukraine and Georgia; to play a role in the 'frozen' conflicts in the Southern Caucasus and Transnistria; and pressure for democratic change in Belarus. Russia tends to regard these policies as part of a full-fledged foreign policy doctrine that aims at consolidating EU supremacy on the continent. As a counterweight, Moscow has given new life to the somewhat anachronistic concept of the 'near abroad,' with economically and politically dependent neighbours gravitating in its power orbit.

In addition to Russia's posture and to the overlaying influence of the US, the composite map of power in the European neighbourhood is of course also defined by the *neighbouring countries themselves*.

⁵ France, Germany and Italy hold traditionally friendly and close relations with Moscow, primarily because of their dependence on Russia's energy. Nordic EU member states are more critical and direct, especially in their criticism of Russia's democratic standards and human rights record. Lastly, new EU member states from Central Europe remain, for historical reasons, particularly sensitive to Russia's influences.

The salient environment of each country, and the way in which the EU has adjusted to it, thus become further analytical keys to understanding variable geometries in European power constellation. In fact, it would be difficult and up to a point futile to observe the place that a country like Georgia or Serbia occupy in the European architecture without locating them in their respective regional contexts.

These regional contexts can be defined in various ways. Emphasis may be placed on factors such as historical heritage, foreign-policy orientations or commercial interests of the countries. The result is that one often ends up with very different maps of the regional constellation surrounding each country.

Two main strands to categorise these contexts may nevertheless be identified. One is identity-based, and focuses on the cultural, ethnic, linguistic and historical ties that bind certain countries together. The other is interest-based, and focuses on strategic considerations and foreign policy priorities of the countries (see, for instance, Neumann, 1994). When it comes to security and power, interdependence in a regional context does not necessarily mean cooperation. It means that countries are inextricably linked to one another, even if this link takes the form of a conflictual relation (Buzan, 1991, pp.186-229). In this sense, the regional context of a country like Georgia cannot be assessed without accounting for the volatile security environment of the Caucasus, which is the result of a turbulent historical heritage, but also of its growing strategic importance for energy transit. Likewise, the excruciating legacy and long-term instability of the Western Balkan region are critical for understanding Serbia's place in the wider Europe.

These regional linkages in the wider Europe have represented a constant, if understated, component of the EU neighbourhood strategy. From an EU perspective, the focus on the regional dimension can arguably be regarded as a by-product of the European integration rationale of pooling resources, building confidence and coordinating action by means of transnational cooperation (see Smith, 2003, pp. 83ff.).

As a result, the EU has promoted or supported frameworks for regional cooperation in its periphery. The objectives and performances of these frameworks have varied greatly depending on the specific challenges of each region. In the Mediterranean, the EU has promoted the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. This initiative has been instrumental for raising confidence and fostering people-to-people exchanges between North and South of the Mediterranean basin, but has left largely unaddressed the daunting economic and security priorities of the region. In the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe, the EU has succeeded in coordinating action with the international community to deal with the immense reconstruction challenges of post-war former Yugoslavia. At the same time, the commitment and 'ownership' of the regional process by Western Balkan countries have remained, to a large extent, inadequate. The EU's Northern Dimension has provided a stepping stone for the inclusion of Poland and the Baltic States into the EU, while favouring the participation of Russia; yet, after the 2004 enlargement, the Northern Dimension appears to have lost some of its strategic 'added value' (Tassinari, 2005).

Despite their differences and limits, these regional mechanisms all address the twin quest for security and integration in Europe's periphery by seeking to level down power asymmetries between the EU and its neighbours. They offer an alternative way to look at the organisation of space and borders in the European neighbourhood, and thereby yet another representation of the varying power constellations in the wider Europe.

4. Applying Variable Geometries

Before embarking on the empirical analysis, a brief justification for the chosen cases is in order.

The EU strategy towards most its neighbours, as well as the foreign policy posture and identity of the countries themselves, make in a majority of cases intuitively clear the place that each country occupies in the wider European space. It is self-evident, for example, that EU neighbours in North Africa will not become EU members, as it is plain that the Western Balkan countries most likely will. Hence, applying variable geometries to these cases is a question of fitting a certain country into one or several of the categories presented above.

This study, however, has put forward the variable geometry argument also to interpret the fuzziness characterising the political, strategic and conceptual borders of the wider Europe. The cases of Turkey and Ukraine make the application of this basic map of variable geometries particularly challenging because their positioning in the wider European space is in many respects ill-established.

Ukraine and, even more markedly, Turkey occupy contested places in the diverse ideational setting characterising the wider European space. In fact, because of these countries' cultural, religious and ethnic legacy, their prospect of integration into the EU is a litmus test to address the questions of identity, finality and legitimacy of the EU polity.

As to institutions, Turkey has reached candidate status for EU accession. For reasons that will be more thoroughly explored below, however, its medium-to-long term membership perspective is meeting increasing opposition both within the EU and in Turkey. As a result, several alternatives to membership have emerged, whose suitability has to be measured against the prospect of full EU integration, which is what the two parties have committed to negotiate.

The EU has repeatedly acknowledged the 'European aspirations' of Ukraine. Expectations about its integration in the EU have grown especially after the 2004-2005 'Orange revolution', which brought to power the western-leaning coalition led by Viktor Yushchenko. Because of the country's prolonged domestic instability and the ambivalence of EU policies, however, Ukraine's relations with the EU remain blurred at best, and deserve to be analysed through the lenses of our variable geometries framework.

Finally, Turkey and Ukraine's gradual integration into the EU has also major power implications for Europe and is likely to have a significant impact on the way in which the EU as a foreign policy actor positions itself on the international stage. From the perspective of both the US and Russia, the ever-closer relations between of two countries with the EU is bound to have tremendous implications for the geopolitics of European security. Moreover, the European orientation of these two large and populous countries has repercussions in their respective regional contexts and for the role that the EU aims to play e.g. in the Black Sea, in the Middle East and in the Mediterranean basin.

It is for these reasons that the cases of Turkey and Ukraine appear particularly relevant to single out the institutional, power-related and ideational implications of variable geometries, which is what this study proceeds to do in the next two sections.

5. Turkey

5.1 Ideas

In order to explain how the deepening of relations between the EU and Turkey impacts on the nature of the EU polity, one ought to first appreciate the rather unique markers characterising Turkey's national identity.

Turkey's tradition of 'civic nationalism' is perhaps the most venerated legacy of Kemal Atatürk's revolution and of his monumental enterprise of state-building. Kemal set to reshape a heterogeneous community by means of staunch secularism, enlightened modernisation of the state institutions and the 'invention' of Turkishness (Tocci, 2001). 'Kemalism' succeeded in forging a modern state by means of populism – which here concerns specifically the elimination of class and ethnic divisions within society – and by attributing a fundamental role to state institutions in governing Turkey's economic structures.

Over the decades, however, it became apparent that this striving for modernity 'from above' determined also a verticalisation of power, with an organic, essentialist state ruling over a stiffened and somewhat constrained society. In other words, the monolithic Kemalist elite succeeded in forging a modern state but did not allow a modern nation to emerge out of it.

The roles played by political Islam and by the military in the history of modern Turkey provide the most egregious examples of this dynamic.

In the Ottoman Empire, Islam was an organising, community-building principle, in which the brotherhood among believers generated a sense of social affiliation for the individual subject. As the modernisation of Turkey proceeded in opposition to class divisions, religious affiliations, ethnic origins, the Kemalist elite turned Islamism from a marker of national identity into a rather individualistic credo (see Aydin & Keyman, 2004). With the rise of the multi-party system in the 1960s, the Kemalist elite, and particularly the military as the most 'Kemalist' of Turkish institutions, resumed political Islamism in order to oppose the rising of liberalist and the leftist parties. This association between Kemalism and political Islam functioned quite effectively in the 1980s to marginalise these emerging 'Western' ideologies. However, the fact that the Kemalist elite enfranchised political Islam also meant a sea-change for the exclusionary discourse characterising Turkish identity-building. In fact, while in the short run the alliance with the Islamists allowed the Kemalists to preserve their hold on power, in the long run it backfired, as it broke the taboo on exclusion and fostered the emergence of competing identity discourses (see for this interpretation, Aydin & Keyman, 2004, pp. 8-9).

The 2002 landslide victory of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) can be interpreted in this context. The success of the moderate Islamist AKP marked a loud popular rejection of the binary, exclusionary discourse upon which Turkish identity was defined by the Kemalist elite. The rise of the AKP was a landmark signal of how inclusive, overlapping discourses eventually come to articulate the ongoing debate on Turkish democracy (ibid.). The reforms of Turkey's democratic institutions and practices enacted by the AKP-led government – e.g. a diminution of the power of the military over civilian institutions, a significant overhaul of the legal system and a more forthcoming approach to the Kurdish minority issue – are an intrinsic part of this evolution of the Turkish democracy.

The challenges that the EU polity faces in relation to Turkey are deeply embedded in this domestic evolution. The first major challenge concerns the way in which the identities of Turkey and of the EU are transforming as a result of their closer relations.

From Turkey's perspective, closer relations with the EU have accompanied and supported the country's own transformation. The EU has become the anchor and the boost for AKP-sponsored reforms and EU membership perspective has represented a crucial litmus test to measure the most basic values of Turkey's Kemalist foundations – e.g. populism, etatism, and its intrinsically Weberian notion of state sovereignty.

From the EU side, the prospect of enlargement towards Turkey has coincided with a period of uncertain and deep introspection. This was sparked by contingent occurrences such as the internal split over the Iraq war, but also by more fundamental developments such as the 2004

enlargement; the rise and fall of the Constitutional debate; and the increasingly problematic relations of some EU countries with their migrant communities.

As a result, the question of Turkey's future in the EU has if possible exacerbated the inside/outside characterisation of the wider Europe. The inflammatory rhetoric of populist politicians has taken the centre stage in the political discourse of several EU member states, and European capitals send contradictory signals about their position on the Turkish EU membership.

These worrying developments have of course important implications also with respect to the finality of the EU, which is paradigmatic in the case of Turkey. Sceptics, such as former French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, have been very explicit in arguing that enlargement towards Turkey would signify the end of the EU. Those in favour argue that Turkey's EU membership would greatly enhance the EU's standing in the international arena.

A particularly interesting aspect of this debate, addressed by both camps, regards the extent to which Turkey's European integration can represent a model and a precursor for democratisation in broader Middle East. On the one hand, sceptics will argue that Turkey's path to modernisation has differed greatly from that of the other states in the Arab-Muslim world and that Turkey can hardly provide a viable model for them. On the other hand, the argument is that the achievements of Turkey's current moderate Islamic government could be of inspiration to other Arab states, especially those that remain autocratic but have opened up extensively to economic liberalisation, e.g. Morocco or Jordan.

Because of the present uncertainty surrounding EU-Turkey negotiations, these arguments are at this stage speculative at best. What can be argued, however, is that Turkey's democratisation has been undeniably boosted by the prospect of EU membership and that enlargement is an eventuality that will most likely never surface in the case of the other Arab-Muslim countries. Hence, the main lesson coming from Turkey in relation to the EU's Arab-Muslim neighbourhood is paradoxically rather independent from Turkey's own fate. It is that EU influence in supporting political and economic transformations depends on the clarity of its strategy: incentives, conditions and objectives. This applies to all EU strategies and, in relation to the Arab-Muslim neighbourhood goes back to the debate on the final goals and shape of the European Neighbourhood Policy.

The point on clarity is also logically linked to the question of legitimacy of the EU as a governance system and as a foreign policy actor. As was noted above, the prospective membership of a large, impoverished and populous country like Turkey is feared to have negative implications on the efficiency, accountability and democratic representation of EU decision-making mechanisms.

Viewed from Ankara, EU promises cannot but waver before the increasing polarisation of the political spectrum and growing popular opposition in Europe. Not coincidentally, Turkey's own attitude has changed as a result. In recent months, and in conjunction with the upcoming national elections, this was highlighted by a nationalist backlash in the government rhetoric on the Kurdish minority question and by plummeting rates – from 61% in 2005 to 35% this year – of EU approval within the Turkish population.

In the last instance, however, the question of EU legitimacy in relation to Turkey rests upon those very conditions on which the two parties have agreed to negotiate. Turkey's eventual EU membership concerns the objective assessment of its results in consolidating its democratic credentials, in reforming its economy and in complying with the EU body of law. The credibility of the EU approach ultimately relies on its ability to uphold these as the only criteria guiding its relations with Turkey (Aydin & Keyman, 2004).

5.2 Institutions⁶

Turkey is a candidate country for EU membership. Negotiations were opened in October 2005, one year after the Commission gave its go-ahead to that effect. Turkey's judiciary reforms have obtained notable achievements e.g. in relation to the abolition of the death penalty and the long-awaited reform of the penal code. By extending its Customs Union with the EU to the ten new EU member states, Turkey has also made a substantial, if implicit, step forward as regards its relations with Cyprus. Despite its great regional disparities, the recent record of the Turkish economy is impressive: the inflation rate is falling, currency is being stabilised, and the GDP is steadily growing.

This notwithstanding, as Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn warned, Turkey's accession negotiations might be heading for a 'train wreck'. Reasons for it, in this specific instance, concern Turkey's reluctance to recognise Cyprus and to open its ports to it. Both the EU and Turkey, however, well know that the malfunctions that could cause a wreck of the enlargement train are more profound.

In institutional terms, the predominant concerns can be probably synthesised by two factors: money and size. Certain countries in Europe have long been wary about the possible implications of a Turkish accession into the EU. They are concerned about their labour market stability and about the generous economic aid that will have to feed Turkey's journey towards EU membership. Moreover, and especially in view of the current Constitutional deadlock, the fear is that Turkey's accession will change the shape of EU institutional functioning, and thus the EU itself, beyond recognition.

The stipulations of the EU-Turkey negotiating framework reflect these concerns and contain unprecedented possible restrictions on Turkey's full membership. They indicate that, in the case of the Turkish accession, "long transitional periods, derogations, specific arrangements or permanent safeguard clauses" may have to be considered (*EU-Turkey Negotiating Framework* 2005, p. 6). Arguably, such formulation already provides for an institutional 'variable geometry' of sorts. These provisions mean in effect that Turkey might – temporarily or permanently – never be fully integrated into the EU in fields such as free movement of persons, structural policies or agriculture.

The EU decisions on Turkey's negotiating framework, however, go further than that. It argues that "negotiations are an open-ended process, the outcome of which cannot be guaranteed beforehand" (*ibid.*, p. 1) and that, should membership not be achieved, "it must be ensured that Turkey is fully anchored in the European structures through the strongest possible bond" (*ibid.*). Here is where the future of EU-Turkey contractual relations look more uncertain.

These open formulations leave room for various interpretations and have generated in recent years various alternative options to full EU membership, especially within conservative circles in Germany (but also France and Austria) that most vehemently oppose Turkey's EU integration. These include the so-called Privileged Partnership option, as well as the less known Extended Associate Membership option (Quaisser and Wood, 2004). Both cases entail an offer of deeper integration of Turkey into the EU, and need to be given a closer look in the light and context of the variable geometries framework proposed here.

In the field economic governance, these proposals entail a substantial deepening of the Customs Union between Turkey and the EU.⁷ This would be extended to form a comprehensive Free

⁶The research assistance of Martina Warning on the German debate reviewed in this section is gratefully acknowledged.

Trade Area (Wissmann, 2004) including e.g. agricultural and textile products, property acquisitions by EU citizens or legal entities in Turkey. It would entail an enhancement of aid programmes and the abolishment of current restrictions on foreign actors operating in the Turkish non-financial service sector. Moreover, it is argued that such an enhanced Customs Union would necessitate strengthening the existing EU-Turkey Association Council by means of EEA-like, *ad-hoc* institutional mechanisms (Zu Guttenberg, 2004).⁸ Alternatively, Turkey would participate in EU Council meetings without voting or veto rights.

In the field of foreign and security policy, the Privileged Partnership and Extended Associate Membership options would foresee the highest possible degree of alignment of Turkey in CFSP and ESDP. This would entail, inter alia, adoption by Turkey of all CFSP positions (to which Turkey is to a significant extent already aligned) and regular participation by the Turkish Foreign Minister in Council meetings. In the ESDP, given Turkey's prominent role in NATO, it could imply for example a direct involvement in the building of the EU Rapid Reaction Force and in the decision-making procedures for crisis management (Wissmann, 2004) possibly leading to institutionalised co-decision rights in ESDP matters (Zu Guttenberg, 2004).

In the field of Freedom, Security and Justice, Privileged Partnership or Extended Associate Membership would imply approximation to the Justice and Home Affairs regulatory norms. This would entail cooperation in the judiciary field, possibly, inter alia, leading to agreements on data protection, the exchange of personal data and the convergence of visa policies and practices.

The real incentive for either the EU or Turkey to agree to either the Privileged Partnership or the Extended Associated Membership is not apparent. In the field of economic integration, for instance, an EEA-like type of arrangement may considerably alter the conditionality/socialisation nexus that sustains enlargement negotiations and the very pace of Turkey's economic reforms. Secondly, the Privileged Partnership/Extended Associate Membership options suggest that a rather emasculated participation of Turkey in EU institutions, through a voiceless participation in the Council or even by means of separate, albeit enhanced, joint EU-Turkey institutions. Most important of all, both the Privileged Partnership and Extended Associate Membership options are presented as permanent alternatives to EU membership. Their far-reaching scope would arguably signal the importance that the EU attaches to Turkey as a strategic partner for the Union. Yet, both these alternatives explicitly aim at taking the membership option off the table.

Following the variable geometries rationale that this study proposes, instead, alternatives should aim at offering credible options that allow the EU and the neighbouring countries concerned to accompany, approach, and stay the course of their respective objectives. The EU and Turkey have initiated negotiations and should continue them, unless objective reasons for suspension provided by the Copenhagen criteria should arise. Alternative proposals should therefore be primarily aimed at providing a sense of purpose and commitment from both sides, regardless of the uncertainty and length that is inevitably bound to characterise negotiations.

⁷ The existing Customs Union covers an estimated 30% of the goods produced in Turkey (Karakas, 2006) and applies to industrial goods with the exception of agriculture, services and public procurement. Under the Customs Union, Turkey is already required to abide by relevant parts of the EU *acquis*, e.g. in relation to industrial standards, without having any decision-making rights attached to it.

⁸ In the Extended Associate Membership option, it is actually argued that the upgraded Customs Union would actually take the shape of an 'Extended EEA' (Quaisser & Wood, 2004, p. 51) with restrictions on the movement of labour.

The institutional dimension of variable geometries could thus take the shape of a sort of ‘communicating vessels’ scheme for EU membership, what analyst Cemal Karakas (2005) has termed ‘gradual integration’. According to such model, accession negotiations could be partitioned in three or four segments, relatively autonomous from each other and leading to a partial EU membership of Turkey as soon as negotiations in those sectors have been completed. In those fields, Turkey would enjoy voting rights (but not veto power) in the Council, consistently with the voting system that that will regulate the activities of the Council at the time this partial membership is achieved (for details see: Karakas, 2006).⁹

Admittedly, such model could markedly affect the legality of the EU enlargement process. Such ‘gradual integration’ would imply a rather radical change in the procedures, practices, and overall rationale characterizing the conditionality machine as was defined above. It would also have implications as far as socialization is concerned. It is indeed possible that this model be objected by the Turkish elite which is wary of partial integration options in view of its Custom Union experience. Or, ‘gradual integration’ could lose momentum along the way and ossify into a ‘multi-speed Europe,’ should Turkey deem a certain degree of partial integration satisfactory or renounce to move on to the next step.

At the same time, like the enlargement process itself, such a model would remain conditional on Turkey’s pace of reforms and on possible hindrances such as the recognition of Cyprus. But it would not have to be ‘conditional’ on changes to the EU’s internal functioning or on its ‘absorption capacity’. Most importantly, gradual integration does not preclude full EU membership as an endpoint and proposes a gradual, incremental, but not necessarily permanent, way to ensure a degree of integration that is proportional to the objective progress of the country.

Interestingly, the ‘slowdown’ of Turkey’s accession process that is currently being discussed in conjunction with the Cyprus controversy appears to be an application of this model, as the European Commission has recommended a freezing of the talks on eight out of the 35 ‘chapters’ of the membership negotiations.

5.3 Power

On the face of it, Turkey’s possible EU membership sets the EU neighbourhood strategy on a ‘Westphalian’ course. The enlargement process aims at ‘desecuritising’ the range of challenges stemming from Turkey by means of integration into the EU.

However, the hugely important strategic implications of Turkey’s closer relations with the EU render this characterisation somewhat reductive. Turkey has historically represented a major power hub of its own. Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver (2003) have actually categorised Turkey as the third ‘neo-medieval’ constellation in Europe, besides the EU and Russia, owing to the country’s size and population, to its geographical position and to its historical heritage.

What the deepening of EU-Turkey relations means for the power constellation of the wider Europe is thus a much more multi-faceted matter, which can be best illustrated by singling out its various geopolitical and regional dimensions.

⁹ According to this proposal Turkey, like the other candidate state, would be able to send observers but not to vote in the European Parliament. A foreseeable problem in this sense would regard for those sectoral issues for which Parliament and Council operate in co-decision. However, as is the case for the current observer countries, Turkey might contribute to decision-making in the Parliament at the committee level, where it will be able to submit proposals to change legislation.

Turkey represents an important geo-political and geo-economic counterpart for both the US and Russia. As far as the US is concerned, Turkey traditionally enjoys a high degree of trust and leverage because of its steady and firm place in the 'West', epitomised by its NATO membership.

Over the decades, America has persistently pushed for a closer engagement of the EU with Turkey. This might have represented an important background contribution to the decisions taken in the 1990s, such as the 1999 Helsinki European Council that acknowledged Turkey as a candidate. However, later on, and particularly during the current Bush administration, Washington's pro-enlargement pressure has been less effective, and perhaps even counterproductive. In addition to the objective difficulties that the EU is faced with in relation to Turkey's prospective accession, indeed, US 'interference' in European affairs now provoke a more widespread uneasiness, especially within certain EU member states (*The Economist*, 2005, p. 5).

Ankara's own attitude vis-à-vis the US is itself less uncritical than it used to be. In 2003, the Turkish Parliament rejected a resolution that would have allowed the transit of US troops on their way to open a second, northern front, in Iraq. This was due not only to the perceived risks coming from an area – predominantly Kurdish – that remains highly volatile for Turkey's own security. Ankara's refusal was arguably also a demonstrative act against Washington's unilateral choice on Iraq. Moreover, Turkey is a staunch defender of the 1936 Montreux Convention, which gives Ankara rights to control passages of war vessels through the Dardanelles straits. This privilege is now particularly problematic, especially in view of Romania and Bulgaria's accession to NATO in April 2004.¹⁰

Turkey's strategic relevance is just as significant when it comes to Russia and the former Soviet space. Bilateral relations between Russia and Turkey (and the political entities that preceded them, the Soviet Union and the Ottoman Empire) are characterised by a centuries-long history of power-political confrontation. This zero-sum way of approaching the bilateral relations in some respect still applies, when looking for example at Russia's weariness vis-à-vis Turkey's role as a NATO member or its ever-closer relations with the EU.

On the other hand, a more recent and perhaps innovative factor has become the role that oil and gas play in bilateral relations. Turkey's goal to become Europe's fourth artery of hydrocarbons transit turn Russia into a natural counterpart. Ankara's asset in this context is provided by its strategic geographical centrality in relation to both the North-South routes, favoured by Russia (e.g. Blue Stream pipeline) and the East-West ones, sponsored by the US and the EU (e.g. Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan; Nabucco pipelines). Turkey stands between the ever-increasing assertiveness of Russia's companies, particularly Gazprom, to control transit routes and the West's hushed attempts to diversify its energy sources, and pragmatically seeks to accommodate both.

Following our characterisation of power in the wider European space, the third dimension is provided by the regional constellations surrounding Turkey. A first element in this context refers to Turkey's relations with the Central Asian Republics. Here there are cultural, historical and religious ties that, in the past, fed what is known as Pan-Turkism.¹¹ Over time, Pan-Turkism has lost relevance, also because of its inherent implausibility in the post-Soviet authoritarian contexts of the countries concerned. In its stead, a softer, more cooperative attitude has taken

¹⁰ Interviews of the author at NATO headquarters, Brussels, May 2006.

¹¹ Pan-Turkism is an ideology based on ethnic and linguistic affinities between Turkey and the communities of most Central Asian republics. In the past, it was referred, and at times abused, to enhance Turkey's strategic clout in the region. See, for instance, Landau, 1995.

over, focusing on Turkey's economic investment in the region and on its support for democratic reforms in these countries.

While Turkey's influence in Central Asia may be limited, there are two main regional constellations where Turkey's role is of great strategic importance for Europe. One is the Black Sea area. The Black Sea is becoming a major crossroads of threats and challenges for the enlarged EU (Tassinari, 2006). Turkey's role in the region is of central importance not only because the above-mentioned geo-economic interests deriving from transit of oil and gas, but also because of classical geopolitical reasons. Most notably, Turkey's role in the South Caucasus remains highly relevant and at the same time problematic. It is relevant because of the diaspora from Georgia and Abkhazia hosted by Turkey, and because of the several sectoral agreements that Turkey signed with Georgia and Azerbaijan. Turkey's role is however controversial, as regards the historically tense relations with Armenia, and consequent bias in relation to some of the frozen conflicts in the area, most notably the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

The second regional constellation where Turkey's role can be of major strategic importance is of course in the broader Middle East. Turkey plays a major role in the diverse area spanning from the Eastern Mediterranean to Iraq and Iran. Its role in the Eastern Mediterranean is closely linked to the EU accession process because of the Cyprus conflict. The Annan Peace Plan, which presumably remains the basis for the currently stalled peace process, was famously rejected by the Greek Cypriot population in the 2004 referendum. As an EU member state, Greek Cyprus seems to have now an excessive leverage which affects the EU's ability to perform in relation to the conflict and more specifically to the possibility of lifting the embargo on Northern Cyprus.

Turkey has also been part of the ailing Euro-Mediterranean Partnership.¹² Since the advent of the ENP, the Barcelona Process' multilateral approach has been implicitly taken over by the bilateral ENP Action Plans which the Commission negotiates with the partner countries of the Southern shore. Turkey has been rather inactive with respect to Mediterranean cooperation so far, primarily because in the mid-1990s this was presented as a possible alternative to EU membership. Now that this scenario has not materialised, Turkey is regarded as an important asset for the revival of this regional constellation. This would be particularly important when it comes to, first, empowering the Southern part of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership with a higher degree of 'ownership' of the regional process. Secondly, Turkey's cultural, societal and political background could potentially be of inspiration and support in the process of political transformation and economic reforms that the EU aims to promote in the Southern Mediterranean, as was discussed in the identity section above.

Turkey's EU accession process may in the long run also affect the Union's role in developments in the Arab-Israeli conflict, Iraq and, further east, Iran. As far as the Arab-Israeli conflict is concerned, Turkey's position appears to converge with the mainstream EU view. Turkey has not refrained from criticising Israel's policies vis-à-vis the Palestinians. At the same time, Turkey's ties with Israel have proven to be very solid in recent years, especially in the military and economic fields (see Emerson & Tocci, 2004, p. 21). Turkey has also a self-evident interest and an important logistical role in the stability of Iraq, with which it shares a border and a sizeable Kurdish minority. The smoothening of bilateral relations with Iran is proven by increasing economic cooperation. As recently stated by IAEA head Mohamed ElBaradei (Voice of America, 2006), this turns Turkey into a major complementary asset especially in relation to the efforts of the international community to negotiate with Teheran on its nuclear programme.

¹² On this aspect, see, for instance, Emerson & Tocci, 2004.

Both the geo-political implications vis-à-vis Russia and the US and the regional constellations (Central Asia, the Black Sea and the broader Middle East) presented here underline the ever-closer correlation between the EU and Turkey's strategic interests.

These different facets indicate that Turkey's deeper integration with the EU will substantially broaden and deepen the scope of EU foreign policy 'actorness'. Perhaps more interestingly, the multiple dimensions of Turkish foreign policy are likely to influence the EU approach towards its neighbourhood in an increasingly multi-faceted and indeed 'neo-medieval' fashion, irrespective of the final shape and outcome of the EU-Turkey bilateral relations.

6. Ukraine

6.1 Ideas

As in the case of Turkey, a brief critical assessment of the features and markers characterising Ukraine's identity and of recent domestic developments is instrumental in order to unravel the ways in which Ukraine interplays with the identity, legitimacy and finality of the EU polity.

It is not by accident that the etymological roots of this country's very name can be traced back to the word 'borderland' (Teague, 2001, p. 13). Ukraine remains home to both a Catholic community in the Western part, historically and culturally linked to Central Europe and Poland in particular, and to an Orthodox East, traditionally close to Russia. Reflecting this Janus-headed nature, Ukraine's foreign policy posture since the dissolution of the Soviet Union took the telling name of 'multivector' (Kuzio, 2003).

The 2004-05 'Orange revolution' led many in Ukraine and abroad to believe that Ukraine's foreign policy orientation was eventually to turn West, possibly taking the country on the track to membership in NATO and in the EU. Throughout the first year of tenure, however, the Orange coalition displayed irreconcilable differences and continuous squabbling among its various components. After new parliamentary elections early in 2006, this led to the nomination of President Yushchenko's pro-Russian arch-rival Viktor Yanukovich as Prime Minister in August 2006.

For many observers, a government led by Yanukovich and his Party of Regions represents a worrying involution for the ongoing transformation of Ukrainian society and economy. The dark picture painted by Vladimir Socor says it best: "The party [of Regions] is strongest in electoral terms in those areas where the Soviet/Russia mentality of paternalism, collectivism and subservience to authority is strongest. The party's oligarchic leaders control the populous industrial centers in the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts in company-town fashion, and on a far-larger scale than the classical model. Furthermore, the party's oligarchs have brought the unreconstructed Communist Party in the government" (Socor, 2006).

The first moves of the new government appear, at least in their rhetoric, to be driven by a wish to reconcile the divided country; to mend tattered relations with Russia – especially in the energy field; to stay the course vis-à-vis European integration and accession to the World Trade Organisation. At the same time, it is at this stage somewhat premature to predict what implications this turnaround will have for Kiev's European aspirations and its relations with the EU. For the purpose of this section, however, these developments have something rather profound to suggest about Ukraine's place in the ideational dimension of the wider Europe.

Although Ukraine remains far more pluralistic than most former Soviet states, the thread uniting this chain of events is that which American author Fareed Zakaria (2003) calls 'illiberal democracy'. Developments occurring in Ukraine in conjunction with the Orange revolution and afterwards included, inter alia, controversial constitutional changes, a chaotic privatisation plan,

the continued, disproportional economic influence of a handful of oligarchs and a power vacuum that in 2006 lasted some seven months. Irrespective of whether elections are run freely and fairly – which is by no means a minor achievement – Ukraine still sorely needs to strengthen the underlying pillars characterising liberal democratic systems: the rule of law, independence of the judiciary, transparent and market-oriented economic governance and so forth.

Much more than Yanukovich's nomination, the alleged U-turn in the foreign policy of his government or the lowering of EU expectations vis-à-vis Kiev, it is this state of affairs that defines more deeply the interplay between Ukraine and the EU as a polity.

Consider, for one, the identity question. Here the Ukrainian case is certainly less problematic than Turkey's. Ukraine is in most respects tied to Europe. Its geography is indisputably in Europe. Its historical legacy, cultural heritage and societal linkages are for the most part bound to Europe.

Yet, in the past few years, the mainstream EU discourse on possible enlargement – which is normally nuanced, at times blurred and even muffled – was unusually definite, exclusionary and blunt. It was, for example, EU Commissioner Gunther Verheugen who argued that for the EU to take in Ukraine would be tantamount to the United States taking in Mexico.

Various institutional, economic and even strategic reasons may be adduced to justify such unequivocal 'othering' of Ukraine from the side of the EU. But the most straightforward explanation is probably that Ukraine is perceived by Brussels as being very far away from European standards of liberal democratic governance.

Since the 2004 enlargement and the Orange revolution, this inside/outside characterisation has softened somewhat. But this happened at the peril of clarity of the EU official position, which brings us to the question of finality.

How to encourage comprehensive political and economic reforms in the absence of any prospect of enlargement has indeed proven to be a particularly challenging balancing-act in relation to Ukraine. It was known from the outset that the ENP was conceived to achieve just that. The original ambition was to devise a credible mechanism that would address the security challenges arising from Europe's Eastern flank while opening up to a substantial and clear degree of EU integration for the countries concerned.

In this sense, the vaster and more heterogeneous scope that the actual policy has eventually taken has been particularly harmful for the objectives the EU intends to pursue in Ukraine. At the same time, this is an unavoidable consequence of the contrasting visions within the Union about the finality of the EU strategy on Ukraine. These visions might be considerably less discordant than in the Turkish case, but they are probably just as pronounced when it comes to strategic considerations. For some, predominantly new, member states, the EU policy should eventually lead to Ukraine's full integration in the EU. In other member states, most notably some of the founding members, the EU policy on Ukraine ought to be regarded as a foreign policy tool, most notably with respect to its relations with Russia.

This uncertainty surrounding the EU's Ukraine policy ultimately raises the legitimacy question. It could be argued that uncertainty was also an intrinsic feature of the enlargement process towards Central and Eastern Europe. In accession negotiations, progress was not acknowledged until this was painstakingly evaluated, monitored and benchmarked. But that uncertainty did not concern the end-point of the process: EU membership. The EU might have been cautious and was certainly thorough in approaching its Eastern enlargement, but it did not waver before the final outcome. The problem with Ukraine is that this uncertainty regards both the process and the end-point.

The credibility of the EU as a governance system and international actor in Ukraine depends on its willingness and ability to support and encourage good governance and economic reforms. These reforms are needed regardless of the country's international orientation and possible EU membership.

But if Ukraine's European aspirations can be the trigger and justification to implement domestic reforms, then it is imperative for the EU to be clear as to what compliance will EU conditions will lead to. This is not an impossible task. It is a matter of being publicly and repeatedly clear about Ukraine's eventual prospect of EU membership while being just as clear that this is not in the cards for the time being. We address what could be done in the meantime in the next section.

6.2 Institutions

A Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA), signed in 1994 and entered into force in 1998, constitutes the legal basis of the relations between Ukraine and the EU. The PCA contains 109 articles, five annexes and one protocol (on mutual assistance in custom matters), which cover all fields of cooperation between the two parties. It expires in 2008 but can be prolonged indefinitely unless one of the two parties denounces it explicitly (Art. 101).

The level of bilateral relations has in many respects moved beyond the PCA, which reflects Ukraine's early post-Soviet transition and is now broadly regarded as outdated. Especially since the Orange revolution, the need to move the partnership beyond the PCA has been increasingly pressing. What is of interest here is to explore how this has been done so far and how it should be done in the future in the light of our broader argument on variable geometries of integration.

In many ways, the three-year bilateral ENP Action Plan, entered into force in February 2005, is a direct product of the unconstructive ambiguity of the ENP as a whole. It is composed of a rather long and general list of actions in all field of the bilateral cooperation. It is not legally binding and, of course, makes no mention about Ukraine's EU membership aspirations.

It is not surprising, then, that in the aftermath of the Orange revolution, Kiev was particularly underwhelmed by the EU offer. The EU responded to this dissatisfaction by adding to the Action Plan a ten-point list of further provisions. This list is more forthcoming than the original plan on a variety of important issues: the prospect of granting of market economy status, the perspective of enhanced cooperation in the foreign and security policy, the possibility of a visa facilitation agreement and of an upgraded bilateral agreement.

Even so, most observers have been unimpressed by the overall strategic and political message that the EU sent to Ukraine. The additions of the list remain non-binding and rely primarily on Ukraine's ambition to carry out reforms. In this sense, both the Action Plan and the subsequent list follow the rationale of the much contested 'positive conditionality' principle animating the ENP and do not sufficiently specify the concrete incentives that should encourage compliance and implementation on the part of Ukraine.

Over the past year, however, the bilateral partnership has also witnessed several remarkable advancements, which provide clearer indications as to how Ukraine's gradual integration into the EU will progress.

In their December 2005 bilateral summit, the two parties confirmed their commitment to prepare a new, comprehensive 'enhanced agreement' to substitute the old PCA as the legal basis of the partnership.

This agreement could ideally resemble the kind of Europe Agreements signed with Central European countries in view of their accession to the EU, as it will encompass all policy areas and will in all likelihood be modelled on the *acquis communautaire*. On the other hand, the

reluctance of the EU to offer an accession perspective to Ukraine makes the comparison with the Europe Agreement somewhat inadequate. What can be realistically expected is that the agreement will provide a clear, detailed definition of the degree of integration that the EU is able to offer Ukraine, short of full membership.

With this in mind, the economic content of the agreement will contain the perspective of a free trade area between the two parties, following Ukraine's accession to the WTO. The benefits coming from a 'simple' FTA eliminating trade tariffs (except agriculture) would be somewhat limited. As demonstrated by Emerson et al. (2006), instead, a 'deep' FTA would have a much more profound impact on the Ukrainian economy. A deep FTA would not be comparable to an EEA model, with full integration in the EU internal market. But it would still imply a more comprehensive approximation from the side of Ukraine with the EU regulatory norms and standards in the field of economic governance. The optimal degree of Ukraine's alignment would have to be calibrated on the basis of the capacity, needs and priorities of both parties. In this respect, such a deep FTA would in effect provide the much needed definition to the obscure 'stake in the internal market' offer contained in the ENP.

In the CFSP context, Ukraine would proceed to formally align its position to EU declarations. Ukraine would enhance its participation in crisis management operations, including peacekeeping, carried out under the EU's common foreign and security policy. This participation was formalised in a bilateral agreement of June 2005 and has already brought some remarkable results, such as the Ukrainian contribution to EU Border Assistance Mission in Transnistria.

In the field of Police and Judicial Cooperation, the institutional dimension is already fairly advanced. The EU and Ukraine have had a bilateral Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) action plan in place since December 2001. Following two expert missions of the European Commission to Ukraine – the first of this kind to a country without the prospect of enlargement – the Action Plan is now in the process of between updated and upgraded.

This Action Plan is particularly sophisticated, compared to the other ENP countries and – according to EU officials – even to some of the current candidates for membership. According to the current plan, Ukraine agreed “to establish an appropriate legislative framework for effective cooperation in the field of justice and home affairs, in line with international and EU standards and to work to ensure the efficient implementation and application of such standards.”¹³ Compliance and implementation are monitored by means of a scorecard.

Still within the JHA field, the issue of border crossing is of particular strategic importance for the EU. Before 2004, Ukraine accounted for a reported 60 to 70% of illegal migrants coming to Western Europe (Pidluska, 2001, p. 243). The enormous human and social challenges that are attached to these numbers – from organised crime to trafficking of drugs and human beings – cannot be dealt with extensively here. What can be pointed out, however, is that the extension of the Schengen system to new EU member states inevitably alters this huge flux of people, particularly in the case of Poland, where border crossings before 2004 amounted to somewhere between 10 and 15 million people a year.

Hence, negotiations between the EU and Ukraine on a visa facilitation and readmission agreement for Ukrainians travelling to the EU were initiated in 2005 and completed in late 2006. Most likely, this agreement will have an impact only on a very limited part of the Ukrainian population. But given the level of border controls and the general level of wealth of the country, Ukraine cannot aspire to more for the time being.

¹³ EU Action Plan on Justice and Home Affairs in Ukraine, 10 December 2001.

6.3 Power

The evolution of EU-Ukrainian relations is revealing of the country's peculiar positioning in the power constellation of the wider Europe. In fact, it is fair to say that the Ukrainian case is a clear illustration of the gradual evolution of the EU since 2004.

The PCA has represented the rather stiffened, 'Westphalian' tool with which the EU effectively aligned Ukraine with the other former Soviet states, and thereby externalised it from European integration dynamics. The ENP has instead aimed at drawing the more porous, 'neo-medieval' ring, with which security challenges are addressed by encouraging a degree of integration into the EU. Notwithstanding the effectiveness of this policy, we argued that this was the intention behind the ENP especially as far as the Ukrainian case is concerned. The prospective Enhanced Agreement will likely be the most substantial and far-reaching contribution to this shift.

The geo-political and geo-economic influences of both the US and Russia have of course also had a major impact on the definition of Ukraine's position in wider Europe.

After the productive cooperation experienced during the Clinton period (Ukraine at the time used to be the third-largest recipient of US aid after Israel and Egypt), the 2000s initially marked a low in US-Ukraine relations. Especially after 9/11, Ukraine was considered less of a priority for the Bush administration, all the more because Vladimir Putin's Russia was considered an indispensable ally in America's war on terror (see Kuzio, 2006). Also, it certainly did not help that Ukraine under President Kuchma was suspected to sell military equipment to Saddam Hussein's Iraq.

America continued to maintain a rather low profile in the build-up of the Orange revolution, partly also because those developments overlapped chronologically with the uncertain US presidential elections of 2004. The dramatic saga that led to Yushchenko's victory, however, eventually revived America's interest in Ukraine. This was for two main reasons. On the one hand, the Orange revolution coincided with Washington's disillusionment vis-à-vis an increasingly autocratic Russia. Most importantly, however, the Orange revolution was regarded as a victory of freedom and democracy, which made a perfect match with the foreign policy mantra preached by the Bush administration.

When it comes to Europe's power constellation, the evolution of US-Ukraine relations is of course paralleled by the NATO question. Differently from the other Central and Eastern European states, Ukraine's degree of integration into NATO was never quite meant to provide a defence shield against Russia. The deep historical, societal and economic ties between Ukraine and Russia have always made this interpretation improbable. Rather, gradual integration into NATO has been regarded as a sort of stepping stone to enhance the credibility and stability of the country on its way to full integration into the EU. As a result, especially in the initial months following the Orange revolution, the possibility of negotiations leading to a NATO Membership Action Plan (MAP) became more consistent.

However, this 'NATO first' strategy has so far proven to be too controversial to be implemented and has in recent months lost much of its appeal. The rumour that a MAP could be reached at the NATO Summit in Riga in November 2006, sparked loud public protests, especially in Ukraine's southern region of Crimea. The compromise of August 2006 that made possible Viktor Yanukovich's nomination as Prime Minister includes the condition that NATO membership is approved in a popular referendum. With public support for the Alliance standing at below 20%, this means that the NATO option has in effect been shelved for the time being.

Zbigniew Brzezinski's maxim that, without Ukraine, Russia ceases to be a Euro-Asian empire still stands when the various facets of Moscow's influence on Ukraine are singled out.

For a good part of the 1990s, arguably until the beginning of Kuchma's second term in office in 1999, Russia was primarily adjusting to the very existence of an independent Ukraine. At most, it was coping with the contested sovereignty over Crimea and Sevastopol (Kuzio, 2003, p. 13).

Kuchma's second term roughly coincided with Vladimir Putin's rise to power, which considerably changed Russia's posture and most importantly its influence on Ukraine.

For one, it should be noted that this influence was not only the result of Russia's policy. Over the years, Ukraine's leadership played the Eastern and Western 'vectors' of its foreign policy orientation one against the other. Repeated statements and actions in support of Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic integration were systematically counterbalanced by Kiev's close relationship with Moscow.

This balancing act has continued before and to a certain extent after the Orange revolution, but it has proven to be precarious and deleterious. A good example is provided by the Single Economic Space (SES). Launched in 2003, the SES comprises Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine and envisages the creation of an economic union among the four states, to be preceded by the establishment of a free trade area and a customs union. Despite warnings from Brussels that schemes such as the SES could hinder Kiev's European ambitions, Ukraine has remained involved in it.

Besides Ukraine's 'multi-vector' strategic choices, however, this involvement in the SES is also emblematic of Russia's significant influence over the Ukrainian economy.

Surely, one may argue that Russia has also availed itself of purely power-political means to influence developments in Ukraine, particularly in its Eastern and South-Eastern regions. Yet, as Moscow's clumsy meddling in the presidential campaign before the Orange revolution demonstrated, political pressure can be risky in a large, heterogeneous country like Ukraine, and can lead to some spectacular blows to Russia's credibility, authority and reputation.

The dependence of the Ukrainian economy on Russia, however, has provided a more effective magnet with which Moscow has been able, time and again, to reclaim Ukraine back into its sphere of interest.

Russia can apply pressure on the economy of Ukraine in a variety of ways. For one, important strategic businesses and assets in Ukraine remain firmly in the hands of a limited number of oligarchs who are connected to the new Prime Minister and are traditionally close to Russia.

The other way in which economic pressure has become a political tool is of course in the energy field. A significant part of Russia's gas exports on their way to Europe – up to 90% of the total in the early 2000s (Saprykin, 2001, p. 104) – pass through Ukraine. Russia sells gas to Ukraine at a reduced price and Ukraine subtracts a toll for its transit towards Europe.

This deal is advantageous but clearly asymmetric. Russia can change its structural conditions by gradually diversifying the routes for its exports, as it has been doing in recent years in the Black Sea or with the forthcoming Northern European Pipeline. Or, Russia can, for whatever reason, decide to reduce or halt the flow of gas, as it did at the end of 2005, on the occasion of the much-publicised 'gas crisis' between the two countries.

Certainly, and especially in this second instance, the credibility of Russia as a global energy supplier could be (and has been) severely damaged as a result of these choices. The point here, however, is that Russia has turned energy into an effective power political tool and that Ukraine, as a result, has had to trade some of its foreign policy independence for the security of its energy supplies and the overall stability of its economy.

In this state of affairs, Ukraine's regional context – the third and last dimension discussed in this section – represents an important factor when pondering Kiev's strategic options in the varying power constellation of the wider European space.

Over the past decade, Ukraine has sought to exploit its strategic geographical position in order to anchor itself to the Euro-Atlantic community and at the same time to balance Russia's growing assertiveness in the former Soviet Union.

Two notable examples of this dynamic are the GUAM and, more recently, the Community of Democratic Choice. The former, which unites Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova, used to be a semi-dormant initiative backed by the US, but it was recently revived in a Summit in Kyiv in May 2006, as the Organisation for Democracy and Economic Development (ODED-GUAM). The stated goals of this new GUAM include energy security, a free trade area, as well as democracy promotion. Unfortunately, these statements often remain only declaratory. At the same time, it is an encouraging signal that former Soviet countries are joining forces and taking a bold and rather explicit stand against Russia.

This is, if possible, even more evident in the second initiative promoted by Ukraine and Georgia, the Community of Democratic Choice (CDC). Launched in 2005, here the two countries are joined by a number of new EU and NATO member states (the three Baltic republics, Romania, Moldova, Slovenia and Macedonia), and committed to promote democratic institutions across the broad region from the Baltic to the Black Sea. An unambiguous confirmation of the anti-Russian drive that also characterises this institution came in the last meeting of the CDC in May 2006, when US Vice-President Dick Cheney spoke critically against Russia's pressures and intimidations in the former Soviet space.

In stark contrast with its initiatives in Northern Europe and in the Mediterranean, the EU has so far proved reluctant to follow up on these developments. Before the 2004 enlargement, for example, Poland lobbied for the establishment of an Eastern Dimension of the EU, including Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine. Despite the backing of other new EU member states, however, the proposal never came to life. One possible way to explain this failure is that the Polish proposal appeared to be a rather deliberate manoeuvre to counteract Russia's influence in the region, while EU-sponsored regional frameworks in the past always sought the inclusion and participation of all potential parties, especially Russia. In this respect, it is notable that the German Foreign Ministry resumed the Eastern Dimension idea in September 2006, with a much more pragmatic and conciliatory tone vis-à-vis Russia (EU Observer, 2006).

Another important example is provided by the emerging Black Sea regional constellation, already noted above in relation to Turkey. Ukraine participates in all the institutional mechanisms established in this region: from the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), to the Romania-sponsored Black Sea Forum for Dialogue and Partnership. As in the case of the Eastern Dimension, however, the EU has so far hesitated to engage in this regional constellation. In the light of the forthcoming enlargement towards Romania and Bulgaria, and of the accession negotiations with Turkey, however, the EU will become a Black Sea actor and a more pro-active role in this region is to be expected.

7. Conclusions

The mapping of variable geometries proposed in this study was both a descriptive and a prescriptive exercise. It was descriptive, as it charted the conceptual, political and strategic factors shaping the EU strategy towards its wider neighbourhood. It was prescriptive, as it interpreted these very factors as a possible roadmap for gradual, diversified and deeper integration of neighbours into the EU.

The concept of variable geometries, as presented here, is not intended as the disruptive precursor of a Europe *à-la-carte*, nor does it point to a diluted, multi-speed model of European integration. Quite to the contrary, the main message coming out of our three dimensions on ideas, institutions and power underlines the need for *credibility*, *clarity* and *comprehensiveness* in the EU neighbourhood strategy.

As far as *ideas* are concerned, the themes of identity, finality and legitimacy were selected to explain how closer relations between the EU and its neighbours affect, and are affected by, the nature of the EU as a polity. By unravelling the distinctions between e.g. inside and outside, 'old' and 'new' Europe and widening and deepening, the analysis delimited the conceptual borders of this ideational dimension. In this sense, variable geometries of ideas correlate to *credibility*, because they concern the maturity of the EU and its self-consciousness about its constitutive difference.

Variable geometries of *institutions* interpreted the nexus between conditionality and socialisation in various EU neighbourhood policies: enlargement, partnership agreements, the European Economic Area and the European Neighbourhood Policy. It was argued that, notwithstanding the different scopes and objectives of these policies, what is at stake in the institutional context is the *clarity* of the incentives and actual degrees of integration that the EU is able to offer in each of them.

When it comes to *power*, the analysis construed the correlation between security and integration as a way to understand the wider European space. It unravelled the strategic implications and the role played by outside actors such as the United States and Russia. It provided an interpretation of how the specific regional context of each neighbouring country affects the construction of the wider European power constellation. The resulting picture underlines the need for *comprehensiveness* because the EU as a foreign policy actor needs to account for each of these factors in order to devise sound and effective neighbourhood policies.

The paradigmatic cases of Turkey and Ukraine were singled out to illustrate how this variable geometries dynamic plays out.

In the case of Turkey, the credibility of the EU rests on the consistency and fairness of the promises made to Ankara: i.e. the enlargement perspective. Various alternative options such as 'Privileged Partnership' and 'Extended Associated Membership' were analysed against this background, and in relation to the clarity of the incentives and prospects of EU integration on offer. The model of so-called 'gradual integration' (Karakas, 2006), in this sense, appeared instead more consistent and balanced in defining a gradual, incremental, but not necessarily permanent, integration of Turkey into the EU. Lastly, we ventured into an analysis of Turkey's strategic role: its qualified support for US policies, its closer relations with Russia and the role that Turkey can prospectively play in EU foreign policy in Central Asia, the Mediterranean, the Black Sea and the Middle East.

When it comes to Ukraine, it was argued that for EU policies to be credible, Brussels needs to take an unambiguous stand on Ukraine's membership aspirations. It is possible, and desirable, to be clear about these aspirations, while at the same time being explicit that the membership perspective is not foreseen in the near future. The institutional dimension of EU-Ukraine relations should reflect this clarity. In this respect, the prospective enhanced agreement between the two parties will be key to lay down a detailed roadmap of the gradual, optimal degree of integration of Ukraine into the EU. Lastly, the analysis focused the geo-political and geo-economic implications of Ukraine's geographical positioning. The EU strategy, in this respect, will have to account for a growing domestic opposition for NATO (and the US) and for the continued significance of Russian influences in Ukrainian domestic politics and economy. At the same time, regional mechanisms supported or promoted by Ukraine in the former Soviet

Union and in the Black Sea region are of major strategic interest for the EU, and deserve a more substantial backing.

The controversies and ambiguities surrounding the EU neighbourhood strategy are ultimately due to the fact that wider Europe concerns the conceptual, strategic and spatial limits of Europe. It is in this wider Europe that the EU as 'process' meets the EU as 'actor'. It is here that its 'gravitational power' meets its 'normative power'. It is here that the EU as a *sui-generis* governance system meets the EU as a nascent foreign policy player.

By cutting across the different meanings and markers composing this puzzle, this analysis of variable geometries provides some signposts for interpreting the evolving map of the wider Europe.

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