5. Eastern Promises? Czech Ambiguity in the European Neighbourhood

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Introduction

This chapter explores the European Neighbourhood Policy as one of EU's key external policies that are of great interest to the Czech Republic. The chapter's aim is twofold: it explores the structural weaknesses that underlie the policy, and it focuses on the manner in which the Czech Republic further strengthens these structural deficiencies or, alternatively, tries to counter them.

This aim is clearly connected with the identification of Czech national interests. After entering the European Union in 2004, the Czech Eastern policy constitutes one of the most important and stable foreign policy directions of the Czech diplomacy, and it is increasingly assimilated into EU's external policies. Yet the EU started to craft its own Eastern policy even before the Eastern enlargement took place and its shape reflected the views and ideas of the older member states. At the same time, new EU members quickly jumped on the bandwagon and took an active part in its further development.

This situation was historically unique from the point of view of Czech interests: The country had been Europeanising rapidly and substantial parts of its elites wished to bring the country's course and external policies in line with those of the EU. At the same time, the Czech Republic also insisted on its special role as a former Communist country as well as a country that was an EU outsider a couple of years before then. In other words, Prague diplomats believed that they should be able to understand the ENP partner countries better than the older EU member states with a different historical experience. The key question is which of these two strands in interpreting the Czech national interest prevailed in the end and what kind of compromise was established between them.

The methodology of critical discourse analysis allows for reconstructing the sedimented meanings from the official documents of the ENP. The two basic methods of predicate analysis and content analysis help us to discover a structure of deep asymmetry between the EU and its external partners. In this sense, the ENP is a tool that helps spread EU's power beyond its borders. The Czech Republic has not only failed to contribute to a more critical assessment of the policy, but it has, in fact, fully adopted the EU's mainstream position on the need

to Europeanise its neighbours and thus place them in a position of ideational dependence on the EU.[1] The discourse analysis thus offers not only a missing reflection of the Czech foreign policy, but also a unique insight into the possible long-term pitfalls of the policy.

Indeed, when speaking about the criteria of Czech national interests, both the relevance of the Czech Eastern policy and a consensus on what should be done with it are present, but only at the level of experts and bureaucrats, to the exclusion of the civil society. As a result, deliberation on this issue is almost entirely missing. Interestingly, while the Czech position is fully acceptable to the country's EU partners, it is often at odds with the wishes of the ENP countries. The current Czech position on the ENP could be declared a national interest only if we limit its external acceptability to the EU. Once we broaden our spectrum of countries to include the ENP partners as well, the Czech policy loses its status as a national interest.

The structure of the study is as follows: Firstly, we present the three postcolonial approaches that have inspired our research, on which we base our "theory of the ENP", and the methodology of critical discourse analysis, including both of the subsequent methods. Secondly, we present the operationalisation of the Czech national interests in the European Neighbourhood. Finally, we confront the Czech approach and its ambiguous representation of the neighbourhood with the asymmetric relations between the EU and the EN.

Concepts and Methods

The basic problem with defining a Czech national interest lies in the fact that what is examined as a possible national interest in this respect often pertains to the Czech Republic's relations to its neighbours or to other countries in Europe. Unlike the diplomacies of great powers that created vast colonial empires in the past, Czech diplomacy has never been in urgent need of coping with global issues. However, after the Czech EU entry, the country is co-responsible for the EU's external relations, which are global in nature. Hence, the exploration of cultural biases and stereotypes that guide Czech foreign policy and that may distort Czech national interests has gained an unprecedented importance.

Our study is built on three concepts that were created specifically to cope with this particular problem: Orientalism, the critique of developmentalism by postdevelopment authors, and Balkanism. The principal overlap between the critique of Orientalism (Said, 1995) and the study of the EU's approach to its neighbourhood as exemplified in the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) is the ambiguous relation of the Self (the West, the EU) to the constructed Other

(the Orient, the EU's neighbourhood). The fact that Western Europe may construct the Orient as its Other does not mean that there cannot be alternative Others for Western Europe, such as the European "periphery" participating in the ENP. The second striking similarity is the tendency of both Orientalism and the EU's policies towards its neighbours to actively model the passive objects of West European politics according to the wishes of the West. The same attitude, under the label of modernisation and adoption of acquis communautaire, might also be discerned in the EU's discourse on the European neighbourhood.

While Edward W. Said contributed substantively to postcolonial studies by applying the Foucauldian critique outside the Western context, *Orientalism* remained limited geographically, historically and politically. Postcolonial studies, on the other hand, show that broad geographical terms such as the East, the South or the Third World are socially constructed. And so are Eastern Europe, Central Europe, and even the Balkans, which seem to be geographically clearly delimited at first sight. If the formerly colonised societies in Asia, Africa and Latin America are a case for a rather extreme representation of the Other, the analysis of non-Western Europe from a postcolonial standpoint is much more intriguing because of its proximity to the "core" Europe.

Orientalist discourses and practices may appear to be limited to the former colonial powers. However, with the progressing Europeanisation, many elements of Orientalism prevalent in Western Europe may be also transferred to countries with no direct colonial experience like the Czech Republic. Hence, a Europeanised Czech foreign policy may result in a more negative assessment of the European East, in an increased level of "othering" in regard to Eastern Europe, and, finally, in a substantial redefinition of the Czech national interest in this region.

Maria Todorova, who coined the term "Balkanism", claims that it is not a mere regional version of Orientalism or developmentalism applied to a specific region of Europe. It builds on the basic concepts of Orientalism (East and West) and developmentalism (modernisation), but it cannot be reduced to either of them. Indeed, Balkanism is a discourse that reflects the in-betweenness of the Balkans, which are located between the East and the West. At the same time, the transitional aspect of the Balkans, the "would-be Europe" but "not enough Europe", is related to the essence of the Balkans as susceptible to modernisation: they are an incomplete self (Todorova, 1997: 18). We argue that the transitional aspect of the ENP cannot be reduced to any of the extremes and that it falls under a contemporary version of Balkanism extended beyond the borders of the Balkans. Once Romania and Bulgaria entered the European Union in 2007 and the Western Balkans included candidate and potential candidate countries, their role has been partly overtaken by the "neighbourhood".

Again, the Czech EU accession with its huge impact on the definition of Czech national interests has led to a reformulation of Czech national interests (as part of EU interests) and the discursive shift of the country westwards ("the return to Europe"). However, this is reflected also in the redefinition of the to-be-developed area further eastwards. The Europe in transition that was previously located in Central Europe is now being replaced by South-Eastern and Eastern European countries beyond the current EU borders.

We share the emphasis of the Orientalist and postcolonial critique on the study of dominant discourses. Belonging to the broad church of social constructivism, we take discourses to be constitutive of social reality. However, as far as epistemology is concerned, we believe that the meanings which construct reality can be uncovered.

We analyse the collected textual and visual data with one dominant and one complementary method: predicate analysis and content analysis respectively (for the application of these methods in political science, see McNabb, 2004; Burnham et al., 2008, particularly chapter 10). The main tool for exploring the unequal relations between the EU and the neighbourhood is predicate analysis, which was popularised in the field of international relations by Jennifer Milliken (1999). Predicate analysis pays attention to linguistic predications, i.e. the ways in which verbs, adverbs and adjectives are attached to nouns. The method is based on the assumption that the position of a word in the grammatical structure is significant of its imagined positions in the social reality, irrespective of the content, which may be even contradictory to these imagined positions.

Predicate analysis is complemented by computer-assisted content analysis (cf. Krippendorff, 2004; Neuendorf, 2005). The benefit of content analysis for our project is to highlight the subtle changes in the discourse on the ENP, especially those changes made by the European Commission and the representatives of the EN countries over time and in different types of documents. Our content analysis is based on the assumption that the power asymmetry between the EU and the EN can be deduced from the frequency of different types of discourse that we have identified by the predicate analysis. As it is virtually impossible to treat a huge amount of information simultaneously, the qualitative analysis software ATLAS.ti allowed us to treat an amount of data so large that we could never analyse it manually.

In a first step, we have coded entire texts according to their time horizon (earlier/recent documents, i.e. diachronic analysis), level of generality (conceptual/technical, i.e. synchronic analysis), thematic scope, target countries, authors, genre, etc. Thereafter, we coded continuous text units (an expression, a sentence, a part of a paragraph) characterised by their correspondence to several criteria. In

detail, we have manually coded (i) predicates expressing asymmetric power relations, (ii) symmetric power relations and commonality, (iii) references to the Southern and Eastern dimensions of the ENP, (iv) expressions referring to the transition and ambiguity of the ENP, (v) different types of logics of action, and (vi) tropes such as metaphors, metonymies and synecdoches. Automatically, we have coded key expressions of the ENP discourse, especially those that the predicate analysis has uncovered as misleading (e.g. joint values, co-ownership). Finally, the multiple overlapping categories enabled us to carry out queries and cross-analyse the available data.

In terms of substance, we focus on two central themes of the explored texts: First, in a diachronic manner, we explore how *subjectivity* is reflected in the shift from the "Wider Europe" conception to the reference to the "European Neighbourhood"; second, in a synchronic manner, we explore how *difference(s)* is (are) interpreted in relation to the East/South distinction. As a cross-cutting issue, we analyse the *(a)symmetry* exposed in the discussion of the norm transfer from the EU to the EN and the ideal of the *commonality* of these norms.

The choice of relevant texts for a discursive analysis is not innocent: an unmediated choice made by a researcher may reflect his/her value-laden preferences. Therefore, we have not substantially reduced the number and types of studied documents and media, except for restricting the number of partner countries to six: Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine for the Eastern dimension and Egypt, Israel and Morocco for the Southern dimension. These countries have been selected according to the availability of speeches by their officials and with regard to the various depths of their relations with the EU. In this study, we are not interested in alternative views on the ENP. However, we have included the speeches by the officials from the partner countries at the ENP conference which took place in Brussels in 2007.

While strategy documents and the speeches by EU officials delivered at the conference and on other occasions are the most important sources for the predicate analysis and the analysis of tropes, we also included ENP country reports, action plans, factsheets describing progress to date and progress reports.[2] We have also included less formal documents such as PowerPoint presentations by the Commission staff and their promotional materials, be they leaflets, brochures or short videos available on YouTube.

It is important to note that since our methodology was much broader than the focus of this chapter, we focus only on those selected findings which are directly related to the search for Czech national interests.

The ENP as a Czech National Interest: Limitations of Consensus and External Acceptability

The main aim of this study is to determine whether the ENP qualifies as part of the national interest of the Czech Republic as an EU member state. The national interest is defined as a procedure that leads to defining that part of the public interest which is oriented outside the country (Kratochvíl, 2009b). Before we can critically explore the results of our analysis, we must identify the four criteria qualifying a policy as a Czech national interest: relevance, deliberation, consensus, and acceptability for the EU (or for other external actors).

We should stress that for a number of reasons, Czech foreign policy has dedicated a lot of attention to Eastern Europe. First, the historical burden of forty years of Communist rule and the transition to democracy gives the country some valuable know-how that can be exported further eastwards. Second, even though Czech companies left Eastern Europe rather too hastily after the fall of Communism, the region is again very attractive as a quickly growing consumer market. Third, after the country's EU and NATO entries, Prague's diplomacy was looking for a set of new foreign policy goals; and the promotion of Eastern Europe's integration with the EU is supposed to be one of the newly erected pillars of Czech foreign policy.

Relevance

As to the relevance of the ENP in the Czech foreign policy, the assessment is not easy. Official long-term documents are virtually silent about the ENP, while allusions to the countries which are covered by the policy are rare indeed. The programme declaration of the current coalition government stays on a very general level as well and states that the Czech Republic will support "a common approach of the EU toward its nearest neighbourhood by helping to make the regions stable and prosperous, hence contributing also to the EU's stability" (Government of the Czech Republic, 2008a). It is not clear, however, whether this formulation is original or whether it was just adopted from some of the official documents of the European Commission, as the "enlightened self-interest" argumentation is quite frequent there. Currently, there is no official conceptual document dealing with Czech foreign policy, and the last one, the Conception of Czech Foreign Policy for the years 2003–2006, was written and accepted in 2002, that is, before the inception of the ENP and the 2004 accession of the Czech Republic to the EU. Yet, even this document is very economical as far as the neighbouring countries are concerned. For instance, Ukraine, the most important Eastern neighbour

participating in the policy, is mentioned only twice and both times as an appendage to mentions of Russia (*Koncepce české zahraniční politiky*, 2006).

Speaking about the more recent developments, the Czech diplomacy is intent, on the one hand, to make the ENP one of the main "market niches" of the country's foreign policy, yet on the other hand it is only the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Office of the Vice-Prime Minister for European Affairs that take the policy seriously. Consequently, while the policy was supposed to become one of the three pillars of EU's external relations under the Czech Presidency (see Vondra, 2006), it was almost never discussed in the Czech media and to this date the term itself remains virtually unknown to the Czech public.

Two conflicting aims are usually identified: stabilisation of the neighbourhood as a protective belt of countries between the Czech Republic and Russia, and the countries' democratisation. This leads to highly ambiguous statements regarding more or less anti-Russian but highly undemocratic countries like Azerbaijan (Schwarzenberg, 2008).[3] It is difficult to ascertain which of these two aims is more relevant, but with the growth of Russia's power and in particular with the Russian-Georgian War, the fear of Russia increases the relative weight of the perceived need for a stable *cordon sanitaire* between the EU and Russia. Moreover, by reproducing the ENP discourse, the Czech Republic aims at positioning itself along the core of the EU and thus reducing the amount of "Eastness" discursively connected to the so-called Eastern enlargement. With Russia being perceived as a major if not the most important threat to Czech security, there is the perspective of pushing the EU border eastwards to incorporate the current ENP partner countries, while the "othering" Russia, which does not participate in the ENP, is perfectly coherent with the Czech foreign policy priorities (compare Malmvig, 2006).

Deliberation and Consensus

The high relevance of the policy for policy-makers and the little attention paid to it by the general public, together with the policy's complex nature, amount to a peculiar situation in which the policy can be "kidnapped" by "experts" working at the central institutions and major think-tanks and shaped by them in a way that makes their priorities more pertinent in the Czech approach to the policy than would be the case if the policy were genuinely discussed with the partner countries. For instance, the restrictive approach of the Ministry of Interior to discussing visa facilitation measures, not to mention a visa-free regime, is generally respected by other institutions, thus keeping the policy far from what the partner countries would want it to deliver (for a critical discussion about this, see Bígl–Čaněk, 2005; Hofírek–Nekorjak, 2008).

The consensus among civil servants and the political elite covers a whole range of issues: First and foremost, the countries of the Eastern neighbourhood, together with the Balkan region, are seen as priority areas for Czech foreign policy.[4] Second, the support for these countries in their efforts to cooperate as closely as possible with the EU is very widespread, as is the belief that these countries have a right to enter the Union when they fulfil the criteria for membership. Third, the ENP is generally accepted as the right policy for relations with these countries. Fourth, while the general ENP framework is accepted, the policy is criticised for being imbalanced in favour of the Southern Dimension and for the insufficient financial support from the EU budget (Interview I, 2007; Interview II, 2007).

Despite the general societal and political discourse in the Czech Republic, which stresses the democratisation ethos of Czech foreign policy, this ethos is not the main component of the Czech input into the ENP. Even more importantly, as our interviews confirm, Czech policy-makers were convinced that the future focus of the ENP should be rather on energy, migration and economic cooperation than on democracy and common values (Interview I; II; III; IV; V, 2007). Possibly the only exception to this is Belarus, which is a long-time target of Czech democratisation efforts. Yet, in practical terms, Belarus does not participate in the ENP and so it does not influence the general Czech view of the policy's future aims.

As a result, on the level of concrete measures that the Czech Republic could adopt (such as visa facilitation, a generally more flexible visa regime between the EU and the neighbourhood or asymmetrical trade preferences for the neighbouring countries), this consensus disappears. While some, mainly MFA civil servants, remain among those supporting these steps, politicians and civil servants from other ministries (the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Trade, etc.) are reluctant to do so.

If there is a general consensus on the Czech position towards the ENP among the politicians, there is very little awareness of and interest in the ENP in the European and Czech civil society. The lack of public interest translates into the depoliticisation of the ENP, making it a highly technical issue (European Commission 2007). It is difficult to speak about a consensus when there are no signs of civil society expressing its views of the policy. Hence, deliberation is, with a few exceptions, certainly not present here (the exceptions include mainly think-tanks such as the Association for International Affairs, the Prague Security Studies Institute, and the Institute of International Relations).

Interestingly, while official representatives of the Czech Republic insist that the policy must not be a substitute for accession, most journalists use the terms "ENP" and "enlargement" as opposites. For instance, when writing about the

aftermath of the Orange Revolution, the respected weekly *Respekt* wrote that "the support for Ukraine has been reduced to the framework of the so-called European Neighbourhood Policy, whose aim is to create a ring of friends around the EU. Not a single word has been said about EU membership…" (Petráček, 2005).

To sum up, there is no real deliberation in the Czech public space about the policy's relevance for either the Czech Republic or the partner countries. Instead, the discourse usually only refers back to the policy's nature as a tool of the entire EU that was already agreed and that should therefore be further implemented. The state of affairs is slightly better in regard to consensus. A strong consensus prevails among policy-makers and civil servants that the ENP is advantageous for both the EU and the partner countries and that it should, sooner or later, lead to enlargement. This consensus nevertheless suffers from two major limitations: it does not pertain to the population in general and it does not cover the concrete steps the Czech Republic should undertake beyond the actions required by the EU.

Acceptability for the EU and the ENP Partners

As the Czech position is not substantially different from the EU position, the criterion of the acceptability for the European Union lacks relevance. The dominant EU discourse on its neighbours leaves little space for variations among the member states. Indeed, we have seen that the identification with the external policy is strictly linked to the identity of the EU as such. There are only two key variables that may be changing from country to country: Firstly, the focus can be on the Eastern and/or the Southern dimension of the policy, according to the country's national preferences, which reflects the geographical and cultural proximity of the neighbours and the related economic and political ties, migratory flows and security threats. Secondly, the individual member states may accentuate the link between the ENP and enlargement or they may, to the contrary, aim at a discursive differentiation between the two policies.

However, if a country's interest in its closest neighbourhood is not *exclusive* like in the case of the Mediterranean Union promoted by France, or if a country does not veto the accession of another country *ex ante*, the European Commission and the other member states fully recognise the country's preferences as legitimate.

If we, on the other hand, do not take the EU alone as the reference group, but also include the partner countries, then the criterion of external acceptability is seriously undermined. While the partner countries usually do not directly reject the ENP (even though Ukraine was implicitly ignoring the policy for a time), they are not very happy with the way the policy functions. For instance, they often

stress their disadvantaged position in areas like migration, trade, and visa facilitation. Their critique, however, focuses mainly on the symbolic absence of the accession promise, which most of them see as their long-term goal anyway.

The predicate and content analysis allow us to further explore the problematic elements of the Czech national interest: deliberation and the external acceptability of the policy for its recipients. Both of these are directly linked to the Czech membership in the EU. The deliberation about the ENP is limited because the policy was originally formulated without a Czech contribution and it was consequently simply accepted by the Czech diplomacy as part of the Europeanisation process. Also regarding external acceptability, the basic distinction pertains to the acceptability for the EU (which is obviously guaranteed since the policy originates in EU institutions) and the acceptability for EU's neighbours, which is much more problematic. Since the Czech interpretation of the policy does not substantially deviate from EU's mainstream, in the following analysis we focus on the deficiencies of the policy that distort both the policy as such and the formulation of the Czech national interest related to the policy.

Type of analysis	Relation to the national interest	Consequences
Diachronic: a genealogy of the ENP	The strengthening position of the European Commission and the missing **deliberation** about the policy	Weakening democratic legitimacy of the policy in the member states, including the Czech Republic
Synchronic: East/South distinction	Different **acceptability** of the policy for Eastern and Southern partners	Possible future resistance of ENP countries to neo-colonial aspects of EU's policies

The Diachronic Approach: A Genealogy of the ENP and the Missing Deliberation

Our diachronic analysis of the ENP is very much linked to the criteria of deliberation. Indeed, dialogue has disappeared from the making of the policy as the policy was further reinforced by the European Commission. It is well known that the original proposal to create the policy that later became known as the ENP bore the title "Wider Europe" (COM(2003) 104 final). The intention of the authors of the policy was to come up with an offer for those East European countries that turned into EU's direct neighbours overnight even though they

would be lacking membership prospects for the foreseeable time (Patten–Solana, 2002). At that time, the draft policy did not include the countries on the Southern shore of the Mediterranean but was aimed at Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova – hence, the title "Wider Europe". This is also why the policy in its prenatal shape referred to itself as the "new EU neighbourhood policy", clearly differentiating between the "EU" and "Europe". Even though Solana and Patten's document explained very succinctly why the time was ripe for such a policy and why the authors were talking about a wider Europe, the phrase they coined did not last for long in EU official documents.

But even in the first documents, the use of the term "Wider Europe" was surprisingly rare. A communication by the Commission quotes the term in the main title, "Wider Europe: Accepting the Challenge", and in relation to a public awareness campaign on the "the benefits and challenges of the wider Europe framework" (COM(2003) 104 final: 14). Words with "neighbour" as a root appear about eighty times in it. Again, in Romano Prodi's three thousand word speech from December 2002 (SPEECH/02/619), the expression "wider Europe" appears in the title and near the end of the speech while words connected to neighbourliness appear almost thirty times. Decidedly, the rare use of the original idea of a Wider Europe attests the failure of the EU officials in trying to imagine a unique area uniting both the EU and its neighbours.

The first Commission Communication alluding to the Wider Europe concept was also the last one. All later documents starting with the *European Neighbourhood Policy Strategy Paper* (COM(2004) 373 final) switched to the notion of a European neighbourhood. The name cannot be explained away by saying that the policy is a policy between European neighbours since non-European countries are involved in it too. Neither can it be a policy between Europe and its neighbours since this would be obviously incorrect in regard to countries like Ukraine.[5] Hence, even though the EU covers less than half of the European continent, it succeeded in introducing and keeping in wide circulation the term that replaces "EU" with "European". Even more strikingly, this discursive strategy was successful not only internally but also in the partner countries, where the title was accepted without any substantial criticism.

If the first document *Wider Europe — Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours* (COM(2003) 104 final: 3) speaks about the EU "drawing closer", which is clearly seen as related to the EU's geographical expansion, all later documents interpret the development in an utterly different way. To give just one example, the *European Neighbourhood Policy Strategy Paper* discusses the "geographic coverage" of the Policy in these words: "The ENP is addressed to the EU's existing neighbours and to those that have drawn closer to the EU as a result of enlargement" (COM(2004)

373 final: 7). This discursive transformation shows that even though the EU enlarges itself, it remains the same. In fact it does not move, it stands firm, and it is only the newly acquired neighbours who have to move geographically, but only as far as their modernisation through their one-sided adoption of the EU *acquis* is required.

Hence, we see that in both cases the ENP started with assuming that it is up to the partners to move closer, thus constructing a space of wider cooperation across the European continent. However, soon afterwards, the term "Europe" was appropriated by the EU alone, which thus declared itself the sole real representative of Europeaness and the sole relevant actor. As a result, it is the partner countries that have to move closer to the EU, but only through the encouragement and motivation of the EU and not out of their own will. This peculiar change is also reflected in the contradictory approach of the EU to commonality to and difference from the neighbourhood.

Here, the commonality of norms, standards and values is perceived as an ideal for which the neighbouring countries strive (or at least they should). In the end, it is the EU's norms and standards and not the common ones that are considered by the EU. The neighbouring countries only have to adopt these norms, as neither an adaptation of these norms to local circumstances in the neighbourhood nor a change of the EU norms induced by the partners is envisaged.

Thus, there is a commonality between the EU and the neighbourhood in the sense of a shared commitment to an ideal. But while this ideal is a long way from the neighbouring countries, it is more or less fully embodied in the way the EU works and in the values on which it is built. The commonality is ideal, but the difference is factual. To overcome the difference, the EU knows only one safe road, that of assimilation, which usually ends in accession. So the partner countries are "encouraged to approximate their legislation to that of the Internal Market" (COM(2003) 104 final: 5), and the reforms should lead to a "close approximation to the fundamental standards prevailing in the EU" (COM(2008): 3), but a similar convergence is required in just about any other field covered by the Action Plans (cf. e.g. COM(2007): 9).

The Synchronic Approach: External Acceptability in the East and the South

Another striking feature of the policy pertains to the difference between the Eastern and the Southern countries involved in the policy, which is related to the general problem of its external acceptability. Clearly, even though officially their

status is the same, there has always been a substantial difference between the East and the South. Suffice to mention the fact that accession is explicitly excluded from the South and only not spoken about when it comes to the East. Importantly, the South was added to the policy only at the insistence of some Southern EU member states, and the Southern partner countries never fully understood why they were put under one policy together with the post-communist East, especially when the overlap between the ENP and the previous EU initiatives for the countries on the southern shore of the Mediterranean was hard to overlook (Escribano, 2005; Bosse, 2007).

As subsequent membership is not foreseen for the South, the discursive treatment of the South is very different. If we compare, for instance, the 2008 Progress Reports for Egypt (SEC(2008) 395) and Ukraine (SEC(2008) 402), we find out that they differ in terms of the language used. Even though this may be partly attributed to the different styles of the authors of the reports, the difference cannot be explained solely by this. Ukraine has been repeatedly declared one of the best reformers (e.g. COM(2008) 164 final), whereas Egypt is not mentioned as such. One could reasonably expect that Ukraine would be assessed more positively in the reports too. But that is not the case at all: there are almost twenty negative references to Ukraine in the report on it, with phrases such as "no progress can be reported" or "no real progress has been made", but the report on Egypt has only one negative reference to Egypt (in spite of both reports having almost the same length).

The probable explanation has to do with the EU's (and, in this particular case, the European Commission's) different views of the Eastern and the Southern neighbourhood. Ukraine, as a potential future candidate for membership, must be criticised even when it performs better than Egypt since what is required from Ukraine is full compliance with EU standards. Egypt, on the other hand, is a very complicated and typically "Oriental" neighbour of the EU with no chances or ambitions to enter the Union. As a result, where a greater chance is foreseen of the country becoming EU-like (i.e. Ukraine), the European Commission applies a stricter conditionality. In regard to the South, on the other hand, conditionality is not directly mentioned and it is present only in a weaker form. As with less capable students, even small achievements in the Southern ENP partner countries that would not be seen as praiseworthy in the East are commended.

In fact, the Southern "partners" seem to enjoy a more equal relation which would better reflect their own preferences. In contrast to the ENP documents, the *Joint Declaration* stresses problems like development and fulfilment of the Millennium Development Goals, food crisis, and degradation of the environment, including climate change and desertification, which will touch South Mediterranean countries more than European countries. These concerns are absent in the

prior communication of the Commission. *The Joint Declaration* also promotes a "dialogue between cultures" in contrast to the culturally blind ENP documents. Both the communication and the declaration agree on the value added of the Union for the Mediterranean compared with the Barcelona Process: a higher political profile, more co-ownership, and more visibility through concrete projects (COM(2008)319 final: 5). In other words, the preceding period, dominated by the ENP, was characterised by the low politicisation and high technicality of the agenda, the feeble ownership of the Southern Mediterranean countries, and a stronger policy focus on processes than on results. It seems that the European Commission had tried hard to submit its partners to a reshaped enlargement policy but did not succeed.

The discourse of the Commission's communication on the Eastern Partnership is different. It does not question any of the ENP's cornerstones and insists on the reinforcement of the policy as it is. The conditionality is re-expressed in the EU's account of the extent to which the EU's values "are reflected in national practices and policy implementation." The agenda of the "partnership" is concretely outlined in the Commission's communication and detailed further in a related working paper (SEC(2008) 2974-3). The stress on the multilateral dimension does not make the relations between the EU and the neighbourhood more equal, as the multilateral agenda has been framed by the EU in four areas, including that of its convergence with the EU's policies. The "partnership" does not refer to a shared space except for when it refers to the economic aspects: it reconfirms the EU's ambition to create a Neighbourhood Economic Community. At the same time, possibly to get more political support in the EU, the Commission underlines the role of the Eastern Partnership as a "strategic imperative and a political investment for the EU, which will pay dividends to Europe's citizens" (COM(2008) 823 final: 15).

Overall, the shift from EU's "policy" to a "partnership" is purely rhetorical: "vassalage" would be a more appropriate term. As Böröcz and Kovácz (2001) noted in the context of the last EU enlargement, Central and Eastern European countries have never had colonies or been colonised. This is not the case of North African and Middle East countries, which have lived under colonial rule and which are much more sensitive to the asymmetries in current EU policies.

Our analysis proves that EU's policies towards its Eastern and Southern neighbours remain neocolonial half a century after the peak of decolonisation, even though some may consider any reference to coloniality as obsolete. Not only the colonial past of the EU and the subsequent decolonisation played an important yet unexplored role in fostering the identity of the EU (Hansen, 2002). The current external relations of the EU did so as well, and continue to do so. Labelling the EU's power "normative" does not make Samir Amin's critique of

Europe's tendency to present itself as universal outdated. Unless the EU reflects its dismissed historicity, it can never pretend to its declared universality.

Yet, the reserved reception of the ENP by the Southern neighbours shows that the North African countries are aware of the EU's dominance. Moreover, they can seemingly conform to the EU's conditionality and self-servingly profit from the EU's blindness in order to gain additional funding. While this dimension seems to be less manifest in the Eastern dimension, the EU should not forget that its normative power may not be eternal and that it does not operate in a void. If the membership perspective is denied to the Eastern neighbours, the illegitimate normative power of the EU may quickly run out of fuel (see, Haukkala, 2007). To use Helen Sjursen's expression, the EU is not "a power that is willing to bind itself, and not only others, to common rules" (Sjursen, 2006: 249). Its current position is incoherent.

Most importantly, our study of the ENP has shown that the construction of the neighbourhood as an ambiguous area, neither self nor completely other, and as a transitional location emulating the EU serves to acknowledge the EU's identity as a normative power. Moreover, there are some hints suggesting that the neighbourhood took over the past role of the Balkans and Eastern Europe. However, "enchantment by the colonizer", the acceptance of the ENP by the partner countries, and the spread of normative power remain unresolved questions in our study.

Conclusion

As seen from the summary table, while the policy seems to be relevant for Czech foreign policy and its role in the EU, there is certainly no discernible general consensus about the policy that would reach beyond the political and expert spheres, with only feeble criticisms coming from a handful of NGOs (see the above mentioned discussion about the Law on Asylum or the criticism levelled against the Czech visa policy). The absence of a general consensus and the failure of the Czech diplomacy to at least attempt to induce some level of deliberation thus preclude any identification of the policy as a Czech national interest. Indeed, the question is whether the absence of public deliberation is not welcomed by the diplomats since they may fear that the policy could be linked to sensitive issues like migration.

To summarise our findings, the ENP complies with the criteria of relevance, consensus and external acceptability for the EU, but it does not meet the standards of deliberation. In addition, the external acceptability criterion is fulfilled only vis-à-vis the EU itself, but not if we take the partner countries into consideration

as well. Therefore, the ENP in its current shape could be listed among the Czech national interests only under two strong qualifications. The first qualification is that a *potential* deliberation, which is guaranteed in democratic societies by definition, must be a sufficient guarantee of actual deliberation if the need be. In reality the poor access of the civic society to information about the effects of the ENP on migrants or the inexistence of appropriate forums in which to discuss them with the political elite may inhibit the expression of the policy's discontents. Nonetheless, we should stress that the deliberation about the ENP at the EU level is not much livelier than in individual member states, which shows that both the EU and its member states may suffer the same problem – insufficient control of their foreign policies by their public(s). Second, external acceptability must be limited to the European Union proper. Enlarging the group of countries by any additional actors (such as the ENP partner countries themselves, or even Russia) would seriously hamper the validity of this criterion.

Endnotes

[1] In reaction to some comments that we have received on an earlier draft of the paper, we would like to stress *ex ante* that our analysis cannot be considered as anti-EU or even anti-European. Nevertheless, we discuss the possible consequences of uncovering the functioning of the ENP in the conclusion.

[2] A comparison of Commission Proposals with final ENP Action Plans approved by the Council has shown that both types of documents differ in only a few technical details.

[3] Minister Schwarzenberg declared the following when speaking about the President of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev: "When I see the way he leads the country, I would rather call him an enlightened ruler, even though still quite absolutist" (Schwarzenberg, 2008).

[4] For instance, there is an article in *Hospodářské noviny*, 4 September 2007, where Minister of Foreign Affairs Schwarzenberg declares the East European and Caucasian regions to be "vitally important for us".

[5] In 1987, Morocco's application to the European Communities was rejected by the Council because Morocco is not a European country.