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DEEPENING AND WIDENING IN EUROPEAN FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY

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The process of European integration has traditionally advanced through two distinct, although strictly interlinked processes:

- a) in institutional terms, either through a reform of the Treaties (formal deepening) or through pragmatic ways and ad hoc mechanisms (informal deepening), intended to consolidate and enhance integration among its members;
- b) via enlargement (widening), through the accession of new members into the EU and their integration of the policies and institutions of the Union.

The impact of these two processes is not uniform and may actually greatly vary, according to the policy area that we consider. The aim of this report – that summarises the research work carried out within the framework of EU-Consent project, and notably within work package VII “Political and security aspects of the EU’ external relations” - is to study the interplay between deepening and widening in the specific area of European foreign and security policy (including both CFSP and ESDP) and more specifically the impact of widening on this area.

In our study, European foreign and security policy will be broken down into four more specific sub-sectors:

- the role of the EU in the world;
- the external aspects of internal security;
- defence policy and security culture;
- the European Neighbourhood Policy.

The analysis will also lead us to identify new methods and forms of integration.

1. The relationship between deepening and widening in European foreign and security policy

Before analysing the nexus between deepening and widening in European foreign and security policy, we need to specify the concepts that have been defined within the EU-Consent theoretical framework:

- a) EU “deepening” has been broadly defined as a process of “gradual and formal *vertical* institutionalisation” or, in neo-functional terms, as a rise in the *scope* and the *level* of European integration in terms of institution-building, democratic legitimacy and European policies affecting both the EU’s polity and policies².

¹ The authors wish to thank Emiliano Alessandri, research fellow at the IAI and author of the report on the workshop, “Political and security aspects of the EU’s external relations”, that was held at the University of Cambridge April 16-17th, 2009, and from which this paper draws some valuable ideas.

² Gaby Umbach (ed.), *EU-CONSENT 2005 - 2009: Four Years of Research on EU “Deepening” and “Widening”: Evidence, Explanation, Extrapolation* (EU-CONSENT Deliverable 144), 2009 forthcoming.

b) EU “widening” was suggested to be broadly defined as a “process of gradual and formal *horizontal* institutionalisation” or, again in neo-functionalist terms, as a process of “geographical spill-over”³.

In the course of our research we needed to extend the meaning of the concept of “deepening” in order to include also informal deepening, which is the strengthening of European integration achieved outside formal Treaty reforms. For example, whether or not the Lisbon Treaty is ratified, the research work conducted within EU-CONSENT has demonstrated that informal reforms are taking place at the level of day-to-day practice, therefore enabling the enlarged EU to continue to function. In a nutshell, while the concept of deepening includes both treaty-based and non treaty-based reforms, widening basically equates with enlargement, even though, for example, some elements of widening also characterise the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), the latter being distinct, although strictly interlinked with enlargement, in particular in its genetic process.

Moreover, informal changes take on an even greater significance in the light of the difficulties that the enlarged EU is encountering in proceeding with integration via formal treaty changes. In fact, what we are presently witnessing has been defined both in terms of “enlargement fatigue” as well as in terms of “Constitution fatigue”, meaning the overall paralysis of the process of European integration.

2. Towards the concept of “broadening”

An additional drawback of the concept of “deepening” that was highlighted by EU-Consent is that deepening is not strictly defined for a given set of activities and competences; if activities at the EU level grow, the outcome is that “deepening” gets confused with the “widening” of the ‘scope’ (or, spectrum) of activities – being two distinct things; more scope (“widening”) may be “deep” or not necessarily so “deep”⁴. Also, defining “widening” as a growing number of EU countries not only pre-empts the use of the term for “widening of scope”, but is viewed not to be in tune with the common use of the term “enlargement”⁵.

Therefore, given that an ‘extension of the scope of policy approaches’ was to be witnessed in a variety of areas, and notably in the area of European foreign policy, it was deemed necessary to resort to the additional concept of “broadening”, in order to amend the dichotomy of EU “deepening” and “widening”.

The newly introduced concept of “broadening”, essentially referring to an extension of scope of policies linked to the creation of new and informal instruments intended to manage them, would not necessarily lead towards formal “deepening” in the strict sense.

The concept of broadening is particularly useful in accounting for and analysing the effects of enlargement on European foreign and security policy, and for this reason it has played an important role in the research work carried out inside Work Package VII.

³ *Ibidem.*

⁴ *Ibidem.*

⁵ *Ibidem.*

3. The “broadening” of the scope of CFSP

While it was observed that in some policy areas enlargement has not contributed to the strengthening of European integration, mainly due to the difficult and incomplete process of adaptation of new Member States to internal EU procedures and socialisation, its impact in the area of European foreign and security policy has been overall positive. Generally, we have observed that enlargement seems to have broadened EU foreign policy interests, both geographically and thematically in the following ways:

- First, acquiring new members has increased the potential and the resources of European foreign and security policy;

- Second, enlargement implied an extension of the EU (mainly eastwards, but also southwards), that resulted in the need to address new security problems (instability and frozen conflicts in Eastern Europe and in Southern Caucasus; relations with Russia) and brought to the fore the political interests and the historic and cultural sensitivities of the new Member States. While this has widened the (partly) already existing differences in EU member states' attitudes towards Russia, it has also increased the presence of the EU in areas where it was previously absent. Many examples point in this direction: from the (ENP), followed by the new Eastern Partnership (EaP), from the missions in Transnistria to the mediation efforts that helped broker a peace deal between Russia and Georgia in August 2008. One may question the strategic coherence and the effectiveness of these initiatives, but has nonetheless to acknowledge that the EU established its presence in areas that were not on the mental maps of EU policy makers until a few years ago. In this respect, it is telling that, commenting on the launch of Eastern Partnership by the EU in Prague in May 2009, Russian Foreign Affairs Minister Lavrov said that this initiative was aimed at establishing an EU sphere of influence in Eastern European and the Caucasus.

- Third, enlargement has also helped to transform the foreign policy priorities and logics of the new Member States. This aspect should be taken into consideration when analysing the exact nature of the relationship between widening and EU foreign policy.

- Fourth, on many foreign policy issues it seems that Member States do not find it particularly costly to follow or go along with other members' initiatives and decisions, thus making “differentiation in foreign policy” more an asset than a liability in the process of integration: in other words, CFSP/ESDP might become a field in which to test forms of differentiated integration. Nevertheless, it has to be remembered that for some crucial issues, starting with the recognition of Kosovo independence, the cost to go along with has appeared to be too high for some Member States to acquiesce with the decisions made by the rest of the EU or some leading members.

4. The limits of “informal deepening”

While the impact of widening in the area of foreign and security policy has resulted in a general geographic and thematic broadening of the scope of EU policies, and has therefore been positive in the short-medium run, it has to be nevertheless considered that this dynamic risks translating into an obstacle to further integration in the long run unless “formal elements” are also introduced to establish or acknowledge new rules and practices within the fields of CFSP/ESDP. In this respect, the Lisbon Treaty would

introduce new, important formal elements, and therefore its ratification becomes an urgent priority.

The time dimension is therefore an important element to be considered when analysing the impact of widening on foreign and security policy. This leads us back again to the classical interplay between deepening and widening, which continues to work behind the short-term “broadening” of EU foreign and security policy. As the analysis of the ENP has shown (see contribution of team 25 here below), new “interim” policies have grown out of the processes of widening and broadening. These tend to be more an institutional adaptation of old concepts to new challenges, following the logic of path dependency – according to which historical choices strongly influence present institutional options⁶ - rather than brand new strategies. The picture is likely to change in the long run when the responses due to adaptation made by the EU prove to be inadequate and insufficient and, as it has traditionally been the rule, widening triggers the need for formal institutional changes. Therefore, reforms are generally needed in order to ensure the sustainability of the European integration process.

In the case of foreign and security policy, the new challenges brought about by taking in new members and shifting the EU borders require adequate reforms towards making EU foreign policy more effective and consistent, such as the permanent President of the European Council, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the European External Action Service, all provided for by the Lisbon Treaty.

We will now examine the impact of widening on four specific aspects of European foreign and security policy, maintaining a distinction between the short and the long term.

5. Foreign policy: for a greater role of the EU in the world

Everyone can recognise that during the last decade the EU has acquired a much greater role in the foreign and security area, although without a “grand design”, and has played the game of an international actor in a more credible way. Despite the lack of coherent and consolidated practices, a “philosophy” of EU foreign policy may be slowly developing. This becomes apparent if one focuses in particular on the socialization of attitudes and on the tendency, which is sensibly reinforcing itself, to identify common pragmatic solutions to specific problems. The support of the European public for both CFSP and ESDP, despite their various shortcomings, seems to remain strong, leading one to wonder why this support has not been better exploited by EU leaders.

The principle of “pragmatism” rather than other principles, seems to have informed several of the most recent EU foreign policy initiatives/decisions. In fact, that of foreign policy remains a field of action where external events tend to have a greater impact on the direction and the kind of instruments used in order to defend the Union’s interests and to tackle new challenges. Therefore, foreign policy generally has a more reactive

⁶ The concept of path dependency was found by P. Pierson. See Paul Pierson, “The Path to European Integration. A Historical Institutionalist Analysis”, in *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (April 1996), p. 123-163. The application of this concept to account for the genetic process of the ENP was made by J. Kelly. See Judith G. Kelley, “New Wine in Old Wineskins: Promoting Political Reforms through the New European Neighbourhood Policy”, in *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 1 (March 2006), p. 29-55.

and respondent character, in comparison to other policy areas. Currently, for example, the main factors affecting the development of EU foreign policy are the following:

- the end of the Bush administration with its mixed legacy on transatlantic relations and the new steps of the newly elected President Obama;
- the still deep economic and financial crisis which is unveiling the weakness of some of the EU's economies and which has exposed some shortcomings in the willingness and ability to coordinate a response among EU member states;
- enlargement has made even more crucial and urgent the issue of the competence for some policy areas other than CFSP; in particular, there exists a growing need to have a common European energy policy, with a strong external dimension;
- the emergence of new foreign policy issues, or the re-emergence of old ones, starting with the phenomenon of piracy, which has attracted renewed attention, causing the EU to launch a mission in the Gulf of Aden for that purpose (Operation Atalanta);
- finally, the fate of the Lisbon Treaty, bits of which are in fact already a reality (informal deepening) even if the process of ratification has not been completed yet.

The last point brings us back to the need, at a certain point in time, of consolidating the new policy responsibilities and the mechanisms and ad hoc procedures of informal deepening. These new responsibilities may require, after a certain period of testing, a stronger and more formal system of external representation, both in terms of efficiency and legitimacy: in other words, some institutional adaptations are deemed as necessary (Lisbon Treaty).

If this does not happen in the long run, CFSP/ESDP risks running into the well known "credibility gap" and the EU might partially lose its appeal as a global actor. In this case, the EU might move into the "Status quo scenario" (see conclusions).

6. The external aspects of internal security

There are several indicators pointing to an ever closer nexus between internal security and external action (enhanced transfer of EU rules to neighbouring countries; closer cooperation on internal security with third countries, notably with the US; new Justice and Home Affairs priorities in CFSP/ESDP; EU attempts to establish norms in other international organisations). This progressive merging between different aspects of security, while being a positive result in terms of cooperation, brings about some new challenges.

- First, the difficulty of striking an appropriate balance between a value-driven foreign policy and internal security consideration. There is a clear danger in approaching security issues only from a technical point of view, regardless of its potential impact in terms of human rights abuses.

- Second, the need to ensure that the international security agreements signed by the EU are in line with EU norms and standards;

- Finally, the issue of the inter-institutional coherence between the area of Freedom, Security and Justice (FSJ) and CFSP, with reference to specific problems, such as the fight against terrorism that need to be tackled through a combination of policies and instruments coming from the different pillars of the EU.

What is clear is that enlargement had a strong impact on the development of internal security, which, in turn, gradually took on an external dimension as well.

In terms of integrative method, it has been the principle of differentiated integration that has led to the main initiatives in the area of Freedom, Security and Justice – of which the intergovernmental Treaty of Prüm is the most significant example. Informal deepening characterised by a differentiated integration model that took place in the sector of internal security, is to be questioned in so far as different treatments may be given to EU citizens according to whether their State has or has not acceded to the Prüm Treaty.

This has made the case for the EU going more in the direction of the model of “re-invented Union”.

7. Towards an emerging defence and security culture

Clear progress has also marked the practical development of ESDP, in terms of both culture and instruments. Security perceptions, concerns and responsibilities have become fairly high on the EU agenda, particularly after the 2004 enlargement.

The EU conceives itself more and more as an international institution acting according to the criteria of “justice” and not only of interest. In this connection, it has been noted that the EU generally stresses the consistency between its decisions and missions and the principles contained in the United Nations Charter even when there is no specific Security Council Resolution calling on the EU to intervene. In this latter case the EU should think creatively about the relationship between legitimacy and autonomy, arguing that EU defence and security missions could be started even without previous UN resolutions, the external legitimising factor being the compliance with international humanitarian law and the internal legal basis being the EU’s own treaties and internal democratic mechanisms. Although, this last suggestion raises a concern about the sources of legitimacy when it comes to security and defence issues because there is a risk of a “self-legitimising” ESDP.

The EU, moreover, has fully endorsed the concept of “human security” as opposed to a classical territorial, or state-centred definition of security. “Human security” seems, in fact, a distinctive if not original element of ESDP and one advancing a “people-based” approach to security and defence issues.

Finally, if one looks at the relationship between ESDP and NATO, he/she might conclude that the record is mixed (not all EU members share the same view on the issue), but that there are signs of an increasingly autonomous culture of defence among EU members.

In institutional terms, the broadening in ESDP has generally taken place without a formal legal basis, such as a new EU treaty, relying instead mostly on documents such as Presidency conclusions and joint actions.

The Lisbon Treaty, in that it includes a solidarity and a defense clause, would introduce a new obligation whose actual content, however, needs to be verified against its symbolical significance. More generally, the potentially negative nexus between symbolism and informality should be clarified and qualified to avoid that informality eclipses symbols of European unity, that are nevertheless important.

Again, using the analytical framework laid out at the beginning of this paper we should acknowledge that widening has created tensions and problems in ESDP, by exposing the EU to new challenges in broader areas. In the case of the Central and Eastern European countries (CEECs) and the Baltic states in particular, the multiplication of security concerns following enlargement has reinforced the existence of different security cultures among Member States, thus further complicating the picture. Overall, however, it must be emphasised that ESDP operations and missions have had the enthusiastic participation of all EU Member States, which bodes well also for the development of a distinctive EU security culture.

The question, rather, is whether the development of both EDSP and of a defense culture in Europe will take place exclusively in Brussels in a sort of a “bubble”, meaning following a rather bureaucratic and Brussel-centric logic, or whether it will take place through continuous interactions between EU member states and even non-EU members, starting with the US and Russia.

8. The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) between broadening and widening

The ENP has emphasised the usefulness of the concept of “broadening” to make sense of the relationship between widening and deepening. Enlargement seems to have broadened EU foreign policy concerns, both geographically and thematically, thus changing the definition of what constitutes the EU neighbourhood and how to deal with it. This has been particularly true for the Eastern dimension - where the EU launched first the ENP and later the Eastern Partnership (EaP) targeting Eastern and Southern Caucasus countries - and even put forward a strategy for Central Asia, but less true for the south of the Mediterranean.

This said, it has to be emphasized that in considering what triggers the expansion of European foreign policy issues, including ENP, external factors cannot be underestimated as a driving force behind new policies. The “Russia factor” is a case in point, as was apparent in the Georgian war of August 2008. The main policy that stemmed from the EU widening and thus confirms the saliency of the concept of broadening is no doubt the ENP, originally crafted as an “interim policy” following the well established practices and methods of enlargement policy. The two main objectives of the ENP are: to postpone the problematic issues regarding the exact perimeter of the EU formal borders, as delineated by the latest round of the enlargement process; to respond to the new security challenges emanating from neighbours, especially the Eastern ones.

In the process, however, the practice of the ENP has included attempts to change the meaning itself of borders, from areas of exclusion to areas of cooperation⁷. This overall positive dynamic was intended to blur the distinction between insiders and outsiders to a point where the ENP has been offered as a policy with its own foundations and

⁷ Michele Comelli, Ettore Greco and Nathalie Tocci, “From Boundary to Borderland: Transforming the Meaning of Borders through the European Neighbourhood Policy”, in *European Foreign Affairs Review*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (Summer 2007), p. 203-218.

therefore a potential alternative to enlargement, but this would lead the policy to lose its “interim” character.

This tendency, if confirmed, could have an impact on the nature of the EU itself: if enlargement ensures that new members bring with them new priorities and visions so that the outcome is not a union between old and new members but a new union (a “re-invented Europe”), the consolidation of ENP as a substitute for enlargement could temper this transformation and lead the EU towards the polar reference model of the “status-quo Europe”.

However, the consolidation of the ENP is jeopardised by new EU initiatives for dealing with Eastern and Southern neighbours that contain policies that take the geographic and geopolitical dimensions into more consideration, respectively the Eastern Partnership and the Union for the Mediterranean.

The assessment of the liabilities of the ENP is to a large extent linked not only to the policy’s structural weakness, but also to a lack of adequate foreign policy instruments. In this respect, the ratification and entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty- which provides for new foreign policy bodies and other notable innovations –would greatly help the EU to face the challenges posed by its turbulent periphery.

As it was acknowledged by the latest Commission progress report for the ENP in 2008⁸, while technical and sector reforms have been carried out in EU’s neighbourhood, what is lacking is the political dimension. In fact, the EU has suffered from a deficit of early information, credibility and capability to act effectively in its Eastern neighbourhood.

Conclusive Remarks

With reference to the above considerations and to the main research results, in the CFSP/ESDP area we are experimenting with new methods and forms of integration whose characteristics might be summarised in the following points:

- the concept of “broadening” applies pretty well in this area, especially in the short-term period, overcoming the political dichotomy between widening and (formal and informal) deepening and filling the need for a new explanatory concept; the area of CFSP/ESDP represents a typical example of integration proceeding beyond formal deepening, through reforms carried out outside the legal framework of the Treaties and implemented through a daily practice.; for instance, some of the innovations provided for by the Lisbon Treaty have already been implemented even before the ratification of the Treaty itself, the main example being the European Defence Agency;
- new forms of differentiated integration have been experimented with, especially in the fast-evolving sector of Justice, Freedom and Security. However, it must be noted that in some cases a trade-off exists between the progress of integration and the compliance with basic rights. For example, different treatments may be given to EU citizens according to whether their State has or has not acceded to the Prüm Treaty;
- as a result of the broadening of the scope of the Union’s external interests, new policies have been launched; in the case of the ENP, it was more the case of an “interim

⁸ European Commission, *Implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy in 2008*, COM(2009) 188/3, Brussels, 23 April 2009, http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/progress2009/com09_188_en.pdf.

policy” based on the model provided by enlargement policy. The sustainability of the ENP as an interim policy may have an impact not only now, but also on the future of enlargement process and the nature of the EU itself. In fact, the consolidation of ENP as a substitute for enlargement could temper the transformation of the EU into a new Union, where the categories of old and new member states are no longer valid and leads the EU towards the polar reference model of the “status-quo Europe”.

- in a long term perspective we should expect the re-entering into the mode of formal deepening in order to answer new requests for enlargement and to develop more consistent foreign and security policies.

Therefore, in terms of models of integration, one could say that the areas of CFSP/ESDP are currently standing mid-way between the model of “transformed/reinvented Union” and the one of “Status quo Union”, featuring at the same time elements of both models, without either model prevailing over the other. In fact, as it was argued by W. Wallace, the movement towards either models is not uniform, but rather follows the path of the “pendulum” theory. However, one way to move the EU towards the more positive scenario, that is the transformed Union, indeed exists: it is to ratify the Lisbon Treaty.