The Empire Strikes Back: 1989, 2011 and Europe's Neighbourhood Policy

Julian Pänke

The comparison between the Arab revolution, [. . .] and the Eastern Central European of 1989 is consistently employed, but remains without any political consequences. Although the experience of peaceful revolutions [. . .] and the success of the transformation of the 1990s [are] more than a proud heritage of Europe. Potentially they are an important instrument of European Neighbourhood Policy.
(Former Polish diplomat Janusz Reiter 2011)

The EU's credibility as a global player will depend to a great extent on its capacity to act decisively in its neighbourhood.
(European Commission, Joint Communication. Delivering on a New Neighbourhood Policy, 2012)

1 Introduction

Empire! A powerful term bound to invite misunderstandings. Until recently the notion of empire was largely rejected by a majority of Western scholars, who considered a neutral, or even positive understanding, as discredited by the colonial history of the last 300 years. The term is politically charged. With the on-going debates surrounding a US unipolar international system, the concept returned with a vengeance, and a parallel historiography reached a more balanced evaluation

J. Pänke (✉)
German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), Department of Social Sciences, Lebanese American University, Beirut Campus, P.O. Box 13-5053, Chouran Beirut 1102 2801, Lebanon

Center for Central and Eastern Europe of the Robert Bosch Stiftung, German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP), Berlin, Germany
e-mail: julian.paenke@web.de; paenke@dgap.org; julian.paenke@lau.edu.lb

A. Boening et al. (eds.), *Global Power Europe - Vol. 2*, Global Power Shift,
DOI 10.1007/978-3-642-32416-1_7,

of the Austrian-Hungarian, Russian and Ottoman empires.[1] Since the beginning of modernity and Edward Gibbon's formative *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, it was clearly the decay, rather than the achievements of empires, which inspired Western analysis. For many non-Western scholars, institutional stability provided by hegemonic regimes like the *Pax Romana* or *Pax Britannica*, outweighed their negative aspects (e.g. Liqun 2010, 23 f.). A few years ago historical examples of empires were analysed as an analogy to the European Union (Zielonka 2006; Posener 2007; Deak 2012), but because of the albeit reasonable hesitation to read the EU as an empire—with images of aggressive imperialism in our minds—and often an unbearable position that these analogies had with respect to civilisational superiority—it never gained prominence. Despite this understandable reluctance, applying the term empire to the EU has two advantages: in a simple and convincing fashion it characterizes the political reality of Europe's Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), and makes us aware of both the perception Europe's neighbours have, as well as Brussels' self-image.

2 Framing the European Empire

Since 2011, the Arab world faces major transformations. Several analysts have compared the Arab revolutions with the changes of 1989 in Eastern Europe. Even if the current financial crisis is absorbing much time and considerable resources of the EU, Brussels needs to understand the full potential of this second major transformation in its immediate neighbourhood for the sake of its own continuity, and to strengthen itself as a global actor. But so far "the main problem is the lack of an official discourse from Brussels and individual European governments about establishing the necessary new relationship with the Arab countries" (Aguirre 2012).

2.1 The European Union as Global Actor?

Given the established presence of the EU all across the globe, the union has to be considered a global *actor*. But does the union exercise the necessary influence required by a global *power*? Europe has one common market and military missions under the European flag. However, 11 member states still use their own currencies, all states hold most economic tools (e.g. taxes, employment), and a 'European army' is still missing, thus "the reluctance to join the words 'Europe' and 'global power'

[1] A recent search shows that Amazon has approximately 207,000 books with the word 'empire' in the title. See among others Michael W. Doyle, Empires, Ithaca (NY) 1986; Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, The Political Systems of Empires, Glencoe (IL) 1963; and Alexander J. Motyl, Imperial Ends: The Decay, Collapse and Revival of Empires, New York 2001 on the concept of empire.

together is only natural" (Renard 2009, p. 31).[2] To make things worse, "a continent that once stood for prosperity and generous social compacts now look[s] to be heading towards a decade of austerity—hardly appealing for emerging powers, whose rates of growth far surpass those of Europe" (Vaïsse and Kundnani 2012, p. 11), and which offer themselves as attractive partners for the Arab region (Ramadan 2012). According to a neo-realist reading, the EU, when competing with other powers, has to adopt a fundamentally new policy in the south. "Unconditional support for dictators [can] no longer be a viable or effective option, especially in the presence of emerging political and economic players such as China, India, Russia and South Africa. Reform [has] become imperative." (Ramadan 2012, p. x).

2.2 *The Argument for a European Empire*

Between 1989 and 2004, Brussels was able to make much progress in transforming the EU into a global power by establishing, what I posit to refer to as 'imperial Europe'. Its external activities in the eastern neighbourhood led to the development of the legal concepts, principles and rules that govern today's Union. The dynamics of its eastern enlargement and the demands of the single market put multi-dimensional governance in place, creating a number of overlapping zones of various degrees of integration: The EU is not a monolithic bloc anymore.

By looking back at the EU's policy record after 1989, the union might be able to avoid losing its influence in its neighbourhood in the future. Considering the idea of a new European empire implies first of all critically evaluating one's self-perception, the perception of the neighbours and assessing their expectations, thus providing a unique chance to re-evaluate the relevance of EU values, and potentially establishing a narrative relevant to its southern neighbourhood: this would link the argument to constructivism. Secondly, Brussels should move forward with bold steps and offer real incentives to the southern Mediterranean (market access, free trade areas dropping non-tariff barriers, open visa regimes) and expand its imperial system of governance, as understood in terms of the importance of rules, as emphasized by the theory of institutionalism. If Brussels and the member states understand and embrace such an imperial nature of the EU's, the Union could establish itself as a global power. By stressing neo-realist power considerations, institutional frameworks and a constructivist approach to ideas and narratives, the argument for an 'imperial Europe' adopts a multi-theory approach.

[2] For a general overview on various perspectives of the EU as object in IR see Schumacher (2005) and Bretherton and Vogler (1999, p. 38). The authors locate the EU according to six criteria in global politics (1) shared set of norms and values; (2) capability to identify priorities and formulate coherent policies; (3) effective negotiating with international actors; (4) available political instruments and capacity to use them; (5) inner legitimacy of decision making processes and their priorities; (6) external perception and expectations of third.

In 2011 the leaders of the European Union clearly failed to reassure the rest of the world with respect to the sustainability of the integration project (Vaïsse and Kundnani 2012, p. 9). To overcome nationalist trends and to finally activate the potential inherent in every crisis, Brussels has to drop the old polarization that played the deepening of the union against a widening (Techau 2011). In an imperial-logic, both concepts mutually reinforce each other as decisive steps towards an ever closer union. They were enhanced (even enabled) by an imperial mission of 'unifying the continent,' which gave a significant sense of meaning and identity.

The "empire strikes back", should be understood in three ways (a) as a demand for the union to re-launch a narrative-based and courageous, resource-backed real offer, as it did in Eastern Europe (1989–2004) to the MENA region now; (b) as reminiscent of European colonialism from the perspective of partners in the southern Mediterranean, which needs to be integrated into the new policies to be adopted; (c) as a promising analytical tool to understand the dynamics of the EU's external relations in its neighbourhood. In the end, reformulating Alexander Wendt's famous dictum,[3] "empire is what the union makes of it".

3 Defining Empire

Freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of travel, freedom of trade, right of establishment, equality of nations, races and religions, equality of citizens before the law—for all these features, the prototype is the Roman empire: the first melting pot to impose the motto: 'unity in diversity'. As successor of the Holy Roman Empire of German Nations, with its patchwork of kingdoms and principalities, margraviates, free cities, and imperial abbeys, it presented another confusingly diverse example of practiced subsidiarity and shared sovereignties. The latter example inspired Jan Zielonka and Alan Posener to ascribe its features, i.e. as a neo-medieval model, to the EU (Zielonka 2006; Posener 2007, p. 111).

3.1 Multi-Dimensional Governance: Internal Component of Imperial Power

Imperial power is characterized by vertical and horizontal multi-dimensional governance, leading to a 'variable geometry' of vertically arranged supranational, national, regional, and local authorities, enmeshed in horizontally overarching policy networks and resulting in constant "negotiations among nested governments at several territorial tiers" (Marks 1993, p. 392; Hooghe and Marks 2001). These flexible arrangements allow different grades of autonomy for the entities in question, as well as constantly negotiated relations between the imperial centre and the regions

[3] Alexander Wendt, Anarchy is what States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics, in: International Organization 46.2, Spring 1992, pp. 391–425.

within bi- and multilateral frameworks. Empires usually represent a reduction in integration from the centre to the periphery, corresponding to decreasing adherence to the common body of law and diminishing possibilities to take part in the decision making process of the centre (Münkler 2005, p. 17). The fuzzy logic of imperial politics has its merits particularly in ethnically, confessionally, and in other ways divided regions, prevalent in the European periphery (Balkans, Caucasus, MENA). Examples of historical empires, such as the Habsburg, Russian, or Ottoman empires, indicate the advantages (as focused on in this chapter) of empire in comparison to national tools of integration.

3.2 Sense of Mission and Blurry Borders: External Component of Imperial Power

Due to a lack of homogeneity in the interior, and the absence of a narrowly conceived national identity, an imperial identity seeks legitimacy by projecting some higher aim to the exterior. Ideologies and narratives might differ, e.g. supporting the spread of freedom and democracy, or the diffusion of socialism, but the imperial mission can be viewed to represent an instrument to be used against the eruption of chaos. Empires constantly confirm the perception of their own mission as defending order (Münkler 2005, pp. 8, 128). "Historic empires provided ideals. [. . .] [As] long as people believe in the principles, the system is likely to endure" (Deak 2012). In this imperial logic to maintain legitimacy among its members, empires tend to expand, utilizing the transforming powers of the periphery. Thus empires endow meaning by appeasing their peripheries. They invest a considerable share of their wealth into the development of peripheral regions. As a consequence, the peripheries were just as interested in the continuation of the empire as the centre (Münkler 2005, p. 9). Furthermore, imperial rule frazzles on the edges in not clearly demarked border territories or frontiers (Whittaker 2004, p. 3). This does not imply that borders are non-existent, rather, actors perceive their location and significance to be variable and somewhat open to manipulation (Barkey 2008, p. 21). As such, borders do not separate equal political entities, instead they represent grades of power and influence (Münkler 2005, p. 16).

3.3 Historical Empires

All three historical empires of the East displayed longevity, resilience, and flexibility as key features. Even though they never exercised complete monopoly of power in the territory under their control, their form of political organization proved widespread and durable (Barkey 2008, 13 f.; Kappeler 2001; Ley 2004; Etkind 2011). For the Ottoman Empire, Karen Barkey analysed the techniques by which the sultans and viziers maintained legitimacy, making a virtue out of diversity (Barkey 2008). Within the Ottoman imperial model the

> "basic configuration of relationships between imperial authorities and peripheries [was] constructed piece meal in a different fashion for each periphery [. . .]. In that construction we see the architecture of empire emerge: a hub-and-spoke structure of state-periphery relations, where the direct and indirect vertical relations of imperial integration coexist with horizontal relations of segmentation." (Barkey 2008, p. 1).

Istanbul remained more interested in preserving imperial flexibility and less committed to construct an encompassing collective or to make political reforms uniform (Barkey 2008, p. 12). Something similar can be said for the Russian and the Habsburg empires.[4]

The two main components of imperial politics are (1) multi-dimensional governance, embodied in flexible arrangements of different levels of integration and constantly negotiated relations between the imperial centre, the regions, and entities in multi- and especially bilateral frames; (2) a supranational ideology to substitute the absence of a narrow national identity concept. This legitimizing narrative is directed to the exterior and calls for continuous expansion, at least interaction with the periphery, which in turn gains substantial influence on the imperial core for the benefit of both.

These two components are prominently present in the European Union of today. The journalist Michael Ignatieff characterizes the US and European empires as "empire *lite*" compared to the empires in the past, which were "built on colonies, conquest and the white man's burden", stressing their "grace notes" of "free markets, human rights and democracy" (Ignatieff 2003). In their basic structures, the US and the EU remain empires, thus explaining their drive for dominance, which always needs to be observed critically. But their competitive advantage, when compared to nationalism, is giving up a binary logic: us or them, affiliation or alienation, suborder or oppression (Posener 2007, p. 117). Empires do not need all the potentially conflict causing elements of a nation: no need for a common history, neither one language or religion, nor shared customs and traditions.

4 Establishing the European Empire (1989–2004)

4.1 Copenhagen: The External Stimulus of Eastern Enlargement

The surprising collapse of the Soviet Union and the early transformations in the former communist states in Eastern Europe after 1989 caught the EU completely off guard. After a 3 year period of insecurity, Brussels decided to introduce the unparalleled external initiative of the Eastern Enlargement. In June 1993 the EU formulated

[4] Moscow's imperial agenda of the 'Third Rome' held together a complex system of dependent entities (ranging from the Siberian frontier, the Cossacks, the Caucasus to autonomous Poland) (e.g. Geoffrey Hosking, Russia: People and Empire 1552–1917, London 1997). Accordingly the Habsburg monarchy: Powers of the Emperor were only strengthened, if the competences did not collide with the princes' privileges (Robert A. Kann, Geschichte des Habsburger Reiches: 1526–1917, Wien, Köln: 20).

the famous Copenhagen Criteria which defined the benchmarks for joining the Union. The common values were explained for the first time to the exterior. Through media coverage on enlargement they were communicated to the European public. They included democracy resting on the protection of minority rights, a free and social market economy and the adoption of the European Law corpus (*aquis communitaire*). Most importantly, they led to self-reflection in the interior.

The major instruments for eliciting compliance with imperial preferences were economic incentives. Some were offered as traditional trade-offs: foreign aid, market shares, and investment in exchange for cooperative behaviour. It should not be forgotten that in the capitals of Eastern Central Europe, this strategy conjured up memories of the Soviet Empire and their "calls for sacrifice, holding out future prospects" (Janos 2000, p. 365). This time prosperity meant a united Europe. At the summit of Essen in 1994, the EU decided on the elements and necessary steps for the pre-accession process. In doing so, Brussels established an external track of widening the sources of imperial appeasement and introduced various levels of integration borders between full and non-members became blurred, which is apparent in the different intermediate passages associate candidate, and candidate in negotiations for example.

4.2 Maastricht: The Internal Stimulus of the European Union

The reality of these various zones of integration was extended on the domestic track as well, i.e. by abolishing border controls in the Schengen area 1996, and the establishment of the European Monetary Union (EMU) in 1999 with Denmark, and the UK opting-out. Along with the member states of the European Free Trade Area (EFTA), e.g. Norway or Switzerland, the EU now complemented its vertical dimension of multi-level governance with a horizontal dimension, in which actors not only cooperated on a subnational level (regions, municipalities) with each other to form territorially overarching policy networks (Marks 1993; Bache and Flinders 2004), but actors participate at various levels of integration, sometimes overlapping in certain policy fields. Whereas the vertical dimension addresses efficiency (subsidiarity), horizontal cooperation in a multitude of networks is typical for imperial entities and allows very flexible responses to specific regional needs in a very vast, multi-cultural geographical area.

In parallel to the response to the transformations in the eastern neighbourhood, the union witnessed a fundamental transition from an economic free market community to a value-based union. The Single European Act of 1986 envisaged a common market for 1993. Along with the 1989 initiative of the Delors Commission and German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, acting under the impact of the foreseeable reunification of Germany, the Euro was introduced as common European currency. The EC laid down the economic and domestic foundations of 'imperial Europe'. It was institutionalized in the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992 by complementing the economic *first pillar* of the European Communities with a Common Foreign and

Security Policy (CFSP) in the *second,* as well as in Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) as the *third pillar*. The idea of imperial fluidity was further strengthened by enhanced cooperation, which allowed a group of states to advance integration in any area within the EU without other members being involved. Revised since its introduction in the Treaty of Amsterdam 1997, it covers by now all policy fields and needs one third of the member states to be initiated. Since March 2011 this procedure was introduced for European divorce law[5] and patents.[6]

The two processes of widening and deepening worked in harmony. By the end of the decade and the introduction of the monetary union in 1999 in merely 11 of 15 member states the EU had received its imperial form of governance with its many exceptions for specific areas. The incentive—or at least the catalyst—for Europe's transformation to an Empire originated not in its core countries, but at the periphery: in Eastern Europe (cf. Pond 1999, p. 7).

4.3 European Neo-Imperialism?

The Eastern Enlargement was anything but a smooth process, though. The majority of the Eastern and Central European states perceived the process as a transition from Soviet to European Empire. As in the case of Moscow after 1945, the more loosely coordinated European powers enforced a certain institutional framework in the territories adjacent to them. The European hegemon was animated by a concern about security. The security concerns were twofold: for one the more distant threat of a new Russian challenge to the continental balance of power, and more importantly the imminent fear of chaos and disorder in the immediate neighbourhood, "including visions of the looming peril of waves of impoverished refugees migrating westward" (Janos 2000, p. 363). The accession candidates themselves were very much aware of the imperial nature of EU policy, and "there was little doubt as to who called the shots, or in other words, who were the 'missionaries' wielding the 'bible'" (Janos 2000, p. 366, citing Sajó 1997). This perception was constantly present, even though the Eastern European elites and large parts of society were willing to go through the painful transformations, which inevitably provoked severe political conflicts through re-distribution of national wealth, institutions and memory along their 'path back to Europe', whose repercussions are still easily observable in the politics of the new member states.

[5] Fourteen states entered the proposed cooperation: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia and Spain.

[6] Towards the end of 2010 twelve states proposed to work around disagreements with Italy and Spain over what languages a common EU Patent would be translated into. The unitary patent would be examined and granted in one of the existing official languages of the European Patent Organization—English, French or German. 25 Member States, all except Italy and Spain, will join the proposal.

On their annual tours through Eastern Europe between 1997 and 2004 the representatives of the European Union appraised, through the use of 'safeguards', 'benchmarks', 'monitoring' and 'screening', the 'progress' of the accession candidates (Posener 2007, p. 94). Hegemonic agencies encouraged, praised and reprimanded their "pupils" by handing out rewards and punishments (Pänke 2010, p. 194). This "teacher" attitude became especially apparent when dealing with the political representation of the former regime elites, i.e. the post-communist parties. For example in 2002, the commissioner for enlargement, Günter Verheugen, in a harsh tone reminded the Slovak population, which parties they should vote for in order not to endanger their EU perspectives—in an open attempt to prevent another electoral victory of the post-communist Vladimír Mečiar (Pänke 2010, p. 113). Such telling examples for the biased approach of EU politicians towards unfavourable actors are manifold and shed an important light on the future nature of the ENP in the MENA region with respect to its unwanted Islamist actors. By the way, despite the numerous electoral successes of Mečiar, Slovakia turned out to be one of the most successful transitional countries.

The importance of enlargement within European foreign policy was widely recognized; Christoph Bertram, former director of the German think tank SWP, considered enlargement the most successful instrument of the EU's external relations (Bertram 2001). Along the way, the EU introduced a number of tools providing for flexible arrangements of integration (1) opt-out clauses (as e.g. for the UK in the Euro zone or Schengen area),[7] (2) enhanced cooperation, and (3) the transition periods within the accession treaties (e.g. for free movement of labour within the single market for the new member states by 2004). Would this "menu" transfer to the southern neighbourhood?

5 Europe Losing Its Neighbourhood (2004–2011)

In several respects 2004 marked a critical juncture in the development of European integration. Concerning the finality of the EU, some state representatives and scholars got carried away by the national dream of a federal Europe, manifested in the struggle to establish a European constitution between 2001 and 2004 (e.g. Pond 1999; Rifkin 2004; Leonard 2005). With the referendums in the Netherlands and France in 2005, the constitutional project failed. The subsequent period was characterized by enlargement fatigue and national quarrels about the breadth of the European defence policy and military capacities. The integration project itself lost its dynamism, reflected by the public becoming increasingly tired of the

[7] The Schengen area comprises 26 members, of which three countries (Iceland, Norway, Switzerland) are non-members of the EU—the UK and Ireland opted-out. The Euro zone currently has 17 members with Denmark and the UK opting out and Montenegro and Kosovo as non-members using the Euro as national currency.

self-reflective debates. The Lisbon Treaty of 2007 did not succeed in clarifying the role of the EU's institutions, and even paradoxically strengthened intergovernmental mechanisms of the union in some respects.

5.1 European Neighbourhood Policy

Shortly before the Eastern Enlargement, Brussels initiated the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) as a 'spin-off'. Originally intended to intensify the close relations between the new eastern and southern periphery with the Union, involving a significant degree of economic integration and a deepening of political cooperation in an approach founded on partnership, joint ownership and differentiation, the ENP turned out to be a "mixture of jumble and loopholes" (Lippert 2008, p. 13). The ENP suffered from its imminent contradictions: south vs. east, accession vs. partnership, co-ownership vs. conditionality, worsened by a lack of real incentives, as well as prevalent conflicts of interest horizontally among EU member states, and vertically between EU institutions (cf. Lippert 2008; Fritz-Vannahme et al. 2008; Bendiek 2008). Two points of critique should be highlighted (1) *differentiation and multilateralization*: indecision concerning the "balance between the bilateral and multilateral dimensions, (…) whether on the thematic or regional levels" (Genshagen Report 2009, 5 f.); and (2) *asymmetry and ownership*: "The canon of principles governing the functioning of the Neighbourhood Policy is rounded off by the EU's much vaunted principle of 'ownership'. Yet 6 years after the introduction of the ENP the question of whether all partners participate sufficiently remains acute at all stages and all levels" (Genshagen Report 2009, 6 f.).

Nevertheless many analysts acknowledged that "the principles of the Neighbourhood Policy reveal a new dimension of how the EU considers itself and looks at the world" (Del Sarto and Schumacher 2005, p. 27). ENP's overall focus on bilateral agreements and its different degrees of integration "convey the image of an EU that will be 'fading out' towards its external borders" (Del Sarto and Schumacher 2005, p. 26)—an imperial centre-periphery approach.[8] So far Brussels lacks the courage to become aware of, or at least acknowledge, this imperial nature, even though it admits a more interest-driven approach, which would be consequently reflected in its foreign policy strategies: the foundation for an effective global actor. Furthermore, the Union lacks the will to invest significant resources in the ENP. The Polish scholar Katarzyna Pełczyńska-Nałęcz expects the continuation of a "dual strategy", leading to "a pretence in which both the EU and its [neighbours] will be merely imitating an integration" (Pełczyńska-Nałęcz 2011, p. 6). The crucial problem is that Brussels remains "unable to [. . .] determine clearly the goal which an integration not involving membership should seek." (Pełczyńska-Nałęcz 2011, p. 10).

[8] For a more positive evaluation of the ENP see e.g. Del Sarto and Schumacher (2005); Cameron and Balfour (2006); and Böttger (2010).

5.2 *Southern Neighbourhood*

The record in the southern neighbourhood is even bleaker. Already in 1995, the Union had launched the Barcelona Process targeting the countries of the Middle East and North Africa, creating a second regional tier in the periphery. Its three baskets mirrored the Copenhagen Criteria without the membership perspective or clear strategy. Furthermore, authors like Francesco Cavatorta interpret the Euro-Med Partnership as "a reaction to the Algerian events of the late 1980s and early 1990s, when the opening up of the political system saw the emergence of an Islamist movement with foreign policy views aimed at challenging the international status quo" (Cavatorta 2011, p. 14). Thus an alliance with Arab dictators promised to be a bulwark against the rise of Islamism, and helped safeguard geopolitical and economic interests (Ramadan 2012, 9 f.). In a ruthless account Mariano Aguirre writes:

> "Since the end of the colonial period, Europe has based its relationship with former colonies on obtaining cheap access to natural resources, selling weapons, and [. . .] profit[ting] from their cheap and tightly-controlled labor force. Politically, Europe's aim was to preserve stability, to do business in the region and to secure Israel's geopolitical position [. . .]. At the same time, Europe was the beneficiary of massive funds that repressive Arab elites transferred to banks, to investments (real estate), and to other operations that were not always clear and legal." (Aguirre 2012)

The Troika of *security* against perceived threats of terrorism (read: Islamism), fear of uncontrolled *migration,* and the hope for guaranteed *energy* supplies ended up in unhealthy alliances with authoritarian regimes in the southern neighbourhood (Hanelt and Möller 2011, p. 3). This policy betrayed the common value system of the Union, and thus undermined any effort of establishing a resilient imperial agenda—and as a result convinced neither the Arab partners that the relations were based on mutual trust or giving up at least of parts of the notorious Western double standards applied in the region up to then (Burgat 2007, 3 f.) nor the European public to show a responsibility to act beyond rhetoric in the southern Mediterranean obviously it did not strengthen legitimacy of the 'imperial Europe project' in general.

The contradiction between bilateral arrangements, as foreseen in the ENP-framework, and the multilateral approach of the Union for the Mediterranean, Nicolas Sarkozy's initiative of 2008, highlights this. "[It] is worth noting that the EU was resisting precisely those areas where a move towards the EU was seen as especially beneficial by most partner states (for example, the introduction of a visa-free regime, access to the agricultural market, etc.)" (Pełczyńska-Nałęcz 2011, p. 10). The European Neighbourhood Policy lacked the political will, consistency and especially the credibility, which it enjoyed in the re-unification process of Europe in the 1990s.

5.3 Under Pressure: The Context of 2011

The political context of 2011 became even more demanding for Brussels because of the 'game' the BRICS introduced (Renard 2009), with the natural resources and potential wealth of countries (which Parag Khanna labels "second world") as the prize. The emerging powers are attempting to reshape the globe to suit their interests. "To a large extent, the future of the second world hinges on how it relates to the [. . .] superpowers," Khanna writes, "and the future of the superpowers depends on how they manage the second world" (Khanna 2008: abstract). The "three flaws commonly associated with the West—European colonialism, American imperialism and their unconditional support for Israel—have never afflicted" the BRICS states; thus they do have a competitive advantage (Ramadan 2012, 60 f.), which leads the analyst Tariq Ramadan to recommend that the MENA region should reach out to the emergent countries, since they can "extricate Muslim-majority societies from the system imposed by the West, with its order, its debt and its crises." (Ramadan 2012, p. 135).

Thus, in its own interest, Brussels "urgently needs to redefine its relationship with the Arab world, demonstrating a shift from favouring elites to supporting democratic political change, democratic actors and an economic and social justice agenda" (Aguirre 2012). If not, the EU might lose its neighbourhood after Brussels completely lost its courage in the east, where it had dropped the membership perspective for countries like Moldova or Ukraine, which had frequently expressed their wish to join the Union.

In the south, Brussels remained caught up in unproductive fixation on stability, betraying its own value system and nourishing the double standard perception. Being challenged by other actors in the region, the status quo is no option anymore and without in-depth reform, the tide is in fact turning against Europe. The EU should take the words of its former commissioner for enlargement Olli Rehn seriously, who said: "European *values* define European borders. Discussions *a priori* on geographic borders and the 'absorption capacity' are quite simply theological." (Posener 2007, p. 11; citing Rehn).

6 The European Union and the Arab Revolutions in 2011

After the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt, the EU responded immediately in March 2011 with the communication *A Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean,* and in May 2011 with a re-evaluation of the ENP in *A New Response to a Changing Neighbourhood*. In the common strategy Brussels promises greater incentives in the three dimensions "money, markets and mobility", introduces further bilateralisation within the "more for more" principle, and seeks closer engagement with civil society in order to build

"deep democracy".[9] In May 2012 the Commissioner of Enlargement and the ENP, Štefan Füle, and High Representative Catherine Ashton presented the ENP-package *Delivering on a new European Neighbourhood Policy,* which unsurprisingly sketches out a bright picture of the new ENP. Among the projected successes, which the communication anticipates, are an "increase in the lending ceilings of EUR 1.15 billion to partner countries from the European Investment Bank, and an extension of the mandate of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development", the introduction of a "Civil Society Facility [...] with an initial budget of EUR 26 million for 2011, and similar amounts planned for 2012" within the "more for more in practice", the doubling of financial assistance for Tunisia's democratic transition from EUR 80 million in 2010 to EUR 160 million in 2011 (*'money'*), negotiation directives for deep and comprehensive free trade areas with Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia (*'markets'*), and the plans "to conclude mobility partnerships with Morocco and Tunisia" (*'mobility'*) (Delivering on a new European Neighbourhood Policy 2012, 3 f.).

6.1 Shortcomings and Differences in Comparison to the Eastern Enlargement

While the preceding plan sounds good in theory, the ENP already did contain elements of differentiation and conditionality, the change anticipated is for Brussels to stick to its principles and promises, and position itself anew in the Arab region in general (Balfour 2012, p. 30). Still, the "new policy has enshrined greater flexibility and set out a framework for tailored responses, matching the specific requirements of the countries [...] and the nature of the partnership they seek with the EU" (Delivering on a new European Neighbourhood Policy 2012, p. 2). It has put Brussels on the right track.

However many analysts remain sceptical about the outcome. For example most of the money was transferred in the form of loans through the European Bank system rather than rapid budget relief, direct aid or debt cancellation (Khakee 2011, p. 3; Balfour 2012). "Mobility was reduced to visa facilitation for more students rather than a more broadly targeted opening of Europe's borders to the south" (Vaïsse and Kundnani 2012, p. 12; Hanelt and Dietl 2011; Khakee 2011, p. 4). "Although the EU began negotiating deep free trade areas with Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco and Jordan, the prospect of more open markets also remained distant as southern member states fearing competition continue to oppose liberalisation of

[9] European Commission, Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. A new response to a changing Neighbourhood, COM(2011) 303, Brussels, May 25, 2011: "The elements that characterise a deep and sustainable democracy include: free and fair elections; freedom of association, expression and assembly and a free press and media; the rule of law administered by an independent judiciary and the right to a fair trial; fighting against corruption; security and law enforcement sector reform (including the police); and the establishment of democratic control over armed and security forces."

the agricultural sector." (Vaïsse and Kundnani 2012, p. 12; Hanelt and Dietl 2011). Beyond these issues, there is the disappointment growing out of the discrepancy between Arab expectations and European commitments. After a series of interviews in Tunisia, Anna Khakee states that support for the transformation should not focus primarily on assistance in building democratic institutions. "While expecting such assistance, many Tunisians fear that it may also amount to interference. Tunisian expectations are instead centered on the relationship between Europe and Tunisia as a whole." (Khakee 2012, p. 2).

The many obstacles for a genuinely new approach towards the MENA region become clearer when comparing them to post-revolutionary Eastern Central Europe after 1989: first, the EU was the main economic and political power in the region; second, there was consensus among all relevant political actors (former opposition as well as post-communists) to join the EU, with all accepting its norms and institutions as an affirmation of their European identity; and third, "the EU's promise of membership, when it was made, provided them an extra incentive to go through the painful process of transition" (Vaïsse and Kundnani 2012, p. 13).

The picture is different in the southern neighbourhood. Firstly, Brussels must compete with other players in the region, such as the USA, the emerging BRICS states, the Gulf states and Turkey. Most of these "players may not offer the funds the EU does, and may not care whether the North African states build their democracies or not, but that hardly matters" (Vaïsse and Kundnani 2012, p. 13). Secondly, some of the southern Mediterranean states are not willing to take over European standards 'all the way', but are rather protective of their independence, seeking emancipation from Western influence rather than sign up to European norms without the establishment of a real attractive alternative to full membership in the Union (Vaïsse and Kundnani 2012, p. 13). "Thirdly, and most importantly, against the background of the euro crisis, Europe does not believe it can afford the more generous approach it took in Central and Eastern Europe after 1989. The argument that engagement with North Africa will, in fact, also benefit Europe by giving the EU an economic edge [. . .] has fallen on deaf ears" (Vaïsse and Kundnani 2012, p. 13).

6.2 Bold Initiative in Need: Expanding Multi-Dimensional Governance

Thus within the various levels of integration and association, European leaders need to find answers to the difficult conceptual challenge of inventing a new long-term relationship with their southern neighbours. A bold initiative of the EU is needed: Conditionality could work if the EU were willing to offer big carrots linked to a new type of associational status, constituting by 2030 a vast Euro-Mediterranean Economic Area (EMEA) as Andre Sapir and Georg Zachmann are suggesting. Brussels could offer complete openness for goods, services and capital, with front-loaded concessions in the agricultural sector. With respect to labour mobility, the Union should organize a 'Blue Card' system for granting

temporary work permits to highly-skilled workers, "and more generally put in place mechanisms to favour circular migration, facilitating the upgrade of human capital." (Sapir and Zachmann 2012, 6 f.). Furthermore the EU needs to re-evaluate its view on Islamist parties. Brussels lost credibility because of its undeniable "political blindness" (Burgat 2007, p. 15), by focusing on ideologically marginal actors, presumably secular and liberal, which had been—and still are—"close to the inner circles of autocratic rule" (Ramadan 2012, p. 94), preventing the EU "from having a clearer knowledge of what was occurring at the societal level" (Cavatorta 2011, p. 15). Here, experiences with post-communist parties in Eastern Europe can be helpful. Based on these ideas, the EU can turn the European Commission's concept of the "Three Cs for enlargement" into a new concept for the whole neighbourhood:

> "(1) Conception: The EU should embrace its neighbors with a more daring approach of selective areas of functional and regional integration; (2) Communication: There is a lot of room for improvement in the EU's way of communicating with its neighbors; and (3) Cooperation: The EU must be selective with regard to partners, and it needs to develop a real spirit of partnership" (Möller 2011, p. 1)

6.3 *A New Imperial Narrative in Need: The Legacy of the 'Euromediterraneum'*

Modelling new strategies towards the MENA region need to integrate the painful legacies of European imperialism still prevalent in the region, and distance itself clearly from European colonialism. Recent remarks of Marwan Bishara, senior political analyst of the Arab news network Al Jazeera, illustrate Arab perceptions. He recalls that the EU's embrace of Arab dictators reflected European expediency, neo-colonial tendencies, and complete ignorance of the Arab people (Bishara 2012). Nevertheless, I posit that a new 'imperial Europe'—if it warrants a bold offer of integration embedded in clear strategies, dropping some of the Western double standards—might be more welcome in the MENA region than in many political circles of Europe itself. However, the new model has to be embedded in a larger narrative of actively supporting the southern neighbours in their transformation. Such a narrative should target the establishment of a shared space of peace, democracy and prosperity; resurrecting the historical unitary economic and administrative space of the Mediterranean past—the 'Euromediterraneum'[10];

[10] The 'Euromediterraneum' comprises the close economic, administrative, and as a consequence institutional links between all regions surrounding the Mediterranean in the Middle Ages as heritage of the Roman Empire. This period was characterized by interaction and mutual enrichment. In the last years it gained prominence in research; see e.g. Koder 2009 and the research network (Daniel König, Britta Müller-Schauenburg et al.) "trans-cultural interdependencies in the medieval Euromediterraneum (500–1500)" launched in March 2012 and funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG); preliminary link: http://www.geschichte.uni-frankfurt.de/download_events/2012-03_transkulturelle_verflechtungen.html (11.07.2012).

in order to set free similar dynamics as Eastern Enlargement had done in the past. "A new imperial construct embracing all nations, religions and non-totalitarian ideologies might well be the only alternative to the revival of tribalism with all its tragic consequences" (Deak 2012).

Being aware that post-authoritarian spaces depend on external stabilization, to consolidate their new political systems, giving them time to develop durable institutions—this time can be granted by an imperial power (Münkler 2005, pp. 219, 247) like the EU. With the experience of its Eastern Enlargement, Brussels has a competitive advantage to emergent states, if Brussels carefully deals with its double standards and credibility (Balfour 2012, p. 32). Last but not least "Europeans must be prepared to accept, first, that Islamic parties can participate in, and even lead Arab coalitions, and second, that Arab democratic processes will take time and might adopt hybrid shapes that do not necessarily coincide with the liberal model." (Aguirre 2012; cf. Ramadan 2012, 116 ff.).

7 Conclusion

The European Union under the impact of the Arab revolutions of 2011 has the chance to reconsider its Neighbourhood policy and reconcile with its imperial nature. The success of the Eastern European transformation rested primarily on the awareness of a common European project—the re-unification of the continent. Politics need emotional narratives to acquire legitimacy and encourage its citizens to join. Based on these preconditions, one can formulate a coherent strategic agenda. 'Imperial Europe' implies understanding its two essential components (1) an *imperial agenda*: Europe already has a common set of values, defined in the Treaties and deployed within various external missions, and highlighted in the Copenhagen Criteria of 1993. The agenda does not represent a formerly adopted ideology, but rather shared interests, enmeshed with historically linked traditions and memories, which have given rise to a common set of principles, which provide an underpinning for a legitimising sense of mission, capable of replacing ethno-cultural solidarities with loyalty to institutions and collective entitlements; (2) its *multi-dimensional governance*: Europe possesses a 'variable geometry', as it includes overlapping regions with different integration levels, which help to blur the boundaries in Europe and towards its neighbours: the Schengen area, the Euro zone, associate countries on the Balkans, candidate countries (e.g. Turkey), member states in various transition stages towards full access to the common market (e.g. Bulgaria, Romania), the EFTA etc.—these flexible arrangements of the Union's imperial landscape can and should be expanded to the MENA region. Europe *à la carte* is a reality—the number of customers in the restaurant can be higher without endangering its nature as a European eatery.

By definition an empire needs to transform itself constantly, making it flexible by adapting to external challenges. The idea of federal Europe led to the failed constitution and the rather disappointing Treaty of Lisbon—within the next decades

Europe will not manifest itself as a federal state. Instead, Brussels needs to blur the borders in the Euro-Mediterranean space (Möller 2011, p. 10)—in combination with a convincing narrative of a shared space of peace, democracy and prosperity. The guiding principles and instruments ("money, markets, mobility") are all there, the current underperformance of Brussels as global power is thus less a problem of capabilities than a matter of intentions.

> "Of the three features that according to Hyde-Price mark a great power, i.e. the scale of its resources, 'a sense of responsibility for milieu-shaping, system-management and providing collective goods', and the willingness to act, it is the latter which is often missing in the EU" (Renard 2009, 32 f.; citing Hyde-Price 2007).

In an interesting analogy to today's state of the European Union, Herfried Münkler and Alan Posener observed that the Roman Empire did not suffer from an imperial overstretch, but rather—since the battle of Varus—from a lack of political will to imperial expansion, failing to offer the tribes behind the Northern frontiers privileged relations and incorporation into the empire (Münkler 2005, p. 247; Posener 2007, 25 f.).

References

Aguirre, M. (2012, May 29). Europe needs to redefine its Arab relations. *The Daily Star* (*Lebanon*), p. 7.

Bache, I., & Flinders, M. (2004). *Multi-level governance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Balfour, R. (2012, January). Changes and continuities in EU-Mediterranean Relations after the Arab Spring. In: S. Biscop, R. Balfour, & M. Emerson (Eds.), *An Arab Springboard for EU Foreign Policy*? (Egmont Paper 54, pp. 27–35). Brussels: Egmont Institute.

Barkey, K. (2008). *Empire of difference. The Ottomans in comparative perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bendiek, A. (2008, September). *Wie effektiv ist die Europäische Nachbarschaftspolitik*? Sechzehn Länder im Vergleich, SWP-Studie S24, Berlin.

Bertram, C. (2001, May 17). The limits of Europe. Where will it all end? *The Economist*.

Bishara, M. (2012). *The invisible Arab: The promise and peril of the Arab revolutions*. New York: Nation Books.

Böttger, K. (2010). *Die Entstehung und Entwicklung der Europäischen Nachbarschaftspolitik*. Baden-Baden: Akteure und Koalitionen.

Bretherton, C., & Vogler, J. (1999). *The European Union as a global actor* (p. 38). London: Routledge.

Burgat, F. (2007). *Great expectations in the Arab World concerning the European Union: Have the high hopes of an alternative partnership to that with the United States already been dashed*? DGExPo/B/PolDep/2006/25, Brussels.

Cameron, F., & Balfour, R. (2006, June). *The European Neighbourhood Policy as a conflict prevention tool* (EPC Issue Paper No. 47). Brussels: European Policy Center.

Cavatorta, F. (2011). The EU and the Arab world: Living up to the EU's normative expectations. In: *The Arab Spring of discontent: A collection from e-International relations* (published on e-International Relations during the first half of 2011), pp. 14–17.

Deak, I. (2012, July 2). Where's Charlemagne when we need him? *International Herald Tribune*, p. 6.

Del Sarto, R. A., & Schumacher, T. (2005). From EMP to ENP: What's at stake with the European Neighbourhood Policy towards the Southern Mediterranean? *European Foreign Affairs Review, 10*, 17–38.

Etkind, A. (2011). *Internal colonization: Russia's imperial experience*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

European Commission, Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic, and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. (2011, May 25). *A new response to a changing neighbourhood.* COM(2011) 303 final, Brussels.

European Commission, Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, and the Committee of the Regions (2012, May 15). *Delivering on a new European Neighbourhood Policy*. JOIN(2012) 14 final, Brussels.

Fritz-Vannahme, J., Schmidt A. G., Gawelek, M., Hanelt, C.-P., Ochmann, C. (2008, July). *Hallo Nachbar! Für eine neue EU-Politik von Marokko bis Aserbaidschan*. Spotlight Europe 2008/07, Bertelsmann Stiftung.

Genshagen, C. (2009, December). *European Neighbourhood Policy – potential and perspectives* (Conference Report). Expert Conference.

Hanelt, C.-P., & Dietl, E. (2011, May). *Europa und die Arabellion 2012*. Spotlight Europe 2011/05, Bertelsmann Stiftung.

Hanelt, C.-P., & Möller, A. (2011, January). *Was kann die EU für Nordafrika tun*? Spotlight Europe 2011/01, Bertelsmann Stiftung.

Hooghe, L., & Marks, G. (2001). *Multi-level governance and European integration*. Boulder, CO: Rowman & Littlefield.

Hyde-Price, A. (2007). *European security in the twenty-first century: The challenge of multi-polarity*. London: Routledge.

Ignatieff, M. (2003, January). The American empire. The burden. *New York Times*. Retrieved March 22, 2012 from http://www.nytimes.com/2003/01/05/magazine/the-american-empire-the-burden.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm

Janos, A. C. (2000). *East Central Europe in the Modern World. The politics of the borderlands from Pre- to Postcommunism*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Kappeler, A. (2001). *The Russian empire: A multi-ethnic history*. New York: Longman.

Khakee, A. (2011, June). *Tunisia's democratisation: Is Europe rising to the occasion*? (Policy Brief No. 80). Madrid: FRIDE.

Khanna, P. (2008). *The second world: how energing powers are redefining global competition on the 21st century*. New York: Random House.

Koder, J. (2009). Politisches Raumdenken orthodoxer Kulturen: Euromediterraneum' und 'Eurasien', zwei überkontinentale Modelle der Byzantiner. *Ostkirchliche Studien, 58.2*, 365–382.

Leonard, M. (2005). *Why Europe will run the 21st century*. Jackson, TN: Fourth Estate.

Ley, M. (2004). *Donau-Monarchie und europäische Zivilisation: Über die Notwendigkeit einer Zivilreligion*. Wien: Passagen.

Lippert, B. (2008, March). Die Europäische Nachbarschaftspolitik: viele Vorbehalte – einige Fortschritte – unsichere Perspektiven. In *Internationale Politikanalyse*. Bonn: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.

Liqun, Z. (2010, September). *China's foreign policy debates* (Chaillot Papers No. 121). Paris: Institute for Security Studies, European Union.

Marks, G. (1993). Structural policy and multi-level governance in the EC. In C. Alan & R. Glenda (Eds.), *The state of the European Community: the Maastricht debate and beyond* (pp. 391–411). Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.

Möller, A. (2011, August). Introduction. In A. Möller (Ed.), *Crossing borders – rethinking the European Union's Neighborhood policies* (DGAPanalyse, No. 2, pp. 7–10). Berlin: German Council on Foreign Relations.

Münkler, H. (2005). *Imperien: Die Logik der Weltherrschaft – vom Alten Rom bis zu den Vereinigten Staaten*. Berlin: Rowohlt Taschenbuch.

Pänke, J. (2010). *Ostmitteleuropa zwischen Verwestlichung und Nationalisierung. Die Neuorientierung polnischer und slowakischer Außenpolitik zwischen 1989 und 2004. DGAP-Schriften zur Internationalen Politik*. Baden-Baden: Nomos.

Pełczyńska-Nałęcz, K. (2011, April). *Integration or imitation? EU policy towards its Eastern neighbours*. OSW Studies Issue 36, Warsaw.

Pond, E. (1999). *The rebirth of Europe*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.

Posener, A. (2007). *Imperium der Zukunft. Warum Europa Weltmacht werden muss*. München: Pantheon.

Ramadan, T. (2012). *The Arab awakening. Islam and the New Middle East*. London: Allen Lane.

Reiter, J. (2011). *Europa und die arabische Revolution* (p. 8). Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung: Frankfurt.

Renard, T. (2009, October). *A BRIC in the world: Emerging powers, Europe, and the coming order* (Egmont Paper 31). Brussels: Egmont Institute.

Rifkin, J. (2004). *The European dream: How Europe's vision of the future is quietly eclipsing the American dream*. Cambridge: Tarcher.

Sajó, A. (1997). Was macht der Westen falsch bei der Unterstützung der Rechtsreformen in Osteuropa. *Kritische Justiz, 30*, 495–503.

Sapir, A., & Zachmann, G. (2012, January). A European Mediterranean economic area to kick-start economic development. In S. Biscop, R. Balfour, & M. Emerson (Eds.), An Arab Springboard for EU Foreign Policy? (Egmont Paper 54, pp. 37–47). Egmont Institute: Brussels.

Schumacher, T. (2005). Die EU als internationaler Akteur im südlichen Mittelmeerraum. In *"Actor Capability" und EU-Mittelmeerpolitik* (pp. 25–41). Baden-Baden: Nomos.

Techau, J. (2011, September). *Time for strategic Europe*. Carnegie Europe.

Vaïsse, J., & Kundnani, H. (2012, January). *European Foreign Policy Scorecard*. London: European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR).

Whittaker, C. R. (2004). *Rome and its frontiers: The dynamics of empire*. New York: Routledge.

Zielonka, J. (2006). *Europe as empire: The nature of the enlarged European Union*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.