A gaze at narratives: What future for the EU's neighbourhood policy?*

Başak Alpan[1]

Middle East Technical University, Political Science and Public Administration, Ankara, Turkey
e-mail: balpan@metu.edu.tr
ORCID:0000-0003-1955-4700

Abstract

The significance of geopolitics and the heightened significance of *realpolitik* which led to a renewed focus on a rather security-based perspective in European politics, particularly in the aftermath of the war in Ukraine, has been a noteworthy remark for the EU politics as well as the EU policies. By exploring the EU's dominant narratives on the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) through official EU documents and EU actors' speeches, this paper aims to understand how the narratives shifted under the light of developments such as the Arab Spring and annexation of Crimea in the 2010s, by giving a particular importance on the notion of "security". The final attempt will be to discuss whether the ENP's *geopolitics narrative* has been capitalised after the Russian invasion of Ukraine and what this means for the future of the European integration in general and the ENP in particular.

Key words: European neighbourhood policy, european union, narratives, geopolitics, security.

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1. Introduction

On top of the devastating impact of the Russian invasion on the people of Ukraine, the war created a milestone moment in the EU's political and institutional history as well as the global landscape. The invasion that began in February 2022 has fundamentally altered the post–Cold War European security order, creating a strong sense of uncertainty in terms of the question of how the invasion will unfold as well as the future of the EU's foreign policy and its bilateral relations with Russia. For the last three decades, the foundations of this relationship were economic and energy interdependence. Now, with Russia posing the biggest threat to peace and stability in Europe, a new crisis of security has emerged, drawing on the EU's capitalisation of a "geopolitical Europe". Indeed, the Union's increasing tendency to pursue a security policy model less influenced by liberal aspirations (the so-called *normative power Europe* claim) *(*Manners, 2002: 241) and more relying on "bounded" rational calculation of the costs and benefits of alternative courses of action – so-called *realpolitik-* reached its pinnacle with the Russian invasion of Ukraine. For the EU, the war proved that, *"*Europe is even more in danger than we thought just a few months ago" and brought the EU's "geopolitical awakening" (EEAS, 2022*)*.

No doubt, the EU project had hard times before, just like it is going through pluri-crises at the moment. Indeed, its spiritual father, Jean Monnet, saw this as the best way to advance to his preferred goal of "ever closer union", arguing that "Europe will be forged in crises, and will be the sum of the solutions adopted for those crises" (cited in Barroso, 2011:2). Currently, it is hard not to witness the shifting mood in Europe, with the rise of nationalism, populism and a nation-first agenda, in parallel to a growing aversion to global capitalism, immigration and the free movement of labour against the background of economic flux, following the 2008 global financial crisis, 2015 migration crisis and more recently, COVID-19 pandemic. The state of crisis is also prevalent for the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), an EU policy aiming to create a "ring of friends", i.e. an area of political stability, security and economic prosperity, comprising the countries situated to the east (i.e. Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine) and to the south of the EU (i.e. Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, and Tunisia) since 2003 (European Commission, 2003: 4).

By exploring the shifts in the EU's ENP narratives (namely the *security and stability narrative*, *market and democracy narrative* and finally *the geopolitics narrative*) and by paying particular attention to the ENP's differentiated approach to two regions under its focus, this paper will argue that the notion of "security" has always been salient in the EU's neighbourhood narratives having particular

meanings at various historical junctures (such as the Arab Spring and the migration crisis). Within the confines of the ENP, as well as the scope of this paper, "security" means to be bereft from the negative factors such as terrorism, migration and human trafficking and that could infiltrate the EU through the borders of neighbouring countries, entailing both civilian and military dimensions (EU Neighbors, 2023). However, when the ENP was launched, the kind of threats against which the EU wanted to guard itself by investing in the ENP was above all non-military and de-territorialized (Christou, 2010). Throughout the narrative shifts named above, the extent of the notion of "security" has increased and expanded as to include various policy areas such as energy and environment, leading to an increasing the degree of "securitization[2]". Moreover, throughout these narrative shifts that will be scrutinised below, the notion of "security" was increasingly associated with a geopolitical perspective.

The paper is structured as follows: After the Introduction, I will explore the conceptual framework on "narratives" to understand how narratives are relevant to the EU's self-representation and policies. Then, I will move to deciphering the EU's ENP narratives with reference to historical junctures through the examination of official EU documents and EU actors' speeches. The argument here will be that the *geopolitics narrative*, which has been fundamentally dominant after the mid-2010s constitutes a fundamental rupture within the ENP narratives, silencing the already eroded *normative power Europe* perspective, emphasising the promotion of values such as democracy, the rule of law, fundamental freedoms and human rights, which will also necessitate a real reconfiguration of the ENP and a revisiting of the idea of European integration.

2. Conceptual framework on narratives

Especially starting from the 1990s, the EU increasingly represented itself as a political institution approximating to the motto of "ever closer Union" mentioned in the Rome Treaty through focusing on shared European values and norms with the aim of going beyond merely being an economic cooperation. This focus on ideational dynamics of the European integration has mainly been emphasised after the 1992 Maastricht Treaty and during the big-bang enlargement of 2004. This perspective which takes the international reality not merely as the product of physical forces and material power (military or economic) but as socially constructed through discursive power (i.e. the power of knowledge, ideas, culture,

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[2] "Securitization" within the context of this paper, following the main presumptions of the Copenhagen School, points to the process which renders an issue a security one, leading to the suspension of daily politics and the introduction of the sense of an urgency and emergency by the elites (see Buzan *et al.,* 1998; Buzan & Wæver, 2003 for main examples of the literature on "securitization").

ideology, and language) (Adler, 1997; Hopf, 1998) has been dubbed as a part of the "social constructivist turn" in the literature (for examples of social constructivist turn in the EU studies, see Checkel, 1999; Christiansen et.al. 1999; Smith, 1999; Zehfuss, 2002). With its reference to human consciousness and ideational factors, social constructivism "insists that human agents do not exist independently from their social environment and its collectively shared systems of meanings" (Risse, 2004: 160).

In this respect, *a narrative* is also a methodological tool that helps construct social reality (for examples of social constructivist use of narratives, see McLean, 2003; Neumann, 2004; Nicolaidis and Howse, 2002). "Narratives are stories people tell to make sense of their reality" (Andrews et. al. 2015: 1). A "narrative turn" across human sciences was announced years ago as a consequence of crisis of confidence in positivist social science, the post-structuralist emphasis on power of agency and "post-modernist exposure of the meta-narratives underpinning much of the theory construction" (Cianciara, 2017; Berkhofer, 1995; Roberts, 2006: 703). Narratives denote how different elements and political projects are brought together, which are defined as generative narrations of a sequence of events, experiences or actions with a plot that ties together different parts into a meaningful whole (Czarniawska, 1998; Franzosi, 1998; Feldman et.al., 2004).

Conceptualization of narratives in European studies is even more recent (for good examples of narratives in European studies see Manners and Murray, 2016; Hague et. al. 2016; Gilbert, 2008; Eder, 2009; Kaiser, 2011). There is a consensus in the literature that the EU foreign policy and EU enlargement policy in particular, are rooted in narrative(s) (Manners, 2010a; Hill and Smith, 2011). In case of the EU enlargement, a democratic-market oriented narrative has been identified from the start as the main base on which to build and sustain such a supranational political community (Samur, 2004: 31). Similarly, Manners and Murray explore how the post-war *peace narrative* of Europe turned into *a human rights and enlargement narrative in the* 1990s (Manners and Murray, 2016). For Schumacher, the EU's engagement in the international system is not merely a function of inter-governmental bargaining, transfers of competence, and opportunity structures, but could be explained through narratives (Schumacher, 2015: 383). In his seminal study on the Eastern Enlargement, Schimmelfennig argues that it is the "rhetorical action" of the EU member states (i.e. the strategic use of norm-based arguments) which could explain why they supported the 2004 enlargement even if it did not reconcile the self-interested state enlargement preferences based on mainly material conditions Schimmelfennig, 2001). For Schimmelfennig, in an "institutional environment" like the EU, political actors are concerned about their reputation as members and about the legitimacy of their preferences and behavior (Schimmelfennig, 2001: 48).

Another important aspect of narratives is that they could be used as cognitive resource that can be deployed strategically by actors and are particularly useful in times of uncertainty (Biegoń, 2013: 198). In line with the research purposes of this paper, the ENP narratives of the EU as constructed by the EU documents depict the way in which the EU as an integration project sees and represents itself in terms of critical junctures (see Cianciara, 2017: 50; Nitoiu, 2013 for a discussion on the varying dynamics of the ENP narratives). In this respect, it is important to explore how the ENP narratives shift under political developments and uncertainties and to understand how this links to the EU foreign policy, which will be scrutinised in the next section.

3. The EU neighbourhood policy: A gaze at narratives

What could be deemed as the predecessor of the ENP, the so-called *Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP)*, better known as *the Barcelona Process* and later transformed into *the Union for the Mediterranean*, has been launched in the 1990s, reflecting the security concerns after the end of the Cold War and inducing a systematic policy approach. "In the framework of a wider security agenda, the then EU-15 aimed at cooperating with 12 Mediterranean states in a broad set of policy domains" (Tömmel, 2013: 19).After the 2004 big-bang enlargement of the EU, some of the EU's Mediterranean member states insisted that any "neighbourhood" policy ought to include a framework that would entail also Southern Mediterranean countries that, by then, were still part of the EMP to counterbalance this enlargement-driven geographical focus (Gamkrelidze and Vaisanen, 2022: 12). Thus, after 10 years of limited success with EMP, the EU changed direction and it launched the ENP[3] in 2005, targeting both the Eastern and Southern neighbours. The key point about the ENP is that it does not offer membership to the countries within its scope. In other words, the ENP included countries that the EU "cannot or does not want to integrate" (Haukkala, 2003: 2). As a part of the ENP, the so-called Eastern Partnership (EaP) was launched in 2009 to strengthen the EU's relations with its Eastern neighbours (Council of the European Union, 2009).

This change also signaled a shift from the EU's multilateral approach to an essentially bilateral approach to the region (Tömmel, 2013: 22). "The ENP has a differentiated and more flexible approach in that the pace and degree of relations between the EU and neighbouring countries are shaped according to each neighbour's own circumstances and capacity, as well as the extent of their progress

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[3] The countries eligible to the ENP are: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine and Belarus.

in carrying out political, social and economic reforms" (Cebeci, 2019: 71). Romano Prodi, the then President of the European Commission, stated that the main purpose for establishing the ENP right after the Eastern Enlargement of 2004 was that the Union wanted to create a safe space by further developing relations with the neighbouring countries (Prodi, 2002: 4).Thus, given the focus areas, the ENP has been established to serve EU's security and stability concerns in the region, and to avoid clashes emerging in the region with non-EU countries, protecting the EU's regional interests and enhancing the role of the Union as a global normative actor.

Thus, from the start, the ENP had a differentiated approach not only towards the neighbour states but also towards the two regions in focus. The legacies of the Soviet period on one hand, and the legacies of colonial past and the authoritarian regimes, on the other, make reforms and economic, social and institutional changes a path-dependent process in both regions. Similarly, bilateral legal relations with the eastern neighbours are based on Partnership and Co-operation Agreements, whereas with most Southern partners more developed association agreements have been concluded (van Elsuwege, 2012: 2). Differences between both types of bilateral agreements *inter alia* include the legal basis, the institutional framework, and the objectives of the relationship. It is also noteworthy that for the eastern neighbours' specific European human rights standards apply, developed within the framework of the Council of Europe (CoE) or the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), whereas for the Mediterranean countries the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is the standard point of reference (van Elsuwege, 2012: 60). The differentiation of human rights standards, particularly in the field of minority protection, is further reflected in the narratives of the ENP Country Reports and Action Plans (see Lannon et.al., 2007 for a more detailed discussion). As Manners contends, the inclusion of the Mediterranean to the ENP was "an add-on to the original aim of improving its relations with the Eastern neighbourhood" (Manners, 2010b: 39). This "add-on" characteristic introduces an unequal treatment for the sake of the Mediterranean partners, creating a distinction between two neighbourhoods. Thus, the EU's differentiation between ENP-East and ENP-South displays the embedded bias towards Arab societies.

This is also reflected in the differentiation between "security" narratives regarding the two regions. "After the launch of the ENP, what we witnessed was an 'exclusionist' policy, where the reduction of illegal migration from the south takes top priority in EU security discourse. Post-9/11, in the policy area of 'counter-terrorism' measures, the EU likewise demarcates 'liberal zones of civilisation' from 'illiberal' ones, leaving the dirty work of counter terrorism to countries such as Egypt and Morocco" (Pace, 2010: 432). On the other hand, for the Central Eastern European ENP members -historically more suspicious of Russia's intentions- "there has been a clear desire for the EU to become more engaged in the post-Soviet space

and to turn the Eastern neighbourhood into a buffer zone with Russia" (Browning, 2018: 111). Indeed, the EaP was launched in view of heightened concerns amongst the neighbours and the EU's newer members in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) in particular, following Russia's military action in Georgia in 2008 (Raik, 2016). Thus, although the notion of "security" was a part of the ENP narratives from the start, the reference point and the scope of the term differed in terms of two regions of the neighbourhood. I will now explore the three particular ENP narratives to understand the temporal narrative shifts as well as conceptual differentiation across two the East and South.

3.1. First ENP narrative-security and stability narrative

"Building security in our neighbourhood" is one of the three objectives of the EU, as laid out in the European Security Strategy (ESS) in December 2003 that defines the major threats and security objectives of the EU (European Council, 2003). Among the three objectives identified - addressing the key threats (terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, regional conflicts, state failure, organised crime), building security in the neighbourhood, and building an international order based on effective multilateralism -two of them are linked to the EU's neighbourhood (Comelli, 2007:2). Thus, "security" from this perspective meant for the ENP when it was first launched the prevention from threats that could infiltrate the EU through the borders of neighbouring countries, entailing both civilian and military dimensions (EU Neighbors, 2023).

In this respect, the focus of the *security and stability narrative* has its roots in the 2003 ESS document, which argued that the post-Cold War "environment is one of increasingly open borders in which the internal and external aspects of security are indissolubly linked" (European Council, 2003: 3). This perspective is echoed in the 2003 *Wider Europe* communication by the European Commission, creating "an enlarged area of political stability and functioning rule of law", promoting regional cooperation and integration that are preconditions for "political stability, economic development and the reduction of poverty and social divisions" as well as promoting "stability and prosperity within and beyond the new borders of the Union" is emphasised (European Commission, 2003: 3–5).

Thus, the most fundamental principles defining the ENP were stability and security, which forms the crux of the first ENP narrative, i.e. *security and stability narrative* (European Commission, 2016). Based on past experiences, the ENP holds that the EU and neighbouring countries are already mutually dependent when it comes to "achieving security, stability and sustainable development within the EU respective borders" (Pardo, 2004: 733). Thus, the ENP is tasked with developing a policy that "stabilizes the neighbourhood and draws it into a virtual circle of development and democracy without offering the prospect of accession" (Balfour

and Rotta, 2005: 8). It is no coincidence that both the ESS and the ENP are conceived in the same period, with a significant focus on creating zones of stability, security and prosperity in and around the EU. In the post-9/11 global environment, the ENP is underpinned by the desire to provide security for EU citizens for effectively controlling external borders (Dekanozishvili, 2018: 229; Bicchi, 2010; Pace, 2010)

When the EU stated to forge ENP-based relationship with the Eastern and Southern neighbourhoods, it was crystal clear that the main aim of the EU in the region was to instigate EU-induced reforms and European governance, led by European norms and way of doing things. Thus, the main point of departure was to reproduce the EU's so-called *normative power Europe* claim. The *normative power Europe* is based on the claim that the EU is normatively different as it promotes the value of peace, democracy, human rights and the rule of law in the world through both constituting a "virtuous example" and EU conditionality (Manners, 2002; Manners and Whitman, 2003). As it will be detailed below, although the focus on "security" was an indispensable part of the ENP from the start, the policy in its early stages underscored the EU's *normative power Europe* claim by underlining European norms and governance.

As mentioned in Section 2, this tendency was also in line with the *zeitgeist* of the late 1990s, when the EU increasingly promoted itself, beyond being a mere market-based economic actor, as a democratic polity of norms and a structure characterised by a distinct European identity as adopted by its citizens. This was also the *lingua franca* of the 2004 Eastern Enlargement. On a different note, at the time of the enlargement, Russia was generally perceived in the EU as being committed to integrating into the liberal world order, and too weak to mount significant opposition in the post-Soviet space (Nitoiu, 2021: 111). Thus, the political landscape was conducive for the EU to emphasise European norms and values within *the security and stability narrative* rather than employing a hardcore security perspective, rendering the EU the cursor of "a European 'post-modern security community' across the wider Europe" (Averre, 2009: 1690).

However much the *security and stability narrative* was equally fostered by the EU's normative power claim in the two regions, it is also necessary to set the differentiated contexts of the narratives. In the Eastern neighbourhood, Russia throughout this period emerged as a former hegemon seeking to maintain its influence over its lost empire (Giusti, 2017). Starting from the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia's policy vis-à-vis former Soviet republics has been premised upon a vision in which Russia's security is tightly interwoven with the fate of these countries. The concept of "near abroad" coined by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the early 1990s mirrors the ambiguous relationship developed by Russia with newly sovereign countries of the post-Soviet space (some of whom had never

been independent prior to the collapse of the USSR) (Delcour, 2018: 16). In this context, Russia was depicted as a "negative actor" (Tolstrup, 2009) and "a non-normative or a realpolitik-oriented actor" (Casier, 2013: 1379). In the South, there was not much of a rival narrative in terms of the EU's *security and stability narrative*. Nevertheless, the EU mainly instigated its own institutions and stability conception within the framework of the ENP narrative, ignoring the growing struggles and protests against regimes particularly in the MENA region with the resulting and increasing local instability and spill over effects into Europe itself, including the reactions of migrant populations within European countries (Pace, 2010: 436).

3.2. Second ENP narrative: Market and democracy narrative

After 2011, there has been a shift in the *security and stability narrative*, mainly against the background of the Arab Spring alongside crucial developments in the Eastern neighbourhood, such as Russia's aggression towards Georgia in 2008 and domestic developments in, for example, Ukraine and Belarus. The ensuing effects of the Lisbon Treaty of 2009, which provided a formal framework to the EU's relations with its vicinity and gave the mandate for this aim to the European Commission and European External Action Service, were also crucial.

To start with, the 2011 ENP review "split the unitary concept of the ENP" into *de facto* two different sub-regional cooperation formats vis-à-vis eastern and southern neighbors respectively (Blockmans, 2015: 2). The post-2011 EU narration of the neighbourhood pointed to an intensified turbulence. "Never before did the EU produce as many strategy documents on the ENP in one year as it did in 2011, nor was the increase in the ENP budget ever as significant in relative and absolute terms, not to mention the fact that it comes at a time of profound economic crisis within the EU" (Whitman and Wolff, 2010: XIV).

In the East, particularly with regard to the 2008 Russian aggression in Georgia and the 2009 launch of EaP, the EU increasingly initiated with the EaP countries Association Agreements (AAs) and Deep and Comprehensive Free-Trade Areas (DCFTAs), as well as instigating visa liberalisation, i.e. the lifting of Schengen visa requirements once specific conditions are met and increased sectoral cooperation, for instance in the energy area (Delcour, 2018: 23). In this context, the second ENP narrative was "stripped of any geo-political considerations" in its design and that it "has not been a geopolitical power projection project in the crude sense of the term" (Haukkala; 2016: 6; Howorth, 2017: 6). What the EaP throughout this period offered was a set of incentives that can be summed up by the so-called 'three Ms': Markets (sectorial access to the EU internal market), Money (financial aid and loans), and Mobility (visa facilitation) (Cadier, 2014: 78). Thus, the EaP was not originally designed to reflect a hard security logic (and did not have the effective

means for this purpose), leading to a focus in the Eastern neighbourhood on deeper economic integration on the part of the second ENP narrative.

In the South, the breakdown of the incumbent political order in North Africa and the Middle East unfolding under the rubric of Arab Spring have put into question "not only previously held understandings about the stability of authoritarian regimes, but also the EU's relations with neighbourhood countries" (Bremberg, 2016: 423). The European Commission in one of its annual regional ENP Progress Reports, referred to 2013 in particular as "a year of crises" owing to "political instability and continuing difficult socio-economic conditions across a number of countries in the neighbourhood. Within this context, "security" in the eyes of the EU was clearly about democratisation. "Security challenges -both domestic and regional- increased and, in some countries, partly reversed democratic reform achievements of previous years and stunted prospects for economic recovery" (European Commission, 2014). According to Cianciara, the EU narrative on the ENP shifted within this context from emphasis on stability, economic development and good governance to "deep democracy" (2017: 57). Deep and sustainable democracy included a focus on free and fair elections, freedom of expression, of assembly and of association, judicial independence, fight against corruption and democratic control over the armed forces. The EU also stressed the role of civil society bringing about deep and sustainable democracy. The Commission's 2011 strategy paper "narrated a story of democratisation leading to greater levels of political and socio-economic stability via a rather linear process and lack of trade-off between democratic change and stability" (cited in Cianciara, 2017: 57). This shift in the ENP narrative is explicitly stated by Stefan Füle, the then Commissioner responsible for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy: "Europe was not vocal enough in defending human rights and local democratic forces in the region (...) Too many of us fell prey to the assumption that authoritarian regimes were a guarantee of stability in the region" (Füle, 2011). For Catherine Ashton, after the Arab Spring, the guiding principle of the ENP is "more for more", which is not about "dictating outcomes" but about "supporting pluralism, accountability, deep democracy and shared prosperity" (Ashton, 2011). All in all, up until the onset of the 2014 Ukraine crisis, the EU managed to create the image of a strong normative actor in the Eastern and Southern neighbourhood, focusing on good governance and norm promotion and drawing on democratic consolidation in the neighbourhood, still capitalising the EU's normative power perspective.

3.3. Third ENP narrative-geopolitics narrative

Starting from mid-2010s, we see the increasing tone of securitization in the ENP, mainly due to the migration flows into the European lands as well as the intensification of "Russian threat" perception. Within the context of Russia's full-

scale military intervention in Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea in 2014 as well as the subsequent destabilisation of Donbas led to a fundamental recalibration of its ENP narrative. In this respect, the third ENP narrative highly displayed characteristics of "securitization" and what Cadier calls, "geopoliticization"[4] (Cadier, 2019).

The second revision of the ENP took place in 2015, following the aforementioned "radical" changes in several ENP partner countries (European Commission and High Representative, 2015: 2). Whilst, for example, in the 2011 ENP review the EU had introduced the principle of "more for more" and introduced the term "deep democracy", the 2015 review omitted engaging with these notions entirely. In this respect, the 2015 review of the ENP introduced a transactional focus on individual partnership priorities for a greater sense of ownership of the policy. One of the principal documents coming out of the 2015 ENP review, the *Joint Communication on the Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy*, makes clear that in "the next three to five years, the most urgent challenge in many parts of the neighbourhood is stabilisation" (European Commission, 2015). In the context of the revised ENP of 2015, this focus on "stabilization" mainly meant securitization of issues.

Moreover, this securitization tendency also differentiated between images of the Eastern and the Southern neighbourhoods similar to the previous narratives. The representation of the Eastern neighbourhood mainly referred to issues like protracted conflicts, authoritarianism, continuous "strategic intimidations, direct threats to their sovereignty and territorial integrity", mainly addressing armed interference of Russia in Georgia and Ukraine, the de facto control over Belarus, as well as the continued presence of Russian troops in protracted conflicts (Council of the EU, 2022: 7–9). Similarly, as far as Southern neighbourhood is concerned, security references revolved around topics such as human trafficking, torture, "terrorism, violent extremism, radicalisation, cyber and hybrid threats as well as organised crime and increasing challenges regarding irregular migration" (Council of the EU, 2022: 43). Gamkrelidze and Vaisanen in their study where they explored the framing of "security" in ENP documents between 2003-2022 find an upward sloping tendency in the inclusion of further issues within the scope of "security" in the ENP documents (Gamkrelidze and Vaisanen, 2022).

This shift is very much reflected in the 2016 *Global Security Strategy*, where the understanding of "security" includes state and societal resilience, with the aim

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[4] For Cadier, "geopoliticization" refers to the geopolitical framing of the EaP in public discourses by political actors especially in EU member states like Poland and Czech Republic, which are geographically and historically more exposed to the Russian "threat" than other member states and which played an important role in pushing for the EaP initiative (Cadier, 2019).

of tackling governmental, economic, societal, climate and energy fragility (EEAS, 2016: 9).

In this context, the EU support for certain political values and reforms has increasingly during this period "pursued as a geopolitical comparative advantage over Russia" and "superimposed with a layer of geostrategic diplomacy" in the East (Youngs, 2017: 6-7), hinting that the EU was shifting towards a more realist, pragmatic, and flexible approach towards its neighbourhood. The "geopoliticization" of the ENP was mainly promoted and reproduced within the European polity by an identifiable discourse coalition, championed by EU member states like Poland and Czech Republic, preceding the outbreak of the 2014 Ukraine crisis.

"Geopolitics" is also the key to understanding the shifts in the ENP narrative regarding the Southern neighbourhood throughout the mid-2010s. The civil war in Syria which erupted in 2011 (and which led to the suspension of EU-Syria relations) as well as the Libyan crisis epitomised by two civil wars until 2020 also shifted the EU narrative regarding these countries. Especially after mid-2010s, the EU refers to Syria and Libya not under the rubric of the ENP but usually in the CFSP documents. For instance, *the Strategic Compass*, the EU's plan of action for strengthening the EU's security and defence policy released in March 2022, positioned the conflicts in Libya and Syria as "specific issue areas" (cited in Sime, 2023: 2). This is also verified by the two EU missions in Libya, i.e. the Integrated Border Management Assistance Mission (EUBAM) launched in 2013 and the European Union Naval Force Mediterranean Operation (EUNAVFOR MED) IRINI launched in 2020 (mainly to implement the UN arms embargo on Libya until 2023).

In a nutshell, the 2015 review of the ENP highlighted the fact that the neighbourhood has transformed "from a ring of friends to a fire" (Nitoiu, 2021: 113). It also advocated a more pragmatic and interest-based approach, which emphasized the need to increase the resilience of the neighbourhood states and the EU itself. This [is] indeed a slight withdrawal from the EU's previous ambitious goals, which did not really take into account the structural factors in the region" (Nitoiu, 2021: 114). Within this context, "resilience" has become the buzzword for the "new" ENP. This reflected the EU's desire for stability in the countries on its outer borders through a more securitized and geopoliticized perspective. "By putting security first, the EU tried to balance its interests and principles" (Blockmans, 2017: 1). The most significant idea at the heart of the ENP -the transformational power of European norms- has all but disappeared with the 2015 revision amid all the realism (Furness and Schafer, 2015).

4. Conclusion: An even more geopolitical ENP after Russian invasion of Ukraine? Or a dead one?

In 2013, the then president of the Commission, Barroso referred to the European narrative centred around culture, cultural diversity and "European values", such as "human dignity, democracy, the rule of law and diversity" (Barroso, 2013). It has been so long since these values had been an indispensable part of the story that the EU was telling about itself, culminating around the EU's so-called *normative power Europe* claim. Nevertheless, in December 2019, Ursula von der Leyen assumed office as the President of the Commission this time with the intention of leading a "geopolitical Commission" (European Commission, 2019). This shift in the self-narrative of the EU is also evident within the framework of the ENP narratives, which this article aimed at exploring through assessing official EU documents and speeches of EU actors. This is very much about the crises and uncertainties attached to the European integration for some time now, "ranging from concerns over competitive markets in the United States and Eastern Asia, to security threats" (Schout and Kassim, 2018: 55). Now, the picture is even more complicated with the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, which duplicated the existing EU crisis and fears, leading to particular policy changes. For instance, this "turning point" ("Zeitenwende") led to, among others, the launching of a major defence program to reequip Germany's armed forces. All in all, the invasion of Ukraine led to a fundamental shift in the EU's security architecture narrative which is more geopolitical and securitised than ever. By the same token, after the Russian invasion, the EU decided in June 2022 to give Moldova and Ukraine EU membership candidate status and to acknowledge Georgia as a potential candidate, with which it rejected the idea of a Russian sphere of influence in the Eastern neighbourhood. This decision fundamentally intertwined the separation between the Enlargement and neighbourhood policies of the EU.

The main argument in this paper has been that the notion of "security" has always been significant in the EU's ENP narratives having particular meanings at various historical junctures, although overshadowed by the EU's *normative power Europe* claim. Nevertheless, throughout the ENP narrative shifts scrutinised above, the extent of the notion of "security" has increased and expanded by time as to include various policy areas such as migration and radicalisation, *normative power Europe* claim being substituted by a focus on geopolitics. After mid-2010s, epitomised by the annexation of Crimea and the Euromaidan protests in Ukraine as well as the further destabilisation in the Southern neighbourhood, the EU paid increased attention to security issues, which increasingly culminated in the ENP's *geopolitics narrative*. This shift has been even exacerbated by the 2022 invasion, which signals the EU's moving away from temporal to geographical othering of

Russia, intertwined with the securitization of the EU's foreign policy including its cultural relations (Valenza, 2023). Adopting an ontological security perspective, Kaunert and de Deus Pereira argue that the invasion represents a constant threat to the maintenance of the stability and resilience in the Eastern Neighbourhood, which also links to the strengthening of *the geopolitics narrative* (Kaunert and de Deus Pereira, 2023).

It is crucial to understand these narrative shifts to examine how *the geopolitics narrative* will be translated into new policy choices in the neighbourhood on the part of the EU in the near future. After the 2022 invasion, some observers and analysts were quick to write the ENP's obituary not only because the ENP and Enlargement Policy basically overlapped but also because of the new geopolitical context that had been created by "the return of war to Europe" (Crombois, 2023; Meister, 2022; Michel, 2022). Moreover, the increasing role of the regional powers such as Türkiye, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Egypt and Iran in the context of growing contestation in the EU's Southern neighbourhood also creates a new geopolitical context in the region. Against this background, the European Political Community (EPC) has been launched on 6 October 2022 in Prague with 44 European heads of state and government (including all 27 EU member states as well as Türkiye) which aimed to "emphasise European geopolitical cooperation in light of Russia's aggression against Ukraine; to remedy enlargement fatigue by providing an additional forum for exchange between EU candidates and member states; as well as create a forum for exchange with non-EU security actors" (Tcherneva, 2023). The launch of the EPC also creates question marks on the extent of the geopolitical future of the EU.

The future of EU policy narratives will fundamentally be shaped against the background of these developments and we will see whether the ENP will turn even more geopolitical or will be completely merged into the EU's Enlargement Policy.

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Özet

Anlatılara bir bakış: Avrupa Birliği Komşuluk Politikası'nı nasıl bir gelecek bekliyor?

Avrupa politikasının özellikle Rusya'nın Ukrayna'yı işgalinden sonra gittikçe daha güvenlik temelli bir alan haline gelmesi ve jeopolitikanın ve realpolitik'in gittikçe artan önemi, Avrupa Birliği'ndeki (AB) politikaları ve politika yapış biçimini derinden etkiledi. Bu bağlamda, bu çalışma, AB resmî belgeleri ve AB aktörlerinin konuşmaları çerçevesinde AB'nin Avrupa Komşuluk Politikası'ndaki (AKP) hâkim anlatıları analiz ederek, Arap Baharı ve Kırım'ın ilhakı gibi olayların gölgesinde anlatıların nasıl değiştiğini "güvenlik" kavramına özel önem atfederek kavramayı amaçlıyor. Çalışma, son olarak AKP'nin jeopolitik anlatısının Rusya'nın Ukrayna'yı işgalinden sonra nasıl değişeceğini ve bunun özelde AKP'nin, genelde de Avrupa entegrasyonunun geleceği için nasıl bir anlama geldiğini tartışıyor.

Anahtar kelimeler: Avrupa Komşuluk Politikası, Avrupa Birliği, anlatı, jeopolitika, güvenlik.