

# A new European turnaround?

## Geopolitical effects of the EU crisis on the borders and cohesion perspectives with the neighbors

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# **A new European turnaround? Geopolitical effects of the EU financial and economic crisis on the borders with the neighbours**

## **Introduction**

The economical and financial crisis is having various effects which can threaten or strengthen the idea of the European Union and its actions, norms and soft power, its cohesion, its position within the global geopolitical context, its foreign politics and therefore its relationship with the neighbours. This paper mainly aims at outlining the elements characterising EU's foreign politics within the context of a slowly declining economical and political process in a multi-polar world, rendered more evident by the actual crisis. The weakening of the EU's pretended normative power within the international contexts will be discussed in relation to the accentuating of the competitiveness priority, the protection of jobs and, more generally, the social market model. These changes affect the EU's relationship with neighbouring countries. Therefore, particular attention will be given to the analysis of the ambiguousness and contradictions of the so-called Europeanisation toward neighbouring countries, in between security, democratisation processes, competitiveness and social justice; above all, we will consider the current transformations' chiaroscuro of Mediterranean and Eastern EU countries. These ambiguousness and contradictions require a new global strategy.

Such a global strategy will basically depend on how the EU will seek to come out of the current financial crisis, a crisis which has also become social, democratic and political. Consequently, the fractures of the project of a united Europe that have been brought about by the crisis and by austerity policies will be analyzed. And so will the new contradictions between democracy and financial stability, austerity and solidarity, which threaten EU's political cohesion and change its relationship with the neighbours. Different scenarios of either redefinition or separation of the UE have surfaced. A two speed Europe has re-appeared again as opposed to new governance policies and to proposals for a federalist re-launch for the construction of Europe.

In this context the German question stands out strongly, as, on one hand, it is liable to divide the EU and on the other it supports a foreign policy more and more oriented toward taking advantage of emerging markets within the globalisation process. Therefore a change has to be undertaken in favour of a Germany playing a more relevant role into endorsing the idea of a united and supportive Europe. At the same time, various EU member states are pursuing geo-economical competition priorities which accentuate contradictions and redefine international relationships, thus marginalizing relationships with the neighbours.

The effects of the crisis, particularly in relation to the multispeed Europe and new geo-economical priorities, can change the Europe of the concentric circles as developed so far, redesigning new variable geometry geopolitics with new poles (i.e. in addition to Russia, Turkey's growing role) and diversities. Neighbouring countries' transformations, particularly Arabic ones, challenge the neighbourhood policy based on the sort of neo-colonial or imperial Europeanisation process. The need arises to re-think politics starting from the undertaking of a real partnership principle which acknowledges the complexities, the plurality and differences of countries and populations.

To discuss a new approach between EU and neighbouring countries, it can be useful to debate on cosmopolitanism, Europeanisation and the new forms of transnational governance and on their neo-liberal, social and security contents. Within the neighbourhood policy it is in fact possible to contemporarily identify various contents reflecting in different geo-political and bordering strategies models in several frontiers areas. These strategies range from the traditional ones of the hard-borders or national-states limes to the analogy of imperial or neo-colonial kind with selective

borders and buffer zones, to the more cosmopolitan one aimed at the creation of networks and interactions that go beyond the frontiers. The complexity and the contradictions of neighbourhood policies reflect in its overlapping with various EU sectoral policies, from that on management of migratory flows to commercial policy, from the cohesion policy to the security one.

When facing this complexity and evident ambiguousness it is indispensable to seek greater coherence by supporting a more cosmopolitan approach open to the participation of the various stakeholders. A real partnership for the co-development, plural and respectful of differences, should characterise more a policy which coherently comprises the various sectoral policies.

Therefore, diverse scenarios have surfaced in EU's neighbourhood policy, from one of consolidation of a strong European core oriented towards emerging markets at a global level, to a more reformist one seeking to pursue and delve into Europeanisation and diversified integration towards the neighbourhood, from the ones more critical of a decentralized and polycentric Europe, based on an Olympic rings geopolitics, to a Europe re-thought about starting from new strategic partnerships, with Russia and Turkey, formulated on the basis of the needs and conditions of the countries of the so-called neighbourhood. To this extent, it could be feasible to think about re-naming the neighbourhood policy, which clearly evokes eurocentrism and a neo-colonial approach, in order to favour common regional policies where eastern European and southern Mediterranean countries' ownership is more evident, in closer collaboration with emerging countries such as Russia and Turkey and influent in areas such as Iran and Gulf States.

## **1 EU and its neighbourhood in the geopolitical changes**

### ***1.1 EU decline in a multi-inter-polar world***

The relationship between EU and the Neighbourhood Countries (NC) should be pictured within the international geopolitical framework, especially with regards to the surfacing of a multi-polar and inter-polar world. The Globalisation is translating in a hastened growth of economical, financial and communication relationships linking more and more countries, territories and people. The growth of relationships is widespread and diversified. The world scenario, characterised until a few years ago by the tripolar hegemony of United States, European Union and Japan, is turning into a multipolar system which new emerging countries, with economical and financial power, are taking part in. This transformation is also multipolar because it creates new relationships of interdependence and dependence between leader countries, so that one can not do without the other. Everything is interconnected and every phenomenon rebounds on with unexpected collateral effects.

The most evident phenomenon in the new century's geopolitics is the surfacing of the so-called BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa). These countries are shaping new power geographies in economic, social and political issues at global and local levels. The BRICS are the new geopolitical actors of future trends and scenarios. In this regard, the EC with the High Representative of the EU for foreign affairs and security policy underlined that

“The world has changed [...] A power shift is currently taking place with a lengthening list of emerging powers entering the global arena. Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa in particular have new ways of engaging with the rest of the world and also different values” (European Commission and High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy , 2011).

In addition to the surfacing of new powers, a partial reduction of the United States' role, or at least a change in the agenda from Bush to Obama's administration, is evident. Following the pretence to unipolarity characterised by the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, wanted by Bush's administration and

supported by the American conservative right wing's ideology, a debate on the USA retrenchment has now to be noted due to the fact that:

“they can no longer afford a world-spanning foreign policy. Retrenchment -- cutting military spending, redefining foreign priorities, and shifting more of the defence burden to allies -- is the only sensible course” (Parent and MacDonald, 2011).

Within this scenery, the observers notice a European short-term and structural decline. In the short term the financial and economic effects of the crisis are clearly evident. But structural long term issues are affecting the sustainability of the social and economic European models. The demographic change, the slowing pace of European productivity, especially in the Southern countries, and the increasing indebtedness are eroding the foundation of welfare states and European cohesion (Gill and Raiser, 2012)<sup>1</sup>. In order to face this decline, according to Pascal Lamy (Director General of the World Trade Organisation and ex European Commissioner for Trade)

“it is a matter of boosting for growth by 1 or 1.5 percentage points in order to be able to continue funding the European welfare system and to check the indebtedness that has built up to date. The reforms required to achieve this goal and to make the best of Europe's comparative advantages are long term reforms primarily regarding its education, training and innovation system.” (Lamy, 2012).

The European competitiveness depends more and more from comparative advantage stemming from its “non-price competitiveness” (know-how, quality and innovation). Parenthetically, this is the main feature of the German model, whereas other European countries, specifically those countries which have recently entered EU, those about to enter and the neighbouring ones, come out as competitive particularly because of lower labour costs.

The European Union has launched 2020's Europe strategy, which is based, in fact, on innovation so to gain back productivity and competitiveness on the international market, together with a cohesion policy which should ensure the catching-up of slow paced regions and the reduction of the differential of income and welfare. Such a cohesion policy should overtake the traditional approach of the redistributive kind in favour of a policy more oriented towards development (Jouen, 2012, p. 10).<sup>2</sup>

## ***1.2 EU external policy between normative power and trade priorities for defending European jobs***

This trend is not delved into by EU's foreign policy. In the Commission and High Representative communication awareness on the BRICS' role and on the major global challenges are detectable, the role of the EU as normative and civilian power (Gerrits, 2009)<sup>3</sup> is reasserted and so is the responsibility towards the neighbourhood, however the connection to the need to regain competitiveness in order to safeguard the European lifestyle (on the contrary, the protection of the

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<sup>1</sup> The World Bank has dedicated an analysis on the weakening of the European economic model.

<sup>2</sup> To this regard, for example, Marjorie Jouen, Deputy Head of the President's private office in the Committee of Regions of the European Union, for the Notre Institute proposes: “starting in 2014, the cohesion policy's role as a policy of development must be affirmed, and we must be open to beginning a true discussion on the model of development we desire. We must create the conditions for a transition to a “smart, green and inclusive development model” as advocated by the Europe 2020 strategy and view the cohesion policy as an instrument of social progress and well-being, which may require new criteria for eligibility. We must re-establish the democratic link between Europeans and the Union by making the results obtained by European funds tangible to them and by relying more heavily on “community-led local development”. The future cohesion policy will also be more credible if procedures are simplified, which would require ensuring at all costs that the European funds are accessible to small, local project initiators.

<sup>3</sup> A definition of EU normative or civilian power can be the following: “All the authors [...] as relevant actor in global politics, whose power and influence are not so much based on military might and other coercive means (which does not exclude other material, mostly economic, sources of power) as on the attractiveness of its example, reflecting such diverse practices, norms and values as shared sovereignty, welfare-state arrangements, multilateralism, democracy, human rights and environmental policies” (Gerrits, 2009)

US lifestyle is always evident in the case of the United States), can not be captured, or it is just under the surface. The EU appears as a beacon of civilization:

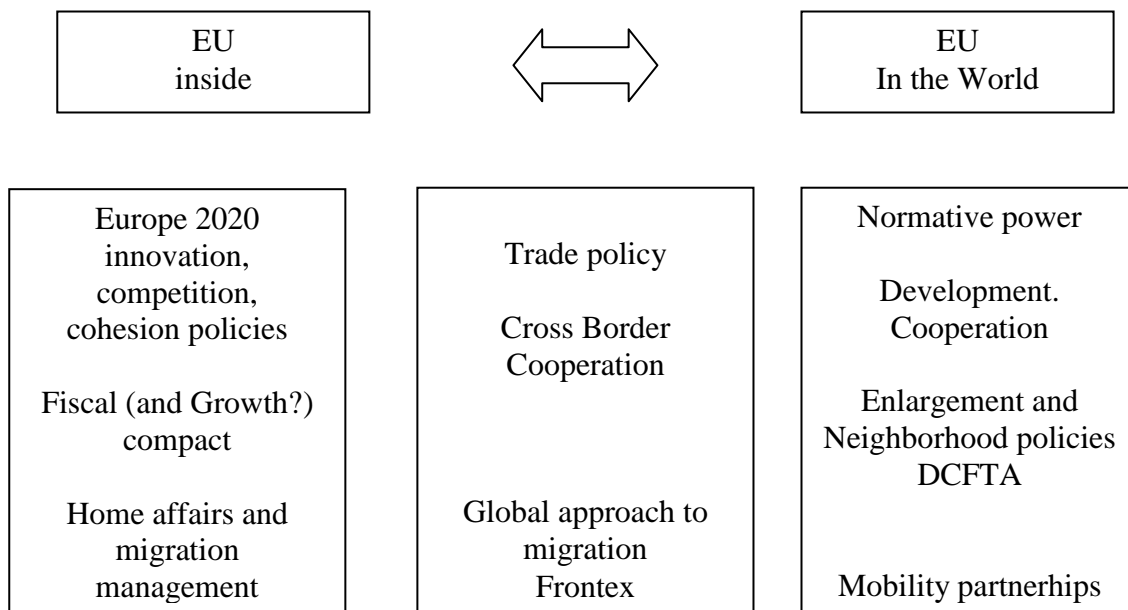
“The overall objective [...] to live up to its ambitions in promoting democracy, peace, solidarity, stability and prosperity and poverty reduction, both at global level and in our immediate neighbourhood, and to help safeguard global public goods” (European Commission and High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, 2011).

Actually, in the strategic objectives, the “support to EU interests abroad, such as protecting EU citizens, enhancing trade opportunities, promoting EU norms and standards, ensuring energy security”, are cited, but they appear as secondary, especially if one considers the distribution of resources.

In the EC’s proposal on resources to devolve to the various instruments for external actions there are over 23 billion euros (prices from December 2011) for the Development Cooperation, 18 for the European Neighbourhood, 14 for the Pre-accession Instrument, 1 for the Partnership Instrument (focus on strategic partners and emerging economies), in addition to this also 1,5 billion for the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights, 2,8 billion for Instrument for Stability and 0,6 billion for Nuclear Safety. Additional 34,2 billion off the budget are to be distributed to the European Development Fund destined to Africa, Caribbean and Pacific. It is evident that the majority of resources are within the scope of the Official Development Aid, but in terms of geopolitics the priority is clearly attributed to enlargement and neighbouring countries, thus showing how EU is characterised more in terms of continental power than as global player.

The issue is that to establish whether, in spite the Commission’s call for a comprehensive and consistent approach, there is real coherence between EU’s internal goal of regaining competitiveness and its external action dedicated for the great part to solidarity and to the European continent (Figure 1). What can not be noted from EU’s foreign policy’s general rhetoric level, can instead be gathered by the analysis of each of the policies in geographic areas, in this instance with particular focus on neighbourhood policy and, moreover, on the sectoral policy related to commerce.

**Figure 1: Inter-relations between internal and external EU policies**



Effectively, the EU has a competence on the Trade Policy thanks to the creation of the single market. The link between the European interest in competitiveness, growth and external action,

oriented to the opening of markets and to safeguard the competitiveness of its productions, is obvious in this policy.

“The Global Europe Communication in 2006 defined the key competitiveness-related elements of the EU’s trade policy pursued by the first Barroso Commission. It set out an integrated approach, linking the internal and external aspects of the EU’s competitiveness. It stated that Europe should pursue internal policies that promote the EU’s external competitiveness. [...] Global Europe called for the EU to remain open to trade and investment, advocating greater openness and fair rules in other markets (European Commission, 2010).”

This approach has been reconfirmed by linking it to the Europe 2020 strategy, so that the Trade Policy stands out as its external dimension. Europe’s political interest is more evident and clear compared to what declared in the EC communication on Global Europe:

“But for an open trade policy in Europe to succeed politically, others – including both our developed and emerging partners - must match our efforts, in a spirit of reciprocity and mutual benefit. Trade policy will not gain public support in Europe if we do not have fair access to raw materials, or if access to public procurement abroad is blocked, for example. The EU will remain an open economy but we will not be naïve. In particular, the Commission will remain vigilant in defence of European interests and European jobs. It will fight unfair trading practices with all appropriate means.” (European Commission, 2010)

### ***1.3 Ambiguities and contradictions in the Europeanisation discourse with neighbour countries***

EU’s interest in competitiveness can also be found in the new policies for geographic areas: it is significant that, with regard to the new Neighbourhood policy, the creation of Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (DCFTA) is still proposed.

In fact “the novelty of ENP consists precisely in its goal of achieving the so-called Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) with EU neighbours by moving from a process of negative integration (i.e., gradual dismantling of trade barriers) towards a process of positive integration (i.e., regulatory convergence in areas that have an impact on trade, in particular sanitary and phytosanitary rules, customs and border procedures, competition and public procurement)” (Montalbano and Nenci, 2012).

It has to do with dismantling, not only pricing obstacles, but also non-pricing related ones which protect to a greater extent the internal markets of neighbour countries and that curb down foreign economical trades.

The field of application ranges from goods to services to capitals. The rules that set forth the relation between companies and state, the production and consumption systems, are rendered suitable and compatible with those of the EU single market, the *acquis communitaires*, thus favouring a greater competitiveness and integration. The relevant rules are those of the European single market and it includes a progressive level of alignment, with transitory periods for more delicate and difficult issues, asymmetrical allowances and technical (Wijkman, 2011) assistance in order to allow the adaptation and the economical restructuring of the neighbour countries.

With regard to this, two issues are to be taken into consideration. The first is related to the issue on coherence and to the possible short-circuits deriving from an approach based on values and democracy and, on the other hand, from the competition aim of the economical liberalization to safeguard the European lifestyle. The negotiation of a greater opening of neighbour countries’ markets, from goods to services to capitals (but not the people), exposes the weak economical structures of this countries to the European competitiveness. This exposure can have negative social effects on the short or medium term which can be also reflected at a political level by undermining delicate democratization processes, such as those actually happening in certain Arabic countries. As written by representatives of Arabic civil society’s movements:

“The EU continues to push for a trade and investments agenda which has proved not to be useful for the development needs of partner countries and that could destroy democratic transitions if confirmed or delved into.”<sup>4</sup>

Should a neo-liberal shock therapy be applied, there is a high risk of a counterproductive collateral effect since it can support protectionist and authoritarian reactions. Therefore, it seems there is a need to carefully and gradually gauge the markets’ liberalisation with the support of democracies. A recent analysis highlights that:

“The fundamental issue at stake in the current DCFTA negotiations is how far the EU should push the EU *acquis communautaire* in particular in the field of technical and sanitary standards. [...] The EU is dealing with economies that are much poorer than the EU’s poorest member states. For them, integrating EU standards into their legislation, and in particular putting them into practice, will be costly and will probably fail” (Dreyer, 2012).

The above only if we deem the economical liberalisation to represent the main and unequivocal recipe for the human development. Otherwise, more space should be allowed for the identification of new development models, less Eurocentric and more focused on the growth of regional markets originating from the needs of neighbour countries, more open to local experimentations and in favour of democracies based on a more compatible balance between competition and social cohesion.

The second issue relates, in fact, to the dialectic between a single growth model and the competitiveness to which one must conform, and the inevitable diversity within the European scenery and within the neighbour countries with their diverse economical, social and political dimensions. The fundamental issue of the strain between homologation and flexibility, between reductionism and complexity arises. The thesis of the single economic model based on the markets’ progressive liberalisation, mandatory for the political liberalisation and for the promotion of the individual’s human rights, clashes against a complex political and social reality both inside and outside the EU.

The modernisation thesis is questioned in relation to its claimed goals, especially in Muslim countries, when it is perceived as instrumental to neo-colonialist processes, reinforcing authoritarian powers and in opposition to solidarity, community and autonomy values. According to Nadine Sika, the political economy of the Arab world also supported by the EU

“can be summarized as follows: Neoliberal reform accompanied by corruption and cronyism; High unemployment levels and rising social inequalities; Increasing incidences of social protests. [...] In applying the neo-liberal recipe “both Arab governments and western funders have neglected the popular unrest that was boiling on the Arab streets. They advocated austerity measures, decreasing tariffs, opening the markets, but were not as passionate about implementing good governance, the rule of law and real democratization processes” (Sika, 2012).

A similar debate can be found within the EU especially in the current period of crisis, as we will see forward.

On the other hand the relation between EU and the neighbourhood can not be reduced to the economical dimension, even though essential. Recent history, in fact, proves how this relation has been especially based on security issues.

These issues comprise the so-called Europeanisation process.

“Europeanisation consists of processes of a) construction, b) diffusion and c) institutionalisation of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, 'ways of doing things' and shared beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidated in the EU policy process and then incorporated in the logic of domestic (national and subnational) discourse, political structures and public policies” (Sittermann, 2011).

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<sup>4</sup> [[http://www.asud.net/test/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=1832%3Aurgent-call-contro-dcfta-conegitto-tunisia-marocco-e-giordania&catid=5%3Amondo&Itemid=39&lang=it](http://www.asud.net/test/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1832%3Aurgent-call-contro-dcfta-conegitto-tunisia-marocco-e-giordania&catid=5%3Amondo&Itemid=39&lang=it)]



A process which tends to promulgate values, norms, policies institutionalised in the forming of EU, inside, outside, between member states, accession countries and neighbour countries. A process, therefore, which faces positions, histories, a plurality of cultures and interests all of various state and non-state stakeholders, at various levels, national and local, in various countries.

The Europeanisation can represent a new land of opportunities for the neighbouring countries, but it can also be challenged. Usually, the great attractiveness of EU membership is highlighted for its sharing of values and for the access to a global power, but more prosaically to the market and to the funds. The crisis, however, puts back into perspective the “carrot” and the debate on Europeanisation is deprived of its more relevant materialistic contents. In addition to this, the enlargement fatigue and the perplexities on which are the boundaries of the Europeanisation, considering that the enlargement can not happen in a progressive and limitless fashion. The issue of Turkey’s access to EU remains unsolved.

Furthermore, and more deeply, we need to question whether and how much neighbour countries want to be Europeanised. The vision and the outside perception on Europeanisation and on EU’s normative power are clearly complex and not immune to critics (as we will see further). The victory of Islamic parties in changing Arabic countries engenders new differences for which the answer can not be the Europeanisation process, but the beginning of a new debate open to confrontation is required. The dilemma between stability and change, as occurred in the EU with neighbour countries, has been partially overtaken in the Mediterranean area, thanks to internal changes, and it is likely to arise again in Europe. EU has to reckon with the plurality and the differences of the neighbouring countries.

#### ***1.4 Complexities and differentiations in the transformations of the NCs***

The neighbourhood, especially the Mediterranean area, appears to be, in various Commission’s documents, as a problematic area more than a source of opportunities. The neighbouring countries political and economic fundamentals are looked upon with concern. The political structures are stuck between a stability built upon authoritarian and nationalistic positions and uncertain and unpredictable changes. Economic structures are weak: if on one hand the macroeconomic administration has improved, on the other competitiveness capacities are scarce and dependent on low labour costs and exploitation of natural resources. With regard to Eastern Europe, it shares with the EU a prospect of an alarming demographic decline as opposed, on the contrary, with the window of opportunities in the Mediterranean area where the demographic growth is more substantial (even though it is stabilising) but it does not meet with new job opportunities, thus resulting in migratory flows towards EU.

However, the uncertainty and unpredictability, caused by the complexity of socio-economic systems, brings about an alternation of EU’s perceptions on neighbours which results in sudden and responsive changes in its geopolitical proposals. As stressed by Michael Emerson (2011a).

“The most striking and indeed astonishing feature of this autumn’s political landscape in the European neighbourhood is the contradictory trend as between East and South. East Europe is reverting back towards authoritarianism, while the Arab world proceeds with its anti-authoritarian devolution. Neither region is homogenous, of course. But the mainstream tendencies are clear.”

In the case of the Mediterranean, therefore, there has been a passage from a vision founded on a security ensured by authoritarian governments, as opposed to the principles of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership aspiring to a progressive democratization process, to the hope that the so-called Arabic Spring from 2011 might lead to a democratic transition, to respect for human rights and to peace prospects. The EU has, hence, renovated the neighbourhood policy, by greatly emphasizing the commitment to support democratization processes, civil society’s organizations and reforms for social and economic integration, by reinforcing the prospects for people’s mobility

partnerships, always with a deep attention to the struggle against illegal migration from a security "point of view" (European Commission, 2011a).

Some scholars see new opportunities for human security,

"bearing in mind that the Tunisian referred to the Arab spring movement as the Revolution of Dignity, the new Tunisian government should implement a human-security centered approach- ensuring that all social groups particularly the most economically vulnerable members of the community, are provided with a least minimal social support, the resources are divided equally and the access to political and economic power is not made exclusive only to a small group of privileged individuals" (Novoty, 2011).

In a similar way the Femise network of European and Mediterranean research centres underlines that

"It is therefore a question of obtaining an open, more inclusive model for growth, that the population can take ownership of because they can directly perceive its results" (Femise, 2011)

A series of political reforms are required so that, on one hand, they support the liberalisation and economic opening by putting into motion new actors, especially young through training and new technologies, and on the other they improve the government's capacity to provide social protection by revising fiscal measures, without weakening macroeconomic balances. Such squaring of the circle is difficult to accomplish and a bit solomonic.

These trends should contribute to the materialization of the theoretic concept of state sustainability which reflects the western-European model of the rule of law in a social market economy and on basis of which the research program MedPro has indicated as the realistically preferable scenario for the transformation of the Mediterranean the Blue one. A scenario where

"Internal Mediterranean heterogeneity would be coupled with overall greater sustainability because, inter alia, the EU would establish a successful "Euro\_mediterranean alliance". Such an alliance would support those countries (e.g. Tunisia) which are on the path of sustainable development, while nudging other countries (e.g. Morocco and Egypt) whose drive for a radical overhaul toward sustainability is still unclear" (Tocci, 2011).

A slowing down and diversification of processes and situations can be noted a year after the Arabic spring and this calls for further caution. If a positive constituent democratic process has started in Tunisia, the transformation in Egypt still appears to be constrained by the military regime, a universally recognized transition government is yet to be formed in Libya, whereas in Syria the civil war is stuck in a deadlock situation which the international community is not able break.

With Eastern Europe we have gone from the great hope for a progressive democratic transformation to the more recent weakness of the reform processes. Countries such as Belarus and Azerbaijan are openly authoritarian, while colour revolutions have dampened and Yushchenko's government in Ukraine and Saakashvili's in Georgia appear less and less democratic (Emerson, 2011a). According to Solonenko and Shapovalova (2011):

"In most cases, the political elites are interested in preserving the status quo rather than undertaking costly reforms, while civil society is too weak either to keep the elites accountable or push for reform. Therefore, the lack of both political interest and domestic pressure largely explains the poor reform results."

Consequently the Eastern Partnership promoted by the European Union in 2009 within the scope of the neighbourhood policy, even though supporting a more intense debate in various sectors, appears to be deprived of its claim to hasten reform processes.

On the other hand, these countries' dynamics have to be contextualised within the geopolitical scenario of their relation with both the European Union and Russia. Following the traditional logic of the spheres of influence, Eastern Europe's various countries are attracted or rejected on the basis of the interests and moves undertaken by the two relevant poles, EU and Russia. As much as EU promotes the participation of these countries to the single market through the Neighbourhood policy, Russia launches the plan for a Euroasian Union, in spite its poor success (Euractiv, 2012). The EU proposes to Ukraine a DCFTA which comprises agriculture and services sectors, whereas

Russia offers a customs union and “*is ready to make an 8 million Euro discount on gas*”<sup>5</sup>. Since, however, the FTA is not compatible with the customs union, Ukraine has had to decide which offer to choose in favour of EU’s proposal<sup>6</sup>.

The dynamic, however, is more complex because the same Eastern countries play a leading role by acting on the rivalry between EU and Russia in order to reinforce their political position in relation to internal issues. In analysing the dynamic of Armenia and Georgia’s governments in relation to EU migration policies and the interdependence with Russia, Ademmer (2011) demonstrates how:

“the recipients of rules promoted by the EU are not only passively targeted by institutionalized modes of governance from the EU or foreign policy instruments applied by Russia; the governments of target countries actively pick and choose between different policy options in line with their own agendas. In cases of more than one actor involved, cross-conditionality and cross-socialization processes can thus occur. The findings of the paper yet suggest that they do not depend on high interdependence or the proclamation of different “spheres of influence” as such, but on the added value they have for domestic governments to cater their relevant constituencies”.

The transformation in the Mediterranean countries and the wedging in of Eastern countries between EU and Russia prove how the Neighbourhood policy can not be deemed as Eurocentric and functional for the Europeanisation process, but how it should be reviewed on the basis of a better understanding of the visions of neighbour countries.

### ***1.5 The crisis and the need for a global strategy***

Given the status quo of the relation with Eastern European countries, the recent renovation of the Neighbourhood policy set forth by the European Commission has only taken place following the Arabic Spring. The transformation happening in some Arabic countries has opened a window of opportunities which the Commission has promptly exploited, by stressing much more than in the past its commitment to support “*deep*” processes of democratisation. However, in spite the Commission’s proposals, the European political debate shows poor interest in the neighbourhood, with the exception of geostrategic projections linked to the financial and economical crisis, as we will see further. There are various causes, which, when overlapping with the crisis, uphold a weak political prospect outside the EU, in amongst these causes: the enlargement fatigue, more generally, foreign, low impact, welfare policies, the difficulties met by the member states in finding a shared foreign policy, this during the first decade of the 2000s when, from Iraq to the war in Libya and Syria, diverse visions on international security and on the claimed exportability of democracy have clashed, the various views on the accession of Turkey to the EU, the poor coherence and non-alignment of the different sectoral elements of EU’s foreign policy, also due to the diverse existing competencies (between a Trade policy where the EU has the exclusive competence and a Security policy where the competencies fall on each of the member states).

Consequently,

“EU lacks a global strategy to address the future of its neighbourhood. The EU is pursuing its process of integration with its neighbours, some with a membership perspective, others not, but we can note a certain fatigue. On both sides, the absorption capacity is at stake. On the EU side, this process of rapprochement is not at the moment a top priority, as it is much more concerned with its internal economic crisis which directly affects its capacity to pursue its foreign policy in its neighbourhood. On the side of the neighbours, their capacity to absorb the huge conditions for closer integration set by the EU is also questioned. The process of integration remains also highly dependent on the neighbours themselves, the pace of change they are ready to embrace, and their willingness to reform” (Notre Europe, 2011).

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<sup>5</sup> Speech by Philippe Cuisson, Deputy Director of DG Trade, quoted in Redondo Alvarez (2011).

<sup>6</sup> A way in May 2012 the agreement is still to be signed-

Beside these general views, there are more specific ones in relation to the contents and the mechanisms of the Neighbourhood policy, particularly the issue of the conditionality linked to the aid for supporting reforms processes or the role of the cross-border cooperation (CBC). Above all, however, it is mainly the financial and economic crisis scenario which is deeply affecting EU's external dimension, its geopolitical position in the world its soft power and its relation with the neighbours.

## **2 The external dimension of the EU crisis**

### ***2.1 Increasing EU divisions and weakening of its normative power***

The crisis is liable to split European Union into a virtuous North and a South which has lived beyond its means. Such an eventuality would greatly reshape the relation and the boundaries with the neighbourhood. The rescue plans and the requests for PIIGS (Portugal, Ireland, Italy, Greece and Spain) to keep their public budgets under control and to reduce debt have brought about the need to tighten up the coordination of fiscal policies and to adopt austerity reforms agreed upon by the European Union countries.

This has led to the signing of the so-called fiscal compact in 2012 and to the increase of resources devolved to financial aid instruments. On one hand, these measures aim at saving the European Union's financial and economic stability, but they have also given rise to the separation and contrast of nationalistic stereotyped perceptions which undermine the idea and the ideal, born after the Second World War, of a united Europe.

An important role has been played by the conflict between a solidarity-insensitive and austere Germany, imposing upon the Greek population draconian measures<sup>7</sup> to support its own banks and a Greece, incapable and ineffective, which has falsified the public budget in order to live beyond its means, thus jeopardising the Eurozone staying power. This has firstly had two outcomes. First of all the political and media debate on the crisis has highlighted the "faults" of certain nations, hence generating a clash between virtuous nations and dissolute nations. The EU, then, appears divided amongst its member states. The debate on the crisis has renationalised the debate at the expense of the community ideal. Secondly, the crisis and the conflict have resulted in a worsening and spreading of the EU's democratic deficit, EU more and more perceived as aloof and stuck on defending financial and banks' stability against the social needs of the more precarious classes in countries hit by the crisis.

As quoted by Youngs (2011):

"Ivan Krastev argues that German-led pressure for fiscal retrenchment could even over-ride local political choices to such an extent that democracy will be hollowed of all meaning in peripheral states – leading to a cleavage not just in economic terms but also between a core where democracy still 'means something' and an outer ring where it is reduced to a precarious façade. Formal commitments to fiscal integration, in the name of protecting the euro, may do little to recover this kind of fragmentation at an underlying political level. It is difficult to see how this could not have deleterious effects on many normative aspects of EU foreign policy."

The democratic issue has appeared in all of its drama in the Greek case, when the local government has renounced to the referendum on the rescue package in order to ward off abandoning the Euro. An instrument of direct democracy has been cast aside to preserve the Eurozone.

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<sup>7</sup>[\[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3MKbGs7RzXM\]](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3MKbGs7RzXM): Anti-German protest in Greece.

In amongst political leaders there are those who question the supremacy of democracy, for instance Pedro Solbes (ex European commissioner and minister of finance in Zapatero's government) asks: "*can these sorts of agreements [the rescue package] be voted on by the public?*" (Solbes, 2011). Thus, a gap has originated between the democratic principle and those choices related to monetary and fiscal policy which are left in the hands of political and financial elites.

Together with Greece hostility to Europe's imposition of austerity, also goes the opposition of the vast majority of the German population to a rescue sustained by their own public resources. The question on the possible staying power of the convergence between the political elite and the German public opinion on European integration and solidarity has found a new answer.

"The euro crisis has finally answered this question with the potential impact of the Greek bail-out on the German budget, the deep hostility of public opinion reflected in the Land election of North Rhine Westphalia and a determined campaign by the Bild Zeitung giving European policy a high saliency, which is likely to be maintained as the unfolding crisis makes further demands on the German taxpayer. This combination of a very hostile press and public opinion led to a very significant erosion of the party political consensus in the Bundestag debate on support for the Greek bail out on 21 May, where the main opposition parties for the first time in a number of decades refused to support the government position" (Paterson, 2010).

The juxtaposition between democracy and financial stability, between austerity and solidarity and the separation between virtuous and dissolute nations, between political-financial elites and public opinion, together with the weakening of the traditional parties system, all interweave the debate on a European Union more and more linked to inter-governmentalism at the expense of the community method. In this way "with more inter-governmental cooperation there will be more potential for division between Eurozone countries and the rest of the EU" (Solbes, 2011). Above all, the image of a Europe lead by a Franco-German directorate against a Europe of community institutions and for citizens has been presented. All of these conflicts undermine the claim of a EU acting as normative power at a global level, as indicated by Youngs in the above mentioned quote, and result in a reshaping of the boundaries and relations with the neighbourhood.

## ***2.2 Looking for a new European governance***

The crisis cannot be solved and a new foreign policy vision cannot be launched without reviewing the European governance. The elite's narratives are divided between those of a Union which should not crumble and should hasten on the path to integration by playing on a greater coordination to keep the Eurozone steady, and those of a Union which should find a more diversified articulation based on the different economic and financial conditions, thus allowing certain countries to abandon the Eurozone. The uncertainty on stabilizing processes and on the behaviour of financial markets maintains unaltered the scenario of a possible two-speed Europe. For instance,

"One model would involve weaker euro members and current 'outs' being left by the way-side by a reduced core, another would see the self-exclusion of only the UK and Denmark, as the two member states with permanent opt-outs from the euro" (Youngs, 2011).

There are those who have prefigured a two-speed Europe with various options of governance review revolving around different equilibriums between flexibility, diversification and uniformity. For example, the ex- Director General of the Legal Service of the Council of the European Union, Jean-Claude Piris, takes into consideration different options: the possibility of a revision of the Lisbon Treaty in favour of a renationalisation and greater policies flexibility given the heterogeneity of the European territory, or the keeping of the treaty, revolving, though, around the concept and possible instruments of a multi-speed Europe.

“The EU could use its “built-in” cooperation: the Schengen area is one example; the Euro area and Permanent Structured Cooperation in defence are other groupings that make differentiation possible. The treaty also allows to opt-out ...[and] the enhanced cooperation” (Piris, 2012)

Other options pertain, instead, the creation of an actual two-speed Europe, particularly of the Euro group through the article 136 of the Treaty, or of a new international agreement, an extra treaty, comprising of new institutions and resources where the decision-making could be modified by a generalisation of qualified majority voting and the introduction of two categories of decisions: one that does not bind member states that voted against; one that binds those states if a 80%-qualified majority voting has voted in favour.

In amongst these options, the choice has falteringly fallen on proceeding with greater integration in order to face the crisis and international pressures, through the tighter economic governance endorsed by 25 member states with the fiscal compact. This is an intergovernmental agreement which comprises many member states of the Euro group, but has not been signed by UK and Czech Republic which have opted-out. In addition to this agreement, various countries have asked for a reinforcement of growth measures by indicating 10 points, amongst these a decisive action to deliver open global markets, especially with regard to the negotiation of free trade agreements with emerging and industrialised countries (Euractiv 2012a). Even the European Central Bank asks for a more decisive action in favour of growth measures:

“surveillance alone is not sufficient. Citizens also expect from Europe common answers to the common challenges which all euro area countries are facing. In a context of global competition and ongoing fiscal consolidation, euro area countries should join their forces. Given that they share a single currency, they have even stronger reasons than other countries to work together. This can be in the field of research and development, education or infrastructure, they should strive for cooperation as much as possible” (Draghi, M., 2012).

In its turn, the European Commission has begun to prepare a €200 billion “pact for growth” to be presented at the EU summit in June 2012, updating the Agenda for growth Europe 2020, with measures of investments financed by Eurobonds and reinforcing of the capital of the European Investment Bank (EIB) (Euractiv, 2012b).

Also, France election’s results, with the victory of the new socialist president Hollande, and in some German Lander, in opposition to Merkel’s views, mark the trend to overtake the impositions of the sole austerity policies in favour of a greater care to measures for economic growth.

There are various available options:

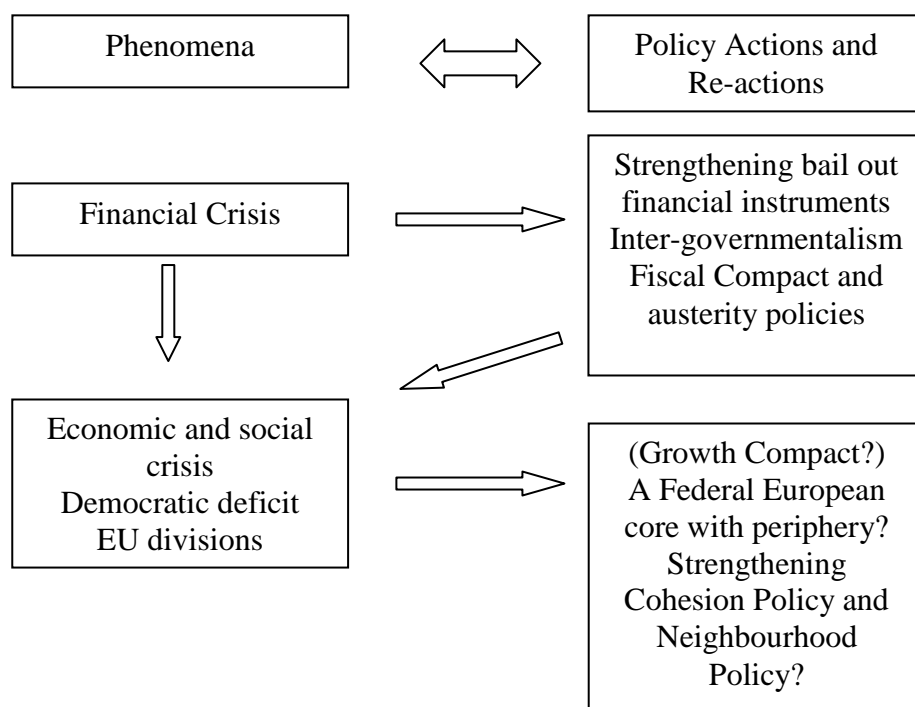
“better use of the Community’s budget and the structural funds to stimulate growth in Member States; doubling the loan capacity of the European Investment Bank, for instance for SMEs and innovation; issuing “project bonds” dedicated to financing pan-European infrastructure projects, mainly in the fields of energy and the environment; further development of the interior market, particularly in the service sector; implementation of a tax on financial transactions in order to correct excesses in the financial system and supplement the Community budget with a new, unique source of revenue” (Delors, Vitorino 2012, p. 1).

The problem is how to find a balance between the austerity measures, ensuring financial stability and the value of the Euro, with growth and solidarity policy, which could unify instead of separating the EU, and a foreign policy more oriented towards emerging markets without overlooking the responsibility towards the neighbourhood.

At a technocratic level, the European Commission is trying to link the new economic governance of the fiscal compact with the Europe 2020 strategy and with the cohesion policy and is also looking for a new development model either coherent or able to minimize the contradictions between competitiveness and solidarity, more or less flexible, based on the different territorial contexts, more or less porous in regard to international relations. Contemporarily, an important debate, involving various levels of governance, local, national and European, has originated between social and political parties to discuss new policies and rules, both inside and outside the EU.

Morata, for instance, points at the risk of incurring in a progressive disintegration of the EU. He draws on the dichotomy between North and South with “*an asymmetric Europe founded on rights inequality between the players of the central core (a reduced Eurozone) and those at the outer fringes*”<sup>8</sup>. The repercussion on outside relations would see a first group of countries more oriented towards strategic partnerships with strong and emerging countries for geo-economic purposes and a second group more tied to the neighbourhood and restricted by security issues for the control of resources and migratory flows.

**Figure 2: EU policy actions and re-actions to the crisis**



Many intellectuals and politicians uphold the moment has come for a much needed and important political qualitative leap: the creation of a Federal Europe<sup>9</sup>. According to Delors, there’s a need to strengthen and coordinate more closely the various policies on the basis of the three principles at the foundation of the EU: competitiveness, cooperation and solidarity. The community method, particularly the Commission and the Parliament, has to regain centrality, a higher democratic legitimacy, resources and initiative power, so to overtake the “cynicism” and the strength tests between member states.

“Either politics is the result of an agreement between the 17 countries, but I see nothing forthcoming, or, there is a delegation of power and a little more federalism. The choice is as clear as that” (Delors, 2012, p. 5).

The community method, resorting to the enhanced cooperation between a cohesive group of member states (which, in Delors’ opinion should already be formed by the countries of the Eurozone) and the re-launching of a policy for social and territorial cohesion through the gathering of resources via euro project-bonds, can be in amongst the main instruments of the European revival.

“What remains to be done is this: we have to think about a new model of development, investment, job creation, assets to equip our youth. All of which does not prevent each member state from taking responsibility, within the framework of its own model, for fiscal consolidation. I insist “within the

<sup>8</sup> [<http://morata.blogactiv.eu/2012/04/19/%C2%BFque-futuro-para-europa/>].

<sup>9</sup> See for example “For a European Socialist Alternative” [<http://europeansocialistalternative.blogspot.it/2012/02/le-texte.html>]; and “Eurofederation”: [<http://www.eurofederation.eu/en>].

framework of its own model". We must take into account diversity. The argument of unity within diversity was evoked to prevent further federalism. Today I turn the argument around: be understanding of other countries. Currently, that is what is at stake. And each country must take its responsibilities. I really like this thought by the former president, alas deceased, of Notre Europe, Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa. He said: "Austerity for the states, growth and dynamism for the Union". I shall reuse this formula and I insist: without dynamism and without strength in Europe, nothing will be possible." (Delors 2012, p. 7)

A federal Europe<sup>10</sup> would finally also require the setting of a stronger and more coherent foreign and defense policy, and therefore a real renewed neighbourhood policy.

### ***2.3 The new German question***

In relation to the European development model, the German issue has already been stressed. The crisis has brought out, in fact, in addition to an alarming resurgence of nationalistic positions, also the issue of the compatibility between the German model, based on exports, on a strong international competitiveness and on a structural surplus on the commercial scale and the position of other European countries showing, on the contrary, structural deficits (Villafranca, 2012). The German model is characterized for the so-called iron triangle.

"The three key principles constituted a self reinforcing iron triangle. The first principle was a rejection of autarchy and an endorsement of a hyper-export strategy whereby Germany was in Wolfgang Hager's characterisation 'an extraordinary trader'. [...] The second principle based on the 1923 trauma was an unwavering commitment to sound money, with the Bundesbank as its independent guardian. The third and overarching principle was a European vocation where European integration appeared to be part of the DNA of the German governing class. Europe provided the access to export markets required by an 'extraordinary trader', and Germany's reflexive multilateralism and its budgetary contribution made this acceptable to other member states". (Paterson, 2012 p. 49).

Now, this balance within the EU between the German model and those of other member states has broken. The imposition of a hard currency, the euro, narrows down the range of flexibility of weaker economies, which were characterised by the cyclical use of devaluation of their currencies to regain competitiveness on foreign markets, whereas the rules of the Stability and Growth Pact implemented in 1997 to facilitate and maintain the stability of the Economic and Monetary Union, reduce the possibility to sustain investments for the catching-up because the states have to maintain public budgets deficits lower than 3% of their GDP and a national debt lower than 60% of GDP or approaching that value.

The weaker economies' impossibility and incapability to follow the German model in the short-term, in a scenario of crisis and binding for the euro, is liable to create a north/south rift within the EU: between a strong centre oriented towards being a global player and weak fringe countries compelled to adopt recessionary policies which will distance them further<sup>11</sup>. Such a prospect is untenable and could lead to the weaker economies defection of the euro, thus drawing them closer to neighbourhood countries. On the other hand, should weak countries stay within the Eurozone, one of the risks could be short-circuiting with close and acceding countries, more costs and currencies competitive. The choice for southern Europe weaker member states would be either

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<sup>10</sup> It is worth mentioning that German leaders support the strengthening of European Unity, together with a stronger democratic legitimacy "Germany's European Central Bank executive board member, Jörg Asmussen, said ahead of the summit that the eurozone should be backed by "a fiscal union and banking union as well as a democratic legitimised political union". His words were echoed by Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble who recently argued in favour of a directly-elected European Commission president with greater control over the EU's fiscal policy." (Euractiv, 2012c).

<sup>11</sup> "Simulations of the medium-term trend in the euro area show that simultaneous austerity policies, primarily targeting the supply side will deepen the euro area's economic divide between the southern European member states and Germany. The main cause of the euro crisis will thus not be overcome but aggravated. A way out of the crisis can only be found, if expansionary demand policies return to the economic policy agenda in Europe. (IMK, 2012).



remaining within the Eurozone, close to the European core, but weaker and weaker and in hard competition with the neighbourhood or the abandonment of the euro and absorption in the neighbourhood. All of this unless there were an important course reversal in favour of a demand revival policy guided by Germany which, by driving the growth, would allow weaker economies to access the resources to repay the debt.

“For a way out of the crisis demand policies have to return to the economic policy agenda in Europe. This would also strengthen confidence in the euro area’s future development. [...] The coordination process should aim at full employment. It should take account of all causes of imbalances such as competitiveness and external imbalances. However, this should be done from a European perspective, which means that the surplus countries would have to implement expansionary economic policies.” (IMK, 2012, p. 27 and 31).

The German model runs the risk of becoming untenable if restricted within the EU, as more and more there is a need for a global player. The austerity reduces German export opportunities within the EU, which will, in turn, re-direct towards expanding markets. German policy appears more and more attracted to BRICS rather than to the difficult and unstable neighbourhood.

“According to Westerwelle, Germany, as a global trading power, has to be part of the emerging new world architecture led by successful countries in Asia, Latin America and Africa. In February 2012, the German foreign ministry published a new policy document on relations with non-traditional powers, including the BRICS as well as a more novel focus on the likes of Mexico, Colombia, Indonesia and Vietnam. The paper confirms the transition towards a policy beyond Europe, formally still based on values but with a clear prioritisation of economic, security and energy interests abroad” (Gratius, 2012, p. 4).

Germany’s awareness of the neighbourhood, particularly the Mediterranean, seems to be instrumental rather than strategic for supporting the creation of new and real democracy’s spaces and for the opening to relations between people and territories. The French Mediterranean Union’s proposal has been reviewed and scaled down by the German government to put it back in a more European perspective of a Union for the Mediterranean. Germany’s interest seems to focus more on issues of economic security and competitiveness, as, for instance, with regard to energy, with the great SolarMed project, and on the bilateral agreements with Russia to ensure access to hydrocarbon. National interests and the geo-economic priorities based on the reinforcement of the economic model export-led appear to reduce Germany’s traditional role as civilian power.

It has surfaced the debate on fear:

“that a more self-confident and dynamic Germany is threatening the political independence and economic well-being of its neighbours and will lead to a “German Europe”, whereas, instead, “German weakness, not power, is the main challenge to EU integration. In order to build a supranational EU and a “European Germany”, Germans will have to overhaul their Cold War institutions and traditions that have become a brake on EU integration” (Behr and Helwig, 2012).

The observers stress how the issue is more complex because, in spite the fact that Germany is more and more mindful of national geo-economic priorities and oriented towards global markets, it does, however, continue to maintain a pacifist and multilateralist attitude in international relations, is well aware, both within the political-economic elite and the public opinion, of its strong interdependence with the European continent and of the importance of supporting a more Europeanist position on both, matters of global governance and in front of areas such as Eastern Europe. Therefore, the verdict should be more balanced. It is to be noted there is a lack and, as a consequence, a need for a new vision of Germany for Europe, crucial also to set up the European global strategy for the world and for neighbouring countries.

## *2.4 New geo-economic priorities*

The new geo-economic priorities are not limited to the German model, but they are a standard recipe, followed by various member states and included in the Union's Trade policy. Prislán and Torreblanca (2011, p. 53) mention how certain EU member states, UK, France and Spain, are pursuing nationalistic policies for economic internationalisation in order to seek emerging markets, business opportunities for great purchase orders, foreign investments and funding (there is great interest for the Sovereign wealth fund from Arabic petroleum exporting countries and from China). The verdict is harsh:

“the neo-mercantilist tone has become more evident. But the price is high. EU member states have sacrificed cohesion and effectiveness for the sake of very meagre economic results. They have also sent the message that unity is not a priority and that their principles, especially on democracy and human rights, are up for sale.”

The predominance of geo-economic priorities in nationalistic trade policies, reinforced in periods of crisis, is liable to have mercantilist derivations which can lead to a zero sum game between EU member states and to beggar my neighbour measures. The aggressive competitiveness between member states to access BRICS markets and resources, in addition to contradicting the community spirit, also goes together with a greater care towards the preservation of national markets. In this case, EU Trade policy is required to implement a strict principle of reciprocity and norms against unfair-trade and anti-dumping, without taking into account third countries' various economic and social contexts. This can have a counter-productive effect on relations with the neighbour countries.

Within a more global vision, the new geo-economic priorities might result in the increase of possible contradictions at various levels. The first level is about contradictions between mercantilist initiatives, solidarity values and respect for human rights as declared and embodied by the EU. The question arises as to how to render coherent an aggressive Trade policy, aimed at emerging countries, with conditions on respect of workers' human rights and for environmental protection.

A second contradiction arises between the Community level and that of the member states', including sub-national levels, individual internationalization policies. Italian Regions, for example, have the power to implement policies for the internationalization and marketing of their own territories.

Such a method creates competitiveness between territories and between member states for attracting Chinese investments and also for exports to emerging markets.

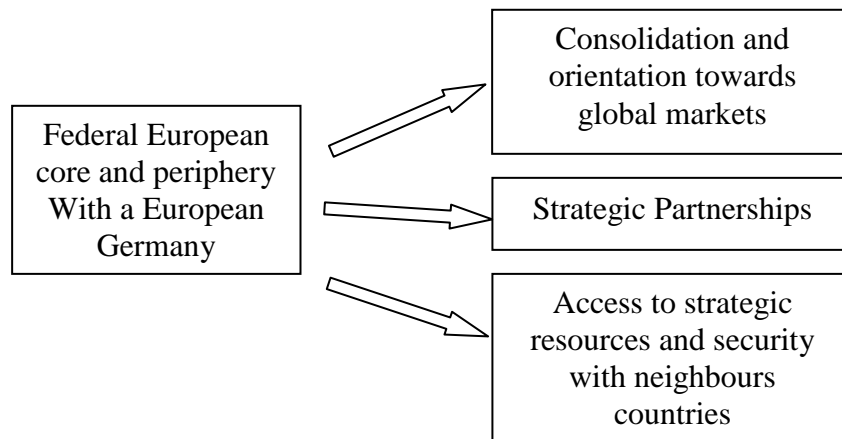
Another contradiction to be managed revolves around the various EU and member states sectoral policies. The main contradiction lies between a trade policy, of exclusive competence of the EU, for access and reciprocity amongst the European single market and emerging countries markets, and immigration policies, restrictive and tightly controlled towards those same countries, of exclusive competence of the member states.

These contradictions mark once again the weakening of the normative and soft power of the EU. European values, founded on human rights and democracy, are not absolute but relative and they are negotiated with partners according to economic benefits.

From a geo-political point of view, economic priorities re-direct the interest of EU and its member states towards global emerging areas, growing markets and knowledge and innovation hubs, whereas the neighbourhood would remain a priority for access to energy resources and for security reasons. Relevant to this approach, the policy of strategic partnerships with emerging powers at a global level. Such a policy is still scarcely defined at EU level, but will have important repercussions on the relation with the neighbourhood. This is already evident with Russia. Russia's geo-political interests overlap, conflict and compete, but can also co-exist and cooperate, based on the various issues at play, with neighbour countries and with EU.

This brings about some triangulations and variable geometries (Renard, 2012)<sup>12</sup> requiring a revision of the EU's regional approach. As a consequence, , “*The EU must thus rethink its regional approach in order to make it compatible with and complementary to the strategic partnership approach*”.

**Figure 3: External objectives of a Federal Europe with a European Germany**



### ***2.5 EU differentiated integration and the neighbourhood***

Given the above mentioned observations, various scenarios of re- territorialisation or re-setting of the boundaries of Europe , outside and inside the EU, towards the neighbourhood. Based on the Eurozone's staying-power, or lack of it, and on the fiscal compact in comparison to the crisis evolution, it is possible to revise the Europe of concentric circles and of variable geometries in relation to the various sectoral policies.

The re-setting of EU's boundaries and of its relation with the neighbourhood depends on political trends which could require greater uniformity or allow diversity within economic models and society, by taking more or less into account of the differences between contexts. With regard to this, the enlargement up to 27 countries and the increasing diversity of contexts has so far favoured a differentiated integration:

“The complexity and size of the enlarged EU means that the chances of realising the narrow core model as motor of the EU are minimal. Enlargement to 27 members entailed institutionalising a logic of diversity, and there is also a clear aggregation of preferences problem. In a recent study Simon Hix identifies a number of coalitions in the Council of Ministers, with the Franco-German coalition being seen as pivotal in only 25% of the cases (Dyson and Sepos, 2010). Moreover, Germany constrained by a ‘resource crunch’ and a hostile public opinion is unwilling and unable to make side payments on the scale that lubricated the acceptance of the Kohl-Mitterrand agenda. The future seems rather to lie with differentiated integration.” (Paterson, 2010, p. 48).

Emerson (2012) has highlighted how the construction of a differentiated integration in the European Union and towards the neighbourhood is characterised by a variable geometry and concentric circle map,

<sup>12</sup> “Triangulation refers here to cooperation in third regions where the EU and its partners have mutual, if not common, interests.” Variable geometry means the shifting partnerships of convenience that exist between the EU and (some of) its partners, depending on the issue at stake” (Renard T, 2012).

“a less official and more analytical approach sees a much more complex set of categories and graduations found in the EU’s policy set for its neighbours, of which the ENP is just one of no less than 13 concentric circles of graduated neighbourhood relationships surrounding its territory”.

These circles are both inside and outside EU, from euro and Schengen areas to their non-participating member states, to the European Economic Area, to accessing countries, to the differentiated neighbourhood, to advanced status neighbouring countries, to relationships with Russia and areas bordering with the neighbourhood.

**Table 1: Europe’s many circles of neighbours, cores and peripheries**

<p>Within the EU</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. French-German axis</li> <li>ii. Member states solidly in ‘everything’, euro and Schengen</li> <li>iii. Member states shakily in ‘everything’, euro’s troubled periphery</li> <li>iv. Member states seeking to be in ‘everything’, but not yet in euro and/or Schengen</li> <li>v. Eurosceptic member states preferring to keep opt-outs</li> </ul> <p>Outside the EU</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. EEA states</li> <li>2. Switzerland special case</li> <li>3. Micro states and dependencies</li> <li>4. Accession candidates</li> <li>5. Western Balkan future accession candidates</li> <li>6. Eastern neighbours in ENP and Eastern Partnership</li> <li>7. Southern neighbours in ENP and Barcelona/Union for the Mediterranean</li> <li>8. Advanced neighbour states with new Association Agreements</li> <li>9. Theoretical ENP states, which are too deviant to be fully in (Belarus, Syria)</li> <li>10. Russia</li> <li>11. Central Asia</li> <li>12. Gulf Cooperation Council</li> <li>13. Arctic region</li> </ul>
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Source: Emerson, 2012.

As seen, following the crisis, this differentiated integration is undergoing a new transformation which could lead to a new relationship particularly between “Member states shakily in ‘everything’, euro’s troubled periphery”, the various accession candidates and NCs. For instance, it is possible to detect a Europe with its neighbourhood divided into three circles, from the centre to the periphery: a EU core, linked to the Euro, stronger and more coherent at an economic-financial level, a periphery, particularly in the south, weaker, out of the euro but still integrated within the single market and the Schengen area<sup>13</sup>, and a third circle including a neighbourhood which is fragmented depending on the various democratic and economic reform processes and variously integrated into EU policies.

New scenarios of competitiveness and cooperation between countries and territories surface and it is with them new policies have to measure against, from trade policy to the one on migratory flows, to social and territorial cohesion across the borders, always taking into account the limitations, the weakening of EU’s claimed normative power and the need to strengthen strategic partnerships with regional powers, from Russia to Turkey. For this reason, there is a need for initiating a new coherent and more cosmopolitan dialogue between EU and the neighbourhood.

<sup>13</sup> Even with regard to the Shengen area there are attempts at re-nationalization, although for exceptional cases, and objections on the part of “core” countries on the elusiveness of controls within outlying countries

### 3 Towards a more cosmopolitan Europe?

#### 3.1 *Cosmopolitan approaches*

Against possible scenarios of transformation and the noticeable contradictions of the EU neighbourhood policy, there is a theoretical normative approach which finds in the European idea the possibility to support values and policies founded on positive visions open to confrontation and to the recognition of pluralities and diversities. This is, for instance, what proposed by Beck and Grande (2006) for a cosmopolitan Europe. The idea is that of positively combining citizens' belonging to both, nation states and Europe's project, therefore overcoming its crucial problem which, according to the authors, is the nations' self-misunderstanding. A Self-misunderstanding because it conceives Europe and its member states as rivals, either Europe or national states, it disowns its origin, the debris of the Second World War, its traditional role to build a pacified Europe as much as the consequences of the rising transnational interdependencies.

“They propose the dynamic “both-and” as an institutional iterative process of integration that create the conditions for a positive sum game where both member states and EU gain legitimacy responding to the need of the citizens. It is a realistic cosmopolitan approach”.

An approach able to integrate cultural, social economic, political differences inside and outside the EU, but still with the need to reconcile with a minimal core of universal values. The authors set forth the theory of Europe as a cosmopolitan post-imperialistic empire.

“This European Empire is not linked to conquest and borders enlargement, but to the fall of national boundaries, to free will, to consent, to transnational interdependence and to the political surplus deriving from cooperation” (*ibidem*, p. 75).

In amongst its characteristics, asymmetrical sovereignty order, differentiated integration, distributed by areas with different intensities of cooperation, from the most intense ones to those more limited and broadened with an open and variable with flexible boundaries spatial structure. In order to concretise this project, a new coalition among state, supranational players and movements of the civil society will be required to take the place of the dominating economic, state and supranational technocracy.

“We call this symbiosis between civil society and Europe “cosmopolitan empire” or cosmopolitan Europe” (*ibidem*, p. 203) [...] which thinks self-critically and within a global perspective on global issues deriving from European modernity” (*ibidem*, p. 265)

Other authors appeal to the idea of a cosmopolitanism with more liberal variations. Youngs (2011), for instance, supports a pragmatic cosmopolitanism approach so to ensure Europe does not incur in the risk, pushed by the necessity to face the crisis in the short term, of adopting policies based on blind geo-economic priorities of the mercantilistic sort. We need to avoid the danger of dismantling the European project for integration and implement, instead, a more open relationship with the neighbours and the world.

“The EU requires a much more holistic and balanced mix of co-operative realism, internationalism, polycentrism and regionalism. [...]In the wake of the crisis, the EU will need to think less in terms of Europeanisation and more in terms of universalism.”

The EU should go beyond a concept of Europeanisation based on export of European values and norms, in favour of adopting an approach which, while maintaining and even clarifying more its regulatory framework and development models, came across more open to confrontation with the otherness, according to a more liberal spirit. Young sustains liberal values, of a cosmopolitan and decentred liberalism, where religious and cultural variations, reflecting a polycentric world made up of diversities and otherness, are possible.

In this picture the EU should present as a

“Medium power that is internationalist in its engagement, cosmopolitan in its values, able to cast utilitarian bilateralism within a framework of mutually beneficial multilateral cooperation, and balances the big rising powers with challenges in its own neighbourhood: this mix does not constitute a single principle of geo-strategy but a series of meso-level guidelines for ensuring that EU policies exhibit adaptability without mere short-term instrumentalism. [...] solutions lie not in less liberalism or a turning-inwards but in a more complete conjoining of economic with effectively-empowering social and political freedoms”.

In support of a cosmopolitan approach, there are also some essential issues relating to global commons, necessarily in need, given their deep interdependency, of a shared multilateral cooperative approach even from a geo-economic point of view.

“Sustainability was nowhere as central to geo-economics in the past as it is today, now that the so-called age of convergence (of living standards and consumption habits) meets the age of scarcity (of energy, food and water, among other commodities)” (Grevi, 2011)

Consequently, as sustained by Grevi, the EU is called to actively take part in environmental global regimes, for example with regard to climate change, by interweaving coherently other spheres of financial and economic governance, such as the G20, by building new international regimes able to reduce the actual fragmentation and competition, as in relation to energy. All of this requires: moving beyond the reductionism on geo-economic priorities of the European foreign policy, a strong boost towards a multilateralism where the role of the BRICS as much as that of poorer countries is recognized and, as a precondition, a greater cohesion between EU’s member states.

A more cosmopolitan and multilateral approach “outside” the EU should match and coherently reflect in an approach more considerate of the differences “within” the EU. In this way the dichotomy inside/outside can be overcome. This is, for example, the theory supported by Zielonka (2006) while referring to the neo-medieval Europeanisation, consisting of a

“polycentric system of government, multiple and overlapping jurisdictions, striking cultural and economic heterogeneity, fuzzy borders, and divided sovereignty.”

A European system made of pluralities which, however, as seen above, hard-pushed by the crisis, has been called to reinforce coordination measures, straining, then, the dialectic between the need for a greater uniformity and requests to safeguard diversities. In relation to this, Zielonka’s thesis lean towards a variable geometry system.

“In my view, the EU can function as a sort of ‘meta-governor’: a governing body that distributes decision-making competence between multitudes of territorially and functionally defined self-governing actors. The EU should not try to impose tight hierarchical control but act as a mediator between various European networks and as a facilitator of continuous communication, cooperation, and compromise between such networks. It should guarantee free access to these networks and make sure that the ongoing bargaining process is transparent and open. The borders of the Union should be flexible and open to those neighbours who embrace the basic set of liberal values and accept the rules operating within the neo-medieval empire.”

All these views subscribe to the analysis of a world which is increasingly becoming inter-polar and with multiple players, where boundaries are not just defined by borders between nation states, borders which, furthermore are more and more porous in spite the erection of walls, but by flows and networks generating new interdependencies e power hierarchies through networked borders. The world is characterised by

“turbulent, polyarchic environments, where strategic uncertainty means that effective solutions to problems can only be defined in the course of pursuing them, while a multi-polar distribution of power means that no single actor can impose her own preferred solution without taking into account the views of others” (Sabel and Zeitlin, 2011).

The world more than multi-polar is increasingly inter-polar and inter-connected by flows of ideas, images and symbols, by financial and commercial flows and by those, more selective and conflicted, of people. New territories and nation states, with a growing capacity and power to

influence at a political level, emerge together with new multinationals, financial funds and communication companies which go beyond states boundaries.

Beck and Grande explain the transformation with the theory of reflective modernisation which comprises the theorem of risk society, that of the forced individualisation and the theorem on multidimensional globalisation. The increase of risks generated by progress, the individualisation of lifestyles with the consequent rise in requests for political involvement, markets' globalisation, security risks, ecological issues, cultural belonging,

“threaten the foundation of the modern state, particularly shared problems' territorial demarcation and demarcability” (Beck e Grande, 2006: 50).

The result is a world and a Europe requiring new forms of transnational governance going beyond the traditional inter-governmental frameworks based on national states. This is about a “post-modern governance” a “network governance” a “multilevel and multi-actor governance”, and of “experimentalism in transnational governance”.

Within the context of these new forms of governance, the values, the principles and society, economy and democracy development models have to be re-discussed. Models that, according to the conflicts and confrontation between the stakeholders can have more or less neoliberal or social market-oriented characteristics, with effects on the construction of boundaries more or less porous and selective.

In regard to this, it is important to recall Parker's objection (2011) to the limits of deliberative cosmopolitanism in the EU new governance.

“In the context of the EU, which was constituted on the basis of a market cosmopolitan rationality or an economic constitution, those subject to any deliberation on EU policies, to the extent that they are bound by the imperative of consensus, must, at least implicitly approve of the liberal rationalities that constituted the EU in its current form.”

The participation of civil society is limited to preordained issues and political approaches based on a neo-liberal market rationale, on a constitutionalised market cosmopolitanism which does not allow for spaces for criticism and political re-assessment. The same criticism has, as partially seen, now been made to the ordo-liberal austerity promoted by Germany with regard to the fiscal compact.

### ***3.2 Different geopolitics of Europeanisation along the borders with the neighbourhood***

There are various visions on cosmopolitanism and Europeanisation to be referred to according to the various actors and “values” at play. Beck and Grande, for instance, identify state strategies that can range from national self-interest, which freezes the European project in a zero sum game, to cosmopolitan realism which, on the other hand, envisions a positive sum game in amongst the various member states' interests and from a common level; capital strategies that go from European and national protectionism to European and global neo-liberalism; technocratic strategies founded on functional rationales oriented towards the reinforcement of supranational elements within the Union. The various Europeanisation visions match various models and political-economic concepts, also comprising of diverse approaches on the role of the boundaries and their structure within different geopolitical backgrounds.

With regard to neighbourhood, for example, Browning and Joenniemi (2008), identify three models of European Geopolitics: the Westphalian model, anchored on national states' role, the imperial or Eurocentric one, envisioning a series of concentric circles around a European core with differentiated integrations the further we go from the core, and the neo-medieval which acquires a more cosmopolitan flavour according to a transnational logic and to a network governance with various centers and more regionalisations, on the basis of the metaphor “*Europe of Olympic Rings*”. The concrete reference for this third model is Northern Europe and the Northern Dimension

Initiative where “*The North transcends East–West divides and entails thinking about borders in rather open terms.*” (*ibidem*, p. 525).

In the same way, Bohdana Dimitrova (2010b) identifies three bordering strategies. The state-centric paradigm of borders which can be compared to the Westphalian model where “*borders are to be regarded as barriers [...] represented by the lines that separate territorially defined units*” (*ibidem*, p. 2). The second is the imperial analogy “*to assert control of its surrounding territories through cooperation and negotiations with elites of these territories, rather than through the traditional methods of war*” (*ibidem*, p. 6). And the third is the strategy of borders as networks of exchange, interaction and integration areas, which can be compared to the medieval model.

These geopolitical models translate in four different geo-strategies, defined by Walters (2004), representing various debates on the frontiers’ role. The first is the “networked (non) border” strategy, prompted by neoliberal interests in free circulation of economic factors, which envisages a sharing of responsibilities with outside governments for a progressive liberalisation. The second is the march strategy, which envisions the creation, at the frontiers, of buffer zones or indistinct inter-zones used for protection and security purposes and for economic dynamics such as the free trade zones. The colonial frontier is the third strategy which visualizes the absorption and “*the notion of the transformation of the outside in line with the preferences of the inside and the outside’s gradual incorporation within the inside*” (Browning and Joenniemi, 2008, p. 529). The limes is, finally, the fourth strategy, limiting the enlargement and establishing a permanent demarcation between what is inside and what is outside.

These four strategies are interlinked as much as the geopolitical models, and this overlapping, complex and conflicting, can also be found in the neighbourhood policy, according the various geographical areas characterising it: north, east and south. According to Browning and Joenniemi’s analysis, this intertwining gains different characteristics based on the geopolitical background. We go from the northern area, where the political debate is more open and focused on a notion of network borders, to the east where march and colonial frontiers strategies combine in an accession to EU perspective, to the Mediterranean where, on the contrary, a limes strategy is more in evidence. The definition of these geo-strategies does not depend on the sole position of the EU, which in its turn includes a difficult negotiation amongst its member states and several stakeholders, but it also depends on the positions of countries at the frontiers and beyond, with particular relevance to the role played by Russia in the northern and eastern area. The complex and dynamic relationship among these actors sets the geostrategies.

Obviously these schematisations are always over-simplifying, the processes are complex, include different interests and purposes and models intermix.

This conceptualisation enables to uncover the different logics, their structure and dynamic diversified according to their framework reference, therefore identifying contradictions and dialectics and possible processes and frameworks.

### ***3.3.... with complex and contradictory composite policy***

It is possible to look further into this through the scrutiny of EU’s various sectoral policies. To this extent, the analysis should assume a multi-level approach because powers are divided and shared between the EU, its member states, the sub-national level and the various stakeholders constituencies. The EU has exclusive competence on two policies such as the trade one, following the creation of the single market, and the common agricultural policy (CAP). Already at this level there are contradictions and ambiguities. Because, if on one side it is true that the neoliberal approach has deeply influenced the EU Trade policy and the Neighbourhood policy, offering partners the possibility to increase their participation into the European single market and, by doing so, reducing of barriers at the borders for commercial relationships, it is also evident how the



common agricultural policy has so far represented an obstacle in the relationships with outside countries, having established hard borders for the entering of agricultural goods from neighbouring countries.

The issue becomes more complex and multifaceted in its ambivalences in reference to policies where the EU has a shared competence with member countries, like, for instance, with regard to immigration and social cohesion policies. Consequently the analysis should take into account the several regulations sectors as much as of the various governance forms.

With regard to this, Sedelmeier (2002, p. 629) has surmised the concept of

“composite policy as ‘a broad policy framework, which draws its substance from distinctive policy decisions’ across a range of policy areas. A composite policy is characterized by the fact that specific parts of the policy are produced by different groups of policy-makers whose preferences are shaped by sectoral policy paradigms, defined as ‘sets of ideas that respectively underpin policy in specific areas’”.

On the basis of this concept Berg and Ehin (2006) have studied the implementation of different EU border regimes within three frameworks: regional or cohesion policy, policy for free movement of persons and immigration and neighbourhood policy. In each of these policies the borders regimes change their opening, closure or governance function and more or less match the geopolitical models or border geo-strategies mentioned above. Further below, Berg and Ehin’s analysis is discussed and its interlinks delved into, also considering the trade policy for its economic, political and ideological relevance.

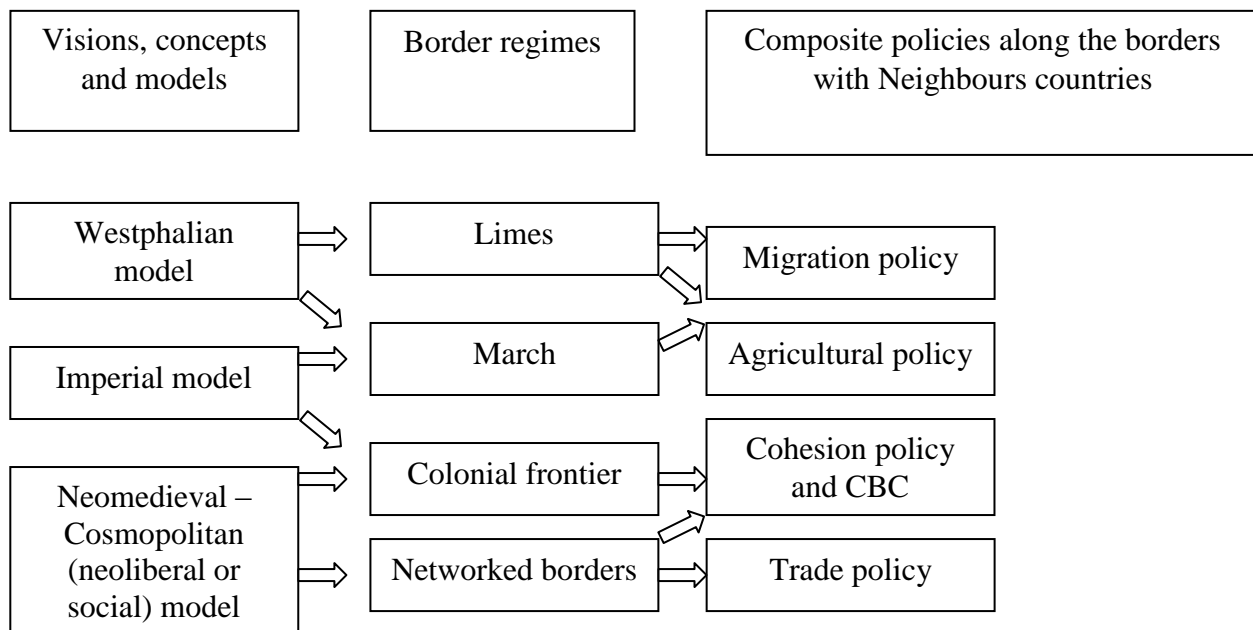
In relation to regional policy the governance is based on the partnership among community, national and sub-national levels. The competence is split between the various levels and a dialectic where each level tries to gain a position of power. The EC sustains the overcoming of internal borders and the development of outlying areas by supporting the role of sub-national governments. Due to this, the regional policy has given rise to the concept of Europe for Regions. On the other hand central governments try to re-define their role within the multi-level partnership, by addressing in a coherent and coordinated way territorial development policies, even while trying to retain control.

“In the case of such conflicts, it is likely that ‘high politics’ will prevail over ‘low politics’ and national priorities over local ones.” (*ibidem*, p. 59).

In addition to this, only recently, starting from the European planning for 2007-2014, regional policy has moved territorial cooperation, previously supported by the community programme Interreg, up to third objective of the Cohesion policy. It is significant that even the Neighbourhood policy has acquired the same kind of action with the introduction of cross-border cooperation. In this way, a EU internal instrument has been exported outside in order to favour cooperation among border territories according, then, to the concept of network borders and to the cosmopolitan neo-medieval model. On the other hand, the strategy papers submitted by the Commission have also introduced, within the priorities for cross-border cooperation, security at the frontiers to control flows of goods and people. Such a competence, though, falls on national governments level, therefore weakening the role territories and local communities play in creating cross-border relationships.

In spite of the Commission’s efforts into promoting a progressive communitarisation of immigration policy, into trying to mediate between positions of closure and opening (see the global approach to migration), several analyses have highlighted how, by maintaining the territorial sovereignty of this competence on the individual nation states, the protection of the borders from imaginary visions of migrants invasions has pushed the reinforcement of hard borders. The model is that of Limes, of a European fortress and of a gated community, which, in among other things, externalises the control of the flows to transit and origin neighbour countries. In such an externalisation the buffer zones are not only situated between the EU and neighbouring countries, but are placed between neighbour countries and the bordering ones from which the flows originate from. The Limes model intertwines with the imperial and colonial model. The EU Limes is not only on the Mediterranean, but it is transferred on the border of the Sahara Desert.

**Figure 4: Inter-relations between EU models, border regimes and neighbour policy**



This, obviously, creates problems to relationships with the neighbours opposing the closure of boundaries, stress the contradictions between a neoliberal approach, demanding the opening of the markets for the movement of goods, services and capitals, as opposed to a debate on security which poses obstacles to the free movement of people. As already mentioned the EC has exclusive competence on trade policy and is engaged in proposing neighbouring countries the implementation of DCFTA which envisages the standardisation of the economies to the rules of the single market. This results in exhausting negotiations within two fields, different but inevitably interdependent and politically interlinked.

On one side, the neighbouring countries' central governments negotiate with the EC for a progressive liberalisation of the national markets to achieve integration within the European Single market. The hard borders of national markets are brought down. This path includes the EC's granting of technical assistance and aid-based partial compensation for the creation of a social protection network to cushion the economic renovation costs deriving from competition increase. The opening of the markets through the cancellation of trade barriers should, in time, lead to a positive sum game with improved growth, employment and welfare. The problem is to face, in the short-middle term, social transition costs which could have political repercussions and which give a boost to migration as well.

On the other hand, the central governments of neighbouring countries negotiate, in order to compensate for Europe's request for a greater collaboration with frontiers monitoring and re-admission of illegal migrants, for the opening to flows of people selected on the basis of economic characteristics (businessmen and seasonal workers, such as doctors and nurses, whose specialisation is required by the European job market), social characteristics (children in need of medical assistance, asylum applicants), status (intellectual and political elites) and they also negotiate for funds for economic and social development and, even worse, for funds to reinforce the control and repression at the borders of countries close to the contiguous ones, as for instance the negotiation between Italy and Gheddafi's Libya. In this negotiations bilateral agreements are prevalent and so are, therefore, the roles of member states and of central governments. In the last few years, however, some of Southern Europe's member states, from Spain to Italy to Greece, ask more and

more for a burden-sharing at community level, while the Commission tries to gain greater influence in negotiating common re-entry agreements.

Within the neighbourhood policy, the community level is interwoven with that of other member states and with sub-national level thanks to the instrument CBC, in a complex and multifaceted governance. The Neighbourhood policy is characterised by an opening of the EU conditional to the implementation of reforms action plans referring to the *acquis communautaire*, although membership for partner countries is not included. The opening appears differentiated because each partner country has different reforms processes. According to Berg and Ehin (2010, p. 62),

“the degree of openness is not uniform along the entire external border but depends heavily on specific historical, political and institutional contexts.”

In analysing three actual cases, Estonia, Moldova and Morocco and with particular attention to the immigration policy, the authors note that

“the differentiated and uneven nature of the emerging border regime [...] despite EU attempts to increase uniformity on the operational level” (*ibidem*, p. 67).

Such a differentiation generates within the interaction between the community level, member states central government’s level, that of neighbouring countries and also the sub-national level, always taking into consideration the interests existing at a local level.

On the other hand, it seems obvious, while analysing the three study cases, that, although the agreements between the EU and its neighbouring countries comprise flexible forms of opening to movement of people across borders at a local level, these are still strongly limited and controlled. There is a differentiation, but it is still framed within a logic which, with regard to people’s mobility, is still restrictive, control-oriented and aimed at creating exclusion more than inclusion (Kostadinova, 2009).

Therefore, it seems the application of a policy of the Westphalian kind, originating hard and partially selective borders, is prevalent. In comparing trade policy with immigration policy, the difference is evident between the breaking down of borders, achieved through inclusion-oriented dynamics for the sharing of the single market, and the erection of hard and selective borders with their tendency to exclude masses of people in seek of employment and better living conditions within the Schengen area.

#### **4 For a real co-ownership and co-development on the borders**

The idea of a cosmopolitan Europe is therefore struggling against such a conflicted Neighbourhood policy scenario. Hence, a theory is set forth and a political request made for reinforcing a neighbourhood policy based on a widespread multi-actors approach, on a socialisation more open to confrontation and on a real co-ownership and co-development with reciprocity-based conditionalities. Such a theory finds support outside the EU, within the motivations behind the Arab spring and within Eastern Europe’s civil society’s networks. In this context, civil society, the development of new networked borders and forms of network governance from the bottom-up play a greater role also for the removal of the hard and selective borders erected so far, this was brought out by the results of the project EUDIMENSIONS<sup>14</sup>.

“Civil society groups therefore argue that, in order to succeed, the Neighbourhood Policy must operate more along the lines of a multi-level and reciprocal project of region-building rather than a one-sided attempt on the part of the EU to ‘order’ its external boundaries and – at the same time – improve relations with its neighbours. It therefore seems to be widely understood that a civil society dimension is vital for the overall success of EU policies that aim to deepen integration between the Union and its neighbours. From the actors’ perspective, a greater focus on co-operation dynamics from below will help connecting

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<sup>14</sup> [<http://www.eudimensions.eu/>].

citizens and communities with the EU and make the abstract notion of a co-operative Neighbourhood more credible” (Scott, 2011).

A policy which can go past the relationships between central governments to widen the stakeholders circle:

“The EU needs to expand its outreach in the region and look for innovative ways of supporting the embryonic middle class and its—sometimes still disorganised—institutions. Thus, besides supporting pro-democracy activists and independent media, the EU should focus on programmes that help empower local public interest groups that are embedded in the broader society, that have clear constituencies and articulated interests. These can engage in advocacy vis-à-vis the government on specific policy issues, thus promoting social rather than regime change (for which there is little popular support). In practice, this means greater EU support for representative associations of businesses, small and medium-sized enterprises, but also for bureaucrats, professional associations and grass-roots civil society organizations rather than just for NGOs and political parties” (Jarabik and Kobzova, 2011).

All of the above should be possible without hegemonic claims and also by reinforcing the fact that “the EU is viewed by its neighbours as a benign power, which might be doing more for them” (Emerson, 2012, p. 61) by supporting a mutual social learning, by providing more resources and spaces to CBC and to new transnational geographies such as macro-regions.

The graduation of concentric circles could be reconfigured in the Europe of Olympic rings. With regard to this, we can refer to the Northern Dimension as analysed by Browning and Joenniemi (2003, p. 475-476), according to whom

“with region-building and networking high on its agenda, the Northern Dimension seems to open up for a reconceptualization of European political space. In particular, it appears to promote a future European constellation that would be beneficial for marginal areas, such as those located in Europe’s north, by allowing and encouraging them to turn into meeting-places, frontiers to be explored and areas that mediate contacts, instead of merely existing as outmost edges. The underlying vision here can be conceptualized in terms of a ‘Europe of Olympic rings’, in contrast to more traditional notions of an empire-like ‘Europe of concentric circles’. It is logical, in the context of such a vision, that those ‘outside’ are also drawn into and provided with access to the inner European circle. In this understanding, outsiders are needed as true partners – that is, actors to be provided with regulating and constituting power, rather than conceptualized as the objects of the actions of those on the inside. This is so as their active contributions are needed if the construction of a more de-centred and less security-gearred Europe is to become reality”

As seen, the differentiated integration within EU, which is interlinked with the outwards Europeanisation process, particularly towards the neighbourhood, waters down and re-settles not only following the European crisis, but also due to the changes occurring in bordering countries. This requires a transition from a Eurocentric approach to relations of real partnership where there is a symmetrical confrontation of values and economic and social models, in spite the existence of material asymmetries. This is about encouraging a new neighbourhood policy less Eurocentric and more sensitive to implementing a real partnership to debate and compare new democracy and development models without pretended superiority. Beside, Gerrits (2009) signals as the EU normative power

“conflicts with others’ perception of the EU. In the perception of Mahbubani (Mahbubani, 2008 ,p. 266), Europe is an arrogant, inward-looking, self-obsessed and conservative entity in decline, which not only treats non-European cultures and societies with disdain and condescension but which also fails to establish any kind of meaningful partnership with them. [...] Tatiana Romanova argues that the concept of normative power denies Russia part of its national identity. The EU monopolises the notion of Europe based on a subjective political (some would argue a cultural) and not an objective geographical definition on what Europe represents, places the Russian federation outside Europe.

And finally according to Yiewi Wang on the Chinese perception, “*Europe’s misplaced sense of universalism; Messianism; and cosmopolitanism ; as well as the EU’s hypocrisy*” (Gerrits, 2009, p. 5 and 6).

The recent Arab spring, with the victory of Islamic parties, has re-opened the debate on the pretended superiority of the European normative model, for two main reasons.

On one hand because it has shown how EU's Neighbourhood policy and its member states foreign policies have not contributed to new democratisation process, but, on the contrary, they have supported authoritarian regimes through aid measures linked to security and economic interests, from energy to control of the migratory flows. Thus revealing a good measure of hypocrisy in comparison to the principles stipulated in the Euro-Mediterranean partnership.

On the other hand because Arabic people are looking for their own Islamic democratic model, different from the Western one showing increasing flaws. The weakness and inconsistency of the Western democracies are increasingly noticed, especially since xenophobia is increasing, migrants' rights are not respected, a neoliberal model undermining both social justice and the same democracy is encouraged, or there are impositions of austerity measures disrupting the social cohesion.

We need a policy able to re-open the debate on the neoliberal mantras serving models mainly based on social justice and territorial cohesion, as indicated in an assessment on the euro-Mediterranean partnership and as required by the revolutionaries of the Arab spring (Schmid, 2010a). A policy able to face critiques on the pretended European moral high ground, on the neighbourhood's ambiguities and neo-liberalism and on the risk of tactical usage of financial aid to civil society to promote the neoliberal view.

“Here the Western neo-liberal agenda is supposed to be spread through civil-society via education, NGO's, cultural exchange, media, school, cultural assistance and perception. Crucial is then whether civil society in the involved countries is willing to adopt European values, norms and politics and thus fits itself into further ‘Europeanisation’” (Boedeltje and Van Houtum, 2011).

According to Kurki's (2012):

“the politico-economic model which informs action is still, it would seem, embedded within a (variant of the) neoliberal discourse: minimally welfare providing pro-market, pro-competition, pro-entrepreneurial states is what is envisioned in the EU neighbourhood, in Africa and in the Middle East.”

And he identifies three issues for the redefinition of EU neighbourhood policy.

“First, a new level of humility and willingness to listen needs to characterize democracy support [...] and accept that perhaps a much less interventionist strategy is now what the locals want. Second, it needs to acknowledge and accept more room for discussion over alternative politico-economic models of democracy. [...] This does not mean that the West has to accept the democratic legitimacy of non-democratic ideological pretenders, or withdraw from liberal democracy support, but it does mean that democracy promoters should at least openly consider the inherently ideological and contested nature of any democracy support activity and the existence of legitimate alternatives, or extensions, to the liberal democratic politico-economic model – be they social, participatory, or global democratic. Third, in the current context any reform of democracy support has to go hand in hand with a revitalisation of the debate on democracy in the West. [...] Very different tools and policy frameworks then are required: ones that are less about telling people what democracy looks like and more about generating reflective thought about what it can look like – in the West as well as the rest.”

Within debates, policies and Europeanisation techniques, particularly through ENPI Action Plans, a tension arises between seeking an ever increasing homologation to regulations unilaterally prescribed by EU and the request for a greater care for pluralities within various territorial socio-political contexts of neighbouring countries.

The EU approach lacks a negotiation more open to reciprocal recognition. The political debate on Europeanisation revolves around the technical and normative instruments preordained by EU: with the enlargement it is the Copenhagen *acquis communitaires*, to which all applying countries have to conform. The enlargement approach has been translated into the neighbourhood policy, so that the EU and neighbouring countries negotiate for reforms plans configured according to guidelines in reference to the western European model, without including, however, EU memberships. The

neighbourhood policy prescribes rules, standards, best practices, benchmarks all revolving around the EU model.

The notion “*everything but institutions*”, i.e. Europeanisation without membership, appears, somehow, hypocritical, dull and neo-colonial or imperialistic. Hypocritical because the perceived message is “*you need to be like us, but you can not stay with us*”. As a result, countries such as Ukraine and Moldova object and push for recognition within the EU.

Dull, because, as amply elaborated in literature, the neighbourhood policy clearly shows lack on incentives, especially given the nonexistence of membership perspective. The conditionality, without promising membership, does not work well and it reflects in its meager impact. This issue presents itself again with greater relevance for the future, considering the proposal to re-launch the neighbourhood policy to support democratic processes by defining conditionalities with more effective benchmarks, when, on the contrary, the EU crisis is liable to further reduce the incentives and exacerbate the contradictions.

Neo-colonial or imperialistic because the debate, even though it acknowledges the need for an improved South to South relationship, amongst southern Mediterranean countries, is still linked to the economic model of the Western free market area. The EU sustains, in fact, the creation of a free trade zone between Arabic countries aiming at reinforcing their specialisations and competitiveness, in any case instrumental to the creation of more attractive market for European foreign investments, while contemporarily pushing for the implementation of the DCFTA according to its own standards.

Consequently, it is now important to reconsider the political debate on Europeanisation, in the relationship with the neighbourhood, again on the role of the borders as limes and as networks, as much as debating on its content, its contradictions and incongruencies and recognising the need for implementing an egalitarian debate open to real confrontation on different values, principles, models and others, in any case compatible to avoid destructive conflicts.

The EU and its member states should be able to reflect critically and in an open-minded way on different visions of democracy as originating in Turkey and in the new democratic Arabic countries, all aware of how much democracy has been corrupted in some of the member states of the same EU due to xenophobic and racist deviations. In relation to this, Beck and Grande (2006, p. 320) propose that

“The cosmopolitan Europe rejected the imagination of the one best way of modernity, while fighting for the existence, the recognition and the encouragement of alternative guidelines for the development of modernity, interlinked, of course, with one another, but mindful of the individual backgrounds and of respective historical conditions”.

All of this while seeking, in any case, an essential core of procedural rules and substantial lowest common, knowing there are inescapable and difficult to solve dilemmas.

## **5 Conclusions, pondering/speculating on possible scenarios**

The European crisis in an inter-polar world, where new players create new and different dynamics, improves the level of complexity and the uncertainty in outlining trends, scenarios, and possible policies to improve the relationship between EU and the neighbourhood, thus favouring a greater social cohesion across the borders. There is a need for a more coherent global strategy which will look at the neighbourhood more as an opportunity than a threat. This global strategy can not transcend the re-launch of a Europe more open towards diversities and more aware of its contradictions. A global strategy which relies on a greater cohesion in amongst member states and a German strategy getting back its multilateralism for the medium-long haul. Should EU be really

willing to characterise its global strategy for its normative power, it needs, on one side, to recognize other parties' limits and perceptions and on the other to reflect in-depth on the various development and democracy models within a more cosmopolitan approach to be shared with outside partners, more and more interlinked.

The previous analysis has allowed to outline hypothetical scenarios for the future which we are now going to develop on the basis of different perspectives: from a perspective of realpolitik, founded on the principle of a European competitive power amongst multipolar rivalries so dear to the political-economic élite, to a more open and cosmopolitan perspective, where various processes and models are more careful about territorial and social contexts. These are obviously speculations on the possible variable geometries of the European construction and in relation to the neighbourhood and have no claim to future "reading".

The analysis of the scenarios draws on a strong common hypothesis: following the affects of the European crisis and of its deepening with the adoption of austerity policies, policies which are undermining both the idea of a unified Europe and internal social cohesion, the elites' responses, but also people's, are developing towards a deep renewal in favour of a Federal Europe more cooperative and hence in need of a real common foreign policy.

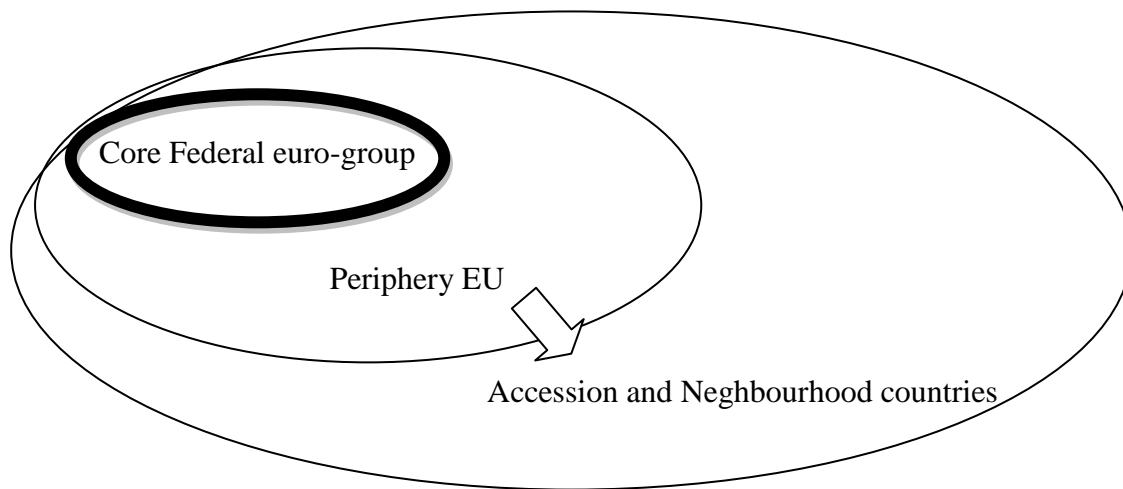
The first scenario, more developed around a hard core, sees the creation of a competitive federal Europe formed by the strongest countries of the Euro-group, particularly those able to respond to the global financial markets pressure. This "core" gives strength to economical and financial cooperation and is characterised by a globally competitive development model. Its foreign policy is definitely oriented towards strategic partnerships with emerging markets, even while still minding international solidarity.

Beside this "core", there would be strong countries, remaining outside the federal coalition for national sovereignty choices, but, moreover, there would be a second circle of outlying countries with weak complementary economies and with buffer zones to manage the migratory flows. This circle would be formed by countries who have abandoned the Eurozone and by those belonging to the EU, all connected to the federal "core" through the single market. A two speed Europe would then be created. The global leadership of the "core" is maintained by addressing the periphery and neighbourhood's problems through a redistributive cohesion policy, constrained by strong conditionalities, and by ensuring participation to the single market. However, even the Schengen area could change, narrowing down to the strongest countries, while peripheral countries would be given control and management functions over flows in buffer zones. The enlargement would come to a stop translating the relationship with Turkey into a strategic regional partnership.

Neighbouring countries would continue to receive external assistance, perhaps even accessing more resources, but in a more restricted way according to standards set up by the core. The Trade policy would be able to exert greater pressure for the implementation of the DCFTA, while the one on immigration would continue to retain an approach of control and repression, even while opening to territorially circumscribed and very selective flows.

In this way we could assist to a progressive detachment of EU periphery from the federal core and, consequently, its approach to the neighbourhood. The principles of territorial cohesion would weaken, while the Western model of democracy and of a market based on competitiveness would be reinforced. The federal core could acquire possible double-standard behaviours from the moment geo-strategic and security interests, negotiable with emerging powers, came into play. The borders would be, from one side, more closed and selective on movement of people, on the basis of a securitarian approach aimed, blindly, at protecting internal social peace; on the other side, they would be more open to movements of goods, capital and services based on a strongly reciprocal approach, basically mercantilistic.

**Figure 5: First scenario of a competitive Federal Europe around a hard core**



The second scenario, more reformist, is a derivation of the first case scenario in which the federal core characterises for a policy more open and involved in the periphery and in the neighbourhood. The Federal Europe of the strongest Eurozone countries would try to counterbalance the search for a greater competitiveness at a global level with greater care for cooperation and solidarity with the periphery and with the neighbourhood, by implementing demand policies aimed at favouring the reduction of asymmetries, in addition to the more traditional offer policies to promote development of capabilities and catching-up. As a result, the European budget would increase. Its foreign policy would be characterised by greater attention towards neighbourhood development while trying to reduce contradictions within what politically possible.

The policy for social cohesion would be reinforced by trying to favour, in addition to a simplified vision of complementarities, greater territorial and economic integration by being more dynamic and open to being influenced by diversities. Positive conditionalities would be reinforced to the detriment of negative ones. The Schengen area would remain the same or it would be enlarged to new EU or applying countries, thus increasingly sharing the external frontiers' management and costs and avoiding the periphery became in a chain of buffer zones.

The enlargement would proceed more slowly so to enable countries to continue with reforms which would then be more gradual and cost-effective from a social point of view. The possible accession of Turkey would be maintained and taken into consideration within the new differentiated, i.e. closer to variable geometry Europe, integration.

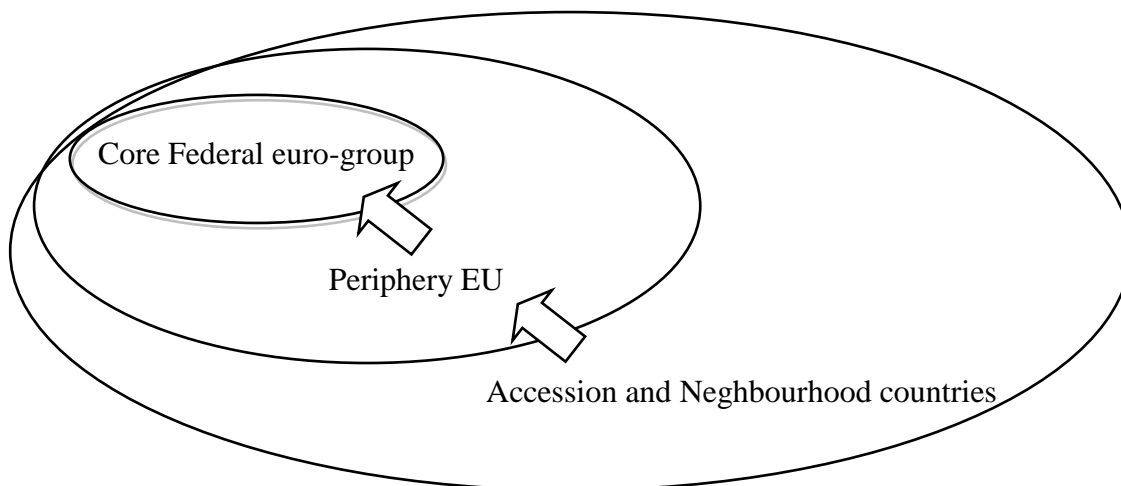
Neighbouring countries could take part in the policy for cohesion, as already planned for member states, thus accessing to more resources and innovations for cross-border and transnational cooperation, such as macro-regions. With some neighbouring countries there could be a debate on EU membership, but not on the federal core- Trade policy would still be driven by the DCFTA proposal but in more gradual steps, with an approach to reciprocity in the longer term and more mindful of the building up of the capabilities of neighbour economies to fall in line with common standards. The immigration policy could be more open by loosening the selective route, while it would still delegate the control of flows but with higher compensations and with greater care to the recognition of the rights of migrants and asylum applicants.

Based on this scenario, the Eurocentric approach would be retained by trying to draw neighbour countries nearer to EU periphery and to the European federal core. The principles of social cohesion would be given strength, while trying to reduce the level of contradiction between the various sectoral policies involving the neighbourhood. The neighbourhood policy would be more integrated



with that of cohesion. The obstacles at the borders would be gradually reduced to facilitate exchanges and mobility.

**Figure 6: Second scenario of a open and reformist Federal Europe**



The third scenario, named Olympic rings' scenario, is greatly different from the first two, relatively realistic, scenarios because it breaks with the concept of differentiated integration by concentric circles. In this scenario the EU is redefined so to overcome the core-periphery approach. The point of view changes: it is not that of the French-German axis or in terms of blue banana, but that of decentralised areas. Partially, we can refer to the concept of neo-medieval empire proposed by Zielovska, in a more or less Eurocentric fashion. On the other hand this scenario could also overlap with the second, empowering the interconnections and the transition from a core-periphery model to a multi-centered model.

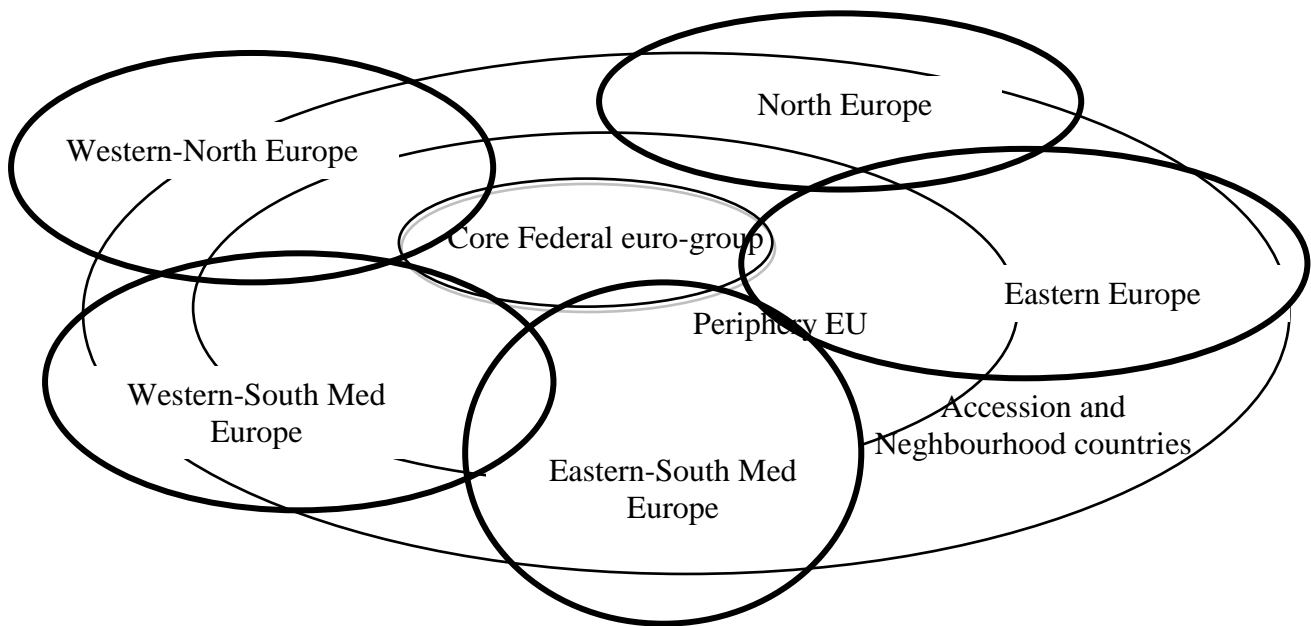
Within the concentric circles outlined above, more decentralised governances, oriented towards the idea of co-development and co-ownership with neighbouring countries, would intertwine. Therefore, there would be common spaces between member states and neighbour countries from Northern and Eastern Europe and from Western and Eastern Mediterranean. The focal point of this restructuring of the European model would be a reinforced cohesion policy also extended to the neighbourhood and distributed by macro-areas according to the principle of geographical functionalities, therefore building new relative structures of transnational governance.

Even sectoral policies could be partially reformed according to this new design: the DCFTA could be substituted by new commercial agreements by macro-areas, east-east, south-south, in an attempt to reinforce, above all, neighbouring countries economic capabilities by linking, at a later date, these areas with the EU single market; contemporarily, even the mobility of people could be favoured in these areas to be later connected to the Schengen area. The contradictions between sectoral policies within the relationship with the neighbourhood could be substantially reformed according to different parameters. The borders would be redefined creating new exchange networks and mobility within the areas. The CBC and new forms of transnational cooperation as the macro-regions would acquire great relevance, as much as multi-level systems would be reinforced in address and policies management.

In this way a polycentric system with open borders on a common and diversified cohesion policy would come into existence. A model so redefined, having as foundation a cohesion policy (as counterbalance to the single market and euro policies) would allow the opening of perspectives that go beyond the traditional Eurocentric approach towards the neighbours focused between market and security. The attention would be addressed towards cooperation opportunities in various

dimensions, to the protection and valorisation of common goods, rather than on threat restraint. Through the new Olympic rings there could be new debates on the principles and forms of democracy, on different socio-economic models more sensitive to the concept of community and territories, with less selective borders and more networks oriented. We could even imagine new forms of transnational democracy.

**Figure 7: Third scenario Europe of Olympic rings**

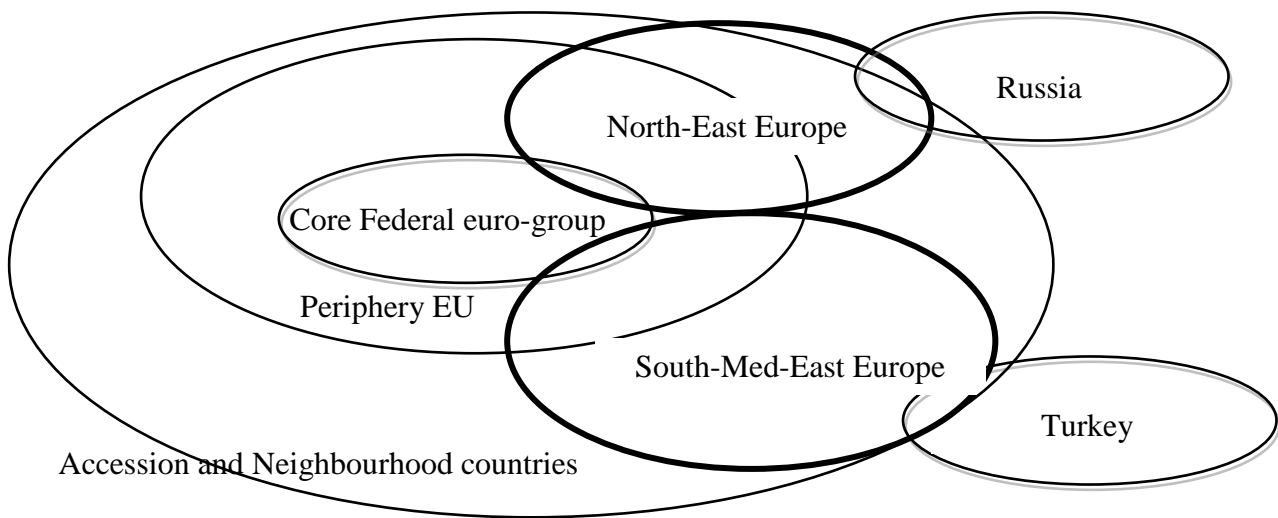


Finally, the fourth and last scenario draws on the previous one but it includes a factor of great relevance, the role, in fact, which could be played by regional powers different from the EU within the relationship with the neighbourhood and within an eventual geopolitical redesign. This scenario is called Olympic rings in strategic partnership for co-development.

In terms of cooperation and openness the previous scenario is modified by the integration of regional powers, particularly Russia and Turkey. The macro-areas would include, in addition to neighbour countries, some parts of EU, Russia and Turkey strongly involved in common macro-areas due to objective functional reasons. The cohesion policy would become a policy shared with these regional powers and market perspectives and people mobility opportunities should also be shared.

The idea of co-development and co-ownership, starting from neighbour countries, which would in this case become “central” in macro-areas, is shared with regional powers. The Olympic rings would be substituted by strategic partnerships in amongst the greatest powers converging on macro-areas in close agreement with “central countries”. In this way there could be a reduction of geopolitical rivalries, of opportunities for opportunistic behaviour towards neighbour countries, of commercial diversions, of inconsistencies between the various sectoral policies in the different poles and, moreover, there could be the possibility to favour the resolution of conflicts which still trouble some of the territories within these macro-areas.

**Figure 8: Fourth scenario, Europe of Olympic rings in strategic partnerships for co-development**



In conclusion, a real partnership for a plural and mindful of diversities co-development, should characterize more a neighbourhood policy which coherently comprises the various sectoral policies. It would even be possible to change the neighbourhood policy's name, which clearly conjures up euro-centrism and a neo-colonial approach, in favour of common regional policies where the ownership of Eastern Europe and southern Mediterranean is more visible, and also in closer cooperation with emerging countries, such as Russia and Turkey, more influencing on areas such as Iran and Gulf countries. In this sense, the last two scenarios conjure up perspectives which, if on one side are not much realistic, on the other side they pinpoint the objectives and possibilities which have meaning to the extent of creating geopolitics more aware of human security and in search of democracies more embedded within the paths of the various territorial contexts.

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