

Kai-Olaf Lang/Johannes Varwick

## Introduction

The political map of Europe has been in constant flux over the past years, and it is probably inevitable that it will take some time for Europeans until the far-reaching institutional changes will be reflected in their cognitive maps. Dramatic changes have taken place in Central, Eastern and South East Europe in the past decade, while the European integration process is making progress despite major shifts in political alliances among the states in the international system. All these developments occurred at the same time – and not just since the terrorist attacks of September, 11 2001 – together with a fundamental shift in the transatlantic relationship, and consequently in the role of the United States of America in Europe and in its attitude to Europe. In particular, the key European organization, the European Union (EU) must decide whether it is willing and able to transform itself from a powerful economic force with a common currency into an equally powerful political and security actor. Moreover, the EU must also decide whether it primarily wants to be concerned with itself, or also wants to play a more active role in world politics by being prepared and able to act on behalf of the international system as a harbinger of peace and stability outside its borders.

The primary concern of this book is to examine whether and if so, how, the EU is able to stabilise its broader periphery by the means of what is called European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP).

- On the one hand, the EU policy towards its neighbourhood is both a crucial part of the integration process in general and the development of a common foreign and security policy in particular which is worth its name. For the time being, neighbourhood policy was – at least to a certain extent – a synonym for enlargement. While the EU gave priority to the concept of criteria-led enlargement until the late 1990s, a more geo-strategic approach has spread increasingly since then. But the initial incorporation of ever more states will be far from straightforward.
- On the other hand there is no doubt that the enlarged European Union needs an effective and coherent common policy to deal with its neighbours strategically. This not only refers to *Europe's neighbourhood*, but rather to the *European Union's neighbourhood*, which are two different things, as the case of Ukraine demonstrates.

These aspects of EU external relations arose in response to three major developments with regard to the European integration process.

- *First*, with the Eastern and South-Eastern enlargements zones of real or potential instability came closer to the borders of the EU. In consequence, additional efforts to promote economic and political reform and to deepen cooperation with partner countries located next to the EU's borders were initiated.
- *Second*, the accession of Central and South-Eastern European countries has implications for the Union's foreign policy mind-set. For one thing, the East European members of the EU place a special emphasis on cooperation with the EU's new direct neighbours in the East, including in the South Caucasus. For another, in response to a perceived "Easternization" of the Union, Mediterranean member states have been pressing for a similar upgrade of cooperation with partner countries at the EU's Southern flank. As a result, a broad framework of cooperation emerged, including countries from Northern Africa and the former Soviet Union.
- *Third*, after the "big bang" enlargement of 2004 and the accession of Rumania and Bulgaria in 2007, together with the accession promise to Western Balkan states and Turkey, there is growing resistance in the EU to continue with the enlargement process. Decreasing public acceptance of enlargement in many "old" member countries, the announcement to hold a referendum on the accession of new members in some EU member states and the bumpy road to institutional reform have triggered an intensive debate about the so called "absorption capacity" of the European Union. In this context, the Union is looking for new mechanisms to exert influence in its immediate geographic environment without using the most efficient instrument, i.e. enlargement policy.

After an initial period in which the geographic scope and the strategic outreach of this new policy were defined and bilateral Actions Plans with particular partner states were agreed as well as the financial assistance scheme (European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument; ENPI) was designed, the ENP has now reached the stage of implementation.

It is in this very moment, where the three sections of the book want to give new insight.

- The *first section* of this volume addresses the conceptual dimension of ENP. The contributions gathered in this section provide comprehensive analyses of the strategic appeal and the institutional make-up of the entire ENP-framework. In the course of this, it becomes apparent that ENP is based on a multiple compromise: between the interests of the EU's Southern and Eastern "caucuses", and between the adherents of a restric-

tive enlargement policy (for whom ENP is a permanent alternative to accession) and proponents of an open-door policy (for whom ENP is a first step towards enlargement). In this context, a number of sensitive issues of ENP become visible: the diversity of cooperation zones; the weakness of an intermediate approach between the general “ENP-umbrella” and the bilateral one; the appropriateness of funding; and of course the question of mechanisms giving momentum to change.

- This book does not focus on bilateral relations with individual partners. Rather, the emphasis is on across-the-board observations and essential areas of cooperation. In this regard, the *second section* deals with key issues of cooperation, including democratisation, justice and home affairs, CFSP and ESDP, economic exchange, and the question of troublesome partners.
- In recognition of the dynamic nature of European foreign affairs as well as the European integration process in general, and the ENP in particular the *third section* gathers contributions about the perspectives of inclusive cooperation with EU partners. The conceptual and practical problems arising in the course of enlargement must necessarily lead to a broader and deeper discussion of the basic direction of the European unification process. By this, the book aims to shed light on the interrelations between internal reform and new ways of involvement. It also offers innovative thought about future forms of partial or selective integration below the level of full-fledged membership and about a “holistic” arrangement of EU cooperation with different partners and partner-regions.

It will be of extraordinary strategic importance for states which have no chance of joining the EU in the foreseeable future to be offered a close and fair partnership below the threshold of membership. The future borders of the Union must therefore not become the impervious borders of a bloc. In particular, enlargement should not lead to a situation in which the ties between applicant countries in the first and subsequent rounds are destroyed, thus creating new barriers. On the contrary: active support should be given to the stabilisation of areas remaining outside the EU. The European Union has particular responsibility for the stability of Europe as a whole. But stability can only be created if the Union itself is stable. Otherwise there is a real danger that good intentions (the export of stability) will lead to problems that will help no one (the import of instability).

Admittedly, enlargement cannot be achieved according to a political textbook if the motivation and interests of those involved differ and if there are political pressures and a need for compromise. However, certain lessons about the way in which an enlarged EU could and would operate should not be ignored. Anyone who is convinced that European integration is the right answer to the challenges of the future must want the EU to remain what

makes it attractive to so many states wishing to join: a community that works.

Taken together, an analysis of these facets of European Neighbourhood Policy should lead to a better understanding of where the EU stands with its cooperation approach. It will show shortcomings as well as achievements, and it can provide hints about future prospects: if ENP is to undergo a deep reconstruction or if the EU should simply continue with the implementation process and think about moderate modifications.