FEDERIGA BINDI AND IRINA ANGELESCU

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Conclusion: The European Union Should Again Be "Open for Business"

This book has shown that EU enlargement—and the EU's relations with its neighborhood—has never been an issue of exclusive European concern. As Federiga Bindi and Kurt Volker explain in their respective chapters, the very creation of the European institutions and the EU's successive waves of enlargement have been transatlantic issues because the United States has always viewed enlargement as a stabilization tool in Europe and therefore a matter of national interest. This will also be the case if the EU is to expand to the countries of the Western Balkans. Beyond that, the situation may change, depending on the EU's position. If the EU adopts a unified voice and acts a as a counterbalancing force to the U.S. (and Russian) influence in the neighborhood, the United States would likely reconsider its priorities. However, if Europe continues to be divided by the interests of its individual member states and to behave like a weak international actor, the United States is likely to continue to support it—as a matter of stability and, hence, national interest.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, for example, the United States pushed for NATO enlargement to the east in a way that was at least partially counterproductive for the EU enlargement process. As Bindi and Jan Techau suggest in their chapters, the post–cold war NATO enlargement challenged the EU because the Central and Eastern European countries (CEECs) seemed to favor accession to NATO over the more burdensome EU accession process. In addition, the CEECs seem to attach more political importance to NATO than do the older member states.

The USSR—and after the end of the cold war, Russia—has had a different view of the EC/EU and its enlargements. During the cold war, it refused to recognize the EC's existence as a legal international entity. It did so in 1988, but only out of necessity (it was in need of financial assistance). However, despite the fact that the USSR initially viewed the EC as a U.S. Trojan horse in Europe, the EU's 2004–07 eastern enlargement was of only marginal concern to Russia. Russia was preoccupied with NATO's expansion toward its former Soviet satellites: as Mark Entin writes, NATO expansion has been seen in Russia as a shift of the cold war division to the east. Therefore, although NATO's expansion challenged the process of EU enlargement to the east, it also facilitated it because it was the focus of Russian attention and fear (read "opposition"), which otherwise would have been directed at the EU.

Should Russia join both NATO and the EU, as Mark Entin argues? The contributors to this book do not agree on the answer to this question, but share his concern that the tenets and stereotypes of the cold war have been slow to die. They are still alive in the leaders' minds, but they do not occupy the minds of the younger generations, those who are challenging regimes in the Middle East in a way that would have been unthinkable before 1989. In a way, the last legacies of the cold war are being challenged in the Middle East as we write, though it is hard to predict what will replace them when today's protesters assume leadership.

The Next Frontier: A Scenario for Future EU Enlargements

What is the foreseeable direction of EU enlargement? The clear picture provided by Ferdinando Nelli Feroci indicates that, in the short term, Croatia will become the only new member state. It is possible that Macedonia, Serbia, and Montenegro will follow by 2020. The other countries in the Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo) face greater domestic and international challenges (for example, five EU member states have not yet recognized Kosovo's independence) and are unlikely to join before the next decade. Iceland, which had the best accession prospect, voted against accession in a referendum on April 9, 2011. In response to the Icelandic population's refusal to pay back the United Kingdom and the Netherlands for their assistance during the economic crisis that began in 2008, those countries made it clear that they would oppose Iceland's membership.

The prospects for Turkey's membership are more complex. There is general agreement among the contributors that Turkey's EU membership would be in the "national" EU interest. As an EU member state Turkey would give added value to the Union as a whole in both energy and geopolitical terms, as Massimo Gaiani clearly describes. Unfortunately, the EU appears to have chosen a short-sighted view in its approach to the Turkish case, putting subjective cultural and value-related issues ahead of a pragmatic analysis of its own interests. As a result, the EU may have lost a historic opportunity. Paradoxically, after decades of eagerly seeking and preparing for EU membership and fulfilling many of the conditions to join, Turkey may decide not to continue its pursuit of EU membership.

Over the past few years, Turkey has progressively affirmed itself as a broker in the Middle East and on the international scene. For example, Turkey is now part of the G20, which is slowly emerging as a major international forum. The unrest in the Arab world has confirmed the unique role Turkey can play in stabilizing the larger neighborhood. Furthermore, the country is now expanding its economic and diplomatic influence not only in the Middle East, but also in the Balkans. Should the Western Balkan states be rejected by the EU, they may well turn to Turkey as an alternative. Should Turkey decide to unilaterally halt or even break off the negotiations, the cost to the EU in political, economic, and, most of all, credibility terms would be enormous. There are signals that Turkey is already considering this scenario, as reflected in Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's speech at the Council of Europe in April 2011, in which he asserted that the EU needs Turkey as a member perhaps more than Turkey needs the EU.[1]

Explaining the EU's Lack of Commitment to Enlargement

One reason for the EU's lack of commitment to enlargement is the absence of a sense of historical legacy and obligation that characterized past expansions to the south in 1986 and to the east in 2004–07. It is unclear why this feeling is not present with regard to the (Western) Balkans, which, for better or worse, are at the heart of European history. As Franco Frattini points out in the Introduction, the European "mission" cannot be considered accomplished until all of the Western Balkan countries have joined the EU. He also emphasizes the symbolic significance of Turkey's accession to the EU, comparing it to two crucial moments in Europe's recent history: the French-German reconciliation and the fall of the Berlin Wall.

European politicians have also been using the economic crisis as a justification for not enlarging further. But there is no correlation between the two. Past enlargements have taken place both in periods of stagnation (1973) and in periods of economic growth (1986). As Luca Einaudi explains, joining the EU does not automatically mean joining the eurozone, a process that is governed by its own rules and criteria in order to guarantee the stability of the area. For instance, of the twelve countries that acceded to the EU in 2004–07, only five joined the eurozone (Cyprus, Estonia, Malta, Slovenia, and Slovakia). Furthermore, a bigger EU also means a larger market. External trade by the

European Union rose by 20 percent after the EU enlarged to twenty-seven members and, from 2000 to 2006, intra-EU trade rose by 33 percent.[2] Although the consequences of the economic crisis that began in 2008 are not yet clear, it is certain—if, for instance, we compare this crisis with the one at the beginning of the 1990s—that the existence of the euro partially buffered the impact of the crisis, especially with regard to financial speculation. Therefore, as Einaudi underlines, the euro is unlikely to be abandoned. An expanding EU would contribute to projecting a perception of dynamism and thus make its economy more attractive for investors. This is what happened before the most recent wave of enlargement, when investors turned to the CEECs not only for lower prices, but also for the prospect of becoming part of the single market.

A third reason for the lack of enlargement enthusiasm in the EU is the lack of popular support and a sense of "enlargement fatigue." As Irina Angelescu, Gilles de Kerchove, Umberto Melotti, and Jean-Luc Marret explain in their respective chapters, there is a growing xenophobia among European citizens and politicians, who perceive immigrants as a threat to the social and economic order and their "way of life"; the threat is perceived to include terrorist attacks.

The official European discourse, which is supportive of enlargement, often does not seem to be complemented by the same message from the narrative and practices of its member states. As these conflicting messages reach countries outside the EU's borders, among them aspiring candidate countries and neighbors, they affect perceptions of the EU's commitment to enlargement and to close relations with its neighbors. and consequently influence their willingness to undertake costly reform. This may result in a catch-22 situation, in which neighbors are not willing to engage in costly reforms until they have a firm commitment (to enlargement) from the EU, while the EU is not willing to offer that commitment in the absence of thorough reforms.

Projections for the Future

What are the consequences of the EU's inability to think strategically about enlargement? We argue that this inability is likely to affect the EU's relations in two directions: first, with its neighborhood, and second, with the wider world. The first consequence, as mentioned already in the case of Turkey, is the possible disenchantment with the EU in the candidate and prospective member countries. The EU's inactivity and Turkey's increasingly proactive stance in foreign affairs could cause the countries of the Western Balkans to gravitate toward the latter. Should this happen, it would deprive the EU of its historical backyard and of a major geopolitical and energy asset (the pipelines planned in that area). Similarly, the countries in the East, driven by the EU's unwillingness to give them a concrete membership perspective, are likely to gravitate toward Russia.

As Gaiani and Alessandro Ortis point out, Russia occupies a preeminent role in ensuring Europe's energy supply. With unrest in the Arab world, the EU is even more dependent on Russian energy. Although Russia's role in ensuring Europe's energy needs has been a matter of contention between the United States and Europe and in Europe itself, the unrest in the Middle East will make Russia's contribution far more appealing. U.S. arguments against Europe's energy dependence on Russia will find Europeans less receptive than in the past. With its southern shore becoming increasingly problematic, Europe will need a stable eastern neighborhood, and it will be less opposed to Russia extending its influence to the former Soviet republics. The consequences for the "frozen conflicts" in the Caucasus would be substantial. Even the former Soviet satellites—now EU members—that joined the United States in vocal protest against Russia in the past may reconsider their position because of their domestic energy needs. The tragic events at Japan's Fukushima nuclear power plant are likely to contribute to this trend if nuclear power is no longer regarded as a secure energy alternative, as suggested by the June 2011 decision made by the German chancellor, Angela Merkel, to close all the nuclear plants in the country by 2020.

The EU will have a big opportunity to contribute to institution building in the post-Arab spring. As Amichai Magen points out, the EU has a record of excellence in institution building and support of democracy. It is hoped that the EU will be able to apply lessons from the past in this part of the world. Stable and well-functioning democratic institutions in this area are of direct interest to the EU, as the waves of immigrants and the energy shortages following the Arab crisis have clearly shown. Likewise, Maurizio Carbone notes that cooperation on development has been one positive example of the EU's transformative power. The EU now has the choice to build on this success. Should it fail to do so, the attractiveness of its soft power will decrease substantially.

The second consequence of the EU's inability to think strategically about enlargement and its neighborhood concerns the EU's role in the world. The United States has become disenchanted with the EU. The post–Lisbon Treaty Europe created enormous expectations. In 2010 the U.S. Department of State created for the first time a position with responsibility for managing relations with the European Union and Western Europe. However, the inability of the EU to speak with one voice because of the desire of its member states to achieve "privileged" status in Washington has, for the most part, voided the potential offered by the Lisbon Treaty in the field of foreign policy.

A similar pattern can be found in other parts of the world. Latin America, as Joaquín Roy points out, has long been attracted by the EU influence. Institutional frameworks such as Mercosur have facilitated dialogue between Mercosur and the EU. More recently, however, emerging economies have pushed for their own place in the sun within Mercosur, just as they have within the EU. Roy believes, though, that an eventual Turkish EU membership would have a positive impact on trade and political relations between Latin America and the EU.

China does not place the EU at the top of its political or foreign policy priorities, as Giovanni Andornino points out. The EU and China speak different foreign policy languages, the former driven by the postmodernist logic of enlargement, the latter guided by pragmatism. Eventual enlargements of the EU would only consolidate this divide. The lack of a proper EU strategy toward China based on a pragmatic analysis of the European "national" interest is striking. A willingness to meet halfway between the postmodern and pragmatic approaches could translate into greater cooperation and mutual benefits for the two actors.

Toward an EU "National" Interest?

As Entin suggests in his chapter, the EU's apparent incapacity to pragmatically determine what best constitutes its "national" interest appears to be linked to the fact that it was unable to understand the radical paradigm shift in international relations after the end of the cold war. The language of diplomacy in the twenty-first century has changed, moving from cold war diplomacy to geo-economics, as Andornino explains in relation to the China case. The inability of the Europeans to understand the vastness of the change and how to cope with it is even more surprising since it is the second time in less than sixty years that they are facing a paradigm shift in international relations and in their role on the world stage.

A similar change occurred in the 1950s and 1960s, during the decolonization process. This failure to grasp the new reality may be linked, as discussed by Bindi, Angelescu, and Entin, to an inward-looking attitude that has characterized the EU since the 1990s. After 1996 the EU appeared obsessed by its need for institutional reform, which it was unable to properly achieve, while the 9/11 terrorist attacks provided new impetus for the European interior ministers to attempt to "seal the borders" of the EU and to "export" unwanted immigrants to third countries.

Both Frattini and Nelli Feroci point out that enlargement is a measure of success and a test of the EU's credibility in the world and at home. Christoffer Kølvraa and Ian Ifversen emphasized the power of attraction of the EU's "civilizational discourse" among its neighboring states. The EU's "soft power" is likely to become less effective if the EU continues to avoid defining its relations with the neighborhood and providing a vision for its foreign policy at large. Furthermore, the more self-centered and inward-looking the EU becomes, the more difficult it is to "sell itself," and its enlargement, to the media. The less the media write about the EU, the less informed the EU citizens are. This translates into less support for the European project as a whole and into lower turnouts for the elections of the European Parliament. (Turnout declined from 61.99 percent in 1979 to 43 percent in 2009.)[3] The result is a vicious circle in which elected politicians are unwilling to back further enlargement because of the lack of support and approval of their national constituencies.

However, the main responsibility for the current deadlock seems to lie with the European political leaders. As the former president of the European Commission, Jacques Delors, underlined in 2011, past leaders such as François Mitterrand, Helmut Kohl, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, Konrad Adenauer, and Charles de Gaulle "have left their mark on the history of Europe because at a given moment they overcame their preconceptions towards the other for a European vision."[4] Without a European vision, it is impossible to define where the European interest lies and therefore to pragmatically determine what best to do about enlargement and relations with the neighborhood and the world.

There are three main beneficiaries of enlargement, as identified by John Peet: the candidate countries, which gain in economic, political, financial, and security terms; the existing member states, for which enlargement preserves stability and fosters prosperity in the neighborhood and in their own national economies; and the EU project itself because enlargements have historically led to more integration and a more active foreign policy. The contributors to this volume argue that there is a fourth and fundamental beneficiary of further EU enlargement: the United States. A further EU enlargement to include the Western Balkans and Turkey would serve the EU, the United States, and transatlantic relations in terms of political stability and economic growth. The United States, which is currently very concerned about public expenditures, would benefit from the EU taking on a greater share of responsibility in the neighborhood. The EU, on the other hand, should include, and prioritize, stability in all its considerations about enlargement and its relations with the neighborhood. This is not to say that the EU should enlarge tomorrow and at all costs (a mistake that has been made in the past), but that it should continue to engage in the process of enlargement in a dynamic and proactive way. It should also engage its larger neighborhood more consistently and be clear about putting the prospects for membership on the table. In other words, the EU should demonstrate no prejudice on the issue of enlargement and send a message to the neighborhood that the EU is (once again) "open for business."

Notes

1. *Euractiv*, "From Strasbourg, Erdogan Blasts France over Burqa Ban," April 14, 2011 (www.euractiv.com/en/enlargement/strasbourg-erdo-blasts-france-burqa-ban-news-504068).

2. Eurostat, *Internal and Intra-European Union Trade. Statistical Yearbook—Data 1958–2006* (the 2008 edition is available online).

3. "Public Opinion in the European Union," *Eurobarometer* 74, Autumn 2010 (Luxembourg: European Commission, 2011); European Parliament, "Turnout at the European Elections (1979–2009)" (www.europarl.europa.eu/parliament/archive/elections 2009/en/turnout_en.html).

4. *Euractiv*, "Delors: 'Superficial' Franco-German Engine Needs Kick-Start," April 14, 2011 (www.euractiv.com/en/future-eu/delors-superficial-franco-german-engine-needs-kick-start-news-503853).