

## LIGHTHOUSE EUROPE

The fall of the Berlin Wall led to one of the most dramatic transformation processes in Europe and in the international system. With historical hindsight, it is clear that it was a landmark moment for the European integration process which resulted in the end of 'divided Europe', and created an environment conducive to the unification of Europe. As in other parts of Europe, this historical moment was warmly welcomed in Turkey by democratic forces which believed in an inclusionary European integration process that would consolidate democracy throughout the Continent.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, the EU's enlargement policy towards Central and Eastern Europe turned out to be one of its most successful endeavours. This enlargement policy has made the EU not only a transformative actor by extending the integration process across the European Continent, but has also reinforced the image of the EU as an attractive pole both in Europe and in the turbulent regions around Europe. It showed that the EU was an inclusive organisation united at a historical moment for the achievement of a common purpose, an institution not only representing the core of Europe but also reflecting on the problems of wider Europe.

Unfortunately, over the last few years we have witnessed a decline in the process of European integration as institutional problems dominated the agenda of the EU. The institutional stalemate faced by the EU was reinforced by the recent economic crisis, leading to a sense of doom and gloom all over Europe. In this context, the crucial linkage between deepening and widening EU policies was shaken, and the enlargement policy was overshadowed by internal problems. As the EU was immersed in its own internal problems,



© Markus Schreiber/AP/SIPA  
German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, right, and his Turkish counterpart Ahmet Davutoglu brief the media after a meeting in Berlin, 16 June 2009.

it started to lose its attractiveness in wider Europe and its neighbourhood. Turkey's negotiations with the EU coincided with this downturn phase in the European integration process. As 'enlargement fatigue' prevailed in the dominant discourses within the EU, Turkey became an easy target. The development of this negative interaction between the EU and Turkey after 2005 further slowed down the already crawling reform process and resulted in the loss of the EU's transformative power over the Turkish accession process. This negative context created resentment and led to feelings in Turkey that the EU was no longer an inclusionary institution interested in Turkey's political and economic reform processes but rather that it was intent on erecting new dividing lines based on religious or cultural differences. Due to this downturn, Turkey's potential roles in the CFSP, ESDP or ENP were not effectively put into practice. As Turkey was diversifying her role in her troubled neighbourhood, there were no effective channels of

\* Professor Eralp is Director of the Center for European Studies, Ankara, Turkey

dialogue with the EU for the purpose of developing common policies on these immediate neighbourhood issues.

Fortunately, the Irish 'yes' vote in the Lisbon Treaty referendum on 4 October has heralded the end of this 'institutional stalemate' and downturn phase in the process of European integration. The ratification of the Lisbon Reform Treaty could open new horizons for enlargement and revitalise the crucial linkage between deepening and widening policies of the EU. The positive climate in the transatlantic relationship also creates a more conducive environment for the US and Europe to work together on the creation of a multipolar multilateral system, channeling their joint efforts on tackling the problems of the volatile international system. Such changes in the European and international contexts open up new possibilities for the process of European integration to revitalise the EU's role in the changing international system. Until now, the European integration process has been more 'inward-looking', focusing on crucial problems in the European continent and on promoting peace, welfare and democratic inclusion. These were remarkable achievements, but it is now time for the EU to deepen its role in the international system through a more 'outward-looking' phase focusing effectively on the problems of globalisation and conflicts in the international system. There is an increasing need for effective multilateralism and the EU should direct its energies to the growing economic and political problems of the global system rather than being 'introverted.' A critical test for the EU in the present international context is posed by the regions neighbouring the EU. To be an

effective and attractive model, the EU has to show that its model of multilateralism has more relevance for the regions around the Union. In brief, it should find ways to link its multilateralism to neighbouring regions and create 'multilateral regionalism.' There are two broad possibilities concerning these regions: either they will be immersed in major conflicts and 'power-politics' will predominate over them or they will be part of a stable multilateral system. What the EU does is extremely important in shaping these trajectories in its neighbouring regions.

There are two options available for political actors in difficult times and crisis periods. Either they choose more shortsighted, nationalist and protectionist policies, which is one of the tendencies in Europe and could be characterised as a trend that might lead to the creation of a 'Fortress Europe.' Or political actors could choose an outward-directed, more inclusionary orientation, taking more responsibility in dealing with regional and global problems, aiming to create a 'Lighthouse Europe' which would make the EU a beacon of stability and democratic values in our turbulent international system. A transformed democratic Turkey within the framework of the accession process could contribute to the EU in meeting such challenges. The ambivalence in Turkey's relationship with the EU does not help either Turkey or the EU. In the turbulent international system there is an increasing need for the EU and Turkey to bring their energies together on critical neighbourhood issues. I hope that the EU will choose the second path and meet the challenges of the present international system as it met the crucial challenges twenty years ago.

The opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the EUISS