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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to shed light on the identity problem of the European Union (EU). In order to do so the EU's justifications of past and present enlargements are investigated. What kind of understanding of the EU do decisions to enlarge speak to? Given that the EU is based on more than pragmatic problem-solving, the question is whether decisions to enlarge reflect a value-based or rather a rights-based polity. Although a certain sense of distinctiveness, certain elements of European particularities, are in evidence, the pull of universal principles has so far turned out to be stronger.

Keywords

Democracy - Enlargement - European identity - Identity - Legitimacy

Introduction

As the debates and referendums across Europe on the ratification of the Constitutional Treaty have demonstrated, the European Union (EU) is a contested entity. It is not only in public debates, in political protest and contestation, however, that questions regarding the nature and purpose of the EU are raised. It is also so in the academic literature. Here, a main question is how to conceptualise this creature that fits neither the concept of 'state' nor that of 'international organization'. What kind of polity is the EU? Its status is unclear and ambiguous. There are different interpretations of what constitutes its core characteristics, as well as of the future direction of integration. To some, the EU is mainly a market, securing the free movement of goods and capital, and providing opportunities for economies of scale for European firms. To others it builds on a common European identity and common European values. Others again see the EU as the first step towards a democratic, supranational polity.

Can the enlargement process help us to achieve a better understanding of the nature of the EU? In this paper I ask what kind of understanding of the EU enlargement speaks to. Do decisions to enlarge mainly suggest that the EU is a free market, focusing on potential economic gains? Do they indicate that there is a sense of common European identity? Or is the focus primarily on securing respect for democratic principles and human rights?

Surprisingly, although enlargement has been a fundamental feature of the EU since its early days, few studies of its significance for European integration have been produced. Rather, enlargements have been seen as isolated episodes, and not related to the EU as such. It is quite clear, however, that the question of membership and how it is dealt with is at the core of any political community - including the EU. In fact, one might argue that without looking at this issue, it would be difficult to get a clear picture of what kind of order is emerging in Europe.

In order for an organisation to find criteria for inclusion (as well as exclusion) of members one would expect it to have, or to be forced to form, an idea of what its fundamental purposes are. New applications for membership, the prospect of enlargement, inevitably raise questions such as who the Europeans are and what kind of values characterise Europe. Deciding where Europe stops, or should stop, is a particular challenge. What kinds of criteria are being used to determine this? Through an analysis of such questions, a better understanding of the European political order: the EU qua polity, may be achieved.

In the first part of the paper, I establish the analytical approach for studying what kind of political order enlargement speaks to - a problem-solving entity, a value-based community or a rights-based polity? These are derived from a threefold conception of practical discourses. In the second and third parts, the empirical relevance of these three conceptions is assessed, with the aim of shedding light on the identity of the EU. The fourth part holds the conclusion. It should be noted that the empirical material draws on different sources and can only here be presented in a condensed form.¹

¹ This paper builds on Sjursen 2006 and the empirical material it contains.

Conceptions of polity formation

The puzzle of enlargement

In recent years a discussion has emerged on how to account for the EU's decision to enlarge to Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). It is quite clear that any enlargement entails risks for the delicately balanced European construction. A number of – competing – interests and values are challenged, and the internal cohesion in all spheres of the Union may be jeopardised. Due amongst other things to the considerable economic gap between the 'old' EU-15 and the applicants from CEE, the risks have been referred to as particularly important with regard to this latest round of enlargement. Consequently one may ask: 'Why expand?' Given the costs and risks of enlargement, why did the EU not chose to remain as it was? And why did not individual states, in particular those that expected to pay the highest price for enlargement, use their power to veto this process?

Several authors stress that norms must have played an important part in the decision to enlarge to CEE (Schimmelfenning 2001; Sedelmeier 2000; Fierke and Wiener 1999; Friis and Murphy 1999). This paper builds on this research but asks in addition what this latest, as well as previous, decisions to enlarge might tell us about the EU qua polity. Further, it moves beyond the existing literature by distinguishing between different types of norms. To emphasise the role of norms, in the way that this literature does, is only the beginning. There are numerous rule-sets, norms and identities. A key question is what kind of norms might have been important in mobilising the EU and its member states to enlarge and what the polity-making effects have been.

Discourse theory specifies argumentative procedures tailored to the solving of different kinds of practical issues – teleological, evaluative and fairness questions – and builds on analytical distinction between moral and ethical norms (Habermas 1993). Moral norms refer to questions that may be settled with reference to justice and concern deontological principles such as human rights, democracy and rule of law. Ethical norms, or values, refer to questions of what is conceived of as the common good and thus revolve on what can be justified in a context-bound ethical-political discourse.² While ethical norms and the concept of values are connected to the characteristics of a specific community and to the identity of the members of that community, understood as collective representations of the good that vary according to cultural and social context; moral norms or rights – referring to justice – are universal in the sense that they pertain to humanity as such, independently of particular identities and belongings (Habermas 1993).

The distinction between values and norms may be utilised in developing two different conceptions of a polity that is more than an international organisation but less than a state. Hence we may conceive of the EU as, respectively, a *value-based community* and a *rights-based post national union*. In addition, drawing on the discourse theory of Habermas, the EU may be depicted as a *problem-solving entity*, based on pragmatic discourses, aimed at solving the perceived problems of the member states.

² Moral norms and values differ, 'first, in their references to obligatory rule-following versus teleological action; second, in the binary versus graduated coding of their validity claims; third, in their absolute versus relative bindingness; and forth, in the coherence criteria that systems of norms and systems of values must respectively satisfy' (Habermas 1996).

These conceptions of the EU polity rest on different integrationist modes and make it possible to disentangle the complex set of arguments used to justify enlargement.

Three conceptions of the EU³

The conception of the EU as a problem-solving entity may be further specified as an entity whose purpose would be to promote and protect the interests of the member states. The EU is merely an international organization aimed at securing a free market. In this conception, integration would be limited to, in fact dependent on, the member states' perception of a clear advantage of committing to collective (European) rather than national solutions. Their right to veto further integrative steps or proposals would be taken for granted.

A value-based community depicts a geographically delimited entity seeking to revitalise traditions, mores and memories of whatever common European values and affiliations there are. A sense of common identity, a *we-feeling*, would function as a basis for integration. In such a polity, integration would not necessarily be limited to issues where member states would expect concrete benefits. As the polity would rest on a feeling of commonality this would facilitate expectations of solidarity across the borders of the member states and allow for an uneven distribution amongst members of the cost and benefits of integrative moves.

A third possibility is to conceive of the EU as a rights-based post-national union. The polity would constitute an extension of the democratic constitutional state to the European level. Hence, as in a value-based polity, it would have autonomous institutions whose legitimacy would be derived not from the member states but directly from a European demos. Contrary to the value-based polity, however, integration would not rest on a feeling of cultural cohesion and common traditions, but on a set of legally entrenched fundamental rights and democratic procedures. This would allow for cultural pluralism and the collective will would be shaped through processes aimed at reaching a common understanding across different identities as well as interests.

These analytical distinctions are important because they make it possible to isolate the cultural-ethical aspects of an identity as distinct from the cognitive-legal principles that are also part of a national identity. Hence, it goes without saying that both values and rights are present in modern, democratic, nation states. However, their weaving together varies. In order to achieve a clearer picture of the EU qua polity understanding the particular blend in the case of the EU is helpful. This is so not in the least because one of the main questions with regard to the future of the EU is that of collective identity: to what extent is this a necessary requirement in order for the EU to develop a legitimate policy as well as to establish a common will needed for collective action? Is it really needed? And to what extent is there any basis at all for nurturing the development of a common identity within the EU?

Which of the above three conceptions of the EU do decisions to enlarge allude to? This question may be examined by investigating how enlargement has been justified. Based on the distinctions of discourse theory, we may ask if it has been justified with the use of arguments pertaining to its *utility* or *efficiency* for particular actors; with

³ These are the conceptions of the CIDEL project. See Eriksen and Fossum 2004 and Eriksen 2005.

reference to the *values* inherent to a particular conception of *the common good*; or with reference to *rights and justice*. The link between the different conceptions of the EU, the different discourses and their indicators is summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. Three conceptions of the EU

Type of entity	Discourse	Indicator
Problem-solving	Pragmatic	Utility, efficiency
Value-based	Ethical-political	Values, common good
Rights-based	Moral	Rights, justice

Beyond problem-solving?

One can see clear efforts to justify enlargement to CEE with reference to its utility to the EU (European Commission 2001). EU documents on enlargement stress its beneficial effects both for the economy of the European Union and for the applicant states. However, more striking than the emphasis on the material gain from enlargement are the expectations of its high cost.⁴ As already noted, there is a noticeable convergence of findings on this matter, suggesting that the decision to enlarge to CEE cannot be understood as the outcome of a rational choice (Schimmelfenning and Sedelmeier 2002) or be accounted for through arguments and reasons pertaining to its utility (Sjursen 2002). The most important reason why such accounts are insufficient is probably that in order for the EU to secure any putative material benefits that might emerge from enlargement, it would suffice to enlarge the internal market (Grabbe and Hughes 1998). This way, the EU would at the same time be able to protect itself from the costs of including applicants in its agricultural or regional policy, as well as from the cost of giving them a seat at the decision-making table (Baldwin et al. 1997; Hagen 1996).

It has been suggested, however, that even though enlargement was expected to be costly to the EU as a whole, it would be beneficial to certain member states, and that it is with this assumption as a starting point that the decision to enlarge must be understood (Schimmelfenning 2001). Hence, it is argued that those actors with most to gain used normative arguments in order to 'shame' the rest into compliance. However, empirical analyses of the position of individual member states document that this claim does not hold. Studies of the positions of Germany and Denmark – two of the main promoters of enlargement to CEE – suggest that in their case arguments pertaining to economic (or security) gain were not predominant and cannot on their own provide an explanation for these countries' strong support for enlargement. Rather, enlargement was seen as an act of duty and the result of a sense of solidarity with the Central and East European Countries (CEEC) (Zaborowski 2006; Riddervold and Sjursen 2006). Consequently, it would seem that their use of normative arguments was not simply 'strategic'.

⁴ Franz Fischler, European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, 'Implications of the Next EU-enlargement', speech at the Philip Morris Institute, Brussels, 14 October 1998 (SPEECH/98/200); Leon Brittan, European Commissioner for External Affairs, 'The EU: Preparing for the 21st Century', Tenth Jean Monnet Memorial Lecture, London, 17 September 1998 (SPEECH/98/171); Spanish Prime Minister Felipe Gonz ales, speech to the European Parliament, 15 November 1995; European Commission, 'Agenda 2000 – For a Stronger and Wider Union', document drawn up on the basis of COM (97) 2000 final, 15 July 1997, *Bulletin of the European Union*, Supplement 5/97.

More importantly, the idea that states such as Spain and France – often described as the enlargement ‘laggards’ – committed themselves to enlargement only because they were ‘forced’ to do so out of a concern for their reputation and due to the ‘social cost’ of refusing, does not fit with empirical evidence. In both these countries enlargement appears to have been important in and of itself (Piedrafita 2006; Sjursen and Romsloe 2006). Although, as Sonia Piedrafita underlines, Spain is generally considered to have been at the losing end of enlargement, Spanish authorities never threatened to use their right to veto the enlargement to CEE (Piedrafita 2006). Given Spain’s own experiences this would have been impossible. In the words of Spanish Foreign Minister (2000-2002) José Piqué:

We regarded Europe as the way to consolidate our democracy and advance in structural reforms [...] a country with this perspective cannot deny the same prospect to the current candidates.⁵

France is usually considered to have been against enlarging to CEE due to the expectation that it would change the political balance inside the EU in Germany’s favour. However, there is little empirical evidence to support this claim. It appears to rest simply on implicit Realist assumptions that of actors as power maximisers (Sjursen and Romsloe 2006). Rather, a sense of duty to enlarge appears to have been decisive also here. The following quote from French Foreign Minister Hervé de Charette, made during a debate in the French Senate at the occasion of the opening of the Intergovernmental Conference in Turin in 1996, is typical:

For the first time in the history of our continent we face the opportunity to ensure, in a peaceful way, the unity of Europe. In whose name could we refuse this fundamental step? It is also, as you well know, the fundamental aspiration of these peoples – most of whom have been living under foreign rule for the last 50 years, and nearly all of whom have been subjected to an ideology that has ruined them – they aspire only to one thing: to sit down at our table and share our prosperity and democratic rule; in whose name, in the name of what egoism, in the name of what blindness could we refuse their aspiration, which is also in our interest?⁶

In sum, detailed analyses of the arguments presented for (and against) enlargement in these four member states suggest that they considered the EU to be ‘more’ than what is captured by the problem-solving conception, where states only remain members due to the expectation that this would more effectively protect their interest than if they stayed outside. If the EU had been considered to be only such a problem-solving entity, those states that had the most to lose from enlargement would not act in accordance with common norms at the expense of their interests. What is more, it is unlikely that they would justify their actions in front of a sceptical domestic public opinion with reference to common norms, as was the case for example in France.

Admittedly, the above findings may be subject to revisions and amendments in accordance with new empirical data. It remains, however, that even if enlargement had come about as a result of a form of ‘hypocrisy’, where some states would have used normative arguments regarding the ‘duty to enlarge’ in order to ensure an

⁵ José Piqué, Joint Committee for European Affairs, session 2, 3 October 2000, Session Diaries of the Spanish Congress, VII Legislature.

⁶ Hervé de Charette, Debate on the IGC, French Senate, 14 March 1996. Translation by the author.

outcome in line with their own interest, they would not have succeeded unless the norms that they appealed to were considered valid, true or right in the first place. The mechanism of shaming or 'rhetorical entrapment' will not work without this.⁷ The norms themselves must be held legitimate before they can be used manipulatively (Eriksen 2000). And this normative basis in itself points to a conception of the EU as something more than what is entailed in the problem-solving conception as we have defined it in this paper.⁸

Is this idea that the EU is about something 'more' than problem-solving a particular feature of the post-Maastricht period, when the political dimensions to integration became more visible in its institutional structure and common policies? Or is there something particular about the membership applications from the CEEC that triggered other considerations than pure utility? The European Community's (EC) debate in the 1970s on enlargement to Greece suggests that the conception of the EU as more than a problem-solving entity is not new, and that the response to the CEEC was not unique. In an analysis of the EU's decision to enlarge to Greece, Susannah Verney has found that:

the economic arguments in favour of Greek accession were peripheral, weak and nebulous. They certainly did not add up to a strong case in favour of admitting Greece. The discourse around the second enlargement clearly did not speak to an image of the European Community as primarily a Common Market.

(Verney 2006: 30)

What, then can we make of this? What types of arguments mobilised the EU to enlarge, and do they point towards a conception of the EU as a value-based community or, rather, a rights-based post-national union?

Value-based community or rights-based post-national union?

Normative arguments, the importance of respect for democratic principles and human rights, played an important role in mobilising for enlargement even as early as during the debate in the 1970s on Greece's application for membership. In fact, the democratic criterion for membership was first projected onto the European stage with the European Parliament's Birkelback report in response to Greece's potential membership candidature in the early 1960s (European Parliamentary Assembly 1962). Until then, the explicit normative reference had been to 'peace', whereas democracy had not been problematised. During enlargement to Greece, and later to Spain and Portugal, its importance was fortified. According to Verney (2006), once the issue of Greek accession had been turned into a question of democracy, rejecting its membership for economic or administrative reasons would have meant a major loss of Community credibility and legitimacy. With enlargement to CEE it was made an explicit condition for opening membership negotiation. The emphasis on universal principles is also evident in the Turkish reform process in the context of enlargement.

⁷ For the 'rhetorical entrapment' argument, see Schimmelfennig 2001.

⁸ Incidentally this also suggests that the established argument in the enlargement literature - the 'rhetorical entrapment' thesis - is insufficiently accounted for in theoretical terms, as a concept of strategic rationality cannot account for the validity of norms. For this, the concept of communicative rationality is necessary. See Habermas 1984.

Describing developments in recent years as an unprecedented 'political avalanche' of democratisation, Gamze Avci has pointed to the EU as a crucial catalyst (Avci 2006). In her view the domestic changes in Turkey have been possible due to the EU-related reform process, which has altered political bargaining positions, redefined interests and allowed for difficult political decisions to be made. She links the acceptance of reforms across party lines to the way in which they were justified – to their appeal to universality. Reforms were justified with arguments based on the idea that they represented the 'right thing to do' rather than on the basis of identity-related arguments of 'who we are' as Turks, or pragmatic considerations of what Turkey might gain from enlargement. Although it may be argued that reforms were in the interest of the ruling Justice and Development Party, the interests were ultimately generalisable, which, according to Avci, explains their acceptance across party lines (Avci 2006).

Constitutional patriotism

The above findings confirm what is argued elsewhere regarding the EU's normative basis. In analyses of the Constitutional Treaty as well as the EU's Charter of Rights the EU is described as an entity that subscribes to the principles of liberal democracy (Eriksen et al. 2003; Schönlau 2005). The core features, the normative ideal of the European Union as it is presented in the Constitutional Treaty, are the rights of the human person, democracy and the rule of law. As Mattias Kumm argues: 'These values are the bedrock' (2005: 15) (Although they are challenged by the moves to include references to Christianity in the Preamble to the Constitutional Treaty).

It is this commitment to universal rights that has led several authors to point to constitutional patriotism as a potential basis for a common European identity (Habermas 2001; Kumm 2005; Eriksen and Weigård 2003). To others, however, such a proposal is problematic (Bellamy and Castiglione 2000). In fact, the concept of constitutional patriotism has often been interpreted as a concept that, due to its universalist features, does not capture the elements of particularity that are required in order for it to trigger a sense of loyalty and allegiance amongst its citizens. As Jan-Werner Müller highlights, 'why should those supporting universalist moral norms not give their loyalty to polities which realise them in a fuller sense or a more coherent fashion? Constitutional patriotism, at first sight at least, seems to beg this question' (Müller 2006: 289). However, this is a misconception. These universal moral principles are only one aspect of constitutional patriotism, as there is also in each polity 'a distinctive interpretation of those constitutional principles that are equally embodied in other republican constitutions – such as popular sovereignty and human rights', in light of its own ethical-political history (Habermas 1998: 118). In fact, 'political agency, as envisaged by the proponents of constitutional patriotism, has been conceived as animated by a set of universalist norms, but enriched and strengthened by particular experiences and concerns' (Müller 2006: 280; see also Kumm 2005; Eriksen and Weigård 2003).

The EU is an entity that commits itself to the principles of modern constitutional democracy yet what emerges in the analysis of the arguments in favour of enlargement is that it does have something in addition to the commitment to these principles. This does not amount to a 'thick' collective identity of the kind that we often assume exists in a nation state, or indeed that would fit with the conception of the EU as a value-based community. There is scarce evidence of arguments pointing

to a sense of 'thick' European collective identity reflecting, for example, religious, ethnic or linguistic commonalities. However, the justifications for enlargement do point to a certain sense of collective 'us' that encompasses the rest of Europe but not the rest of the world. There seems to be 'more' to the EU than what is entailed not only in a 'problem-solving', but also in a 'rights-based' conception.

This sense of distinctiveness emerges in references made by representatives of EU institutions as well as member states (Sjursen 2002). Referring to various aspects of Europe's distant as well as immediate past, they allude to a common European heritage. With regard to enlargement to CEE, the systematic references to the 'artificial' division of Europe imposed as a result of the Cold War are particularly striking. Enlargement was repeatedly and consistently described as an opportunity to once and for all overcome this 'unnatural' division. Further, the process was considered one of *re-uniting* Europe, rather than 'only' uniting it. This is so even though it is debatable to what extent and in what sense Europe was 'united' prior to the Cold War. A typical example is the following statement by Spanish Prime Minister Felipe González:

In the horizon of the coming new century, enlargement of the Union to the Eastern and Central [European] countries [...] will become true. Europe will be reconciled with her own history and this great reunification will become a factor of security and stability for the whole continent. The challenge is moral, historical, and geopolitical, more than economic or financial

(González 1996: 17)

There are also systematic references to the importance of peace, security and stability in the context of Eastern enlargement. Clearly, security arguments may be interpreted as indicators of interest-based rather than normative justifications of enlargement. However, such arguments take the shape of concerns for the security of Europe as a whole, and not for the security of particular states. Further, the desire for 'security' is linked to 'peace' and 'stability' and articulated as a common good that addresses the EU as a whole. Hence: 'The historic task of our generation will be to extend the existing zone of stability to the rest of Europe. It will not be easy. But History will not forgive us if we fail'.⁹ These references to peace and security have a particular meaning in the European context. In the same way as the arguments regarding the division of Europe, they are implicitly, or sometimes explicitly, linked to a collective experience of intra-European conflict and war. Thus, it is a matter of Europe being threatened by itself, and of Europe overcoming its own past, rather than of Europe being threatened by actors or factors outside of itself.

At the level of individual member states a particular 'national flavour' is added to the arguments referred to above. With regard to France, for example, in addition to the emphasis on the historic dimensions to enlargement, there is a strong accent on the need to live up to the commitments made in the treaties. Furthermore, a core characteristic of the French position was the emphasis on 'political Europe' as opposed to a mere common European market or free trade area (Sjursen and Romsloe 2006). The intrinsic value of the EU is linked to this 'political Europe', which gives it its distinctiveness. Hence, French policy makers spoke not only of a duty to enlarge

⁹ Danish Foreign Minister Niels Helveg Petersen, speech at the Institute of European Affairs, Dublin, 28 October 1994.

but a duty to ensure that the enlarged Europe – for the good of all – remain a political Europe: ‘France wants them to join not only a single market, but first of all a political union.’ And: ‘we will trade with everyone, but discuss politics and social issues only with some’.¹⁰ As to German policy makers, they added to the overall argument of the importance of reuniting Europe with an emphasis on multilateralism and the need for reconciliation (Zaborowski 2006). Furthermore, while recognising the need to enlarge to the entire group of CEEC, member states appear to have had particular attachments to some of the applicant states. This may be linked to a stronger sense of commonality with regard to these states. Denmark, for example, was concerned that the Baltic States were treated on an equal footing with the Central and East European applicants. This may best be understood as due to a particular sense of solidarity with these states (Riddervold and Sjørusen 2006). Likewise, with regard to France, value-based arguments in favour of Romania’s entry into the Union were often present.

This sense of distinctiveness – the ‘supplements of (European) particularity’ – that emerge in justifications of enlargement fits with the concept of constitutional patriotism. There is a co-existence of adherence to a universalist core and references to particular historical circumstances that have rooted them in a practice – a lifeworld – which have imprinted them with values and affection.

Looking back in time, a conception of a European ‘us’ is also evident in discussions regarding Greece’s relations with the EC (Verney 2006). Also here, enlargement was about bringing an applicant – Greece – ‘back to Europe’:

Twelve years ago we had high hopes that here was a European country – indeed, the fount of our ideals of democratic liberty – which would in due course join us as a full member [...] We still continue to hope [for] the day when Greece becomes once again what she was, and when we can develop to the full our relationship with her as a European democracy among European democracies, a country which we can eventually, in happier circumstances, welcome into our Community itself.

(Verney 2006: 34)

A universalistic (European) self-understanding

Contrary to what is generally assumed then, there may be a certain basis on which a form of political attachment and loyalty to Europe may be built. However, it comes closer to what Bernhard Peters has referred to as a collective (European) *self-understanding* than a collective identity. In fact: “‘Identity’ [...] is a somewhat misleading term because of its connotations of homogeneity and permanence’ (Peters 2005: 92). A collective self-understanding that does not amount to a fundamental self description may account for some aspects of the European integration process. Further, rather than a given culturalist substrate that ‘existed’ and was acknowledged prior to the integration process this idea of a certain ‘Europeanness’ has emerged gradually, amongst other things through debates connected to the possibility of enlargement. Rather than being deliberately articulated it emerges, amongst other processes, through the arguments presented for enlargement (Delanty 2005: 131).

¹⁰ Interview with Michel Barnier, French Minister for European Affairs, with the Estonian newspaper *Postimees*, 13 October 1995, printed in *Les Correspondances du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères*, March-April-May 1996.

Moreover, it is being defined and redefined as new applicants knock on the EU's door. In fact, the way in which the many arguments about Greece's and the CEEC' European nature were presented suggest that enlargement has been as much a matter of consolidating the Community's and later the Union's own nature, as about bringing these states 'back to Europe'. Debates on accession have played into discourses within the EC/EU on its identity and become an intrinsic part of it.

This also means that although many consider the new member states to subscribe mostly to a 'problem-solving' conception of the EU, their understanding of the EU may change due to the exchange of arguments and perspectives taking place within the Union (Drulák 2006). It may also be that by claiming their 'right' to membership in the EU, they have appealed to the very norms that make the EU something more than a problem-solving entity. And by arguing for a 'fair deal' in the accession negotiations, they have in fact subscribed to norms and principles that they will in turn be expected to respect also when this may not be in their own interest.

However, allusions to a common European heritage are difficult to find when enlargement to Turkey is discussed (Sjursen 2002). While the aim of policies towards Eastern Europe was to 'overcome the division' and to fulfil 'the aspiration of the peoples of central and eastern Europe to "rejoin Europe"',¹¹ Turkey is described as an important partner to Europe rather than as a 'natural' part of the European family. There is no suggestion of 'reunifying Europe' by enlarging to Turkey. In the same speech, relations with Turkey are discussed together with Israel and Morocco, while Eastern Europe is described as 'belonging to the European family of nations'.¹² When a rationale for admitting Turkey is established, it is explicitly linked to security: 'We want a stable, Europe-oriented Turkey'¹³ and 'Turkey's importance stems from its strategic position'.¹⁴ Turkey is an important neighbour but lies in a different region. 'There is general recognition of Turkey's importance to the Union [...]. Turkey's geo-strategic position and its steadfastness over decades as a secular, Moslem country [...] reinforces its position as a valued neighbour in a sensitive region'.¹⁵ Most recently, a few days before accession negotiations were opened with Turkey, Olli Rehn, European Commissioner for Enlargement, stressed that '[t]he reasons which led the EU to decide to open accession negotiations with Turkey are unchanged: the EU needs a stable, democratic and prosperous Turkey, in peace with its neighbours, which takes over the EU values, policies and standards.'¹⁶

¹¹ Frans Andriessen, European Commissioner for External Relations and Trade Policy, 'Prosperity and Stability in a Wider Europe', speech at the Atlantic CEO Institute, Czechoslovakia, 10 June 1991 (SPEECH/91/71).

¹² Hans van den Broek, European Commissioner for External Relations and Enlargement, speech at the Tilburg University Seminar 'Europe Revisited: The New Europe and the Lessons of History', Tilburg, 4 June 1993 (SPEECH/93/68).

¹³ Günter Verheugen, European Commissioner for Enlargement, 'Enlargement: Speed and Quality', speech at the conference 'The Second Decade towards a New and Integrated Europe', Den Haag, 4 November 1999 (SPEECH/99/151).

¹⁴ H. van den Broek, 'Turkey and the European Community in an Age of Transition', speech at the Foreign Policy Institute, Ankara, 27 May 1993 (SPEECH/93/63).

¹⁵ H. van den Broek, European Commissioner for Relations with Central & Eastern Europe, 'The Prospect for EU Enlargement', Conference organized by the International Press Institute 'The Future of Europe', Brussels, 27 November 1997 (SPEECH/97/264).

¹⁶ Olli Rehn, 'Accession Negotiations with Turkey: the Journey is as Important as the Final Destination', European Parliament Plenary Session, Strasbourg, 28 September 2005 (SPEECH/05/556).

Does this mean that a thicker sense of identity, perhaps based on religion, is after all at play? The opening of membership negotiations with Turkey in October 2005 suggest the contrary. The decision to open negotiations was contested. However, on what basis could it have been refused? In a manner similar to that observed with regard to enlargement to Greece, once enlargement has become linked to prospects of successful democratisation, it severely limits the scope for states willing to break ranks and reject candidate states. The arguments pertaining to the importance of the political conditions for membership – respect for democratic principles and human rights – also bind the EU once these conditions have been fulfilled. What for so long functioned as a constraint on enlargement to Turkey has become a catalyst. The EU's commitment to the universalist core of constitutional patriotism trump arguments pertaining to culture or religion as reasons for excluding Turkey.

What are the implications of this for the future of the EU?

Enlargement and the future of integration

Enlargement may be seen not only as a process that reinforces the applicants' European nature but also the Union's own 'Europeanness'. The prospects of enlargement have been an important factor in shaping the idea of what the Community, and later the Union, is or should be. They have been important in the process of constructing a 'common Europe'. The justifications of enlargement to CEE suggest that the EU is a polity built on a negation rather than a celebration of its past experiences. The examples of Turkey and Greece are reminders that its parallel commitment to universal principles is an integral part of its identity. This universalistic self-understanding leads to a constant need to reassess and redefine the particularistic elements as new members enter the Union.

Yet, how far can the collective (European) self-understanding be reconfigured and redefined and remain 'particular' to Europe? And is this sense of Europeanness that has mobilised the EU and the governments of its member states to commit to costly enlargements, strong enough to mobilise for even further enlargements? Finally, the arguments and reasons referred to in this paper are those of governmental elites. Will arguments in favour of enlargement be even more strongly questioned by public opinion in the next round?

The success of EU enlargement is linked precisely to democratic transition. Therein lies also a risk. It remains to be seen if the particular blend of universal principles and European particularities that are found in the justifications for enlargement are robust enough to withstand further expansions. The pull of these principles may, however, ultimately be stronger than its particularistic elements. But the moral appeal of the universalist dimension makes it difficult to draw a line where enlargement should stop. Universalist, moral principles by definition do not contain any elements allowing the EU to distinguish between different applicants for membership, beyond their respect, or lack of such, for basic rights. They give no guidance in terms of drawing borders.

If this is so, the EU will, in the very long run be faced with a situation where its potential for commanding loyalty or establishing the kind of solidarity that is necessary in order to provide a basis for collective action, may disappear. In order to solve this challenge the debate on borders would need to be uplifted to the global level, in which, according to a cosmopolitan logic, borders would be drawn based on the ability of other regional entities to function properly, and with the aim of avoiding a system of domination of one single (regional) entity.

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