

Rethinking enlargement

A European Debate

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Timothy Garton Ash: A new European narrative



Timothy Garton Ash is a historian and one of the leading chroniclers of Europe's transformation of the last quarter century. He has written eight books, publishes regularly in the [New York Review of Books](#) and contributes a weekly column to [The Guardian](#). He is professor of European Studies at Oxford University.

Nearly 15 years ago, in 1995, Timothy Garton Ash wrote a short essay about Europe, its title a question: "Catching the wrong bus?" Abstract Euro-thinking associated with French and German intellectuals, Ash maintained, was in trouble. He proposed an antidote that may sound familiar: Europe "could perhaps use a little more British thinking at the moment – with 'British' here meant in the deeper sense of our particular intellectual tradition: sceptical, empirical and pragmatic." The task was "to 'think Europe' in English; to see Europe plain and to see it whole."

What kind of Europe did Ash see in 1995? There was a European Union, "less than a federal superstate and more than an alliance: an unprecedented, unique and horribly complex combination of the supranational and the intergovernmental, of economic integration and political cooperation." There was a second Europe of states recently liberated from communism and aiming to join the EU and NATO. There was also a third Europe, made up of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus, ambivalent about joining European institutions and hardly on the EU's own radar.

In 1995 the first Europe was engaged in the "grotesque, rapid-sleep-inducing, acronym-ridden, polit-bureaucratic detail" of its own internal reform. The political leaders of the European Union were preoccupied with their own internal debates in the context of an open-ended Inter-Governmental Conference (IGC) and preparations for the common currency. Many, like Ash, feared that EU leaders would not have enough

energy and attention for those parts of the continent where EU action could make the difference between democracy and dictatorship, war and peace. Fears of war in Europe were not abstract in 1995. The war in Bosnia-Herzegovina was moving towards its most horrible climax (or rather nadir) in Srebrenica. It was followed by state collapse in Albania in 1997, fighting in Kosovo in 1998, NATO's war with Serbia in 1999, fighting in South Serbia in 2001, and near civil-war in Macedonia in the same year.

Now fast forward to 2007, the final year of the EU's fifth enlargement. Taking another look at Europe "plain and whole", what did we see in 2007? European leaders and institutions did not, as Ash had feared in 1995, "catch the wrong bus". The "empirical-sceptical approach" proposed by Garton Ash won out. His suggestion, in 1995, was for:

"a detailed project both for the enlargement of the present EU to include, over the next twenty years, the recently liberated second Europe, and simultaneously, for a more closely coordinated, and in some respects 'common' foreign, security and defence policy, to meet the challenges and dangers both within Europe itself and from the dangerous world around."

By 2007, with the exception of the Western Balkans and Turkey, this has largely been achieved. And 'empirical-sceptical thinking' certainly played a role. The EU enlargement story is not over, however. New thinking is still urgently required.

In a much more recent essay, published in 2007, Ash claimed that "Europe has lost the plot." Approaching the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, on 25 March 2007,

"Europe no longer knows what story it wants to tell. A shared political narrative sustained the postwar project of (west) European integration for three generations, but it has fallen apart since the end of the cold war. Most Europeans now have little idea where we're coming from; far less do we share a vision of where we want to go. We don't know why we have an EU or what it's good for. So we urgently need a new narrative."

"Europe's true stories", as the essay is called, suggests a new European narrative, to be constructed by interweaving six issues, each representing a European goal: freedom, peace, law, prosperity, diversity and solidarity. The earlier European narrative, notes Ash, has become obsolete.

"In this proposal, our identity will not be constructed in the fashion of the historic European nation, once humorously defined as a group of people united by a common hatred of their neighbours and a shared misunderstanding of their past. We should not even attempt to retell European history as the kind of teleological mythology

characteristic of 19th-century nation-building. No good will come of such a mythopoeic falsification of our history ("From Charlemagne to the euro"), and it won't work anyway.

The nation was brilliantly analysed by the historian Ernest Renan as a community of shared memory and shared forgetting; but what one nation wishes to forget another wishes to remember. The more nations there are in the EU, the more diverse the family of national memories, the more difficult it is to construct shared myths about a common past."

European identity, argues Ash, should not be established through the negative stereotyping of an enemy or the "other". Attempts to find Europe's "other" in the United States or Islam are "foolish and self-defeating. They divide Europeans rather than uniting them."

"Europe's only defining 'other' is its own previous self: more specifically, the unhappy, self-destructive, at times downright barbaric chapters in the history of European civilisation. With the wars of the Yugoslav succession and the attempted genocide in Kosovo, that unhappy history stretches into the very last year of the century. This is no distant past."

Looking at the recent experience of EU enlargement to Central Eastern and South Eastern Europe, the lack of a convincing narrative becomes apparent. The most recent enlargement brought the 20th century division of Europe to an end. The continent has never been as democratic, prosperous and stable as it is today. As one of Europe's biggest successes, this story must be part of any new European narrative.

"Everything depends on the personalities, events and anecdotes that give life and colour to narrative. These will vary from place to place. The stories of European freedom, peace or diversity can and should be told differently in Warsaw and Madrid, on the left and on the right. There need be no single one-size-fits-all version of our story."

- Timothy Garton Ash, ["Europe's true stories"](#), in *Prospect Magazine*, Issue 131, February 2007.
- Timothy Garton Ash, ["Catching the wrong bus?"](#), in *The Times Literary Supplement*, 5 May 1995, p. 3-4.
- Many of Timothy Garton Ash's texts, including his recent columns and essays, can be found on [his personal webpage](#).

25 February 2008

Janos Kornai: The Great Transformation

Janos Kornai is a Hungarian economist. Born in Budapest in 1928, he spent much of his teenage years hiding from the Nazis and most of his career in communist Hungary, at the Academy of Sciences. Starting in the mid-1960s, however, he was also a visiting professor at some of the most renowned Western universities, including Stanford, Yale, Harvard, Princeton and the London School of Economics. From 1986 to 2002 he was a professor at Harvard (in addition to his job in Budapest). Since 2005 he is a research professor at the Central European University in Budapest.

Here we do not look at Kornai's major economic works (*The Road to a Free Economy, Economics of Shortage, Overcentralisation*), but at an essay he wrote in 2005 on "success and disappointment" in Central Europe's post communist transformation. Kornai starts off by going back a couple of decades, recalling the mood and expectations of the people living in communist Central Europe, and contrasting it with what people think today.



an essay he wrote in 2005 on "success and disappointment" in Central Europe's post communist transformation. Kornai starts off by going back a couple of decades, recalling the mood and expectations of the people living in communist Central Europe, and contrasting it with what people think today.

"At that time, they felt it a hopeless daydream that within the foreseeable future their countries would become democratic market economies. Today however, though this has become a reality, many are disappointed and bitter."

It is this paradox that Kornai explores in this text. He looks at the issue from two perspectives: the big historical perspective and the perspective of the individual.

"I am convinced that what took place in Central Eastern Europe during the past decade and a half is an unparalleled success story in history. I believe this, in spite of the fact that I am fully aware of the grief and disappointment it was associated with. (...) In spite of serious problems and anomalies – assessing the situation from the perspective of great historical changes – what took place in this part of the world is a success story."

Kornai's convictions stem from his appreciation of the benefits of democracy and human rights in the former communist countries, the successful establishment of a capitalist economy (which Kornai sees as a

pre-condition for democracy), and the fact that these changes happened so quickly – and in a peaceful manner. It is difficult to disagree.

But Kornai does not deny the many problems and difficulties that the “great transformation” has brought to the people of Central and Eastern Europe.

“Emotions of success and failure intermingle in everyone’s life who either participated or was an emphatic observer of the transformation taking place in the Central Eastern European region. Far be it from me to engage in a cheap ‘success propaganda’ campaign. We are not facing imaginary difficulties, nor are these problems encountered by a small proportion of the populace; we are up against some very real and serious negative phenomena.”

In his analysis of the reasons for this level of dissatisfaction, Kornai puts considerable emphasis on psychological factors, such as the relationship between hope and expectations, shifting reference points (“Everyone has started to compare his own circumstances with that of Germany, France or Scandinavia.”), and the fact that “people very easily forget”:

“Nowadays it seems that I, once the author of a book entitled ‘Economics of Shortage’ (1980), will be left as the single individual in Eastern Europe, who still remembers the shortage economy and feels genuine joy that it is over.”

For those who do not view the transition by reference to history or political science, but to their own living standards, the picture looks less bright, says Kornai.

“Among those who offer these negative judgments, there is an unfortunate mixture of half-true and half-erroneous establishment of the facts, a combination of half-substantiated and half-mistaken causal analysis, and an ordering of values that places the values of everyday life at the forefront. Those who judge from this perspective are not thinking in centuries-long historical perspective. They do not care what results the capitalist economic system and the democratic political order will produce in the distant future. They are experiencing these problems today, they are suffering from them now, or they are hurt by seeing others who are suffering now – and for this reason, their experience of the change that occurred in the system is as a failure, rather than a success.”

No one holding such views is to blame, maintains Kornai. “Every person has only one life.” He also thinks that big historical arguments and the weight of individual experiences cannot be compared or weighed against one another.

"I keep two accounts and not one, and do not merge them. On one account, I gladly acknowledge a great success at the level of world-history: a system was created superior to the former one, without bloodshed, with incredible speed. On the other account, I have the list of good and bad experience in everyday life; much joy and much pain. I consider it both sensible and defensible to say that what has happened in this region can be simultaneously considered a success in terms of its global historical significance, and a failure in many important aspects because it caused pain, bitterness and disappointment for so many people."

Kornai asks for a stronger role of the social sciences, particularly more interdisciplinary work, without which "it is impossible to understand and to evaluate the great transformations."

"One of the reasons for the overly negative judgment prevailing in Central Eastern European public opinion circles regarding the current great transformation is that scholars of the social sciences have neglected to analyse and evaluate the results within the requisite historical framework."

What Janos Kornai writes about the perception of the "great transformation" applies equally to the story of EU enlargement – which has had a crucial role in facilitating the transformation – and to those living on the western side of the former Iron Curtain. People in the old member states tend to look at the recent changes from an individual perspective – thinking about the impact of "Polish plumbers" on domestic labour markets, to draw on the famous cliché – rarely aware of, or interested in, the bigger picture. Like Kornai suggests, no individual is to be blamed for his or her own reasoning and for putting individual interest ahead of the historical dimension.

But looking at EU enlargement "within the requisite historical framework" would help, becoming, at the same time, part of what [Timothy Garton Ash](#) calls a "new European narrative".

- Janos Kornai, "The Great Transformation of Central Eastern Europe: Success and Disappointment", Presidential Address, delivered at the 14th World Congress of the International Economic Association in Marrakech, Morocco, on 29 August 2005, revised in February 2006. An online version is available [here](#).

25 February 2009

Richard Rose: Overcoming anti-modernity



"The most straightforward way to understand how people have coped with transformation is to ask them."

A renowned political scientist, Richard Rose has published more than 40 books on a vast number of topics ranging from the conflict in Northern Ireland over the welfare state to democratisation and Europe. Born in the United States, Rose moved to the UK when Winston Churchill was Prime Minister. He now heads the [Centre for the Study of Public Policy](#) at the [University of Aberdeen](#). The centre's website lists a [vast amount of surveys](#) on various topics related to the countries of Central Eastern Europe, the Baltics, South-eastern Europe, Russia, Belarus and Ukraine.

In his book "Understanding Post-Communist Transformation. A bottom up approach" Richard Rose looks at the experiences of ordinary people during what he – like [Janos Kornai](#) – calls "the great transformation of Europe". The book draws on more than 100 surveys and 120,000 interviews in 20 countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union from 1991 to 2008.

Rose's book is an illustrative journey back in time to the early days of the transition. It shows how different society in communist Eastern Europe actually was – not only in terms of political orientation and economic welfare, but in terms of the way people lived. Rose maintains that the communist states of Eastern Europe were not modern societies.

"Communist societies were not modern in the European sense. Even though they had mass education, big cities and jet aeroplanes, the harsh

application of Marxist-Leninist principles created something different, an anti-modern society."

A modern state has to be a *Rechtsstaat*, argues Rose: a state in which the rule of law controls what state officials may and may not do, a political system that avoids arbitrariness and unreliability in political rule. The communist system, unconstrained by laws and rights of the individual, was the opposite.

"In the absence of the rule of law, subjects could not rely on bureaucrats to deliver services to which they were entitled by law. To get things done required much more time and energy than when dealing with a modern bureaucracy working with the predictability of a vending machine. People who wanted to benefit from what the planners decided turned to an economy of favours in which [connections] counted more than rules."

Another striking (anti-modern) feature of the East European transition societies was food production. In a modern society only a small part of the population produces food. During the early 1990s, however, according to Rose's research, from half to four fifth of households in post-communist Europe were growing food. Strikingly, "a household's economic circumstances [had] no effect on the decision to grow food."

A third very interesting finding was the structure of a typical household's economic activities. Rose distinguishes between three types of economies: official economies (activities on public record), unofficial economies (with money changing hands, but not on public record), and household economies (repair, other help and barter among friends and relatives, none of it involving money). In a modern European society, most people earn their living from only one economy – the official one. In transition economies this is different:

"In an economy in transformation, the most risky strategy to maintain welfare is to rely solely on individual earnings in the official economy. When the New Europe Barometer asked people at the start of the transformation – Do you earn enough from your regular job to buy the things you really need? – everywhere two-thirds or more said they did not."

In Hungary in 1992 only 11 percent of respondents said they earned enough from their regular jobs. Delving deeper into the issue, Rose breaks down the three main categories and defines a total of 9 economies.

PARTICIPATION IN NINE ECONOMIES*	(households)
<i>OFFICIAL economies: legal monetized</i>	(97%)
Member of household has regular job	72
Receives pension, welfare benefit	39
<i>SOCIAL economies: non-monetized a-legal</i>	(90%)
Household production food, housing	68
Exchange help friends, neighbours	64
Queuing more than an hour a day	23
Gets, gives favours for free	15
<i>UNCIVIL economies: monetized, illegal</i>	(34%)
Pays, receives bribes	21
Job in second, shadow economy	19
Uses foreign currency	2

* Mean for Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia; 1992 data ("uses foreign currency" 1993).

The number of households engaged in various economies is striking.

"It was common to be active in all three types of economies – official, household and uncivil. This was the case in two-thirds of households in what was then Czechoslovakia, in just over half of households in Russia and 3 in 7 in Bulgaria. Households involved in only a single economy were deviant: in 1991 and early 1992 only 2 per cent in Czechoslovakia and 3 per cent in Russia were involved in just a single economy."

This legacy, combined with the legacy of a state that – besides being hostile and unaccountable – lacked the rule of law, helps to explain why East European societies often found it difficult to establish and to trust the institutions of a free market democracy.

- Richard Rose, *Understanding Post-Communist Transformation. A bottom up approach*, Routledge, 2009.
- [Centre for the Study of Public Policy](#) at the University of Aberdeen, where – for a small fee – one finds a [vast amount of surveys](#) on various topics for the countries of Central Eastern Europe, the Baltics, Southeastern Europe.

30 June 2009

Mark Leonard: Europe's "invisible hand"



"Europe doesn't change countries by threatening to invade them: its biggest threat is having nothing to do with them at all."

Mark Leonard is the Executive director of the [European Council on Foreign Relations \(ECFR\)](#), a pan-European think tank set up in 2007. Leonard used to be the director of foreign policy at the Centre for European Reform, a London-based think tank where he focused on transatlantic relations, the Middle East and relations with China. Previously he was director of the Foreign Policy Centre, a think-tank he co-founded at age 24. His articles, published in many European and US media, can be accessed on his personal home page at www.markleonard.net.

Mark Leonard's book "Why Europe will run the 21st century" is a stimulating, concise, and well written work on the ascendancy of European (and the demise of American) power. Leonard reminds us that "in 1950 [US] GDP was twice the size of Western Europe's and five times Japan's; today its GDP is the same size as the EU's and less than double that of Japan's"). He looks at economic issues, at welfare, global diplomacy and warfare, and sees Europe in the front row. But he is also aware that his position is not mainstream:

"If you put the words 'Europe' and 'crisis' into the internet search engine Google, over four million entries come up. Newspapers have used them together so often that they are almost interchangeable: on any day over the last fifty years there have been stories of divisions, failure to meet targets, diplomatic wrangles, a perpetual sense of failure. But historians tell a different story from journalists. They describe a continent with one of the

most successful foreign policies in history. They tell us that, in just fifty years, war between European powers has become unthinkable; that European economies have caught up with America; and that Europe has brought successive waves of countries out of dictatorship and into democracy.

Because news is told by journalists rather than historians, European power is often confused with weakness."

One of the key theses of Leonard's book is that Europe's power is intrinsically different from US power – and better fits the challenges of the 21st century. One reason for this is the way the EU (or rather its predecessors) was set up in the first place.

After the experience of World War II there was no wish for big charismatic leaders in Europe. One of the major contributions of Jean Monnet, one of the key architects of the new Europe, was "a vision of how not to have a vision."

"He let the fear of conflict drive European unity and left its goal vague, allowing everyone to feel that Europe was going their way. To this day, Europe is a journey with no final destination, a political system that shies away from the grand plans and concrete certainties that define American politics. Its lack of vision is the key to its strength.

...

Monnet's tactic was always to focus on technical details rather than the big political questions that attract headlines. He tried to tackle contentious issues by breaking them down into component parts – it is a lot easier to get agreement on coal and steel tariffs than war and peace. And once the governments of France and Germany were sucked into endless negotiations, they were less likely to go to war.

The best way to change the facts on the ground was through gradual change – what Monnet called engrenage. Each agreement to co-operate at a European level would lead inexorably to another agreement that deepened European integration."

Borrowing Adam Smith' famous concept of the "invisible hand of the market", Leonard sees Monnet's genius in having developed "a 'European invisible hand' that allows an orderly European society to emerge from each country's national interest. And that is possibly the most powerful element of Monnet's vision: he did not try to abolish the nation-state or nationalism – simply to change its nature by pooling sovereignty."

For a visitor to the House of Commons in London, it might seem as if nothing in British politics has changed over the past few decades. However, as Leonard points out, an “invisible Europeanization of power” has taken place across the political spectrum in the UK. Up to a third of British legislation and two-thirds of economic and social legislation “are made by British ministers with their European colleagues in Brussels.”

Because national governments are the agents of European power carrying out European policies, the European Commission can remain small and discreet. The EC has barely half a civil servant per 10,000 citizens, compared to an average of one per 300 for national administrations.

“The European Union is about enhancing rather than destroying national identities. Brussels, the antithesis of an imperial capital, is in many ways a microcosm of Europe.”

The EU’s institutional legacy and its structure also render European power on the international arena different from the power of the United States – and, as Leonard argues – more powerful.

Describing the American engagement in Afghanistan as “power as spectacle”, Leonard concludes that “this kind of power is inefficient because it is always imposed on unwilling subjects from outside, rather than changing the wiring of society from the inside.”

Even in the US’ own neighbourhood, its policies have proved largely unsuccessful. “The United States has sent troops into its neighbours more than fifteen times over the last fifty years but many of the countries around it have barely changed.” More than three decades of America’s “war on drugs” and the \$7.5 billion “Plan Colombia” have failed in producing the desired results.

“The overblown rhetoric directed at the ‘American Empire’ misses the fact that the US reach – militarily and diplomatically – is shallow and narrow. The lonely superpower can bribe, bully, or impose its will almost anywhere in the world, but when its back is turned, its potency wanes. The strength of the EU, conversely, is broad and deep: once sucked into its sphere of influence, countries are changed forever.”

The ex-communist countries of Eastern Europe are only the most recent and most dramatic example of such lasting change.

“Europe’s power is a ‘transformative power’ ... The USA may have changed the regime in Afghanistan, but Europe is changing all of Polish society, from its economic policies and property laws to its treatment of minorities and what gets served on the nation’s tables.”

- Mark Leonard, *Why Europe will run the 21st century*, Forth Estate, 2005.
- Mark Leonard's personal homepage: www.markleonard.net
- [European Council on Foreign Relations \(ECFR\)](#)

30 June 2009

Alan Milward: The EU as the saviour of the nation state

"To supersede the nation-state would be to destroy the Community."

Alan S. Milward, a former professor at the London School of Economics and the European University Institute in Florence, is one of the leading historians of European integration. In 1993 he became an official historian at the UK Cabinet Office. He recently had to resign from this post for health reasons.

Milward's book "The European Rescue of the Nation-State", published in 1992, challenged the conventional view of European integration as a process destined to produce the replacement of nation-states by a European federal political structure. Milward argues that in the wake of the Second World War the founding fathers of European integration were first and foremost interested in rebuilding their countries as nation-states. Integration, it follows, was the outcome of a conscious decision by European governments to pool sovereignty in certain areas to provide nation-states with the foundations they – given the horrible experience of the war – apparently lacked.

"There is ... a strong common identity of thought between Spaak, Schuman, Adenauer, de Gasperi and Monnet. It is to be found in their understanding of the search for security by the western European population after 1945 and in the very wide interpretation which they, like the population, gave to it. Going far beyond the problems of military defence and physical protection, they interpreted it to mean an economic security in daily life of a more comprehensive and assured kind than before the war ... We are not dealing with social reformers, nor, except in the case of Monnet, economic innovators, but merely with statesmen well attuned to the themes of fear, of the need of reassurance, and of the fundamentally conservative yearning for a more certain personal and political order which shaped democratic politics in those years."

According to Milward, the European Community and the nation-state are anything but incompatible. The evolution of the Community does not imply the extinction of the nation-state as an organizational structure.

"The evolution of the European Community since 1945 has been an integral part of the reassertion of the nation-state as an organisational concept ... Without the process of integration the west European nation-state might well not have retained the allegiance and support of its citizens in the way that it has. The European Community has been its buttress, an indispensable part of the nation-state's post-war construction. Without it, the nation-state could not have offered to its citizens the same measure of security and prosperity which it has provided and which has justified its survival."

Milward's book, published in 1992, does not cover the latest wave of EU enlargement. Even so, it offers a framework that helps understand the experience of countries aspiring for European integration after 1989.

After the fall of communism in Eastern Europe, confidence in the state had been dented – by the communist regimes, their repressiveness, their failure to satisfy the interests of citizens, or by war, as in the former Yugoslavia. The legitimacy of many of the emerging states was weak. With the exception of Slovenia and Croatia, the successor states of the Yugoslav federation also suffered from major legitimacy problems, mostly related to poor economic performance, bad governance and contested identity issues.

There is a striking parallel between the experience of post-communist Eastern Europe and post-war Western Europe. Given the experience of the late 1930s, lacking legitimacy for the nation state was a key problem after the war. Milward points out that of twenty-six European nation states in 1938 all but six had been annexed, occupied, partially occupied or turned into satellite states by the end of 1940. The nation state's claim to legitimacy "could only be sustained were it able to respond to a greater range of demands from its citizens."

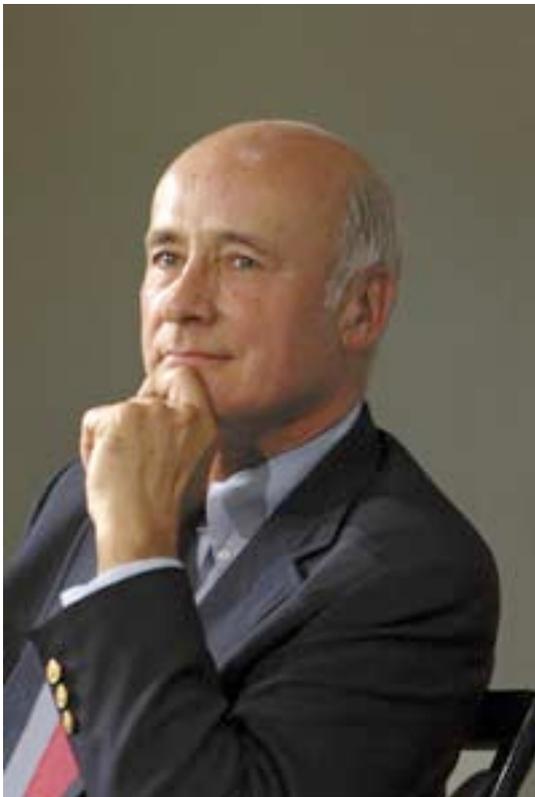
"After 1945 the European nation-state rescued itself from collapse, created a new political consensus as the basis of its legitimacy, and through changes in its response to its citizens which meant a sweeping extension of its functions and ambitions reasserted itself as the fundamental unit of political organization. The European Community only evolved as an aspect of that national reassertion and without it the reassertion might well have proved impossible. To supersede the nation-state would be to destroy the Community. To put a finite limit to the process of integration would be to weaken the nation-state, to limit its scope and to curb its power."

Given the success of the European project over the last 50 years, European integration offers the only credible vision for a prosperous and secure future for the new states in the Balkans.

- Alan S. Milward, *The European Rescue of the Nation-State*, Routledge, 2000 (first edition published in 1992).

4 January 2010

Joseph Nye: Soft Power



"Soft power rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others."

Joseph S. Nye, born in 1937, is Dean Emeritus of the [John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University](#). Nye made a name for himself in international relations theory in the 1970s when – together with Robert Keohane – he developed the concept of neoliberalism (not to be confused with neoliberal economic theory). The theory suggests that international politics are not solely governed by interstate relations, but by a multitude of channels, from informal governmental ties to multi-national corporations. From 1977 to 1979 Nye served as Deputy to the

Undersecretary of State for Security Assistance, Science and Technology and in 1994 and 1995 as Assistant Secretary of Defence for International Security Affairs.

It was Joseph S. Nye who fathered the term "soft power", an expression often used to describe the EU's capability to bring about change in its neighbourhood. Nye first developed the concept in 1990 in a book called *Bound to Lead – the Changing Nature of American Power*, disputing the idea that the United States was in decline. He developed the concept further over time and dedicated a full book, *Soft Power*, to the topic in 2004. "Some of our leaders," he wrote, "do not understand the crucial importance of soft power in our reordered post-September 11 world."

“Power is the ability to influence the behavior of others to get the outcomes one wants. But there are several ways to affect the behavior of others. You can coerce them with threats; you can induce them with payments; or you can attract and co-opt them to want what you want.

Everyone is familiar with hard power. We know that military and economic might often get others to change their position. Hard power can rest on inducements (“carrots”) or threats (“sticks”). But sometimes you can get the outcomes you want without tangible threats or payoffs ... A country may obtain the outcomes it wants in world politics because other countries – admiring its values, emulating its examples, aspiring to its level of prosperity and openness – want to follow it.”

In the American policy environment, the importance of soft power is contested. Former Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld once told a journalist he did “not know what it meant.” In a [Foreign Affairs](#) article in 2004, Nye deplored the decline of America’s soft power, strongly criticising the Bush administration.

Soft power, Nye argues in his book, is not the same as influence.

“After all, influence can also rest on the hard power of threats or payments. And soft power is more than just persuasion or the ability to move people by argument, though that is an important part of it. It is also the ability to attract, and attraction often leads to acquiescence. Simply put, in behavioural terms soft power is attractive power. In terms of resources, soft-power resources are the assets that produce such attraction.”

These “soft-power resources”, according to Nye, mainly derive from culture, domestic values and policies, and from foreign policy substance and style. He cites examples from the Beatles and the Hollywood film industry to democratic core values such as freedom of speech and equality of women. With regard to foreign policy, Nye points to issues like the Iraq war and America’s “new unilateralism”, both of which have undermined America’s soft power.

Nye’s most concise definition of soft power is “the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments. It arises from the attractiveness of a country’s culture, political ideals, and policies.”

Today, Nye’s concept “soft power” enjoys widespread use in international relations and foreign policy circles. Often, however, it is difficult to determine how soft power is actually exercised and to gauge the changes it has helped achieve. How does a country’s cultural influence or its image as a champion of human rights affect foreign policy outcomes?

“Whether a particular asset is a soft-power resource that produces attraction can be measured by asking people through polls or focus groups. Whether that attraction in turn produces desired policy outcomes has to be judged in particular cases.”

The closest competitor to the United States in terms of soft power resources, says Nye, is Europe. European art, literature, music, design, fashion and food are all “global cultural magnets”. European countries rank extremely high in terms of Nobel Prize awards, tourist visits, applications for political asylum, life expectancy and overseas development assistance. Furthermore, “soccer, Europe’s primary sport, is far more popular globally than American football or baseball.” And the new constitution of South Africa bears more resemblance to the European Convention on Human Rights than to the American Bill of Rights.

“Many European domestic policies appeal to young populations in modern democracies. For example, European policies on capital punishment, gun control, climate change, and the rights of homosexuals are probably closer to the views of many younger people in rich countries around the world than are American government policies.”

What Nye hardly mentions is the EU enlargement process. By coaching and conditioning ten former communist states – young but successful free-market democracies – for EU entry, enlargement has become the most important achievement of EU foreign policy. Its success owes overwhelmingly to soft power. Although he agrees with [Timothy Garton Ash](#) that the EU’s “soft power is demonstrated by the fact that not only millions of individuals but also whole states want to enter it,” Nye does not explore the subject further. It has fallen to other thinkers – the likes of [Heather Grabbe](#) – to do so.

- Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power. The Means to Success in World Politics*, Public Affairs, 2004.
- Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Bound to Lead. The Changing Nature of American Power*, Basic Books, 1990.

29 December 2009

Heather Grabbe: The EU's transformative power

"The attraction of accession proved to be more powerful than other goals."



Heather Grabbe has been working on EU enlargement for more than a decade, moving between academia and practice. She was deputy director of the [Centre for European Reform](#), a London-based think tank focusing on European issues, and a research fellow at the [Royal Institute for International Affairs](#) (Chatham House) in

London, the [European University Institute](#) in Florence, the [European Union Institute for Security Studies](#) in Paris and the [Centre for International Relations](#) in Warsaw. She also taught at the [London School of Economics](#). From 2004 to early 2009 she was a senior adviser to EU Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn, responsible for the Balkans and Turkey. Since February 2009 she leads the Brussels office of the [Open Society Institute](#) and is director of EU affairs for the Soros network.

Heather Grabbe was one of the first academics to look in detail at the actual workings of the accession process – the changes taking place in countries that aspired to become EU members and the tools the EU was using to bring about reform.

In 1999, in the midst of the reorganisation of the pre-accession process (which would eventually lead to the launch of new pre-accession tools like ISPA and Sapard), Grabbe published a paper on the new "accession partnerships" and their implications for EU conditionality in Central and Eastern Europe. In ["A Partnership for Accession?"](#) she wrote:

"The criteria applied to CEE have changed as the EU's very general Copenhagen conditions have been elaborated and interpreted in several stages, resulting in an increasingly detailed policy agenda for applicants."

In a [2001 article](#) Grabbe analysed the tools used by the EU to effect change through conditionality and the accession process:

- Models (legislative and institutional templates): the requirement for legal transposition of the EU acquis, often requiring modifications of existing or the creation of new institutions.
- Money (aid and technical assistance): primarily pre-accession funds (ISPA, Sapard, and Phare) intended to develop institutional capacity, to handle large transfers and to increase familiarity with EU procedures, both nationally and regionally.
- Benchmarking and monitoring: accession partnerships and regular reports published by the European Commission on each applicant's progress in different fields. This public monitoring process "could be used by other actors – both domestic and external – to judge the progress of politicians and officials. The Regular Reports became a focus of interest for both the domestic and international media each year. Both voters and foreign investors paid attention to what the EU said about progress in key areas like privatisation and financial sector regulation."
- Advice and twinning: a wide range of policy advice through technical assistance and special twinning projects.
- Gate-keeping: the EU's most powerful conditionality tool is granting or withholding access to different stages in the accession process, among them: privileged trade access and additional aid; the signing of an association agreement; the opening of negotiations; the opening and closing of individual chapters; and the signing of the accession treaty.

Much of Grabbe's thinking is brought together in *The EU's Transformative Power*, her 2006 book. As the title suggests, Grabbe's understanding of the EU's soft power does not lie solely in its power of attraction (as [Nye's original definition of soft power](#) would suggest), but in specific tools developed to bring about transformation.

The EU's transformative power is potentially colossal, argues Grabbe.

"Through the accession process, the EU can directly affect policy, institutional development, and the capacity of the state. The EU's influence is most readily identifiable where it advocates particular policy and institutional preferences."

Grabbe claims that – because of the "diffuseness" of its influence and the uncertainties of the accession process itself – EU soft power was not used in Central and Eastern Europe to the fullest possible extent. She does not deny the EU's huge influence on the post-communist states during the accession process, however. "The attraction of accession proved to be more powerful than other goals," she writes.

Grabbe also maintains that Europeanisation becomes embedded in domestic policies and institutions long before accession. In most of the new entrants, Europeanisation – by way of adaptation guided by EU legislative and institutional templates – began several years before the opening of accession negotiations.

“For Hungary, some regulatory alignment started even under communism in the 1980s, but Bulgaria started alignment in earnest only around 1997.”

The question of the strong variations in the reform trajectories of Europe’s post-communist countries is explored in more detail by [Milada Anna Vachudova](#).

- Against the background of the current slow-down of the enlargement process in the Balkans, in an article published in [Europe’s World](#) in early spring 2010, Grabbe demands more coherence in the EU’s approach to the Western Balkans. She also calls on the EU to stick to its commitments and reward progress with rewards (Heather Grabbe, [“We’ve got to get the EU’s Balkans enlargement back on track”](#), Europe’s World, Spring 2010).
- Heather Grabbe, *The EU’s Transformative Power. Europeanization through Conditionality in Central and Eastern Europe*, Palgrave Studies in European Union Politics, Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.
- Heather Grabbe, [“How Does Europeanisation Affect CEE Governance? Conditionality, Diffusion and Diversity”](#) in *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol.8, Issue 4, December 2001, pp.1013-1031.
- Heather Grabbe, [Profiting from EU enlargement](#), Centre for European Reform, 2001.
- Heather Grabbe, [A Partnership for Accession? The Implications of EU Conditionality for the Central and East European Applicants](#), Robert Schuman Centre Working paper 12/99, European University Institute, 1999.

Last updated: 22 February 2010

Milada Anna Vachudova: Passive and active EU leverage

“Once a state becomes deeply enmeshed in the European Union’s pre-accession process, the high costs of pulling out of this process motivate even previously illiberal ruling parties to adopt a political strategy that embraces qualifying for EU membership.”



Milada Anna Vachudova is a specialist on the democratisation of post-communist Europe and EU enlargement. Having completed a D.Phil. at Oxford University, she was awarded fellowships and research grants from various prestigious universities including Harvard, Columbia and Princeton. She is now an Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and is working on a book comparing the experience of democratization and international engagement in the Western Balkans since 1995.

In her book “Europe undivided” Milada Vachudova explores two key questions related to eastern EU enlargement. First, what explains the variations in the political trajectories of Europe’s post-communist countries after 1989? Why did the Hungary and Poland do well, and why did Bulgaria and Romania lag dramatically behind? Second, did these trajectories later converge, and if so, to what extent was this a product of EU leverage?

Vachudova’s central thesis, as far as the first question is concerned, is that the initial political dynamics were largely determined by the strength of anti-communist opposition forces at the time of regime change. This had a strong influence not only on subsequent political developments, but also on the economic reforms and on harmful practices such as rent seeking:

“The transition to a market-based democracy creates the opportunity for elites to rewrite the rules of the polity and the economy all at once. In such an environment, politicians confront strong incentives to forsake political pluralism and economic liberalism in favour of rent-seeking strategies that channel benefits to narrowly defined interest groups at the expense of society as a whole.

Arbitrage opportunities for those in a position to mediate between the reformed and unreformed sectors of the economy include the liberalization of foreign trade with incomplete price liberalization, the liberalization of prices without market competition, and the

privatization of companies without new controls on state credits and subsidies for production. As Hellman pointed out, the transition from a command economy necessarily creates some arbitrage opportunities because not all aspects of a fully functioning market economy can be put in place all at once."

The presence of an organised opposition jump-starts the creation of a competitive political system, which in turn decreases the opportunities of rent-seeking elites. This was the case in Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, where the rules of the political transition were negotiated between opposition leaders and the communist party officials. The absence of a strong, organised opposition as in Romania, Bulgaria and Slovakia created a political vacuum at the time of regime change that enabled non-opposition governments to hold power.

"In general, citizens in Romania, Bulgaria, and Slovakia were more suspicious of the market: the absence of an opposition to communism, or of a reforming communist party at the end of communism left these societies with a weaker consensus on the desirability of market capitalism. This made it easy for rent-seeking elites to win elections by promising slow, cautious reform."

Vachudova distinguishes between passive and active EU leverage. Passive leverage, she says, comes down to the attractiveness of EU membership – the EU's magnetism. Active leverage, by contrast, is understood as deliberate conditionality exercised in the pre-accession process.

For the first five years after 1989, the EU exercised only passive leverage, with widely differing results. While all governments declared EU membership as their key foreign policy goal, the governments of Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia began working to meet key EU requirements straight away; the governments of Bulgaria, Romania and (later) Slovakia, did not.

"The cost to governing elites of fulfilling the EU's domestic requirements varied after 1989 according to their dependence on ethnic nationalism and economic corruption to win and keep political power. Fore illiberal governments, the costs of adapting domestic policies to EU requirements were too high. Their political power depended on domestic strategies that were incompatible with the EU's requirements of liberal democracy and comprehensive economic reform."

For a few years, while there was only passive leverage, illiberal pattern governments could have it both ways. They could solicit EU membership as a matter of foreign policy, but practice economic and political rent seeking as the daily bread of domestic politics."

This changed in the mid-1990s, when the EU started to apply what Vachudova calls "active leverage". Thanks to clearer criteria, increasingly strict monitoring through the "avis", the annual reports, screening, and the negotiation process itself, governments that only rhetorically supported EU accession were quickly exposed.

"The EU's active leverage reinforces domestic political change: it elicits compliance as candidates seek to qualify for membership, and the process of complying transforms the polity, the economy and groups in society over the medium term. As candidates move through the pre-accession process toward membership, it becomes less likely that the polity will slide back by becoming less competitive or rolling back reform."

EU's active leverage is so powerful, Vachudova argues, because of three characteristics of the pre-accession process: *asymmetric interdependence* (membership was tremendously attractive and candidates needed EU integration for economic survival); *enforcement* (the requirements were huge and non-negotiable); and, most of the time, *meritocracy* (an applicant's place in the enlargement queue had to correspond to the progress made).

"Governments would cease to devote so much political capital to meeting the requirements of membership if it was obvious that the quality of preparations for any individual candidate could be trumped by domestic politics in EU member states."

"At least in principle, a merit-based accession process creates rules which tie the hands of governments not just in aspiring member states, but also in existing ones."

Active leverage had an effect on the political system of at least some of the accession countries. While it most probably contributed to the fall of the illiberal governments of Bulgaria, Romania and Slovakia, Vachudova maintains that:

"the EU had much greater traction on domestic policy-making in Romania, Bulgaria, and Slovakia after illiberal ruling parties lost elections in 1996, 1997, and 1998 respectively. The opposition parties that took office had used the EU as a focal point for cooperation and had spent time adapting to the EU's agenda for prospective members; once in office, they were tied to implementing this agenda by the expectations of the voters that progress would be made toward membership."

Economic and administrative reform was the biggest effect of the EU's active leverage:

"In all of the candidates for EU membership, the EU's active leverage promoted reforms of the state and the economy ... Governments had to reform in order to move forward in the EU's pre-accession process. Moving forward in this process in turn served as a credible commitment mechanism for many economic actors that treated it as a guarantee of ongoing reform."

Vachudova notes that "even when previous illiberal rulers were re-elected in Romania because of the failure of the 'reformers' to govern effectively, they did not return to (most) of their old ways, complying instead with EU rules."

Looking at Vachudova's analysis from today's vantage point, the brakes that Slovenia, Greece and Cyprus currently apply on the accession process (because of bi-lateral issues) clearly undermine one of the basic principles of the EU's leverage: meritocracy.

- Milada Anna Vachudova, *Europe Undivided. Democracy, Leverage, and Integration after Communism*, Oxford Univ. Press, 2005.

6 July 2009

Frank Schimmelfennig: The Europeanisation of Eastern Europe



"Once a given issue area became subject of the EU's conditionality, rule adoption increased dramatically and became a consistent feature across countries and issue areas."

[Frank Schimmelfennig](#) is Professor of European Politics at the ETH Zurich's Department of Social Sciences and Humanities. He previously held research and teaching posts in Tübingen, Darmstadt and Mannheim. He is particularly interested in international institutions, European integration, enlargement and democratisation.

In 2005 Frank Schimmelfennig published an influential volume, co-edited with [Ulrich Sedelmeier](#), on "The Europeanization of Central and Eastern

Europe". While most commentators agree that the influence of the EU on accession countries is huge, it is less clear, argue Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, "to what extent and in which ways the EU exercises its influence on the accession countries". This question is explored through a series of case studies by different authors, for which Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier provide the theoretical framework.

Europeanisation is defined, simply, "as a process in which states adopt EU rules." In their search for explanations of how and why it actually takes place, the authors examine three models:

First, the *external incentives model*, which "follows a logic of consequences and is driven by the *external* rewards and sanctions that the EU adds to the cost-benefit calculations of the rule-adopting state";

Second, the *social learning model*, which emphasises the Central and East European countries' identification with the EU and their acceptance of the legitimacy of the EU's rules;

Third, the *lesson-drawing model*, according to which countries "adopt EU rules because they judge them as effective remedies to inherently *domestic* needs and policy challenges."

The book finds that "while none of the three models ... explains the Europeanization of Central and Eastern Europe entirely, the external incentives provided by the EU can largely account for the impact of the EU on candidate countries."

According to this model, EU conditionality during the accession process can be understood as a strategy of reactive reinforcement by reward.

"The EU pays the reward if the target government complies with the conditions and withholds the reward if it fails to comply. It does not, however, intervene either coercively by inflicting extra costs ("reinforcement by punishment") or supportively by offering extra benefits ("reinforcement by support") to change the behaviour of the target government."

A member state's actual cost-benefit assessment is influenced by a number of factors: the determinacy of conditions, the size and speed of rewards, the credibility of threats and promises, and the level of adoption costs.

"In sum, according to the external incentives model, given a strategy of reinforcement by reward, conditionality will be most effective if rules and conditions are determinate; conditional rewards are certain, high and quickly disbursed; threats to withhold the

reward are credible; adoption costs are small; and veto players are few."

The book examines two major areas of EU conditionality: its impact on the accession countries' democratic structures; and its impact on the countries' adoption of EU legislation and policies. The evidence from the case studies suggests that, as far as *democratic conditionality* is concerned, the key variables are credible conditionality and adoption costs. Governments fearing that the implementation of EU rules will erode their domestic power base tend to be unresponsive to EU incentives. When it comes to what the authors call *acquis conditionality*, a credible membership perspective and the setting of EU rules as requirements for membership are key.

"We do observe some rule adoption even before the EU's conditionality was spelled out, but it was patchy and selective. However, once a given issue area became subject of the EU's conditionality, rule adoption increased dramatically and became a consistent feature across countries and issue areas."

What makes the EU's approach so powerful is that "once a credible membership perspective has been established, adoption costs in individual policy areas are discounted against the (aggregate) benefits of membership, rather than just the benefits in this particular policy area."

- Frank Schimmelfennig and Ulrich Sedelmeier, "Introduction: Conceptualizing the Europeanization of Central and Eastern Europe", in: *The Europeanization of Central and Eastern Europe*, Cornell University Press, 2005, pp. 1-28.
- Frank Schimmelfennig and Ulrich Sedelmeier, "Conclusions: The Impact of the EU on the Accession Countries", in: *The Europeanization of Central and Eastern Europe*, Cornell University Press, 2005, pp. 210-228.
- Frank Schimmelfennig, *The EU, NATO and the Integration of Europe: Rules and Rhetoric*, Cambridge University Press, 2003.

10 August 2009

Wade Jacoby: EU accession as emulation

"Social science techniques for understanding such complex process are underdeveloped."



Wade Jacoby is a professor of political science at [Brigham Young University](http://www.byu.edu) in Provo, a small city at Utah Lake in the United States. Jacoby specialises in international institutions with a special focus on institutional transfer. He has worked extensively on Germany, where he was visiting professor in 2005 (in Bonn) and on Eastern Europe.

*In his 2004 book *The Enlargement of the European Union and NATO*, Jacoby sought to explain institutional change in accession countries. The book, in his words, was an attempt to "link the process of change to a synthesis of major institutional theory traditions".*

Jacoby's key term is "emulation", which he describes as "a variety of related processes that have in common the fact that elites in one country use formal institutions and practices from abroad to refashion their own rules or organisations". Jacoby's "theory of emulation" sits at the junction of "three widely used bodies of institutionalist theory – rational choice, historical and sociological."

Jacoby tries to answer two questions: first, through which processes do elites attempt emulation? And second, what are the outcomes of the CEE countries' efforts to emulate Western Europe?

In doing so, he identifies four different modes of emulation, each of them a factor of (a) the degree of external pressure and (b) the degree of faithfulness in replication.

First, according to Jacoby, there are "copies", the "voluntary and reasonably faithful spread of institutions from one place to another". These are rather rare.

The second mode of emulation is through "templates": "Some CEE elites voluntarily looked to Western Europe for general templates in which they used the West European model more as a loose approximation than a detailed blueprint."

Third, there are “thresholds”, minimum – albeit rigorously enforced – standards for institutional change set by the EU (or NATO).

“Both the EU and NATO long tried to minimize mandates of precise institutional outcomes. At times this reluctance reflected a lack of internal consensus among members or deference to the sovereignty of CEE states. In part, however, IO [International Organisation] officials also were wary of a checklist approach, because for several years, each IO had an internal consensus against a rapid enlargement. Some officials worried that if they gave precise targets to CEE reformers, they would come under more pressure to admit CEE states if those targets were met.”

And fourth, there are “patches”, explicit requirements “often involving specific legal texts to be incorporated en bloc into national law.”

Given the high number of non-negotiable EU directives and policy prescriptions that accession countries have to incorporate into their national legislation, the concept of “emulation” – and Jacoby’s distinction between different modes thereof – might be a useful analytical tool.

However, the real value of this conceptual framework rests on whether and how it helps to answer Jacoby’s second and more interesting question: What comes out of these efforts of emulation? The result varies. “In some cases,” says Jacoby, “we will see emulation feeding into a robust ‘politics as usual’, while in other cases emulation will create policy areas almost *de novo*.” He proposes four “labels” for such outcomes, all of them a factor of the “density of rules” and the “density of actors”. These are “open struggle” (high density of rules/high density of actors), “scaffolding” (high density of rules/low density of actors), “homesteading” (low density of rules/low density of actors), and “continuous learning” (low density of rules/high density of actors).

Equipped with such a model, Jacoby looks at five policy areas – agriculture, regional policy, consumer protection, health care and civilian control of the military – in a number of countries and examines the modes of emulation and outcomes in each case. His “theory of emulation”, however, points to no clear conclusion. “Institutional theories add more by synthesis and juxtaposition than in isolation”, Jacoby writes.

“Emulation is both hard to do and hard to describe. It is hard to do because elites must do more than simply copy best practices. Rather, they must understand how attractive foreign models actually work, agree with other actors on the desirability of emulating them, and be able to execute their plans.”

There is also no pattern of relationships between his “modes of emulation” and “labels” of outcomes.

"Unfortunately, the major macrosociological and political science research tradition ... has a markedly difficult time with these complexities since it blends out uncertainty and disagreement in favor of tracking the spread of highly stylized models and generally ignores the implementation phase altogether."

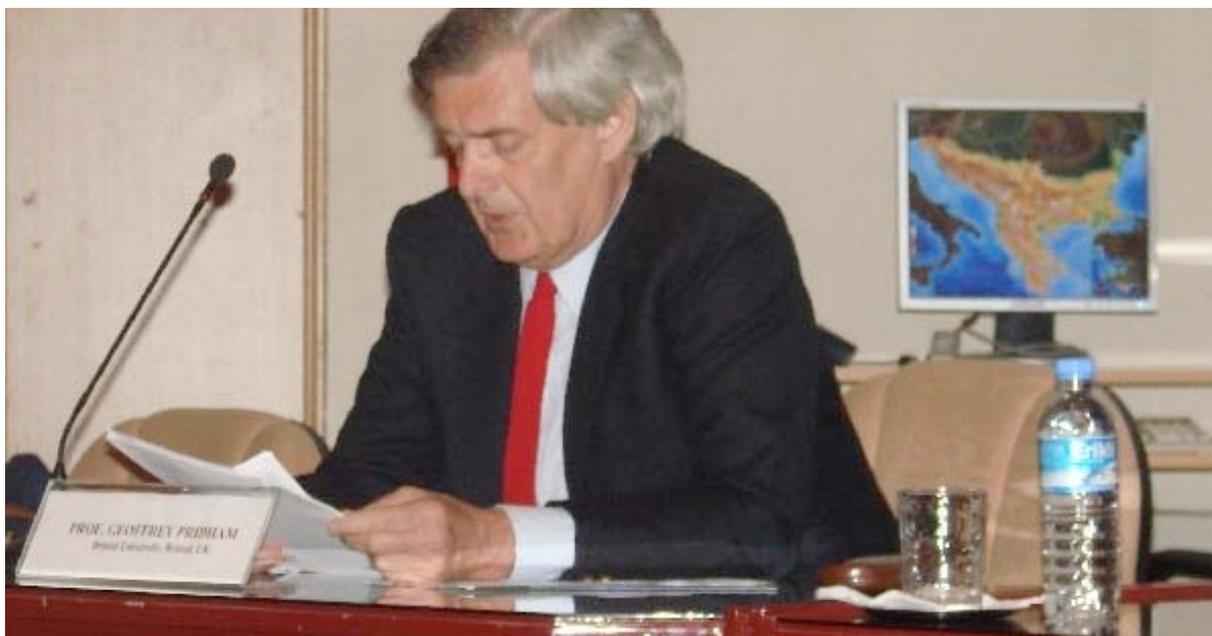
Two hundred pages into Jacoby's book, this makes for rather disappointing reading for those who expected more tangible answers. Jacoby, in his conclusions, acknowledges the limits of his research tools.

"In closing, two things are plain to see. First, Eastern Europeans have looked West for inspiration and tried to emulate some of the things they saw. Second, social science techniques for understanding such complex process are underdeveloped."

- Wade Jacoby, *The Enlargement of the European Union and NATO. Ordering from the Menu in Central Europe*, Cambridge Univ. Press, 2004.

11 January 2010

Geoffrey Pridham: Democratic conditionality after EU accession



"There is no general pattern of backtracking, aside from some national-specific cases like Poland and Slovakia over political control in their civil services."

Geoffrey Pridham was Professor of European Politics at the Department of Politics of the University of Bristol (UK). After his retirement in November 2007, he won a University of Bristol Senior Research Fellowship for two years and continued his research on democratisation and EU enlargement.

Already in 2005 Pridham had published "Designing Democracy – EU Enlargement and Regime Change in Post-Communist Europe", a book in which he explores the relationship between Europeanisation and democratisation.

"It was essentially the overall accession process that most of all carried forward the implementation of democratic conditionality. This is underlined by examining in turn the two successive phases of pre-negotiations and then actual membership negotiations. Even though the EU's political conditions were more visible in the former phase, because their satisfaction was decisive in persuading the EU to invite countries to negotiate, it was the enhanced dynamics that accession then acquired through the shift to these negotiations – together with the progress these made – that contributed much to propelling forward the implementation as distinct from the observation of democratic conditionality."

In a more recent article, published in 2007 (["Unfinished Business? Eastern Enlargement and Democratic Conditionality"](#)), Pridham explores what happens to democratic conditionality once a country has joined the EU as a member state. While enlargement is acknowledged as the EU's most influential democracy promotion tool, says Pridham, doubts persist as to the depth of democratic norms in many a Central and East European country.

Pridham refers to Ulrich Sedelmeier who, in 2006, warned of a possible "Eastern (compliance) Problem". In subsequent research, however, [Sedelmeier](#) has concluded that "far from constituting an 'eastern problem', compliance in the new members has been surprisingly good."

Pridham's article focuses primarily on Romania. Looking at post-accession compliance in Slovakia and Latvia, Pridham explores what these countries' track records might imply for Romania's post-accession performance. What is more interesting, and more concrete, are his findings on the actual post-accession performance of the new member states:

"There is no general pattern of backtracking aside from some national-specific cases like Poland and Slovakia over political control in their civil services."

Comparing Slovakia's and Latvia's performance in two particularly tricky areas, judicial reform and the fight against corruption, Pridham detects no uniform pattern.

"By and large, this analysis confirms, in hindsight, the overall importance of EU conditionality's impact during the accession process, notwithstanding its defects ... Even where the EU's main achievement was formal with the creation of new structures and an enlarged statute book to buttress the conditions, this could be important as a framework for subsequent action following accession. It is noticeable in several instances that real progress only began towards the end of the accession process."

This was true for judicial reform in Slovakia and anti-corruption policies in Latvia. The dynamics of the accession process have – obviously – disappeared. But they were replaced by new pressure for change.

"EU enlargement is ... a continuing process that stretches beyond the point of actual entry. As political conditionality shows, accession-induced change did, as a whole, achieve sufficient progress upon which to build further ... [The post-accession picture] is one where direct pressures are diminishing and indirect pressures – coming from full engagement with the EU from inside – continue to grow."

- Geoffrey Pridham, ["Unfinished Business? Eastern Enlargement and Democratic Conditionality"](#), Fride, Working paper 36, April 2007.
- Geoffrey Pridham, *Designing Democracy. EU Enlargement and Regime Change in Post-Communist Europe*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

10 August 2009

Ulrich Sedelmeier: The "eastern problem" revisited



"The performance of the EU8 is not only better on average, but almost every individual EU8 [country] also performed better than almost every old member state."

[Ulrich Sedelmeier](#) is a Senior Lecturer at the Department of International Relations at the LSE in London. He was earlier Associate Professor of International Relations

and European Studies at the Central European University in Budapest. He has co-edited "The Europeanization of Central and Eastern Europe" with [Frank Schimmelfennig](#) and has published many articles on the EU and the latest EU enlargement.

In one of his most recent articles, Ulrich Sedelmeier picks up the question of the new East European member states' compliance with the *acquis*. "Criticism notwithstanding," Sedelmeier writes, "EU conditionality was generally very effective in prompting the CEECs' alignment with the *acquis*. However, there are doubts whether this success of the EU's pre-accession conditionality is sustainable after accession." Available literature on EU compliance and pre-accession conditionality, he notes, suggests the emergence of an "eastern problem".

"The literature on pre-accession alignment and EU compliance would expect accession to result in much more serious compliance problems in the post-communist new members compared to the older member states. The dominance of the conditional membership incentives for pre-accession rule transfer, as well as the high costs of compliance and capacity limitations in the EU8, suggest that the good performance of the EU8 during the pre-accession period will quickly erode. The likelihood that formal rule adoption will result in behavioural rule adoption is low."

Four years after the accession of the EU-8, Sedelmeier examines the available facts. His analysis of the most recent data on transposition of the *acquis* and infringement of EU law delivers astonishing results: "far from constituting an 'eastern problem', compliance in the new members has been surprisingly good."

All EU directives need to be transposed into national law by an agreed deadline. Once the member states have done so, they must notify the European Commission.

"Initially, transposition rates among the EU8 diverged significantly. Five of the EU8 started with rates well below the average for the EU15. However, since 2005, the EU8 have done consistently better than the EU15. Only the Czech Republic temporarily dropped again below the average of the EU15 ... at the end of 2006, four of the EU8 were in the top five, with a further three in the top 11. Thus, after initial problems for some of the EU8, they have rapidly improved and maintained transposition rates that are clearly better than the EU15 on average and for most of them individually."

Infringements measures are actions taken by the Commission against member states that violate EU law. If a case is not resolved informally before the Commission starts the infringement procedure (which happens in most cases), the Commission sends a "letter of formal notice". For

those cases that remain unresolved, the Commission delivers a “reasoned opinion”. The last possibility is a deferral of the case to the European Court of Justice (ECJ).

“The performance of the EU8 is not only better on average, but almost every individual EU8 also performed better than almost every old member state. Lithuania is the outstanding performer in the EU, and the top nine include seven of the EU8 ... In sum, compared to the old member states, the infringement record of the EU8 – both on average and for most of them individually – is excellent.”

The EU-8 countries’ record also holds up with respect to directives with a post-enlargement implementation deadline. Relevant data suggests that the number of initial infringements in the EU8 is not significantly lower, but that the EU8 member states settle their cases much quicker than the EU15.

Table: Infringements of directives with a post- 1 May 2004 implementation deadline

191 directives (2004 and 2005)	EU 15	EU 8
Infringements (%)	39.2	32.8
Reasoned opinions (%)	16.4	6.7
Referrals to the ECJ (%)	7.1	1.3
Av. duration of infringement cases (months)	13.4	11.0
Open cases (by 1 May 2007)	7.9	2.3

There are a number of potential objections to the argument. Transposition figures measure only *formal* implementation of directives. They reflect the number of directives whose transposition has been reported to the European Commission by the member states – but they do not necessarily measure whether the directive has been correctly transposed, let alone applied and enforced.

Infringement data, on the other hand, focus on correct application, but they cover only non-compliance cases detected and taken up by the European Commission, which mostly relies on reports by aggrieved parties, ie companies, interest groups or individuals. This might only be the tip of the iceberg. A systematic bias might play to the advantage of the EU8: the extent of undetected non-compliance cases might be higher as citizens, firms and interest groups are less aware of their rights than

their counterparts in the EU15. The fact that complaints are a considerably less significant source of infringements in the EU8 than in the EU15 gives some weight to this criticism. However,

“even if the lower incidence of complaints explained some of the difference in the infringement patterns, it does not affect the differences in settlement behaviour – the greater inclination of the EU8 to settle emerging infringement at an earlier stage of the infringement procedure.”

The short observation period and the fact that the EU8 had negotiated some transition periods in the more challenging areas of EU law might also distort the picture, but – according to Sedelmeier – it is “unlikely that they had a dramatic impact”.

Further research is required in order to explain the very good performance of the EU8. The safeguard clause cannot explain it: though it expired in May 2007, compliance did not deteriorate (and even improved on 2006, except in the case of Poland).

Sedelmeier offers two tentative explanations.

First, the EU8 had made “an institutional investment to increase the effectiveness of national arrangements for the adoption of EU law, which allowed them to transpose a massive amount of *acquis* into national legislation within a very short period of time.” Many of the EU8 countries have kept some of the pre-accession procedures in place, increasing their capacity to deliver timely transposition. Speedy procedures, however, might also have some drawbacks in terms of lacking debate and transparency.

Second, the post-communist member states might have become “socialised” to the effect that jockeying for position in the accession regatta has made national elites anxious to improve their countries’ relative performance.

- Ulrich Sedelmeier, “After conditionality: post-accession compliance with EU law in East Central Europe”, *Journal of European Public Policy*, 15 (6), pp. 806-825.
- Rachel A. Epstein and Ulrich Sedelmeier, “Beyond conditionality: international institutions in postcommunist Europe after enlargement”, *Journal of European Public Policy*, 15 (6), pp. 795-805.

11 August 2009

Thomas Risse: The Europeanisation of EU member states

"In general, no single EU member state investigated in this volume is more likely than others to change its institutional structure in response to Europeanization pressures."

Thomas Risse, born in 1955, is Professor and Chair of International Politics at the Department of Political and Social Sciences at Freie Universität Berlin. From 1997 to 2001 Risse was Professor for International Relations at the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies at the European University Institute in Florence. His main interests include theories of international relations and problems of transnational governance.



The impact of Europeanisation on institutional change is not limited to aspiring members. As the EU continuously changes and evolves, with new regulations and directives passed every day, old member states have to change, too.

How this actually happens is the topic of "Transforming Europe – Europeanization and Domestic Change", a 2001 book co-edited by Thomas Risse, Maria Green Cowles and James Caporaso.

Risse understands "Europeanisation" *not* as the transposition of EU rules and procedures at the national level, but as "the emergence and development at the European level of distinct structures of governance", to which member states then have to adapt.

Conceptually, the crux of his argument is this:

"Europeanization changes nation-states by exerting adaptational pressures. Europeanization by itself is a necessary but not sufficient condition for domestic change. When there are changes at the European level, the first question one must ask is how closely these changes fit with what already exists at the domestic level. Poor fit implies strong adaptational pressure; good fit implies weak pressure. A country whose domestic institutions are perfectly compatible with Europeanization experiences no adaptational pressure. In such a case, we expect no domestic institutional change."

Where adaptational pressures exist, we do not necessarily foresee significant domestic change. National and subnational governments may simply avoid doing anything to respond, in which case there will be an implementation deficit. Whether or not a country adjusts its institutional structure to Europe will depend on the presence or absence of mediating factors."

Risse and his colleagues identify five such mediating factors: multiple veto points, mediating formal institutions, political organisation and cultures, differential empowerment of actors, and learning.

These factors play out differently in different countries. Though Europeanisation pressures led to domestic adaptation in eight out of the ten cases examined in the book (from gender equality and telecommunications to environmental policy), Risse and his colleagues could not identify a simple explanatory pattern or model.

"In general, no single EU member state investigated in this volume is more likely than others to change its institutional structure in response to Europeanization pressures."

While Europeanisation has brought about new and distinct structures of government, these are not modelled after any of the individual old member states. "The alleged European 'top of the class', Germany, faces as much adaptational pressure across a variety of issue-areas as the European 'laggard', Britain." As Risse writes in the introduction,

"Strong movements in Europeanization as well as strong adaptational pressure do not necessarily translate into domestic structural change. These forces must pass through and interact with facilitating and/or obstructive factors specific to each country."

While it is the individual case studies (see for example Alberta Sragia's text on the transformation of Italy's public finances before the Euro) that provide more concrete insights, Risse and his colleagues make an important conceptual contribution.

"Europeanization does not result in the homogenization of domestic structures. Member states face varying degrees of adaptational pressures to the 'regulatory patchwork' of EU rules and regulations. Different factors restrain or facilitate their adaption to these Europeanization pressures. Yet, the transformation of domestic structures takes place all the same, oftentimes in rather fundamental ways."

- Maria Green Cowles, James Caporaso, and Thomas Risse (eds), *Transforming Europe. Europeanization and Domestic*

Change, Cornell Univ. Press, 2001. Introduction (pp. 1-20) and conclusions (pp. 217-237).

11 August 2009

Panayotis Ioakimidis: The Europeanisation of Greece

Panayotis Ioakimidis is a Greek academic focusing on European policy and European integration. He is professor at the International and European Studies Department at the [Faculty of Political Science and Public Administration](#) of the University of Athens. He formerly worked for the Greek Foreign Ministry, served as an alternate member of the European Convention on behalf of the Greek Government, and was an adviser on European issues to Greek Prime Minister Costas Simitis.

In his study "The Europeanisation of Greece" Panayotis Ioakimidis provides a concise case study of the transformative powers of the European Union. Looking at Greece, he finds that Europeanisation changed the Greek state thoroughly, but only as of the mid-1990s, more than a decade after membership.

Greece acceded to the EU in 1981, less than seven years after the country's dictatorship had come to an end. Greek politics and the economy functioned very differently from other EU countries. The state was the major employer and had a key role in the economy, in particular through ownership of most banks. As Ioakimidis puts it, "the state occupied a hegemonic position in practically every aspect of Greek society."

Employment in the public sector, already extraordinarily high (351,028 people) in 1981, nearly doubled (to 615,956) in 1992. The state was used by political leaders as an employment machine to keep their constituencies happy. An opaque network of provisions regulating the allocation of state subsidies, grants and aids of every form allowed the government to cater to its networks of patron-client relations and "dependencies". With the banking system in the hands of the state, the distribution of loans followed purely political and clientelist purposes.

The price, of course, was rapidly growing public debt – rising from 17.6 percent of GDP in 1970 to 28.3 percent in 1981 and to 112 per cent in 1986.

The state was huge, but not effective, described as "a colossus with feet of clay" by D.A. Sotiropoulos. Everything was centred in Athens.

Ioakimidis describes the country as the “most centralised unitary state in Europe in the early 1980s.”

Against this background, Europeanisation has deeply penetrated the Greek political system, delivering change in a wide range of areas. Ioakimidis lists four of the most important levels at which change took place: the regulatory, functional, territorial, and institutional.

First, EU membership had a major impact on the Greek economy, bringing about a stark contraction of the state as an economic actor and radically changing the regulatory patterns of the Greek economy. But this did not come overnight. Until 1985 Greece pursued a reckless policy of uncontrollable public deficits. Then Athens needed EU assistance. Brussels agreed to help, but imposed a stabilisation and reform programme. The programme, however, was abandoned again by the government in 1987, due to social pressures.

The real turning point came in 1992 with the adoption of the Maastricht Treaty, which set out the “convergence criteria” for a common currency. Faced with a high price for non-compliance, namely exclusion from the single currency, Greece embarked on a new reform programme. Through radical cuts in expenditure, particularly in state employment and state subsidies, the deficit fell from 12.5 percent in 1993 to 0.9 in 1999. This meant “a radical reduction in the size of the Greek state and a thorough redefinition of the state’s economic role” proved necessary. The process led to the complete liberalisation of the banking system, greater transparency in relations between the state and public companies and – through European single market regulations – a competitive regulatory regime.

Second, Europeanisation meant a redefinition of the functions and competencies of the state.

“Because of EU membership, the Greek state, while forced to abandon a host of economic functions and activities, was at the same time led by the EU’s impact and dynamics to assume new functions and develop policies that otherwise it might not have developed at all.”

The Greek state administration had to start dealing with new policies in a consistent way, in particular with regard to structural policies, the environment, vocational training, research and technology, consumer protection and cross border co-operation – areas where virtually no policies had existed.

Third, Europeanisation also had a lasting effect on Greece’s territorial organisation. “EU membership”, writes Ioakimidis, “has been the factor that contributed to altering fundamentally the territorial distribution of

political power, political activities, choices and resources." The EU's structural policies "generated the dynamics and conditions for introducing a systematic policy of regional decentralisation and reinforcing the powers and autonomy of the regions." The initial reforms began in 1986, when 13 administrative regions were formed, and were further extended in 1994 when elections at the prefecture level were held for the first time.

As Ioakimidis maintains, most if not all of the reforms pertaining to local governance

"were introduced as a response to the requirements and impact of EU membership. The 1986 reforms came about after Greece had discovered that it was not in a position to implement the IMPs [Integrated Mediterranean Programmes] because it lacked the decentralised regional structures required by the EU as partners in the execution of the structural policy."

Greek regions gained new financial resources, a greater say in national policy making, direct communication with EU bodies, and links to counterparts in other member states.

Fourth, notes Ioakimidis, the Greek example shows that the "Europeanisation process and EU membership in general can play a decisive role in strengthening democratic institutions and widening the scope of the democratic process by bringing into it new social and political actors."

The Bank of Greece, for example, tightly controlled by the government until 1995, gained almost full institutional independence and operational autonomy, largely due to the need to implement the convergence programme for euro entry. Handling the EU agenda required skills and knowledge, resulting in more transparent recruitment of civil servants. Due to EU pressure the state was also forced to start involving civil society in policy making, particularly with regard to the development of developmental and structural policies. "It is (..) evident that EU membership operates as a very effective force supporting the process of building a civil society in Greece (...) by weakening the omnipotence of the state."

Ioakimidis concludes that "Europeanisation has been a powerful force for redefining the role, functions and powers of the state and for altering the balance of power between the state on the one hand, and society and the regions on the other."

Ioakimidis' text is a convincing illustration of the transformative power of the EU. Unlike the new member states which had to change *before* they could enter the Union, Greece was admitted to the EU as a largely unreformed country and thereafter had little incentive to reform. This

changed when Greece feared to be left out of a new important club, the Eurozone. The benefits of membership as a credible incentive, combined with strict criteria, triggered the biggest reform drive in modern Greece.

- Panayotis Ioakimidis, "The Europeanization of Greece: An Overall Assessment", in: Kevin Featherstone and George Kazamias (eds.), in *Europeanization and the Southern Periphery*, Frank Cass, 2001, pp. 73-94. For an electronic version of this article without footnotes click [here](#).

26 February 2009

Jose Magone: The Europeanisation and democratisation of Portugal



"Europeanisation meant not only modernization, but also democratization of policy-formulation, policy-making and policy implementation processes."

José Magone is professor of global and regional governance at the [Berlin School of Economics and Law](#). Earlier he taught at the [Instituto Piaget](#) in Lisbon and – from 1992 to 2008 – at the [University of Hull](#) in northern England. Magone specialises in global and regional governance, European integration and the Iberian Peninsula.

In an article published in 2001, José Magone argues that in the case of Portugal, the processes of democratisation and Europeanisation were intertwined. The challenges that followed a difficult transition from dictatorship to democracy – between 1974 and 1976 – were huge.

"Portuguese political elites had to transform the poorest country in western Europe from a formal to a sustainable democracy which would overcome the past traditions of patrimonialism based on clientilism, patronage, closed-mindedness and repression."

What made this even more difficult was an extremely unfavourable economic landscape. As Magone points out, Portugal – most of its large enterprises state-owned, its economy still reeling from the loss of a huge colonial empire – was bankrupt. Between 1976 and 1985 the country had

nine different governments, hampering the consolidation of the democratic system.

With EU membership, this changed. European integration, and EU regional policy in particular, argues Magone, was a crucial tool of democracy-building in Portugal.

"The integration of the Portuguese bureaucratic structures into the COREPER mechanisms [the permanent representations of the member states to the European Commission] and the committees of the Commission steadily changed the nature of governance in the Portuguese case. This integration of bureaucratic structures led to the opening-up of the previously closed-minded authoritarian bureaucratic structure ...

The policy formulation, making and implementation of national policies became increasingly subsumed in long-term European programmes. This not only had a lasting modernizing effect, but it also subsequently paved the way to strengthen the democratic structures of the country at local, regional and national levels."

Portugal's early years in the EU coincided with a series of wide-ranging reforms spearheaded by European Commission president [Jacques Delors](#). Under Delors, writes Magone, the EU acquired "democratic output legitimacy". The creation of the Single Market and the Economic and Monetary Union, he observes, "set in motion a process of convergence of the member states' policy-making structures and cultures."

"The integration of Portugal into the EC/EU was a major factor in structuring Portuguese democratic governance towards an open-minded, reflective, citizen-friendly, transparent and accountable political and administrative behaviour. This did not materialize soon after membership, but developed gradually as a response to the pressures coming from European public policy, learning from the experiences of other member states and the slow development of national, regional and local civil societies."

Magone gives credit to Anibal Cavaco Silva of the Social Democratic party (PSD), in power from 1985 to 1995, for launching the overhaul of the Portuguese administration and economy.

"[Cavaco Silva] used the support of the EC/EU to develop long-term development plans which would have at their core the improvement of the education sector, the efficiency of the agricultural sector, administrative reform and sound macroeconomic policies ... [He also launched] a vast programme to modernise the public administration aimed at the upgrading of civil servants' qualifications, decentralisation, increased accountability and transparency."

EU policies played an important role in this transformation, as “the administration had to increase its efficiency in view of facilitating the absorption, implementation and monitoring of the structural funds.”

One of the most important tools of change was the reformed [regional policy](#).

“European regional policy in the form of the structural funds became one of the central policies pushing the Portuguese political system towards a democratic governance system ... Europeanisation meant not only modernization, but also democratization of policy-formulation, policy-making and policy implementation processes.”

A special programme, PRODEP, was negotiated with the EU to address Portugal’s huge education problem. In 1970, 33.6 percent of the Portuguese population was illiterate. (Despite some progress, the problem remained profound in the 1980s.) As late as 1992, almost half of the working population was unskilled or semiskilled. Thanks to the programme, up to 75 percent of its financing provided by the EU, access to education has increased considerably. Illiteracy is now found only among the elderly in a few pockets in the country’s poorer regions.

Structurally, Portugal’s economy has become increasingly similar to other EU member states, with strong growth in the tertiary sector along with a decline in the industrial and agricultural sectors. Portuguese GDP per capita rose considerably following accession, from 53 percent of the EU average in 1980 to 70 percent in 1996 (and 77 percent in 2003).

For Magone, the importance of the EU in Portugal’s development is clear: “The European integration process was an important reinforcing factor in transforming Portugal from an authoritarian to a democratic governance system.”

- José Magone, “The Transformation of the Portuguese Political System: European Regional Policy and Democratization in a Small EU Member State”, in: Kevin Featherstone and George Kazamias (eds.), *Europeanization and the Southern Periphery*, Frank Cass, 2001, pp. 119-140.

8 January 2010

Larry Siedentop: Bureaucratic despotism

"Democratic legitimacy in Europe is at risk."



Larry Siedentop is a political scientist and historian. Born in Chicago in 1936, he studied at Harvard and Oxford, where he also spent most of his academic career as a lecturer and a fellow at Keble College. Siedentop is the author of Democracy in

Europe, a book on the political problems of the EU, hailed by Denis MacShane as "at last, a proper book on Europe". Having retired from academia, Siedentop occasionally writes for the Financial Times, The Independent and other papers.

"Democratic legitimacy in Europe is at risk," reads the first sentence of Siedentop's 2000 book, *Democracy in Europe*. Though it comes from one of the most ferocious critics of the EU's democratic structures, the book does not reflect the current typical British approach to Europe.

Siedentop's analysis is based on the (weakly argued) assumption that the EU is in the process of turning into a state. A biographer of Alexis de Tocqueville, Siedentop alludes to the French critic of the American political system both in the book's title and in its construction. His work, however, unlike de Tocqueville's, is slim on empirical evidence and observation. Siedentop sees European integration, through the single market and the euro, as having evolved too far too quickly and observes not only a "rapid accumulation of power in Brussels" but the emergence of "bureaucratic despotism". The European project, he argues, is under threat.

"For European integration raises the question of whether it is possible to create a democratic political class or élite across Europe. If not, the future looks bleak. In the absence of such an élite or political class, democracy in Europe will become a mere façade for bureaucratic rule from the centre or, worse still, for a plebiscitary and potentially demagogic form of politics. For let us be honest with ourselves. European federalism could lead to ugly reactions within member states, perhaps even to new forms of Caesarism."

What we have now is not a European democratic political class but an unaccountable bureaucratic elite, claims Siedentop. The "de facto

accumulation of power in Brussels", he says, is evidence that the "bureaucratic" French model of the state is winning against the federalist German and the precedent- and custom-based British models.

"The peril is real. If the idea of Europe becomes associated primarily with the arrogance of unaccountable élites, the prospects for Europe are bleaker than they have been since 1945. For then the idea of Europe will divide rather than unite. It will divide nations within themselves and may even set nations against each other."

Siedentop's solution is a US-type written constitution that clearly defines the rights and responsibilities of the EU and the member states. There is still a long way to go, Siedentop acknowledges. Functional federal institutions, as he sees it, require a common religion (Christianity), a common language (English) and a shared legal culture (which can take root when lawyers are afforded a greater role in the political system). The establishment of a Senate – composed of representatives elected by the national and regional parliaments of the member states – would also help. Representative democracy in Europe means "the dispersal of authority, checks and balances and significant local autonomy." Without it,

"We then find ourselves back facing Montesquieu's risk – the risk that a central agency can draw all power to itself by playing off one region against another, one group or culture against another. In the absence of a common language, a widely shared political culture and a coherent political class ... the danger of European federalism subsiding into a bureaucratic form of the state should never be underestimated. Whether such a tyranny could long survive, or would itself break up in a contentious and perhaps even violent way, is another matter."

Siedentop has drawn the scorn of fellow academics for allegedly misrepresenting the EU's history and turning a deaf ear to the existing debate on the legitimacy of the EU's constitutional structure. "Siedentop's most fundamental error", [Andrew Moravcsik](#) maintains, "is his assumption that the EU is a nation-state in the making and therefore ought to be held to the same democratic standards as its member states."

One of Siedentop's arguments, however, if one cuts the drama and the doomsday scenarios, finds more support. It is his observation of a European public feeling out of touch with the elites.

"[Throughout Europe] public opinion, dazed by the speed with which monetary union is being imposed, and uncertain about its implications, has a growing sense that the élites of Europe have left public opinion far behind in the pursuit of this new project – and that power in Europe will be centralized, whether the peoples of Europe

want it or not. A new kind of historicism or doctrine of historical inevitability has thus been born.

That is why the idealism associated with European construction during much of the post-war period is now draining away."

This issue is addressed in more detail by other authors, including most recently by [Simon Hix](#). Others, however, including [Moravcsik](#) and Giandomenico Majone, take a diametrically opposed position on the subject.

- Larry Siedentop, *Democracy in Europe*, Penguin, 2000.
- Andrew Moravcsik, "[Despotism In Brussels? Misreading the European Union](#)", Review Essay, in *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2001.

11 March 2010

Simon Hix: Limited democratic politics



"What is missing is the substantive content of democracy: a battle for control of political power and the policy agenda at the European level."

*Simon Hix is Professor of European and comparative politics at the London School of Economics. His book, *The Political System of the European Union*, first published in 1999, is basic reading for students*

of European politics. Most of Hix's papers can be downloaded from [his website](#).

There are widespread claims that the EU is not democratic enough: that European integration has led to an increase in executive power at the expense of national parliamentary control; that the European Parliament is too weak; that the EU is too distant from voters; and that European policies, including enlargement, are not what EU citizens want.

In his most recent book, *What's wrong with the European Union and how to fix it*, Simon Hix argues that these standard claims about the EU's democratic deficit are largely wrong. Except for one: that neither political office nor the direction of EU policies are subject to democratic electoral contest. In order to address this, Hix proposes to introduce what he calls "limited democratic politics."

In order to fully understand his argument, we need to start with what Hix thinks are the EU's three major problems: policy gridlock, collapse of popular legitimacy, and democratic deficit.

First, the current policy gridlock has arisen because the policy agenda of the EU has shifted from integration and the creation of a common market towards economic reform.

"The key thing to understand about the internal market project is that the reason the EU was able to pass more than 300 pieces of legislation in this period was that there was a very large range of policies that all the key actors were willing to accept since the alternative, of not having a working internal market in a wide range of goods and services, was so undesirable."

Since the late 1990s, the main debate in the EU is the liberalisation (and extent thereof) of the internal market. As a result, changes now mean moving the system leftwards or rightwards on the political ideological axis. Unlike the creation of the internal market, this is bound to produce opposition. While the construction of the market was in everyone's interest, changing the system is liable to produce both winners *and* losers.

Second, Hix points to a "dramatic collapse of popular legitimacy of the EU" since the early 1990s. For a decade now the percentage of Europeans who think their country's membership in the EU is "a good thing" has hovered at or just above 50 percent. ([Andrew Moravcsik](#) points out that most of the remainder are "neutral" and only 14% have a negative perception of the EU.) Hix thinks this is because Europeans are now more knowledgeable about the EU and make their own judgements about the costs and benefits of membership.

“Citizens who perceive that they gain new economic opportunities from market integration in Europe tend to support the EU, while citizens who perceive that market integration threatens their economic interests tend to oppose the EU. Moreover, citizens who feel that EU policies (such as social and environmental regulations) are closer to their personal political views than their current national policies are likely to support the EU, while citizens who feel that EU policies are further from their personal political views than their current national policies are likely to oppose the EU.”

Public relations will not change this, says Hix. The same EU policy decision will win the support of one group of EU citizens and draw the opposition of another. In a typical political system, those opposed to a particular policy move will usually blame the government. When it comes to the EU, however, they are liable to blame the political system as a whole.

This brings Hix to his third point: the EU’s “democratic deficit”. Though he dispenses with many of the standard criticisms of the EU’s democratic shortcomings, Hix does deplore the lack of competition for the control of political authority at the European level. The president of the European Commission is chosen by secret horse-trading between the heads of the member states.

“The election of the Commission President is closer to the election of a pope – who emerges from a secret conclave of cardinals – than to an open and competitive battle.”

European Parliament elections have very little to do with Europe, argues Hix. For most voters, what is at stake at the national level is much greater than what is at stake at the European level.

“There is an extremely weak connection between voters’ choices in national and European Parliament elections and the policy outcomes at the European level... What is missing is the substantive content of democracy: a battle for control of political power and the policy agenda at the European level, between rival groups of leaders with rival policy platforms.”

The EU’s current institutional framework, says Hix, is ripe for an injection of “limited democratic politics”. Qualified Majority Voting (QMV) is on the rise. The Council now passes about half of the legislation by QMV. The European Parliament has now more power in co-decision procedures and MEPs already vote much more along party lines than national lines.

“The institutional and behavioural prerequisites for limited democratic politics in the EU already exist. On the institutional side, as a result of the treaty reforms since the 1980s, a broad majority coalition can dominate EU policy-making. A coalition of governments

in the Council and political parties in the European Parliament has the potential to appoint a clearly left-wing or right-wing Commission President and then pass the legislative proposals of the Commission. This is how politics works in all democratic systems and is how politics could work at the European level."

Hix proposes the following concrete changes.

The European Parliament, he argues, should move from a fully proportional to a "winner-takes-more" model. Instead of the two big European caucuses sharing the presidency for 2½ years each, the EP President could be elected for a full five year term. Committee chairs could also be allocated increasingly to those parties that secure the greatest share of the vote. "Which European party 'won' the elections would matter for the first time."

"Despite the recent changes, the Council is still probably the most secretive legislative chamber anywhere in the democratic world," Hix maintains. That said, *all* of the Council's legislative documents should be made accessible to the public, as should all of its legislative deliberations. Hix also proposes to restrict amendment rights to coalitions of governments and to put *all* decisions to a vote and record the votes in the minutes.

Finally, Hix suggests an open contest for the president of the European Commission. While the selection process has become more political, it still happens behind closed doors.

"The 'election' of the Commission President – and it is an election, regardless of the procedure – will not be a democratic process unless it is clear what each of the potential candidates stands for, in terms of what he or she intends to do if elected, and which national government and party leaders back which candidates."

Proposals to this effect have not made it into the Lisbon Treaty. However, Hix suggests, it is enough for a number of national party leaders, government leaders and party leaders in the European Parliament to take the initiative and change the process. Groups of national party leaders should declare their support for a specific candidate before the EP elections. Once one group proposes a candidate, others would be pressed to follow. The nominated candidates should then set out their policy agendas, allowing for genuine debate. The EP should invite each of the candidates to a live parliamentary debate. The winner's policy agenda should guide the allocation of portfolios and the multi-annual work plan.

"Even without treaty reforms, if rival candidates were presented before European Parliament elections and then played a role in the election campaigns, the initiative would be taken away from the

European Council, as after the elections the heads of government would be under a lot of pressure to formally nominate the candidate of the Euro-party that emerges as the largest group in the newly elected Parliament."

The media would have an incentive to cover the appointment. The public would be more capable of identifying with the Commission President and his or her agenda. The "losing side" in a contest for Commission President would have an incentive to put together an alternative policy package and find a good candidate for the next round.

"The Commission as a whole would still be a broad coalition, as the governments would still control the nomination of the other members of the Commission. The Commission would still be constrained by the checks and balances of the EU system, which mean that any elected Commission President would need a very broad coalition of commissioners, governments and MEPs to be able to pass legislation."

Assuming that European politics is modified along the lines suggested by Hix, enlargement might well end up as one of the divisive policy questions. Would this render the process more legitimate? Hix's colleague [Andrew Moravcsik](#) argues that issues that are decided at the EU level are too boring for most European citizens to bother about. Forcing public participation on such topics "would simply hand the European issue over to extremists."

- Simon Hix, *What's Wrong with the European Union & How to Fix It*, Polity Press, 2008. The basics of his argument were already presented in a shorter article published by Hix together with Andreas Follesdal: ["Why There is a Democratic Deficit in the EU: A Response to Majone and Moravcsik"](#), in *Journal of Common Market Studies* (JCMS), Vol. 44, Nr. 3, 2006, pp. 533-62.
- [Simon Hix's homepage](#) at the LSE, with access to electronic versions of most of his papers.
- [VoteWatch.eu](#), an excellent website tracking all voting in the EU parliament. It is a joint project with Sara Hagemann, Adul Noury, Doru Frantescu and Simon Hix.

4 March 2010

Andrew Moravcsik: EU enlargement as rational choice



"The European democratic deficit is a myth."

Andrew Moravcsik is professor of politics and international affairs and director of the European Union programme at Princeton University. He has extensively published in academia (for a list of his publications visit his [webpage](#), mainly on European integration, transatlantic relations, international organisations and multilateral institutions. He is also a contributing editor of Newsweek Magazine and has published over 100 commentaries, including in

the Financial Times, Prospect, and Foreign Affairs. He has also been a trade negotiator for the US government, a special assistant to the deputy prime minister of the Republic of Korea and an assistant in the press office of the European Commission.

A number of political thinkers, including [Larry Siedentop](#) and [Simon Hix](#), argue that the EU is haunted by a democratic deficit. To varying degrees, they portray the EU as an unaccountable technocratic superstate run by powerful officials that work together with the governments of the member states to circumvent national political processes.

Andrew Moravcsik begs to differ.

"Across nearly every measurable dimension, the EU is at least as democratic, and generally more so, than its member states."

In "The Myth of Europe's 'Democratic Deficit'", Moravcsik responds to what he sees as the six most frequent accusations levelled against the EU.

Myth 1: The EU is a powerful superstate encroaching on the power of nation-states to address core concerns of their citizens.

There is no superstate, counters Moravcsik. EU policy-making is limited to around 10-20 percent of national decision-making, "largely in matters of low salience to voters, while the national polities retain control over most other, generally more salient issues."

Myth 2: The EU is an arbitrary, runaway technocracy operated by officials subject to inadequate procedural controls, such as transparency, checks and balances and national oversight.

The EU's budget amounts to less than 2 percent of total European public spending, "over which officials enjoy little discretion, since broad spending priorities are laid down by interstate consensus" or the European Parliament. The EU's bureaucracy comprises not more than 20-30,000 officials, "an administration equalling that of a medium-sized European city".

"Normal 'everyday' legislation in Brussels must likewise surmount higher barriers than in any national system. Successively, it must secure: (a) consensual support from national leaders in the European Council to be placed on the agenda, (b) a formal proposal from a majority of the technocratic Commission, (c) a formal 2/3 majority (but in practice, a consensus) of weighted member state votes in the Council of Ministers, (d) a series of absolute majorities of the directly elected European parliament, and (e) transposition into national law by national bureaucrats or parliaments."

Also, with so many actors in the game, it's utterly impossible to legislate secretly, claims Moravcsik. Access to public information is so well developed in the Union that it could serve as a model for a number of member states.

Myth 3: EU decisions are made by unelected officials not subject to meaningful democratic accountability.

In reality, says Moravcsik, big changes (to treaties) require approval by all governments and are made subject to national ratification mechanisms. In the case of the Irish referendum on the Lisbon Treaty, "a negative margin of less than 10 percent among a population totalling only 1 percent of Europeans has stalled continent-wide reform indefinitely."

"In the everyday legislative process, democratic control is just as tight. Nearly every critical decision-maker – national leaders, national ministers, European parliamentarians, national parliamentarians – is directly elected."

Myth 4: Negative referendum results in places like France, the Netherlands and Ireland expressed the fundamental mistrust of European citizens towards the EU and its policies.

While it is tempting to read these referendum results “as a considered public vote of ‘no-confidence’ in the EU”, Moravcsik maintains that in reality “there is almost no connection between voting behaviour on referendums and public attitudes on Europe.”

“Consider, for example, the recent Irish referendum, where 42% of ‘no’ voters admitted to pollsters (thus surely an underestimate) that they opposed the treaty because they were ignorant of its content ... a substantial group admitted voting ‘no’ because they believed the constitution contained specific clauses that were not in it, e.g. the EU would be able to reinstate the death penalty, legalize abortion, conscript Irish into a European army, impose taxes by majority vote ... – all matters entirely outside Brussels’ legal competence.”

Moreover, in no single member state can one find a significant part of the electorate favouring withdrawal from the EU or its major policies.

Myth 5: European institutions are disliked or mistrusted by publics because they do not encourage public participation.

While it is true that only about half of Europeans have a positive image of the EU, according to a 2007 Eurobarometer poll only 14% have a negative image (34% neutral). In fact, as Moravcsik points out, the EU's popularity compares favourably with that of national institutions.

“The European Parliament is significantly more trusted than national parliaments, the EU significantly more than national governments, and the European Court of Justice slightly more than national legal systems.”

There is no correlation between political participation and trust. In fact, decidedly non-participatory institutions like courts, central banks, the army and the police enjoy more trust than elected bodies.

Myth 6: Voters fail to participate actively and intelligently in European politics because existing EU institutions disillusion or disempower them.

Moravcsik turns the argument around and maintains that apathy is not the result of unresponsive EU institutions, but of citizens' attitudes toward European issues, which most of them find boring.

“There is good reason to believe that European citizens refuse to participate meaningfully – regardless of the institutional forum – because the issues they care about most are not handled by the EU. They are rational, choosing to allocate their time and energy to other matters ... Future efforts toward forcing participation in the

context of widespread popular apathy would simply hand the European issue over to extremists."

In sum, argues Moravcsik, "Europe is no worse off, overall, than its constituent member states. Reform to increase direct political participation, moreover, would almost likely undermine public legitimacy, popularity and trust without generating greater public accountability."

Now, what about EU enlargement? Is it also one of the "non-salient issues" that people do not care about?

Moravcsik argues that the fifth enlargement was based on rational choice. In his prominent study "The Choice for Europe", Moravcsik wrote that "European integration can best be explained as a series of rational choices made by national leaders". In an article written together with [Milada Vachudova](#), Moravcsik maintains that "European governments, West and East, calculated the expected economic and geopolitical consequences of enlargement for their domestic societies and acted accordingly." This was hardly a new phenomenon.

"Each previous round of EU enlargement has gone through a parallel and predictable negotiation process ... In each and every round, applicant countries have consistently found themselves in a weak negotiating position vis-à-vis their EU partners, and accordingly have conceded much in exchange for membership."

Moravcsik and Vachudova explain this by reference to basic bargaining theory. "Those countries that gain the most through more intense interstate cooperation ... have the most intense preferences for agreement and thus are willing to compromise the most on the margin to further it." Called "asymmetrical interdependence", a concept of international relations theory coined by [Nye](#) and Keohane, this phenomenon could already be observed during the negotiations for the Treaty of Rome.

"The country whose foreign minister had initially proposed the customs union and which benefited the most per capita from its realization – namely the Netherlands – was forced to make the greatest concessions on the margin to achieve agreement. The result was that the treaty was viciously criticized by Dutch politicians and the public – more so, perhaps, than in any other of the six original member states, even though (or precisely because) non-ratification by the Netherlands was never a realistic option. The obverse case in the 1950s was that of France, which achieved almost all of its negotiating goals in large part because, as a large and macro-economically uncompetitive country, French non-ratification was a realistic possibility up until the final moment."

The same pattern of bargaining, say the authors, has characterised all type of EU negotiations – accession talks included – ever since.

“In each case, bargaining demands by applicant countries for recognition of their particular circumstances were stripped away one by one until a deal was struck that disproportionately reflected the priorities of existing member states. Thus Britain in 1973, though relatively poor, ended up a large net contributor to the EU budget. Ireland, Denmark, Greece and Spain were subsequently forced to accept agricultural arrangements not particularly well suited to their particular comparative advantages.”

The pattern is the same with regard to the Eastern enlargement, Moravcsik and Vachudova maintain. Though both old member states and applicants benefit, the applicants benefit more, which puts them in a disadvantageous bargaining position. In the pre-accession process, “applicants have had to satisfy the Copenhagen criteria and adopt the *acquis* in its entirety to qualify for membership ... the requirements are massive, non-negotiable, uniformly applied and (usually) closely enforced.”

But this has also been to the advantage of the applicants.

*“For the construction of a well-functioning market economy and a strong, democratic state – long-term goals that are hardly in question – the requirements for EU membership have been, on balance, positive. They have promoted valuable reforms: creating an independent civil service, overhauling the judiciary, improving oversight of financial markets, and blocking bailouts of uncompetitive but influential sectors. To be sure, applicants have had to divert their meagre public resources from health and education to implementing an *acquis* devoted primarily to the regulation of economic production. Still, locking the applicants into the EU’s legal and regulatory frameworks promises to limit corruption, improve administrative capacity, attract foreign direct investment and facilitate full insertion into the EU and global economy – thereby bringing substantial returns to the national budget over the long term.”*

- Andrew Moravcsik, [“The Myth of Europe’s Democratic Deficit”](#), in: *Intereconomics – Journal of European Public Policy*, November/December 2008, pp. 331-340.
- Andrew Moravcsik and Milada Anna Vachudova, “Preferences, power and equilibrium. The causes and consequences of EU enlargement” in: Frank Schimmelfennig and Ulrich Sedelmeier (eds), *The Politics of European Union Enlargement. Theoretical Approaches*, Routledge, 2005, pp. 198-212.

- Andrew Moravcsik, *The Choice for Europe: Social Purpose and State Power from Messina to Maastricht*, Cornell Studies in Political Economy, Cornell University Press, 1998.
- [Andrew Moravcsik's homepage](#).

15 March 2010

Poul Skytte Christoffersen: The regatta model

Poul Skytte Christoffersen is a Danish diplomat with a career-long experience in the EU corridors of Brussels. From 1977-1980 he was first secretary of the Danish Permanent Representation to the EC.



For the next 14 years, he worked as head of cabinet of the Secretary General of the Council of the European Union (1980-1994). From 1995 to 2003 he served as Danish Ambassador to the EC, and in this capacity was president of the Permanent Representatives Committee and EU Chief negotiator at the level of officials in the final phase of enlargement negotiations in 2002. He has also taught at Copenhagen University and the Copenhagen Business School. Since early 2006 Christoffersen is head of cabinet of EU Commissioner for Agriculture Mariann Fischer Boel.

Drawing on his extensive insider knowledge of the European administration in Brussels and his experience of the accession negotiation process, Christoffersen provides a unique first-hand account of what he calls the "saga of the latest enlargement" from the early 1990s to the conclusion of enlargement negotiations in Copenhagen in December 2002. It appears in the form of four chapters (75 pages) of a remarkable book, *The Accession Story. The EU from Fifteen to Twenty-Five Countries*, edited by George Vassiliou (The book also includes accounts of the chief negotiators of all 10 countries that acceded in 2004).

What makes Christoffersen's texts special is a unique combination of detailed descriptions of *technical* structures and processes with first-hand insights into *political* processes and negotiations between the European Commission, the respective presidencies, member states and applicant countries. While he spends more time describing the later phases of the accession process, he covers the whole period from the early 1990s to 2002 and thus also provides a chronicle of the process as such.

Christoffersen's text serves as an important reminder – to those who complain about enlargement fatigue – that the enlargement agenda has always been subject to internal EU dynamics, ups-and-downs, and difficult moments.

He recalls, for example, that after the Danes voted against the Maastricht Treaty in a referendum on 2 June 1992, "for a moment the uncertainty of the fate of the Maastricht Treaty threatened to prolong the period of introspective, and to block progress towards enlargement." It was overcome only in May 1993, a month before the Copenhagen European Council, when a majority of Danes voted in favour of the Maastricht Treaty in a second referendum. Subsequently, negotiations with the EFTA countries, which had been put on hold, could be resumed, and a more open mindset with regard to further rounds of enlargement emerged.

Christoffersen also describes the differences in opinion ahead of the crucial Luxembourg European Council in December 1997. The Commission, backed by most member states, had proposed to start negotiations with six countries (Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia, and Cyprus). But other member states, led by Sweden, Denmark and the UK, were reluctant to separate the countries into two groups.

"Leaving somebody behind – awaiting another 'wave' in an uncertain future – could take away the pressure for reform and modernisation in the countries left on the shore. Denmark and Sweden proposed the regatta model, where all the candidates were allowed to 'set sail' and participate in the enlargement negotiations. Each country's efforts would then determine when they were able to conclude the negotiations."

Eventually, at the Luxembourg European Council the "wave approach" carried the day. But several elements of the "regatta model" were introduced as well.

"The conclusions underlined that the accession process, involving the ten Central and East European applicant states and Cyprus, would be comprehensive and inclusive. All these states were destined to join the Union on the basis of the same criteria and would participate in the accession process on an equal footing. The European Council sought in this way to eliminate fears among the countries left behind that they might be subjected to stricter conditions when a judgement would be made in the future on the start of negotiations."

Practically, this meant that all applicant countries would participate in the opening meeting of the enlargement negotiation process – and that all would be offered accession partnerships, technical assistance and financial support through the PHARE programme. "A special 'catch-up' facility was foreseen for those initially left behind." Regular reports would be prepared

for all applicant countries on an annual basis, and the five remaining countries would go through the analytical examination (called “screening”) of the EU acquis and local legislation, along with those applicant countries which were selected to start negotiations.

Christoffersen’s chapter on “Organisation of the Process and Beginning of the Negotiations”, contrasting formal EU structures with actual practice, can be considered the best available summary of the institutional structure, the mechanisms of the accession negotiations and the negotiation framework.

An interesting example of the difference between formal structure and actual practice are the possibilities of EU members to slow down the negotiation process. Before negotiation chapters could be opened with applicant countries, the EU member states had to agree on a common position.

“A Member State that desires to slow down the accession process can in theory draw out the technical examination. Despite the varying political sensitivities which existed in the Member States throughout the whole process of the fifth enlargement, there were however very few examples of such filibustering tactics. One of the characteristics of the Union machinery is that once it gets into motion it is in practice difficult to stop, and the political costs involved in working against the common objectives are great.”

At the end of 2000, the Commission drew up a road map, which was subsequently endorsed by the member states at the Nice European Council in December 2000. While receiving little public attention at the time, the road map proved crucial in sustaining momentum during the negotiations. It outlined a clear sequence for tackling outstanding issues during 2001 and 2002, also putting pressure on the EU to define common positions.

“The Commission’s approach [the road map] had a significant impact on the negotiations for the following two years. The tasks of each of the presidencies that would follow were spelled out, and the candidates received a welcome planning instrument. Any Member State that might be reluctant to go ahead on a specific chapter was placed in a difficult situation. If complete EU common positions were not ready by the specified timetable, the fault for the lack of progress would fall on the EU – and in particular on any country which blocked internal EU agreement.”

Christoffersen’s chapter on the Danish presidency (“The Danish Presidency: Conclusion of the Negotiations”) provides a detailed account of how the numerous remaining issues – from Kaliningrad and land purchase rights for EU citizens in the acceding countries to direct farm

payments and the overall financial package – were overcome in the second half of 2002, during the last 6 months of negotiations. It's a vivid description of a difficult balancing act involving the Commission, the Presidency, the member states and the accession countries. Once all open issues were on the table,

"the presidency and the Commission then started the meticulous exercise of examining each specific demand, to see what could be done. For the series of bilateral meetings that followed, the EU negotiation team had in its pocket suggestions for solutions to some of the minor problems that had been raised, as well as concessions on some of the agricultural quota issues. These were suggestions put forward on the presidency's own responsibility. The Member States were being kept informed about the development in the negotiations, but the presidency deliberately did not seek a negotiation mandate. It was firmly convinced that the nature of the final stage of the negotiations, as well as the short time available, did not permit the application of normal negotiation procedures."

At the European Council summit many issues, in particular finances, remained unresolved. Protracted negotiations proved necessary before the candidate countries' representatives could enter the room late in the evening of the last day for the formal approval of the negotiation results.

"The Danish Queen had invited members of the European Council to dinner in the evening to celebrate the event, but the meeting had lasted too long, and the dinner had to be cancelled. In the end it was the Copenhagen riot police in full battledress, after having been engaged in controlling the demonstrations in Copenhagen (in the end very peaceful) during the day, that were invited to dinner in the royal apartments."

- Poul Skytte Christoffersen, chapters "The Preparation of the Fifth Enlargement", "Organisation of the Process and Beginning of the Negotiations", "From Helsinki to Seville, July 1999 – June 2002" and "The Danish Presidency: Conclusion of the Negotiations", in George Vassiliou (ed.), *The Accession Story. The EU from Fifteen to Twenty-Five Countries*, Oxford Univ. Press, 2007, pp. 24-99.

25 February 2009

Peter Ludlow: The Making of the New Europe

"The fifth enlargement was an impressive demonstration of how effective the European Union's strange, hybrid, European Council-centred system can be."

Peter Ludlow is a historian and the prototype of a Brussels insider. Educated at Oxford, Cambridge and Göttingen, he taught history at the University of London and at the European University Institute in Florence. In 1981, after 15 years in academia, he became the founding director of the [Centre for European Policy Studies](#) (CEPS) in Brussels. Though he retired from CEPS in 2001, Ludlow remains a close observer of the EU policy process. His books and [briefing notes](#) on every European Council since 1999 make for some of the most insightful reading on the practice of EU policy making.



One of Peter Ludlow's most thorough pieces of work is *The Making of the New Europe*, an analytical description of the European Councils in Brussels and Copenhagen in the second half of 2002. Across more than 350 pages Ludlow tells a story of complex negotiations, clashes of interest, key decisions and compromises that led to what he calls "a peaceful revolution".

The Brussels and Copenhagen summits determined that ten comparatively poor and young democracies would be admitted as EU members in May 2004. The EU heads of state also set the goal for Bulgaria and Romania to accede by 2007. They also promised to start negotiations with Turkey (pending a positive assessment of Ankara's progress in 2004), acknowledged the membership aspirations of the Western Balkan countries, secured an agreement with Russia over Kaliningrad, and removed the final obstacles to an agreement between the EU and NATO.

"Separately each development is important. Taken together, they constitute an event of global significance. Europe, for so long the scene of divisions and conflict, has voluntarily and peacefully created structures in which Europeans of the most varied backgrounds, representing virtually every country of a highly populated continent, can live together in peace and forge a common destiny."

Ludlow is well aware of the scope of the accession process. "EU membership requires a controlled revolution in politics, government, the economy and society. Changes of this order need time to effect and time to monitor." His book, though, focuses on the "climax" of this process. It is a story of initiative, leadership, and the European way of making big decisions.

"The fifth enlargement was an impressive demonstration of how effective the European Union's strange, hybrid, European Council-centred system can be."

Ludlow's book fills the often seemingly dull and protracted policy process with actors, life and drama. Its strength lies in Ludlow's insightful accounts of the manifold policy dynamics that led to the successful conclusion of the Copenhagen Council.

EU enlargement has always been characterised by reluctance on the part of the old member states. Ludlow reminds us that Malta and Cyprus had to wait three years for an *avis* on their membership applications. The even tried to keep the rich EFTA countries from applying for full membership.

"The great majority of those whom EC leaders hoped to buy off with less than full membership did not find the alternatives that they were offered sufficiently attractive ... Austria, Finland, Norway and Sweden, while going through the motions of EEA negotiations, applied for membership all the same."

There was never much enthusiasm for the fifth enlargement either. In 2002, only one out of two EU citizens supported enlargement; three in ten were against. Many citizens of the old member states, Ludlow points out, were deeply ignorant about enlargement. A special poll (Eurobarometer 57) conducted in 2002 delivered stunning results:

"A staggering 74% of those polled in the UK could not name a single candidate country correctly, while 51% admitted that they had not been aware of the enlargement of the EU before the interview with the pollster. It is hard to believe that these low levels of knowledge were a factor explaining the low level of support for enlargement in the UK. Ignorance could, however, work the other way. Even though 74% of the Portuguese who were polled failed, like their counterparts in Britain, to name a single candidate, 57% thought that enlargement was a good thing. In Spain too, a lot of people appeared to like what they did not know: 64% were in favour of enlargement, but 69% did not know any of the countries involved. Ignorance could in other words be bliss."

Many governments were just as unenthusiastic about enlargement, particularly with regard to its price tag. Ludlow recounts in detail the budget negotiations and the efforts by the Danish EU Presidency to reconcile the member states to the expectations of the applicant countries. The sums involved, close to 41 billion Euros for the years 2004-2006, sound huge. Yet compared to the size and economic power of the Union, Ludlow points out, the package looks much less generous:

"As a percentage of EU GDP, the Commission reckoned that the net bill was less than 0.05%. Given the huge economic as well as political benefits that can be expected to flow from enlargement, this is to put it mildly a modest outlay."

The financial cost of enlargement, however, remained one of the most contested issues until the very end of the negotiations. Masterminding a compromise and closing the deal required patience and skills. Both the Commission and a number of EU Presidencies, particularly the Danish one, played a key role.

"The final stages of the enlargement story, and more particularly the last six months of 2002, provided an impressive example of just how well the EU system can work, if those in charge know what they want to do."

Bringing the positions of 15 member states and 10 applicant countries into line was a difficult undertaking, particularly since every member state had veto power over any agreement.

"The most important consideration was .. that the obligations set out in successive treaties simply could not be ignored. Article O of the Treaty of Maastricht adapted, but safeguarded the essentials of the message contained in article 237 of the Treaty of Rome and article 205 of the Treaty of Paris. 'Any European state may apply to become a Member of the Union' ... EU 12 could not shut the door indefinitely in the face of a growing number of actual and potential candidates without violating its own birthright. An 'organised and vital Europe', of which the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe were not full members, would be a contradiction in terms. No government or institution wanted in the end to go down in history as having blocked the reunification of Europe."

Looking back, Ludlow asserts that "the closer in fact that one looks at the fifth enlargement, the more obvious it becomes that the EU had no alternative if it was to maintain any semblance of consistency with its founding treaties and its self-proclaimed ambitions."

A first crucial step towards a more proactive line on enlargement came with the appointment of the Prodi Commission in 1999. The Commission's

attitude changed quickly from a “somewhat lukewarm supporter of the candidate countries” to one of “their most vigorous champions”. Ludlow credits Prodi not only for advocating an EU membership perspective for the Western Balkans, but also for changing the whole enlargement dynamic, most notably through the appointment of Günter Verheugen to the newly created post of enlargement commissioner and the establishment of a new enlargement directorate general led by Eneko Landaburu.

In autumn 1999, the new Commission recommended that the EU open accession negotiations with all applicants that met the Copenhagen political criteria. The heads of state did just that at the Helsinki European Council. In 2000 the Commission developed a roadmap setting out priorities for negotiations until mid-2002.

At least as important was the role of the Danish presidency from July to December 2002 (as already in 1993 when for the first time a serious membership perspective was opened for the Central and East European countries). Ludlow calls it “arguably one of the most effective EU presidencies ever.”

The Danes had a very tight timeline and needed to bring about agreement on a huge number of contested issues, from the financial package for enlargement to demands for CAP reform to a solution to the Kaliningrad issue. (After the Baltic states’ accession to the EU, Kaliningrad would turn into a Russian exclave in the EU.)

In the person of [Poul Christoffersen](#), the Danish Presidency had an extraordinary permanent representative in Brussels. Together with Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen and Enlargement Commissioner Günter Verheugen, Christoffersen was to play an extraordinary role in the whole process. After serving in the Danish Permanent Representation in the 1970s, Christoffersen had spent 14 years as chief of cabinet of the Secretary General of the Council, attending every European Council from 1981-94. He was then appointed as the Danish Permanent Representative. “With the exception of six months at the end of 1994 when – not unnaturally – the Danish government required him to catch up on contemporary Denmark, Christoffersen had resided in Brussels for a quarter of a century,” writes Ludlow.

Under the Danish Presidency the new rules of procedure for the Council, adopted under the Nice Treaty, were to be applied for the first time. The Danes interpreted the rather unexciting amendments very imaginatively and to maximum effect. This became apparent when they presented the annotated agenda for the Brussels European Council.

“The second version of the annotated agenda ... did not simply explain what the heads of state and government would or should

talk about, it anticipated what they would decide. Acting entirely on their own initiative, the Danish Presidency decided in other words that the final version of the annotated agenda would be to all intents and purposes the draft conclusions. They also decided, once again unilaterally, to put the annotated agenda on the Presidency website. Preparations for the European Council had hitherto been secretive."

After the Brussels European Council, hardly two months remained before the Copenhagen summit. Besides discussions with the candidates, the main focus lay on the EU's own position.

"In normal circumstances, this would have involved extensive negotiations within the EU. Poul Christoffersen, the Danish permanent representative believed, however, that an intra-EU negotiation would endanger the Presidency's timetable. He therefore decided, with his prime minister's agreement, to dispense with it. This was in itself noteworthy. What made the situation still more remarkable, however, was that the Presidency and the Commission proceeded to prepare a 'final offer' [to the candidate countries] that went well beyond the 'absolute limits' laid down [by the member states] at the Brussels Council."

Ludlow maintains that Christoffersen would have lost the battle straight away had he decided to negotiate with Coreper, the committee of permanent representatives, a key body in the EU decision-making process. Instead of doing so, Christoffersen made a bold, but simple argument:

"As he observed in his closing remarks at the evening session [of a Coreper meeting], he was aware that his proposals were not to everybody's liking. There would, however, be ample opportunity for governments that continued to harbour reservations to make their views known to the Danish prime minister, who was about to set off on his pre-Copenhagen tour des capitals. In the meantime, he assumed that nobody in the room wanted to take responsibility for sabotaging the fifth enlargement. He therefore proposed to use the package that he had presented as the basis for further rounds of negotiations with the candidates. Coreper did not say yes. Neither, however, did it say no."

There were many disagreements to come, as well as numerous side issues that poisoned the debate. The going got particularly tough during the last two weeks before the Copenhagen summit in December 2002. Yet it was in Copenhagen that the EU heads of state announced the accession of ten new members on 1 May 2004 – a date set to become one of the milestones in the history of European integration.

“However easy it is to find faults, the process that came to a climax in the second half of 2002 remains one of the most impressive episodes in recent European history.”

- Peter Ludlow, *The Making of the New Europe. The European Councils in Brussels and Copenhagen 2002*, EuroComment, 2004.
- [Eurocomment](#) website, with more information about Peter Ludlow's briefing notes on European Council meetings and other publications on European policy making.

26 April 2010