

THE ARRIVAL OF ENLARGEMENT STUDIES: PATTERNS AND PROBLEMS

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Keynote Address

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(1) INTRODUCTION

European Union enlargement has in the past several years really arrived as an area of academic research and as an autonomous field within European integration studies. Previously, successive enlargements had been regarded as somewhat separate developments, behind which lay the misleading assumption that integration effects only really occurred once candidate countries became new member states of the EU and its predecessor organisations the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Community (EC).

This limited sense of enlargement's importance for integration helped to account for the fact that while valuable research was published on individual enlargements – with an emphasis on descriptive and policy-oriented work¹ – there was no sustained interest in this, an area with important consequences for European integration as a whole.² This has now begun to happen, as evident in attempts at comparative theorising about enlargement politics; and there is clearly a strong element of academic interest following political tendencies in the EU itself. The reasons for this arrival of enlargement studies are several:

- The size of the 2004 enlargement, obviously, with ten compared with previously three or less entrants, combined with two more in 2007;
- A pronounced sense of historic occasion marked by the reuniting of Europe East and West, as evident in the celebrations in May 2004;
- The different kinds of candidate countries, compared with previous ones, for they had undergone not just non-democratic rule (as had the South European entrants of the 1980s), but also a rather pervasive form of totalitarianism, against a background of somewhat different political traditions compared with those of Western Europe;
- A more elaborate accession process in terms of conditionality requirements and pre-entry policy adaptation than was the case in 1973, 1981, 1986 and 1995; hence, there was a greater interest in and challenge from the accession process itself;

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¹ F. Schimmelfennig and U. Sedelmeier, "Theorizing EU enlargement: research focus, hypotheses and the state of research", *Journal of European Public Policy*, 9/4, p. 501.

² *Ibid.*, p. 501: "EU enlargement has far-reaching implications not only for the political shape of Europe but also for the institutional set-up and the major policies of the Community".

- An unprecedented concern within the EU about the effects of enlargement on the EU itself, on its functioning as a decision-making system and on its policies as well as its socio-economic cohesion.

One might add that the greater politicisation of EU affairs that had been developing for a decade and more added to the much increased salience of EU enlargement since the end of the Cold War, whereas before it had been an important, albeit sporadic, occurrence during the history of integration.³

As one general study of EU enlargement, published in 2004, announced in its preface: "Enlargement is the most important issue facing the European Union since at least the mid-1990s".⁴ Since 2004, there has been a further enlargement to include two countries from the Eastern Balkans in 2007; and there is the growing prospect of yet more EU entrants at different points of time from the Western Balkans, beginning with Croatia in a few years followed through the next decade by a possible extension of membership to virtually the whole of South-East Europe including maybe even Turkey. In the words of one survey of trends in enlargement studies, this makes enlargement "a permanent and continuous item on the EU's agenda"⁵ – which it already has been since the early 1990s with both the enlargement to three EFTA countries (that came to fruition in 1995) and the early moves towards Eastern enlargement.

At this point, it is appropriate to ask what is basically understood by "EU enlargement". This is necessary now that we have the arrival of enlargement studies as an important area in its own right. "Enlargement" is a generic term used broadly to refer to the overall process whereby interested countries and eventually prospective member states start the formal process of moving towards negotiations and membership and end this process with their final adaptation to integration from inside the EU. It should include at one end the early stage of association insofar as that is designed as a preliminary to actual membership and as a preparatory stage before negotiations. However, it is worth noting that enlargement remains surprisingly undefined in textbooks on European integration; and that it has been subject to some different understandings over time. It has even on occasions – notably in the press – been used to refer rather narrowly to the actual event of EU entry which, admittedly, is the most dramatic point in the enlargement process after the opening of membership negotiations

³ *ibid.*, p. 500.

⁴ N. Nugent (ed.), *European Union Enlargement* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004) p. ix.

⁵ Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, *op. cit.*, p. 500.

This definition therefore takes the discussion of enlargement into the first years of membership at least in completing the story of enlargement.⁶ There is now a growing interest in the follow-up to the accessions that ended in 2004 and 2007, with some early academic work on post-accession compliance over conditionality,⁷ but there is also a new concern as in the informed press about the consequences for the EU of admitting so many post-Communist countries. The accession of both Romania and Bulgaria in January 2007 has promoted this concern and raised doubts about their state of preparedness especially in the light of Romania's persistent reputation for being an integration laggard.⁸ Very recently, *The Economist* published one of its special reports on EU enlargement, titled "In the Nick of Time", in which it dwelt on the problems since accession in 2004 and 2007, namely of an economic kind coming from the relative poverty of the new member states from Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), signs of backtracking on political reforms, the persistent impact of historical legacies from the Communist past and evident strains on the rule of law.⁹

This keynote address seeks to explore the arrival of enlargement studies by looking firstly as background at the way enlargement was treated previously in European integration studies; secondly, at trends in work on Eastern enlargement over the past decade; and thirdly, at the significance of new research in this same recent period on the theme of Europeanisation as well as early efforts to construct theoretical approaches to EU enlargement. Conclusions will then be drawn about the future of enlargement studies; and some suggestions will be made about a research agenda.

(2) THE EARLY TREATMENT OF E.U. ENLARGEMENT

There now follows a brief and hardly exhaustive overview of trends in literature on EU enlargement before the shift in the mid-1990s towards

⁶ Cf. Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, *op.cit.*, p. 503: "Enlargement is best conceptualised as a gradual process that begins before, and continues after, the admission of new members to the organisation".

⁷ See U. Sedelmeier, "Pre-accession conditionality and post-accession compliance in the new member states: a research note", chapter 8 in W. Sadurski, J. Ziller and K. Zurek (eds), *Apres Enlargement: Legal and Political Responses in Central and Eastern Europe* (Florence: European University Institute, 2006), pp. 145-60; G. Pridham, "The EU's political conditionality and post-accession tendencies: comparisons from Slovakia and Latvia", *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 46/2, March 2008, pp. 365-87; and G. Pridham, "Status quo bias or institutionalisation for reversibility?: the EU's political conditionality, post-accession tendencies and democratic consolidation in Slovakia", *Europe-Asia Studies*, 60/3, May 2008, pp. 423-54.

⁸ G. Pridham, "The effects of the European Union's democratic conditionality: the case of Romania during accession", *The Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, 23/2, June 2007, pp. 241-42.

⁹ *The Economist*, 31 May 2008.

the prospect of Eastern enlargement. It is confined to published work in the English language for reasons of time and space.¹⁰ Nevertheless, since English is now the pre-eminent language of political science and European integration studies, work published in that language must represent a reasonable cross-section of work on enlargement both before, and especially during, the EU's opening to CEE as a result of which English has become the dominant working language in EU affairs except around Brussels. Publications are quoted strictly with reference to their coverage of EU enlargement or not as the case may be; but this is not intended to reflect negatively on their overall value.

A study of general texts on European integration reveals two results: that histories have been more inclined to give attention to enlargement than studies of the EU as a system and policy-process; and, that the latter began to change in this respect once Eastern enlargement moved ahead. With the histories, the explanation must be that looking back highlights enlargement events as having a significance for how integration subsequently developed and as representing one dimension of major integration initiatives over the past four decades.¹¹ For instance, Urwin's history of European integration (1991) included one chapter on the question of enlargement (although rather UK-focussed) and a later chapter sub-section on Southern enlargement;¹² while Blair's similar history of the EU since 1945 (2005) has chapter sub-sections on the enlarged EC as of the 1970s and on the Northern enlargement of 1995 with a further one on the Fifth Enlargement (to CEE) linked to the issue of constitutional reform.¹³ Apart from these short historical surveys, there have been some national case studies of accession of a detailed and descriptive kind that provide still a historical source reference, often about the country of the author in question.¹⁴

¹⁰ This is by no means to undervalue publications on EU enlargement in other languages. For instance, there is an interesting literature on Southern enlargement in German. And, not surprisingly, there has, in line with the reasons mentioned above in the introduction, been close attention paid to enlargement matters over CEE in other European languages of interest to the author's research on political conditionality, e.g. L. Mattina, *La Sfida dell'Allargamento: L'Unione Europea e la Democratizzazione dell'Europa Centro-Orientale* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2004).

¹¹ For example, D. Dinan, *Ever Closer Union: an Introduction to European Integration* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2nd. Edition 1999) has a Part I on integration history where every chapter save one has a section on one of the successive enlargements up to and including that of 1995.

¹² D.W. Urwin, *The Community of Europe: a History of European Integration since 1945* (London: Longman, 1991).

¹³ A. Blair, *The European Union since 1945* (Harlow: Pearson, 2005).

¹⁴ For example, on the UK's first failed and second successful attempt at negotiating membership, see respectively M. Camps, *Britain and the European Community, 1955-1963* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964); and U. Kitzinger, *Diplomacy and Persuasion: how Britain joined the Common Market* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1973). Also see F. Roy Willis, *France, Germany and the New Europe, 1945-1967*

With general studies on the EU as a policy process, the implicit view has prevailed that, not yet being member states, those countries aiming to join or even busy negotiating membership were not therefore part of that system. This was true in the sense they were not fully accredited with the right to co-decide EU policy but that was to ignore the integration effects, increasing and often extensive, that impacted on candidate countries and also countries that had not yet been accorded that official status. Sometimes, enlargement was almost completely ignored as in readers on European integration (which by the nature of the exercise were admittedly highly selective);¹⁵ but that was also true of texts on EU policies and its decision-making process.¹⁶ This tendency has persisted well into the Eastern enlargement period in some cases where enlargement barely gained recognition with respect to policies.¹⁷ Nevertheless, some general studies of integration have begun to accord enlargement the attention it deserves such as Beach's focus on the EU in policy action where the Fifth Enlargement is granted a full chapter status among other examples of negotiations on the grounds "it was the most complex external negotiation ever undertaken by the EU".¹⁸ Significantly, theoretical texts on European integration have continued to exclude enlargement from their consideration.¹⁹

There are two overview comments on this literature just mentioned. Firstly, it represents a top-down and rather "inside" approach to integration studies with a distinct input bias (as when concentrating on the role of the different EU institutions, for instance); and secondly, it is reflective of this tendency that any increase in attention to

(London: Oxford University Press, 1965) on these countries' domestic processes in joining the first integration communities, although that strictly speaking did not involve enlargement.

¹⁵ For example, B. Nelsen and A. Stubb (eds.), *The European Union: Readings on the Theory and Practice of European Integration* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1994); D. de Giustino, *A Reader in European Integration* (London: Longman, 1996). The latter did include among its selected documents de Gaulle's statement of January 1963 rejecting British membership of the then EEC.

¹⁶ S. George, *Politics and Policy in the European Community* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991) made no mention at all of enlargement matters; while J. McCormick, *Understanding the European Union: a Concise Introduction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1999) has a sub-section in one chapter on deepening and widening (i.e. not just enlargement) during 1958-86 with a few pages later on devoted to relations with CEE under the heading of the EU and the world.

¹⁷ For example, S. Hix, *The Political System of the European Union* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2nd. Edition 2005).

¹⁸ D. Beach, *The Dynamics of European Integration: Why and When EU Institutions Matter* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 244.

¹⁹ For example, D. Chrysochoou, M. Tsinisizelis, S. Stavridis and K. Ifantis, *Theory and Reform in the European Union* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999) includes only a few pages on EU decision-making and enlargement linked to the question of institutional reform.

enlargement in studies of the EU system has been related to the regular issue of EU institutional reform which has been prominent over the past two decades, i.e. the same period in which enlargement has become a virtually continuous process in integration affairs. It is precisely this question relating to deepening of the EU compared with its widening which has dominated perspectives of enlargement in integration studies over time.

That debate has revolved around the question of whether these two major developments with their own different dynamics are broadly compatible or conflictual. On this there is no clear agreement. On the one hand, there is regular evidence with successive enlargements of deepening initiatives being taken and accepted or at least not being prevented (e.g. over regional policy following Greece's accession; the Maastricht Treaty preceding the EFTA enlargement; and more recently, the Amsterdam, Nice and – eventually – Lisbon Treaties linked to Eastern enlargement). The strongest integrationist member states have in pushing forward these advances been concerned to limit the threat from enlargement to EU decision-making and its internal cohesion and policy capacity²⁰ – which is precisely the main argument of pessimists about the effects of enlargement – while the less integrationist member states (the UK is invariably mentioned in this context) seek to promote widening, it is said, in order to weaken deepening. Thus, political or national standpoints have coloured perceptions of the widening/deepening relationship; while the academic literature has tended to favour the optimistic argument and to see the idea of “deepening versus widening” as posing “a false dichotomy”.²¹

Whatever the argument adopted, it is clear from this treatment of enlargement that it is predominantly focussed on the EU and the effects of admitting new members on its internal functioning. This again emphasises that the interest has not specially been in enlargement as such. Nevertheless, this did not prevent interesting work appearing on individual enlargements or on country cases within those enlargements; indeed, there is an established pattern of informative empirical studies of individual member states and European integration.²² Examples have included the three Southern European countries which joined the EU, then the EC, in the 1980s, with work focussing on the motives for seeking membership and the domestic debate during accession and to some extent on the effects of enlargement – which has so far been a major area of neglect in the case of Eastern enlargement. Interest at the time in Southern enlargement was enhanced by two parallel developments: the transitions to democracy after right-wing

²⁰ Nugent, *European Union Enlargement*, p. 64.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

²² This was taken to a new level with the series of country monographs of “EC Membership Evaluated”, published by Frances Pinter in the early 1990s.

authoritarianism in all three cases; and the appearance at the same time of the phenomenon of Euro-Communism which – apart from the prominent case of Italy – affected Spain and to a lesser extent Portugal and Greece. With both of these developments, academic interest tended to be located outside mainstream European integration studies.

The domestic aspect of Southern enlargement was particularly relevant as there was much less of an internal political consensus over prospective accession than was the case later with CEE.²³ This had problematic consequences with Greek membership because PASOK's intense populist reservations about integration only gradually diminished during its period of national office which commenced shortly after Greece joined in 1981. European integration politics interacted with the complicated change whereby PASOK eventually adopted a modernisation strategy, in the meantime causing persistent friction with Brussels.²⁴ Moreover, problems of managerial efficiency in the Greek state machine and the belated efforts at economic modernisation meant that Greece proved a difficult new member state for quite an extended period.²⁵ But then the decision to admit Greece was taken against the advice of the European Commission in its *avis* of 1976 (which argued on socio-economic grounds that Greece was unprepared for membership) and for high-political reasons linked to the compelling argument promoted effectively by Karamanlis, the Greek Prime Minister, that accession would secure democratisation in his country. As Roy Jenkins, then Commission President, commented in his diary in 1978, Greece was "in my view the least qualified for membership, but it was too late for that view greatly to signify, particularly as it was balanced by the high regard which I developed for Konstantinos Karamanlis, then Greek Prime Minister".²⁶ Here was a clear example of "politics above all" in enlargement matters.

In retrospect, Greece was admitted too soon and too easily when compared with the requirements imposed on the CEE candidate countries from the mid-1990s in terms of both conditionality and *acquis communautaire*. Greece would have failed some of the political conditions at least those concerning fighting corruption and respect for ethnic minorities; while the condition of the country's public administration would have been the occasion for severe reprimands from Brussels. In fact, the case of Greece's accession reappeared as

²³ See L. Tsoukalis, *The European Community and its Mediterranean Enlargement* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981).

²⁴ See G. Moschonas, "The path of modernisation: PASOK and European integration", *Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans*, 3/1, May 2001, pp. 11-24.

²⁵ D. Ethier, *Economic Adjustment in New Democracies: Lessons from Southern Europe* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), chapter 4.

²⁶ R. Jenkins, *European Diary, 1977-81* (London: Collins, 1989), pp. 199-200.

an issue in the context of Eastern enlargement as a negative model over implementation, for it was considered that any repetition of that experience, where Greece did adjust to integration but took decades to do so, would be disastrous in the case of a large group of post-Communist countries.²⁷ This concern of Brussels was certainly recognised and accepted by post-Communist applicant countries, such as Romania which was then seen as the most likely approximation to the Greek case, although some influential people in Bucharest argued against too strict a comparison.²⁸ Nevertheless, others were more pessimistic and indeed compared Romania negatively with reference to Greece. As one former state secretary in the Ministry of Public Administration, disillusioned with the then government's efforts at administrative reform commented, Romania was likely to face a crisis as a member state to a degree comparable with Greece in the first ten years of EU membership.²⁹

As to the *acquis communautaire*, it should be recalled, the Southern entrants to the Community were allowed to adopt this following accession. Greece achieved this but very slowly; while Spain, for instance, was rather more efficient such as in adopting the body of European environmental legislation in the first two years of membership from 1986 which, however, caused severe administrative blockage.³⁰ Clearly, cross-national variation was present in the Southern enlargement; but such a luxury over policy harmonisation was not allowed with the Eastern enlargement; and this represents one of the fundamental differences between these two examples of EU enlargement. However, there has been a real shortage of cross-enlargement comparisons, as comparative and empirical work has tended to be focussed within each enlargement round. Occasionally, there have been brief overviews of successive enlargements either highlighting the main differences or looking at particular themes; but this is not a developed area of research.³¹

²⁷ M. Vachudova, *Europe Undivided: Democracy, Leverage and Integration after Communism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 112.

²⁸ According to Alin Teodorescu, Director of the Institute of Marketing and Polls (IMAS) and adviser to Prime Minister Nastase on administrative reform, the EU (especially DG Enlargement) did "not want the same problem with CEE as with Greece"; but then he argued that Greek public administration was "far worse than the Romanian state" and that Greece cost the EU 645 Euros per annum and Romania only 35 Euros according to Verheugen" (author interview with Teodorescu in Bucharest, October 2003).

²⁹ Author interview with Marius Profiriou, School of Public Administration, in Bucharest, November 2005.

³⁰ Author interview with Teresa Mosquete, Environmental Policy Directorate, Ministry of Public Works, in Madrid, October 1992.

³¹ For example, Nugent, *European Union Enlargement*, pp. 56-58 summarises the main differences between enlargement rounds as those concerning the number of applicants, the characteristics of applicants, the level of development achieved by the EU, the number and nature of policy issues creating difficulties and the length of

(3) TRENDS IN WORK ON EASTERN ENLARGEMENT

Published work on the EU's enlargement to Central and Eastern Europe has been extensive and much more so than on previous enlargement rounds. This is not really surprising given the magnitude of this latest enlargement in terms of both the number of applicants/entrants and also the scale of pre-accession requirements which have been unprecedented and continue to mount because of the regular increase in European legislation as well as the tightening of conditionality procedures and expectations with respect to the Western Balkans.³² A similar expansion of interest in the subject has been evident in conference activity – with or without policy practitioners – over the past decade and longer, as one obvious source of eventual published work. Such conference activity has far outpaced that on Southern enlargement at the time, in my experience; and this cannot be solely attributed to the greater length of the accession process.

It is difficult when surveying all this literature to mark out particular tendencies, as its thematic focus has been rather varied, ranging from overviews of Eastern enlargement or the accession process and its stages, to some attention given to domestic politics.³³ Important areas like policy and political economy³⁴ and the role of EU institutions in enlargement³⁵ have received due attention; while the parallel enlargement of NATO and other international organisations like the Council of Europe have invited comparisons with EU enlargement.³⁶

the accession process. See also G. Pridham, *Designing Democracy: EU Enlargement and Regime Change in Post-Communist Europe* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), chapters 3.2 and 3.4 comparing motivation of applicant countries in successive enlargements, using the model of four imperatives: the historical, the democratic, the security and the modernising/economic imperatives.

³² On the latter, see G. Pridham, "Change and continuity in the European Union's political conditionality: aims, approach and priorities", *Democratization*, 14/3, June 2007, pp. 446-71.

³³ On the former, there is for example M. Baun, *A Wider Europe: the Process and Politics of European Union Enlargement* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000) and P. Poole, *Europe Unites: the EU's Eastern Enlargement* (Westport: Praeger, 2003). On the latter, see for instance K. Henderson (ed.), *Back to Europe: Central and Eastern Europe and the European Union* (London: UCL Press, 1999); M. Mannin (ed.), *Pushing Back the Boundaries: the European Union and Central and Eastern Europe* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999); and K. Cordell (ed.), *Poland and the European Union* (London: Routledge, 2000).

³⁴ For example, A. Mayhew, *Recreating Europe: the European Union's Policy towards Central and Eastern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

³⁵ For example, J. O'Brennan, *The Eastern Enlargement of the European Union* (London: Routledge, 2006).

³⁶ For example, S. Croft, J. Redmond, G. Wyn Rees and M. Webber, *The Enlargement of Europe* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999).

This diversity may be illustrated with reference to articles on Eastern enlargement published by the *Journal of Common Market Studies* – a reputable organ of European integration studies – during the past decade, that is since the first membership negotiations started in 1998. Articles have covered the following areas: policy matters (monetary union, immigration, EU market, manufacturing firms and the working environment); single country studies (the Czech Republic, Romania, Turkey and Cyprus); governance and institutions (governance in the enlarged EU, the ECB and the sub-regional levels); conditionality (political conditionality, administrative reform); enlargement policy (pre-accession aid, the European Neighbourhood Policy); and society (the role of the media, public opinion). My own experience of participating in many conferences on Eastern enlargement in the same period revealed a similar spread in paper themes of varied interests in this subject, with the addition of important ones like political parties and organised interests. One topic that has received enhanced attention because of Eastern enlargement, because of the cross-national appearance of that phenomenon in CEE, has been Euroscepticism. Work on this has tended to draw comparisons between both parts of Europe.³⁷

Nevertheless, three salient features are worth mentioning here. Firstly, the literature on Eastern enlargement, however vast, has been distinctly of a top-down nature rather than a bottom-up one. That is, it has focussed largely on the EU level or approached enlargement matters from the EU angle. Attention to individual country cases represents the principal exception to this tendency, although the main works concentrating on these were published early on³⁸ while journal articles on the same – taking the example of the *JCMS* – have in fact been rather sparse. This tendency for a top-down approach (rather in line with the accession process itself, one may suggest) does of course reflect a general pattern in European integration studies; whereas the bottom-up approach is more likely to be associated with those working in the field of comparative European politics.

Secondly, if there has been one particular growth area it must be that of EU conditionality, especially its political variant. Again, this follows EU development itself for it has been over Eastern enlargement that the EU has for the first time elaborated an extensive and systematic conditionality – somewhat conforming with a general tendency in the post-Cold War world, although no other international organisation has articulated conditionality to such a broad, detailed and bureaucratic

³⁷ See especially the recently published double volume on the subject: A. Szczerbiak and P. Taggart (eds.), *Opposing Europe?: the Comparative Party Politics, vol. 1: Case Studies and Country Surveys, vol. 2: Comparative and Theoretical Perspectives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

³⁸ See footnote 33.

extent as the EU. Work on Southern enlargement, when similarly new democracies were applicants, did not produce such an outpouring of research interest at the time.³⁹ Now, however, conditionality has produced several major studies as well as a profusion of articles (and articles on this theme continue to be regularly submitted to a range of different journals, in my experience).⁴⁰

Thirdly, recent new directions in literature include the following. Further enlargement prospects have directed the attention of scholars to the Balkans⁴¹ – in line with the current geographical focus of DG Enlargement in Brussels – but also to the European Neighbourhood Policy which, notwithstanding official policy statements coming out of the Commission, is seen as a possible precursor to yet more enlargement further East. But most significant has been the growth of interest in the new member states. This is significant for two reasons: it did not exist with previous post-enlargement situations; and it represents an attempt to rectify the neglect of a bottom-up approach to enlargement because it explores the up till 2004 unaccustomed role of the post-Communist new member states as policy-makers within the EU, in place of having been policy-takers during the accession period. This new development in enlargement studies is therefore worth special comment.

The notion of “new member states” (NMS) in the European Union really is a novelty. On none of the previous enlargement occasions was this notion present as indicating something significant or distinctive – although the term was not absolutely absent in some press commentary at the time. It was then generally assumed that the new entrants were now “member states” with full voting and policy-making rights despite their transitional periods of usually several years for the

³⁹ Though see G. Pridham, “The politics of the European Community, transnational networks and democratic transition in Southern Europe”, in G. Pridham (ed.), *Encouraging Democracy: the International Context of Regime Transition in Southern Europe* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1991), pp. 212-45, which treats conditionality as part of a general discussion.

⁴⁰ For books, see H. Grabbe, *The EU's Transformative Power: Europeanization through Conditionality in Central and Eastern Europe* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); G. Pridham, *Designing Democracy: EU Enlargement and Regime Change in Post-Communist Europe* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); and, M. Vachudova, *Europe Undivided: Democracy, Leverage and Integration after Communism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). For a critique of this literature on conditionality as a whole, see T. Haughton, “When does the EU make a difference?: conditionality and the accession process in Central and Eastern Europe”, *Political Studies Review*, 5, May 2007, pp. 233-46.

⁴¹ For example, the following book is due to be published later this year: J. O'Brennan, *The EU and the Balkans: Stabilization and Europeanization through Enlargement* (London: Routledge, 2008).

purpose of adapting fully to the policy consequences of joining.⁴² Only recently, with the prospect of the mega-enlargement to former post-Communist states has there begun to develop any special interest in how new member states cope with the problems of managing EU membership.⁴³

The reasons for this previous “neglect” and present concern are the obvious and familiar ones discussed above. They are both quantitative and qualitative. The first refers to the magnitude of the 2004 enlargement together with that of 2007 which is, however, unlikely to be repeated judging by discouraging statements of Commissioner Rehn about any further mega-enlargements.⁴⁴ The qualitative reason relates to the extent of preparation, pre-accession requirements and policy harmonisation in response to pre-accession demands on the EU side, prompted by a concern about the consequences for the functioning of the EU, such as those relating to the often unsatisfactory state of national administration in the post-Communist democracies as well as the widespread presence of corruption there. This concern has, if anything, much increased of late with the growing prospect of further enlargement to South-East Europe.

The question of NMS has certainly arrived on the EU agenda; and so, therefore, has the *problematique* as far as academic research is concerned. In the course of time, the notion of “new member states” will almost certainly be transitory (referring, that is, to a transitional phenomenon); and it will eventually disappear with respect to the 2004 entrants. But it may, however, be revived despite no more mega-enlargements in the event of serious difficulties after Western Balkan countries join.

Meanwhile, the issue has been very much present in new member state perceptions, including a certain sensitivity early on among certain NMS that they were not being fairly treated (such as over agricultural subsidies and free movement of labour provisions). The sense of “them” and “us” then arose; and it may persist for a while as suggested by the

⁴² This assumption was reflected in the academic literature, for instance, in the “EC Membership Evaluated” series of country monographs published by Pinter in the early 1990s, only a couple of years after the Iberian enlargement of 1986.

⁴³ A first example of this interest was G. Falkner, “How pervasive are Euro-politics? Effects of EU membership on a new member state”, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 38/2, June 2000, pp. 223-50, based on a largely institutionally-focussed look at one of the countries in the 1995 enlargement, i.e. Austria.

⁴⁴ This caution is also written into key policy documents, e.g. *Communication from the Commission: 2005 Enlargement Strategy Paper*, European Commission, 9 November 2005 COM (2005) 561, p. 3: “There is no further enlargement with a large group of countries at the same time in view... future enlargements will go at the pace dictated by each country’s performance in meeting the rigorous standards, to ensure the smooth absorption of new members”.

very dichotomy of terms “new member states” and “old member states” – which are common currency around Brussels and in some of the member state capitals, not to mention in the quality press of EU countries. It was present again in November/December 2005 over the complicated decision on the EU budget with firm reactions from the NMS to suggestions from the UK Presidency for a cut in resources.⁴⁵ It was also evident in broadly different reactions to the debacle over the EU Constitution following the French and Dutch referenda, with some expressions of disillusionment from the East such as when President Kwasniewski of Poland remarked:

When I see the atmosphere in some European countries, especially among founders such as France, Germany and Holland, and the atmosphere in our countries, the new EU members, the difference is that the founders are like people after fifty years of marriage and we are still in love with Europe.⁴⁶

More recently, this dichotomy has been expressed in rather more confident, even critical, tones towards the old member states, vaunting the very experience of the NMS in having undergone the post-Communist reform experience as an advantage when confronting EU policy concerns.⁴⁷ Clearly, their unprecedentedly thorough preparation does distinguish the NMS from old member states when they themselves were new member states. The current NMS were the object of an “impositional Europeanisation” at such a forced pace that the “downloading” process involved (i.e. of EU law, policies and practices) had deep or at least wide effects so that these NMS finally arrived at the door of the EU institutions strongly marked by this process.⁴⁸ At the same time, new patterns have emerged over the past four years with the NMS tending to take a more progressive line over further enlargement than old member states and to adopt a harder position on EU relations with Russia for reasons obviously related to their own experience under Communism.

⁴⁵ On the sustained and angry effort by Latvia, in harmony with the other Baltic states, to fight this proposal, see the news reports of the national news agency LETA from 25 November to 17 December 2005.

⁴⁶ www.euractiv.com, 20 June 2005. .

⁴⁷ Cf. the comments of the Slovak Ambassador to the EU, Maros Sefcovic, that “Slovakia was a more dynamic and more open-market orientated than other member states” and that this was “his major negative surprise”; and that he was “astonished sometimes at the old member states” compared with Slovakia “which was not doing things in the old-fashioned way”: “some old member states (such as France) have a fear of the future, while Slovakia is still in a fast running reform mood” (author interview in Brussels, October 2005).

⁴⁸ K. Goetz, “The new member states and the EU: responding to Europe” in S. Bulmer and C. Lequesne (eds.), *The Member States of the European Union* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 255.

A new area has therefore opened up for research into new member state behaviour within the EU. But this must eventually embrace an alternative pattern whereby cross-national diversity among NMS develops as among old member states or where some of them form regional groupings or bilateral policy alliances as has happened previously in EU affairs. In this context, it is worth noting that Eastern enlargement has opened up a new interest area within integration studies in the role of small states as distinct from large ones – a distinction that does not overlap entirely with that between new and old member states, even though most entrants in 2004 were indeed small states. Furthermore, there is obviously a whole area of research waiting for those interested in the continuing and long-term effects of implementing the *acquis* on the countries from Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). But it is a vast potential area best pursued perhaps by means of sectoral work on different policies. In general, there has been so far weak attention to the effects of enlargement on the NMS including during their accession. In this respect, relevant ideas that have surfaced include the problem of how enlargement affects the distribution of power and interests in accession states as well as their identity, norms and goals.⁴⁹ Finally, it remains to be seen whether or how much the systematic study of NMS departs in any way from the conclusion in comparative work that there is little evidence for the convergence or homogenisation of domestic institutions, policies and processes towards common approaches or models among member states.⁵⁰ In other words, has conditionality prior to 2004 had lasting and perhaps deep effects?

(4) NEW DEPARTURES: EUROPEANISATION AND THEORETICAL APPROACHES

In recent years, two developments have occurred which have assisted enlargement studies to move forward as an autonomous area of research in work on European integration. The first is the growth industry on Europeanisation, which has promoted the tendency to regard accession countries as part of the integration process, albeit outside the EU for the time being, while also directing attention to integration effects on domestic politics to a degree which is new. This dominant fashion in current integration research has carried in its wake enlargement studies to some extent, although most work has so far concentrated on the older member states of Western Europe. The second is the appearance of the first efforts at theoretical approaches to EU enlargement drawing essentially on theory on international relations. This has both enhanced a general interest in enlargement as

⁴⁹ Schimmelfenning and Sedelmeier, "Theorising EU enlargement", p. 507.

⁵⁰ See M. Cowles, J. Caporaso and T. Risse (eds.), *Transforming Europe: Europeanisation and Domestic Change* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001).

a phenomenon and also pointed the way to further aspects of enlargement that require investigation.

“Europeanisation” has now become an established term of late being employed in areas of international relations and the social sciences, but particularly in European studies and integration research.⁵¹ While different meanings have been read into the term, work here on integration has tended to focus on policy and institutions while taking the lesson from international relations that Europeanisation’s impact is mediated by national structures and actors. In other words, this is that category of Europeanisation that concerns the penetration of European procedures and rules into domestic politics in formal, informal and possibly also cultural ways rather than the other category which looks at the institutionalisation of the EU political system.⁵² This immediately identifies its relevance for assessing candidate countries since policies are central to membership negotiations, while institutions and therefore national structures, are increasingly viewed as crucial to their “ability to take on the obligations of membership” (to use the phrase from the Copenhagen conditions).

It has been argued that new member states – and therefore by implication, candidate countries within range of closing the deal over membership – are particularly worthwhile exploring for their Europeanisation effects. That is because, in Falkner’s words, “the ‘trickling down’ of European patterns can be studied almost as if under laboratory conditions”. Changes may be detected more easily than in other national systems for two reasons: “first, adaptation happened only recently ... second, the changes were much more abrupt than in the original member states – the entire *acquis communautaire* had to be implemented at once which accounts for quite dramatic innovation in the space of only a few years”.⁵³ In the case of CEE, this argument is even stronger because post-Communist countries – unlike Falkner’s case of Austria – were not only new democracies, whose still unconsolidated structures were to be reinforced through conditionality, but also – as is commonly recognised – they have suffered from weak institutional “cores”. They have accordingly been more vulnerable if not more open to EU pressures over pre-accession institutionalisation, all the more in the light of their post-1989 experience of policy transfer and institutional learning from other countries.⁵⁴ This would suggest

⁵¹ C. Major, “Europeanisation and foreign and security policy – undermining or rescuing the nation state?”, *Politics*, 25/3, September 2005, p. 175.

⁵² P. Mair, “The Europeanization dimension”, *Journal of European Public Policy*, 11/2, April 2004, pp. 337-48.

⁵³ G. Falkner, “How pervasive are Euro-politics?”, p. 224.

⁵⁴ Goetz, “The new member states and the EU”, pp. 261-62. A similar argument was made about the Southern European states and the EU impact in the area of environmental policy given their prior lack of development here, see A. Weale, G. Pridham, M. Cini, D. Konstadakopoulos, M. Porter and B. Flynn, *Environmental*

considerable scope for, if not considerable impact from, Brussels-driven institutional change. As Grabbe argues, Europeanisation applies to CEE but with two differences from the older member states from Western Europe: there was a wider scope to the EU's agenda which went well beyond just adopting the *acquis communautaire* in imposing an extensive range of political and economic conditions (which had not applied to even recent entrants like Austria); and the power relationship between the EU and the post-Communist countries was very asymmetrical thus giving Brussels more coercive influence over them than was conceivable in the case of member states already in the EU.⁵⁵

The case is therefore made for exploring Europeanisation effects on prospective member states. Nevertheless, this remains a research agenda for the future since this dimension of Europeanisation has so far not been explored much in empirical work. Recently, there was published the collective volume of Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, *The Europeanisation of Central and Eastern Europe* (2005) which takes as its brief a restricted definition of the term, namely the adoption of EU rules, which is usefully applied to a series of EU policy areas such as regional, social and environmental.⁵⁶ Particularly helpful for pushing forward the research agenda are the explanatory models and comparative ideas, some of them tentative, in both the introduction and conclusion such as the legitimacy of European rules and adoption costs as well as specific ways in which external incentives operate. As the editors conclude, "our research has confirmed the extremely important and strong links between enlargement and Europeanisation in Central and Eastern Europe...[it has shown] that enlargement is the main driving force and the main condition of effective EU rule export in this region ... in the absence of enlargement and accession conditionality, the export of EU rules would have remained limited, patchy and slow".⁵⁷

At the same time, some scepticism is due; and this questions whether such institutional and other effects have been really profound in the post-Communist new member states. A related theme not widely explored is that of "institutionalisation for reversibility", meaning that the high-pressure approach of the EU during the accession process in imposing conditions on apparently willing candidate countries might

Governance in Europe: An Ever Closer Ecological Union? (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), especially part II on comparative environmental governance which looks at policies, institutions and domestic politics. This six-country study included two recently acceded member states, Spain and Greece, which were researched primarily by means of extensive elite interviews during the first half of the 1990s.

⁵⁵ Grabbe, *The EU's Transformative Power*, pp. 39-40.

⁵⁶ F. Schimmelfennig and U. Sedelmeier (eds.), *The Europeanization of Central and Eastern Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005).

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 221.

after all produce a reaction on their part now they have arrived in the safe haven of “Brussels”, with the result that EU-required institutional change begins to stall.⁵⁸

Theorising about EU enlargement is still in its infancy and is essentially recent, having arisen in the context of Eastern enlargement – therefore, a further indication of the impact of this mega-enlargement. Quite correctly, the line taken has been to relate such theorising to integration in general rather than to hive off at a tangent. For instance, Baun’s starting point is to examine the relevance of standing integration theories.⁵⁹ In his view, the intergovernmentalist model is the most applicable because of the central role played by member states through the Council in enlargement matters and the concomitant style of membership negotiations. However, he also recognises that the supranational institutions, the Commission and the European Parliament, play an important part in the accession process, the former all the more since it acquired a decisive role in negotiations with the opening to CEE. Interestingly, he also points out that enlargement decisions have a certain “history-making” character since they greatly affect the future functioning of the EU.⁶⁰

Some thinking has emerged relating to the overall dynamics of enlargement. *Pravda* has categorised states outside the EU according to their position in queues for membership of NATO and the EU: “insiders” (in line for the next accession), “outsiders” (which have a semi-detached association) and “extreme outsiders” which are essentially ostracised by the international community. His main point is that “the power of conditionality tends to vary with perceived prospects of progress towards accession”, although he posits that EU leverage and response to this may be stronger albeit more sporadic among “insiders” than those states with a probability of joining soon.⁶¹ Very similar in its conception is a gravity model of democratisation presented by Emerson and Noutcheva, whereby the EU acts as a pole of attraction for democratising countries for explaining their success or failure in securing fast, deep and lasting democratisation. The tendency for states to converge on “the democratic model of the centre” depends on its reputational quality and attractiveness, its geographic and cultural-historical proximity and its openness to the periphery.⁶² Both ideas capture a sense of the movement in

⁵⁸ Goetz, *op. cit.*, p. 273.

⁵⁹ Baun, *A Wider Europe*, pp. 15-20.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁶¹ A. Pravda, “Introduction”, in J. Zielonka and A. Pravda (eds.), *Democratic Consolidation in Eastern Europe, vol. 2: International and Transnational Factors* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 22-24.

⁶² M. Emerson and G. Noutcheva, *Europeanisation as a Gravity Model of Democratisation*, Working Document no. 214, Centre for European Policy Studies, Brussels, November 2004, p. 2.

enlargement; but what they neglect however – or, perhaps take for granted – is the importance of domestic arenas and how these interact with EU “push and pull” influences.

A number of semi-abstract hypotheses have entered the debate in the last few years. These include hypotheses about the EU’s involvement in and motivation behind enlargement (conceptualised as “rhetorical action”) and interesting discussions about alternative though not necessarily conflicting theories along rationalist and constructivist lines – which may be translated as respectively instrumental and values-based positions – in looking at compliance by accession states with the pre-accession demands of Brussels.⁶³ Explanations for the motivation behind the 2004 enlargement are now fairly well covered in the literature;⁶⁴ but this is almost exclusively viewed as it were from the Brussels end even though early steps towards enlargement are taken in response to pressure from countries outside the EU (which has on some occasions shown itself reluctant to pursue a full relationship with them).⁶⁵

This theoretical work on rationality and constructivism has related primarily to motivation over enlargement, assuming candidate countries to be unified actors, in an attempt to explain conceptually the power of the EU’s leverage. Accession states are therefore confronted alternatively with the logic of consequentiality (whereby they are placed under great pressure linked to prospective membership to accede to Brussels’ demands) and the logic of appropriateness (involving social learning and the acceptance of European political standards). While, it is argued, these are not necessarily rival explanations, a preference has favoured the rationalist explanation as the more decisive.⁶⁶ However, the influence of norms is seen in some work on conditionality as more impactful when combined with the prospect of membership, as in the case of ethnic minority rights.⁶⁷

⁶³ See the collection of enlargement theories in F. Schimmelfenning and U. Sedelmeier (eds.), *The Politics of European Union Enlargement: Theoretical Approaches* (London: Routledge, 2005), especially chapters 3 and 7.

⁶⁴ See, for instance, the part III chapters in J. O’Brennan, *The Eastern Enlargement of the European Union*. These cover geopolitical, economic and normative explanations. On motivation behind enlargement, see also H. Sjursen, “Why expand?: the question of legitimacy and justification in the EU’s enlargement policy”, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 40/3, September 2002, pp. 491-513.

⁶⁵ Cf. the comment that enlargement “involves an adjustment to external initiatives rather than an actively sought and internally conceived development” [I. Tsalicoglou, *Negotiating for Entry: the Accession of Greece to the European Community* (Aldershot: Dartmouth, 1995), p. 157].

⁶⁶ See Schimmelfenning and Sedelmeier, *The Politics of European Union Enlargement*, chapters 1 and 11.

⁶⁷ J. Kelley, *Ethnic Politics in Europe: the Power of Norms and Incentives* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

Altogether, such theoretical work tends to ignore the matter of intervening variables, on both the EU and accession state sides, which may complicate and limit the capacity and effectiveness of political conditionality. A suitable corrective is provided by such approaches as Putnam's "two-level game" of inter-governmental bargaining whereby each level's (the external and the internal) impacts on the other or may be utilised by skilful leadership in either direction – inwardly or outwardly – to secure a successful outcome to negotiations.⁶⁸ Altogether, a good start has been made in thinking broadly about enlargement matters for the debate over rationality and constructivism has stimulated interesting discussion. Nevertheless, theorising about enlargement is in its early stages and there is much room still for further conceptualisation of enlargement affairs, for applying Europeanisation work with its emphasis on European/national interactions to candidate countries and for analysing the effects of enlargement on accession states, once they become new members of the EU.⁶⁹

(5) CONCLUSIONS: THE FUTURE OF ENLARGEMENT STUDIES

This overview of enlargement studies and their evolution, especially in recent years during the course of Eastern enlargement, has identified both important changes but also areas for further work, notably with respect to Europeanisation trends and conceptualising or theorising about enlargement within the wider context of European integration as a whole. There has certainly been no "fatigue" in enlargement studies – unlike the "enlargement fatigue" that is supposed to exist within the EU itself – for this area of investigation has distinctly arrived on the integration agenda as an important rather than previously peripheral or passing concern and one that has acquired now a sense of continuousness.

But what about the future of enlargement studies? Seen from the long-term perspective, there is a mortality about enlargement studies because inevitably there will come the time when there are no more possible accession countries either because the boundaries of Europe are exhausted or because certain countries exclude themselves permanently from the integration process. But that time will not come yet, it seems, for there is not only South-East Europe waiting at the EU's doorstep but also countries further East – with Ukraine at their head – have similar ambitions to join. This is likely to take accession cases, if they develop further, into the third decade of this century. Therefore, it may be said that enlargement studies have an intermediate future. Ultimately, they may be incorporated into the field of European

⁶⁸ R. Putnam, "Diplomacy and domestic politics: the logic of two-level games", *International Organization*, 42/3, summer 1988, pp. 427-60.

⁶⁹ See Nugent, *European Union Enlargement*, p. 254.

integration historical work which is indeed is growing; and, eventually official papers will become available to cast light on enlargement decision-making in the past.

Obviously, it is evident from this overview of the literature on EU enlargement that there is significant scope for both further general work and also specific research aspects of this process, especially when assuming that this is seen as continuing beyond the point of EU entry. Therefore, an important area in any research agenda must be the effects of enlargement including policy ones deriving from the implementation of the *acquis communautaire* which opens up a diverse and rich field for investigation whether it involves looking at social, environmental, agricultural or foreign and security policy. Thus, any such agenda needs to embrace the role of new member states, ephemeral though that is as a phenomenon.

Turning now to comparative approaches, there are various ways forward. One would be the historical-comparative approach that benefits from over-time comparisons with previous enlargements. Lessons may be drawn from the earlier experiences of the different countries in question on which there is available work. This would have the advantage of offering a completed process for after a time these countries ceased to be in the category of both accession and new member states. One could, for instance, try a comparison focussed on their first period of being member states with CEE as of now.

Two other possible comparative approaches remain. The first is a cross-national comparison between different countries from CEE that joined in 2004 and 2007 (not including Malta and Cyprus given the post-Communist factor). This has the attraction of looking at ten different countries in the same integration "time capsule". It would also probably highlight growing diversity and thus interesting differences between NMS that are facing concurrently the same policy and adaptation problems within the very same EU institutional structures. It is an approach that has the appeal of observing integration as it moves; and one may choose to focus usefully on the first years to catch the feel of early membership dynamics. But its obvious weakness is a lack of suitable perspective, limited as it is at the moment by not being able to assess the complete process. It is rather like trying to analyse a moving target.

And when indeed may a new member state cease to be "new"? It is difficult if not impossible to give this a time definition, although formal deadlines like the end of transition periods after some years of early membership might be employed. A more specific point in time like the end of restrictions on the free movement of labour has some relevance but, by definition, could not really be taken as an overall marker of the

general phenomenon of NMS passing out of debate. The completion of conditionality targets (whereby NMS are recognised as having achieved – at last – European political and economic standards) is rather more difficult to apply since exactness about fully satisfying say either fighting corruption or implementing judicial reform is open to some disagreement if not controversy. Self-perception criteria might offer some mileage, whereby NMS cease in effect to regard themselves as such; while the emergence of policy alliances and networks that straddle the new/old member state divide has some appeal here. There is therefore a variety of ways in which one may play with the ephemerality of NMS. Whichever criteria are preferred, one suspects that cross-national variation is likely to be quite prominent in empirical analysis of this question.

The second other comparative approach may be called diachronic-comparative taking individual or groups of countries. This simply adopts the view, as Schimmelfenning and Sedelmeier put it, that “enlargement is best conceptualised as a gradual process that begins before, and continues after, the admission of new members to the organisation”.⁷⁰ Such an approach has the merit of offering more perspective because it contextualises better the role of accession and new member states, although clearly it cannot overcome ignorance of the complete process. It may be utilised by adopting a straightforward continuity/discontinuity framework that is not mesmerised by the heroic date of EU entry. Diachronic comparison concentrates more prosaically on the question of scope for but also limitations on the role of new member states and may apply familiar comparative criteria by disaggregating new member state systems whether in an institutional direction or a policy-focussed one.

In conclusion, enlargement studies have expanded significantly and therefore present an interesting and potentially productive challenge for scholars with an interest in this area of European integration. On present trends, this is likely to lead to an enrichment of European integration studies in general.

⁷⁰ Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, “Theorising EU enlargement”, p. 503.