

# Theorizing EU enlargement: research focus, hypotheses, and the state of research

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**ABSTRACT** Despite its indisputable political relevance, the enlargement of the EU has suffered from a theoretical neglect in studies of European integration. While theoretically informed studies have emerged recently, this literature suffers from a predominant focus on single cases and from not being linked to the more general study of international organizations in the social sciences. This article aims to structure the emerging debate in order to generate more generalizable and cumulative insights. First, we define enlargement as a process of gradual and formal horizontal institutionalization. We identify key dependent variables of a so-defined enlargement, for which we propose comparative research strategies. Second, we draw on two basic approaches to the analysis of international organizations – rationalist and sociological or constructivist institutionalism – to derive core hypotheses on the conditions of enlargement. Finally, we demonstrate the usefulness of these theoretical approaches in structuring the debate by giving an overview of the state of research on EU enlargement.

**KEY WORDS** Constructivism; enlargement; European Union; integration theory; rationalist institutionalism; regional organizations.

## I. THE STUDY OF ENLARGEMENT: POLITICAL RELEVANCE, THEORETICAL NEGLECT, AND METHODOLOGICAL SHORTCOMINGS

The enlargement of the European Union (EU) is a key political process both for the organization itself and the international relations of Europe in general. While enlargement was always an important, albeit sporadic event throughout its history, its salience has increased dramatically since the end of the Cold War. The 1995 enlargement to three former European Free Trade Association (EFTA) members, the acknowledgement of the candidate status of thirteen further countries, up to ten of which might join in 2004, and the extension of the membership perspective to the western Balkans, have made enlargement a permanent and continuous item on the EU's agenda.

The EU's transformation from an exclusively west European organization into the centre of gravity of pan-European institution-building makes it a

dominant locus of domestic policy-making and transnational relations for the entire region. The future borders of the EU will replace the old East–West line of the Cold War as the central cleavage in the European system. ‘Europe’ has increasingly come to be defined in terms of the EU; the ‘Europeanization’ or ‘Europeanness’ of individual countries has come to be measured by the intensity of institutional relations with the Community and by the adoption of its organizational norms and rules (see, for example, Katzenstein 1997b: 262).

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. The tough negotiations that the member governments have been conducting for the last five years on the budget, the agricultural and regional policies, the representation of member states in EU institutions, and the decision-making rules in the Council are directly related to the expected consequences of enlargement.

In light of its political relevance, it is striking that EU enlargement has been a largely neglected issue in the theory of regional integration (see also Friis and Murphy 1999; Wallace 2000). The classical approaches to the study of integration like neo-functionalism and transactionalism only mentioned the geographical growth of international communities in passing (see Deutsch 1970: 4, 43–4; Haas 1968: 313–17; Schmitter 1969: 165). This is not surprising: first, analysing the establishment and stabilization of regional organizations logically precedes studying their territorial expansion. Second, the heyday of regional integration theory had come to an end before the European Community’s first enlargement in 1973. In addition, the subsequent move towards the analysis of substantive policies and the adoption of theoretical frameworks from comparative politics (such as neo-corporatism and network analysis) did little to further research on such a polity-building issue as enlargement (see Friis and Murphy 1999: 213). It is more surprising that the revival of international relations regional integration studies at the beginning of the 1990s and the theoretical debate between ‘intergovernmentalism’ and ‘supranationalism’ still focused exclusively upon issues of ‘deepening’ like the Single European Act, the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), or legal integration.

While the increased salience of enlargement since the end of the Cold War has resulted in a sizeable body of literature, the theoretical neglect of this subject resulted in a number of weaknesses of the study of enlargement. The bulk of the enlargement literature consists of descriptive and often policy-oriented studies of single cases – typically analysing single enlargement rounds of single organizations, single member or accession countries, or even single policy areas in the enlargement process. The EFTA and eastern enlargement have triggered theory-oriented work, but most of these studies still focus on a single round of EU enlargement and, as we will argue, ignore important aspects of enlargement – such as the pre-accession process, substantive policies,

and the impact of enlargement on both the EU and the accession countries.

We certainly do not want to downplay the importance of these empirical studies or the significance of the recent 'theoretical turn' in the study of enlargement. However, the problem with the current state of research is that the insights that they generate are not easily generalizable and thus do not contribute as much to our cumulative understanding of enlargement as we might wish. We argue that these shortcomings result from four (interrelated) factors, namely: (1) an insularity of the study of EU enlargement which divorces it from the study of other international organizations; (2) the lack of comparative research designs; (3) an under-specification of dependent variables and a neglect of important dimensions of enlargement; and (4) an under-specification of causal factors or independent variables, and a subsequent neglect of exploring alternative explanations.

In order to help structure the emerging debate, this introductory article pursues three goals which address these shortcomings. The first goal is a conceptualization of enlargement which relates EU enlargement to the study of international organizations more broadly. We thus define enlargement as a process of gradual and formal horizontal institutionalization. Subsequently, we identify and classify key research focuses of a so-defined enlargement and propose comparative research strategies within these different focuses (section II). The second goal is theory development. We suggest that, rather than striving for some kind of 'enlargement theory', it is more fruitful to link up the study of enlargement (as institutionalization) with the study of institutions in international relations and European integration studies. Drawing on two basic approaches to the analysis of international organizations – rationalist and sociological or constructivist institutionalism – we derive core hypotheses on the conditions of enlargement (section III). Finally, we demonstrate the usefulness of these theoretical approaches in structuring the debate in an overview of the state of research on EU enlargement (section IV).

The goal of this special issue is to bring together in a systematic form the insights from the recently emerging literature and to move beyond the state of the art in the study of enlargement by complementing these studies with original articles that combine a theoretical approach with comparative analyses. Whereas they contribute to the ongoing debate between rationalist and constructivist analyses, their main purpose is to provide examples of comparative and statistical analyses of EU enlargement and to explore under-researched aspects of the enlargement process.

## II. ENLARGEMENT: DEFINITION AND RESEARCH FOCUS

Even though this is a special issue on the enlargement of the European Union, our conceptual and theoretical focus is more general. In principle, our definitions, research focuses, and hypotheses can be applied to the enlargement of

other regional organizations and are designed to encourage comparative analysis.

## Definition

We propose to define the *enlargement* of an organization as a process of *gradual and formal horizontal institutionalization* of organizational rules and norms.

(1) *Institutionalization* means the process by which the actions and interactions of social actors come to be normatively patterned.

(2) The difference between ‘horizontal’ and ‘vertical’ institutionalization corresponds to the common usage of ‘widening’ and ‘deepening’. *Horizontal institutionalization* takes place when institutions spread beyond the incumbent actors, that is, when the group of actors whose actions and relations are governed by the organization’s norms becomes larger.

(3) Organizational membership and organizational norms are formally defined. It is therefore reasonable to concentrate on *formal* and purposive acts of horizontal institutionalization like the conclusion of association agreements or the signing and coming into effect of accession treaties. However, organizational norms also spread informally (‘diffuse’) beyond the boundaries of the organization, both to aspiring members and to states that have no intention of joining. Such diffusion might result from unilateral adaptation in order to mitigate negative externalities of regional integration itself, or from a convergence of practices when non-members consider institutional templates of the organization as viable responses to broader systemic challenges. We suggest a focus on purposive alignment with organizational rules, either more narrowly with a view to accession, or more broadly when changes in institutional practices are a direct response to regional integration.

(4) Horizontal institutionalization is a matter of degree, and enlargement is best conceptualized as a *gradual process* that begins before, and continues after, the admission of new members to the organization. Even in the absence of full membership, outside actors might follow certain organizational norms and rules. Non-members align with organizational rules as a result of the organization’s accession conditionality, or because these rules are embodied in formal agreements that create an institutional relationship short of full membership, such as association agreements or agreements to participate in selected policies of the organization (e.g. the European Economic Area (EEA) agreement or the Swiss treaties with the EU). Conversely, new members of the organization may negotiate post-accession transition periods before applying some of its norms, or they might begin to participate in some of the organization’s policies at different times – as in the EMU or the Schengen Agreements.

What are the consequences of such a definition of enlargement? First, by defining enlargement as institutionalization, we establish an explicit link to the study of institutions and open the analysis of enlargement to theories about

the establishment and effects of institutions. Second, it widens the field of enlargement studies beyond the narrow focus on decisions about formal membership. Such a wider focus includes, for example, horizontal institutionalization short of membership, the expansion of the organization's substantive policies, and the impact of horizontal institutionalization in the applicants, the member states, and the organization itself. This widening of the research focus will be the subject of the remainder of this section.

### **Research focus: dimensions of enlargement, dependent variables, and comparative strategies**

We can distinguish four main dimensions or aspects of enlargement, which generate separate dependent variables for the study of enlargement. The literature on EU enlargement has focused primarily on three dimensions of enlargement which all concern the process leading to enlargement, or to decisions on formal acts of horizontal institutionalization. These dimensions could be labelled respectively as: (1) applicants' enlargement politics; (2) member state enlargement politics; and (3) EU enlargement politics. We suggest that, for the latter dimension, it is useful to distinguish between (a) the macro or polity dimension and (b) the substantive or policy dimension. Furthermore, we argue that a dimension that has received comparatively little attention concerns (4) the impact of enlargement, i.e. the effects of these formal acts.

In this subsection, we identify the principal research questions in each of these main dimensions of enlargement, in order to encourage a clearer specification of dependent variables which should facilitate debate and make research results more comparable. Moreover, we observe that to the extent that theoretical studies exist, they have been primarily single case studies. We thus suggest how in each dimension a broadening of the empirical focus can lead to a more comparative research design towards more cross-sectional and longitudinal studies.<sup>1</sup> Cross-sectional studies compare the politics of different applicants and member states, the EU and other regional organizations, diverse policy areas, and the impact of enlargement in different domestic and international settings. Longitudinal studies take the comparison further to the study of applicant and member state politics over time, the analysis of different enlargement rounds, and short-term and long-term impacts. On the basis of these suggestions about dependent variables and comparative strategies, we map the state of the literature and sketch future research directions as depicted in Table 1.<sup>2</sup>

(1) *Applicant enlargement politics.* The basic question with regard to this dimension is, why and under which conditions do non-members seek accession to a regional organization? Since horizontal institutionalization does not only result from full membership in a regional organization, the broader

Table 1 Dependent variables and comparative strategies in the enlargement literature

	<i>Applicants' politics</i>	<i>Member state politics</i>	<i>EU macro politics</i>	<i>EU substantive politics</i>	<i>Impact of enlargement</i>
Single case		Hyde-Price 2000; Tewes 1998	Friis 1998a, 1998b; Schimmelfennig 2001; Sedelmeier 2000		Falkner 2000
Cross-sectional comparison	Bieler 2000; Fioretos 1997; Ingebritsen 1998; Smith 1999 <b>Mattli and Plümpert;</b> <b>Gstöhl</b>		Fierke and Wiener 1999	Haggard et al. 1993 <b>Sedelmeier</b>	Börzel 1999
(Cross-sectional and) Longitudinal comparison	Mattli 1999; <b>Schimmelfennig;</b> <b>Bieler</b>		<b>Schimmelfennig</b>		

question is, under which conditions do outsiders pursue a change in their institutional relationship with the regional organization and what kind of institutional relationship with the organization do outsiders prefer? Especially with regard to the EFTA enlargement, there is already a sizeable body of theoretically informed literature, which goes beyond single cases and uses cross-sectional comparisons within the same enlargement round. These insights can be improved through longitudinal comparisons across enlargement rounds (Mattli 1999; Bieler as well as Schimmelfennig in this volume) and comparisons with cases of countries that chose not to join (Gstöhl in this volume) or to apply (Mattli and Plümper in this volume).

(2) *Member state enlargement politics*. The main question is, under which conditions does a member state of a regional organization favour or oppose enlargement to a particular applicant country? Theoretical studies of this dimension usually focus on single member states (Tewes 1998; Hyde-Price 2000). Even descriptive studies that compare more than one member state are extremely rare (Lippert *et al.* 2001). More systematic insights could be gained from comparisons of more member states and/or across enlargement rounds. Furthermore, while studies of this dimension of enlargement have mainly focused on member states, the focus could be broadened to analyse actors within the regional organization other than national governments, such as institutional actors.

(3) *EU enlargement politics*. Under which conditions does the regional organization admit a new member, or modify its institutional relationship with outside states? There are two analytically separate dimensions to this question, which respectively relate to the *macro dimension* and the *substantive dimension* of enlargement.

(a) The macro dimension relates to the EU as a *polity* and concerns the question of candidate selection and patterns of national membership of the organization. The main questions are why the organization prefers to admit one state rather than another, and why it offers membership rather than some other form of (or no) institutional relationship between the organization and the outsider state. While there is an emerging body of theoretical literature on this dimension, these studies have focused on single cases, mainly eastern enlargement (Friis 1998a, 1998b, 1998c; Schimmelfennig 1998, 2001; Sedelmeier 2000).

There are some cross-sectional comparisons with the same enlargement round of other international organizations, mainly between the eastern enlargements of the EU and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).<sup>3</sup> However, most of these studies are fairly descriptive (Croft *et al.* 1999; Smith and Timmins 2000; Sperling 1999) and only a few are theoretical (Fierke and Wiener 1999; Schimmelfennig in this issue). For such cross-sectional and longitudinal comparisons, the basic question concerns variations in the pattern of organizational size and national membership. Why are some states more integrated than others, and why are they members of one organization but not

of another? Why do some organizations have a larger membership and expand more quickly than others?

(b) The *substantive or policy dimension of EU politics* concerns the concrete substance of the organizational rules that are horizontally institutionalized. Studies of this dimension seek to explain the specific outcomes of accession negotiations in distinctive policy areas, but also the nature of pre-accession conditionality or association policies. The key question is to what extent outcomes reflect the preferences of certain actors, such as the applicants, member states, societal interest groups or institutional actors. Theoretical analyses of the macro dimension have often neglected this dimension (but see Sedelmeier 1998) and there are very few theoretically informed comparisons between policy areas (Haggard *et al.* 1993; Sedelmeier in this issue) or across enlargement rounds.

(4) *The impact of enlargement.* Enlargement affects both the organization and the state to which its institutional rules are extended. With regard to the organization, it is most often asked how enlargement affects the distribution of power and interests in the organization, and how it influences the identity, norms, and goals as well as the effectiveness and efficiency of the organization, and about the effect of a widening of membership on the prospects for a deepening of integration within the organization. However, most relevant for the study of horizontal institutionalization is the impact of enlargement on new members and non-members. Here, the main questions are: How does enlargement change the identity, the interests, and the behaviour of governmental and societal actors? Under which conditions do they conform to the norms of the organization?

This dimension has so far been largely neglected in theoretical studies of enlargement. While the theoretically increasingly sophisticated 'Europeanization' literature has analysed the effects of membership on new members, these are mainly single case studies (Falkner 2000) as well as comparisons between new and 'old' member states (Börzel 1999). However, these insights have not yet been systematically applied to study the pre-accession effects on candidate countries. With regard to eastern enlargement, there is little cross-fertilization between theoretical studies of the impact of international organizations; the Europeanization literature; the more theoretical literature on the transformations in the Central and East European countries (CEECs), and the mainly descriptive literature on the effect of the EU on the candidates which is often limited to single countries and single policy areas.

While we emphasize that this is a central dimension of enlargement which requires more research, we will not discuss enlargement effects any further, because this dimension of enlargement is absent in the contributions to this issue.

In sum, theoretically informed empirical studies on EU enlargement have focused so far primarily on the EFTA applicants' politics and the EU macro politics on eastern enlargement. The greatest deficits are in the study of the policy dimension and the impact of enlargement, on the one hand, and in the



comparative analysis of member state politics and organizational macro politics, on the other.

### III. THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO ENLARGEMENT: RATIONALISM, CONSTRUCTIVISM, AND HYPOTHESES FOR ENLARGEMENT

In this section, we propose to embed the theoretical analysis of enlargement in the current international relations debate between rationalist and sociological or constructivist institutionalism.<sup>4</sup> First, this debate offers a broad spectrum of assumptions and hypotheses about the conditions of institutionalization and about institutional effects. It spans the two disciplines that have contributed most to the social science analysis of institutions: economics and sociology. Second, linking the study of enlargement to the analysis of institutions in international relations and the general social sciences prevents theoretical insularity. Finally, it is our impression that the growing body of theoretically oriented work on enlargement fits in well with this debate. After briefly outlining the theoretical foundations of both institutionalist approaches, we specify hypotheses for the dimensions or dependent variables in the study of enlargement.

#### Theoretical foundations

Rationalism and constructivism do not provide us with fully elaborated and internally consistent competing hypotheses on enlargement that we could rigorously test against each other. First, both rationalism and constructivism are social *metatheories* defined by a set of (mainly ontological) assumptions about the social world rather than by specific hypotheses. There is a variety of substantial theories based on either rationalist or constructivist assumptions that attribute preferences and outcomes to different factors and lead to different and even contradictory expectations about enlargement. Second, the differences between rationalist and sociological theories of institutions are multi-dimensional and often a matter of degree rather than principle. It is therefore more useful to regard the two institutionalisms as partially competing and partially complementary sources of theoretical inspiration for the study of enlargement. In the following, we will nevertheless construct two ideal types of a rationalist and a sociological analysis of enlargement in order to portray the theoretical alternatives as clearly as possible.

At the most fundamental level, rationalist and constructivist institutionalism are based on different social ontologies (individualism and materialism in rationalism and a social and ideational ontology in constructivism) and assume different logics of action – a rationalist logic of consequentiality opposed to a constructivist logic of appropriateness (March and Olsen 1989: 160). These divergent premises are reflected in different perspectives on the causal status and purposes of international organizations which, in turn, lead

to competing hypotheses about the rationale, the conditions, and the mechanisms of enlargement.

In rationalist institutionalism, the causal *status of institutions* generally remains secondary to that of individual, material interests. Institutions are treated as intervening variables between the material interests and the material environment of the actors, on the one hand, and the collective outcomes, on the other. They mainly provide constraints and incentives, not reasons, for action; they alter cost/benefit calculations, not identities and interests. By contrast, in the constructivist perspective, institutions shape actors' identities and interests. Actors do not simply confront institutions as external constraints and incentives towards which they behave expediently. Rather, institutions provide meaning to the rights and obligations entailed in their social roles. Actors conform with institutionally prescribed behaviour out of normative commitment or habit.<sup>5</sup>

The different conceptions of institutions are reflected in the functions and workings that both theories typically ascribe to *international organizations*. In the rationalist account, international organizations are instrumental associations designed to help states pursue their interests more efficiently. According to Abbott and Snidal (1998), they are attractive to states because of two functional characteristics that reduce transaction costs: centralization and independence. International organizations render collective action more efficient, for example, by providing stable negotiating forums, pooling activities, elaborating norms, and acting as a neutral information provider, trustee, allocator, or arbiter. Moreover, states pool and delegate authority to international organizations in order to 'constrain and control one another' (Moravcsik 1998: 9). By removing the interpretation, implementation, and enforcement of agreements from the reach of domestic opposition and from the unilateral control of state governments, international organizations raise the visibility and the costs of non-compliance (Moravcsik 1998: 73–4).

Rationalist international relations theories generally do not accord international organizations the status of purposive and autonomous actors in international politics. Although the economic theory of bureaucracy suggests that international agencies try to maximize their resources and turf, these theories regard the states' concern for autonomy as too strong, and the power of international bureaucracy as too limited, for international organizations to represent anything but the instruments of states. Moreover, rationalist theories conceive international organizations as *clubs*, that is *voluntary* groups 'in the sense that members would not join (or remain in the club) unless a net gain resulted from membership' (Sandler and Tschirhart 1980: 1491).

Whereas rationalist institutionalism emphasizes the instrumental, regulatory, and efficiency-enhancing functions of international organizations, sociological institutionalism sees them as autonomous and powerful actors with constitutive and legitimacy-providing functions. International organizations are 'community representatives' (Abbott and Snidal 1998: 24) as well as

community-building agencies. The origins, goals, and procedures of international organizations are more strongly determined by the standards of legitimacy and appropriateness of the international community they represent (which constitute their cultural and institutional environment) than by the utilitarian demand for efficient problem-solving (see, for example, Barnett and Finnemore 1999: 703; Katzenstein 1997a: 12; Weber 1994: 4–5, 32). International organizations ‘can become autonomous sites of authority . . . because of power flowing from at least two sources: (1) the legitimacy of the rational-legal authority they embody, and (2) control over technical expertise and information’ (Barnett and Finnemore 1999: 707). Owing to these sources of power, international organizations are able ‘to impose definitions of member characteristics and purposes upon the governments of its member states’ (McNeely 1995: 33; cf. also Finnemore 1996). For instance, they ‘define international tasks [and] new categories of actors . . . , create new interests for actors . . . , and transfer models of political organizations around the world’ (Barnett and Finnemore 1999: 699). On the basis of these theoretical foundations, we will now present some core rationalist and constructivist hypotheses for the enlargement of international organizations.

### Rationalist hypotheses

Rationalist explanations of enlargement involve two steps: first, the explanation of applicant and member state enlargement preferences and, second, the explanation of organizational collective enlargement decisions at the macro and policy levels.

#### *Applicant and member state politics*

As in all rationalist theory, *expected individual costs and benefits determine the applicants’ and the member states’ enlargement preferences. States favour the kind and degree of horizontal institutionalization that maximizes their net benefits.* More specifically, a member state favours the integration of an outsider state – and an outsider seeks to expand its institutional ties with the organization – under the conditions that it will reap positive net benefits from enlargement, and that these benefits exceed the benefits it would secure from an alternative form of horizontal institutionalization. This general hypothesis, however, begs the question of what the relevant costs and benefits are. In this respect, rationalist hypotheses vary to a great extent.

First, we can distinguish three categories of costs and benefits thought to be most relevant for the enlargement preferences of applicants and members. These are transaction (or management), policy, and autonomy costs and benefits.

(1) *Transaction* costs rise for the member states because additional members require additional organizational infrastructure and make communication within the organization more cumbersome and costly. Additional members

usually also increase the heterogeneity of the membership, and 'the costs of centralized decisions are likely to rise where more and more persons of differing tastes participate' (Sandler *et al.* 1978: 69). Applicants have to establish delegations at the headquarters of the organization and incur costs of communication, co-ordination, and supervision in the relations between these delegations and capitals. These costs are balanced by benefits like the provision of organizational services to the member states and faster communication and co-ordination between incumbents and new member states.

(2) For the member states, *policy* costs come in the form of crowding costs because, in an enlarged organization, they have to share collective goods with the new members. For the applicants, policy costs involve membership contributions and the adaptation of domestic policies (see Mattli and Plümpner in this issue). Conversely, the incumbent members obtain policy benefits from the contributions of new members to the club goods, and applicants can expect to benefit from being able to participate in the club goods.

(3) *Autonomy* costs arise because horizontal institutionalization implies forgoing unilateral policy options both for the member states and the applicants. For member states, which have already lost policy-making autonomy in the integrated issue-areas, autonomy costs mainly consist in having to accord new members equal decision-making rights. In general, under the EU's qualified majority voting rule, the individual member states' degree of control over outcomes decreases with enlargement (see, for example, Kerremans 1998). In return, member states may gain better control over external political developments in the applicant states. For applicant states, the greatest cost is the loss of policy-making autonomy as a result of membership. This loss, however, can be balanced by both the right to participate in organizational decision-making and the protection of state autonomy provided by the organization against other states or domestic society.

Second, rationalist international relations theories differ with regard to the kind of cost/benefit calculations that states typically make.<sup>6</sup>

(1) *Neo-liberal institutionalists* assume that states mainly care about their own *absolute* gains and losses. Whereas enlargement must result in net welfare benefits in order to find support, autonomy benefits and costs are secondary.

(2) By contrast, *realists* assume that state actors are mainly concerned with *external autonomy* and power. In international co-operation, they worry about the distribution of benefits among the participating states, because the *relative* gains and losses *vis-à-vis* other states will affect their future international power position and security. Correspondingly, a member state favours enlargement, and a non-member state bids to join an international organization, if this is a necessary and efficient means to balance the superior power or threat of a third state (or coalition of states) or to increase its own power (see, for example, Walt 1987; Waltz 1979: 117–27).

(3) A third strand of rationalist institutionalism assumes that states are indeed most concerned about their *autonomy*, but not so much *vis-à-vis* other

states rather than *their own societies* (Vaubel 1986; Wolf 1999). Focusing on applicant states, Mattli (1999) integrates both external and internal autonomy concerns: state leaders will only be willing to bear the autonomy costs of integration in order to retain political power. Assuming that a government's re-election chances will mainly depend on economic performance, 'a country seeks to integrate its economy only when there is a significant positive cost of maintaining its present governance structure in terms of foregone growth (as measured by a continuing performance gap between it and a more integrated rival governance structure)' (Mattli 1999: 81; see also Mattli 2000).

The third difference concerns the material conditions that determine a state's cost/benefit calculations. Rationalist approaches to enlargement have identified *various sources of enlargement preferences*:

(1) *General systemic conditions*, like changes in the world economy, in technology, or the security environment. For instance, the denationalization of the economy creates incentives for joining an international economic organization.

(2) *Organization-specific systemic conditions*, like the degree of integration of the organization. For example, the deepening of economic integration in the organization will create negative externalities for outsiders (diversion of trade and investment) and trigger demand for membership. Alternatively, a high degree of integration may deter states which value autonomy highly.

(3) *Positional characteristics of states*, like the extent of their economic dependence on a regional organization or their geographical position. For instance, the more trade dependent a state is on the members of an economic union, the stronger its demand for membership.

(4) *Subsystemic conditions and domestic structure*, like the relative strength of economic sectors or factors. For instance, the stronger capital- or export-oriented sectors, the greater the demand for integration.

### *EU macro and substantive politics*

According to club theory, the most pertinent rationalist approach to the optimal size of organizations, the *organization expands its institutions and membership if, for both the member states and the applicant states, the marginal benefits of enlargement exceed the marginal costs*.<sup>7</sup> In the club-theoretical perspective, enlargement will continue until marginal costs equal marginal benefits. This equilibrium indicates the optimal size of the organization (Buchanan 1965: 5; Padoan 1997: 118). However, the outcomes of organizational enlargement politics also depend on (1) constellations of bargaining power and (2) formal decision-making rules.

It is not necessary that enlargement *as such* is beneficial to *each* member. Enlargement can also result from unequal *bargaining power* among the incumbents.<sup>8</sup> Member states that expect net losses from enlargement will agree to enlargement if their bargaining power is sufficient to obtain full compensation through side-payments by the winners (which, in turn, requires that the

necessary concessions do not exceed the winners' gains from enlargement). Otherwise, the losers will consent to enlargement if the winners are able to threaten them credibly with exclusion (and if the losses of exclusion for the losers exceed the losses of enlargement).

The other factor to take into account is *formal decision-making rules*. In general, enlargement requires the consensus of all member states. In the EU, three further extensions have to be taken into account. First, accession and association treaties have to be ratified by national parliaments and accession treaties must or can be subjected to a referendum in the applicant countries as well as in some of the member states. Second, association and accession require the consent of the European Parliament (EP) under the assent procedure.<sup>9</sup> Finally, EU policies that are affected by enlargement (such as agriculture, trade, or regional policies) are governed by different policy rules and decision-making procedures. These rules and procedures privilege individual governments and interest groups in the distributional politics of enlargement (see Wennerlund 2000).

### Constructivist hypotheses

In contrast to rationalist hypotheses, sociological explanations of enlargement usually do not start with actor preferences but at the systemic, 'organizational' level. However, to the extent that they allow for ideational conflict, the differentiation between the state level and the EU level can be upheld. According to constructivist institutionalism, enlargement politics will generally be shaped by ideational, cultural factors. The most relevant of these factors is 'community' or 'cultural match', that is, the degree to which the actors inside and outside the organization share a collective identity and fundamental beliefs.<sup>10</sup> Studying enlargement in a constructivist perspective, then, primarily consists in the analysis of social identities, values, and norms, not the material, distributional consequences of enlargement for individual actors.<sup>11</sup>

#### *Applicant and member state politics*

Applicants and members 'construct' each other and their relationship on the basis of the ideas that define the community represented by the international organization. Whether applicant and member states regard enlargement as desirable depends on the degree of community they perceive to have with each other. The general hypotheses about applicant and member state politics are highly similar. *The more an external state identifies with the international community that the organization represents and the more it shares the values and norms that define the purpose and the policies of the organization, the stronger the institutional ties it seeks with this organization and the more the member states are willing to pursue horizontal institutionalization with this state.*

With regard to the EU, applicant and member state politics are about whether an applicant state is 'European', subscribes to the integrationist project

of an 'ever closer union', adheres to the liberal-democratic political value foundations of the EU, or shares the norms underlying specific EU policies (see Gstöhl in this issue). Depending on the extent of the domestic consensus on the applicant state's identity and policy norms, applicant politics will be more or less controversial and the resulting enlargement preferences will be more or less stable and strong.

On average, in the constructivist perspective, we would expect greater conflict within applicant states on the enlargement issue than within the member states. First, for an applicant state, the decision to join a regional organization, and in particular the EU, constitutes a major political reorientation whereas, for the member states, the decision to enlarge an existing organization is more a matter of policy continuity. Second, member states can be assumed to share the constitutive values and norms of their community organization and to have been exposed, for a certain time, to socialization within the organization.

### *EU macro and substantive politics*

Correspondingly, and in contrast to rationalist institutionalism, we would expect a *low degree of variation among preferences and conflict among the member state actors*. As sociological institutionalism often assumes strong institutional and cultural effects ('socialization' or 'Europeanization') at the systemic level, member states will have largely homogeneous enlargement preferences. If we relax this assumption, we expect to see more variation in preferences.

First, if there is *tension among the community values and norms*, there will not be a single, unambiguous standard shaping the enlargement preferences of the incumbents. The debate about the priority between deepening or widening in the EU is a case in point. Second, *identification with, and internalization of, the community values and norms* may vary not only among the external states but also among the community actors. Whereas we can expect, for instance, the organizational actors (like the European Commission) to hold preferences that are strongly influenced by the organizational norms, member state governments may be subject to partly competing influences from national and international identities as well as cultural and institutional environments. Finally, the resonance of *particular* organizational norms might vary across different groups of policy-makers, depending on their functional and organizational positions. This potential tension is particularly important for the policy dimension of enlargement. While more general organizational norms and constitutive values might have a stronger impact on the macro politics of enlargement, distinctive substantive policies might be shaped to a larger extent by the particular norms (or policy paradigms) underpinning the policy area in question (Sedelmeier 1998 and in this issue).

Even in the case of normative conflict within the organization, however, the decision-making process will not be a bargaining process but a *process of arguing*.<sup>12</sup> If, for instance, it is unclear or contested which community norm

applies in a given situation, whether organizational norms override conflicting national norms, or to what degree an external state shares the fundamental beliefs and adheres to the fundamental practices of the community, the actors engage in discourse. They challenge the validity claims of the other actors' preferences and definitions of the situation, put forward arguments in favour of their positions, and seek a consensus based on the better argument. Although it cannot always be determined theoretically what the best and most convincing argument will be in a given situation, it should be one that is based on the collective identity, the constitutive beliefs and practices of the community, and the norms and rules of the organization. More fundamentally, arguing and discourse have the potential *to modify old, or construct new, identities and norms*. Incumbents and outsiders continuously seek to define and redefine the boundaries of the community, between 'us' and 'them', and to interpret and reinterpret the organizational norms. As a result, we will observe change in the definition or extension of the international community and in its enlargement practices.

Eventually, the outcome of organizational politics will again depend on the degree of community and cultural or normative match. *The organization expands (its institutions) to outside states to the extent that these states share its collective identity, values, and norms*. The higher the degree of community and the better the cultural or normative match, the faster and the deeper the process of horizontal institutionalization. Enlargement will continue until the (cultural) borders of the international community and the (formal, institutional) borders of the international organization match. More generally, the differentiated pattern of institutional relationships between the organization and the states in its environment will be congruent with their differentiated degree of cultural and normative agreement.

#### IV. THE STATE OF RESEARCH: FOCUS AND CONTROVERSIES IN EFTA AND EASTERN ENLARGEMENT

Table 1 (p. 505) reflects that theory-oriented research on enlargement has concentrated on the two major enlargement processes of the 1990s: the 1995 enlargement to include three former EFTA members and the ongoing process of eastern enlargement. However, analyses of these two cases reveal quite different patterns.

As Table 1 also reveals, the dominant research focus in the two cases has been on different dimensions of enlargement. While research on EFTA enlargement has concentrated on applicant politics, studies of eastern enlargement have predominantly analysed EU (macro) politics. In addition, we observe different patterns in the theoretical debates between competing explanations in the two cases (see Table 2). In the case of EFTA enlargement, rationalist explanations dominate and the controversies are mainly among factors that all fit within a rationalist framework. By contrast, sociological



Table 2 Theoretical positions in the main debates about EFTA and eastern enlargement

	<i>Applicants' politics</i>	<i>Member state politics</i>	<i>EU macro politics</i>	<i>EU substantive politics</i>
<i>Rationalist</i>	<p>Bieler 2000;            Fioretos 1997;            Ingebritsen 1998;            Mattli 1999;            Smith 1999</p> <p><b>Bieler</b> (structure of production process)</p> <p><b>Mattli and Plümper</b> (domestic reform incentives)</p>		Friis 1998a, 1998b	Haggard et al. 1993
<i>Constructivist</i>	<b>Gstöhl</b> (national identity)	Hyde-Price 2000; Tewes 1998	Fierke and Wiener 1999; Friis 1998c; Schimmelfennig 2001; Sedelmeier 2000	<b>Sedelmeier</b> (policy paradigms)
			<b>Schimmelfennig</b> (democratic community)	

factors (values and norms) have figured more prominently in accounts of eastern enlargement.

This section serves three related purposes. First, we review, and place into context, what is so far a fairly disjointed theoretical literature on EU enlargement. We do not intend to present a comprehensive overview of enlargement research, but aim to indicate major tendencies and controversies. Second, we locate the contributions to this special issue within the literature. Third, we demonstrate that the rationalist/constructivist debate is a useful way to structure and organize these controversies. However, we do not intend to systematically test the hypotheses that we derived in the previous section in the cases of EFTA and eastern enlargement. Rather, we point out where controversies in the study of enlargement reflect this debate. We reiterate that we do not conceive of the debate as mutually exclusive explanations. Many of the contributions combine rationalist and constructivist insights. At the same time, our overview also demonstrates that debates on some aspects of individual enlargement rounds can be plausibly conducted exclusively in a rationalist, and on others in a constructivist, framework.

## EFTA enlargement

### *Systemic factors underpinning applicant enlargement politics*

The main puzzle that studies of the EFTA enlargement identify concerns the applicants' enlargement politics (but see Friis 1998a). Thus, the key question pursued is: why did the EFTA countries, after a long period of deliberate non-membership in the European Community (EC), develop an interest in closer ties with, and membership of, the EC at the beginning of the 1990s?

There is a broad agreement in the literature that three major developments at the systemic level which fit well with a rationalist framework can account for the timing of the EFTA countries' interest in EU membership. The *end of the Cold War* removed an obstacle to EU membership, since the majority of the EFTA countries (except for Iceland and Norway) were neutral and non-aligned (Ingebritsen 1998: 10; Mattli 1999: 88). Changes in the world economy, namely *the oil crisis and globalization*, as well as the negative externalities resulting from the *deepening of EC integration*, created positive incentives for a stronger institutional relationship.

Ingebritsen (1997: 174) argues that, as a result of the oil shock, the Scandinavian countries had embarked upon a transformation of their economic model so that 'Scandinavian political economies shared more in common with European institutions and policies than in the previous accession period [the 1970s].' When the EC launched its internal market programme, the EFTA economies performed worse than the EC-6 in terms of economic growth and experienced a dramatic increase in outward investment. On the one hand, the internal market therefore provided a strong pull, as it offered the prospect of increasing competitiveness, while, on the other hand, the threat of

a relocation of investment had a push effect (see, for example, Mattli 1999: 82, 89; Fioretos 1997: 312–16; Bieler 2000: 41–3, 73–4). The pressure to join the internal market grew owing to a ‘domino effect’ after Austria applied for membership in 1989 (Baldwin 1995: 33).

In contrast to the broad agreement about the underlying systemic factors, there is a more controversial debate about how these systemic factors translated into domestic politics in individual countries. There are two distinctive questions to this debate, which an exclusive focus on the systemic level fails to answer. The first debate is about how these systemic factors translated into alliances of actors at the domestic level that *successfully* pushed for EU membership. The second debate goes further towards answering the question about what conditions outsiders join under by also considering cases that did *not* result in accession.

### *Composition and structure of domestic alliances leading to accession*

With regard to the first debate, Fioretos (1997) argues that export-oriented Swedish firms successfully pushed the Swedish government to pursue EU membership by threatening to relocate their investment. By contrast, Smith (1999) places more emphasis on government choice than on societal pressure as well as on the political power of economic ideas. He argues that the economic downturn persuaded the Finnish and Swedish governments of the need for a radical change in economic policy, which in turn required a fundamental change in state/society relations. EU membership was thus a means to play a ‘two-level game’ to overcome domestic corporatist arrangements, to which the EEA provided a strategic route: while the EEA did not require popular approval (except in Switzerland), the *fait accompli* of EEA membership created strong incentives for full membership.

Finally, Bieler’s neo-Gramscian analysis of Sweden and Austria echoes to some extent the more constructivist notion of economic ideas as underpinning a neo-liberal ‘hegemonic project’ (Bieler 2000 and in this issue). Otherwise, however, Bieler argues that domestic actors react to material constraints and incentives. In contrast to both Fioretos and Smith, he does not see either governments or societal groups as pushing or pushed, but observes partly cross-cutting alliances between the social forces of business and labour as well as certain state institutions. The cleavage in these alliances relates to whether they are oriented at domestic or transnational production processes.

### *Variations in domestic approval of membership*

The second debate concerns competing explanations for variations in the success of different applicants’ governments to obtain approval for their applications or accession treaties in national referenda. Drawing on aggregate data on economic performance, Mattli attributes the negative outcome of the Norwegian referendum to the fact that, for the second time after 1972, the

economic performance gap with the EU had disappeared between application and ratification (1999: 85–6). Other studies argue that these variations depended mainly on *domestic structures in the applicant countries*.

In her analysis of the Nordic countries, Ingebritsen (1998) attributes the variation in outcomes to different *leading sectors* in the Scandinavian economies. Whereas Sweden and, to a lesser degree, Finland are capital-intensive, manufacturing exporters (which makes them sensitive to changes in their export markets and to the threat of disinvestment), Norway's income is dominated by the petroleum sector which not only makes this country less dependent on the European market, but also allows it to protect its agriculture and fisheries at higher levels than the EU. This finding is corroborated by Moses and Jenssen (1998) whose analysis of the referenda at the county level shows that (subnational) regions that depend on sheltered sectors were less likely to support membership than those dependent on manufacture and trade.

Materialist and rationalist explanations, however, cannot account for the Swiss case. Observers attribute the Swiss 'no' to the EEA to socio-political characteristics like multi-nationality or to voters' concerns about neutrality, sovereignty, and direct democracy (Arndt 1998: 268; Mattli 1999: 93–4) or simply to the Swiss government's poor management of the application process (Dupont *et al.* 1999). Gstöhl (in this issue) makes a more general argument that constructivist approaches are necessary complements to an analysis of material cost and benefits, in order to understand how particular national identity constructions result in 'reluctance' towards EU membership. She emphasizes the importance of both geo-historical factors (foreign policy traditions and experiences of foreign rule) as well as socio-political institutions and societal cleavages in such identity constructions.

Thus, the story of EFTA membership applications can be plausibly told in rationalist terms. Changes in their security and economic environment led the EFTA governments to recalculate the costs and benefits of EU membership on the basis of their material interests in power and welfare. By contrast, identity-related factors that could have been an obstacle to EU membership seem to have mattered less. However, the apparent unimportance of conflicting national identity constructions seems to have been primarily the case for governmental élites. By contrast, for electorates in national referenda, presumed characteristics of national identity and political culture (corporatism, neutrality) seem to have mattered more than material cost/benefit calculations.

## Eastern enlargement

### *Applicant politics and member state politics*

In contrast to EFTA enlargement, work on eastern enlargement has focused on EU politics. The *CEECs' desire to join the EU* appears largely uncontroversial, as it conforms with both constructivist and rationalist expectations.

The argument that EU membership as part of the CEECs' foreign policy object to 'return to Europe' is motivated by their desire to cast off an 'eastern' identity, and to be recognized as 'one of us' by the European international community (see, for example, Kolankiewicz 1993; Neumann 1993), fits well with constructivist arguments. Indeed, Schimmelfennig (in this issue) suggests that the extent to which different CEECs adhere to liberal democratic norms is the most consistent indicator of their membership applications, not just to the EU, but also other European organizations that are based on these values.

Likewise, material cost/benefit calculations would lead us to expect a strong CEEC interest in EU membership. The CEECs can expect to benefit not only from full economic integration in terms of market access and incentives for foreign direct investment (FDI), but also in terms of budgetary receipts and a voice in EU decision-making. Mattli and Plümpner (in this issue) offer a formal rationalist model that explains how the extent of democratization in the CEECs – used by Schimmelfennig (in this issue) as a 'constructivist' indicator for the degree of community between the organizations and the applicants – can also be conceived as a 'rationalist' indicator for the domestic incentives and costs of membership. They argue that the main result of EU membership is to redress economic distortions and to maximize aggregate welfare. Democratic regimes are more likely to pursue such policies than non-democratic regimes. In the latter, domestic interests groups can more easily resist changes in the *status quo* that guarantees their rents at the expense of aggregate welfare.

There are also only a few theoretical studies of member state politics. Again, this appears to reflect that the member governments' preferences<sup>13</sup> conform well with rationalist expectations about cost/benefit calculations. Material conditions, in particular geographical proximity (both as a proxy for interdependence and geopolitical interests) and socio-economic structure (affecting gains/losses from competition for market access, investment, and budgetary receipts), go a long way toward explaining variations in the member governments' preferences about the speed of eastern enlargement and the selection of candidates (Schimmelfennig 2001; Sedelmeier 1994). However, the analyses of the German case by Tewes (1998) and Hyde-Price (2000) suggest that there is also a more sociological explanation of German governments' support for enlargement as the result of complex role conflicts in German foreign policy.

### *EU macro politics*

Theoretical studies of eastern enlargement have focused predominantly, and often exclusively, on the macro dimension of EU politics. The key question that these studies address is why the EU decided to open enlargement negotiations. The bulk of this literature is underpinned by a maybe surprisingly strong consensus that this question cannot be answered in a rationalist,

materialist framework. Systematic attempts to draw up a rationalist account and to test rationalist hypotheses thus mainly take the form of counterfactuals in studies that argue that the decision to enlarge presents a puzzle for rationalist approaches that focus on the distribution of egoistic, material preferences and bargaining power (Schimmelfennig 2001: 48–58; see also Sedelmeier 1998: 2):

(1) Since economic interdependence between the member states and the applicants is highly asymmetrical in favour of the EU, the *CEECs* did not possess the bargaining power to make the reluctant majority of member states accept their bid to join the EU.

(2) In the *EU*, the proponents of eastern enlargement (Britain, Denmark, Germany) were in a clear minority and could not credibly threaten the more reluctant governments with any attractive unilateral or coalitional alternative outside the EU framework (like some form of Northern–Central European integration). In game-theoretical language, then, the situation was that of a ‘suasion game’ (Martin 1993: 104) in which the *CEECs* and the proponents of enlargement had the dominant strategy to agree with whatever the ‘brake-men’ saw as in their best interest.

(3) *Association*, the initial outcome of the enlargement process, corresponds with the ‘Nash solution’ to this game because it protects the potential losers against the costs of trade and budgetary competition and, for the others, it is at least more beneficial than the *status quo*. The change from association to enlargement cannot be explained by this bargaining structure.

Thus, the debate about the EU politics of eastern enlargement has been mainly between studies that go beyond material factors. While Lykke Friis (1998a, 1998b, 1998c) and her collaborative work with Anna Murphy (Friis and Murphy 1999, 2000) emphasize the importance of social norms, much of their argument is primarily a criticism of an intergovernmental bargaining model, which can still be accommodated within a rationalist framework. This concerns, for example, the emphasis on the high degree of *uncertainty* that characterizes the EU’s negotiation processes, which limits the ability of actors to pin down their interests and preferences ahead of the negotiations and allows for agenda-setting through supranational actors; as well as the *complexity* of the negotiations themselves; the precedence created by past practices; and the spill-over from other negotiations. Other authors start more explicitly from sociological premises and emphasize the role of norms and identity in the enlargement process (Fierke and Wiener 1999; Schimmelfennig 2001; Sedelmeier 2000).

Although we should not overstate the differences, we note that there are nuances in this more sociological work, primarily concerning (1) the nature of the norms that are relevant in the enlargement process and (2) how these norms matter. With regard to the source of the relevant norms, we can analytically distinguish between (a) liberal democratic principles, (b) the EU’s

pan-European identity, and (c) specific role and identity constructions of the EU towards the CEECs.

Schimmelfennig (1998, 2001 and in this issue) emphasizes primarily the constitutive liberal values and norms of the European international community, which are at the basis of the membership norms contained in the EU treaties. Indeed, his statistical event-historical analysis in this special issue presents evidence that the more a state adheres to these liberal norms, the higher the likelihood that it is admitted to the EU (as well as to other West European regional organizations – the Council of Europe and NATO).

Friis (1998c) argues that the EU's pan-European identity was a key factor in the Luxembourg European Council's decision to start formal accession negotiations with all CEEC candidates at the same time. Fierke and Wiener (1999) emphasize primarily the importance of speech acts for the enlargement of NATO and the EU, namely the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe's 1975 Helsinki declaration. In their argument, this speech act entailed a 'promise' to encourage the spread of western democratic norms across the division of Europe which became part of the institutional identity for both organizations. Sedelmeier (1998, 2000) focuses more explicitly on the discursive creation of a particular identity of the EU towards the CEECs which asserted throughout the Cold War, as well as after its end, a 'special responsibility' of the EU for the reintegration of the peoples who had been involuntarily excluded from the integration project.

While not all accounts that emphasize the importance of social norms for enlargement are very explicit about how these norms matter, the enlargement literature reflects the debate between rationalist arguments about the constraining effect of norms on actors' strategies and constructivist arguments about their constitutive effects on actors' identities.

The rationalist view underpins the argument by Schimmelfennig (2001) that the EU's normative institutional environment enabled actors that favoured enlargement for selfish reasons to use references to institutional norms instrumentally. Such 'rhetorical action' increased their bargaining power as it allowed them to shame reluctant member states that were concerned about their reputation as community members into acquiescing in enlargement.

By contrast, Fierke and Wiener's argument that at the end of the Cold War previous 'promises' were turned into a 'threat' (1999: 725) is based on the assumption that speech acts create inter-subjective meanings that have a much deeper impact on identity constructions. Finally, Sedelmeier (1998, 2000) argues that the effect of norms is uneven across different groups of actors inside the EU. Those actors who identified most closely with the EU's identity towards the CEECs acted as *principled* policy advocates. For other actors, however, the collectively asserted 'responsibility' and the commitment that it entailed acted primarily as a constraint on open opposition to enlargement, which in turn enabled the policy advocates to move policy incrementally towards enlargement.

*EU substantive politics*

Most studies of EU enlargement politics focus almost exclusively on macro politics, with few suggestions about the implications of their insights for substantive politics. Their failure to link their explanatory factors to substantive policies limits their contribution to answering the question as to under what conditions such substantive outcomes reflect the preferences of certain actors.

At the same time, the few theoretical studies of the substantive dimension focus mainly on the early phase of the association policy, and offer little guidance on how to link these two dimensions of enlargement. For example, the comparative analysis of various areas of EU policy towards the CEECs by Haggard *et al.* (1993) argues convincingly that domestic politics, rather than theories that focus on state power or international institutions, best explain substantive policy outcomes. However, the EU's eventual decision to enlarge is then difficult to explain on the basis of domestic interest group preferences.

Sedelmeier (1998, 2001) suggests that one way to link macro and substantive politics in eastern enlargement is to focus on the role of policy advocates in the EU. He argues that the receptiveness of a group of policy-makers inside the Commission to EU identity towards the CEECs not only made them push for enlargement as such at the macro level, but also led them to advocate the preferences in substantive policies. In his contribution to this issue, Sedelmeier argues that the success of such advocacy not only depended on interest group pressure, but also on the structure of the policy process, as well as policy paradigms – the sets of ideas underpinning EU policy in the various policy areas. The combination of these factors then determines under which conditions EU policy might accommodate the preferences of the candidate countries.

## V. CONCLUSION: RATIONALISM, CONSTRUCTIVISM AND THE STATE OF RESEARCH ON EU ENLARGEMENT

For a long time, the theoretical study of enlargement has been the domain of economics. Club theory has conceived of the EU as an economic association and has focused on the economic costs and benefits of membership and expansion. The general value-added of the political science analysis of enlargement consists in the improved understanding of enlargement as a political process driven by more and other factors than just economic interests (see also Gstöhl; Mattli and Plümper in this issue). For all their different theoretical perspectives, the contributions to this issue agree on this point. Whereas rationalist institutionalism emphasizes the *political* economy of enlargement, including the autonomy concerns and re-election constraints of governments and the differential power of interest groups (Bieler; Mattli and Plümper in this issue), constructivist institutionalism brings in ideational factors such as 'national identity' in applicant politics (Gstöhl in this issue), collective identity



in EU macro politics (Schimmelfennig in this issue), and policy paradigms in substantive policies (Sedelmeier in this issue).

Obviously, both rationalist and constructivist factors play a role in enlargement decision-making. The stronger emphasis on rationalist factors in the analysis of EFTA enlargement, and on constructivist factors in eastern enlargement, are to a large extent explicable by the different characteristics of both enlargement rounds and by what researchers regard as unproblematic and puzzling. In the case of EFTA enlargement, neither the democratic credentials nor the economic capacities of the candidates were an issue; the puzzle was the timing of applications and the variance in referendum outcomes. In the case of eastern enlargement, it was the other way round.

At the same time, the specific focuses and puzzles guiding the research on each enlargement round limit the comparability of results and cast doubt on their generalizability. For instance, if applicant states are indeed mainly motivated by material self-interest, how far 'down' into their own societies and how far 'up' on the EU level do material factors 'travel' and affect enlargement outcomes? Moreover, if EU macro decisions do indeed reflect collective identity, membership norms, and legitimacy concerns, is it 'ideas all the way down' to member state politics and substantive policies? Finally, does the impact of enlargement on the EU, its member states, and the applicants result in a (constructivist) process of social learning and internalization or in a (rationalist) process creating new behavioural opportunities and constraints at the domestic and EU levels?

In sum, the state of research on enlargement demonstrates once more the limits of single-case studies (even if they are theory-oriented) and the need for an enlargement of enlargement research – to more comparative analysis and to the integration of under-researched dimensions such as member state politics, substantive policies, and the impact of enlargement.

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## NOTES

- 1 To be sure, we do not suggest that only large-n studies are useful. Qualitative studies of single cases can be just as valuable for comparative insights if they are able to test generalizable propositions.
- 2 This table does not give a comprehensive bibliography of the enlargement literature. We focus on recent theory-oriented work and its general distribution across various research focuses. References in bold print are contributions to this special issue.
- 3 Preston (1997) is the only (and a mainly descriptive) comparative analysis of successive EU enlargements.

- 4 See Katzenstein *et al.* (1999) for a recent effort to take stock of the debate and Christiansen *et al.* (1999) as well as Aspinwall and Schneider (2001) on its relevance for the study of European integration.
- 5 On the different conceptions of institutions, see, e.g., Scott (1995).
- 6 For an overview of their differences in institutional analysis, see, e.g., Baldwin (1993) and Hasenclever *et al.* (1997: chs 3–4).
- 7 The seminal article is Buchanan (1965).
- 8 Moravcsik (1998: 62, 60–7) defines a state's bargaining power as 'inversely proportional to the relative value that it places on an agreement compared to the outcome of its best alternative policy'.
- 9 However, the EP is not usually seen as a major player in enlargement politics. Garrett and Tsebelis concede that, under the assent procedure, it is 'reasonable to conceive of decision making in terms of the Luxembourg compromise period' (1996: 283). According to Bailer and Schneider (2000), the EP is constrained in the use of its veto against accession agreements because of its integrationist stance.
- 10 On 'cultural match' and 'salience' in constructivist analysis, see, e.g., Checkel (1999) and Cortell and Davis (2000).
- 11 On the role of identity, values, and norms in enlargement, see Schimmelfennig (2001; this issue); Sedelmeier (2000).
- 12 On the logic of arguing, see Risse (2000). For analyses of enlargement focusing on discourse, see Fierke and Wiener (1999); Schimmelfennig (2001); Sedelmeier (2000).
- 13 For an overview of member state preferences, see, e.g., Grabbe and Hughes (1998: 4–6).

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