The European Union's Enlargement to the East:
Can a Constructivist Perspective Explain Integration in Europe?

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Explaining integration and regionalism among states has been the purpose of many theories in international relations and underlying some of these theories is the assumption that material self-interest is a main force driving integration. For instance, neo-functionalists see material self-interest, technology, and economics as driving regionalism and integration, because they claim that it can create prosperity. Likewise neo-liberal institutionalism shares this emphasis on material self-interest but sees governments as being the major force increasing integration. Yet scholars have begun revisiting and disputing this idea that self-interest, free of normative concerns, is the only rational motive and explanation behind the integration phenomenon in international relations. The instance of regionalism that I would like to discuss is the integration of the Eastern European countries in the European Union (EU). This choice makes sense if we consider that the eastward expansion of the EU is not in the best interest of many current EU members. This greater integration of Europe can have many negative consequences in terms of economic cost, agricultural policy, social cohesion, law and order, immigration, and many other concerns for both special interest groups and governments in EU member countries. Therefore, theories on integration that refer to material interest do not adequately explain this move to expand integration in Europe.

Given the apparent disincentives for the members in expanding the EU eastward, how can we explain why the members of the EU are expanding the union to include the former countries of the Soviet bloc? I propose that constructivist theory can help explain eastern enlargement in the EU, because of its emphasis on community, values, identity and dialogue. I will begin by summarizing three groups of theories that explain regional integration. Then, I will describe disincentives to enlargement. Thirdly, I will describe a constructivist theory of how past rhetoric can entrap actors into commitments. Fourthly, I will show how such rhetorical entrapment was used to advance eastern integration. Finally, I will move on to some of the outcomes of the norm-based arguments.

The neo-functionalist perspective on regionalization has certain core assumptions. Neo-functionalists rather, stress that incremental but deliberate decisions at the hands of bureaucrats, such as the creation of institutions that would lead to further integration, as the preponderant force behind spillover of integration from the 'low politics' of technical decisions into 'high politics'.[1] Neo-functionalists would also argue that supranational institutions are the best way of solving common problems, and that the shift in institutions from the oversight of technical and non-controversial issues to decision making in 'high politics'[2] is desirable. Neo-functionalists do consider states to be central to politics and yet propose that technocrats can take part in politics and effectively plan sectors of integration.[3] Another principle of this theory is that it downplays the importance of identity, and instead emphasizes utilitarian factors in community and nation-state formation;[4] the priority in integration is the assurance of peace, security, and *economic prosperity*. According to neo-functionalists, questions of values, norms, justice, or intersubjectivity do not factor into the considerations that political actors make, and self-interested motives like the desire for economic prosperity are the only intersubjective values that communities are thought to share.

Functionalist assumptions about the role of technocrats may have been applicable to the European Community or European Union at times because technocrats are largely responsible for certain

issues such as unifying product standards or technology across the EU, for example. Even the structure of decision-making itself seems as though technocrats are governing the EU and not the elected representatives or Member State governments. It is true that integration among EU members has been deepening. For instance at one time only trade was integrated, but now currency has also been integrated as well. Neo-functionalist thinkers also point to the Commission because it is a technocratic organization whose members are not elected, and who are career civil servants, but who make technical and political decisions. However, while policies concerning technical issues are integrated, the EU has not integrated national policy in politically controversial areas like social welfare and unemployment benefits. Europe does not have a common criminal code, foreign policy, or social welfare policy either. Many would argue that the nation state remains responsible for these political domains and that technocrats have not yet supplanted the political process at the domestic level. The widening of the EU to include the Central and eastern European states is itself a decision that could not have been advanced by the technocrats themselves and requires the assent of the national governments of Member States. Although the neo-functionalist perspective is relevant in explaining some features of the EU, it does not accord enough importance to the activities of national governments in integration.

Neo-liberal institutionalism is a theoretical perspective that, for this author, better explains European integration in the EU. As Andrew Hurrell enumerates, firstly, the cooperation and collective action that institutions provide are a way for states to achieve their interests in conditions of increasing interdependence. Second, states are central actors and the aim of analysis is to determine the conditions of power and preferences that enable or constrain cooperation among these rational and self-interested actors. Third, institutions matter because of the benefits that they provide to states and because of the ways in which they alter the decision-making by introducing factors like transparency, mechanisms to discourage 'cheating', or the development of convergent expectations.[5] Andrew Moravcsik writes that state preferences, bargaining between governments and the cooperation and 'pooling' of sovereignty in institutions are important to understanding European integration and he emphasizes the central role of material interests in determining state preferences and behaviour.[6] Yet what may be lacking in the neo-liberal institutionalist conception of the EU and its processes is that it also overemphasizes the importance of material interests, but does not accord much importance to values, norms or identity in the interaction between political actors. The enlargement of the EU to include the countries of central and Eastern Europe is better explained by a combination of neo-liberal institutionalism and constructivism.

Andrew Hurrell provides a good account of some core arguments on which constructivist theories are based. When applied to questions of regionalism, constructivism focuses on regional awareness and regional identity, and on the sense of belonging to a particular regional community. He says that "instead of focusing solely on material incentives, constructivists emphasize the importance of shared knowledge, learning, ideational forces, normative and institutional structures".[7] According to constructivists, perceptions influence behaviour and therefore they consider it important to observe how identities interact with material incentives, how language and discourse influence actors, as well as how actors interpret their social context because their perceptions influence their behaviour.[8] They also claim that states are constructed by historical processes and that therefore they can be deconstructed; that interests and identities are constructed by histories and cultures, by domestic factors, and by interactions with other states. Other scholars are also claiming that identity is currently becoming more relevant in international relations, and that the politics of regionalism are becoming complicated by the existence of different identities that overlap, coexist, interact and are interdependent. For instance, conceptions of regional identity may vary from nation to nation and may conflict with each other.

Some elements of neo-liberal institutionalism that I think are applicable to Eastern enlargement are its recognition of the centrality of state actors in the political processes that increase integration, and of the bargaining between the actors. Yet neo-liberal institutionalist thinkers like Moravcsik may overemphasize the significance of material interests in state preferences and behaviours in the case of eastern enlargement of the EU.

According to neo-liberal institutionalists, state preferences are an important element for analyzing the European Union and they are also important in understanding enlargement to the East. With respect to national preferences of current EU members, many of them are not compatible with enlargement. Poorer, less developed, and more agricultural member states like Spain, Portugal, Greece, or Ireland, could incur high costs from enlargement from trade competition and budgetary competition. Many of these member countries tend to specialize in the same traditional and resource-intensive industries as countries in Central and Eastern Europe do. These industries include agriculture, textiles, leather and metalworking.[9] Therefore, the competition with candidates because of trade integration could adversely affect these poorer current member states.

Furthermore these poorer members are currently net recipients of EU budget transfers, but Central and Eastern European (CEE) members would also become net recipients of transfers. They would qualify for funding under regional development programs and under the Cohesion Policy since there is a great disparity in income between the prospective eastern members and even the least developed current Member States.[10] Agriculture comprises a very large part of the CEE economies, and therefore eastward enlargement will also affect the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). These redistributive programs comprise eighty percent of the European Union's budget[11] and major net contributors oppose an increase in EU spending. Given the magnitude of the CEECs' funding needs and the contributing members' unwillingness to significantly increase spending, reform of these funding programs is unavoidable if the EU is to accommodate the new members. To illustrate the dimensions of this dilemma, the CEE candidates produce three percent of the EU's gross national product, while they attain thirty percent of EU agricultural production, and possess forty-four percent of the productive land.[12] Furthermore, it is estimated that agricultural production will actually increase rather than diminish because the current CAP would provide an incentive for production.[13] In the current beneficiary countries, reforms and enlargement were unpopular because fewer farmers would be eligible for support and transfers would be reduced.[14] Even wealthier member states like France would be affected by reforms because its agricultural sector is relatively large and benefits from the CAP. In order for the EU to reach the objectives of the Cohesion Policy including the CEECs, the funding might even need to be reformed so that current members may no longer qualify for them after enlargement.[15] On the whole, the Mediterranean region would receive less funding, and this is problematic for Greece because Cyprus would also receive less funding as a new EU member. Others like the Benelux countries are also reluctant about enlargement, largely because they will benefit little but may have to contribute more to the EU budget. If state preferences of these countries were shaped by rational materialistic calculations as neo-liberal institutionalist scholars claim, then many member states would not have supported enlargement.

To many current members, maintaining association with the eastern European governments through the Trade and Cooperation Agreements and subsequently the Europe Agreements would have been a preferable and more rational alternative to extending full membership to the CEECs.[16] These agreements benefited the existing members while not obligating them to include CEECs in EU decision-making, or extend the CAP or regional development policies. Since 1989, the EU signed bilateral Trade and Cooperation Agreements with all of the former member states of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA). Besides the promotion of joint ventures and other economic cooperation, these agreements involved trade liberalization that could provide CEECs with hard-currency export markets as well as imports that could aid economic reconstruction.[17] However, the EU maintained protectionist

guards in the sectors where CEEC exporters could gain the most and compete effectively with industries in existing member states. Trade liberalization in the agreements did not extend to textile products, did not alter specific arrangements on trade in agricultural products, and did not affect products covered by the treaty establishing the European Coal and Steel Community.[18]

The Trade and Cooperation Agreements formed the basis for the subsequent negotiations of the Europe Agreements, where CEE governments fought unsuccessfully to gain more access to sensitive EU markets. In fact when Romania and Bulgaria negotiated Europe Agreements, Spanish steel lobbies and French agricultural lobbies were partly responsible for allowing even less access to EU markets than the Visegrad (Hungary, Czech Republic and Poland) countries received.[19] Combined with pressure on eastern European states to open up their economies, the EU's protectionism helped cause the CEECs to run a trade deficit with the EU. In 1989, the EU had a deficit with the CEECs of 600 million ecus (European currency unit) but by 1993 that deficit had turned into a surplus of 5.6 billion ecus.[20] Countries like Italy also blocked and delayed the signing of a bilateral agreement with Bulgaria,[21] and the agreements themselves acted as a delay for granting full membership. Association was a kind of solution for the EU members in their relations with eastern European governments because it seemed to satisfy some of the CEECs' desires for closet dealings with the EU. It opened up their markets to the EU, but it excluded them from the valuable dividends of membership, i.e. the CAP or participation in decision-making.

Based on their material interests, the preferences of many member states would have been to maintain association and postpone membership indefinitely. Yet despite these disincentives to enlargement we know that enlargement is indeed proceeding. What additional factors can explain this discrepancy between self-interest and the enlargement outcome? I will now draw on Frank Schimmelfennig's constructivist arguments in order to demonstrate that the strategic use of norm-based arguments helped overcome the uncooperative and self-interested behaviour of some of the member states.

The success of these arguments lies in the actors; namely, the government leaders being part of a social community with shared norms and values, and in being committed to upholding and promoting these norms and values, including their community's standard of legitimacy. Legitimacy is important to politics because it distinguishes rightful or improper ways of acquiring or exercising political power, as well as desirable or permissible political programs. Standards of legitimacy allocate different degrees of legitimacy to political actors' preferences and behaviours and act as constraints on political actors.[22] To gain legitimacy, actors are obligated to argue and justify their political goals in terms of the community's identity, norms and morals,[23] and these arguments involve rhetoric. If a political actor's preferences are in line with the community's standards of legitimacy the actor has greater bargaining power, which in turn affects outcome and which shows that outcomes are the result of more than the interplay of interests and power alone.[24]

Yet what if an actor has materially-based preferences that do not follow the community's standards? What then forces the actor to comply with the community's values? On the domestic level, public support for enlargement has tended to be low, so it is unlikely that voters would retaliate if a government actor opposed enlargement. In the realm of international relations and in the case of the EU there is no central authority that can force compliance. Therefore other mechanisms such as social influence would explain the participation of self-interested actors in the project of eastern integration. Frank Schimmelfennig posits that shaming, which entails the public exposure of illegitimate goals and behaviour, is largely at work behind eastern enlargement of the EU. He explains how such shaming can be accomplished through the use of norm-based arguments. If an actor has publicly declared support and belief in the community's standard of legitimacy in the past, and (s)he deviates from the standard out of

self-interest, members of the community can shame the actor into compliance by exposing the inconsistencies between his past declarations and his present actions. According to Schimmelfennig, the actor could then feel genuinely ashamed and would want to change his behaviour. Even if a political actors manipulated the community's standard for opportunistic reasons, they could still wish to change their behaviour out of concern for their reputation and standing in the community. But, in order to avoid conforming to the community's standard of legitimacy, the shamed actor could use rhetoric to manipulate and downplay community norms and values. However, this is difficult and risky because community standards could be unambiguously defined and also because the actor could lose credibility if seen to be cynically manipulating norms and values. So we see that political actors can be entrapped by their public declarations - even if the declarations are insincere and opportunistic - and can be exposed by their community and be forced to comply.

Representatives of reticent EU Member States faced this type of exposure and scrutiny, and it is a major reason why they modified their self-interested behaviour and became more cooperative in efforts to integrate the CEECs. Government representatives from the eastern European countries and from existing Member States pointed out that some members were not heeding their past commitments to the Community's norms, values, and identity. These community standards included pan-Europeanism, overcoming the divisions in Europe, and extending peace and prosperity to Eastern Europe. Being part of a community, being accountable to its members, sharing certain norms and values, as well as maintaining legitimacy within a community became constraints on member states, eventually making them accept enlargement. These are constraints, which neo-liberal institutionalist thinkers do not deal with, but which the constructivist perspective can better explain.

Charles de Gaulle expressed his desire to see a Europe stretching all the way from the Atlantic to the Urals. Many in the Soviet bloc remembered such Cold War rhetoric and interpreted it as a genuine commitment. In the past, speeches and documents made by EU officials and government leaders have expressed and contained ideological commitments to the integration of all European societies, and these past commitments serve presently to entrap government officials and silence open opposition to enlargement by existing members.

The organizations that preceded and led up to the European Community, like the European Coal and Steel Community, were based on a pan-European, antifascist and anti-communist ideology. Federalist Congresses of the late 1940s like the Resolution of the Congress of Montreux of the Union Européenne des Fédéralistes of 1947,[25] were directed to all European peoples and rejected the division of the continent. They expressed their hope that the rest of Europe would join integration in Western Europe and would create a "free and peaceful community".[26] The European Economic Community was founded in 1958, and the preamble to the EEC treaty states that its founding states were "determined to lay the foundations of an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe" and called "upon the other people of Europe who share their ideal to join these efforts", and accorded any European state the right to apply for membership (Art. 237 EEC Treaty).[27] In a ceremonial speech in 1968 the first president of the European Community's Commission invoked a "sentiment of pan-European solidarity" and in 1980, Francois Mitterand stated that "what we term Europe is a second-best option which alone cannot represent all European history, geography, and culture".[28] During the Cold War, whether genuine or a cheap political device, espousing pan-European ideology was an opportunity for EC member state officials to confirm their allegiance to their community, all the while it was becoming a public verbal commitment.[29] For eastern European peoples who felt oppressed by Soviet rule, these West European declarations and expressions of solidarity must have been memorable. The rhetoric must have strengthened their sense of identity as Europeans, as part of liberal Western European traditions, as belonging to the organizations of European integration. Just as the community ideology was used as a reason for integration in Western Europe, it played a role in strengthening the drive for European integration in Eastern Europe. During the Strasbourg summit in December of 1989, heads of state and government of the EC declared that:

> the current changes and the prospects for development in Europe demonstrate the attraction
> which the political and. economic model of Community Europe holds for many countries. The
> Community must live up to this expectation and these demands: its path lies not in withdrawal
> but in openness and cooperation, particularly with other European states... The objective
> remains...that of overcoming the divisions of Europe.[30]

Some government leaders in the former Soviet satellite states took these pan-European liberal commitments at face value and interpreted past rhetoric as a promise of membership, even though the EC did not make such explicit promises after the Cold War.

Leaders in the Central and Eastern European states began to point out the discrepancy between past commitments, values, and practices, and the EU's current level of support for Eastern countries seeking membership. Stalling and delaying tactics and protectionism have already been mentioned and are prime examples of this discrepancy. Past enlargements also contrast with the current treatment of eastern European candidates. In 1990, the Hungarian foreign minister argued that the Spanish and Portuguese membership was the result of a political decision and that the EU should make the same decision in the case of Eastern Europe. Others also pointed out that in the case of Mediterranean enlargement, even though the candidates were also poor relative to EU standards, the requisites of membership did not affect the initiation of negotiations.[31]

Central and eastern European government officials complained about their association arrangements - the Europe Agreements. Some questioned why they did not contain more unambiguous support for full membership, while others also pointed out that they established trade arrangements that were biased against the CEECs. The Europe Agreements were signed with Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic in 1991 and with Romania and Bulgaria by March of 1993 in later negotiations.[32] It was not until June 1993 that at their summit in Copenhagen that the European Council outlined the criteria that candidates would need to meet before future membership. Representatives for CEECs and other EU officials were disappointed by the lack of any clear link in the Europe Agreements between association and accession and the agreements did not outline a clear strategy for integration. Poland's chief negotiator for the Europe Agreements complained, "I think we were all disappointed about the format and the political climate of the talks. It soon turned into pure trade bargaining with the two sides across the table".[33] They remarked that the Agreements seemed to focus on economic factors rather than enlargement. Vladimir Dlouhy, Czechoslovakia's economics minister, commented on the negotiations for his country's Europe Agreements: "When we started our political changes and then economic reforms, we had a lot of support from Western European political circles. But now, when we are really coming to the terms of the support, only cool-blooded economic facts are put on the table".[34]

Another complaint was that the Europe Agreements seemed to be aimed at protecting the EC members against perceived economic threats from the CEECs.[35] It was clear that the Agreements were biased against the CEECs and this is apparent in the figures on trade surpluses and deficits. 83% of the EU's trade surplus from 1992 to 1997 was accumulated in trade with the ten CEECs[36]. In 1997, five years after the implementation of the first Interim Agreements, Czech Prime Minister Vaclav Klaus openly criticized the Europe Agreements for being biased in the EU's favour and for being largely responsible for the rising trade and account deficits of the Czech Republic and other CEECs.[37] We have here examples of CEEC governments uncovering how the EU, rather than seizing the opportunity to build a plan for accession, attempted to block any serious discussion of accession by using association to placate the CEECs. They also pointed out that instead of supporting the economic development of the CEECs and really assisting to prepare economically for accession, the EU was protecting its own industries while

exploiting the CEECs' cooperation and desire to integrate. Their disillusionment informs us that they had taken the Cold War promises on 'overcoming the divisions in Europe' at face value.

The governments of eastern candidate countries were not the only ones to notice the EU's double standard. In one of her speeches in 1990, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher declared that "We can't say in one breath that they are part of Europe and in the next our European Community Club is so exclusive that we won't admit them" and also stated that "the Community should declare unequivocally that it is ready to accept the Central and Eastern European countries as Members".[38] It is true the British government's promotion of 'widening' may have been done in order to halt 'deepening' of the EU. Nevertheless, remarks made by British officials had the effect of calling into question the EU's credibility. During the 1991 coup d'état in the Soviet Union, Commission president Jacques Delors urged Member States to "show consistency between their actions and their statements".[39] At another time Delors exposed some EU members' hypocrisy in their behaviour towards the candidates when he said that

It's no good making fine speeches with a sob in your voice on Sunday and then on Monday opposing the trade concessions enabling those countries to sell their goods and improve their standards of living" and that" it is not enough to send encouraging signals to the East European countries.[40]

Other representatives brought up the EU's behaviour and implications for its future Legitimacy. In referring to Italy's treatment of Bulgaria, Commissioner Sir Leon Britton expressed his concern that blocking of association negotiation Member States could damage the EC's credibility. Also in 1993, the European Parliament feared that blockage of the interim agreement with Bulgaria could damage the EU's credibility in Eastern Europe.[41].

Some Member States like Germany, Denmark, and Sweden were also promoting eastern enlargement. It is true that their preferences in this matter were influenced by material gains from possible economic ties with these eastern countries. Geographic proximity alone is a great determinant in this. However, the strength of cultural and historical links, as well as a sense of moral obligation in Germany's case, cannot be underestimated as driving reasons for these states' support of eastward expansion. The Kohl government claimed that Germany was obligated to be the primary advocate on behalf of the CEECs' aspirations for EU membership because of its historical record of aggression in the east and because of Germany's debt of thanks to the peoples of Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland for their part in precipitating the political transformations that led to Germany's reunification.[42] Enlargement was part of Germany's policy of historical reconciliation and Bonn wished to form a special relationship with Poland, similar to the one they had formed with France.[43] Since the beginning, Germany wanted the EU to give the CEECs a firm prospect for membership.

The candidate governments also referred to their identity as Europeans in order to persuade and embarrass the EU into enlargement. They have claimed that the division of Europe during the Cold War was artificial and that they share the norms and values of the West. For many eastern Europeans a considerable part of their identity was tied to their 'Europeanness' and to their belonging to the rest of Europe and to its institutions. Vaclav Havel's idea of a "return to Europe" is an example of the politics and rhetoric of identity that EU membership has involved. The Romanian ambassador to the EU had said that Romania has always been part of West European traditions", and Hungarian foreign minister considered his country's membership bid to be the "return to this Community to which it has always belonged".[44] This 'Europeanness' also served as an opposite to 'Sovietness",[45] and thus the identity became important to them and a part of the dissent against the Soviet system. It is difficult for the EU to deny people a part of their identity, and even more difficult because they themselves engaged in the

rhetoric of identity. Some groups, like EU technocrats as well as some governments, had a vested interest in the issue of a European identity and engaged in promoting it.[46]

We now turn to the outcomes of the strategic norm-based arguments and begin with its effect of silencing outright criticism of enlargement. One of the outcomes of this strategy using norm-based arguments is that the Member State governments had few rhetorical maneuvers available to respond to the rhetorical arguments exposing their hypocrisy and resistance to eastern expansion. They could not dispute pan-European liberalism because that would have meant admitting the hypocrisy of their past public statements, as well as rejecting the very principles, values and norms that were part of the foundations of the European Community. Disputing that the candidate states adhered to the EC's values or that they did not fulfill the accession criteria was not a powerful argument either because nobody was suggesting that totally unprepared candidates become members. The EC could have stated that eventual membership was open and that it would assist the candidates in preparation for it.

As a result of the rhetorical strategy of the candidates and of some Member States, opponents and skeptics of enlargement were silenced in their open criticism of eastern enlargement. France has often been seen as a hindrance, but has had to conform to the community's past commitment to integration. President Mitterand's adviser wrote that in 1991 when the President publicly declared his support for Czech, Hungarian and Polish aspirations for membership, it was done because he believed that he was in a morally awkward position and felt obliged to make the declaration.[47] His commitment was further cemented when the Hungarian Prime Minister stated that he had "confidence in the French President's word",[48] thus making it known that France's promise would be remembered, especially if it was broken. The French government has also found itself accused of being the main obstacle to enlargement and had felt obligated to soften its position because it feared losing the sympathies of the Central and Eastern European societies,[49] which indicates that integrity in the eyes of others (other members of their community) *is* important to political actors.

Another indication that member states were silenced on criticizing enlargement is that when the Commission strongly supported the enlargement, EC members did not dispute them. For instance, in the preambles of the drafts for association negotiations and in the 1992 report for the Lisbon summit, the Commission would refer to enlargement as if it were a common agreed upon objective.[50] However, if some member states deeply opposed enlargement and wished to postpone it indefinitely, this was not evident since in the many hours of discussion leading up to the Copenhagen summit, the Commission's bold advancement of eastward expansion was hardly discussed at all, let alone disputed.[51] Members must have realized that failure on the part of the EC to achieve the goal of successful integration of eastern countries could damage the EU's international credibility and fragile political image.[52] The timing and circumstances surrounding this reaction could be evidence that Member State representatives were shamed into accepting eventual membership for the former Soviet countries.

If we examine some historical points in the formal and lengthy process of eastward enlargement, one of the initial open commitments to enlargement came in 1992 when the European Council, which is a council comprising the heads of EU Member State governments, and which meets annually, agreed that it "would reach decisions on the various components of the Commission's report in order to prepare the Associate countries for accession to the Union", which meant that the CEECs could eventually become members.[53] Some critics would say that the mounting moral and political pressure for enlargement in 1992 and 1993 led to the 1993 Copenhagen summit, in which the Commission proposed criteria for EU membership to candidates and also proposed different areas of intergovernmental cooperation in order to prepare the CEECs.[54] Preceding the Copenhagen Summit, in a series of joint memoranda aimed at the Commission in 1992 and 1993, the Visegrad countries (Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia) reiterated their demand for full membership and asked the European Council to enumerate explicit conditions for membership and a timetable for negotiations.[55] In 1993, the Commission came out with a report

suggesting specific measures for deepening the association's relationships, such as amendments to the Europe Agreements that would have allowed the CEECs a greater economic benefit from trade with the EU than they had previously known. The European council also called on the Commission to submit proposals in order to replace existing trade arrangements with the Baltic States with free trade agreements. Also, with the enumeration of criteria for membership, countries such as Romania, Bulgaria and Slovenia became potential members.[56] The chain of events in this period of time would suggest that the pressure from the CEECs embarrassed the Commission and the European Council, because they highlighted the gap between the past rhetoric about welcoming the East into the EC and the actual substance of EU policy towards the CEECs.[57]

At the 1994 Essen Summit, the German government, which then held the presidency of the European Council, along with other heads of government, pushed for the Commission to deliver 'White Papers'. This was one of the procedural steps in EU enlargement which would have given CEEC governments an assessment of the stage of each candidate country's application and a detailed guide of the steps they needed to take in order to comply with criteria.[58] They entail the evaluation of each application, the readiness of each applicant to implement the *acquis communautaire*, to meet the high EU standards, as well as the application's possible specific consequences for the EC, be it in terms of structural funding, or justice and home affairs, for example.[59] In 1998, the Council of Ministers commenced accession negotiations with the "Visegrad" countries of Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic.

Also in 1998, it was decided that accession negotiations with the rest of the CEEC Applicants (Bulgaria, Slovakia, Slovenia, Romania, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia) should start in 2000, and so they did. The Commission recommended that accession negotiations take place with all of the applicants that had so far been undertaking reforms and the European Council accepted the Commission's recommendation.[60] Even the poorest applicants like Romania would eventually become members. Many member states such as Britain and Germany also favoured a more inclusive strategy for accession. Romano Prodi, the new Commission President at that time, argued that an inclusive strategy was more likely to ensure security and that EU enlargement should be guided by a 'political vision, not a technocratic one".[61]

The process leading to the enlargement negotiations was gradual and the steps involved were numerous and small. However, this does not necessarily support the functionalist -inspired explanation that enlargement was a process of 'drift' in which technocratic officials made incremental decisions. One could instead argue that governments decided that they could no longer oppose integration of the candidates, and that they would face damaging their credibility if they openly disputed it. Instead, the government actors that stood to lose materially or politically from enlargement have abandoned open criticism of enlargement itself. Yet in accession negotiations they pursue self-interested tactics in order to minimize their economic losses for when the inevitable enlargement of the EU comes to a conclusion.

In conclusion, I hope I have demonstrated that constructivism can explain regional integration in the case of eastern enlargement of the EU. I began by presenting brief summaries of how neo-functionalists, neo-liberal institutionalists, and how constructivists explain regionalism. Then from the neo-liberal institutionalist perspective, I analyzed the preferences of some EU members. I then moved on to a theoretical constructivist explanation of norm-based arguments, and then applied it to eastern enlargement. Finally, I tried to show that the strategic norm-based arguments were important in causing the integration of Eastern countries into the European Union. Norms, community, identity and dialogue all were important in European regionalism and eastward enlargement of the EU. It is always difficult to ascertain outcomes in a precise and accurate way, especially with a constructivist analysis and admittedly, constructivist perspectives have been criticized because they are difficult to demonstrate empirically. But there are clues that ethically based constraints and norm-based arguments used by actors supporting

enlargement have embarrassed and influenced other members states to accept enlargement and allow integration of the eastern countries.

This way of thinking about social influence and its place in politics recognizes that political actors are part of a community and act in a certain social context. Cost-benefit calculations, self-interested and rational decision-making, and the pursuit of self-interested preferences usually only goes so far and is often constrained by values of the political actor's community. Identity is constructed by the community and brings along with it certain responsibilities and standards of appropriateness. Norms and values are very much a part of forming political arguments, goals, bargaining and processes. State preferences do exist and often they are not in line with community standards. We also see that these interactions involve actors (in governments) making decisions that sometimes contradict their material interest.

Notes

[1] Michael Schulz et al, "A Framework for Understanding Regionalization" in Fredrik Soderbaum, andJoakim Ojendal, eds, *Regionalization in a Globalizing World* (New York: Zed Books, 2001) 9.

[2] Ibid, 9.

[3] Ibid, 9.

[4] Ibid, 20.

[5] Andrew Hurrell, "Regionalism in Theoretical Perspective" in Fawcett, Louise and Andrew Hurrell, eds, *Regionalism in World Politics: Regional Organization and International Order* (Oxford: Oxford U. Press, 1995) 55.

[6] Andrew Moravcsik, *The Choice for Europe* (New York: Cornell U. Press, 1998) 9.

[7] Andrew Hurrell, "Regionalism in Theoretical Perspective" in Fawcett, Louise and Andrew Hurrell, eds, *Regionalism in World Politics: Regional Organization and International Order* (Oxford: Oxford U. Press, 1995) 64.

[8] Ibid, 64.

[9] Ian Kearns, "Eastern Europe in Transition into the New Europe" in Gamble, Andrew and Anthony Payne, eds, in *Regionalism & World Order* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996) 78.

[10] John Agnew, "How Many Europes? The European Union, Eastward Enlargement and Uneven Development", *European Urban and Regional Studies 8*.1 (Winter 2001) 32.

[11] Ibid, 31.

[12] Frank Schimmelfennig, "The Community Trap: Liberal Norms, Rhetorical Action, and the Eastern Enlargement of the European Union", *International Organization 55*.1 (Winter 2001) 52.

[13] John Agnew, "How Many Europes? The European Union, Eastward Enlargement and Uneven Development", *European Urban and Regional Studies* 8.1 (Winter 2001) 29-38.

[14] Desmond Dinan, *Ever Closer Union*. Second Edition. (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999) 198.

[15] John Agnew, "How Many Europes? The European Union, Eastward Enlargement and Uneven Development", *European Urban and Regional Studies* 8.1 (Winter 2001) 32.

[16] Ian Kearns, "Eastern Europe in Transition into the New Europe" in Gamble, Andrew and Anthony Payne, eds, in *Regionalism & World Order* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996) 79.

[17] Ibid, 78.

[18] Ibid, 79.

[19] Ibid, 79.

[20] Ibid, 81.

[21] Frank Schimmelfennig, "The Community Trap: Liberal Norms, Rhetorical Action, and the Eastern Enlargement of the European Union", *International Organization 55*.1 (Winter 2001) 56.

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