



HOW CAN WE EXPLAIN THE EASTERN ENLARGEMENT PROCESS OF THE EU?

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Abstract:

Since the Treaty of Rome, the expansion phenomenon of European Union is the most important political tool of the union. The Eastern Enlargement of the EU, the number of countries that are both included besides old and new members in terms of political, social, and economic differences have been the most compelling expansion. This study tries to explain the contributions of East expansion to the integration of Europe in the context of three theories.

Keywords:

European Union, Enlargement, Eastern Enlargement, Integration Theories, Neo-Functionalism, Liberal Intergovernmentalism, Social Constructivism

1. Introduction

The goal of the Europe Project is to gather People who are similar, share common emotions, try to protect common actions and interests. (Further Enlargement 2006:18).

Regional union showed up as an evolutionary process. Approximately in 50 years, EU evolved to 27 members from containing 6 members of commerce-oriented regime in monetary, environmental, and structural perspectives (Dinç, 2011: 206-207).

As Olli Rehn mentioned, EU is not a fossil; it is a vital habitat. He remarks another dimension of the same reality as well. According to Rehn, Enlargement Policy is the essence of the soft power for EU. Enlargement Perspective has been presented in order to contribute to running democracy, and market economy, and also for being allied in the face of mutual problems (Rehn, SPEECH: 27.10.2006). EU should correct etiquette according to the changing conditions and also it should keep up with regional and global changes in the world. Enlargement policy is one of the most significant policies since the beginning for EU.

Emergence and evolution of the EU are of the historical processes (Gilbert, 2008: 643). Eastern Enlargement has historical dimensions from various aspects, this situation came up as a historical period as prevalently mentioned. As Milan Kundera, intellectual in the Centre Europe, uttered; West Europe has a historical duty for disloyal East European Countries.

When the eastern bloc collapsed, the ultimate borders of EU in the eastern part of Europe emerged as a problem. Essentially, the Soviet Union was closing down the eastern border of the European continent. When the Cold War suddenly ended, the acceleration of globalization was very effective on the Eastern Enlargement of EU as well. Under these circumstances, in the summit of Copenhagen, the EU leaders came together and declared that if the middle and eastern European countries are ready from political and economical perspective, their candidanship will turn into full membership as well (Copenhagen, 1993).

2. Consolidation Theories Within the Context of Eastern Enlargement

Since the Rome Treaty, the phenomenon of integration is on the agenda of the European Union as one of the most important political tools of the EU. In the historical process, negotiations were made with each of these countries; developments such as rule of law, freedom of expression, civil rights, fair trial were put into practice. The work was

done under theories and opinions with the aim of explaining the Europe integration. Theories and approaches that attempt to explain this process the Union has developed and diversified along with the evolution. In this section, the eastern enlargement of the EU as part of consolidation perspective has been utilized.

3. Neo-Functionalism and Eastern Enlargement

In Neo-Functionalism perspective; financial, monetary, and technical areas are less important in political arena, and the start of integration. This situation acts as a trigger in political consolidation, and this creates an overflow effect. Ari, 2004: 462). If the financial concretion does not come true, this step is the dominant factor in the EU; the political concretion and its extension, military concretion will not come true. This thesis represents this sort of notion as well. Some authors say that at the end of 1950's Neo-Functionalist approach, which Ernst Haas developed, the EU concretion arised as a reaction against Cold War until the collapse of the Soviet Union. However, these explanations remained incapable of telling the concretion and expansion of EU that emerged especially after 90's (Haas, 1958: 27; Moravcsik, 2005: 277; Karacasulu, 2007: 89).

On the other hand, some authors argue that it is not possible to ignore Neo-Functionalist approach in order to explain new enlargement waves of the EU. Because Neo-Functionalist approach has some reference points for telling or referring the enlargement waves. As you know, EU has some supranational institutions like the EU Commission. Moreover, these institutions played a role in the enlargement process of the EU. For instance, EU Commission provides coordination for Eastern European Countries in order to give financial aid. According to Neo-Functionalist approach, EU Commission uses the enlargement process in order to become more powerful in the decision-making process in EU (O'Brennan, 2001: 171).

Apart from this, the other connection of Neo-Functionalist approach to enlargement process became as Christopher Preston asserted a new kind of diffusion (geographic spillover) in 1997. This concept means that the policies of the EU to deploy to the other neighbor countries as well. As a result, the other states will perceive this step as a successful concretion, and they will demand to get involved in this process. This situation is not valid for all neighbor countries, and it makes claimant's attitude create fraud (O'Brennan, 2001: 173; Çakır, 2001: 36).

4. Liberal Intergovernmentalist Approach and Eastern Enlargement

Liberal intergovernmentalist approach tries to explain eastern enlargement policy with 'theory of bargaining' in the context of EU. Candidate countries are in weak positions in the negotiations for becoming full-members. This makes candidate countries dependent on EU market and EU capital. In order to benefit from financial aids, candidate countries are obliged to accept severe conditions in the negotiations. Candidate countries want to be included in the process of integration. This preference represents a rational stance. Because, if the candidate countries are out of the process of integration, these countries may face damages from the import restriction policy of EU (Moravcsik, 1993: 87). As Schimmelfening mentioned, that structuralist account enlargement is related to the rational choice approach. Schimmelfening resolves 'puzzle of enlargement,' and he refers to the 'rhetorical entrapment.' To illustrate, Germany and Denmark see this eastern enlargement process as their common interest toward them. They used normative arguments in strategical ways as well. In this perspective, the norms have a great impact on actor's behaviors.

Norms and identities affectively function in the negotiations as a cost-benefit element. Actors try to explain their actions with the rational choice theory (Sjursen, 2002:5). Liberal Intergovernmentalist view has a deep area of effect in bargains and preferences in expansion process. As Frank Schimmelfening mentioned, the preferences of the member states depend on the speed of EU enlargement and the size of enlargement. For instance, the enlargement movement on the East European Countries leads to different opinions. Some of the member states (Austria, Germany, England) totally supported the eastern enlargement as well. However, some other member states (France, Italy, Belgium) stayed silent or tried to limit the enlargement process. According to the theory, the preferences of the member states on EU enlargement are based on the geographical location and geographical position, commercial interests, geopolitical interests. For example, the countries in the EU who have borders with the eastern European countries supported the idea of the scope of enlargement for East European Countries. But the other member countries dwelled on much more restricted enlargement. Italy and Greece became imperturbable against

enlargement. Because with this enlargement, the difference of development rates of the EU showed up itself and for this reason, member states encounter the problem of insufficient money from the Community Budget as well (Schimmelfennig, 2001:88). Furthermore, some candidate countries are superior in economical areas and products some of the members countries specialize in. Member countries worry that if these candidate countries become full-members, they may suffer economically. In addition, there is an asymmetrical dependency between candidate countries. This situation indirectly affects other countries. And this situation leads to those candidate countries looking positively to the enlargement movement. For example, Germany has influence on Central and East European countries as Germany obtains some gains from east expansion. Germany wants to increase its effectiveness and power in the decision-making process of east expansion. (Grabbe & Hughes, 1998:89).

Another example is the decrease of communication and transport costs, and the acquisition of economic yields. As can be understood from all these considerations, the preferences of the countries oriented to economic and political concretion are focused on profit and loss account; several factors are very effective in this issue (Wiener & Diez 2004:90). About the approach of liberal intergovernmentalist specified points on matters links together with enlargement of European integration in the summit of Copenhagen in 1993 of the European Council that the countries which have partnership relations with the member countries. In the European Council, there was an expression that the candidate countries may become full members of the EU. Until this decision, the interests and preferences of the member states did not change, and among the national actors, the power of bargaining of the theory of liberal intergovernmentalist did not become different than asymmetrical qualifications. Liberal intergovernmentalist approach cannot give a response to explain why the member states altered their idea about partnership relations with eastern European countries regarding their full membership. Liberal intergovernmentalist approach lost its qualification of explaining eastern enlargement. At the same time, liberal intergovernmentalist approach ignored the role of determining EU policies by supranational institutions such as Eu Commission and EU Parliament. It ignored EU Commission's function about executing negotiation process of the candidate countries and also ignored the EU Parliament's function on ratifying membership of the candidate countries as well (Miles, 1995:598).

5. Social Constructivist Approach and Eastern Enlargement

Towards European integration theoretic approach and within the scope of European expansion, another approach is social constructivism. Rational perspective, which was dominant until this point, gives its place to irrational evaluations after this point. Because, with the social constructivist, rather than rational preferences shaped by values and norms, the behaviors of actors become the basic determinant in the international area.

Social constructivism considers East expansion process as a supporting point for the future of Europe. Social Constructivism tries to clarify the process of eastern enlargement shaped by values and norms by relevant actors with their manners and attitudes, not just from material interests and material behaviors under the disguise of social learning. Values and norms such as; common culture, common history, European identity, democracy, rule of law, respecting human rights, market economy are the fundamental evaluation criteria in the EU expansion process. (Mercan, 2011: 77).

In an ethical-political discourse, justification will rely on a particular conception of the collective 'us' and a particular idea of the values represented by a specific community. Here, one would seek to justify enlargement by referring to duties and responsibilities emerging as a result of belonging to a particular community. From this perspective, communicative processes are context-bound: they are only possible in collectivities that have a distinct sense of identity (Sjursen,2006:8-9). The EU would prioritize enlargement to states towards which it had a particular sense of kinship-based duty. This would suggest that enlargement is not only or not at all a matter of (material) interests but also a matter of values and that a sense of common identity (Sjursen,2006:10). What emerges as a predominant pattern from the same entity. The aim of policies towards Eastern Europe was to 'overcome the division' and 'to fulfill the aspiration of the peoples of eastern Europe to rejoin Europe' "(Sjursen, 2006: 12).

In fact, a comparison of the qualitatively different reasons presented by the EU for enlargement to the CEECs and to Turkey suggest that 'a sense of "kinship-based duty" contributes to an explanation not only of the general decision to enlarge to Eastern Europe but of the differentiated support for enlargement to this group of states in comparison to Turkey (Sjursen, 2006:11-12).

Reference to the sense of a shared destiny and a duty to enlarge was a regular feature in the arguments for enlargement to Eastern Europe. According to Commission President Santer (1998), 'The collapse of the Iron Curtain ended the Cold War and presented us with a unique opportunity to unite Europe... We have a historical and moral duty to seize this opportunity'. According to French Prime Minister Alain Juppé (1993), the West Europeans had a 'duty to solidarity' with the Central and East Europeans (Sjursen,2006:12). In this context de Gaulle's vision of a 'Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals' was to a large extent an anti-American policy, it was also a policy based on a vision of Europe as one of cultural identity. The borders between east and west in Europe were often referred to as 'artificial' (Sjursen,2002:506).

Concerning Turkey, the justifications for enlargement were different. Rather than a natural part of the European family, Turkey was described as an important partner to Europe. In the same speech, relations with Turkey were discussed together with relations with Israel and Morocco, while Eastern Europe was described as 'belonging to the European family of nations' (van den Broek 1993a; Sjursen,2006:12). When a rationale for admitting Turkey was presented, it was explicitly linked to utility defined in terms of security: 'We want a stable, Europe-oriented Turkey'(Verheugen 1999; Sjursen,2006:12) and 'Turkey's importance stems from its strategic position.' Turkey was described as an important neighbor but lies in a different region. There was no suggestion of 'reunifying Europe'by enlarging to Turkey.' There is a general recognition of Turkey's importance to the Union... Turkey's geostrategic position and its steadfastness over the decades as a secular, Muslim country... reinforces its position as a valued neighbor in a sensitive region' (van den Broek 1997f; Sjursen, 2006:13). The main reason for enlarging to Turkey presented in the 1990s was neither that Turkey must be returned to Europe nor that the EU had a particular duty toward Turkey, but that Turkey was strategically important: The European Union and Turkey are linked in a strategic partnership. The Union wants to further integrate Turkey into the European structures. We need Turkey as a reliable partner in foreign and security policy. We want Turkey to be a stable democracy, respecting the rule of law and human rights. Our interest is that Turkey plays a constructive role in our common efforts to contribute to peace and stability in the region (Verheugen,2000a: 4-5; Sjursen, 2006:13). With regard to Turkey, the reference to duty or kinship was virtually absent in the 1990s. Only two references to Turkey as part of the 'European family' have been found. One is in a speech by Hans van den Broek in Bucharest.' All are aware of the important geopolitical and strategic factors which favor Turkey's integration into the European family' (van den Broek 1997g; Sjursen,2006:13). This might contribute to our understanding of why Turkey has not been prioritized in the EU's enlargement policy. Besides, economical support to Poland in the first East expansion wave can be explained with blood relations. Blood relations argument is a significant factor which contributes to expansion. It is less prepared than the other eastern European countries, and the negotiations with the EU are lagging behind the others (Sjursen,2002:505). It would seem as if history works against Turkey and in favor of Eastern Europe. As Neumann and Welsh have shown, Turkey is together with Russia in one of the human collectives that have historically been one of Europe's 'others.'

Social constructivist approach settlements of the foundation of EU enlargement with norms and values. At the same time, this approach came open to criticism because Social constructivist approach ignores rational factors available for enlargement by other triggers. Frank Schimmelfening put forward that there is a need of establishing a bond between policies which contains bargaining process and collective identity, and norms. As a result, Social Constructivism approach does not bring EU membership requests of East European countries to the front. Because, this approach suggests conditions for these countries such as making political reforms, enhancing socio-economic conditions, and meeting rational and concrete expectations in security. In this way, this approach is potentially weak to explain enlargement waves (Schimmelfenning, 2001:62).

6. Conclusion

This study examined the fundamental dynamics, important subjects, old members, new candidates, and the perspective of Turkey on the Eastern Expansion of European Union in the context of three different approaches (Neo-Functionalism, Liberal Governmentalism, and Social Constructivism). Under all three theories in the assessment, it has been accepted that Turkey is one of the most crucial and strategic partners. It is emphasized on that from Atlantic to the Urals, and also the borders between West Europe and East Europe are actually artificial as mentioned. However, as expressed in this study, Turkey is not seen as a member of the European Family.

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