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The EU Entrapped Between Enlargement and Integration

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Introduction

There is a great tension between the widening and deepening of integration within the EU, with the EU having simultaneously pursued both since the early 1990's. The results of such a pursuit are beginning to unfold, or rather, have unfolded and contagion of the problem is at the centre of debates. Brexit poses a serious, yet not terminal challenge to the European Union, although a similar referendum in France or in even in Italy could well be. In the early 2000's, there were claims relating to integration overstretch, which centred around ideas that with the accession of numerous new states, which have political orientations differing from those of the pro---integration core of the EU, the European Union would cease in its ability to function effectively.

Since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, the external borders of the European Union have expanded deeper and deeper into the former Soviet space. The first round of enlargement took in Austria, Finland and Sweden in 1995; Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in 2003; Poland, Hungary, Czechia and Slovakia in 2004; Bulgaria and Romania in 2007 and Croatia in 2013. This enlargement has occurred simultaneously with the deepening of integration--- Maastricht, the failed European Constitution and the Lisbon Treaty--- however, what is apparent is the lack of a compelling European identity. The lack of European identity and a subsequent united Europe has opened the prospect of disintegration and, critically, is the result of the simultaneous pursuit of vertical and horizontal integration.

This paper will proceed in three parts; firstly, it will give a timeline of the development of the European Union, charting both the territorial enlargement and deepening of integration, part two will seek to unearth the problems that the simultaneous pursuit of horizontal and vertical integration has resulted in, with a focus on latter, and part three will offer some solutions to the problems in part two. The paper will conclude that the EU's joint pursuit of two types of integration has led to overstretch and the lack of development of vertical integration exposes great problems that have come with horizontal enlargement and have left the union entrapped between enlargement and disintegration.

Part 1: Timeline of Expansion and Integration

The 1990's

The Maastricht Treaty, signed in 1992, had the central aim of integrating Europe. The treaty brought into existence the European Union as it is known today and was focussed on the establishment of the pillars. The first of these pillars is the most important for the focus of this paper--- the supranational pillar, in which the central institutions of the EU are predominantly active (The European Commission, The European Parliament and the European Court of Justice). The treaty also expanded the role of the European Council, it retained its agenda setting role and became the highest authority over EU Common and Foreign Security Policy. The council became the central political authority of the EU. However, Maastricht also extended the power of the European Parliament, making it a co--- legislator along with the Council, this move was aimed at reducing the democratic deficit and advancing a common European identity. It has been praised for establishing a closer relationship between the EU institutions, yet, as will be argued, it is at the heart of EU problems--- primarily as a result of increased complexity in EU decision making.

The impact of Maastricht and its successes and failures have been debated, yet what can easily be ascertained is the treaty's ignorance regarding the issue of European citizenship and regarding the creation of a common European identity. Debates on the treaty focussed most heavily on the granting of the new powers to the European Parliament and on the two intergovernmental pillars (the Common Foreign and Security Pillar and the Police and Judicial Cooperation in Criminal Matters pillar) along with the creation of the Schengen area. Therefore, what was really missing from the debates and treaty was the issue of tackling input legitimacy in the EU--- although the European Parliament's powers were extended, the lack of focus on a common European citizenship, along with not enhancing input legitimacy has led to problems of integration, the effects of which are now being realised.

Immediately after the Maastricht Treaty, negotiations began regarding the accession of three new countries into the union--- Austria, Finland and Sweden. This was the round of accession with the least impact. The three joining states were wealthy and culturally aligned with existing membership, however, it must be noted that with the exception of Austria, the accession referenda in Finland and Sweden revealed rather sceptical attitudes towards the EU.

The 2000's: The period of Over---Expansion

The 2004 enlargement remains the most expansive of any single round of enlargement with the joining of ten new states, including Hungary, the Baltic states, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Poland, Cyprus and Malta. The accession of such a number of states in one round of expansion was expected to problematize the decision making processes within the EU, however, these fears have not come to fruition--- there has been no paralysis of the decision making output of the EU institutions, however, without appropriate measures having been taken in Maastricht for the the increasing of input legitimacy and the development of a European citizenry. This culminated in the failed European Constitution, which was rejected by the Dutch and French voters in 2005. It failed in the year after the largest round of EU expansion, a Eurobarometer Poll in 2003 (EB 59) found that only one third of the population of the existing 15 members thought that enlargement should be a priority of the EU, further, those most against enlargement were the North---Western European countries.

The round of enlargement of 2007 included the accession of Bulgaria and Romania. It is politically and legally the most difficult of the rounds of accession due to the monitoring, which had to be done post accession. Both countries had the lowest GDP per capita upon entry and both countries had severe issues regarding corruption and organised crime, The EU initially planned that while accession could proceed, reforms could be implemented in these areas with a period of monitoring for three years; this allowed for their quick accession but also ensured that both countries would fulfil the criteria of EU states. However, the implementation of reforms has been problematic and the monitoring process continues.

Lastly, the Lisbon Treaty of 2009 aimed at improving and enhancing the democratic legitimacy of the European Union. The treaty increased the powers of the European

parliament, making the legislative process effectively bicameral with the parliament taking its place alongside the Council. The Treaty also made legally binding the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union--- in effect bringing into force much of what was in the failed European Constitution. The Lisbon Treaty, therefore, after a period of rapid horizontal expansion sought to improve the running of the union by reducing the growing democratic deficit and by integrating current members more deeply through the Charter of Fundamental Rights.

This section has sought simply to describe and show the dual processes of vertical and horizontal integration working in tandem with each other. In the first two decades of the existence of the EU, the union has undergone huge change--- the accession 16 new members and the deepening of integration. While there are major issues currently with the new accession countries of Bulgaria and Romania, the following sections will discuss the problems that have resulted from vertical integration--- or rather the lack of vertical integration, which is needed to both solidify the EU as a single political community and for making future enlargement possible.

Part Two: The Institutional Problems

Problem One: Effectiveness before the individual

To begin this section, we want to make the assertion that the average EU citizen knows little about the EU and, that this problem is accentuated by the lack of input legitimacy. It is not that there is a lack of channels for democratic input, indeed there are three channels--- the supranational channel which includes European Parliamentary election, the intergovernmental channel where the domestic political arena can influence countries positions in the EU and the transnational channel where interest groups are at work. Thus, the issue is not that there are no available channels for citizens to participate but rather, that the institutional design, due to its multi---level character, of channels of input do not make it clear in which channel the citizen should seek redress as problems and issues transcend the three channels. Importantly, this limits the visibility of where decisions are made, by who and how, thus limiting accountability and showing that efficiency and effectiveness is put before accountability.

The effectiveness and efficiency over accountability argument is evident in the legislative process in the EU. The Council of the European Union shares the legislative function with the European Parliament. In the council, transparency and accountability give way for the 'culture of consensus' whereby open voting in the council is avoided. The European Parliament has open voting with just a simple majority to pass. However, the fear of legislative paralysis in the has led to an increase in the number of trilogues, or early agreements as shown in the graph below.

Source:
Bressanelli et al. 2016

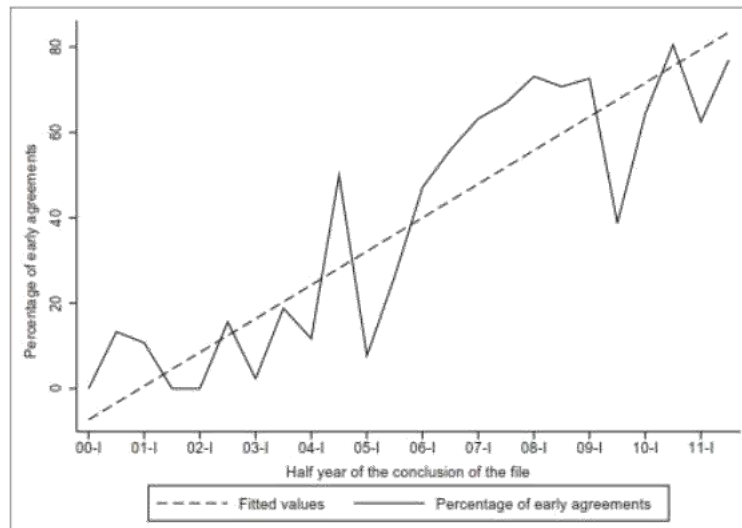


Figure 1. Percentage of EAs per half year (1999–2011).

Trilogues are the process whereby representatives of the three legislative bodies--- the Commission, the Council and the European Parliament--- meet behind closed doors, negotiate and when compromise is reached it is accepted in the Council and the parliament at first reading. While trilogues have been effective in preventing a backlog of legislation by increasing the speed of the decision making process, they are problematic when it comes to democracy. Policy negotiations have increasingly moved from the formal political forum to closed and exclusive arenas where only a few actors are present. The EU, therefore, places efficiency above accountability, alienating European citizens from the decision---making process.

Problem two: Policy Drift

The second problem relating to the alienation of the individual from the EU is policy drift, which is particularly apparent in the European Parliament. Policy drift in the European Parliament arises from the fact the MEP's in the Parliament tend to be more in support of integration than the governments of member states and of the average European citizen. The pro---integration policy drift arises from the fact that pro---integrationalist politicians are more likely to run for election to the European parliament and Eurosceptical citizens are more likely not to vote in European Parliamentary elections--- while this is changing at present with a higher percentage of Eurosceptical MEP's in the current parliament than in any previous parliament, nevertheless, they still represent a minority, leading to policy drift.

Problem Three: A lack of any true European demos

The failed European constitution was perhaps the most telling of the evidence that there in no true conception of European demos. The Maastricht Treaty signed in 1992 went much further with regards to integration than any previous treaty. The treaty contained provisions to deepen integration to the extent that an European demos would be created--- 'every

person holding the nationality of a member state shall be a citizen of the union,' however, despite attempts at creating this European demos--- through the European Anthem, the European Union flag and the failed European constitution, European identity remains weak.

National loyalties which are limiting support for integration, Carey (2002: 390) argues that it is how states 'define themselves culturally, politically and economically that is important to the dynamics of integration...prospects for future integration rest on the EU's ability to create a European identity.' Carey (2002) looks at how national identity relates to an individual's feelings of positive attachment to their nation and how such feelings affect support for European integration. The link between positive attachment and opposition to European integration arises from the notion that "the growth of scope of the European Union in the realm of economics, politics and culture...impinges on this view of the nation" (Carey 2002: 391).

National Identity was prevalent in the Brexit referendum campaign. One key battleground that the referendum campaign was fought over on was sovereignty. Sovereignty, particularly in the British case, is a concept of great political contestation and Maastricht only complicated the matter more. The debate on sovereignty was highly politicised before, during and after the referendum. The issue of sovereignty was at the very centre of Cameron's new deal, which was ultimately rejected by the British electorate. The new deal contained two central provisions relating to sovereignty; firstly, the deal contained a provision stating that if national parliaments acted together in compelling numbers, they would have the power to veto EU proposals, secondly, EU treaties would be written in such a way that it granted the U.K the opportunity to be exempt--- a provision aimed at reducing the integration of the U.K into the EU. The leave campaign, during the referendum, played strongly on the nationalistic sense of sovereignty, arguing that continued European Union membership was an affront to sovereignty, arguing that a vote to leave the union was a vote to 'take back control'--- one of the UKIP slogans for the campaign, included in the UKIP rhetoric was notions of a UK independence day--- a nationalistic celebration marking Brexit. One of the major campaign issues, therefore, was highly politicised due to the use of national identity by elites.

The European elite have failed to capture the imagination of the European citizenry, they have failed to create a Europe as a common home for Europeans, with national identity standing in the way. However, individuals are not restricted to single identities and it is possible, the existence of national identity and European identity need not be mutually exclusive and the EU should focus on the harbouring a greater sense of European identity. The first two problems highlighted above--- the idea of effectiveness placed about accountability and that of policy drift--- act only to alienate the average EU citizen, which can be seen in the constant falling of electoral turnout of the European Parliament elections. Further, it is this alienation and lack of common shared European citizenship which risks disintegration of the European union.

Part 3: Solutions

Solution 1: Moving towards majoritarianism

This final section will offer a solution to the institutional problems, which may make the decision---making process more transparent. The current institutional setup of the EU is

based on the concept of consociational democracy--- a framework adopted to provide political stability to deeply divided societies. Policy is decided upon by a grand coalition of elites who favour integration, member states retain their autonomy and all nationalities are represented in both the EU's political and administrative bodies. Using consociational principles in the EU has been justified by the 'trilemma' that you cannot have political stability, high political diversity and majoritarianism together in one system. The EU with its 28 nationalities has always been assumed to be a diverse a community, thus the EU has negated majoritarianism in order to provide stability, however, it is this form of consensual politics where the issues regarding the democratic deficit lie--- the lines of accountability are much less clear than they are in a majoritarian system.

Hale and Koenig---Archibugi (2016) study the issue of the possibility of having more majoritarianism in the EU. In their paper they seek to discover whether the community is as diverse as is suggested and whether the conditions do in fact exist for democracy to flourish. They find that the EU is not as polarised as had been previously thought and that the existence of cross---cutting cleavages in the EU are significantly high, meaning that the conditions exist for greater majoritarianism. By adopting greater majoritarianism into EU decision---making, the great problem of accountability would be lessened, trust in the EU would rise as citizens could see both how and where decisions are made, thus making them more likely to participate.

Solution 2: Working towards a European Demos

The current existence of a European demos is a moot point with most falling on the side of their being no or, at very best, weak European demos. Maastricht began the process of institutionalising the European citizenry, yet it's development has been problematic (for example the rejection of the European Constitution). It was discussed earlier that national identity inhibits a truly European identity, however, the existence of one does not negate the existence of the other--- the EU, if it wants to continue to grow and be successful, needs to better develop the secondary European identity. While the first solution will go some way to allowing greater accountability of EU bureaucrats and politicians, the EU also needs to better connect the citizens to the output of the EU. One such possible solution would be the changing of the European party system and the creation of truly European parties, which operate on the European level and not the domestic. This has been suggested and criticised before this paper, however, with the research of Hale Koenig---Archibugi (2016) finding the existence of large cross---cutting cleavages in the EU and greater coherence amongst the European population, this is perhaps a possibility and it would succeed better in bringing citizens together as citizens from different member states would be voting for the same parties, creating something more akin to a political community.

Lastly, the EU needs to continue its cultural and educational programmes--- such as Erasmus exchange, which, we have not yet felt the full impact of yet, due to the lag period of students participating during youth, however, it goes some way to explaining the differences in support of the EU by the youth and elderly, which were manifest in the Brexit result. However, moreover, this is perhaps where a word of warning is necessary. If the EU desires to create a deeply integrated union, it is perhaps only possible between countries which share an affinity for one another--- the EU needs to choose very carefully who it lets into the union. Turkey is a case in point--- while Turkey's membership of the union now seems very distant, its often discussed membership reveals citizen concern. Eurobarometer

255 (2006) revealed that most EU citizens were opposed to Turkish membership, with 40% believing Turkey belongs to Europe historically and culturally. Therefore, if the aim is to create a deeply integrated union with the existence of a European identity and citizenry, the enlargement process cannot be deep and inclusive, but rather deep and exclusive.

Conclusion

The European Union has pursued a policy of simultaneous vertical and horizontal enlargement, however, there is a trade off between enlargement and integration. The paper charted the development of the EU in its first two decades and argued that the elite driven nature of the EU has placed the effectiveness and efficiency of the EU and the goals of European politicians above the average citizen, which has culminated in individual alienation from the community and thus limited the development of a European identity. The EU is at risk of disintegration, its desire to simultaneously integrate vertically and horizontally has left behind people, created tensions between the old member states, the EU institutions and the new member states and given rise to disenchantment and Euroscepticism, with Brexit being an example.

The EU must decide between what kind of union it wants to create--- one that is deep and exclusive, or one that is minimal and inclusive as vertical and horizontal integration are mutually exclusive. If the European Union seeks the deeper integration of member states then, in order to prevent disintegration, it must reform the decision---making processes, improve input legitimacy and work to create a common Europe, failure to do so will lead to the next Brexit.

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