The Double Puzzle of EU Enlargement

Liberal Norms, Rhetorical Action, and the Decision to Expand to the East

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1 Introduction[1]

In this paper, I analyze the decision of the European Union (EU) to expand to Central and Eastern Europe.[2] More precisely, as it is still uncertain when, under which conditions, and (some would even argue) whether Eastern enlargement will actually take place, I ask why the EU opened accession negotiations with five Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries (the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, and Slovenia) in March 1998.

The analysis is embedded in and guided by the current "great debate" between rationalist and sociological or constructivist approaches to the study of international institutions in the International Relations (IR) discipline.[3] I argue that, in the perspective of this theoretical debate, the decision of the EU to expand to the East confronts us with a double puzzle:

On the one hand, the decision-making *outcome*, the opening of accession negotiations with CEE countries, is puzzling for *rationalist* theory. A rationalist cost-benefit analysis shows that Eastern enlargement cannot be accounted for as a result of selfish and instrumental choice by the EU member states. In a neorealist, power-based perspective, it is neither necessary nor useful for balancing purposes. From a neoliberal, interest-based viewpoint, Eastern enlargement is puzzling because the expected costs of full CEE membership exceed the expected benefits for the EU, the domestic and international constellations of bargaining power in the EU should have counteracted this decision, and above all, association offers the current members an efficient institutional solution that allows them to benefit from economic integration without having to bear the costs of political integration.

Instead, the decision to expand can be explained in a sociological perspective in which the EU is conceived of as the organization of a European, liberal international community and in which enlargement is understood as the inclusion of countries that have come to share its liberal values and norms.

On the other hand, the decision-making *process* that led to the opening of accession negotations is a puzzle for *sociological* institutionalism. It is difficult to see the appropriate or taken-for-granted behavior that sociological theories would let us expect. Instead, the preferences and the behavior of the main political actors in the EU system correspond much better with rationalist assumptions. The enlargement preferences of the member states reflect a common North-South divide in EU politics and can be attributed to different degrees of interdependence with Central and Eastern Europe as well as different sensitivities to the reform measures that must precede the admission of CEE countries. The initial decision-making

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process, in turn, is best characterized as a controversial bargaining process in which the EU tried, at first, to deflect the CEE demands for full membership and then gave in to these demands only reluctantly and in small increments.

Thus, the problem is to explain how a process predominantly characterized by rational action resulted in a normatively determined outcome. This is, of course, a very familiar theme for social scientists. The search for the causal link between "private vices" and "public virtues" is at the core of modern social theory, and has strongly motivated theory-building in IR since its beginnings. Currently, theoretical developments in sociological institutionalism as well as empirical research on norm transmission in the international system converge on the recommendation to disentangle rational choice and ontological materialism and put more emphasis on strategic action in institutional environments.

As a solution to the double puzzle, I propose "rhetorical action" as an intervening mechanism between egoistic preferences and normative collective outcomes. Rhetorical action is the strategic use of arguments. It presupposes both rational actors and an institutional environment: In an intersubjectively structured environment, rational political actors need legitimacy and must take into account common values and norms but manipulate them through the strategic use of arguments. Thereby they are able to modify the collective outcome that would have resulted from constellations of interests and power alone.

How did rhetorical action intervene in the process of Eastern enlargement? During and after the Second World War, the project of European integration was based on the vision and legitimating ideology of a pan-European security community of liberal welfare states. This ideology is reflected in the membership rules of the European Union to this day. Under the conditions of the Cold War, however, a "decoupling" took place: The pan-European vision was upheld for reasons of legitimacy but became ritualized and detached from the practical activity of the Community. The CEE states and their supporters in the Community system had to recouple practice and ideology. As their material bargaining power was small, they justified their claims to full membership by the constitutive values and norms of the EU, manipulated the European identity and the accession criteria to their advantage, and exposed inconsistencies between the community's standard of legitimacy, its past rhetoric, and its past treatment of outside states, on the one hand, and its policy toward the CEE countries, on the other.

Once the ceremonialization of the Community's pan-European liberalism was broken, the opponents of a commitment to Eastern enlargement found themselves rhetorically entrapped. They could neither openly oppose nor threaten to veto enlargement without damaging their credibility and legitimacy as community members. With the support of the Commission's proposal power and the Council presidencies of pro-enlargement member states, the initial objections of the Community were therefore replaced quickly, and without much discussion, by a commitment to Eastern enlargement. This commitment has gained in strength until the accession negotiations were opened and has been shielded effectively by its undisputed

legitimacy from the "fallout" of the tough bargaining on the institutional and policy reforms that Eastern enlargement requires.

2 The Decision to Expand to the East: A Puzzle for Rationalist Institutionalism

2.1 Rationalist Institutionalism and Enlargement

Rationalist theories of international politics and international institutions have dominated the theoretical debate in International Relations throughout the 1980s. Although the major approaches in this controversy, the power-based or neorealist approach and the interest-based or neoliberal approach, differ on several theoretical assumptions and expectations, they share some basic premises which allow to group both of them under "rationalism".[4]

Power-based and interest-based approaches to the study of international relations and international institutions share the *rationalist premises* of individualism, materialism, egoism, and instrumentalism: (1) Rationalist explanations of international interaction start with the individual actors whose identities, interests, and preferences they take as exogenously given and basically stable over time. (2) Rationalist institutionalism conceptualizes the international environment of these actors as an anarchical and technical environment characterized by the absence of hierarchical authority structures and by the predominance of material structures like the distribution of power and wealth.[5] These material conditions are the most important explanatory factors for the processes and outcomes in international relations. (3) Rationalist institutionalists assume that individuals as well as corporate actors act egoistically, i.e. "the preferences of actors in world politics are based on their assessment of their own welfare, not that of others".[6] In other words, in ordering their objectives, they give priority to their self-interest. (4) The actors choose the behavioral option which promises to maximize their own welfare, or at least satisfy their selfish goals, under the given circumstances. The assumptions of egoism and instrumentalism combined meet the "rational actor" requirement as it is most widely used in rationalist approaches to the study of international institutions.[7] Moreover, rationalist approaches are "objectivist" in the sense that they do not pay "attention to differences among individuals or biases in the way people think".[8] These premises also characterize the rationalist analysis of international organizations and their enlargement.

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4   See, for instance, Baldwin 1993, Hasenclever, Mayer, and Rittberger 1997, chs. 3 and 4. Baldwin describes the opposing positions as "neorealism" and "neoliberalism", Hasenclever, Mayer, and Rittberger use the labels "power-based theories" and "interest-based theories".

5   Of course, this only applies to IR rationalism. By contrast, rational choice institutionalism in comparative politics assumes powerful institutions that impose prohibitive costs on deviant behavior.

6   Keohane 1984, 66. To be sure, the assumption of egoism is no assumption of rational-choice theory as such but a general feature of rationalist institutionalism in IR.

7   They usually also share the assumption of "bounded rationality" according to which the actors neither have to be strict utility maximizers nor have to possess *full* information about the courses of action

In the rationalist account, international institutions are accorded secondary causal status only, as they are supposed to influence the options available to the actors and their cost-benefit calculations, but not the constitution of the actors, their identities and interests. International organizations are instrumental associations designed to enhance efficiency. They help states to increase their utilities by reducing problems and costs of collective action.

Although the enlargement of international organizations has not received much attention in these theories[9], rationalist assumptions can easily be applied to this issue: Decisions on membership in international organizations, then, are made according to criteria of instrumental rationality. They are based on exogenously given and stable egoistic preferences of both members and candidates for membership, and they reflect the material conditions of the international system.

The basic rationalist approach to the issues of the membership and the size of organizations is *club theory*. A club is defined as a voluntary group deriving mutual benefit from sharing a good characterized by excludable and partially divisible benefits.[10] This definition is held to suit most international organizations. If an international organization provides divisible goods, membership becomes a problem because additional members are rival consumers. Enlargement can lead to crowding, i.e. members cannot use the good as much or as often as they would like to because of other members using the good as well. International organizations, then, only expand if the costs of crowding are matched by equivalent "cost reductions owing to the sharing of provision expense", i.e. contributions by the new members.[11] This applies to all members and candidates for membership individually. That is, for a club-type international organization to expand, each member state must expect positive net benefits in order to approve of expansion, and each state outside the organization must expect positive net benefits in order to join the organization.

Power-based and interest-based approaches further share the rationalist belief that, ceteris paribus, *organizations with fewer members are preferable* to larger ones: "Small is beautiful". Generally, the larger the *size* of an international organization, the smaller the a priori voting power of each member, the smaller the "marginal policy contribution" of an additional member, the higher the diffusion of gains from cooperation, the higher the likelihood of free riding, and

9   See Bernauer 1995, 177 and Mattli 1995, 137.

10   This definition is, in abbreviated form, from Cornes and Sandler 1986, 24-25. Clubs are "voluntary 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). A good is *in*divisible "when a *unit* of the good can be consumed by one individual without detracting [...] from the consumption opportunities still available to others from that *same* unit"; it is excludable if its benefits can be "withheld costlessly by the owner or provider" (Cornes and Sandler 1986, 6).

11   Cornes and Sandler 1986, 159-60.

the higher the administrative costs as well as the costs of finding agreement.[12] These factors are particularly pertinent to the EU.

With the accession of CEE countries, *heterogeneity* within the EU will rise sharply. The new members will bring with them the peculiar historical, political, economic, and social heritage and problems of their region. They have a particulary low level of socioeconomic development, struggle with specific problems of transformation from a communist society, and possess political traditions (long periods of authoritarianism, foreign domination etc.) which distinguish them clearly from the current EU members.[13] Increased heterogeneity will raise the costs of decision-making and lower the probability of consensus. Enlargement reduces the decision-making capacity of the EU not only under the unanimity rule. Even (qualified) majorities are more difficult to build because the number of potential blocking coalitions rises disproportionally. The joint-decision trap will still be harder to evade; the opportunity costs of non-decisions will increase.[14] In addition, majority voting reduces the degree of control for each member state in an expanded EU, particularly that of the larger member states.[15] Finally, administrative costs will explode due to the rising number of official languages that have to be interpreted (and translated into all other official languages). It is therefore agreed that EU organs and policy-making processes will have to be reformed ahead of Eastern enlargement. A reduction of EU commissioners, official languages, and consensus requirements in Council decision-making are among the most prominent proposals for reform. Each of these proposals, however, creates costs for old members.

In a club theoretical perspective, then, the marginal benefits accruing to the members of the international organization as a result of enlargement have to be considerably higher than the marginal costs of crowding in the use of the shared good. They would have to balance the disproportionally increasing costs of organization, decisions, and compliance as well. Are there enlargement benefits sizeable enough to make the old EU members interested in the accession of CEE countries?

2.2 The Power-Based or Neorealist Approach to Eastern Enlargement

The *neorealist analysis* of international politics starts from the assumption that the international system is an anarchical self-help system in which states must be primarily concerned with their security if they want to survive and protect their autonomy.[16] Therefore states are sensitive to changes in the distribution of power in the international system. They worry about relative gains

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12   Fratianni and Pattison 1982, 252; Olson 1971, 35; Russett 1968, 286. For a realist assertion of the virtue of small numbers in alliances, cf. Liska 1962, 27.

13   Kreile 1997, 212-13.

14   Scharpf 1985; Wilming 1995, 197.

15   Kerremans 1998, 93; Raunio and Wiberg 1998.

16   Waltz 1979.

of other states and seek to defend their position in the international power structure.[17] In principle, states prefer not to accede to international organizations because institutional commitments reduce their freedom of action and entail the risks of long-term losses in autonomy and relative power. Such organizations are only formed out of necessity, i.e. if states are not capable of maintaining their autonomy and of defending their position in the international power structure on their own. When this is the case, states align with each other in order to balance the threat caused by other states or alliances.[18]

Realist alliance theory is also applicable to non-military, predominantly *economic international organizations* such as the European Union. In the realist analysis, the international political economy follows the same logic of power competition as international politics in general. Economic resources are regarded as an indispensible component of the national power base, and the state pursues foreign economic policies in order to maintain and strengthen its autonomy, security and position in the international power structure.[19] Economic organization, then, serves the same purposes as military alignment. According to Robert Gilpin, "regional arrangements are essentially inter-state alliances whose primary purpose is to strengthen the position of individual states in an interdependent and highly competitive global economy".[20] Thus, the core realist proposition concerning enlargement can be summarized in the following conditional expectation: *The EU expands if enlargement is a necessary and efficient means in order to balance superior power or perceived threats.* Enlargement would be necessary if the EU was not capable of balancing, by autonomous efforts, the superiority or threat of competing economic powers. It would be efficient if the accession of CEE countries improved the power position of the EU vis-à-vis these competing powers.

The main neorealist argument for enlargement is the one that Joseph Grieco referred to with regard to the internal market and currency union projects:

"[N]eorealists might argue that [...] the European nations, concerned not about their immediate security but as a matter of paying prudent attention to their relative position in the world economy, elected in the mid- to late 1980s to revive the EC in order to counter the continuing economic challenge of the United States, and especially the new and even more acute challenge of Japan."[21]

Still, neorealists would expect the EU to enlarge only if it failed to meet these challenges internally. Yet, the internal market program has been successful, and the currency union develops as planned. Even if the EU had felt the need to strengthen itself through expansion, it would hardly have chosen *Eastern* enlargement. Instead of increasing the EU's common power,

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17   This "defensive positionalism" has been most clearly outlined by Grieco 1988.
18   See Waltz 1979, 126-27 for key propositions of balance-of-power theory, and Walt 1987 for balance-of-threat theory. I do not go into the details here because the differences between both theories do not matter in the following empirical evaluation.
19   Frieden and Lake 1995, 12-13; Gilpin 1987, 31-32.
20   Gilpin 1996, 19.
21   Grieco 1996, 284.

the CEE economies will remain a drain on its resources for the foreseeable future once they become full members (see below). They are not capable of improving the global power position of the EU vis-à-vis the United States or Japan. At the same time, the EU does not have to fear that Central and Eastern Europe could come under the control of its global competitors. Even if they had that interest, the region's economic dependence on Western Europe could hardly be substituted by such geographically distant economies as the American or the Japanese. As a consequence, neorealism cannot explain the EU's interest in eastward expansion because it is neither necessary nor useful for balancing purposes.

2.3 The Interest-Based or Neoliberal Approach to Eastern Enlargement

In the *neoliberal perspective*, the international system is characterized by complex interdependence.[22] Due to increasing international interdependence, military power is losing its effectiveness and fungibility as a means to achieve state objectives. At the same time, survival ceases to be the primary concern of states. As a consequence, security is not the only and not even the main benefit that states seek by forming and expanding international organizations. Instead of relative losses, states worry mostly about maximizing their absolute (welfare) gains under conditions of (primarily economic) interdependence in a variety of issue-areas. International institutions are created because they help states to manage interdependence and to increase their gains from international cooperation. Accordingly, the core neoliberal proposition concerning enlargement is: *The EU expands if its members expect net absolute gains from enlargement.* According to Moravcsik's liberal intergovernmentalist analysis of European integration, "patterns of commercial advantage", especially the "interests of powerful domestic producers", and "the relative bargaining power of important governments", an effect of their asymmetrical interdependence and divergent preference intensities, determine the substantive decisions of the Community.[23]

Economists agree that *trade integration* with the CEE region will benefit the EU economies in the aggregate. It opens a new market for Western European exports in their close proximity. In addition, the supply of cheaper resources and cheaper but qualified labor as well as economies of scale will reduce costs and strengthen European competitiveness on the world market.[24] However, this positive outlook has to be qualified in several ways:

(1) "Studies of the long-run output, employment, and welfare effects of increased CEE-EU trade in the EU commonly conclude that the overall impact will remain *relatively small*".[25] Whereas trade with the EU accounts for approximately 40-65% of the total trade of most CEE

22   Keohane and Nye 1977.
23   Moravcsik 1998, 3.
24   Von Hagen 1996, 6; Kawecka-Wyrzykowska 1996, 88.
25   Von Hagen 1996, 6, my italics. See also Baldwin, Francois, and Portes 1997, 138 and 147. They estimate an increase in EU real income of 0.2% as a result of economic integration.

countries[26], trade with the CEE region does not amount to more than 5% of the total trade of EU members. In general, the pattern of economic interests in East and West created a highly asymmetrical interdependence in favor of the EU.

(2) The effects of trade integration will be *distributed unevenly* among sectors and countries. EU agriculture, textile and leather as well as metalworking industries will be exposed to stiffer competition as a result of progressive market integration. EU member countries which specialize in such traditional and resource-intensive industries (like Spain, Portugal, Greece, Italy) will face higher import pressures than others.[27] Moreover, Weise et al. expect political problems because the "burdens of adaptation are mostly concentrated on specific sectors in which actors are easy to mobilize politically. Profits, however, are spread more widely and, therefore, less transparent". Those (mostly Northern) countries that will benefit most from trade integration will, in turn, face migration pressures for which there is a high potential due to geographical proximity, high unemployment in the East and high wage differentials.[28]

(3) Although the benefits of economic integration with Central and Eastern Europe are distributed very unevenly among EU members, the preponderant interest of all of them is in intra-EU trade. *Germany* is clearly the most important beneficiary of economic integration with the East. Its trade with Central and Eastern Europe comes to 9% of its total external trade[29] and around 45% of total EU trade with this region[30] (although its economy accounts for only around 25% of the EU economy in terms of GDP).[31] Nevertheless, its economic stakes in the East are small compared to those in the common market. Under these circumstances, Germany could not credibly (and did not) issue threats of pursuing a unilateral policy in the East or of building a German-CEE coalition against its EU partners.[32]

(4) Most importantly, however, the EU members are *able to reap most of the fruit of trade integration without granting the CEE countries full membership*. Under the current association regime, economic integration has progressed toward a free-trade area. Western corporations benefit from advantageous terms of trade, and the EU has realized each year a trade surplus with its Eastern neighbors. Direct investments in the region are growing. What is more, association allows the EU to protect the sectors in which it is particularly vulnerable to competition and to prevent migration more effectively than it would be possible after enlargement.

The *budgetary costs* that would follow from Eastern enlargement add to these disincentives. It is obvious that all CEE countries would become structural net recipients. For the foreseeable future, EU transfers to these countries will outweigh by far their contributions to the EU budget.

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26   See, e.g., Eurostat data reported in "Weekly Europe Selected Statistics" 1037, 12 January 1998.
27   Von Hagen 1996, 6-7.
28   Weise et al. 1997, 18 and 26.
29   My calculation based on Statistisches Jahrbuch für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1998 (data for 1996).
30   Eurostat data reported in "Weekly Europe Selected Statistics" 1047, 23 March 1998.
31   My calculation based on OECD data reported in Süddeutsche Zeitung, 29 April 1999, 25.
32   See Moravcsik 1998, 63-65 on the conditions of success of these bargaining strategies.

This mainly results from the effects of enlargement on the CAP and the Union's structural and regional policies which together comprise around 80% of the Community budget.

According to Tangermann, the CAP would be seriously affected because the CEE associates, whereas producing only 3% of the EU GNP, possess 44% of the EU productive land and attain 30% of the EU agricultural production. He expects that agricultural production will rather increase than diminsh as a result of economic recovery, and that participation in the CAP would give the CEE countries an additional incentive for agricultural production because EU prices in many areas of agriculture are well above world market prices.[33] Furthermore, due to their low levels of wealth and income, the CEE countries would benefit enormously from the structural funds. If these policies remained unchanged, the community budget would have to increase by 20% to two thirds of its current volume depending on the scenario and the calculation.[34] Therefore, a reform of the CAP and the structural policies is an indispensible pre-condition of enlargement. National budgets are too constrained by decreasing tax yields and by EMU debt limits to permit a generous expansion of Community revenue. Any reform, however, will inevitably lead to income reductions for the EU farmers as well as to either lower transfers to the comparatively disadvantaged EU regions or to fewer regions eligible for financial support.

Three *strategies of cost reduction* are conceivable but of limited effect: First, the EU could limit its Eastern enlargement to the five CEE countries with which it currently conducts accession negotiations. However, this group is still much below EU economic standards and comprises some of the most potent agricultural producers of the region. Second, a partial membership excluding participation in the CAP and the structural policies is only a theoretical option. It would not only be difficult to legitimate politically but also meet serious practical obstacles in an internal market.[35] Finally, the EU could postpone enlargement significantly. Probably, the costs of CEE membership will diminsh in the course of time as a result of modernization and growth. Nevertheless, the CEE countries would still remain a EU periphery and net recipients of the community budget. Moreover, this strategy only affects the structural policies positively (provided that CEE growth rates continue to exceed EU growth rates). In the case of the CAP, an increase in CEE agricultural productivity would mean an increase in expenses instead.

Furthermore, given the highly asymmetrical East-West interdependence, the *opportunity costs of non-enlargement* are low. On the one hand, the CEE countries cannot credibly threaten to close their markets to the West and thus deprive the EU of the benefits of trade integration. By shielding their economies from integration with the EU, the CEE countries would harm

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33   Tangermann 1995, 485.
34   See, e.g., Baldwin 1994, 161-179; Baldwin, Francois, and Portes 1997, 152-166; Weise et al. 1997, 258.
35   For instance, if CEE members did not participate in the CAP, border controls would have to be remain in place. See Tangermann 1995, 486-87.

themselves more than the EU. On the other hand, it is not convincing to argue that, without the prospect of EU membership, the CEE countries would become politically and economically unstable, threatening Western European security and welfare with illegal migration and organized crime.[36] First, "self-inflicted chaos" is no credible bargaining strategy. It is in the self-interest of the CEE governments to develop stable political and economic systems. Second, given its resources, why shouldn't the EU be able to defend itself efficiently against the spill-over of Eastern European instability? This analysis is corroborated by EU policy in the region: Far from receiving special care, countries that do not achieve internal stability on their own and export instability beyond their borders are excluded from the benefits of association and have no prospect of becoming EU members whatsoever.

Finally, it is puzzling in a rationalist perspective that the EU opened accession negotiations *before* the outcomes of the necessary institutional and policy reforms were calculable. First, the European Council asked the Commission to study the consequences of Eastern enlargement for EU policies only *after* it had taken the general decision to enlarge.[37] Second, the 1996/1997 Intergovernmental Conference that was supposed to introduce the necessary internal reforms in order to prepare the EU for Eastern enlargement left the crucial issues undecided. Nevertheless, accession negotiations began as planned. Thus, the EU member states embarked upon Eastern enlargement without being able to gauge its individual consequences.

In sum, the neoliberal analysis of Eastern enlargement clearly points toward the exclusion of Central and Eastern Europe from the European Union. It is highly plausible but not even necessary to argue that the expected costs of full membership for the CEE countries exceed the potential benefits of Eastern enlargement. That is because association constitutes, from the point of view of EU members, an efficient institutional solution that enables the EU to benefit from the economic integration of EU and CEE markets without having to bear the costs of political integration.

3 The Solution: Sociological Institutionalism and Enlargement as the Expansion of Community[38]

3.1. The Norm-Based Approach to Enlargement

Since the beginning of the 1990s, *sociological approaches* to the study of international relations have increasingly challenged the rationalist paradigm.[39] Sociological institutionalist theories

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36   See, for instance, Kawecka-Wyrzykowska 1996, 97; Saryusz-Wolski 1994, 24-25.

37   Conclusions of the Presidency, European Council meeting, Essen, 9/10 December 1994.

38   This section builds on Schimmelfennig 1998.

39   I use "sociological" as the generic term for a variety of approaches in order to stress their departure from "economic" models of international politics. Keohane 1988 distinguishes "rationalist" and "reflective" approaches. Ruggie 1998 draws the conceptual line between "neo-utilitarianism" and "social constructivism". Haggard and Simmons 1987 as well as Hasenclever, Mayer, and Rittberger 1997 subsume the sociologically inclined approaches under "cognitivism".

reject the basic metatheoretical and theoretical premises of rationalism.[40] The central difference is ontological.[41] Sociological institutionalists share a structuralist ontology according to which social phenomena "cannot be reduced to aggregations or consequences of individuals' attributes or motives".[42] Rather, the actors, their interests, and preferences must be endogenized, i.e. analyzed and explained as the products of social structures (culture, institutions) and social interaction. Sociological institutionalists regard the international system as an "institutional" or "cultural" environment structured by intersubjective cognitions and norms.[43] Correspondingly, sociological institutionalists reject the assumption that international actors generally act egoistically and instrumentally. They view rationality as "constructed" or "context-bound"[44] and the actors as being committed in their decisions to values and norms and following a "logic of appropriateness".[45]

On the basis of these assumptions, sociological institutionalism posits that the origins and the constitution as well as the goals and procedures of *international organizations* are more strongly determined by the standards of legitimacy and appropriateness of the international community to which they belong than by the utilitarian demand for efficient problem-solving.[46] International organizations are the institutional articulation of international communities of values and norms whose "definitions, rules, and principles are encoded in the prescriptions" they elaborate "for nation-state practice", and they are able "to impose definitions of member characteristics and purposes upon the governments of [their] member states".[47] Therefore, they do not only regulate state behavior but also contribute to shaping actors' identities and interests. States that share the fundamental values of an international community and adhere to its basic norms are regarded as (informal) community members and are entitled to join the community organizations. Consequently, we can expect *the EU to admit all countries that share its collective identity and adhere to its constitutive norms.*

40	Hasenclever, Mayer, and Rittberger 1997, ch. 5.
41	See Adler 1997a, 324-26 or Jepperson, Wendt, and Katzenstein 1996, 65-67 for the view that epistemological or methodological positions do not divide rationalist and sociological approaches.
42	DiMaggio and Powell 1991, 8.
43	See Scott 1991, 167 for the distinction of "technical" and "institutional" environments in organization theory and Weber 1994 for an application of this distinction to the analysis of international organizations. "Cultural environments" are stressed by Jepperson, Wendt, and Katzenstein 1996, 33-34.
44	DiMaggio 1998, 700; Nee and Strang 1998, 706-707.
45	March and Olsen 1989, 160-62 oppose this logic to the rationalist "logic of consequentiality".
46	Katzenstein 1997, 12; Reus-Smit 1997, 569; Weber 1994, 4-5 and 32.
47	McNeely 1995, 27 and 33.

3.2.   The Values and Norms of the European International Community[48]

The European Union is the main organization of the European community of states. This European international community is part of a wider Euro-Atlantic or "Western" international community which transcends the geographical borders of Europe and spreads across the Atlantic to include the U.S. and Canada.

The Western international community is based on liberal political values and norms. The belief in and adherence to liberal human rights, i.e individual freedoms, civil liberties, and political rights are the fundamental beliefs and practices that constitute the community. They "define legitimate statehood and rightful state action" in the domestic as well as in the international realm.[49] In the domestic realm, the *liberal principles of social and political order* - societal pluralism, the rule of law, democratic political participation and representation as well as private property and a market-based economy - are derived from and justified by these liberal human rights.

In the international realm, liberal values and norms are expressed in the institutions of *peaceful conflict management and multilateralist collaboration*. The "democratic peace" has its roots in the domestic norms of liberal democratic states. These norms demand that political conflicts be managed and resolved without violence and on the basis of constitutional procedures. When democratic states deal with each other, they know that all actors are committed to these common values and norms. This knowledge enables them to develop mutual trust, dependable expectations of peaceful behavior.[50] In time, liberal democracies develop "pluralistic security communities" in which states neither expect nor prepare for organized violence as a means to settle interstate disputes.[51]

Multilateralism is defined as a generic institutional form that "coordinates relations among three or more states on the basis of generalized principles of conduct. These "generalized organizing principles logically entail an indivisibility among the members of a collectivity with respect to the range of behavior in question" and generate "expectations of 'diffuse reciprocity'".[52] They correspond to the basic liberal idea of procedural justice, i.e. "the legislative codification of formal, reciprocally binding social rules" among the members of society.[53]

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48   I chose the term "European international community" rather than "European community" in order to clearly distinguish the community of values and norms from the formal organization, the EC. The European international community has more organizations than the EU, e.g. the Council of Europe.

49   Reus-Smit 1997, 558.

50   Owen 1996; Russett et al. 1995, 31-32; Risse-Kappen 1995a.

51   See Deutsch et al. 1957 for the classical formulation of the concept of security community. For a recent reformulation and application, see Adler and Barnett 1996, 76; Adler 1997b.

52   Ruggie 1993, 11.

53   Reus-Smit 1997, 577.

3.3 The Norm-Based Approach and Eastern Enlargement

The *conditions of accession* postulated in the sociological hypothesis closely correspond to those set up by the European Union. Whereas the original Art. 237 EEC Treaty accorded all *European states* the right to apply for membership, subsequent EU declarations and legal acts as well as EU practice have established several more precise prerequisites for a successful application.[54] First, the EU requires its members to be *democracies* that respect the *rule of law* and *human rights* (Preambles to the SEA and the TEU, Art. F and O TEU). Second, new members must conform to the Community *principle of an open-market economy with free competition* (Art. 3a EC Treaty). However, this principle offers members a lot of leeway with regard to the degree of state involvement and intervention in the economy and does not specify any necessary levels of economic development or capacities. Finally, new members must accept the entire *acquis communautaire*, i.e. the entire body of EU law, as well as the *acquis politique* (mainly from the Common Foreign and Security Policy).

These general prerequisites have been reaffirmed with regard to *Eastern enlargement*. The European Council in Copenhagen explicitly established the accession of CEE states as an EU objective in June 1993, provided that they have achieved "stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities" and "the existence of a functioning market economy" as well as the ability to adopt the *acquis*. They must accept the aims of political, economic, and monetary union as stated in the TEU (but they do not have to meet the criteria of economic convergence required for joining the EMU).

If the sociological expectation was correct, the five CEE countries selected for formal accession talks should, first, match the EU members and, second, distinguish themselves from the other five associated countries with regard to the internalization of the liberal values and norms that constitute the European international community. An analysis based on the Freedom House indicators for the guarantee of political rights and civil liberties (Table 1) confirms this expectation to a very large degree.

With the exception of Slovakia[55], all associated countries are categorized as "free", whereas all other CEE countries were rated "partly free" or "not free". Since all "free" CEE countries are associated with the EU, a political system in which political human rights and civil liberties are guaranteed appears to be a sufficient (although not necessary) condition of *association* with the EU.[56]

The more detailed figures reveal a *distinction* between the five CEE countries that were invited to formal accession talks and the other associated countries. First, all countries of the top group received the best rating for political rights (1) and the second best rating (2) for civil liberties, whereas Bulgaria, Latvia, Romania, and Slovakia only scored 2 for political rights and

54   Richter 1997. Cf. also Michalski and Wallace 1992, 33-36; Redmond and Rosenthal 1998, 2-3.
55   Slovakia was rated "free" in 1994/95 and 1995/96 but downgraded in 1996/97.
56   Neither Romania nor Slovakia were "free" countries when they became associated with the EU.

2 or worse for civil liberties. Second, all of the top five countries are classified as "consolidated democracies and market economies" and rank highest with regard to their achievements of democratic and economic transition. Finally, the ratings for the invited countries *match the ratings for current EU members*. All EU members were rated 1 for political rights and 1 or 2 for civil liberties. (Only Greece scored 3 for civil liberties.) The sociological expectation is only contradicted by the fact that Lithuania was not invited to formal accession talks although its human rights and democratic record is as good as that of the first-rate candiates and the EU members.

Table 1: Data on the Selection of CEE Countries for Formal Accession Talks[57]

Status	Country	FI	PR	CL	Time	Class	DEM	ECO
Association Formal Accession Talks	Czech Rep.	free	1	2	7/4	cons	1.38	1.88
	Estonia	free	1	2	4/1	cons	2.06	2.13
	Hungary	free	1	2	7/4	cons	1.44	1.63
	Poland	free	1	2	7/2	cons	1.44	2.00
	Slovenia	free	1	2	6/4	cons	1.88	2.38
Association "Pre-Ins"	Bulgaria	free	2	3	6/-	trans	3.81	5.38
	Latvia	free	2	2	3/-	cons	2.06	2.50
	Lithuania	free	1	2	6/2	cons	2.06	2.50
	Romania	free	2	3	1/-	trans	3.88	4.63
	Slovakia	partly free	2	4	-/-	trans	3.81	3.38

In sum, the norm-based or sociological approach to enlargement provides a satisfactory first cut at the decision of the EU to open accession negotiations with five CEE countries. In contrast

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57   The Freedom House data are provided by a non-governmental organization of good repute from outside the EU. Thus they are a useful independent source to evaluate to what degree the CEE countries meet the central prerequisite for membership in the sociological perspective. I chose the 1996/1997 data because they represent, by and large, the situation in the CEE countries shortly before the Commission prepared its Opinions on the candidates' suitability for membership. The data are taken from Karatnycky, Motyl, and Shor 1997. FI stands for "Freedom Index" which is a combined measure of PR ("Political Rights") and CL ("Civil Liberties"). The first figure in the column "time" is the number of years that the country has continously been rated "free"; the second figure stands for the number of years that the country has had a rating of 1 for PR and 2 for CL. The general classification (class), "Democracy" (DEM), and "Economy" (ECO) ratings are specific to the organization's "Nations in Transit" evaluation. The "democracy" value is composed of ratings for "political process", "civil society", "independent media", "rule of law", and "government and public administration". Freedom House ratings are from 1 (best) to 7 (worse). "Cons" means "Consolidated Democracy and Market Economy", "trans" means "Transitional Government and Economy".

to rationalism, it not only gives a plausible account of why the EU is prepared to admit CEE countries as full members at all, but also explains, to a very large extent, which of them the EU selected for the "fast" track to membership.

There are good methodological reasons, however, not to stop with a correlational macro-explanation. On the one hand, of course, correlations can be treacherous indicators of causal relationships. On the other hand, a purely macrotheoretical explanation is less than satisfactory because it neglects the agency side of how collective outcomes are produced. It leaves aside how structural situations are transformed into individual action and how individual actions are aggregated to collective outcomes. In the next part of the paper, I will therefore analyze the agency that intervenes between structural causes and collective outcomes. Doing so will not only give us a more complete account of how the enlargement decision came about. It will also allow us to regard the sociological explanation as more justified than before - if the observable micro-processes correspond to sociological expectations. Unfortunately, things are not so easy in the case of Eastern enlargement. And here starts the second puzzle.

4 The Enlargement Decision-Making Process: A Puzzle for Sociological Institutionalism

4.1 Sociological Micro-Expectations

The microfoundations of a structural theory tell us how, and to what extent, social structures affect actor dispositions, how actors behave, and how individual preferences and actions interact and are aggregated to produce a collective outcome. From these microfoundations, we can derive observable "micro-expectations".

What kind of actor behavior and decision-making process should we observe if the sociological explanation was correct? In answering this question, one immediately comes across the problem that, in contrast to rationalism, sociological institutionalism has a predilection for structural macro-explanation and is less than clear about its microfoundations and interaction dynamics.[58] At a very general level, however, sociological institutionalists agree that international institutions do not simply regulate state behavior but shape state identities and interests. They further propose two general mechanisms of institutional impact, one normative and the other cognitive.[59]

In the *normative perspective*, socialization is the primary mechanism through which intersubjective structures are transformed into individual preferences and action. As a result of successful socialization, the values and norms that constitute the social fabric of a community or society, are internalized by its members, i.e. adopted into their own repertoire of cognitions

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58   See Checkel 1998a and Finnemore 1996a and 1996b for criticism from an IR viewpoint.

59   Hall and Taylor 1996, 948; Scott 1995, 34-52. Whereas the normative mechanism is often associated with the "old institutionalism" exemplified by Weber and Parsons, the cognitive mechanism is most prominent in neo-institutionalist approaches to organizational theory (see, e.g., DiMaggio and Powell 1991).

and behaviors. As a result of internalization, the individuals identify themselves with their community and commit themselves to its values and norms.[60] Alternatively, we may say that individual actors become socialized into institutionally defined roles, learn the norms and rules associated with these roles, and act appropriately by "fulfilling the obligations of a role in a situation".[61] Although socialization and internalization are the basic micro-mechanisms of the normative perspective, norm-governed actor behavior is not necessarily automatic or unreasoned.[62] Sometimes the situation or the rules may be unclear. Then, the "process involves determining what the situation is, what role is being fulfilled, and what the obligations of that role in that situation are".[63] In making these assessments and choices, however, the actors do not calculate how to advance their interests but reason morally and normatively on the basis of the community values.

The *cognitive perspective* is more radical in its critique of rational choice theory and in its rejection of the assumption of reflective and purposive actors than the normative perspective. "Not norms and values but taken-for-granted scripts, rules, and classifications are the stuff of which institutions are made."[64] Institutions shape individual behavior "by providing the cognitive scripts, categories and models that are indispensable for action, not least because without them the world and the behaviour of others cannot be interpreted".[65] Individual actors conform with institutionally prescribed behavior, not out of moral commitment or a sense of obligation but out of habit: "For cognitive theorists, compliance occurs [...] because other types of behavior are inconceivable; routines are followed because they are taken for granted as 'the way we do things'."[66] In situations of uncertainty, individuals and organizations do not resort to moral reasoning but to mimetic processes.

Both sociological perspectives differ with regard to how institutions influence the dispositions and behavior of individual actors. Both appear to agree, however, that the aggregation of individual actions is of minor importance and theoretically trivial. Thanks to the assumption of consensual values or common templates, collective action problems are strongly deemphasized in comparison with rationalist institutionalism.

Whereas it is difficult to test the psychological foundations of these general causal mechanisms directly, they permit the formulation of partly concurrent and partly different observable behavioral implications. Two main expectations follow from the sociological process hypotheses: First, *institutional determination, and homogeneity, of actor preferences and behavior is high*. According to both perspectives, the enlargement preferences of EU actors

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60   See, for instance, Parsons 1969, 440-56 or Weber's concept of "value-rationality" (1968, 25).
61   March and Olsen 1989, 160-61.
62   Scott 1995, 39.
63   March and Olsen 1989, 160.
64   DiMaggio and Powell 1991, 15.
65   Hall and Taylor 1996, 947.
66   Scott 1995, 44.

should be both convergent and based on liberal values and norms. Correspondingly, we would expect little conflict about the timing of enlargement and the selection of new members. Even if the EU actors were uncertain about their preferences or disagreed about the definition of the situation or the appropriate rules, we should see value-based deliberation or mimetic processes.

Second, *the enlargement process is strongly institutionalized.* According to the normative account, we expect a high degree of moral commitment and the pursuit of a norm-based policy program on the part of the organization. Organizational decision-making should be based on the liberal values and the enlargement norms of the Community. More concretely, the EU actors are expected to commit themselves firmly to the perspective of admission for the liberal democracies of Central and Eastern Europe, to develop and implement a "grand design" for the integration of this region, i.e. a consensual far-reaching program for the successive stages of accession to the Union. By contrast, in the cognitivist perspetive, we rather expect the execution of organizational scripts, i.e. a less visible and emotionalized, "bureaucratic" process. The decision to open accession negotiations should be the habitualized response to political change in the environment of the EU and should have resulted from the EU's organizational program of dealing with non-member states.

4.2. Sociological Micro-Expectations and the Enlargement Decision-Making Process

The empirical evidence does not sufficiently support any of the sociological micro-expectations concerning enlargement. Although some observable process characteristics are consistent with the sociological hypotheses, the general picture contradicts them.

(1) Institutional determination of actor preferences on enlargement was low. *Enlargement preferences within the EU system have differed* so *widely* that they cannot be attributed to a common intersubjective structure.[67] With regard to the *timetable* of enlargement, one group of member governments (the "drivers") have advocated an early and firm commitment to Eastern enlargement, whereas other member governments (the "brakemen") have been reticent and have tried to slow down the process. The "big four" have been divided on this issue, with Germany and Britain having advocated enlargement openly and France and Italy remaining reluctant. This divergence also extends to the smaller member countries. Whereas the reticent members clearly were in the majority at the beginning (Spain, Portugal, Ireland, and the Benelux countries), the "drivers" gained in strength after the 1995 enlargement and consist of Austria, Denmark, Finland, and Sweden. Further divisions concerned the *selection of countries* for formal accession negotiations. One group of countries, with Germany as their most influential member, pushed for a limited first round of enlargement, others favored a more inclusive approach. Whereas, however, France and Italy mainly sought to include Bulgaria and Romania, Denmark and Sweden were most interested in the Baltic countries. Finally, the debate on the institutional

67 For an overview of member state preferences, see, e.g., Brüning and Kaiser 1996; Dannreuther 1997, 67-79; Grabbe and Hughes 1998, 4-6.

and policy *reforms* that need to be accompany the enlargement process has revealed strong, and as of now unresolved, conflicts of interest about voting rules in the Council, the restructuring of the Commission, the financing of the community budget, as well as the "Agenda 2000" reforms of regional and agricultural policies.[68]

The divergence of member state preferences on the major aspects of enlargement policy indicates that neither community norms nor institutional templates exerted the determining and unifying influence on the actors' interests and cognitions that sociological institutionalism predicts. Two observations, however, are consistent with sociological expectations: First, no EU member government has openly opposed Eastern enlargement as such; in public, all of them have supported the membership of liberal democratic CEE countries in principle. Second, no EU member government has proposed to open accession negotations with countries that strongly violated liberal norms in their domestic and international conduct.

(2) The institutionalization of the enlargement process has been as weak as the institutional determination of actor preferences. The decision-making and policy process *did not conform either to a "moral grand design" or to a "habitualized performance program"*. By contrast, the enlargement process has been incremental and contested from the beginning. The Community's policy toward the CEE countries lacked a strong commitment to enlargement and was stalling rather than pro-active.[69]

The *Community did not develop a long-term strategy* for Central and Eastern Europe, let alone design *a path, a program, or a timetable for CEE membership*. The Community developed a number of programs designed to aid the CEE countries in their transition to liberal democracy. Most of the early instruments, such as the PHARE program, G24 assistance, or the establish of a European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, were new and specifically tailored to meet the challenge of Eastern European transformation in the short term. In the judgment of Sedelmeier and Wallace, they "reflected a sense that 'something had to be done', but not a policy".[70] Other instruments, such as the Trade and Cooperation Agreements and Association Agreements, had already been established before the changes in Eastern Europe but still did not come close to organizational routines. They were not only adapted to the historically new situation of the post-communist CEE countries but also repeatedly renegotiated and rearranged according to the progress of transition and of EC/EU-CEE relations.[71]

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68   Note that all these differences were not only visible *between* but sometimes also *within* national governments.

69   See the descriptions by Mayhew 1998; Sedelmeier and Wallace 1996; Torreblanca 1997.

70   Sedelmeier and Wallace 1996, 355.

71   "Trade agreements" were turned into "trade and cooperation agreements" (TCAs) after the beginning of liberalization. The TCAs with the successor states of the Soviet Union are being replaced by a new type of agreement, the "partnership and cooperation agreements". For the advanced CEE countries the European Council agreed to "create *a new type* of association agreement" in April 1990 (cit. in Sedelmeier and Wallace 1996, 355). Subsequent European Councils changed the trade provisions and added new elements like a reinforced political dialogue and the "structured relationship".

It was the *CEE governments* that *raised the issue of membership* and constantly kept pushing the Community for an explicit commitment to this goal. Although the Commission proposed the negotiation of association agreements already in February 1990, it sought to avoid any reference to future accession. In its communication to the Council, the Commission stated clearly that the associations "in no way represent a sort of membership antichamber": "Membership will not be excluded when the time comes, but this is a totally separate question".[72] During the negotiations with the CEE countries, the EC agreed to a formula mentioning their future membership but only went so far as to recognize membership as the associates', but not as the Community's, "final objective".[73]

Community sentiment and moral commitment is also hard to detect in the substantive *negotiations about trade liberalization* and their outcome. The EC offered the CEE countries a fast and asymmetrical liberalization of trade in industrial products. However, it reserved protectionist "anti-dumping" and "safeguard" measures for itself and made an exception of exactly those sectors (agriculture, textiles, coal, iron and steel) in which the CEE economies were competitive and could have earned the money necessary to finance their liberal transformation.[74] Portugal blocked a further liberalization of trade in textiles, France vetoed any concession on beefmeat, and Spain blocked agreement on steel trade, leading negotiations to the brink of breakdown.[75] As a result, the CEE countries ran into a permanent trade deficit with the Community.[76]

Progress toward Eastern enlargement came *in small increments*. On the one hand, other events and crises have often pushed Eastern enlargement to the back of the agenda: the Maastricht treaty, its rejection by the Danish voters, financial problems, the accession negotiations with the EFTAns, and the IGC leading to the Treaty of Amsterdam. Second, the steps and stages in the decision-making process did not follow from a "grand enlargement design" that was first laid down and then implemented successively but rather represented a sequence of more or less related ad hoc decisions. As far as each step was accompanied by further trade liberalization, it also involved new rounds of tough bargaining among and within the member states.[77]

After the EC had been extremely cautious not to commit itself to CEE membership in the association negotiations, the Conclusions of the Presidency at the Lisbon European Council in June 1992 mentioned in an abstract way that "[t]he principle of a Union open to European states that aspire to full participation and who fulfill the conditions for membership is a fundamental element of the European construction". But the member governments still kept to the formula

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72   Europe 5185, 2 February 1990, 2.
73   Sedelmeier and Wallace 1996, 370; Torreblanca 1997, 12.
74   Mayhew 1998, 23; Sedelmeier and Wallace 1996, 371.
75   Europe 5562, 7 September 1991, 8; Europe 5563, 9/10 September 1991, 9; Torreblanca 1997, 40-41.
76   See Friis 1998a for further causes of the "ungenerous" outcome of these negotiations.
77   Mayhew 1998, 28-29, 33; Sedelmeier and Wallace 1996, 375 and 380.

that accession was something that "they [the CEE states] seek". Only one year later in Copenhagen did the European Council agree "that the associated countries [...] shall become members of the European Union" and lay down the general conditions of admission.[78] It did not, however, develop a strategy to prepare the associated countries for membership. This strategy was the subject of internal policy debate and negotiations throughout 1994. They resulted in a "pre-accession strategy", a "structured relationship", and a "White Paper" on the preparation for the integration of the CEE countries in the internal market. Again, all these were innovative policy elements without precedence in earlier rounds of enlargement.

In spite of initial reticence and subsequent incrementalism, the *perspective of membership became more concrete and more definitive with each decision-making step*. At the Madrid European Council in December 1995, the heads of state and government asked "the Commission to expedite preparation of its opinions on the applications made" and "to take its evaluation of the effects of enlargement on Community policies further" so that accession negotiations with the CEE countries could begin after the 1996 IGC.[79] These tasks were completed in the summer of 1997, and accession negotiations started in March 1998 despite the poor results of the IGC on institutional reform and strong interest group and member government opposition against the Agenda 2000 reforms proposed by the Commission. Thus, the policy of Eastern enlargement appears to have gathered some autonomous momentum and gained some degree of institutionalization in the course of the decision-making process.

This outcome, however, was obviously not produced either by internalized community sentiment, moral commitment, and appropriate rule-following, or by organizational templates, scripts, and performance programs. It is often suggested that the initial lack of commitment and design was due to *surprise and uncertainty* about the changes in the East and to the need for an extended learning process.[80] This observation, however, does not save the sociological perspectives. According to sociological institutionalism, it is exactly in situations of uncertainty in which the actors do not possess sufficient information for rational action that they have recourse to institutionalized norms and categories and perform duties and scripts. The situation is different if there is uncertainty about the norms and categories themselves. But this was obviously not the case after the breakdown of Soviet communism in Central and Eastern Europe. First, treaty norms and past practice (in particular Southern enlargement) clearly pointed to the right of democratic CEE states to Community membership. Second, already the European Council's Declaration on Central and Eastern Europe at the Strasbourg summit in December 1989 framed the new situation in the basic categories of the liberal European international community and outlined the policy to which the Community members felt obliged:

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78   Conclusions of the Presidency.
79   Conclusions of the Presidency.
80   Mayhew 1998, 11 and 14; Sedelmeier and Wallace 1996, 355 and 373-74.

"The current changes and the prospects for development in Europe demonstrate the attractic which the political and economic model of Community Europe holds for many countries. Th Community must live up to this expectation and these demands: its path lies not in withdraw but in openness and cooperation, particularly with the other European states. [...] Th Community has taken and will take the necessary decisions to strengthen its cooperation wit peoples aspiring to freedom, democracy and progress and with States which intend the founding principles to be democracy, pluralism and the rule of law. It will encourage th necessary economic reforms by all means at its disposal, and will continue its examination (the appropriate forms of association with the countries which are pursuing the path of econom and political reform [...] [T]he objective remains [...] that of overcoming the divisions (Europe."[81]

At the subsequent Dublin summit of June 1990, the EC expressed its "deep satisfaction at th progress already made and in prospect towards overcoming the divisions of Europe an restoring the unity of the continent whose peoples share a common heritage and culture".[82]

In sum, the preferences and the behavior of the principal political actors in the EU syste1 contradict sociological institutionalist assumptions and expectations. Due to their neglect (collective action dynamics, the major sociological micro-accounts cannot explain either how th "undersocialized" participants and the "underinstitutionalized" decision-making in the Easter enlargement process could bring about a value- and norm-based collective outcome.

5   A Partial Solution: Rationalism, Selfish Interests, and Instrumental Bargaining

5.1   Rationalist Micro-Expectations

The preferences and the behavior of the actors in the EU decision-making process o enlargement are better explained on the basis of rationalist microfoundations: *egoism an instrumentalism*. In this perspective, the actors pursue private material gains. They are n(interested in the welfare of others but seek to maximize their own power and/or wealth. Th systemic theories of neorealism and neoliberalism assume that (changes in) the internation; distribution of power and wealth constitute the main opportunities and constraints for the state: pursuit of selfish political ends. With their preferences determined exogenously by their selfis disposition and their environment, the actors engage in a bargaining process in which they a(strategically in order to maximize their individual gains from an interdependent decisio1 making situation. The outcome of this bargaining process is determined by the constellation (preferences ("the game") and the relative power of the actors.

In the rationalist perspective, we would expect the *enlargement preferences of state acto1* to vary with the level of expected gains or losses from the integration of CEE countrie Whereas relative power is the most important factor in the neorealist analysis, neoliber; institutionalism emphasizes absolute welfare. In the *neorealist analysis*, enlargement affects th

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81   Conclusions of the Presidency.
82   Conclusions of the Presidency.

internal distribution of power in the European Union. States that stand to gain in relative power as a result of enlargement will favor the admission of new countries. Conversely, states that expect a loss in relative power will oppose enlargement. In turn, gains and losses in relative power are mainly determined by the pattern of influence that the old members possess on the new members. If a member state possesses high influence on a CEE state, for instance due to economic dependency, it can expect the CEE state to strenghten its position in EU coalition-building and decision-making once this state is admitted.

In the *neoliberal analysis*, enlargement preferences depend mainly on the *level of negative and positive interdependence* with Central and Eastern Europe. Negative interdependence determines the degree to which a country is sensitive or vulnerable to developments in the East; positive interdependence gives rise to gains from economic and other transactions with this region. Enlargement is a means to reduce the risks and costs, and to increase the chances and benefits, of interdependence. Hence, countries with a relatively high degree of interdependence with Central and Eastern Europe will be favorable to enlargement. Moreover, they will focus on those CEE countries with which interdependence is highest. Interdependence will determine the initial preferences of member countries but is not the only factor on which eventual support of enlargement depends. The second factor is the *distribution of cost and benefits from internal reforms*. In general, a neoliberal perspective suggests that the more a state expects to lose from the reforms necessitated by Eastern enlargement, the more reticent it will be towards expansion.

Finally, the *bargaining behavior* of the member countries will reflect their egoistic interests and the constellation of preferences of the EU members. In particular, the states that stand to lose from enlargement, or have no specific material interest in the admission of CEE countries, will demand that the beneficiaries of enlargement pay a disproportionate share of the costs of enlargement. They will seek compensation through side payments, or otherwise issue veto threats. States with an interest in enlargement will be more forthcoming but try to secure as many net gains as possible and avoid a situation in which they will have to make internal concessions that exceed the gains they expect from enlargement.

5.2 Rationalist Micro-Expectations and the Enlargement Decision-Making Process

Both rationalist approaches give a fairly plausible overall explanation of the pattern of enlargement preferences in the European Union: The divide between the "drivers" and the "brakemen" roughly follows a familiar division of countries in Community politics, that between *"Northern" and "Southern" members*. Britain and Germany, joined by the Scandinavians and Austria, have been most forthcoming to the CEE countries' desire to join the EU, whereas France, Italy, Spain, and Portugal are known for their reticence.

In the neoliberal perspective, the distinction between Northern and Southern countries reflects a *difference in levels of interdependence*.[83] On the one hand, the greater geographical

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83   Grabbe and Hughes 1998, 5-6; Mayhew 1998, 11-12.

·proximity of the Northern countries to Central and Eastern Europe makes them more sensitive to negative developments in this region. Crises and wars, economic and ecological deterioration in the region would affect them more strongly than the remote Southern countries. Therefore, the Northern countries have a greater interest in stabilization through enlargement. In addition, Germany had a particular interest in the multilateralization of its disproportionately high unilateral transfers to Central and Eastern Europe.[84] On the other hand, geographical proximity produces positive interdependence. According to the "gravity model", it reduces the costs of transport and communication and encourages trade and investment.

Moreover, the North-South divide in the European Union reflects different *socio-economic structures*. On the whole, the Northern countries are wealthier, more industrialized, and less agricultural than the Southern members. For that reason, they are the largest, and often net, contributors to the EC budget; they benefit less from the CAP and the regional policies than the Southerners and have less to fear from CEE agricultural and low-tech exports. As a consequence, they would also be less negatively affected by the necessary reform of these policies and by a more generous trade liberalization with the CEE region.

Realism adds a particular twist to the neoliberal account. From a realist viewpoint, geography and interdependence give rise to influence if, as it is the case here, interdependence is sufficiently asymmetrical in favor of the member countries. The Southern countries, above all France, therefore fear that the CEE members will side with the Northern countries in EU decision-making, cause a power shift in favor of the North, and will make the EU more "German" or at least more "Germanic".

Geography also appears to be the key to understanding the different national preferences concerning the *selection of future members* from the region. For reasons of both interdependence and influence, we would expect member countries to support the early membership of those CEE countries that are geographically close or belong to their "region". Indeed, the Central European member states favored a limited Central European enlargement, the Scandinavian members advocated the inclusion of their Baltic neighbors, and France and Italy spoke out in favor of the Southeastern European candidates Bulgaria and Romania.

Although geography accounts well for the broad pattern of enlargement preferences among the member states, it is not entirely convincing in each case. Among the Southern members, Italian hesitance is puzzling at first glance: Italy is in close geographical proximity with Southeastern Europe. It is not only strongly affected by the crises in the Balkans, most evidently by the flow of refugees, but also a major trading partner and source of foreign direct investments in the region. It seems, however, that Italy is more preoccupied with problems of Mediterranean security than with the CEE region and that its interest in Eastern enlargement has diminished because its neighboring sub-region of Southeastern Europe does not stand a chance to be fully

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84   Pradetto and Sigmund 1993, 898-99.

integrated in the foreseeable future and because its own policy projects in the region (the Central European Initiative) have been disappointing.[85]

˙ Among the Northern members, Britain's pro-enlargement stance is difficult to explain by interdependence: Central and Eastern Europe is neither geographically close nor economically important to Britain. Rather, British policy (in particular under Conservative governments) has been motivated principally by the calculation that an extensive "widening" of the Community would prevent its further "deepening" and even dilute the achieved level of integration.[86] This explanation, however, cannot be generalized. If we hypothesize that enlargement preferences vary with national commitment to the Community, it is difficult to explain why such integration skeptics as Britain, Denmark, and Sweden have shared Germany's pro-enlargement stance, why such Europeanized members as the Benelux countries and Italy have been as reticent as France and Spain whose attitude towards supranational integration is much more instrumental, and why the preferences for individual CEE candidates cut across these "camps".[87]

Whatever best explains the enlargement preferences of individual member states, it is obvious that their positions are not determined by institutional norms or templates but by individual calculations based on material incentives and attitudes to integration. In this case of uncertainty and policy innovation, member states did not have recourse to European cognitive and normative rules but fell back upon their individual interests.

Apart from the member states, the *European Commission* is credited with having played an influential role in the EU decision-making process and with furthering the cause of Eastern enlargement.[88] Although we would expect, from a sociological institutionalist viewpoint, that the Commission as the "guardian of the treaties" was committed to the expansion of the community organization to the successfully socialized CEE countries, the pro-enlargement preference of the Commission is also consistent with rationalist expectations: In a public choice perspective on bureaucracy, Eastern enlargement must appear as a welcome opportunity to expand the tasks and the resources of the Commission.[89]

A similar argument can be made for the *CEE countries*. True, their desire to join the European Union conforms to sociological expectations. In this perspective, the "return to Europe", the dominant foreign policy goal of the CEE countries, results from a strong identification with Western values and norms as well as with the European international community from which these countries had been cut off under communist rule. The West constitutes the model of the "good" domestic and international order which inspired the

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85   Bardi 1996, 163-65.

86   Hayward 1996, 148; Grabbe and Hughes 1998, 5.

87   Moreover, this hypothesis is neither theoretically nor empirically consistent: First, as shown in chapter 3.3, a pro-enlargement stance is perfectly compatible with a strong commitment to European integration. Second, there is no evidence from the history of European integration in the support of the widening-dilution nexus.

88   Mayhew 1998, 29; Sedelmeier and Wallace 1996, 375.

89   See, e.g., Vaubel 1986, 47.

revolutions of 1989 and 1990 and which the CEE countries try to emulate in their transformation processes. EU membership would represent, for them, the strongest indication that they have successfully transformed themselves into modern European countries and are recognized as a part of the West by their role models. At the same time, it would prove that they have broken the links with their communist past and have cast off their "Eastern" identity.[90]

Identification with the values and norms of the Western international community is, however, not a necessary condition for the CEE countries' desire to join the EU. All CEE candidates would become net recipients in the EU and benefit from full economic integration.[91] In addition, membership gives them the right to vote in the Council of Ministers as well as the European Parliament and to be represented in the Commission. Moreover, the rationalist explanation also accounts for the interest in membership of those governments that do not fully adhere to the liberal norms of the Western community: Both Romania and Slovakia have applied for EU membership in 1995 when they had governments with strong authoritarian tendencies; Croatia as well as Ukraine regard EU membership as their ultimate foreign policy goals.

In sum, rationalism gives a plausible general explanation for the initial enlargement preferences of all the main actors in the enlargement process. Although some actors may have been genuinely motivated by community sentiment, values, and norms, such a motivation is difficult to disentangle from self-interest where it is corroborated by the empirical evidence and ill-suited to provide a general explanation of actor preferences. For these reasons, I regard self-interest as a useful starting-point for the micro-explanation of Eastern enlargement.

Moreover, the initial behavior of the Community also corresponds to rationalist expectations of *self-interested bargaining*. As some form of trade integration plus political cooperation was the most efficient institutional solution for its relationship with Central and Eastern Europe and acceptable to all member states, the Community proposed to negotiate trade and cooperation agreements and, later on, association agreements with the CEE countries. In these agreements, the EC actors sought to avoid losses for their own economices and any commitment to the future membership of CEE countries. Self-interested bargaining behavior has been most obvious in the case of, though not limited to, the "brakemen" among the Community actors.

(1) *Blockage of trade liberalization:* A more extended liberalization of EC-CEE trade was ultimately blocked by Southern members like France, Portugal, and Spain in the association negotiations. Sedelmeier and Wallace, however, describe

"a bargaining process in which the narrow economic interests of domestic EC sectors, threatened by CEEC competition were able to gain primacy over political preferences for a more

90   See, e.g., Alamir and Pradetto 1998, 136-37; Hyde-Price 1994, 225; 1996, 197; Kolankiewicz 1993, 108; 1994, 481-82.

91   See Baldwin, Francois, and Portes 1997 for a very optimistic prognosis and Dauderstädt 1998 for a more skeptical assessment.

generous approach to the CEECs. [...] [W]ithin most member governments the foreign ministry was competing with ministries of economics, industry, and agriculture. These latter were subjected to vertical pressures from producer lobbies and other sectoral groups."[92]

One month ahead of the Copenhagen summit that was to commit the EU to the goal of Eastern enlargement, Southern members "categorically rejected" the Commission's idea of convening special summits between the EU and the CEE countries. On "the economic and commercial level, the division between 'Mediterranean countries' and those of the 'North' became even clearer, with the former calling for caution on market access".[93] Even after Copenhagen, differences of view over the safeguard clause and defense measures delayed the interim agreement with Bulgaria for more than half a year[94], and Italy blocked the opening of association negotiations with Slovenia for almost a year between 1994 and 1995 because of problems resulting from the nationalization of Italian property in the 1950s.

(2) *Side payments*: Furthermore, the Southern members suggested that the political dialogue with the CEE countries be widened "to other countries, including the Mediterranean."[95] This demand for a side payment led later to a bargain on the "Mediterranean Program" decided at Essen in December 1994 in which the Community pledged to spend the same amount on the Southern members' most critical neighboring region as on PHARE aid to the East.[96]

(3) *Delaying tactics:* The EC as a whole, and some of the reticent members in particular, used diverse delaying tactics to deflect the CEE demands for full membership. The association agreements were the first such device. Mitterrand's proposal of a "European Confederation" or Balladur's plan of a "Stability Pact" for Europe, and several ideas of "membership light" (i.e. excluding the more cost-intensive EU policies) can also be interpreted as attempts to deflect and delay full membership in the EU. Finally, the urgency of other issues has often been a welcome opportunity to push enlargement on the back of the agenda.

Rationalism, however, is only *a partial solution* to the puzzle that the decision-making process on Eastern enlargement presents to sociological institutionalism. It accounts for the initial preferences of all the main actors and elucidates the bargaining behavior of the Community, in particular that of the "brakemen". But rationalism fails to account for the fact that the Community has later committed itself to Eastern enlargement and has remained on track in spite of frequent blockages and delaying tactics and in the absence of a deal on the necessary reforms. Given the strong asymmetrical interdependence in favor of the EU and the absence of credible threats and bargaining chips on the part of the "drivers", rationalism cannot explain how egoistic preferences and instrumental bargaining behavior could produce a collective

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92   Sedelmeier and Wallace 1996, 371.
93   Europe 5978, 12 May 1993, 9.
94   Europe 6079, 6 October 1993, 8.
95   Ibid.
96   "Brüssel bereitet Osteuropa auf Beitritt zur EU mit ehrgeizigen Programmen vor", Süddeutsche Zeitung, 7 December 1994; Sedelmeier and Wallace 1996, 378.

outcome that did not reflect the relative power of states but the constitutive norms of the community.

Intersubjective structures do not explain the preferences and the behavior of the actors; and preferences and relative power do not explain the collective outcome. Therefore, the solution to the double puzzle of Eastern enlargement must be found in the *process of interaction and interest aggregation during the negotiating and decision-making process*.[97] Rationalism is a good starting point for the analysis of the decision-making process as it gives a plausible explanation of the actor preferences, the bargaining behavior of the "brakemen" and the initial responses of the EU to the CEE demands for full membership. But somehow the normative intersubjective structure of the EU must have intervened in the process and "distorted" the outcome predicted by the constellation of interests and capabilities.

It follows from this discussion of micro-expectations that any explanation of Eastern enlargement will have to account for three partly puzzling *process features*, some of which correspond to rationalist expectations whereas others appear to fit in better with a sociological community perspective:

(1) On the one hand, the member states have differed with regard to their commitment to the enlargement project, the speed of expansion, the ranking of candidate states, and the necessary institutional and policy reforms. On the other hand, in spite of the costs involved, no member government has publicly opposed the goal of Eastern enlargement or the membership criteria as such.

(2) On the one hand, the EU's policy vis-à-vis the CEE countries and its internal decision-making on Eastern enlargement has been characterized by tough, self-interested bargaining on the distributional effects of economic integration and policy reforms. On the other hand, the public statements by the EU and the CEE countries have been heavily infused with references to the European international community and its liberal values and norms.

(3) On the one hand, the CEE countries pushed the idea of EU membership whereas the EU was unwilling initially to commit itself to their admission. Progress toward enlargement has been incremental. On the other hand, the EU changed quite suddenly, and apparently without much debate, to a general norm-based commitment to enlargement. This commitment has become increasingly firm and concrete over time, although the distributional issues in the EU have not been settled and internal bargaining has not lost its harshness.

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97   See Friis 1998a, 323 for the same starting point. She claims that the Commission put enlargement on the agenda after having decided "that it was better to put itself in the driving seat and steer the inevitable" but does not explain why "it was apparently impossible to palm the Central Europeans off with less than membership" (1998a, 334).

·· 6 Solving the Double Puzzle: Rhetorical Action

6.1 Rhetorical Action: Basic Assumptions and Propositions

In order to account for the process characteristics of Eastern enlargement and to discover the intervening process by which the community values and norms asserted themselves against self-interested preferences and bargaining, we must abandon the conception that European identities and norms are so deeply internalized that they exercise their influence from *within* the actors through socially constructed cognitions, institutionally determined preferences, and habitualized or appropriate behavior. Rather, the solution to the double puzzle will have to allow for considerable freedom of choice vis-à-vis the intersubjective structures of the social environment and for the strategic use of identities and norms.

These considerations correspond to a widespread view among authors working on the influence of norms in international relations.[98] In a recent survey of the field, Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink conclude: "The extensive body of empirical research on norms reveals an intimate relationship between norms and rationality."[99] The theoretical lesson they draw is to disentangle rational choice and ontological materialism.[100] Similar conclusions can be found in a recent stock-taking exercise among neoinstitutionalists. According to Paul DiMaggio, "the action" within sociological institutionalism "has shifted [...] from demonstrating that collective actors behave 'irrationally' to depicting and explaining different conceptions of rationality." The question is not anymore, "whether people act strategically, but rather under what conditions and how they do so."[101] Victor Nee and David Strang call for a new institutionalism that "employs a rational action theory that takes into account cultural beliefs".[102] How to link rational choice with a non-material, social ontology at a theoretical level - and not just as *ad hoc* and eclecticist adjustments inspired by empirical observations - is the task we currently face. I propose "rhetorical action" as one possible way to capture theoretically the relationship between rational action and the influence of social norms and values on collective outcomes.[103]

Rhetorical action is the strategic use of arguments. It presupposes both rational actors and an institutional (cultural, normative) environment: On the one hand, in an intersubjectively structured environment, rational political actors need legitimacy and must refer to common values and norms in order to advance their goals. On the other hand, rational political actors manipulate the intersubjective values and norms through the strategic use of arguments in order to reduce the constraints of legitimacy. Finally, and most importantly for this study: By using value-based and normative arguments strategically in political discourse, political actors are

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98   Checkel 1998b, 9; Forschungsgruppe Menschenrechte 1998; Risse 1998.
99   Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, 909.
100   Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, 910.
101   DiMaggio 1998, 698 and 701.
102   Nee and Strang 1998, 713.
103   See Schimmelfennig 1995; 1997 for rhetorical action in international relations and Gusfield 1981; 1989 for a more general rhetorical perspective on political action (and social science).

able to modify the collective outcome that would have resulted from constellations of interests and power alone.

The theoretical argument starts from the rationalist assumption that it is the *basic self-interest of politicians and political organizations* to come to power.[104] Once in power, they will try, on the one hand, to increase their welfare, resources, and influence, and on the other hand, to meet the demands of those groups whose support they need to remain in power.

In an *institutional environment,* the demands that rational political actors face are not only material. Each polity has institutionalized a standard of political legitimacy which is based on the constitutive values, norms, and ideological beliefs of the political community.[105] The *standard of legitimacy* defines the members of the polity, their rights and duties. It distinguishes rightful and improper ways of acquiring, transferring, and exercising authority, and it determines which political purposes, programs, and goals are desirable and permissible.

Rhetorical action fits in with a *regulative* perspective on institutions which is consistent with the assumption of rational actors.[106] In this perspective, the standard of legitimacy influences the behavior of political actors not through internalization or cognitive mechanisms but as an *institutional incentive and constraint* that alters their cost-benefit calculations. Rational political actors do not take the standard of legitimacy either for granted or as a moral imperative. They regard legitimacy as a resource that can be used to strengthen their political influence and achieve their political goals, but they calculate whether the benefits of legitimacy are worth the costs of adaptation. To the extent that the standard of legitimacy is clearly defined, consistent, and consensually shared in the polity, it develops a conformist logic:[107] Political actors will adhere to the social norms of political behavior and pursue political goals that are compatible with the fundamental values of the polity in order to be perceived as legitimate. Thus, in an environment with strong intersubjective structures, the logics of appropriateness and consequentiality converge. Even for an actor who is uncommitted to the community norms, it is the rational choice to follow them.

In the regulative perspective on institutions, it is often assumed that actors comply with the rules in order to avoid coercive sanctions imposing potentially infinite costs on them. In the public choice perspective, political actors operate under the constraint that the voters may not reelect them if they deviate from the standard of legitimacy. Both perspectives do not capture the core of the compliance problem in international relations. On the one hand, the international

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104   This assumption is compatible with both public choice theory and political realism.

105   Legitimacy is a central concept in most sociological approaches. Again, normativist institutionalism stresses the moral, value-based dimension of legitimacy, whereas cognitivist institutionalism emphasizes cultural support or common frames of reference (Scott 1995, 46-47).

106   Scott 1995, 35-37 and 50-51. This perspective is on institutions and legitimacy typical for economic institutionalism (see, e.g., North 1981) but not limited to economics (see, e.g., Parsons 1990, 324-27 and recently Nee 1998).

107   See the four factors of effective international legitimacy analyzed by Franck 1990, 49: determinacy, symbolic validation, coherence, and adherence.

system widely *lacks a formal and central authority structure* that could force the actors to comply. On the other hand, most international political issues are *exempt from the reelection constraint* either because the voters are not sufficiently informed about, or interested in, these issues or because they escape effective control by national constituencies and legislatures. For these reasons, *informal* mechanisms of compliance are highly relevant in international politics. Systematically located between internalization and habitualization, on the one hand, and formal, coercive sanctions, on the other, they include shaming or shunning activities and reputational mechanisms.[108] These informal mechanisms work the more effectively, the more closely-knit or community-like the groups of actors are.

Even if the institutional environment is so strong that it is rational to act appropriately, rational political actors will *manipulate the standard of legitimacy* in order to increase the benefits and minimize the costs of legitimacy. If the actor's political goals are in line with the institutionalized values and norms, the standard of legitimacy provides an opportunity for instrumental action. In this case, the intersubjective structure adds cheap legitimacy to the actor's egoistic goals, and the added legitimacy enhances the actor's bargaining power. Actors will pretend to be committed to the community values, sell their self-interests as normative obligations, and appeal to their adversaries to stick to the standard of legitimacy or discredit them as traitors to the common values. Conversely, the standard of legitimacy imposes a constraint on action if the actor pursues political goals that contradict the institutionalized values and norms. In that case, the intersubjective structure reduces the legitimacy of the actor's goals, and the reduced legitimacy weakens the actor's bargaining power. In response to this situation, political actors have a variety of rhetorical strategies at their disposal: They can downplay the community values and norms or question their relevance in the present context. They may try to demonstrate that their goals and behavior are in line with the standard of legitimacy or pay tribute to the community values and norms in word while violating them in deed.

No matter whether the standard of legitimacy is manipulated in order to exploit the opportunities it offers or to circumvent the constraints it imposes, the actors use arguments. *Arguing* is the characteristic mode of communication in an ideal-type institutional environment, whereas bargaining is pertinent to technical environments.[109] The successful use of threats and promises in the bargaining mode ultimately depends on the power and the preferences of the actors. The successful justification of claims in the arguing mode, however, requires shared values and norms that serve as "warrants" and "backings" for the validity of the argument.[110] In the real world of mixed social environments, rational political actors will use both modes of

108   For "shaming" see, e.g., Moravcsik 1995 on the European human rights regime. "Reputation" is basic to neoliberal institutionalism (Keohane 1984, 103-106); see also Lumsdaine (1993, 25) for a moral emphasis. In general, see Goffman's treatement of enforcement in strategic interaction (1969, 123-35).

109   See Elster 1992 and Saretzki 1996 for the analytical distinction of these two modes.

110   See Toulmin's model of argumentation for the terminology of "warrants" and "backings" (Toulmin et al. 1979); Kratochwil 1989 uses the classical concept of "topoi".

communication instrumentally. In general, however, the stronger the institutional component of the environment, the more often the actors will choose "arguing", the more they have to justify their claims by social values and norms in order to pursue their interests effectively, and the more successfully they will be able to counter the effects of bargaining power with the power of argument.

To be sure, the use of arguments is not synonymous with "communicative action".[111] Rational political actors who use arguments do not engage in a Habermasian "cooperative search for truth" in which they aspire to consent instead of success.[112] Rather, participants in a political debate seek to assert and disseminate their own standpoint, and to justify their political goals successfully. They use their arguments strategically, i.e. they choose arguments that are both suitable to back their claims and promise to resonate well with their particular audience. This strategic use of arguments is *rhetorical action*.[113]

There are, however, *limits to the strategic manipulation* of the standard of legitimacy.[114] Manipulation always risks to undermine the legitimacy of the actors instead of improving it. Political actors that seek the benefits of legitimacy must be careful not to lose their credibility (in the sense of apparent truthfulness) when manipulating social values and norms. First, rhetorical actors must *appear convincing* to their audience. In order to avoid "cognitive dissonance" and the concomitant mimic and gesticulatory expressions, rhetorical actors are more convincing when they put forward those normative rationalizations of their self-interests that they actually believe in than self-disbelieved statements. It is easier for them to ignore, hide, or play down inconvenient facts or social norms than to lie about them or contest them directly.[115]

Second, rhetorical actors *cannot change their standpoints at will*. Once they have based their political claims on a certain set of ideas, they have identified themselves, and are identified by others, with these ideas. As long as they act and argue on the basis of these ideas, they remain credible. If self-interest dictates a change in standpoints and arguments, it is usually very difficult to persuade the public that this change is motivated by true learning (as opposed to adaptation) and honest convictions.

Third, and relatedly, rhetorical actors must avoid to create the impression that they use values and norms cynically and inconsistently. The *requirement of consistency* applies both to the match between arguments and actions and to the match between arguments used at different

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111   Habermas 1981. See Kratochwil 1989, Müller 1994, and Risse-Kappen 1995b for the application of "communicative action" to IR, and my criticism in Schimmelfennig 1997, 224-26.

112   Habermas 1973, 148; 1981, I, 47-48.

113   This distinction between communicative and rhetorical action parallels the common distinction between a "dialectical" and a "rhetorical" orientation in the linguistic theory of argumentation. See van Eemeren 1990. See also Elster 1991, 85-107; 1992, 18-19. For an analysis of Eastern enlargement based on speech acts, but with a considerably less rhetorical twist, see Fierke and Wiener 1999.

114   See Elster 1989, 100 and 103; 1992, 19.

115   Goffman 1969, 43-45; Eriksen/Weigård 1997, 231-33.

times and in different contexts. If inconsistency is publicly exposed, - and political opponents will usually not forego this opportunity - credibility and, in turn, legitimacy suffer. According to Elster, the "joint impact of the constraints of impartiality and consistency can be considerable".[116] Even if political actors only refer opportunistically to general values and norms in order to advance their purely selfish interests, they can become entrapped by their arguments and obliged to behave as if they had taken them seriously.

I conclude this section with *two methodological notes*, one on theory construction, the other on the use of evidence.

(1) I do not claim that the rationalist assumptions cover the full range of the real political actors' motivations and behaviors, but I regard them as useful for efficient *theory construction*. They serve as worst-case assumptions. I think the analysis so far has given us reason to believe that at least some major actors in the EU are motivated by self-interest and have not changed their preferences in the process. By demonstrating that and why even purely self-interested political actors follow social norms in a certain context, the theoretical argument of rhetorical action also covers the "easier cases" of actors motivated by social cognitions and norms or convinced by them in processes of social learning and persuasion. If, on the other hand, the argument had been based on the assumption of socialized or learning actors, the behavior of selfish and unpersuaded actors could not have been subsumed.

(2) The *body of evidence* for the rhetorical explanation of Eastern enlargement consists of characteristic patterns of decision-making behavior that have been reported in the press and in the literature and the patterns of speech acts that can be found in the public statements of the relevant actors. In a situation in which direct, reliable historical sources on the enlargement decision-making process will not be accessible for a long time and have to be substituted by interviews, rhetorical analysis has two methodological advantages: Firstly, it can draw on an abundance of publicly available data for the analysis of argumentative behavior: speeches, declarations, statements at press conferences, contributions to op-ed pages, etc. These sources would usually be discarded as attempts at covering-up the actors' true interests. But then, secondly, rhetorical analysis is indifferent to these true motivations. It is based on the assumption that, no matter whether political actors really mean what they say, they will choose their arguments strategically and that both opportunistic and truthful arguments have real consequences for their proponents and the debate.

Of course, these decisions come at a price. For the sake of theoretical efficiency, I rely (though with considerable empirical justification) on an "as if" assumption of egoism and instrumentalism with regard to actor dispositions. More importantly, I cannot adduce any direct evidence for the psychological effects of rhetorical arguments and for the primacy of credibility and legitimacy concerns in producing the decision to enlarge the EU to Central and Eastern Europe. I do claim to show, however, that the main observable features of the enlargement

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116   Elster 1992, 19.

process are consistent with the propositions of rhetorical action and that they "make sense" in a rhetorical perspective.

6.2. The Past History of Eastern Enlargement: Decoupling and Ritualization

Like all systems of authority, the European Union was built on, and is legitimated by, a common ideology. The *"founding myth"* of European integration can be summarized as follows: The apocalypse of fascism and World War II devastated Europe and removed it from the center of the international system. This called for a break with the European history of power politics and internecine warfare. European integration was the answer: a community of liberal democratic welfare states cooperating so closely that, first, war among them would become unthinkable and, second, they would be able to assert themselves as an autonomous force in world politics.[117] In the immediate post-war era, the project of European integration was meant to unite the entire continent. The federalist congresses of the late 1940s appealed to *all* European peoples, rejected the division of the continent, and accepted integration in the West only as a core to be joined by the rest of Europe "in a free and peaceful community".[118]

The Stalinization of the CEE countries and the beginning East-West confrontation deprived this pan-European orientation of any practical consequences. Rather, Western European integration was additionally legitimated as a bulwark against the un-European, "Asian" ideology of Soviet communism which had spread in the Eastern half of the continent.[119] The membership of the first organizations of the European international community, the OEEC, the Council of Europe, and the European Coal and Steel Community, was therefore limited to (different numbers of) Western European countries. The original pan-European vision was, however, still present in the names and the statutes of these organizations which signalled an openness, in principle, towards any liberal-democratic European state. In the early 1950s, there also remained some hope that integration in the West could actively contribute to liberalization in the East. A united democratic and prospering Western Europe was supposed to become an attractive alternative to Soviet rule to the peoples of East and exert legitimatory pressure on the communist regimes. Yet, when the desired crisis of legitimacy manifested itself in the GDR, Hungary, and Poland in the mid-1950s, the West shied away from active support and accepted the suppression of liberal movements out of fear of a military confrontation with the Soviet Union.

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117   For an analysis of the belief systems guiding early European integration, see, e.g., Loth 1991 and Schneider 1977. The conflict between federalism and functionalism was not about the ends but about the means of European integration.

118   Resolution of the Congress of Montreux of the Union Européenne des Fédéralistes (UEF), August 1947. This and other resolutions are collected in Schwarz 1980.

119   This cultural dimension is most obvious in statements by German chancellor Adenauer, see Schneider 1977, 325.

In the 1950s, with the division of Europe consolidated, *decoupling* took place. In organization theory, decoupling refers to the separation of organizational activities from formal structures and rules. It "enables organizations to maintain standardized, legitimating formal structures while their activities vary in response to practical considerations".[120] For the Western European organizations and their member states, to uphold their pan-European vocation was a cheap opportunity of maintaining and enhancing their domestic and international legitimacy and of putting pressure on the communist East. In the context of the East-West inter-systemic conflict, the Western Europeans could claim to represent the "true" or "better" Europe and demonstrate their system's superiority to their own and the CEE publics. They could invoke a "sentiment of pan-European solidarity"[121] because this solidarity was cost-free during the Cold War; they could express their desire to see "Europe whole and free" because the event was highly unlikely in the foreseeable future; and they could lend their verbal support to liberal movements in Central and Eastern Europe while regretting that it would be irresponsible to go beyond economic sanctions against the communist governments.

At the practical level, however, the pan-European orientation all but disappeared from the agenda. The project of integration within the European Community was predominantly inward-looking. For all practical purposes, "Europe" came to be synonymous with "Western Europe".[122] In the détente period, problems of "peaceful coexistence" rather than community-building dominated the EC's approach to its Eastern neighbors. In the terminology of organizational theory, the original pan-European orientation of the treaties and the corresponding membership rules had become purely "ceremonial"; the EC had "ritualized" its commitment to a pan-European liberal community of states because it "reflected" the constitutive values and norms of its "institutionalized environment" and promised to enhance its legitimacy at low cost.[123]

6.3 Rhetorical Recoupling

Suddenly and unexpectedly, the unthinkable happened. In 1989, the Soviet leadership under Gorbachev gave its CEE allies the "freedom of choice" which most of them used to choose liberal democratic transition. These developments were greeted with enthusiasm in the West[124], since they signalled the victory of liberalism in the inter-systemic conflict and promised to boost the West's international and domestic legitimacy. At the same time, however, this new situation removed the conditions that had prevented pan-European integration after the Second World War and had allowed the Western European states and organizations to use their commitment

120 Meyer and Rowan 1991, 57-58.
121 First President of the European Commission, Walter Hallstein, in a speech before the "European Movement", 20 January 1968, cited according to Schwarz 1980, 415.
122 Even when the EC dealt with constitutive questions, as in its Copenhagen "Document on European Identity" of 1973 or in the 1975 Tindemans Report on European Union, its horizons did not reach beyond the "Nine".
123 Meyer and Rowan 1991, 57-59.
124 See the declarations of the Strasbourg and Dublin summits quoted above; Mayhew 1998, 11.

to a united liberal Europe as a low-cost legitimacy-enhancing device. When the CEE states began demanding integration into the Western organizations, the West's cold war rhetoric turned out not to have been "cheap talk" at all.[125]

For the CEE states and the Western supporters of Eastern enlargement, the task was to recouple the Community's practical behavior with its institutionalized values and norms. In the perspective of rhetorical action, they could be expected to count on the power of arguments since they lacked the material assets and the bargaining power to make a selfish EU admit them as full members. Rhetorically rational actors choose arguments that are based on values and norms which their opponents share or, at least, have rhetorically committed themselves to. They assume that their opponents cannot ignore or counter such arguments without losing credibility and legitimacy, and that these expected losses are high enough to force concessions from them.

Therefore, the CEE state actors have based their claims to membership on the constitutive values and norms of the European international community: European identity and unity, liberal democracy, and multilateralism. They invoke the community's ceremonialized membership rules and take its ritualized pan-European liberal commitment at face value. They try to demonstrate that these values and norms oblige the EU to admit their states and that a failure to do so would be an act of disloyalty to, and lead to the decay of, the ideational foundations of the European international community. They uncover inconsistencies between the constitutive values and the past rhetoric and practice of the Community, on the one hand, and their current behavior towards the CEE countries, on the other hand. In doing so, they have managed to "mobilize" the institutionalized values, to make enlargement an issue of credibility and legitimacy and, thus, to recouple the activities of the organization with its formal structure. Finally, in order to advance their individual interest in accession, the CEE state actors seek to show that they not only share the community values and adhere to its norms but also that they stand out from the other candidates in this respect. Some typical examples of CEE rhetorical strategies follow:

(1) *Manipulation of European Identity:* The manipulation of collective identity mainly consists in the claim of CEE countries to belong not only to geographical Europe, but also to the (informal) European international community. This claim is then linked to the formal membership rules of the European Union in order to back up the CEE countries' demand for accession to the EU. CEE states put forward that they have traditionally shared the values and norms of European or Western culture and civilization, have always aspired to belong to the West during the years of Soviet dominance and the "artificial" division of the continent, and/or have demonstrated their adherence to the European standard of legitimacy during and after the revolutions of 1989 to 1991.[126]

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125   I allude to Risse-Kappen 1995b.
126   See also Neumann 1998.

Thus, the "return to Europe" has become the battlecry of almost all CEE governments, including some rather improbable candidates. Not only did Hungarian foreign minister Jeszenczky justify his country's official request for EU membership as the "return to this Community to which it has always belonged"[127], but also Romanian ambassador to the EU Ene asserted that "Romania has always been part of West European traditions"[128], and even the head of a delegation of the Christian Democrat Union of Georgia visiting the European Parliament expressed that Georgia hopes to "return to Europe".[129] In their competition for accession to Western organizations, the CEE states, furthermore, combine the assertion of their own European identity with the claim "that the next state to the East is not European".[130]

Finally, CEE state actors manipulate the European identity and the West's institutionalized and ritualized commitment to "overcoming the divisions of Europe" in order to get a better deal in their negotiations with the EU. The Polish chief negotiator in the association negotiations with the EC, Olechowski, stated "that 'the technocratic approach' is not enough in these negotiations, which have a historic goal: give Europe back to Poland, and Poland back to Europe".[131] Correspondingly, the Western demonstration of its superior bargaining power in these negotations was denounced as an "economic Yalta" or a "new economic Iron Curtain".[132] When Italy blocked negotiations with Slovenia because of open property questions, Slovenian officials also brought history and European identity into play. President Kucan argued that "Slovenia would again have the feeling that it is the victim of a historical error if it were refused access to the European Union" and warned that "Italy cannot allow itself to oppose Slovenia's accession as it would be placing a self-centred position before European interests".[133]

(2) *Manipulating the Accession Criteria:* Given that criteria of economic performance and self-interest speak against Eastern enlargement, CEE governments point to the constitutive values and norms of the Western community and the intentions "of the forefathers of European construction" in order to support their demand that the member states base their decisions on *political criteria* and a *long-term collective interest* in European peace, stability, and welfare.[134]

On the basis of these criteria, CEE states incessantly argue that they are, or will soon be, ready for Community membership. One representative of Hungary, for instance, claimed as early as 1990 to be able to catch up with EC members within a few years; the Hungarian government has repeated this claim ever since.[135] In their race to membership, the candidate

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127   Europe 6204, 6 April 1994, 3.
128   Ene 1997, web edition.
129   Europe 6065 16 September 1993, 5.
130   Neumann 1998, 406. See also Alamir and Pradetto 1998, 140; Neumann 1993, 367.
131   Europe 5456, 21 March 1991, 4
132   Saryusz-Wolski 1994, 20-21.
133   Europe 6263, 30 June 1994, 6.
134   See, e.g., Saryusz-Wolski 1994, 23.
135   FBIS-EEU-90-081, 26 April 1990, 46; Béla Weyer, "Am ersehnten Ufer angelangt", Süddeutsche Zeitung, 30 March 1999, 45.

states furthermore seek to demonstrate their individual merits and achievements. The same Hungarian representative, for instance, pointed to Hungary's "pioneering role in the changes in central and Eastern Europe".[136] Reportedly, at a meeting with the EC in 1992, Hungary, Poland, and Czechoslovakia "would have liked the joint statement to establish a clear distinction between themselves" and other candidates: "They do not believe Bulgaria and Romania are able to establish the same links with the EC as they do at this time."[137]

Moreover, CEE actors have sought to counter the Western strategy of postponing a concrete commitment to Eastern enlargement and demanding the full adoption of EU norms *ahead of* accession. In order to achieve early admission and, possibly, water down the stringent admission criteria, they have claimed that, in the absence of a concrete timetable for enlargement, the West risked that the CEE societies will turn away from liberal democracy, and demanded full membership as the only means of securing liberal transformation and economic modernization.[138] The scenario for the decay of pan-European liberalism was most dramatically outlined by Czech President Vaclav Havel when he spoke about enlargement in 1994 before the European Parliament:[139]

"Anything else would be a return to the times when European order was not a work of consensus but of violence. And the evil demons are lying in wait. A vacuum, the decay of values, the fear of freedom, suffering and poverty, chaos - those are the environments in which they flourish. [...] For if the future European order does not emerge from a broadening European Union, based on the best European values and willing to defend and transmit them, the organization of the future could well fall into the hands of a cast of fools, fanatics, populists and demagogues waiting for their chance and determined to promote the worst European traditions."

(3) *Exposing Inconsistencies:* One of the most important rhetorical strategies of the CEE states is to disclose failures of the EU to honor past commitments, to match words and deeds, and to treat outside countries consistently. CEE state actors have repeatedly pointed at the *mismatch between political declarations* such as the Strasbourg documents - expressing deep satisfaction with the democratization and the hope to achieve European unity, promising close cooperation with, as well as openness and support to, the like-minded CEE countries, and encouraging their political and economic reforms -, on the one hand, *and actual behavior* like protectionism and stalling tactics concerning enlargement, on the other.[140]

Moreover, CEE policy-makers compare the EU's Eastern policy with its *relations to other outside states* and its behavior in *earlier rounds of enlargement* in order to demand equal treatment. In the association negotiations, the Central European governments argued that a future-membership clause had been included in the agreements with Greece and Turkey in the

136   FBIS-EEU-90-081, 26 April 1990, 46.
137   Europe 5827, 2 October 1992, 7.
138   Europe 6204, 6 April 1994, 3; Saryusz-Wolski 1994, 21.
139   Europe Documents 1874, 16 March 1994, 3.
140   Saryusz-Wolski 1994, 23.

early 1960s.[141] According to Peter van Ham, "in particular, the Spanish and Portuguese precedents have been major trump cards which could be played by the Central Europeans". Already in 1990, Hungarian foreign minister Kodolanyi argued that the Iberian enlargement "had been the result of a political settlement" (pushing economic problems in the background) and "that the Community would do the right thing now to take a similar decision".[142] After the EU had committed itself to Eastern enlargement, Central and Eastern Europeans still suspected the Community to "discriminate against the transitional countries" by imposing *economic* conditions that had to be met *ahead of* accession negotiations, whereas "both Mediterranean enlargements were characterized mainly by political motives" and, in the earlier cases, the prerequisites of membership did not affect the beginning of negotiations.[143]

These rhetorical strategies and arguments were echoed by the "drivers" *in the Community system*. First, they emphasized collective identity. Commissioner Frans Andriessen, during his first visit to Prague after the "velvet revolution", stated that "noone who has made the short journey between Brussels and Prague can be unaware that Czechoslovakia is our neighbour; its history is part of our history; its culture and traditions are part of our common European heritage".[144] Willy DeClerq, president of the European Parliament's Committee on External Economic Relations, criticized those blocking the association negotiations by saying "he would have thought [...] that the Community was going to treat the countries concerned 'as European'".[145] Secondly, at various occasions, President of the Commission Jacques Delors publicly exposed the mismatch between the Community's rhetoric and its practical behavior towards the CEE countries. During the coup d'état in the Soviet Union in August 1991, he "launched a vigorous appeal to the Member States to show consistency between their actions and their statements":[146] "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."[147] He further warned that "the perspective of the next enlargement is not clear" and that "it is not enough to send encouraging signals to the East European countries".[148]

The ritualized commitment of the Community to pan-European liberalism and the rhetorical efforts to recouple the organizational standard of legitimacy with its practical behavior were the reason why the enlargement debate was so heavily infused with value-based statements. In time, the Community became rhetorically entrapped.

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141   Van Ham 1993, 198.
142   Van Ham 1993, 196.
143   Inotai 1998, 159. See also Kumar 1996, 54.
144   Europe 5206, 3 March 1990, 5.
145   Europe 5566, 13 September 1991, 13.
146   Europe 5549 21 August 1991, 2.
147   Financial Times, 21 August 1991, cited in van Ham 1993, 198.
148   Cited in Torreblanca 1997, 14.

6.4. Rhetorical Entrapment

By basing their claims on the constitutive values and norms as well as on the ritualized rhetoric of the community, the advocates of Eastern enlargement gained a considerable argumentative advantage in the debate. How could they turn their arguments into policy or, in other words, why couldn't the "brakemen" just ignore them?

As I argued above, the central compliance mechanisms in the regulatory perspective on institutions, formal coercive sanctions and the reelection constraint, often are not applicable in international politics. This is also true for Eastern enlargement. First, although the consolidated liberal-democratic CEE countries were entiteled to membership in the EU according to its membership rules and admission practice, there was no way to legally enforce this right. Second, no member government had to fear electoral defeat if it opposed enlargement. In accordance with EC tradition, Eastern enlargement has so far been predominantly elite politics made possible by a "permissive consensus".[149] If anything, public support for Eastern enlargement has been much lower than in the case of EFTA enlargement and has been waning over time. In the Eurobarometer polls, only the admission of Hungary and Poland gained the support of more than half of those asked in the member countries. Interestingly, public skepticism in such declared pro-enlargement countries as Austria and Germany is among the highest in all EU Europe.[150] Moreover, the only public protests in connection with Eastern enlargement, for instance by farmers, were directed against its consequences, so that member governments should have felt encouraged to remain opposed.

For these reasons, rhetorical recoupling must have worked informally. In principle, the conditions for reputational mechanisms and shaming and shunning activities are favorable in the EU because it is such a closely-knit network based on common political values. If a member state had openly opposed the democratic CEE countries' belonging to "Europe" and their entitlement to membership, it would have come into conflict with the ideology and basic norms of its international community and admitted the hypocrisy of its former public pronouncements. Such a state would have put at stake its "European" reputation, i.e. its credibility and legitimacy as a community member. Since a commitment to Eastern enlargement was not only demanded from outside but also from within the Community, open opposition and a veto threat would not only have damaged the reputation of a member state in Central and Eastern Europe (which might not have been too painful) but also its standing among its peers.

The supporters of a generous policy towards the East have repeatedly addressed the credibility issue directly in order to exert pressure on the "brakemen". For instance, Commissioner Brittan affirmed that the blockage of association negotiations by some member states "could affect the Community's 'credibility'".[151] Similarly, the European Parliament

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149   Lindberg and Scheingold 1970, 41.
150   See Standard Eurobarometer 38/1992, Fig. 5.2; 42/1994, Fig. 6.2, 45/1996, Fig. 4.4 and 4.5.
151   Europe 5564, 11 September 1991, 10.

requested in October 1993 that the Summit intervene to end the blockage of the interim agreement with Bulgaria because "it is undermining the European Community's credibility in Eastern Europe".[152] Hungarian Prime Minister Antall raised the credibility stakes in French enlargement policy when he refered to the French promise, in its bilateral friendship treaty with Hungary, to support Hungary's full membership and stated: "I have confidence in the French President's word."[153]

Some formal *institutional characteristics* of the EU system have helped in the rhetorical entrapment of the Community. One is the Commission's *proposal power*. The Commission has elaborated the major documents defining the EU's policy toward Central and Eastern Europe for discussion and decision in the Council. It could use its proposal power not only to speed up the process but also to frame the intergovernmental debate. By basing its proposals on the community values, its membership rules and past enlargement practice, the Commission made it difficult for the reticent governments to openly oppose the goal of enlargement and the preparation of accession. According to Mayhew, the Commission paper to the Lisbon Summit in June 1992 "talked almost in a matter of fact way about accession as if it was already agreed as a common objective".[154] As the "brakemen" could not credibly oppose this move, the pretended consensus was quickly turned into official policy.

The other institutional peculiarity is the rotating *European Council Presidency* which gives the presidency some discretion in the choice of, and the emphasis on, policy issues. In this perspective, it is small wonder that the most important steps toward enlargement were taken at the Copenhagen Council of 1993 and the Essen Council of 1994 when the presidency was held by avowed supporters of a firm commitment to the membership of CEE countries.

How could the enlargement skeptics react to this rhetorical entrapment? It was *hard to attack the pro-enlargement arguments directly*. Generally, rhetorical actors possess three strategies to undermine the validity of an argument. They can dispute the warrant on which the argument rests, call into question the credibility of the proponent, or doubt the argumentative link between the warrant and the claim. The skeptics couldn't embark on the first strategy at all because that would have meant to reject the very values and norms on which their political system and their membership in the community rested (and in which they themselves probably strongly believed).

The second strategy was of limited use, too. Whereas it may have been possible to call into question the credibility of, say, the Meciar or Iliescu governments, the integrity of presidents Havel and Walesa was beyond dispute. And whereas it may have been possible to unmask the British or Danish advocacy of enlargement as attempts to dilute the Community, this would not have been credible with regard to Germany or the Commission.

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152   Europe 6094, 27 October 1993, 10.
153   Europe 5568, 16/17 September 1991, 7.
154   Mayhew 1998, 25.

The third strategy was also difficult to maintain. In the case of enlargement, it mainly would have consisted in denying that the candidate states truly adhere to the community values and norms and fulfill the accession criteria. This was credible with regard to those countries that delayed reform or deviated from liberal transformation. To the extent, however, that CEE countries developed stable democratic institutions, a functioning market economy, multilateralist foreign policies and a high preparedness to adopt the acquis communautaire, there remained no justifiable grounds to reject their demand for membership.

Thus, the "brakemen" possessed no argumentative strategy to get out of their rhetorical entrapment and bring the enlargement process to a halt. This is the reason why no member state has openly and directly opposed Eastern enlargement. It also explains why the Commission proposal for a clear commitment to membership of CEE countries was tacitly approved at the Lisbon Council (i.e. only six months after the association agreements had been signed) and "hardly discussed by the Member States and certainly not disputed in the many hours of discussion and negotiation leading up to the [Copenhagen] Summit".[155]

Lacking direct counter-arguments, the skeptics had to take to *indirect strategies*. The Community's commitment to the objective of enlargement, and the "brakemen's" consent in particular, were certainly facilitated by the symbolic quality of this commitment at the beginning and by the expectation that it wouldn't have to be honored for a long time. In order to extend this period, the skeptics used various *delaying tactics* in addition. Their effect was doubtful, however. Proposals for alternative institutional arrangements like Mitterrand's European Confederation or the "European Political Space" were received politely by the CEE governments but also firmly rejected as substitutes to full membership.[156] The tightening of accession criteria as implied in the Balladur plan of a "stability pact" (it demanded the settlement of domestic and international ethnic conflicts ahead of accession) certainly raises the demands on the candidates but makes it even more difficult to keep them out of the EU when they actually meet them (as many of them have done).[157]

Finally, the "brakemen" could turn to other issue-areas and negotiating tables in order to pursue their interests and retrieve some of their expected losses. This has led to one of the most conspicuous features of the enlargement decision-making process. It is reflected in Mayhew's observation at various European Council summits that "while there was little discussion or dispute on the common objective of accession, the minor trade concessions proved very difficult to negotiate"[158], and in the fact that the enlargement process gathered momentum and was kept on track at the same time that the process of internal reform was delayed and has not met the

155   Mayhew (1998, 25 and 27 (quote)).
156   See Havel's remarks upon receiving the Prix Charlemagne (Europe 5489, 11 May 1991, 5) and Saryusz-Wolski (1994, 26).
157   Europe 6005 (21/22 June 1993, 7).
158   Mayhew (1998, 164).

objective of preparing the EU for the accession of CEE countries either at the intergovernmental conference leading to the Treaty of Amsterdam nor at the Berlin summit on the Agenda 2000.

This *duality of process* is itself an *institutional effect* of a liberal-democratic constitutional system which is based on a core of inalienable rights and political principles, on the one hand, and on a general openness regarding the content of material policies which is to be determined by pluralistic competition. Whereas the issue of EU membership is one of principles and rights and thus belongs to the constitutional "taboo zone" in which selfish bargaining and open opposition to the association and admission of European, liberal-democratic coutnries is regarded as illegitimate, hard bargaining on the economic and financial terms of enlargement and on the necessary institutional and policy reforms is legitimate practice in the EU governance system and compatible with the idea of liberal pluralism.

Each concession to the membership aspirations of the CEE countries, from the very reluctant acknowledgment of these aspirations in the Europe Agreements via the general agreement to expansion at the Copenhagen summit to the pre-accession preparations decided in Essen, created a stronger public commitment to enlargement - even if it had meant to be nothing but a tactical concession to accommodate the CEE states. Once the decision to enlarge was made, each further step towards the opening of accession negotiations could be presented as a logical follow-up and was difficult to oppose. As a result of rhetorical recoupling and entrapment, the policy of Eastern enlargement is securely locked in and effectively shielded from the "fallout" of the tough bargaining on internal reforms.

Finally, liberal membership norms and rhetorical action played an important role in the *selection of CEE states* for the accession negotiations. Although the member states' preferences are best explained as reflecting their divergent "geopolitical" orientations and sensitivities, they could not directly advocate the cause of their "pet candidates" on the grounds of self-interest. For instance, Germany's early attempt at the Madrid Council of 1995 to tie the Union to selecting the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland for the first round of enlargement was suspected and rejected as being too strongly linked to German national priorities.[159] In order to be successful, any differentiation among the candidate countries had to be justified and opposed on impartial, normative grounds. In its Opinions on the candidates and its later assessments in the framework of the accession partnerships, the Commission has presented its selection of five countries for the "fast track" as an objective, apolitical application of the norm-based Copenhagen criteria, although it also reflected the attempt of the Commission to put together a medium-size group of candidates from different CEE subregions that it expected both to be acceptable to all member states and to keep the enlargement costs manageable.[160]

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159   Friis 1998b, 4.
160   Friis 1998b, 5-6; Europe 7267, 20/21 July 1998, 9. As I have argued above (ch. 3.3), the normative approach to candidate selection is not fully determinate with regard to the number of countries.

This proposal, however, did not satisfy those member states with special interests in the Northern or Southern subregions of Eastern Europe which were only represented by one candidate (whereas three fast-track candidates came from the center). Denmark, Finland, Italy, and Sweden put forward an argument that was both suitable to cover up the divergent subregional interests of this coalition and justifiable on the basis of the community values and norms: The EU should open accession negotiations with all associated countries at the same time in order not to create a new division of Europe and discourage democratic consolidation in the "pre-ins".[161] In the analysis of Lykke Friis, this argument gained support, not because of Italian-Scandinavian bargaining power but because it "appeared more legitimate. These countries were [...] able to link their frame back to the core of the EU's self-image - the very fact that the EU has always presented itself as a club for all Europeans".[162] The supporters of small-scale enlargement could not directly oppose this frame for reasons of legitimacy but were able to make sure that its consequences remained largely symbolic: Whereas the accession process was formally opened with all associated CEE countries, only half of them actually took a seat at the negotiating table.

7 Concluding Remarks

In this paper, I have analyzed the decision of the EU to expand to Central and Eastern Europe from the theoretical vantage point of the current IR debate between "rationalism" and "constructivism". Both theoretical perspectives were found wanting in their "pure" form: Whereas rationalism could explain the actor preferences and much of their interaction, it failed to account for the collective decision of enlargement. Sociological institutionalism, in turn, could explain the outcome but not the process. In order to provide the missing link between rational action and a norm-conforming outcome, I introduced "rhetorical action". "Rhetorical action" starts with the assumption that the actors act selfishly and instrumentally but postulates that, in an institutional environment, they must take into account, but are also able to manipulate, the values and norms that constitute this environment through the use of strategic arguments. "Rhetorical action" thus disentangles rational choice and ontological materialism, adds "agency" to a sociological institutionalist, structuralist explanation, and provides one way of theorizing the context conditions of strategic action, as suggested in recent reviews of the rationalism-constructivism debate.

In my application of the rhetorical-action approach to the EU decision-making process on Eastern enlargement, I claim that the strategic use of arguments based on community values and norms has had three effects: to "recouple" the Community's ritualized pan-European liberalism, to "entrap" argumentatively the opponents of an EU commitment to Eastern enlargement by

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161   Of course, the opening of accession negotiations with ten countries also creates a dividing line in the region and may discourage democratic reform in the non-associated countries.

162   Friis 1998b, 7.

sufficiently increasing the legitimacy costs of opposition, and thus to produce a collective outcome that would not have been expected as the result of the constellation of power and interests.

As my account is based on the analysis of speech acts and observable behavior only, I cannot show directly that the "brakemen" within the Community acquiesced in Eastern enlargement because of the arguments presented to them and out of concern for their credibility and legitimacy. On the one hand, I am skeptical that this certainly desirable task can be achieved on the basis of the currently available evidence. On the other hand, the rhetorical-action mechanism not only provides a plausible theoretical solution to the double puzzle of Eastern enlargement but also helps to explain the main observable features and patterns of the EU decision-making process.

If my analysis is correct, Eastern enlargement is inevitable. The future process will continue to be accompanied by hard-nosed bargaining among the member states and with the candidate countries. But as long as the latter adhere to the liberal norms of the community and adopt the acquis, the former will remain rhetorically entrapped. As it was the case in earlier enlargement rounds, some of the contested issues will not be settled until the proverbial last minute before the signing of the accession treaties but they will be settled because the EU cannot afford the failure of Eastern enlargement for reasons of credibility and legitimacy.

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