

**The Temporality of Enlargement:
Comparing East Central Europe and Turkey**

Esra LaGro

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Abstract

This paper is a preliminary attempt to bring forward the analysis of time dimension in EU governance through the case study of EU Enlargement and the Turkish accession process. While doing this, comparanda with the recent fifth Enlargement of the EU involving the CEECs, and the Europeanization process will be made where relevant.

The main interrelated research questions in this context are as follows: Why study time during this stage of European integration? How and where does the temporality relate to the EU process of Turkey? What has the comparative research agenda to offer vis-à-vis Turkey with reference to the most recent enlargement wave (that is the CEECs)? How does the timing (political time) of core executives both in the EU and Turkey relate to the EU Enlargement in general and to accession process of Turkey in particular? Naturally the answers to these questions cannot be given at once, thus the current paper is reflecting only a work in progress and answers to the above questions are only outlined to a certain extent and the research continues.

Keywords:

EU governance, time, temporality, enlargement, Central and East European countries, EU conditionality, Europeanization, Turkish accession process.

The Temporality of Enlargement: Comparing East Central Europe and Turkey

Esra LaGro¹

Introduction

This paper is a preliminary attempt to bring forward the analysis of time dimension in EU governance through the case study of EU Enlargement and the Turkish accession process. While doing this, comparanda with the recent fifth Enlargement of the EU involving the CEECs, and the Europeanization process will be made where relevant. In this context, the following sections will outline possible answers to the main interrelated questions as presented below.

The main interrelated research questions in this context are as follows: Why study time during this stage of European integration? How and where does the temporality relate to the EU enlargement process and EU conditionality as well as the accession process of Turkey? What has the comparative research agenda to offer with reference to the most recent enlargement wave (that is the CEECs)? How does the timing (political time) of core executives both in the EU and Turkey relate to the EU enlargement in general and to accession process of Turkey in particular? Naturally the answers to these questions cannot be given at once, thus the current paper is reflecting only an outline of answers to the above mentioned questions and the research continues.

¹ Asst. Prof.Dr.; Jean Monnet Chair for EU Enlargement and Governance, Istanbul Dogus University, Turkey elagro@dogus.edu.tr. The current paper is a draft and comments are welcome.

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Why study time, and temporality of EU enlargement now?

Fundamentally, all the political processes have the time dimension and they all entail explicit or implicit usage of temporal rules and devices². For a neutral observer, perhaps a significant question in terms of the EU and its governance would be why study time at this stage of European integration. There can be several arguments in this context. However, the most relevant issues from view point of EU scholars are actually twofold:

- a. to be able to identify the temporally specific aspects of EU governance analytically.
- b. to be able to develop a scientific methodology and theoretical framework to sustain the results of the former. The theoretical and methodological discussion of temporality or the time dimension in EU governance is currently in the making (Meyer-Sahling, 2007 and Goetz, 2006a and 2006b) and it is likely to introduce a fruitful agenda for future research in EU Governance.

Once the research agenda focusing on the temporality of EU governance can be established through a sound methodology and a theoretical framework it is bound to open up new research horizons.

The study of temporality is definitely not a new issue but its usage in political theory and analysis has been neglected to a big extent so far³. There are, however, several academic publications which point to the neglect of temporal analysis in politics and specifically in EU politics and governance (Schedler and Santiso, 1998; Pierson, 2000; Tilly, 1994, 1995; Schmitter and Santiso, 1998; Ekengren, 1997, 2002; Jerneck, 2000; and more recently Goetz, 2006; Meyer-Sahling, 2007) which might provide fruitful insights for future research. Among these, Ekengren in his well-known book "The Time of

² See further Schmitter and Santiso, 1998.

³ See Goetz, 2006a and 2006b; Meyer-Sahling, 2007 on this.

European Governance" points to a missing link in the analysis of the EU governance; the temporal dimension. He focuses explicitly on the ways to distinguish the temporal logic of EU governance while providing a thorough account and discussion of theoretical and pragmatic issues (Ekengren, 2002, also Ekengren, 1997). Apart from this explicit focus on the temporality of European governance, there are other scholars who also have pointed out the importance of adding time dimension to political analysis (Schedler and Santiso, 1998; Schmitter and Santiso, 1998). The necessity of adding the time dimension into analysis of EU governance and particularly the European administrative space has also been recently underlined by Goetz (2006a; 2006b) who persuasively discusses the significance of focusing on time dimension. The current paper is partially an attempt to apply the insights provided by above mentioned work to EU Enlargement and the Turkish accession process.

At present, the answer to the above question, that is, why study time at this stage of European integration, manifests itself in the recent discussions about the absorption capacity of the EU as well as the hurdles around the EU Constitution, especially in the aftermath of the recent fifth enlargement towards Central and Eastern Europe. Obviously, the EU enlargement is a process relevant to the past, present and the future of the EU. It is well-known that the EU uses time rules in implementing this policy extensively. With the absorption capacity arguments, however, the EU indicates to have come to a saturation point in time and has the increasing tendency to buy time in terms of future enlargements in order to consolidate its governance structure with 27 members before continuing further⁴, thus the use of temporal devices and rules are exponentially increasing. The case of EU enlargement towards CEECs, the periods from their candidacy to accession provides a significant laboratory for research in temporality of EU governance allowing also comparative work with the current enlargement policy. EU enlargement wave, as it is

⁴ See Durand and Missiroli, 2006; Emerson et al., 2006; Barysch, 2006 on the discussion regarding the absorption capacity of the EU.

often called, connotes shape of time as manifested in EU governance⁵. Briefly, the EU enlargement and the Europeanization process mainly going parallel with it (at least on part of the CEECs) evidently provide new horizons for research in EU governance through the study of time dimension.

Temporality of EU Enlargement

The recent CEEC enlargement engaged a group of states in negotiations and accession process with the EU where time pressure was explicit, and the competition among CEECs to transpose their national legislation vis-à-vis the EU acquis and close the negotiation chapters as soon as possible has meant a high tempo. The EU being 'a moving target for the candidates' (Grabbe, 2003) also adds to the temporal feature of the enlargement process. During the fifth enlargement, the CEECs had to show enormous effort not only to catch up with the EU acquis in a relatively short time but also not to lag behind other fellow negotiating neighbors. In such an environment, obviously, the EU used time rather effectively not only in terms of conditionality and through its powerful position vis-à-vis candidates but also while negotiating the derogations. Clearly, derogations are also temporal devices for buying time on part of the EU. Put it differently, the interaction between EU time tables and the domestic time tables in the CEECs worked basically in two significant ways during the fifth enlargement. First, by synchronizing the negotiations of CEECs the EU created a competitive pressure among them, squeezed their domestic time tables, and thus controlled the pace of reforms. Secondly, the asymmetric relationship between the EU and CEECs affected domestic transformation processes of CEECs or their Europeanization in a way which outweighed possible delays on part of the CEECs.

⁵ Personal communication of Philippe Schmitter during the CONSENT workshop on the 'Temporality of European Governance and Europeanization' on 15-16 February 2007.

Throughout the EU enlargement processes, the EU evolved through 'learning by doing' so each enlargement wave created a revised or a new roadmap, timetable etc. For example, in the case of CEECs it was enough to adopt the EU acquis basically but with future enlargements implementation is required. Thus the time dimension comes more and more into the fore. Clearly, the accession negotiations of Turkey began in an unfavorable environment in October 2005 when the EU has already reached a saturation phase in terms of its governance structure as well as the enlargement. The increasingly pronounced absorption capacity arguments and the moves towards possible future public referenda on part of some individual EU member states vis-à-vis Turkish accession are clear indications of this among others.

Temporality of the EU Conditionality

There is substantial literature on the issue of EU conditionality and enlargement especially with reference to the recent fifth enlargement discussing specific aspects of it, and also in terms of Europeanization of the accession states, mainly CEECs⁶, however explicit analysis of temporality in this context is largely missing apart from partial employment of timing and sequencing of reforms and incentives on part of the EU and the candidates.

As it is well-known, the EU conditionality is basically effective in two ways; democratization/continuous monitoring and implementation of democratic conditionality, and the acquis conditionality. Both are going hand in hand in the ongoing Turkish accession process whereas the democratic conditionality was largely left aside and replaced by acquis conditionality in the case of CEECs during much of the negotiation phase. This aspect and the uploading of the domestic political agenda as well as populism of the EU member states to the EU level, as reflected in the Turkish accession process,

⁶ Leading work being published by Grabbe, 2001, 2002, 2003 and 2006; Schimmelfening and Sedelmeier 2002, 2004, 2007; see also Sedelmeier, 2006 on Europeanization among others.

increasingly decreases the credibility of the EU conditionality over time. This in a way indicates that extensive use of time rules can also be counter productive from view point of EU enlargement governance.

An analysis by Tocci (2005) specifically points to the time dimension of conditionality. She discusses the 'time inconsistency' of the EU conditionality. Time inconsistency refers to that fact that since the EU expects the reforms to be completed in the short or medium term and the actual membership occurs in the longer term, the EU conditionality poses a problem on part of the candidates. She comments that "the process is front-loaded with obligations and back-loaded on the delivery of the benefits" (Tocci, 2005:78). This accordingly poses a number of problems, for example, domestic policy makers are inclined to delay reforms until the time of benefits is foreseeable. The time inconsistency of EU conditionality is particularly evident in the Turkish accession process and will most likely continue to be so.

Another important issue again raised by Tocci is that the timing and monitoring capability of the EU is limited due to the vagueness of the EU conditionality and this further creates problems throughout the negotiations (2005:79).

In addition, the comparable rhythms in the EU, its member states and candidates are also obviously important in terms of time dimension of the implementation of conditionality throughout the enlargement process. This partially dwells on the general theoretical perspectives on the time dimension of democracy or state time where the electoral cycles or other political governance cycles intervene in the EU enlargement process.⁷ As such there are also other issues to be mentioned in the next section which further indicate that Turkish accession process is a resourceful laboratory for analyzing time in the EU governance context.

⁷ See further Shedler and Santiso, 1998; Schmitter and Santiso, 1998; Tilly, 1994 and 1995. See also Schimmelfenning and Sedelmeier, 2007 who provide dynamic insights for the EU conditionality with specific reference to new member states.

Temporality of Turkish Accession Process

Grabbe (2001) mentions five mechanisms as employed by the EU to affect change through conditionality and accession process. The first two are considered to be more relevant to Turkey. One is gate-keeping which means access to negotiations and further stages in the accession process. In this context, she highlights explicit usage of conditionality in a gate-keeping role for the CEECs. In the case of Turkey, this means that on one hand, as the gate-keeper the EU decides the tempo of the negotiations. On the other hand, Turkey does not have the incentive of full membership in the foreseeable future and also the absence of immediate competitors like in the case of CEECs to insert group competition in the process, meaning that the tempo or pace of negotiations is also partially in the hands of Turkey. Given the current situation whether this is positive or negative outlook remains to be seen. Tempo was used during the accession of new member states as a sort of competitive benchmark and rivalry sustained the benefits of concessions for the EU. In the case of Turkey, this is clearly different. As it is known, the slow tempo of the reforms was criticized by the EU recently. Benchmarking and monitoring through Regular Reports are the second mechanism outlined by Grabbe and have also again the time dimension since the regular reports are annually written, and they also provide explicit and implicit time tables for policy and its implementation.

Emerson provides further clues for the temporality of EU enlargement governance for future accession states also with specific reference to Turkey. He reads the small prints in the Council conclusions which are providing instruments for phasing the negotiations through time. Accordingly, there are three main sets of conditions as “i) Conditions for possible suspension of negotiations; ii) Conditions for transnational arrangements or derogations after accession; iii) conditions for alternative solutions if the negotiations fail” (2004:2). These conditions are clearly indicative of the temporal

governance devices aimed by the EU member states given the reservations of some about the Turkish process, if nothing else.

Clearly, the cumulative experience arising from the CEEC enlargement provides a comparative analysis in the case of Turkish accession process and the analysis can go much detailed further. However, it is possible to highlight for the purposes of this paper at least four important points relevant to the analysis of time dimension of the Turkish accession process and temporality of EU enlargement to have a brief and comprehensive outlook.

First, the ambiguity of time frame since the candidacy status of Turkey in 1999 points to temporal aspect of EU enlargement. After the candidacy status, the unexpected high tempo of reforms realized in Turkey between 2001 and 2005 clearly urged the EU to opt for different possibilities of buying time. We see here the interaction of the use of different temporal governance of both Turkish and the EU leaders. First 'giving a date for a date for the talk on opening negotiations' with Turkey, and later the precondition of Cyprus issue only added to the ambiguity of the process. This also indicates how temporality is employed in enlargement process, highlighting that the EU leaders also came to understand that the process of Turkey was moving on in an almost irreversible way, and this was not in parallel with the domestic political time tables of the EU and its member states.

Secondly, it is clear that the political weight attached to Turkish accession is different than the previous enlargements on the EU side. This in return affects the sequencing of the Turkish negotiation process. The recent hurdle around the suspension of eight negotiation chapters depending on the Cyprus issue, the ongoing pressure of the EU in democratic conditionality in the negotiation phase, and the move to create new definitions of minorities in Turkey while there is no such body of legislation applicable for the EU member states as such are clear manifestations.

Thirdly, a brief comparison of political cycles in Turkey and the member states as well as in the EU itself provides an empirical focus, i.e. German elections, French elections and the exponentially increased efforts on undermining Turkey in Western Europe. The arguments of Christian democrats on the so-called “privileged partnership” and the stance of France towards Turkey in line with the domestic political agendas as well as the continuous explicit remarks about the open-ended nature of the negotiations are clear examples of how domestic time tables of EU member states are reflected on the EU level as well as on the enlargement process. But this was not unique to EU member states only. In terms of temporal governance, the Turkish government also used the EU process or EU-ization of legislation (or premature Europeanization) as a legitimization tool where relevant and bought time in office as such until very recently.

Finally, the shared time of the relevant actors on both sides seems to be decreasing exponentially. The recent developments in Turkey seem to point out to the fact that Turkish governing elite, business world and civil society teamed up to pursue an independent time table and a road map for reforms in Turkey (albeit mostly in line with the EU acquis) since the credibility of the EU soared, and therefore the conditionality of the EU is not taken seriously as it used to be⁸. The government recently announced on April 2007 the fact that Turkey will continue its reforms with or without the EU, and there is no need to wait for opening or closing negotiation chapters with the EU for that. Put it differently, Turkey will model the EU acquis for reforms regardless of the EU. Thus the sequencing passed completely to the domestic political level. This is a critical juncture. It also indicates that the EU has lost much of its demandeur position vis-à-vis Turkey at least for the moment. At this critical juncture the EU not only needs to develop its own roadmap but also its roadmap with Turkey. This in return means that the current rather premature Europeanization process in Turkey is likely to be a two-way adjustment process

⁸ Euractive –“Turkey to adopt reforms even if the EU entry is blocked” 17 April 2007.

as suggested recently by Dyson (2007) eventually, through which political time will have a pivotal role.

Conclusion

This paper briefly argued that given a sound methodological and theoretical framework, the analysis of time dimension of EU governance in general and with reference to specific EU policies such as Enlargement (and also Europeanization for that matter) in particular, have significant insights to offer for future research. In this context, Turkish accession process provides a good case study. However, clearly one needs to keep in mind that the analysis of time dimension in EU governance is in the making and thus more methodological/theoretical issues need to be resolved.

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