# Fast Track to Europe – The Integration of the German Democratic Republic into the European Community

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## Summary

The fall of the Berlin Wall on 9 November 1989 represents a critical juncture and a watershed moment in contemporary history. Following the sudden and largely unexpected opening of the inner-German border, the slight breeze of change blowing over Europe since the mid-1980s intensified into an unstoppable revolutionary storm. Within months, the socialist dictatorships of Central and Eastern Europe were swept away. The dismantling of the Iron Curtain, which had divided Berlin, Germany, and Europe since the end of the Second World War, marked the definitive end of the bipolar Cold War order. The evolving European security architecture was ultimately consolidated through the eastern enlargements of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU). The first post-Cold War expansion of these international organisations co-occurred with Germany's reunification. Thus, 3 October 1990 marks both the end of Germany's division through the accession of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) to the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and the simultaneous expansion of NATO and the EU to the former GDR territory.

The GDR's integration into the EU – then still known as the European Community (EC) was not only a fascinating historical event due to its geopolitical implications but also because of the extraordinary challenges involved in the enlargement process. Decades of a socialist planned economy had left East Germany with severe structural deficiencies, including a deteriorating infrastructure, profound economic challenges, and widespread environmental pollution. Managing the enlargement process required exceptional flexibility from policymakers and administrators. Yet, despite these challenges, the integration of the GDR and its 16 million inhabitants into the EC was completed in just 329 days following the fall of the Berlin Wall.

While the national and international dynamics of Germany's reunification have been extensively researched, the integration of the GDR into the EC remains an underexplored topic. Despite its historical significance, the EU's first eastern enlargement has not received sufficient scholarly attention across research disciplines. This doctoral dissertation, therefore, examines the integration of the GDR into the EC, shedding light on this pivotal yet often overlooked chapter of European integration.

The dissertation is cumulative and consists of an introductory chapter, followed by four main chapters and one concluding chapter. *Chapter 2* establishes the methodological foundation for the subsequent empirical chapters by introducing archival research in political science. The analysis of recently declassified documents, which I have collected from various European

archives, forms the empirical backbone of this dissertation. The evidence presented throughout is predominantly based on these archival files.

*Chapter 3* provides the hitherto missing explanation for the decision to integrate the GDR into the EC as soon as Germany's reunification took effect. Drawing on the theory of neoclassical realism, I argue that EU enlargement is primarily a high-politics issue driven by states' core security interests. I demonstrate that the swift accession of the GDR resulted from the FRG's confrontational negotiation approach. Motivated by domestic political considerations, the FRG government made a take-it-or-leave-it offer to its EC partners, who ultimately acquiesced under the implicit threat of a German withdrawal from the EC – an outcome with potentially unforeseeable geopolitical consequences.

*Chapter 4* examines the conditions under which the GDR joined the EC, including all temporary exemptions from membership obligations and benefits. Whenever enlargement arises, the EU faces a dilemma between minimising financial costs and upholding normative commitments to support new members. I show that this tension was particularly pronounced during the negotiations concerning the GDR's enlargement terms. Consistent with the theoretical framework developed in this chapter, I find that the GDR's enlargement terms were the result of a carefully negotiated compromise balancing material interests and normative obligations.

*Chapter 5* analyses the integration of East Germany into the EC's regional policy framework. Despite severe economic and infrastructural deficiencies, the new East German *Länder* (states) did not receive significant structural funding from the EC until 1994. I demonstrate that this seemingly surprising outcome was primarily driven by Chancellor Helmut Kohl's chequebook diplomacy. Concerned that protracted budget negotiations could delay reunification and provoke electoral backlash ahead of the upcoming elections, Kohl firmly opposed EC financial assistance. Although the GDR government actively sought greater support from the structural funds, its efforts ultimately proved unsuccessful.

*Chapter 6* concludes by reflecting on the dissertation's broader implications, particularly regarding contemporary debates on EU enlargement.

# Zusammenfassung (Summary in German)

Wie nur wenige singuläre Ereignisse der Weltgeschichte stellt der Fall der Berliner Mauer am 9. November 1989 einen kritischen Wendepunkt mit einhergehendem Epochenwandel dar. Der seit Mitte der 1980er über Europa leicht wahrnehmbare Hauch der Veränderung intensivierte sich infolge der plötzlichen Öffnung der Schlagbäume an der innerdeutschen Grenze zu einem orkanartigen Sturm. Innerhalb weniger Monate fegte dieser Sturm unaufhaltsam über die sozialistischen Diktaturen Zentral- und Osteuropas hinweg und brachte sie zum Einsturz. Mit dem Verschwinden des Eisernen Vorhangs, der seit dem Ende des Zweiten Weltkrieges Berlin, Deutschland und Europa zweigeteilt hatte, war auch das Ende der bipolaren Ordnung des Kalten Krieges besiegelt. Die in der Folge neugestaltete europäische Sicherheitsarchitektur wurde maßgeblich durch die Osterweiterungen der North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) sowie der Europäischen Union (EU) geprägt und konsolidiert. Die erste Ausdehnung dieser westlichen Bündnisse gen Osten erfolgte zusammen mit der deutschen Wiedervereinigung. Der 3. Oktober 1990 steht demnach für zweierlei: zum einen für die Überwindung der deutschen Teilung durch den Beitritt der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (DDR) zur Bundesrepublik Deutschland (BRD) und zum anderen für die zugleich erfolgte Erweiterung der NATO und der EU auf das Staatsgebiet der gerade von der Landkarte verschwundenen DDR.

Der Beitritt der DDR zur EU – damals noch als Europäische Gemeinschaft (EG) bekannt – fasziniert auch jenseits seiner geopolitischen Implikationen aufgrund der mit dem Beitritt verbundenen außerordentlichen Probleme. Jahrzehnte der sozialistischen Planwirtschaft hatten im Osten Deutschlands markante Spuren hinterlassen. Zu den Hauptproblemen gehörten neben der tiefgreifenden Strukturschwäche die defizitäre Wirtschaft, die marode Infrastruktur sowie weitverbreitete Umweltverschmutzung. Die Bewältigung dieser Probleme stellte für Politik und Verwaltung eine enorme Herausforderung dar. Trotz dieser komplexen Situation gelang es mit einem Kraftakt, die DDR samt ihrer 16 Millionen Einwohner innerhalb von nur 329 Tagen nach dem Fall der Berliner Mauer in die EG einzugliedern.

Während die nationalen und internationalen Dynamiken der deutschen Wiedervereinigung gemeinhin als bestens erforscht gelten, kann dies für die Eingliederung der DDR in die EG nicht behauptet werden. Die erste Osterweiterung der EU ist disziplinübergreifend bis heute nicht systematisch erforscht worden. In der vorliegenden Dissertationsschrift widme ich mich daher diesem bedeutenden Kapitel europäischer Integrationsgeschichte und analysiere die Eingliederung der DDR in die EG.

Die kumulative Dissertation besteht aus einem einleitenden Kapitel, gefolgt von vier Hauptkapiteln und einem Schlusskapitel. Im *zweiten Kapitel* lege ich die methodische Grundlage für die folgenden empirischen Kapitel, indem ich in die Grundlagen und Vorteile der Archivforschung in der Politikwissenschaft erläutere. Diese grundlegende Einführung ist von zentraler Bedeutung, da der Großteil der in der Dissertation gewonnenen Erkenntnisse auf der Analyse erst kürzlich freigegebener Regierungs- und Verwaltungsakten beruht. Diese Dokumente habe ich in mehreren europäischen Archiven gesichtet und anschließend systematisch ausgewertet.

Im *dritten Kapitel* wende ich mich den Hintergründen der Entscheidung zu, die DDR ohne Verzögerung mit dem Inkrafttreten der deutschen Wiedervereinigung in die EG einzugliedern. Ausgehend von der Theorie des neoklassischen Realismus zeige ich auf, dass die EU-Erweiterungsthematik für Staaten von übergeordnetem Interesse ist, da sie deren Kerninteressen im Bereich der Sicherheit betrifft. Die Erkenntnisse des Kapitels zeigen, dass der schnelle Beitritt der DDR zur EG vor allem auf die konfrontative Verhandlungsstrategie der Bundesregierung zurückzuführen ist. Demnach unterbreitete die BRD ihren EG-Partnern ein Angebot ohne jeglichen Verhandlungsspielraum, das diese trotz anfänglichen Widerstandes nicht ablehnen konnten, da es die implizite Drohung eines deutschen Rückzugs aus der EG mit potenziell unvorhersehbaren geopolitischen Folgen beinhaltete.

Das *vierte Kapitel* untersucht die Bedingungen, unter welchen die DDR der EG beitrat und fokussiert sich dabei auf temporäre Ausnahmen von den Pflichten und Rechten der EG-Mitgliedschaft für das ehemalige Staatsgebiet der DDR. Dabei gehe ich von einem Spannungsverhältnis aus, welches praktisch jeder Erweiterungsrunde innewohnt. So zielen die EU-Mitgliedsstaaten darauf ab, die finanziellen Auswirkungen der Erweiterung möglichst gering zu halten, was jedoch im Widerstand zu der normativen Verpflichtung steht, neuen Mitgliedern unter die Arme zu greifen. Dieses grundsätzliche Dilemma prägte die Verhandlungen über die DDR-Beitrittsbedingungen maßgeblich. Im Einklang mit dem theoretischen Ansatz, den ich im Kapitel entwickle, zeigt sich, dass den Beitrittsbedingungen der DDR ein mühsam ausgehandelter Kompromiss zugrunde lag, der materielle Interessen und normative Verpflichtungen sorgfältig ausbalancierte.

Das *fünfte Kapitel* untersucht die Eingliederung Ostdeutschlands in die Regionalpolitik der EG. Trotz erheblicher struktureller Defizite erhielten die ostdeutschen Länder bis 1994 keine nennenswerte Unterstützung aus den EG-Strukturfonds. Ich zeige, dass dieses auf den ersten Blick überraschende Ergebnis primär auf die Scheckbuchdiplomatie von Bundeskanzler Kohl

zurückzuführen ist. Der Bundeskanzler befürchtete, dass komplizierte Verhandlungen über die Anpassung der EG-Strukturfonds die Herbeiführung der deutschen Einheit verzögern könnten. Kohl betrachtete die Wiedervereinigung als notwendige Voraussetzung für seinen Verbleib im Amt des Bundeskanzlers über die anstehende Bundestagswahl hinaus und lehnte daher jegliche finanzielle Unterstützung seitens der EG für die ostdeutschen Bundesländer ab. Obwohl die Regierung von DDR Ministerpräsident Lothar de Maizière aktiv stärkere Unterstützung aus den Strukturmitteln forderte, blieben diese Bemühungen letztlich erfolglos.

Das abschließende *sechste Kapitel* fasst die zentralen Erkenntnisse der Dissertation zusammen, insbesondere im Hinblick auf die durch aktuelle (geo)politische Ereignisse wiederbelebte EU-Erweiterungsdebatte.

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Note that the lists of figures and list of tables do not include figures and tables in the appendix.

# List of Abbreviations and Special Terms

| | |
|---|---|
| *Acquis communautaire* (short: *acquis)* | Body of common rights and obligations that bind all EU member states, including treaties, legislation, and court rulings |
| BA | Bundesarchiv, Federal Archives of Germany |
| *Bundestag* | FRG federal parliament |
| CEEC | Central and Eastern European Countries |
| DG | Directorate General |
| DI | Differentiated integration |
| EC | European Community |
| ECSC | European Coal and Steel Community |
| ECU | European Currency Unit |
| EMU | Economic and Monetary Union |
| EP | European Parliament |
| EU | European Union |
| FCO | Foreign and Commonwealth Office of the UK |
| FRG | Federal Republic of Germany |
| GDR | German Democratic Republic |
| *Grundgesetz* | FRG constitution |
| HAEC | Historical Archives of the European Commission |
| HAEU | Historical Archives of the European Union |
| IR | International relations |
| *Land* (plural *Länder*) | State(s) of the FRG |
| NA | National Archives of the United Kingdom |
| NATO | North Atlantic Treaty Organization |
| *Richtlinienkompetenz* | The FRG Chancellor's authority to set the general direction of government policy |
| SEA | Single European Act |
| TEU | Treaty on the European Union |
| TFEU | Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union |
| *Volkskammer* | GDR parliament |
| *Westbindung* | FRG's alignment to the West |
| *Zeitenwende* | Historical turning point |

## Chronology of Events

This timeline presents the most crucial events for the GDR's integration into the EC.

| | |
|---|---|
| 09.10.1989 | Start of mass protests in the GDR |
| 18.10.1989 | Erich Honecker resigns as head of state and party leader of the GDR and is succeeded by Egon Krenz |
| 09.11.1989 | Fall of the Berlin Wall |
| 18.11.1989 | The transitional GDR government under Hans Modrow takes office |
| 18.11.1989 | Informal EC special summit in Paris on current events in Central and Eastern Europe |
| 28.11.1989 | Federal Chancellor Helmut Kohl presents his 10-point-programme for overcoming Germany's division to the *Bundestag* |
| 08./09.12.1989 | EC summit in Strasbourg |
| 17.01.1990 | EC Commission President Jacques Delors presents three options for the GDR's future in the EC |
| 01.02.1990 | GDR Prime Minister Modrow presents a three-stage plan for German unification |
| 10.02.1990 | During his visit to Moscow, Chancellor Kohl receives Gorbachev's general approval for German reunification |
| 13.02.1990 | The four victorious powers of World War II and the two German states establish the 2+4 format to resolve external aspects of German reunification |
| 18.03.1990 | First democratic *Volkskammer* elections in the GDR, with voters expressing a clear preference for swift reunification |
| 05.04.1990 | The European Parliament passes a resolution welcoming the planned German reunification |
| 12.04.1990 | Lothar de Maizière is elected Prime Minister of the GDR |
| 28.04.1990 | EC special summit in Dublin, where the integration of the GDR into the EC is decided, taking effect on the first day of Germany's reunification |
| 05.05.1990 | Start of the 2+4 negotiations |

| | |
|---|---|
| 31.05.1990 | Meeting of the European Parliament's ad hoc committee on German unity with representatives of the German *Bundestag* |
| 25./26.06.1990 | EC summit in Dublin on progress toward the establishment of the European Union |
| 01.07.1990 | Currency, economic, and social union between the GDR and FRG comes into force |
| 02.07.1990 | Date set for all-German elections on 2 December 1990 |
| 14.07.1990 | Gorbachev grants the unified Germany the freedom to choose its alliances |
| 21.08.1990 | The EC Commission presents a draft legislative package containing necessary exemptions from EC legislation for integrating the East German *Länder* |
| 23.08.1990 | The *Volkskammer* votes in favour of the GDR's accession to the FRG |
| 31.08.1990 | GDR and FRG sign the Unification Treaty |
| 12.09.1990 | 2+4 Treaty is signed |
| 17.09.1990 | Due to time constraints, the Council, following the European Parliament, transfers special authority to the EC Commission for managing the GDR's integration into the EC |
| 24.09.1990 | GDR leaves the Warsaw Pact |
| 03.10.1990 | German Unity Day |
| 02.10.1990 | First all-German federal elections. Victory for Chancellor Kohl and his governing coalition |
| 04.12.1990 | The EC adopts the final legislative package for integrating the former GDR into the EC |

*"Wiedervereinigung und Westintegration, Deutschlandpolitik und Europapolitik sind wie zwei Seiten derselben Medaille." (Helmut Kohl in the Bundestag on 8 November 1989)*[1]

# 1 Fast Track to Europe

Since the Peace of Westphalia (1648) laid the foundation for the modern state system, the international system has continually evolved. Yet, never before in modern history has the world witnessed change of such a rapid pace and profound scale as in the late 20th century. Communist regimes that once seemed immovable crumbled within months through a wave of revolutions and subsequent democratic transitions. The watershed moment in this unprecedented period of systemic change was the fall of the Berlin Wall. The sudden and largely unforeseen opening of the inner-German border on 9 November 1989 sent shockwaves across the globe, accelerating the dissolution of the Cold War's bipolar security structure. Just as the divided Germany had long symbolised the post-World War II order, so too did the peaceful revolution in the German Democratic Republic (GDR), which culminated in Germany's reunification, mark its definitive end. The emerging European security architecture was eventually cemented through the eastern enlargements of the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

The very first expansion of both the EU and NATO beyond the former Iron Curtain occurred on 3 October 1990. On this day, the GDR not only joined the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), completing reunification, but its territory was also simultaneously integrated into the EU and NATO. These processes were historically significant in securing the FRG's *Westbindung* (Western alignment), thereby ensuring that the reunified Germany remained firmly embedded in the West's political, economic, and security structures. Despite the importance of this moment, the EU's first eastern enlargement has not received sufficient scholarly attention. This doctoral dissertation, therefore, examines the integration of the GDR into the EU, then still known as the European Community (EC).

EU enlargement is a complex and demanding process with protracted negotiations and high hurdles. Successful candidates take on average approximately 3000 days before being granted membership.[2] The accession of new member states is usually preceded by a gradual deepening

[1] "Reunification and Western integration, German politics and European politics, are like two sides of the same coin." Retrieved from https://www.bundesstiftung-helmut-kohl.de/helmut-kohl/zitate/europa, accessed 10.11.24. Like all other translations from non-English sources in this dissertation, the content of this sources has been translated by me with the assistance of DeepL.

[2] Duration from submission of the official membership application to accession date for all successful enlargements; own calculation.

of the institutional ties between the candidate and the EU, often through trade or association agreements (compare Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, 2005: 5–6). The GDR, instead, took the fast track to Europe and was integrated into the EC only 329 days after the fall of the Berlin Wall – without meaningful preparatory steps or pre-existing connections to the EC.

The speed of this exceptional accession is all the more remarkable given the GDR's deteriorating state in the late 1980s. After decades of a socialist planned economy, East Germany faced profound structural challenges: its economy was outdated and internationally uncompetitive, its infrastructure was crumbling and environmental pollution was widespread. While other former socialist states took more than a decade to prepare for EU membership, the GDR had less than a year to undergo a radical transformation. The East German political, economic, and social system had to be entirely reshaped to meet the rigorous demands of the *acquis communautaire*[3], which posed significant challenges for the GDR and its 16 million citizens. Managing the integration of the GDR into the EC was likewise a Herculean task for political decision-makers and administrative staff.

The EC was confronted with this unexpected enlargement amid a crucial transformation from a predominantly intergovernmental Community focused on economic cooperation into an ever closer, political Union. The GDR's accession took place precisely between two key milestones in this process: the adoption of the Single European Act (SEA) in 1987 and the establishment of the EU with the Maastricht Treaty in 1993. To concentrate its resources, the EC had initially ruled out enlargements at least until the completion of the Single Market in 1992 (Spence, 1992: 141). The fall of the Berlin Wall and the sudden resurgence of the "German Question"[4] in 1989 cast fundamental doubt on planned integration projects. Initially, it was uncertain whether the reunified Germany would uphold its *Westbindung* and remain a committed supporter of European integration (Baun, 1995; Hyde-Price, 2000; Patel, 2024a).

Despite its historical significance and far-reaching implications, our understanding of the GDR's integration into the EC remains limited. This dissertation, therefore, pursues four key aims. First, it seeks to understand the enlargement decision: Why did the EC opt for the immediate integration of the GDR upon German reunification? Who were the key decision-makers, and what were the crucial steps in the bargaining process? What alternative options

[3] The *acquis communautaire* is "the body of common rights and obligations that is binding on all EU Member States and that is constantly evolving". https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/pages/glossary/euacquisen (accessed 10 June 2022).

[4] When referring to the German Question, I mean the debates that emerged following the division of Germany after 1945, particularly concerning the possibility and implications of reunification.

were considered, and why was a more gradual, step-by-step approach rejected? Second, the dissertation aims to examine the enlargement process itself: How was the GDR's integration into the EC practically implemented, given the immense time constraints and the vast structural problems in East Germany? How were the terms of enlargement negotiated, and how did they differ from other enlargement rounds? What temporary derogations from EC legislation were granted, and how were they justified? Third, the dissertation aims to explore the EC's role in financing the GDR's transformation. What financial support was provided from EC funds? Did the FRG and the GDR develop a unified position on the issue? How was the integration of the East German *Länder* into the EC's regional policy framework negotiated and arranged? Did East Germany become a major beneficiary of the EC's structural funds? Finally, I aim to assess to what degree the GDR's integration into the EC was truly unique. Are there parallels to other enlargements? Which aspects are comparable, and which remain unique?

After decades of being locked away in archives, previously classified documents concerning the GDR's accession to the EC have only recently become accessible. These archival records are of paramount importance for addressing the dissertation's four key aims and answering its central research questions. Drawing on these valuable sources, I revisit Europe's *annus mirabilis*[5] of 1989 and conduct an in-depth case study of the GDR's integration into the EC in 1990.

The remainder of this introduction is structured as follows. First, I provide a general review of the relevant research in the disciplines on which the dissertation draws. Second, I introduce the dissertation's central overarching approach. Third, I summarise each chapter and discuss the dissertation's main contributions.

## 1.1 State of the Art

Following a brief conceptual discussion of enlargement, I outline the state of research in two key disciplines that this dissertation engages with and contributes to: the social scientific study of regional integration and contemporary historical research on Germany's reunification.

In general terms, my dissertation investigates regional integration, which consists of two dimensions. The first – vertical integration – refers to the deepening or intensification of cooperation among member states, while the second – horizontal integration – concerns the enlargement of regional organisations, also known as widening. Although both dimensions are

[5] The term is frequently used for the revolutionary events in Europe in 1989, for instance in Hyde-Price (2012: 19).

interdependent, my dissertation specifically focuses on horizontal integration. (for an extensive discussion of both integration dimensions see Leuffen et al., 2022: 8–11).

Enlargement, in its most fundamental sense, is defined as the "process of something becoming bigger, or being made bigger".[6] The EU defines enlargement as follows: "Enlargement happens when new countries join the European Union."[7] This state-level definition is problematic as it overlooks the principle of moving treaty frontiers inherent in the EU treaties (Weinzierl, 2021; Zimmermann and Eiken, 2021). According to this principle, the Union's geographical scope is determined through the member states, implying that territorial changes within a member state automatically lead to horizontal (dis)integration of the Union.

The most significant enlargement under the moving frontiers principle was, certainly, the GDR (Kuschel, 1991). A more recent application of the moving treaty frontiers principle concerned the French overseas territory of Mayotte. After being designated as a French department in 2011, Mayotte was integrated into the EU in 2014. While this integration did not involve the accession of a new sovereign state, it illustrates how territorial changes within existing member states result in EU enlargement in practice (for more information on this enlargement see Cole and Cabestan, 2024; Rakotondrahaso, 2014). Similarly, the Saarland's accession to the EU in 1957 exemplifies integration under the moving treaty frontiers principle, whereas Greenland's withdrawal in 1985 and Algeria's departure in 1962 represent cases of horizontal disintegration.

To ensure a more comprehensive conceptualisation, I define enlargement as a process of institutionalisation at the actor level: "Horizontal institutionalization takes place when institutions spread beyond the incumbent actors, that is, when the group of actors whose actions and relations are governed by the organisation's norms becomes larger" (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, 2005: 5).

### 1.1.1 Social Scientific Integration Literature

The above definition of enlargement is widely accepted in the social scientific regional integration literature. Since the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1952, a substantial body of theoretical literature on European integration – predominantly focusing on vertical integration – has emerged as a subfield of international relations (IR) (for an extensive overview of the trends and phases in this literature see Schmidt, 2024; and the contributions in the edited volumes by Wiener et al., 2019; Wiener and Diez,

[6] Definition by the Cambridge Dictionary available at: https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/enlargement, accessed: 12.02.25.
[7] Available at: https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/eu-enlargement_en, accessed 12.02.25.

2009). Theoretical developments, debates, and shifts in the literature on European integration have been driven by both innovations in IR theory and political developments that have led to intensified integration (Leuffen et al., 2022: 52–63; Maher, 2021). In the context of EU enlargement, the prevailing theoretical frameworks remain dominated by the enlargement discourse surrounding the accession of the Central and Eastern European Countries (CEEC) in 2004/2007 – commonly referred to as the EU's "big bang enlargement". The great debate between rationalists and constructivists in IR scholarship during the 1990s and 2000s (Christiansen et al., 2001) also shaped the theorisation of EU enlargement, leading to a similar divide among scholars in this subfield (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, 2002).

The most influential representative from the rational institutionalist camp is liberal intergovernmentalism (Moravcsik, 1993, 1998). This theory presents a three-step framework for integration: (1) national preference formation**,** where rational state leaders define their interests primarily based on economic interests; (2) intergovernmental bargaining, wherein the most powerful states shape the outcome; and (3) institutional choice, where states design institutions to lock in agreements and ensure their functioning. Originally developed to explain vertical integration, liberal intergovernmentalism has also been applied to the study of horizontal integration (Moravcsik and Schimmelfennig, 2009; Moravcsik and Vachudova, 2003; Moravcsik and Vachudova, 2005).

Against the backdrop of the big bang enlargement, liberal intergovernmentalism faced significant critique. Scholars from the constructivist camp – also referred to as sociological or normative institutionalists – have criticised liberal intergovernmentalism for its narrow focus on material interests and bargaining power, therefore, asserting that it fails to adequately explain the EU's decision to incorporate the CEEC. To address the "puzzle(s) of the EU's eastern enlargement" (Sedelmeier, 2005: 3), constructivists emphasise the "collective identity" (Sedelmeier, 2005: 9) and "kinship" (Sjursen, 2002: 495) Europeans share. This common identity, alongside shared values and norms, ultimately prompted the EU to favour enlargement despite considerable material costs (Jileva, 2004; Risse, 2009; Sedelmeier, 2005; Sjursen, 2002; Thomas, 2009; Torreblanca, 2001).

While constructivist theory explains the outcome of the big bang enlargement, it struggles to explain the process. The fact that neither rational nor normative institutionalism fully accounts for the CEEC accession to the EU has been referred to as the "double puzzle of Eastern enlargement" (Schimmelfennig, 2003: 190). To address this issue, Schimmelfennig (2001, 2003) integrates rationalism and constructivism in his theory of "rhetorical action". He argues

that while state leaders act rationally, their decisions are also shaped by the EU's "constitutive organizational rules" (Schimmelfennig, 2003: 4). Proponents of enlargement can, therefore, strategically invoke these rules and related norms to remind opponents of their past verbal commitments and their commonly shared identity. As demonstrated in the enlargement of the CEEC, this shaming process can rhetorically entrap opponents, ultimately compelling them to consent to enlargement.

In response, scholars from the rationalist camp demonstrated how the double puzzle of Eastern enlargement can also be explained within the boundaries of rational institutionalism (Plümper and Schneider, 2007; Schneider, 2007, 2009). Enlargement typically generates "distributional conflicts" (Schneider, 2009: 5) among existing EU member states. However, these conflicts can be mitigated by temporarily restricting new members' access to certain benefits (see also Schimmelfennig, 2014). Moreover, the material benefits of enlargement can be redistributed from states that stand to gain the most to those that would otherwise benefit less.

Following Russia's brutal full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, EU enlargement has not only returned to the forefront of the political agenda but also garnered renewed scholarly attention (e.g. Anghel and Džankić, 2023; Costa et al., 2025; Hoxhaj 2025; Karjalainen, 2023; Orenstein, 2023; Panchuk, 2024; Rabinovych, 2024a, 2024b; Schramm, 2025; Vaduchova and Koval, 2024). While it remains premature to discern definitive trends within this rapidly expanding body of literature, it appears that established integration theories continue to offer valuable insights (Leuffen et al., 2024). However, recent contributions place greater emphasis on the geopolitical dimension of enlargement, an aspect that was not in the focus of scholars two decades ago (notable exemptions are Missiroli, 2003; Skalnes, 2005).

### 1.1.2 Contemporary History

Researching European integration is of course not solely the domain of social scientists. Contemporary historians have also made valuable contributions, offering nuanced perspectives by situating integration within broader historical contexts. Unlike political scientists, however, historians generally place less emphasis on theoretical models, instead prioritising archival research to develop rich narratives (e.g. Avery and Cameron, 1998; Gehler and Loth, 2020; Loth, 2015; Patel, 2022; van Meurs et al., 2018; Wirsching, 2012).

Despite the obvious interconnections between European integration and the German Question in the 20th century, historians have only relatively recently begun to explore existing interdependencies (see contributions in the edited volume by Patel, 2024b). In the past, the relationship between European integration and the German Question has either been overlooked

or insufficiently explored. Research on Germany's reunification is, instead, extensive and "among the best researched in the history of Europe's past half century" (Patel, 2024a: 7). The first decade following reunification already witnessed the emergence of "a cascade of published material – documents, memoirs, books, and articles, by active participants and outside observers" (Spohr, 2000: 869), which has since been further developed. The substantial scholarly output can be attributed to the significance of Germany's reunification for European and global politics. Another reason is the political support for research, exemplified by Germany's establishment of the "Bundesstiftung zur Aufarbeitung der SED-Diktatur"[8], which has since become a major contributor to scholarship in this field.

Research by contemporary historians focuses, on the one hand, on intra-German processes and negotiations leading to unification (e.g. Küsters et al., 2017; Rödder, 2009; Walter, 1999; Weidenfeld and Korte, 1999). A steadily growing body of scholarship, authored predominantly by East Germans, examines the cultural, political, and socio-economic differences between East and West Germany in light of the decisions from the 1990s (Geipel, 2024; Kowalczuk, 2019; Mau, 2024; Oschmann, 2023). On the other hand, the international implications of German reunification have also been a key area of inquiry. Research has dealt, among other topics, with the end of Germany's occupation status and the restoration of full state sovereignty through the 2+4 Agreement, as well as the expansion of NATO. The latter has remained a subject of sustained scholarly interest, particularly in light of the return of geopolitics to Europe in the 21st century (Bozo et al., 2017; Geiger et al., 2021a; Hanhimäki, 2021; Küsters et al., 2000; Plato, 2003; Sarotte, 2019; Sarotte, 2021; Schabert, 2021; Spohr, 2020; Zelikow and Rice, 1997).

### 1.1.3 State of Research on the GDR's Accession to the EC

Despite extensive research on EU enlargement and the German reunification, the integration of the GDR into the EC remains an underexplored process across disciplines. This is surprising, considering that the topic's substantial potential was recognised from the outset (Blumenwitz, 1990; Schimansky-Geier, 1990). Initially presented research agendas were, however, not systematically pursued (Günther et al., 1991; Weidenfeld et al., 1991) so much of the literature remained in the beginning stage and is predominantly descriptive, superficial or resembles policy briefs (Eppe, 1993; Hrbek, 1990; Kaiser and Becher, 1993; Kohler-Koch, 1991). While these contributions highlight key issues, challenges and open questions, they do not offer rigorous analyses.

[8] https://www.bundesstiftung-aufarbeitung.de/de/start, accessed: 12.02.25.

Meyer's (1993) monograph remains the most extensive study to date that addresses the key sequences and complex interplay of actors involved in the GDR's accession to the EC. However, it lacks analytical depth, remaining primarily descriptive and is therefore best understood as a chronological account. Other essay-like contributions focus on distinct aspects of the GDR's accession to the EC such as economic consequences resulting from the unprecedented speed of the enlargement process (Falke, 1994; Giegerich, 1991; Holeschovsky, 1991; Janning, 1999). Further studies address the administrative challenges of incorporating the GDR into the EC's secondary legislation (Kuschel, 1991; Spence, 1992; Toepel and Weise, 2000) and others deal with the institutional consequences of reunification for the EC (Morgan, 1992). Law scholars have studied the enlargement from the perspective of international law (Grabnitz and Bogdandy, 1991; Timmermans, 1990; Zimmermann and Eiken, 2021). They also examine the implementation of EC regulations and directives in the five newly established East German *Länder* (Jacqué, 1991). Additionally, scholars explore the constitutional mechanisms that facilitated reunification and their implications for European integration (Randelzhofer, 1991).

As the GDR's accession lacked formal accession negotiations and other standard enlargement procedures, social scientists have classified it as an "unusual instance of EU enlargement" (Duttle et al., 2017: 415) without specifying what constitutes a "usual" enlargement. The perception of the GDR enlargement as "sui generis" (Spence, 1992: 143) has not only discouraged further inquiry but also led scholars to deliberately exclude the GDR from their analyses (e.g. Schimmelfennig and Winzen, 2020: 104). This is particularly surprising given the generally high hurdles in the social sciences to exclude outliers from analysis. The discipline has a well-established tradition of analysing exceptional cases, particularly those that challenge existing theories or exhibit extreme values on key variables (compare Gerring, 2017: 63–117). One would expect a case as historically significant as the GDR's accession to attract considerable scholarly attention. Yet, this has not been the case – not even in the extensive body of literature that emerged in the context of the EU's eastern enlargements, which has entirely overlooked this initial instance of enlargement.

## 1.2 Overarching Approach and Structure of the Dissertation

The underdeveloped state of research on the GDR's integration into the EC and its significance remains largely unrecognised (notable exceptions include Patel, 2024a; Patel and Schulze, 2022). I seek to address this gap by offering a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of the GDR's integration process. To achieve this, I adopt a case-centric and interdisciplinary

approach. While more detailed summaries of the dissertation's main chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5 are provided later, this section focuses on the dissertation's overarching approach, general structure and interconnections between its main chapters.

This dissertation adopts a pragmatic approach to theory, acknowledging its essential role in scientific inquiry while avoiding the tendency to treat it as an end in itself. Instead, I regard theory as a critical tool for achieving the fundamental objective of research, which is to explain real-world phenomena. This perspective aligns with a broader trend in IR, in which the importance of case-specific knowledge for causal inquiry – alongside the aim of generalising – is being rediscovered and emphasised (compare Humphreys and Suganami, 2024). If the goal of research is to provide a comprehensive explanation of complex cases, researchers should be open to transcending rigid theoretical boundaries and integrating multiple approaches. This pragmatic stance toward theory is likely to enhance the explanatory power of their work (Cornut, 2015; Friedrichs and Kratochwil, 2009; Sil and Katzenstein, 2010).

Given the complexity of EU enlargement, regional integration scholars have long embraced a pragmatic approach to theory (e.g. Hakansson, 2024; Schimmelfennig, 2003), and this dissertation follows that tradition. Rather than applying a single theoretical framework uniformly across all chapters, I employ tailored approaches that reflect the distinct sequences within the enlargement process as each chapter focuses on a different phase. At the same time, a key unifying element is my deliberate effort to bridge the long-recognised, yet rarely integrated, divide between rationalism and constructivism in IR theory (Jupille et al., 2003; March and Olsen, 1998; Yoder and Haynes, 2025).

The empirical backbone of this dissertation consists of previously classified documents that I have collected from various European archives. During field trips in 2022 and 2023, I conducted research at the Bundesarchiv (BA) in Koblenz (Germany), the National Archives (NA) in London (UK) and the Historical Archives of the European Union (HAEU) in Florence (Italy). Most of the records retrieved from these archives had been classified for thirty years and were only recently declassified. These highly informative and trustworthy documents were therefore unavailable to previous studies, which had to rely on less reliable sources, such as memoirs and interviews. The advantages of using archival documents are discussed in *chapter 2*, which introduces readers to archival research in political science. The chapter lays the methodological foundation for the empirical chapters 3, 4 and 5 to follow.

In *chapter 2*, I discuss how archival files can be utilised in causal process tracing analysis. The method allows researchers to develop a fine-grained understanding of the causal mechanisms that lead to specific outcomes and is thus well-established in the social sciences (Beach and Pedersen, 2013; Bennett and Checkel, 2015b; Fairfield and Charman, 2022). Rather than a single, uniform approach, "process tracing" is best understood as an umbrella term encompassing a variety of approaches that have been likened to the work of detectives piecing together evidence to reconstruct a crime (e.g. Beach and Pedersen, 2013: 130). Given my objective of providing an in-depth understanding of the processes leading to the GDR's accession to the EC, process tracing emerges as the most appropriate method. Consequently, I apply different forms of process tracing across all empirical chapters, often in conjunction with other methods.

The sequence of the empirical chapters 3, 4 and 5 closely follows the chronological progression of the GDR's integration into the EC. The process can be divided into two distinct periods separated by the EC special Council in Dublin on 28 April 1990. At this summit, the EC heads of state and government decided that the GDR would be fully integrated into the EC from the first day of German reunification. The period preceding the Dublin Council was primarily shaped by geopolitical considerations, particularly the implications of German reunification for the EC. In contrast, the period following the summit was dominated by discussions on the administrative and financial challenges of the GDR's immediate accession.

*Chapter 3* focuses entirely on the first period and the question of why the EC reached the Dublin decision and why other solutions discussed earlier in 1990 were ultimately discarded. In the theoretical section of the chapter, I develop an explanation for EU enlargement processes based on realism. Specifically, I draw on neoclassical realism to incorporate domestic factors often overlooked in (neo)realist theories.

*Chapter 4* focuses on the period following the Dublin summit of 28 April 1990 and examines the GDR's terms of enlargement, specifically the negotiated transitional derogations from the *acquis communautaire*. Unlike the question addressed in *chapter 3* – whether the GDR should join the EC – the terms of enlargement were not decided at the highest level by the heads of state and government. Instead, they were primarily negotiated at a lower ministerial and bureaucratic level. While the comparability of the GDR's accession to other EU enlargements is discussed across all empirical chapters, *chapter 4* adopts the most explicitly comparative approach. I conduct a rigorous analysis of the GDR's accession terms in comparison to all other EU enlargement rounds, using a comprehensive dataset and advanced statistical techniques.

In the fifth and final empirical chapter, I continue the examination of the GDR's terms of enlargement, with a specific focus on the integration of the five East German *Länder* into the EC's regional policy framework. As with every enlargement, this issue proved particularly sensitive due to its financial implications. The decision to exclude East Germany from the structural funds until 1994 remains the only instance of financial discrimination against Germany in the context of the accession of the East German *Länder* to the EC. The explanation for this seemingly puzzling outcome, developed in the chapter, is grounded in domestic political factors. This finding emerges as a central theme throughout all empirical chapters, highlighting the crucial role of domestic factors in intergovernmental bargaining.

## 1.3 Dissertation Outline

In the following, I offer more extensive summaries of the chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5, which are all single-authored. Subsequently, I elaborate on the overarching set of contributions the dissertation makes.

### 1.3.1 Chapter 2: Finding the Needle in the Haystack

*Chapter 2* – published as a profession-format article in *European Political Science* (Klein, 2025a) – establishes the methodological foundation for the subsequent chapters by introducing readers to archival research in political science. While political scientists have traditionally shown a strong interest in history, archival documents remain rather underutilised in the discipline. In fact, archival research is largely absent from the methodological repertoire of political scientists, and those considering its use may be discouraged by the lack of discipline-specific guidance, particularly in the field of European politics. This chapter underscores the significant potential of archival document analysis and demonstrates its application in causal process tracing, a well-established and widely employed method within the social sciences, particularly in small-N and mixed-methods studies (Beach and Pedersen, 2013; Bennett and Checkel, 2015a; Fairfield and Charman, 2022).

The chapter begins by examining the limitations of commonly used data sources in process tracing analysis, such as interviews, memoirs, and speeches. Interview data, for instance, can be problematic as respondents may have incentives to misrepresent information in order to present themselves in a more favourable light (Berry, 2002; Kapiszewski et al., 2015). In contrast, I demonstrate that previously classified archival documents circumvent many of these issues, as their content is generally more reliable. I further elaborate on the integration of archival sources into process tracing analysis and their role in establishing causal inference.

Beyond its methodological contribution, the chapter provides practical, hands-on guidance for political scientists preparing for and conducting archival fieldwork. Drawing on my own research experiences, I outline three key preparatory tasks essential for a successful archival research trip. First, scholars must acquire case-specific background knowledge, for instance, through extensive engagement with secondary literature in their research area. This foundational knowledge facilitates addressing the second task: identifying relevant archives, establishing communication with archivists, and drafting effective research inquiries. Third, researchers should engage with theory before entering the archival reading room. Developing process expectations from theory provides crucial guidance and structure during archival research. However, scholars should also remain open to alternative explanations, unexpected findings, and inductive insights.

The chapter concludes by addressing common challenges encountered in archival reading rooms and proposing strategies to overcome them. Additionally, I offer practical recommendations for organising and storing archival material efficiently. Finally, I explore emerging opportunities of archival research such as the use of archival documents in large-N text-as-data approaches (Bukhari et al., 2017; Martínek et al., 2020). As archives begin to digitise their holdings, archival research is expected to become less resource-intensive in the future, which likely will expand its accessibility and potential within political science (Kim, 2022).

### 1.3.2 Chapter 3: Enlargement as High Politics

*Chapter 3* – published as a research article in *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* (Klein, 2024) – delves into the immediate aftermath of the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989. While most of the national and international implications of this pivotal event have been extensively researched, the integration of the GDR into the EC remains underexplored. This chapter addresses this gap by examining why the EC chose to integrate the GDR as soon as Germany's reunification came into effect.

The chapter begins with critically assessing existing narratives in the literature, which I demonstrate to be incomplete or inaccurate. These persistent narratives suggest that the GDR's accession resulted from a political bargain between France and the FRG, while others view the enlargement as an inevitable consequence of reunification or merely a fortunate historical development (e.g. Baun, 1995; Falke, 1994). Throughout the chapter, I challenge these interpretations and construct an explanation that combines theoretical rigour with a systematic analysis of newly collected historical evidence.

I develop a theory of EU enlargement grounded in neoclassical realism (Rathbun, 2008; Rose, 1998). While this approach retains the core principles of neorealism, it rejects the notion of states as unitary actors, allowing for the inclusion of domestic factors such as leaders' personal views and public opinion as explanatory variables. To date, the regional integration literature has been dominated by constructivist (Schimmelfennig, 2003) and liberal theory (Moravcsik, 1998), while realism – IR's third grand school of thought – has remained absent from this canon.

The chapter's analysis is designed as an analytical narrative, a special form of causal process tracing (Bates et al., 1998). Using recently declassified archival documents, I test the process expectations derived from the neoclassical realist explanation for the GDR's integration. I also evaluate alternative explanations offered by constructivist and liberal intergovernmentalist theories, which, as I demonstrate, fail to account for the specifics of this enlargement case. My findings support the neoclassical realist perspective: the EC's decision to integrate the GDR was driven by the FRG's assertive negotiation strategy. The West German government presented the EC with a take-it-or-leave-it offer. Either the EC would accept the immediate accession of the GDR upon reunification, or the FRG would proceed with reunification unilaterally. I prove that the FRG was willing to act on this threat, potentially leading to Germany's withdrawal from the EC, which would have jeopardised the EC and called the European integration project into question. Despite strong initial resistance, the EC member states ultimately conceded to the FRG's demands by the spring of 1990, recognising that the immediate accession of the GDR best served their security interests. By ensuring that a reunified Germany remained firmly anchored within the EC, European stability was safeguarded, and any resurgence of German great power ambitions was effectively prevented.

This chapter fills an important gap in our understanding of how the post-Cold War European security order was restructured. The findings demonstrate that the outcome was not predetermined and that the course of history could have unfolded differently. By illuminating the negotiation dynamics behind this exceptional case of EC enlargement, the chapter offers valuable insights into the broader interplay between geopolitics and European integration – an issue of growing relevance in light of current developments on the continent.

### 1.3.3 Chapter 4: Between Playing Hardball and Accommodating Generously

*Chapter 4* – forthcoming as a research article in the *Journal of Common Market Studies* – examines the determinants shaping the terms of enlargement the EU imposes on new member states. Whenever enlargement is on the agenda, the existing EU member states face the dilemma

of minimising their short-term costs associated with the accession of typically poorer new member states and fulfilling their normative obligation to support these new members with whom they share a common identity. Historically, the EU has exhibited ambivalence towards new members, both by temporarily restricting their access to membership benefits and by granting them exemptions from obligations (Schimmelfennig, 2014). In this chapter, I investigate the determinants of these enlargement terms, asking under what conditions the EU plays hardball and when it accommodates new members generously.

My analysis of the EU's enlargement terms builds on the longstanding divide in European Studies between rational and normative institutionalism. Both theoretical approaches yield contrasting assumptions regarding the politics of EU enlargement (Schimmelfennig, 2014). I align with a growing body of literature that critiques the rigid separation between these two perspectives, arguing that a more integrative approach is necessary to fully account for real-world political dynamics (Cornut, 2015; Friedrichs and Kratochwil, 2009; Jupille et al., 2003; Lake, 2013; Maher, 2021; Moravcsik, 2003; Sil and Katzenstein, 2010). To this end, I develop a theoretical framework that integrates rational and normative institutionalism, generating more nuanced and empirically testable expectations. I argue that the EU's enlargement terms for new member states are shaped both by material interests and by normative obligations linked to European identity. The intergovernmental negotiations about the terms of enlargement between EU member states involve both hard bargaining and deliberative exchanges, ultimately producing enlargement terms that are a painstakingly negotiated compromise between competing material interests and normative obligations of member states.

To test this argument, I analyse the terms of enlargement for the integration of the GDR into the EC, for which the EC's dilemma between material interests and normative obligations was particularly pronounced, making it a highly suitable subject for investigation. The chapter's mixed-methods analysis consists of two components. First, a comparative, large-N assessment of the GDR's enlargement terms in relation to other EU enlargement rounds; and, second, a detailed case study, drawing on recently declassified archival documents, to examine the decision-making process that shaped the GDR's enlargement terms.

The findings reveal that while some aspects of the GDR's enlargement terms were exceptional, others aligned with established enlargement patterns. The number of temporary exemptions granted to the GDR was unprecedentedly high, yet discriminatory measures were almost absent. However, these differentiations were shorter in duration than in other enlargement cases,

although they were concentrated in similar policy areas. The analysis of the decision-making processes underlying the GDR's enlargement terms confirms that the final terms reflected a painstakingly negotiated compromise between material interests and norms**.**

### 1.3.4 Chapter 5: Two States, One Voice?

*Chapter 5* examines the initial integration of the five new East German *Länder* into the EC's regional policy framework. Following Germany's reunification and the simultaneous incorporation of the GDR into the EC, the East German *Länder* suffered from severe economic challenges, extensive structural deficits, a deteriorating infrastructure, and widespread environmental pollution. Given these circumstances and the immense transformation costs – later estimated in the trillions of euros (Schroeder, 2014) – the Eastern *Länder* were clear candidates for substantial structural funds support. Yet, until 1994, they were excluded from the EC's regional policy and received only minimal assistance. In fact, the Eastern *Länder* were allocated less than one-third of the funding granted to comparable regions (Anderson, 1996: 181). This outcome is puzzling, as the FRG could have vetoed the apparent discrimination against the East German *Länder* and, as the EC's principal budgetary contributor, held a strong negotiating position.

This chapter employs a theory-guided idiographic analysis (compare Eckstein, 2000; Levy, 2008), enabling an in-depth exploration of the complex interplay between overlapping domestic and international factors in this exceptional case of enlargement. Through an examination of previously top-secret records, I first analyse the process of preference formation in both German states before investigating the negotiations with the other EC member states that led to the final outcome. While the GDR demanded the immediate inclusion of the East German *Länder* into the regional policy, the FRG opposed any form of EC financial assistance. What seems like a surprising position was, in fact, shaped by Chancellor Helmut Kohl's broader political calculus. Focused on electoral considerations, Kohl was convinced that only a swift reunification would secure victory in the upcoming federal elections. Concerned that prolonged renegotiations over East Germany's integration into regional policy might delay reunification and jeopardise his re-election, Kohl opted to forgo EC financial support. This decision was highly contested within his cabinet, yet he ultimately imposed his position through his *Richtlinienkompetenz*.[9]

[9] The *Richtlinienkompetenz* is outlined in Article 65 of the German *Grundgesetz* and states that:"The Federal Chancellor shall determine and be responsible for the general guidelines of policy". The *Grundgesetz* is available in English at https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/englisch_gg/englisch_gg.html#p0304, accessed 14.01.25.

The relations between the two German governments were marked by growing tensions. I find no evidence that either the FRG or the GDR government made significant efforts to develop a unified position on the integration of the Eastern *Länder* into the EC structural funds. On the contrary, both governments not only spoke with divergent voices on the matter but also actively undermined each other's initiatives. Ultimately, the FRG leveraged its superior bargaining power and relied on established diplomatic channels that were inaccessible to the inexperienced GDR government. Despite its considerable diplomatic efforts, the GDR was ultimately unable to prevent the exclusion of the Eastern *Länder* from structural funding until 1994.

The findings of *chapter 5* reveal a previously unexplored instance of the FRG's "chequebook diplomacy", a long-standing (West) German practice of using financial side payments to achieve foreign policy objectives (Sperling, 1994). In this case, chequebook diplomacy facilitated the fast-track reunification of Germany, with the initial financial burden of reunification shouldered almost exclusively by the German taxpayer. As a result, Kohl was able to present himself as "Chancellor of Unity" before the first all-German elections in December 1990, from which he emerged victorious.

## 1.4 Main Contributions

Each chapter of this dissertation makes distinct contributions to the literature, which are discussed in detail within the respective chapters. Here, I focus on the overarching empirical, methodological, and theoretical contributions of the dissertation, which are of relevance to both social scientists and historians.

The primary empirical contribution lies in shedding light on a previously overlooked case of EU enlargement, examining its political, administrative-legal, and financial complexities. By reconstructing the GDR's integration into the EC in detail, the dissertation not only fills a significant gap in the historiography of European integration but also provides a crucial missing link in understanding the EC's role in reshaping the European security order after the Cold War.

My findings indicate that, while the GDR's integration into the EC represents a special case, it does not warrant the sui generis status it has been assigned in the regional integration scholarship thus far. Many of the underlying dynamics align with those observed in previous and subsequent enlargement rounds, offering considerable scope for comparative analysis. By challenging the prevailing tendency to treat the GDR's accession as an exceptional case, the dissertation makes a significant contribution to the field, encouraging its inclusion in broader discussions on EU enlargement and prompting a reassessment of its place within comparative research.

More broadly, the dissertation's empirical contributions extend beyond the specific case of the GDR, offering deeper insights into the functioning of the EU. It enhances our understanding of how the EU responds to unforeseen and crisis-like conditions, demonstrating both its willingness to make exceptional decisions and its administrative capacity to implement them. In the case of the GDR, this included bypassing formal enlargement negotiations and flexibly applying the *acquis communautaire* to East Germany. More generally, the findings reaffirm that enlargement is not merely a technocratic process but a high politics issue shaped by states' security interests. Furthermore, the dissertation contributes to the literature on the EU's regional policy by analysing the accession of the East German *Länder*, which represented a major shock to the regional policy framework established in 1988 – a structure that largely remains in place today.

A key methodological contribution of the dissertation lies in its extensive use of archival research, which provides new empirical data and uncovers previously unexamined sources. While archival research is well-established among historians, it remains relatively uncommon in political science and is even more underutilised in regional integration studies. By incorporating archival records extensively, this dissertation demonstrates their value in political science research and contributes to establishing archival research as a more prominent methodological approach in the field. Additionally, the dissertation offers practical guidance for political scientists interested in archival research, providing hands-on insights into data collection and analysis.

Finally, the dissertation makes theoretical contributions, most notably by integrating realism into the social scientific literature on European integration, a field traditionally dominated by liberalism and constructivism. Given the recent surge in scholarly interest in enlargement – particularly in its geopolitical dimensions – the dissertation's approach offers a timely contribution. By applying neoclassical realism and combining rational and normative institutionalist theories, it also engages with ongoing IR debates on the evolution and future of theory (compare Dunne et al., 2013). I revisit these theoretical contributions and their implications for future research in the concluding chapter.

*"History is too important to leave it to the historians" (Levy, 1997: 33).*

# 2 Finding the Needle in the Haystack: Archival Research in European Political Science

## Abstract

This short article offers a practical introduction to archival research for political scientists working on European politics. Archival documents are increasingly recognised as a relevant data source for process tracing analyses in small-N or mixed methods studies. Previously classified archival documents are exceptionally trustworthy due to their original confidentiality. Their rich and detailed content facilitates the understanding of causal mechanisms. Still, the hurdles for working with archival sources are high for political scientists. Lack of experience, no special training in handling historic documents, a shortage of textbooks meeting their demands are a few of the problems political scientists planning archival research face. In the article, I highlight the opportunities of archival research and demonstrate how challenges can be overcome. I emphasise that the archival field trip should only be planned once researchers have gained substantive context knowledge. In their preparation, researchers should use all the resources archives offer and develop measurable expectations from theories.

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## 2.1 Archival Research in European Political Science

Political scientists, particularly those interested in historical cases, increasingly recognise the enormous potential of archival research. The evidence derived from the analysis of archival documents is well suited to inform process tracing analyses. Process tracing is the dominant choice in the discipline for small-N studies and the qualitative part of mixed methods studies, which continue shaping the evolving landscape of political science research. Political science has overcome dogmatic debates between small and large-N research and recognised the inherent benefits of combining both (Humphreys and Jacobs, 2023). Researchers particularly value the opportunity to generate internally and externally valid results with one study (Brady and Collier, 2010; Dunning, 2015). Due to its significance, process tracing is becoming increasingly sophisticated (Beach and Pedersen, 2013; Bennett and Checkel, 2015a; see also Fairfield and Charman, 2022 on formal Bayesian process tracing; Humphreys and Jacobs, 2023 on integrating qualitative and quantitative inferences).

Nevertheless, scholars still encounter practical issues. One relates to collecting and analysing causal process observations from archival research. Even though archival files are increasingly available online, the digitisation of content is still in the early stages and incomplete, so field trips to archives remain essential. Researchers who rely exclusively on digitised content risk bias resulting from convenience sampling (King et al., 2021).

Compared to their potential fellow visitors in the archival reading room, political scientists usually have less experience handling archival primary sources. While a political science programme's curriculum typically includes, for example, software programme training or qualitative content analysis, dedicated courses on archival research are missing (Frisch et al., 2012). This leads to several problems once a research puzzle has been identified to which the answer might lie in an archive. Historians can count on their undergraduate training or a range of guiding textbooks when approaching an archive. On the contrary, political scientists lack experience and cannot rely on routines for archival fieldwork (Cook and Schwartz, 2002). Existing textbooks from and for historians on archival research do not address the demands of political scientists as they, for instance, do not reflect on the role of theory. While there is a small range of publications specifically devoted to archival research for political scientists, this literature is underdeveloped in comparison to other methodological approaches. These nevertheless helpful publications are either broad and unspecific or focused on US politics and work in US archives (cf. Frisch and Kelly, 2012; Kapiszewski et al., 2015). For the field of

European politics[10], therefore, subject-specific guidance is missing. As a result, scholars might abandon their research projects or turn to more familiar data sources. If they still go on the archival field trip, it might become an inefficient adventure with poor results.

This short article is directed to political scientists in the field of European politics for whose projects archival research might be a worthwhile endeavour.[11] I discuss why and when political scientists should consider a field trip to an archive and offer practical guidance for planning and executing the field trip. In essence, successful preparation comes down to fulfilling three tasks. Even though I focus on European archives, the guidance is to a large degree also helpful for researchers in other subfields.[12]

The article proceeds as follows. First, I consider different forms of data political scientists typically rely on and discuss possible bias. Then I demonstrate how archival documents once they have been declassified can avoid many of those limitations. After that, I turn to practical matters that scholars should consider when preparing their archival field trips. I emphasise the importance of theory for organising archival research. Finally, I discuss typical challenges related to the data collection and analysis of archival files and also address the opportunity of using archival material for text-as-data approaches. In the last section, I summarise the article's implications before I end with an outlook on the future of archival research in European political science. The article is inspired by field trips I made to different archives such as the Historical Archives of the European Union (HAEU) in Florence, Italy, the National Archives of the UK (NA) in London, and the German Federal Archives (BA) in Koblenz, Germany. For the sake of illustration and to emphasise the article's practical element, I frequently refer to examples from my own research and the field of European politics more broadly.

[10] Defining European politics is not straightforward and can become a controversial issue similar to the definition of what "Europe" is. My understanding is rather broad in terms of geography and content. A good orientation of what European politics includes can be gained by reading the monograph by Magone (2019).

[11] Naturally, the archives for scholars researching European politics should be situated in Europe. There are, however, exemptions such as the Archive of European Integration in Pittsburgh (US). Scholars working, for instance, on the relationship between the EU and the US should, of course, also take US archives into account.

[12] Researchers planning archival research in the US should approach the volume by Frisch et al. (2012) and inform themselves about the FOIA (https://www.uscis.gov/records/request-records-through-the-freedom-of-information-act-or-privacy-act, accessed 03.02.24). There is barely any literature on archival research for political scientists in authoritarian and low-income states. For historians, there is more guidance, e.g. the edited volume by Bastian et al. (2018) on archival research in the Caribbean. I generally recommend political scientists planning archival research in these states to consult Kapiszewski et al. (2015), Art (2016) and also Subotić (2021) for ethical issues.

## 2.2 Field Trip to an Archive: Why and When?

Many political scientists share a strong interest in history. There is a long tradition of studying historical events' impact on contemporary political phenomena (Putnam et al., 1993; Simpser et al., 2018). Recent work demonstrates that visiting the reading room of an archive is not a necessary condition for publishing on historical topics. Quantitively-minded scholars provide new historical insights through innovative statistical methods (e.g. Bueno de Mesquita and Bueno de Mesquita, 2023; Gingerich and Vogler, 2021). Despite their advantages, these approaches cannot inform us about the "cogs and wheels" (Elster, 1989: 3) generating an outcome. If a researcher aims to understand a causal mechanism completely, she must use a process tracing approach (Beach and Pedersen, 2013; Bennett and Checkel, 2015a; Fairfield and Charman, 2022).

Archival documents are, of course, not the only type of data typically used for process tracing. Authors consider interviews, memoirs, speeches, newspapers, and secondary literature, which can be analysed with considerably less time and resources. Nevertheless, the evidence from archival documents will most of the time prevail and significantly improve the quality of political science research (Darnton, 2018; Frisch et al., 2012; Larson, 2001, 2017).

No matter which type of data one draws on in the analysis, reflecting on potential bias is an inevitable part of the research process. This is particularly crucial for interviews, the most popular form of political science field research (Kapiszewski et al., 2015: 190). Bias can be introduced by both the interviewer and the interviewee and affect the validity and reliability of a study's results (Berry, 2002). The selection of interview partners already involves difficulties. When analysing a bargaining process, for instance, researchers should interview both the "winners" and the "losers" of the negotiations. An unbalanced selection of interviewees from both camps would significantly bias the results and should, therefore, be avoided (Beach and Pedersen, 2013: 134–136). In many cases, the "losers" might be unavailable for an interview about their defeat so the results will suffer from "non-response bias" (Kapiszewski et al., 2015: 219). The personal characteristics of the researcher herself also matter and inhibit interviewees from expressing themselves freely. This affects the validity but also the reliability of the results. Another researcher conducting the interviews might get very different responses, for instance, due to ethical issues (Berry, 2002; Kapiszewski et al., 2015: 190–223). In terms of validity, the content created from interviews does not represent facts. Instead, the statements of interviewees often contain untruths, whether intentional or not. If intentional, interviewees might want to present themselves in a good light. On the contrary, unintentional error can be caused by the

interviewee who has never known the truth and can, therefore, not speak the truth. Moreover, vanishing memory can cause incorrect statements (Mosley, 2013, pp. 14–28). Imagine you plan to conduct interviews to study the role of the Delors Commission in the creation of the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU). In fact, the results of interviews with involved decision makers will have a lower validity nowadays than if the interviews were conducted already in the 1990s. Moreover, important decision makers, such as the late Delors, might already have passed away making interviews problematic as the more distant events date back.

Other types of data frequently used as evidence for process tracing analyses also tend to be biased. Relying exclusively on publications by historians is problematic for several reasons. Historians have little interest in theoretical explanation or generalisation and, therefore, omit relevant documents (Larson, 2001, 2017). Apart from being selective on the primary sources, the secondary literature includes bias as history is explained from the author's point of view (Lustick, 1996; Thies, 2002). Memoirs tend to be subjective and full of self-praise. Like **s**peeches,[13] they are directed to the public and may, therefore, spare out essential details. Newspapers are informative but, after all, commercial products in which journalists potentially exclude information lacking attractiveness to the reader (Beach and Pedersen, 2013: 132–143).

Even though archival research avoids many of these problems, it is no "panacea" (Darnton, 2018: 125). The type of documents stored in archives is diverse and can broadly be grouped into public, private and classified.[14] This categorisation is well illustrated by the example of the Historical Archives of the European Commission (HAEC).[15] The HAEC hold items such as interviews and speeches by Commissioners, their newspaper appearances or speeches that are meant to be publicly available. Whereas this data can be informative, it can include similar bias as discussed previously. This is different for private documents such as private letter exchanges between Commissioners or transcriptions of phone calls. Private documents have no legal status of classification but are usually not proactively made public unless their authors or recipients choose to do so, for instance, in their memoirs. Documents such as internal Commissioner briefings, memoranda or non-papers are usually classified by EU legislation as restricted, confidential, secret or top-secret. As a common rule, classified EU documents remain under

[13] Note that the text of the speech may be different from the speech actually held. Comparing the differences may illuminate differences between the staff authors and/or bureaucratic inputs and the principal who actually gives the speech.

[14] I thank an anonymous reviewer for the suggestion to distinguish between "private" and "classified" documents.

[15] https://ec.europa.eu/historical_archives/archiv_fonds_en.htm, accessed 03.02.24.

lock and key for thirty years.[16] This period might be extended if the documents relate to strictly personal information. The exact classification period is subject to a country's legislation and, therefore, varies across archives.

Checking the status of declassification is obligatory for researchers to ensure that files of interest are actually accessible. The archives will not be open for many issues political scientists are interested in such as, for example, the negotiations preceding the EU's Treaty of Lisbon 2009. In this case, all classified and the majority of the private documents will remain locked up in the archives for at least the next 15 years. Thus, researchers must rely on other data sources or be patient and wait another 15 years.

Assuming the common thirty-year rule, a record from 1 December, 1989 will still not become automatically accessible on 1 December, 2019. Declassification is no automatized process and requires archivists to check the documents before they are made available. Since the number of documents in archives is large and the size of staff is relatively small, this might take another couple of years. From my experience, this process can be accelerated by requesting access to specific documents, but policies differ from archive to archive. There can also be dedicated committees for making declassification decisions on an ad-hoc or regular basis such as the US Advisory Committee on Historical Diplomatic Documentation.[17] Declassification is not always a routine process but it may also become politicised (Trachtenberg, 2020). A striking example is the Stasi Records Agency that was installed by the German parliament to manage the release of millions of documents the former East German secret service had collected.[18]

Once the documents of interest have been declassified, scholars can make use of that data and significantly improve the quality of their research. Previously classified documents and to a large extent also private documents are trustworthy and constitute "hard primary sources" (Moravcsik, 1998: 80). Due to their original confidentiality, they are less likely to be biased. "Documents after all, are generated from a government's own internal purposes, and what would be the point of keeping records if those records were not even meant to be accurate?" (Trachtenberg, 2006: 147). Hence, archival documents should be consulted whenever possible as they permit an unbiased look into the functioning of state bureaucracies, ministries, or

[16] It happens that classified documents are leaked. As this is a criminal offence, scientists should only use these documents with extreme caution so as not to make themselves liable to prosecution.
[17] https://history.state.gov/about/hac/intro, accessed 30.01.24.
[18] https://www.stasi-unterlagen-archiv.de/en/, accessed 30.01.24.

international organisations (Frisch et al., 2012; Larson, 2001; Lieshout et al., 2004; Shifrinson, 2022).

Depending on the research topic, different types of archives can be of interest. Typical archive holders are states, cities, international organisations, and foundations, but also former state officials often create archival collections with private documents after leaving office.[19] In fact, archives are similar to gold mines in which you cannot simply walk in and pick up the treasure. In the following, I will provide practical advice on how the mining of evidence in an archive will be successful.

## 2.3 Preparing for the Field Trip: How to Find the Needle in the Haystack

Archival research is often compared to searching for a needle in the haystack. This relates to the overwhelming number of documents that are stored in archives. The NA's collection alone consists of more than eleven million files. For sound reasons, archives prefer to measure their records in kilometres. Eventually, it can be one or a handful out of eleven million records speaking as evidence to a research question. In the following, I introduce three tasks every political scientist should complete in preparation for their archival field trip so that the needle in the haystack will be found.

The first task is to acquire extensive background knowledge. The reading room of an archive should only be entered if the researcher has become an expert on the case. A good strategy for this is studying the secondary literature.[20] Most likely, historians or sometimes social scientists have already written about your topic or at least touched on related issues. For my research on the history of European integration, a large corpus of literature is available in which historians deal with the different enlargements of the EU. Even though this literature is rather descriptive and does not directly address my research questions, this existing scholarship provided me with essential background knowledge. Furthermore, studying the secondary literature facilitates narrowing down the general research interest into a concrete research question. Of course, there are other ways of familiarising oneself with a research topic, such as interviews at a preliminary stage of research (Lynch, 2013: 34–35). Helpful are also collected volumes that are occasionally published and contain a selection of private or classified documents. For my research, several of those were available, such as a special issue published by the UK's Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) (Salmon et al., 2010). Special issues like these can be very

[19] The Routledge Guide to European Political Archives by Cook (2012) offers a good first orientation for available archives in Europe.
[20] See the previous section for bias possibly included in the secondary literature.

beneficial while preparing for an archival stay. Moreover, they facilitate the identification of relevant holdings. Nevertheless, it is not advisable to entirely build on these collected volumes since the selection of documents for these volumes should raise concerns. Indeed, publishers have intentions. Why should the FCO, for instance, publish files that show it in a bad light?

After a rich understanding of the research topic has been gained and the research question has been narrowed down sufficiently, researchers can move on to the second task of the preparation stage and select the archives to visit. Since field trips to archives are time and resource-intensive, most researchers must focus on the most relevant ones for their research topic. The best strategy to identify archives whose reading rooms are worth traveling to is to approach the archives directly by sending them a research inquiry. This is a formal request for some archives, and for others, an informal e-mail. The message should specify where the research interest lies and how the research would benefit from visiting the archive. After some time, the request will be answered by an archivist. Typically, requests showing that the author has informed herself about the archive's holdings receive quicker responses. In my experience, you should keep the connection to the archivist answering your inquiry. The archivists usually check the documents before declassification and sort them into holdings. Thus, they have an excellent understanding of what to find where. In some archives like the HAEU, archivists are also researchers themselves and might recall particularly insightful holdings. Furthermore, researchers should engage with archives' online catalogues. Even though archives' catalogues may not have the quality of big search engines, they allow for browsing the holdings to determine whether the archive stores relevant files. Searching through online catalogues is also a great tool to shrink the metaphorical haystack of archival documents, as an example from the BA demonstrates. The files in the BA's online catalogue sum up to more than 500 kilometres. For my research, I was interested in the implications of the German unification on the European integration process. After searching for "German Unification", the database indicates more than 1000 files. This is still a massive haystack as a file consists, on average, of several hundred documents. By specifying the search with "German Unification European Integration" the number of files reduces to 180. With added specifications, the number of files will further shrink and make the haystack manageable.

The final task completing the preparation phase of the archival trip relates to the role of theory. Contrary to historians, political scientists aim to generalise, meaning that theorising is an essential part of their research (Larson, 2001). Beach and Pedersen (2013: 137) advocate a "theory-driven search for data". Before going to an archive, a political scientist should already

have engaged with theory and derived expectations that can be tested with the documents held in the archive.[21] Prior to each of my field trips, I had studied the theoretical literature and had a list of process expectations ready. Central to my research on European integration was Moravcsik's (1998) theory of liberal intergovernmentalism. From this theory, I derived the process expectation that states form their preferences on predominantly economic considerations. In more general terms, I assumed that if the theory is true, I should expect to see X, Y and Z. Having these process expectations or observable implications at hand facilitates the identification of relevant documents since you know what type of evidence to search for.

To prevent the creation of bias already in the data collection process, process expectations from rival theories must be considered. Including alternative explanations and rival hypotheses already in the data collection stage follows the Bayesian approach that also encourages researchers to think about the probability of a piece of evidence and currently update these probabilities during the research process. In order words, researchers should reflect on the "prior" and "posterior probability" of observations and engage in "Bayesian updating" (Fairfield and Charman, 2022: 3–4). While theory and observable implications are essential for political scientists, they should remain open to inductive insights. Archival research often includes serendipities and leads to rather unexpected discoveries (Frisch et al., 2012; Kapiszewski et al., 2015: 18–19). In this case, scholars should not see their previously specified research strategies as "straitjackets" (Trachtenberg, 2020: 140) but instead engage in "soaking and poking" (Bennett and Checkel, 2015a: 18), meaning they should be open to inductive insights and update general research strategies including theoretical assumptions and observable implications.

[21] If researchers are unfamiliar with this process, they should consult Fairfield and Charman (2022), who introduce the foundations of Bayesian inference in an easily graspable way. Even if researchers do not conduct a formal Bayesian process tracing, familiarising oneself with its concepts of "prior/posterior probability" and "Bayesian updating" are extremely helpful for preparing but also during archival research.

**Tasks to Complete in Preparation of the Archival Field Trip**

- Task 1: Acquire case-specific background knowledge
  - Study secondary literature, interviews, special collections
- Task 2: Select archive(s) with relevant holdings
  - Send research inquiries to archives
  - Contact archivists
  - Browse online catalogue
- Task 3: Engage with theory
  - Make a list of process expectations
  - Incorporate that observable implications have different likelihoods under rival expectations
  - Leave space for rival expectations and inductive insights

*Table 1 Tasks to complete in preparation of the archival field trip.*

## 2.4 Typical Challenges in the Reading Room

Before entering the reading room, visitors are asked to pass a security check and place all their working materials in a transparent plastic bag. Then, visitors are free to enter, and after some initial disorientation, political scientists will find out that there is no reason to feel alien among their peers in the reading room. At the latest, after having a document on the desk that carries a President's signature, every political scientist will be under the spell of history. Even though the reading room is video monitored and full of regulations, most archives no longer oblige visitors to wear white gloves and permit photographing or scanning the files. This is a great help since it allows scanning documents and analysing them back in the office. On the other hand, it includes the danger of tireless scanning and filling up the online cloud with documents that are actually not relevant. I recommend skimming documents and scanning them only if they appear relevant. This way, it is possible to go through twenty to twenty-five files daily. This rule of thumb should, however, be treated with caution. First, the volume of files varies greatly. I had files on my desk with less than ten pages but also ones with more than one thousand pages. Second, a file might be so interesting that it requires hours to skim and scan, whereas on other occasions, a file is understood as "irrelevant" after five minutes. Researchers should pre-order documents before their trip to avoid time in the archive if possible.

Depending on the length of the field trip, the number of scanned documents rapidly grows to a large size. To avoid confusion, researchers should, therefore, develop an efficient system to keep track of the files they have examined. There are special programmes available such as Obsidian or Devonthink but a simple Excel file will also suffice. Every scanned document

should be included in the database with its title, keywords, and a short summary. This facilitates the analysis of the documents back in the office.

The mere scanning of documents takes on a different meaning if researchers employ a text-as-data approach for which archival documents are suitable (Grimmer and Stewart, 2013; Wilkerson and Casas, 2017). Advances in optical character recognition allow importing scanned documents directly as computer-readable text and facilitate the quantification of archival content in datasets. There are different software and apps available such as Adobe, Abby Finereader or Readiris. Some of them such as Transkribus can also read historic handwritten documents. Optical character recognition is already well established among scholars working with archival documents as it tremendously reduces the time and resources otherwise required (Bukhari et al., 2017; Martínek et al., 2020). Moving to data analysis, scholars can then use the large corpus of text for rather simple exercises such as word counts but also more complex endeavours (Egami et al., 2022). With constantly evolving AI-based large language models, text-as-data approaches are becoming ever more sophisticated (e.g. Gilardi et al., 2023). This also opens new avenues for archival research. No matter which of these avenues is taken, the analysed documents have to be selected carefully and comprehensively to avoid selection bias.

No matter to which end, working in an archive is also learning by doing so that a routine will be quickly developed. Still, some challenges may occur in the reading room. Firstly, it is not possible to examine every file you wish. This might be due to time constraints, or the limit of files that can be ordered a day might be reached. I have also experienced that documents were unavailable because they were being restored or borrowed to a ministry. In addition, the archivist checking the record after declassification can consider it "unworthy of archival preservation"[22]. Furthermore, records can be incomplete, lost, stolen, or hidden in a former President's bathroom. If we assume that the documents were destroyed intentionally, the findings of an analysis built on archival research should be interpreted with caution. Even though archival documents (private and classified) are on the whole less biased than other types, this does, of course, not mean that they are unbiased. Take for instance a European Council meeting that a researcher might be interested in. Usually, the minutes are the only available record of the meeting and constitute a reliable source. However, when analysing the minutes,

[22] The BA decides, for instance, "whether these documents are worthy of archival preservation, that is whether they have lasting value for the research and understanding of history and the present, for the protection of legitimate interests of citizens or for legislation, administration and jurisdiction." accessible at https://www.bundesarchiv.de/EN/Navigation/Meta/About-us/Tasks/tasks.html, accessed 03.02.24.

one must not forget that the document's author might have had intentions such as, for example, leaving out the most controversial parts or downplaying heated exchanges. Moreover, the minutes will most likely not capture the emotions participants expressed which might significantly alter the interpretation of the meeting. When analysing the documents, it should also be kept in mind that participants sometimes do not express their actual opinions due to instrumental motivations or are hesitant because they know that the minutes will eventually be declassified.

A common phenomenon of archival research is called "e silentio evidence" (Beach and Pedersen, 2013: 126; Bennett and Checkel, 2015a: 17–20). It relates to missing crucial information in a document or the absence of a document concerning salient issues. Even if a document is absent or does not mention something, it might still have inferential value. An example from my own research relates to the "10-point-programme" presented by Germany's Chancellor Kohl as a major advance towards Germany's reunification. I have found evidence that the programme created major discussions among the governments of other European states but there is not much about it in the German archive. Reading the memoirs of the involved German decision-makers, I learned that the programme was developed under utmost secrecy to guarantee a surprise effect. Only the Chancellor's inner circle was involved, so even other government members were not informed. The programme was not prepared via official channels and is largely absent in official documents by Germany's federal chancellery. Thus, it represents e silentio evidence. The best way to cope with these challenges and avoid bias as much as possible is to triangulate within and across-sources (cf. Beach and Pedersen, 2013: 126–129). Returning to the example of the European Council meeting, a good approach for within-sources triangulation is to analyse the meeting records of every involved state. If there are no major discrepancies in them, this is a good sign. The confidence in the documents can be increased when triangulating across sources, for instance, by analysing interviews with participants or checking if they have written about the meeting in their memoirs.

## 2.5 Outlook

In this article, I have introduced and discussed archival research for political scientists working in the field of European politics. Even though the value of archival documents is generally recognised, political scientists usually lack subfield-specific practical guidance on why and how to use archival documents as causal process observations.

In a nutshell, I have emphasised the advantages of archival research for political scientists. The observations collected in an archive's reading room generally outperform other types of data,

such as interviews, memoirs, and speeches, in terms of bias and validity. I establish practical guidance in the form of three tasks to complete in the preparation phase of the archival stay. I emphasise that scholars should enter an archival reading room only once they have a rich understanding of their case. Only with a narrow research question and clear theoretical expectations will the number of relevant documents stored in an archive reduce to a manageable size. Even after a solid preparation for their field trip, researchers might still face challenges in the reading room, which have been addressed in the final chapter.

The article has several implications for political scientists also beyond the field of European politics. Despite the challenges rooted in archival research, political scientists should feel encouraged to approach an archive's reading room if this could be beneficial for their research. After all, collecting data in an archival room is not a Herculean task if basic rules are followed. Moreover, political scientists will quickly overcome the disadvantage of having received no training on archival research during their studies and develop a routine (Cook and Schwartz, 2002). Indeed, some archival research education would also enrich the typical political science curriculum. As a result, political scientists would become familiar with archival research early on in their careers and use it more often. The advantages of archival documents over other data increase the validity of results from small-N, large-N and mixed methods research that builds on process tracing analyses but also on evolving text-as-data approaches.

The good news is that archival documents are getting more accessible as archives start digitising their content (Kim, 2022). In the future, researchers can possibly save resource-intense trips to archives and analyse documents from their desks. So far, however, only a fraction of archival records has been digitised, making a visit to the reading room indispensable. Establishing the norm of making collected documents available online would be a great achievement for the scholarly community. Until that norm is established, research relying exclusively on partially digitised archival holdings faces the downsides of convenience sampling. Hence, digitised material from archives should be treated with caution. In addition to these shortcomings of digitised archival documents, the visit to archives brings a particular scholarly flavour beyond the touristic value added.

*"There is a place for East Germany in the Community." (Jacques Delors to the European Parliament on 17 January 1990)*[23]

# 3 Enlargement as High Politics: New Insights on the Integration of the German Democratic Republic into the European Community


## Abstract

An essential part of the restructuring of the European security order after the Cold War is the Eastern enlargement of the EC. This article provides the hitherto missing explanation for the integration of the GDR into the EC. In alignment with neoclassical realism, I claim that high politics took precedence in this exceptional enlargement. Established theories underestimate the importance of security and power and, thereby, fall short in accounting for the fast-track accession of the GDR to the EC. I argue that the FRG pressed for a rapid reunification including the automatic accession of the GDR to the EC. Motivated by internal factors, the FRG's government ventured a take-it-or-leave-it-offer that the other EC states acquiesced to under the threat of a German withdrawal from the EC with unforeseeable geopolitical consequences. The analysis builds on recently declassified, original documents collected from different archives.



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[23] Entire speech is available in European Commission (1990: 6–16).

## 3.1 Introduction

The fall of the Berlin Wall on 9 November 1989 constitutes a watershed moment in contemporary history. After the opening of the inner-German border, cracks in the Iron Curtain developed into seemingly unstoppable dynamics of change in the European and global security structure. The collapse of socialism in Europe was followed by Eastern enlargements of NATO and the EC. The integration of the former GDR and its 16 million inhabitants into NATO and EC is the first expansion of these organisations to the previously socialist hemisphere. Given its completion within less than 1 year on 3 October 1990, the GDR's enlargement case is outstanding and puzzling at the same time.

National and international negotiations towards the reunification of Germany, such as the 2 + 4 negotiations and NATO enlargement, have received extensive scholarly attention and are well understood. The opposite is true for the European dimension: the regional integration and enlargement literature treats the GDR's accession to the EC due to its specific circumstances as an outlier case not deserving further consideration. The few existing publications miss out on recently available evidence and neglect theoretical explanation. I address the research gap concerning this exceptional case by theorising and then systematically unpacking the historical evidence.

I challenge existing narratives that attribute the GDR's integration into the EC to a horse trade between France and the FRG or view it as an afterthought of reunification, generally perceived as a fortunate turn of history. Aiming at an explanation with more theoretical rigour, I develop a new synthetic model for EC enlargement in alignment with neoclassical realism. The use of realism is innovative in the regional integration literature, which is so far dominated by the IR grand theories of constructivism and liberalism (Moravcsik, 1998; Schneider, 2009; Sedelmeier, 2005).

My central argument is that enlargement is foremost a high politics exercise related to a state's core national interests. I claim that the GDR's fast-track accession was the consequence of the FRG's harsh negotiation strategy including a daring take-it-or-leave-it-offer ruling out regular accession procedures. Whereas internal factors undoubtedly influenced the FRG's government, its overarching objective was territorial expansion while maintaining its ties to the Western alliance. In pursuit of these goals, the FRG threatened to opt out of the Community. This threat links back to a central pillar of the European integration project, the pacification of Germany.

Faced with the prospect of jeopardising this hard-worn achievement, the other EC member states acquiesced to the FRG's terms.

Archival research is indispensable to test these claims. Like no other type of data, archival files enable accurate process tracing and avoid shortcomings of other commonly used material such as interviews or memoirs (Frisch et al., 2012; Klein, 2025a). After decades under lock and key, classified files have only recently become accessible. For this article, I studied a large number of documents (more than 400) that are of greatest relevance for the GDR's accession to the EC. They constitute new evidence of interest to historians and social scientists. The findings in the analysis are in favour of the argumentation, which enlightens and alters the prevailing understanding of this exceptional enlargement case that shaped Europe's path after the Cold War. I present novel evidence for hard bargaining sessions, in which the FRG threatened to withdraw from the Community and pursue reunification with the GDR even if the EC did not consent. This threat was countered with a reference to reactivating the occupational rights over Germany. Furthermore, I demonstrate that the West German government's successful engagement in the GDR's election campaign[24], along with support from the United States and USSR, critically influenced the EC's decision to approve rapid enlargement.

The article's findings inform our understanding of Europe's encompassing change in the 1990s and 2000s. The GDR's accession coincides with the intensification of the European integration project[25] with the EC's transformation to an "ever-closer" political EU (Baun, 1995) and following enlargement rounds. Against the background of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the connection between security and enlargement is increasingly recognised (Anghel and Džankić, 2023). Meanwhile, Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia are enlargement candidate countries, allowing the findings of my article to inform revitalised enlargement debates.[26]

I proceed as follows. In the first section, I review the existing literature on the GDR's integration into the EC and identify three insufficient narratives. The second section engages with constructivist and liberal intergovernmentalist enlargement theories. Since I claim that integrating the GDR was an exercise of high politics, I leave these theories behind and develop a neoclassical realist explanation. In the article's fourth section, I analyse the archival

[24] This refers to the GDR's first free parliamentary elections in March 1990.
[25] The intensification of European integration is known as "vertical integration", enlargement as "horizontal integration".
[26] https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/eu-enlargementen, accessed 11.09.24.

documents and construct a historical narrative tracing the events. The results confirm the new synthetic model for enlargement. The discussion section reassesses the performance of the established enlargement theories in light of the presented evidence. In the conclusion, I address possible implications for contemporary enlargements.

## 3.2 Existing Literature on the GDR's Integration into the EC

Even though the reunification of Germany has received considerable attention from contemporary historians, the implications for the EC have not yet been sufficiently explored. Within the existing literature, three persistent narratives about the GDR's integration into the EC can be identified. As the article's analysis will show, these narratives fall theoretically and empirically short of delivering an encompassing account. According to the first narrative, the reunification of Germany was a fortunate turn of history. The narrative suggests that fate was catching up with Europe in 1989. "Chance [was] a helper" (Plato, 2003: 90) so that "history was unfolding" (Gehler and Jacob, 2019: 506) at a "breath-taking speed" (Toepel and Weise, 2000: 178). Politicians were lagging behind the ever-accelerating events and forced to improvise (Morgan, 1992). Eventually, promoters of the narrative conclude that Germany's reunification including the integration of the GDR into the EC "has been an unusually smooth process. It did not stir many waves" (Falke, 1994: 164).

The second narrative argues that Germany's reunification, including the GDR's integration into the EC resulted from a horse trade. "France and West Germany made kind of a deal" (Spohr, 2000: 878) à la trading enhanced European integration for reunification. The substance of that deal is often reduced to the creation of the EMU (e.g. Baun, 1995; Marsh, 2009; Rödder, 2004; Weidenfeld, 1998), leaving the causal link to the integration of the GDR into the EC open. The horse-trade narrative remains persistent even though the situation was much more complex (Schabert, 2021; Wirsching, 2022).

According to the third persistent narrative, the integration of the GDR into the EC is a neglectable and unavoidable by-product of the German reunification. Since the enlargement lacks formal accession negotiations and did not follow standard procedures, it is an "unusual instance of EU enlargement" (Duttle et al., 2017: 415). It seems this serves as the justification in the social-scientific enlargement literature to disregard the GDR's integration into the Community. Influential and encompassing contributions overlook this enlargement case (e.g. Moravcsik, 1998; Schimmelfennig, 2003; Schneider, 2009). Even though the integration of the

GDR is an outlier case,[27] there are good reasons to argue that the integration of the GDR was not simply a by-product but the outcome of separate negotiations between the FRG and the EC. The chosen solution was neither pre-programmed nor without any alternative. The ignorance of the literature towards the GDR's EC integration might be related to the difficulties of established models concerning the GDR case. For instance, in Schneider's (2009) model, member states bargain with the applicant, which was not the case for the GDR's integration.

## 3.3 Theoretical Approaches to Enlargement

Scholars of horizontal integration have developed enlargement theories based on IR grand theories. Surprisingly, a realist integration theory is absent. After introducing constructivist and liberal intergovernmentalist theories in the following, I develop a new synthetic model for enlargement in alignment with neoclassical realism.

### 3.3.1 Identity and Norms – Constructivism

Constructivist enlargement scholars understand the EC as a Community of liberal, democratic states with common norms and values. The member states share a "collective identity" (Sedelmeier, 2005: 9) or "kinship" (Sjursen, 2002: 495). Authors aligning with this form of constructivism argue that the shared identity and related norms are decisive for enlargement. Accordingly, consent for enlargement builds almost exclusively on whether the applicant state shares the EC's norms. Enlargement occurs even though it might be related to high material costs (Sjursen, 2002).

When deriving testable expectations and later in the empirical analysis, I draw on the constructivist theory developed by (Schimmelfennig, 2003), which deviates to some extent from the approaches of Sjursen and Sedelmeier. Schimmelfennig (2003: 3) emphasises that "liberal values and norms" are decisive to enlargement rather than material factors. Both NATO and the EC identify themselves according to these values and norms, which they formalised as "constitutive organizational rules" (Schimmelfennig, 2003: 4). These include domestically "social pluralism, the rule of law, democratic political participation and representation as well as property and a market-based economy" and internationally "democratic peace […] and multilateralism" (Schimmelfennig, 2003: 4). Whereas Schimmelfennig shares this understanding with the previously discussed constructivist approaches, he rejects that norms are "ends in themselves" (Sjursen, 2002: 508). In accession negotiations, therefore, states'

[27] Focusing on the presence of enlargement negotiations, the GDR's accession can be seen as an outlier case of enlargement. Note, however, that enlargement has occurred in similar ways before and after, for example, the Saarland's accession in 1957 or Mayotte in 2014.

preferences are not informed by norms but rather by "material environmental conditions and egoistic interests" (Schimmelfennig, 2003: 5).[28]

As a consequence, the EC is not expected to integrate an applicant only because it internalised the EC's liberal-democratic values. On the contrary, if at least one member state expects material costs, enlargement prospects are clouded. It is then still possible with "rhetorical action" (Schimmelfennig, 2003: 5), which is at play if either the applicant state or the proponents of enlargement within the Community manage to link "their claims for enlargement on the collective identity and the constitutive liberal values and norms" (Schimmelfennig, 2003: 5) of the EC. If successful, the initial opponents of enlargement find themselves "rhetorically entrapped" (Schimmelfennig, 2003: 5). The entrapment is initialised through shaming the opponents of enlargement in referring to the "constitutive organisational rules", which the applicant has internalised. Moreover, the opponents can be shamed for not acting along their previous statements and behaviour in other enlargement rounds.

### 3.3.2 Economic and Commercial Interests – Liberal Intergovernmentalism

For liberal intergovernmentalism, European integration results from negotiations between governments forming their preferences endogenously. The preference formation of governments is "issue-specific" (Moravcsik, 1998: 50). Since European integration often concerns economic issues,[29] such as the market or agriculture, economic interests are generally assumed to dominate preference formation. While liberal intergovernmentalism tends to emphasise economic factors, it does not overlook other influences, such as geopolitics (Moravcsik, 1998: 24–50; Moravcsik and Vachudova, 2003; Moravcsik and Vachudova, 2005). More recent scholarship has further relaxed the theory's economic focus, with (Moravcsik, 2018: 1652) acknowledging that "[s]ometimes non-economic concerns may even dominate national preference formation".

In response to the criticism that liberal intergovernmentalism received concerning its difficulties in explaining the EU's Eastern enlargement, Schneider (2007, 2009) created a comprehensive answer. In line with standard assumptions of rational choice models, "governments are rational actors who aim at maximizing the aggregated welfare of the country they govern and thus, always choose a strategy guaranteeing their survival in power" (Schneider, 2007: 88). Each member state will calculate its expected "net utility" (Schneider, 2007: 88) from expanding the EC if a possible enlargement is on the table. On the one hand,

[28] Schimmelfennig (2003: 3) defines material interests as "security and economic interests".
[29] This is particularly true for the pre-Maastricht EC.

each state can expect "basic cooperation benefits" (Schneider, 2007: 88) if another state joins the Community, for instance, due to removed trade barriers. On the other hand, member states face costs, particularly if the applicant state is economically weak and eligible for EC funds. A fast accession occurs only if all member states expect a positive net utility. Given the heterogeneity of member state preferences, this scenario is unlikely.[30] Therefore, enlargement negotiations are linked to "distributional conflicts" (Schneider, 2009: 5). These can be resolved in two ways. Either the applicant state accepts temporary exemption from membership benefits, for example, by renouncing access to EC funds. If this is insufficient to convince the opponents of enlargement, the proponents can offer the "redistribution of enlargement costs and benefits" (Schneider, 2009: 6) to their disadvantage. This might, for instance, imply increased payments of the proponents to the EC budget.

Based on these two redistribution options, Schneider (2007: 90) defines four possible outcomes of enlargement negotiations: "non-membership, differentiated membership, […] inner-union redistribution, […] unconditional enlargement". Thus, the liberal intergovernmentalist explanation of enlargement offers two possible ways out of a gridlock situation. We can expect enlargement to happen if all member states expect more benefits than costs from it (if necessary after compensation of the opponents).

### 3.3.3 Enlargement as High Politics – Neoclassical Realism

According to constructivism and liberal intergovernmentalism, enlargement is predominantly a low politics exercise.[31] Both theories overlook essential and often dominant features of enlargement processes related to geopolitical matters. I claim that integrating new states into the EC is foremost a high politics exercise related to a state's core national interest, which is survival in the international system. Low politics such as economic questions are not irrelevant but "second-order concerns" (Hyde-Price, 2006: 222). They are subordinate to security (Mearsheimer, 2001: 46–48). In joining the EC, states transfer parts of their sovereignty and become partially dependent on EC decision-making. In the Community, a security problem of one state always affects all member states. Therefore, applicants consider if membership could create geopolitical problems. Existent member states will only consent to enlargement if this does not threaten their security. All member states will have to agree that their core national interests are not violated for enlargement to occur. In cases like the Northern enlargement, core national interests were not concerned so that second-order concerns dominated. The opposite

[30] The only exemption mentioned by Schneider is the EC's 1995 Northern enlargement.
[31] For the distinction between high and low politics, see Hoffmann (1966).

was the case with the GDR, and currently with Ukraine, where enlargement is a matter of war and peace.

I develop this argument building on realism, hitherto under-represented in the regional integration literature (Skalnes, 2005; see volume by Wiener and Diez, 2009). Often realism is used as a "straw man" (Hyde-Price, 2006: 219) to be knocked down in favour of other theoretical approaches with the notable exception of studies investigating European defence and security cooperation (Dyson, 2010, 2015; Turpin, 2019).

Neoclassical realism builds on the core principles of neorealism (Waltz, 1979), which asserts that the international system is anarchic. The primary motive of states, the units in the system, is survival. To achieve security, states balance against major powers by enhancing their capabilities and cooperating with other states.[32] Based on these foundational tenets, different neorealist subtypes were developed. Defensive and offensive realists, for instance, take opposing stances on the issue of whether states can attain a satisfying level of security or whether they continuously strive to accumulate relative power (Mearsheimer, 2001; van Evera, 1998). Further variation exists concerning the question if states balance against power or threat (Walt, 1987). While any of these variations of neorealism could serve as the "baseline" (Ripsman et al., 2016: 114) for a neoclassical realist model, I focus on the core principles that all variations of neorealism share. Although this approach may limit the ability to account for the full range of systemic variables developed by different strands of neorealism, it is most appropriate to distinguish neoclassical realism from constructivism and liberal intergovernmentalism. In addition, this more general approach aligns with a key objective of my article, which is to further integrate neoclassical realism into the regional integration literature.

Compared to neorealism, neoclassical realism is more inclusive towards the previously discussed constructivism and liberal intergovernmentalism. Neoclassical realists agree with neorealists that the "system should be the starting point of any analysis" (Rathbun, 2008: 307). Changes in the international system constrain or incentivise state action. For neoclassical realists, the state is not a "black box" (Rose, 1998: 148). In the neoclassical framework, internal factors intervene between systemic incentives and outcomes. The influence of domestic variables and ideas is not assessed at the systemic but at the unit level. How do these internal factors look in practice? First, decision-makers' perceptions matter (Rose, 1998: 157–161).

[32] Less commonly states "bandwagon", see Waltz (1979).

This corresponds to “cognitive filters” and refers to state leaders “possess[ing] a set of core values, beliefs, and images” (Ripsman et al., 2016: 62). Since leaders have different personalities and filters, it matters who is in power. Second, the relationship between the state and society is a possible intervening variable (Rose, 1998: 162–165). Decision-making is, thus, impacted by domestic factors such as the institutional setup but also popular opinion (see Ripsman et al., 2016: 58–79). In the short term, internal factors may impede decisions the systemic incentives call for. In the long term, leaders cannot act against systemic pressures, or they are deemed to fail (Rathbun, 2008: 317).

Applying the neoclassical realist framework to the GDR’s integration into the EC, the outcome to explain (dependent variable) is enlargement. “[S]ystemic stimuli” (Ripsman et al., 2016: 12) are considered independent variables providing states with incentives or constraints. It is only due to systemic change, in the underlying case expressed through the fall of the Berlin Wall, that the reunification of Germany and the related EC enlargement became an issue. For decades, the bipolar international system had prevented change. The return of the German Question in 1989 could not be ignored by states and called for a reaction. States needed to evaluate how accessing the GDR to the EC would impact their security and position in the international system. In fact, the integration of the GDR would lead to a shift in the balance of power in favour of Germany. If a state assesses that enlargement undermines its core national interests, it is expected to veto.

Since internal factors intervene, state decisions on the GDR’s integration are not only driven by security concerns. Leaders’ personal views and popular opinion can, for instance, influence how the fall of the Wall is perceived. It is conceivable that internal factors exert such strong influence that a leader may support enlargement, even when it is at odds with the state’s core national interests. Since states cannot turn against the dynamics of the international system, the consequences would be severe.

### 3.3.4 Process Expectations for the GDR's Enlargement from the Three Theoretical Lenses

The three discussed theoretical accounts for EC enlargement generate different implications for the GDR's integration into the EC. The differences are condensed in the process expectations of *Table 2*. Process expectations allow assessing competing theories against case-specific, empirical evidence (Bennett and Checkel, 2015a). They capture what should be expected to be observed if a specific theory holds. The expectations are structured along three central stages of every enlargement process: preference formation, intergovernmental negotiation and outcome (compare Moravcsik, 1998).

| | **Constructivism** | **Liberal Intergovernmentalism** | **Neoclassical Realism** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Preferences** | **C-1** Member states form their preference for enlargement based on material interests. Member states calculate the costs and benefits an accession of the GDR to the EC would have for them materially. | **LI-1** Member states form their preference for enlargement predominantly based on economic interests. Member states calculate the costs and benefits an accession of the GDR to the EC would have for them economically. | **NR-1** Member states form their preferences for enlargement based on geopolitical interests. Member states calculate the costs and benefits an accession of the GDR to the EC would have for their core national interests. Internal factors can bias this calculation. |
| **Negotiations** | **C-2** Negotiations are dominated by value and norms-related considerations.<br>**C-2A** If all member states have a material interest in integrating the GDR into the EC, the negotiations will be smooth. The member states will emphasise the GDR's compliance with the EC's values and norms.<br>**C-2B** If at least one member state has no material interest in integrating the GDR into the EC, the proponent(s) of enlargement will engage in rhetorical action. They will strategically use the EC's values and norms to argue why the GDR should be integrated into the EC. | **LI-2** Negotiations are predominantly dominated by economic considerations.<br>**LI-2A** If all member states have an economic interest in integrating the GDR into the EC, the negotiations will be smooth.<br>**LI-2B** If at least one member state has no economic interest in integrating the GDR into the EC, this state will emphasise its economic concerns. The negotiations will then centre around these concerns. The proponent(s) of enlargement will develop a strategy to mitigate the economic costs of the enlargement-opposing state. | **NR-2** Negotiations are dominated by geopolitical considerations and possibly internal factors.<br>**NR-2A** If all member states agree that integrating the GDR into the EC does not violate their core national interests, the negotiations will be smooth.<br>**NR-2B** If at least one member state views its core national interest violated from integrating the GDR into the EC, there will be hard bargaining sessions in which states with opposing interests will confront each other with threats and conflict. |
| **Outcome** | **C-3A** If all member states have a material interest in enlargement that complies with the EC's values and norms, the GDR will be integrated into the EC.<br>**C-3B** If the proponents' rhetorical action succeeds and they manage to rhetorically entrap the opponent(s), the GDR will be integrated into the EC. | **LI-3A** If all member states have an economic interest in enlargement, the GDR will be integrated into the EC.<br>**LI-3B** If the economic costs of integrating the GDR into the EC can be mitigated so that all member states have an economic interest in enlargement, the GDR will be integrated into the EC. | **NR-3** If all member states expect no violation of their core national interests, the GDR will be integrated into the EC. |

*Table 2 Process expectations for the GDR's enlargement derived from the three theories.*

## 3.4 Research Design: Analytical Narrative of the GDR's European Integration

The article's research design is an "analytical narrative" consisting of a rich and in-depth narrative based on theory (Bates et al., 1998). Analytic narratives are a special form of process tracing analyses. They are, however, actor-oriented and less variable-oriented (Levi and Weingast, 2016). My analysis is designed along Bennett and Checkel's (2015a: 21) best practices for process tracing. I focus not exclusively on my promoted neoclassical realist explanation but also consider alternative enlargement theories. In addition, I incorporate recent advancements in process tracing methodology concerning Bayesianism (Fairfield and Charman, 2022). Thus, I assume that the inferential value of different pieces of evidence may vary when tested against process expectations. I focus on identifying observations that constitute "doubly decisive" or "smoking gun" evidence (Bennett and Checkel, 2015a: 16–17).[33]

The analysis is foremost informed by archival research. After decades under lock and key, strictly confidential documents from government headquarters and ministries have become available that prior publications could not draw on.[34] Hence, my findings are likely to amend or even challenge existing findings. Scholars have so far relied on sources such as politicians' memoirs, interviews or newspapers. "Hard primary" (Moravcsik, 1998: 80) archival evidence outperforms these other types of sources. Files from archives are trustworthy and reduce bias due to their original confidentiality (Klein, 2025a; Trachtenberg, 2006: 147).

Archival research is essential for revealing causal mechanisms and holistic understandings of outcomes. Still, social scientists rarely visit the reading room of an archive. My use of archival evidence within the regional integration literature is, particularly, innovative. The analysis of archival documents was linked to extensive field trips to the Historical Archives of the European Union (HAEU), the German Bundesarchiv and the National Archives of the United Kingdom (NA). I have analysed more than 400 relevant files with each file consisting of several hundred pages. If the bias in "soft primary sources" such as memoirs is assessable, I also use them as evidence. Moreover, insights from the secondary literature serve the purpose of triangulation. The downsides of archival documents are that content tends to be selective, and occasionally, files disappear (Beach and Pedersen, 2013: 213–222). Furthermore, I use

[33] Finding doubly decisive and smoking gun evidence increases the confidence in results. The original conceptualisation goes back to van Evera (1997).
[34] An exemption is Spence (1992), who had access to classified Commission documents. The Commission was, however, not a decisive actor.

historical poll data from the Politbarometer West dataset (Jung et al., 2019). For pragmatic reasons, I focus on the FRG, France and the UK.

## 3.5 Empirical Analysis

### 3.5.1 The Sudden Return of the German Question

The prompt opening of the inner-German border turned the German Question into the dominant issue of world politics, raising questions to which politicians had no answers prepared. Under which circumstances could Germany be reunited? How fast could a reunification happen? What would happen to the FRG's membership in the alliances NATO and EC? Initial reactions from the European capitals welcomed the change in East Germany.[35] At the same time, concerns were arising that the events in the GDR could create a domino effect and overthrow the post-war order. States recognised the fall of the Berlin Wall as an indicator of a changing international system and were concerned about consequences for their core national interests in the field of security. In response, the EC member states developed status quo-oriented preferences as for decades the division was a convenient solution to prevent German great power aspirations.[36] Still, public statements of French government members officially welcomed the developments pointing to the Germans' right of self-determination. Against the background of a possible reunification, France emphasised that Germany must remain part of the West and – concerning the EC – that there is "no choice to be made between the Community and the GDR".[37] The fact that France explicitly mentioned the EC at this moment demonstrates that it perceived the FRG's membership in the Community as a crucial factor in ensuring stability. This evidence challenges the third narrative presented in the second section of the article, which suggests that the question of EC membership for East Germany was merely an afterthought of reunification not paid much attention to by decision-makers.

A similar interpretation emerges from the study of UK documents. One week before the fall of the Wall, the UK was "fundamentally opposed to German reunification".[38] London was distraught that too rapid change in the GDR would inflate a large-scale fire in Eastern Europe. The government aimed at the "possibility of delaying 'reunification' for some time […] for the next two/three years".[39] Like France, the UK had a "major interest in a steady pro-Western foreign policy in Bonn" precluding the possibility of a neutral, reunified Germany and

[35] BA-B136/34467: "Haltungen zur Deutschen Frage", 10.11.89.
[36] NA-FCO-33/10758: "France and the German Question", 25.10.89
[37] NA-PREM-19/2696: "The German Question: Kohl Proposals: French Views", 19.11.89.
[38] NA-FCO-33/10278: "Germany", 02.11.89.
[39] NA-WRE-O14/2: "GDR Internal Developments: Policy", 15.11.89.

preferring a Germany tied to the West.[40] This end could be achieved through "trade and cooperation agreements" with the socialist East including the GDR.[41] This evidence supports NR-1 as geopolitical interests drive the EC's preference formation.

Unsurprisingly, the FRG welcomed the events in the GDR. Shortly after the fall of the Wall, Kohl began exploring the possibility of reunification.[42] In line with the neoclassical realist premise, internal factors strongly influenced Kohl's interpretation of the systemic incentive, which a neorealist framework would overlook. Throughout 1989, Kohl's cabinet witnessed increasing numbers of GDR refugees and recognised them as a threat to internal stability.[43] 31% of the West German population identified GDR immigrants as the most important political problem in October 1989 (Jung et al., 2019). Kohl hoped that soft signals towards reunification would reduce emigration. Furthermore, Kohl aimed to satisfy the electorate as he was facing elections in 1990 (Spohr, 2000). At the same time, the Chancellor firmly believed that a reunified Germany could only thrive within NATO and the EC.[44]

In light of a rapidly changing environment, the French President convened a special EC summit on 18 November 1989. Given Kohl's challenging internal situation, the meeting was of great significance. The Chancellor was "not looking for decisions" but a "political gesture of solidarity among partners and of support for reform in the GDR".[45] In his speech, Kohl demanded that "the people of Germany must be allowed to determine their future for themselves" but also emphasised the FRG's commitment to NATO and EC.[46] This did, however, not relax the concerns of the others. Thatcher claimed it was not the right time to talk about reunification since this would "open a Pandora's Box of border claims through central Europe".[47]

### 3.5.2 Kohl's Gamble

The EC's extraordinary Paris summit left Kohl in a difficult situation. Against all efforts, the member states opposed any reunification aspirations. The following passage from Kohl's (2005: 988) memoirs captures the dissatisfaction with the status quo and the Chancellor's lesson

[40] NA-WRG-O20/3: "The Federal Republic of Germany: How Reliable an Ally?", 10.04.89.
[41] Conclusions from the Madrid European Council, 26-27.06.89, accessible at http://aei.pitt.edu/1453/, accessed 26.04.23.
[42] In Küsters and Hofmann (1998) Doc-Nr. 86: "Telefongespräch Kohl mit Krenz", 11.11.89.
[43] Cabinet meetings summer/autumn 1989 prove migration from the GDR worried the FRG's government. Minutes are available: https://www.bundesarchiv.de/cocoon/barch/0000/k/k1989k/index.html, accessed 20.03.23.
[44] BA-B136/32696: "10-Punkte-Plan", 28.11.89.
[45] NA-PREM-19/2672: "German intentions at the Paris meeting of Community heads of Government", 17.11.89.
[46] NA-PREM-19/2672: "European Community Heads of Government Meeting in Paris", 19.11.89.
[47] NA-PREM-19/2672: "European Community Heads of Government Meeting in Paris", 19.11.89.

from the summit. Moreover, the quote highlights Kohl's awareness of the far-reaching implications the fall of the Wall had on the international system:

> I took the special Paris summit as a warning. Even my friend Francois Mitterrand did not seem to be reliable. The British attitude hardly surprised me. However, the sharpness with which the British Prime Minister behaved towards me was more than disconcerting. After all, I now knew how to behave. Whether they liked it or not in government headquarters, with the fall of the Berlin Wall, the German Question had overnight become the dominant issue in international politics.

Due to the disappointing Paris summit, combined with the worrisome domestic situation, the FRG government felt compelled to seek a change in the status quo. The following evidence supports the neoclassical realist framework as it demonstrates the strong impact of internal factors, particularly re-election concerns. Migration from the GDR remained high in November 1989 and was considered the most important political problem by half of the West Germans. The unsatisfactory Paris summit was used by the opposition to blame the government's inability to handle the crisis. Opinion polls from November 1989 recorded that Kohl's party was lagging 11% behind the Social Democrats compared to October (Jung et al., 2019). In response, Kohl's inner circle started working on a strategy to regain leadership in the German Question (Teltschik, 1993: 53). Kohl presented the resulting 10-point-programme on 28 November. The programme formulates the geopolitical aim to overcome the separation of Germany and culminates in saying that "unification will appear if the people in Germany want so".[48]

The Chancellor's speech was a take-it-or-leave-it offer. After declaring the goal of reunification, Kohl could no longer deviate from this promise without losing face and, probably, office. The programme tied Kohl's hands in international negotiations but was more than just a costly signal. After Kohl's speech, returning to the status quo became impossible. The FRG would not accept any outcome less far-reaching than reunification that should occur including the automatic accession of the GDR. The importance of Kohl's 10-points is uncontested but points 6 and 7, in which Kohl emphasises the interdependence of the national reunification process and European integration, have received less attention. Accordingly, the reunified Germany shall be part of the EC, which underlines the FRG's preference for the automatic integration of the GDR into the Community in that case. Furthermore, the launch of the 10-point-programme precluded other options concerning the future relationship between the GDR and the EC. There were two other at that time realistic scenarios. First, official accession

[48] BA-B136/32696: "Kohl 10 Punkte Plan", 28.11.89.

negotiations at the end of which the GDR could become the Community's 13th member. Second, less far-reaching integration in the form of trade/association agreements.[49]

The 10-point -programme was an unprecedented move prepared under secrecy to ensure a surprise effect. Apart from a narrow circle around Kohl, nobody was informed about the programme.[50] The 10-point-programme is a prior example of the neoclassical realist premise of how internal factors can influence how leaders perceive systemic incentives. Kohl's memoirs confirm that the Chancellor felt a strong demand for sending out a signal to the electorate that reunification would occur without giving up the FRG's Western integration. Moreover, Kohl (2005: 988–993) states that he intended to send a message of hope to the GDR citizens and thereby reduce emigration. Despite these internal motivations, the 10-points' kernel is geopolitical. Thus, the programme carried the potential to overthrow the European security order confirming NR-1.

### 3.5.3 Reactions to the 10-point-programme

On the domestic level, the 10-point-programme was a major success for Kohl by narrowing the distance in the polls to the opposition. Moreover, Kohl shifted the public's attention from the migration problem to reunification, which was suddenly considered the most important issue by 57% (Jung et al., 2019).

In the international arena, the programme caused outrage. British assessments confirm that the 10-points were perceived as a take-it-or-leave-it-offer making the status quo "begin to look unattainable".[51] Hence, alternative paths such as negotiations about a trade agreement or official membership negotiations between the GDR and EC were no longer a realistic option. Due to his domestic situation, Kohl could pose a credible ratification threat for any outcome less far-reaching than the 10-points (Putnam, 1988). In this sense, Kohl acts as the agenda setter with the power to move the status quo beyond the German separation. This fait accompli-like move constitutes "reversion point politics" (Johnson, 1998: 55) as the EC is brought in a position to accept an outcome far from its preferred one. In fact, Kohl was taking a great risk in launching the 10-point-programme as his proposal left little room for negotiations. Either reunification would be accomplished together with the automatic integration of the GDR into the EC or Germany would seek reunification single-handedly and trigger a major crisis with

[49] Commission President constantly referred to these three options, for example, in a speech to the EP in January 1990 (European Commission, 1990).
[50] NA-FCO-33/10383: "FRG/GDR", 30.11.89; only the United States was informed beforehand (Teltschik, 1993: 52).
[51] NA-PREM-19/2696: "The German Question and some implications for Security in Europe", 12.12.1989; NA-FCO-33/10381: "The German Question", 07.12.1989.

potentially drastic consequences for the EC. To achieve reunification, a one-sided decision of the GDR under Article 23 of the FRG's constitution to join the Federal Republic was sufficient.[52] It was beyond the allied powers' control to prevent this.[53] Consequently, the reunited Germany could opt out of the EC to achieve reunification. During the ratification of the Treaties of Rome, the FRG had officially declared to assume "the possibility of a review of the Common Market and EURATOM Treaties in the event of German reunification".[54] That this could imply a German opt-out was notified by the other signatory states with "no contradiction". A German withdrawal from the Community would drastically affect the European security order. Moreover, a fundamental pillar of the European integration project, the pacification of Germany, would be questioned. In response, the EC could cut the FRG from beneficiaries of membership. Furthermore, the EC could push the UK and France, as former occupational powers over Germany, to restore their occupational rights.

That Kohl's proposal included this risky escalation threat can be explained from a neoclassical realist perspective (expectation NR-2) as it resembles a situation where a leader attaches great importance to the domestic level and is at risk of being punished by the system (Rathbun, 2008: 317). The punishment could imply negative consequences for the FRG's security. Even if reunification can be achieved without the EC's consent, Germany would pay the price of being isolated or face the restoration of its occupational status. This again would affect Germany's core national interests related to security.

There are three explanations why Kohl's interpretation of the systemic incentive was biased and why the 10-points were, therefore, a risky take-it-or-leave-it offer. First, Kohl was facing federal elections in 1990, in which his re-election prospects were considerably greater as Chancellor of Unity. Second, Kohl had just been confronted with an inner-party coup so his standing was damaged.[55] The ambitious 10-points were, thus, also a signal of strength to the party. A third explanation is the support of the United States which was crucial to the FRG as a cabinet meeting proves.[56] Kohl reinsured himself of President Bush's support in regular phone

[52] https://www.bundestag.de/webarchiv/textarchiv/2013/46662599kw46grundgesetz23-213482, accessed 17.12.23.
[53] NA PREM 19/2998: "Germany: Meeting with Herr Teltschik", 09.02.90.
[54] Bulletin des Presse- und Informationsamtes der Bundesregierung, Nr. 56, 22.03.57.
[55] https://www.spiegel.de/politik/blamierte-frondeure-a-2bf8a260-0002-0001-0000-000013507081, accessed 15.05.23.
[56] FRG cabinet meeting 23.11.89, available at: https://www.bundesarchiv.de/cocoon/barch/0000/k/k1989k/kap11/kap239/para37.html, accessed 20.03.23.

calls. Directly after the presentation of the 10-points, Bush assured Kohl to be "on the same page".[57] Certainly, Kohl would have acted differently without Bush's support.

The Chancellor's speech generated significant disruptions in the relationship with the EC. None of the member states was pleased with the programme's content.[58] France's main concern was that the FRG would turn its back on the EC and jeopardise Mitterrand's attempts to advance European integration. The UK was similarly reserved.[59] The first confrontation between Kohl and his colleagues occurred at the Strasbourg Council in December. Evidence from this and ongoing negotiations disconfirm process expectation NR-2A. Several EC member states saw their core national interests violated by a high-speed resolution of the German Question, including the fast-track accession of the GDR into the EC. Thatcher and Mitterrand were both concerned about the situation and, in particular, Thatcher repeatedly mentioned the Four Power arrangement to stop reunification ambitions. Thatcher was worried that

> reunification would just come about. If that were to happen all the fixed points in Europe would collapse […] we would probably face a fait accompli. This is why she thought we must have a structure to stop this happening and the only available one was the Four Power arrangement.[60]

The French President agreed with the fait accompli nature of the 10-points but was less certain about available measures to hold the FRG back. Still, Mitterrand was deeply worried that a German solo run would overthrow the post-War order and agreed with his British counterpart that this outcome would be a very costly one.[61]

> He [Mitterrand] was very critical of Chancellor Kohl's ten points plan and speech […] Kohl was speculating on the national adrenalin of the German people and it seemed that nothing could stop him […] Mitterrand continued that the German people were in a process of motion and we did not have many cards to stop them. Nor could the Russians do much. It seemed the United States did not have the will. All that was left was Britain and France. He was fearful that he and the Prime Minister would find themselves in the situation of their predecessors in the 1930s who had failed to react in the face of constant pressing forward by the Germans.[62]

The Strasbourg Council (December 1989) saw hard bargaining sessions, as expected by NR-2B. German government officials found themselves isolated in a "frosty, irritated atmosphere"

[57] Phone call between Bush and Kohl took place on 29.11.89 as cited in Zelikow and Rice (1997: 183).
[58] NA-FCO-33/10381:"Kohl's speech on the German Question", 28.11.89.
[59] BA-B136/34457: "Reaktionen aus den wichtigsten Hauptstädten auf den 10-Punkte Plan", 30.11.89.
[60] NA FCO 33/10383: "Germany: conversation Prime Minister and President Mitterrand", 08.12.89.
[61] NA-WRL-020/1: "Secretary of State's meeting with President Bush: Germany", 30.01.90.
[62] NA-WRL-020/1: "Secretary of State's meeting with President Bush: Germany", 30.01.90.

(Genscher, 1995: 663).[63] After "tribunal-like questioning" and "heated exchanges" (Kohl, 2005: 1011–1012), the EC states emphasised the Germans' right of self-determination, which was a partial success for Kohl.[64] In the aftermath the atmosphere remained unrelaxed with France and the UK developing different strategies but both driven by geopolitical concerns.

### 3.5.4 France: Integration must Continue

France's position was that the German Question should not be resolved at the cost of halting vertical European integration (Schabert, 2021: 238–251). After Kohl presented the 10-points, Mitterrand worried that the FRG would turn its back on Europe. Mitterrand emphasised that he could accept reunification if it did not happen at the expense of the EC. He recognised a clear connection between geopolitics and enlargement and argued that the GDR should be automatically accessed to the EC in case of reunification, which would guarantee a stable European security environment.[65]

Before the EC's Strasbourg summit, there had been tensions between France and the FRG concerning the EMU (see Wirsching, 2022). The dispute was settled last minute as Mitterrand gained trust in the FRG's rhetorical commitments that German reunification and European integration go hand in hand. An internal document reveals that the ongoing German rhetorical commitments pro Europe were instrumental, in fact, a "political-psychological safeguard"[66] for the geopolitical aim of reunification while retaining membership in the EC.

In the following weeks, France and Germany were developing a common position. In an informal meeting in January 1990, Mitterrand and Kohl agreed that the answer to the fall of the Iron Curtain must be "a close connection of Germany, France and Europe". Moreover, "German and European unity should be pursued simultaneously".[67] This solution satisfied the geopolitical aims of both states. The FRG would gain territory by reunifying with the GDR, and France's security concerns would be relaxed by tying Germany closer to the EC. Due to this general agreement, France was willing to acquiesce to Kohl's take-it-or-leave-it-offer. This corresponds to the process expectations NR-3, according to which enlargement occurs if it is in

[63] NA-FCO-30/7992: "European Council, Strasbourg", 09.12.90.
[64] HAEU-DORIE-612-3800: "Conclusions de la Presidence – Conseil Europeen – Strasbourg", 09.12.89.
[65] Original citation can be found in Schabert (2021: 303).
[66] In Küsters and Hofmann (1998) Doc-Nr. 151: "Aufzeichnung des Ministerialdirigenten Hartmann", 29.01.90.
[67] In Küsters and Hofmann (1998) Doc-Nr. 135: "Gespräch des Bundeskanzlers Kohl mit Staatspräsident Mitterrand", 04.01.90.

line with states' core national interests. The French President assured Kohl that there would be no French veto.[68]

These findings speak against the second narrative mentioned in the article's second section that France and the FRG made some "kind of deal" (Spohr, 2000: 878). In all the archives I have visited I found no material backing the horse-trade narrative à la unification for more vertical European integration. Instead, the Franco-German engine, which had stalled due to the 10-points, was restarted in early 1990.[69] Projects that had already been in the pipeline served as fuel for the engine, such as the political Union. For the latter, a common proposal was presented in the run-up of the Dublin Council, at which the automatic integration of the GDR was also decided on.[70] This relaxed Mitterrand's security concerns and reassured France's perception of the EC as a tool to prevent German great power ambitions. At the same time, it demonstrates that for France the EC membership of the reunified Germany was more than just an afterthought of reunification but an essential part of the European security architecture.

### 3.5.5 United Kingdom's (unsuccessful) Attempts to Preserve the Status Quo

The UK not only rejected all proposals that foresaw further vertical European integration but also disliked the French position (see also Wirsching, 2022: 661–672). Thatcher argued that progress in European integration would allow the Germans to dominate the EC; she "did not accept that the right way to prevent Germany's dominance was to integrate Europe more closely […] An integrated Europe would be a German Europe".[71] This is a striking example of how leaders' cognitive filters influence their perception of systemic change, confirming NR-1 and NR-2. Whereas Mitterrand had a good relationship with Kohl and generally supported European integration, the opposite was true for Kohl and Thatcher (Thatcher, 1993: 257).

The UK considered the reactivation of the four-power rights a legitimate instrument to prevent rapid progress and hoped to ally with the USSR.[72] The UK was status quo-oriented and convinced that "a binary German confederation would be the best form of German unity".[73] Thatcher rejected a fast-track reunification and openly accused Kohl of destabilising Europe.[74]

[68] In Küsters and Hofmann (1998) Doc-Nr. 187: "Gespräch des Bundeskanzlers mit Staatspräsident Mitterrand", 15.02.90.
[69] Wirsching (2022) makes a similar finding.
[70] HAEU-DORIE-567-3800: "Conseil Européen – Dublin", 28.04.90.
[71] NA-FCO-30/8905: "Prime Minister's meeting with the Prime Minister of France", 26.03.90.
[72] NA-FCO-33/10382: "Visit of Shevardnadze", 18.12.89.
[73] In Salmon et al. (2010) Doc-Nr. 91: "The German Question and its Repercussions", 09.01.90.
[74] BA-B136/30501: "Interview der britischen Premierministerin Margaret Thatcher", 25.01.90.

Amid of these tensions, Kohl's close advisor Teltschik met with Thatcher's Private Secretary Powell on 9 February 1990.[75] The records of the meeting reveal a German threat to leave the Community, which was previously unknown and disproves the first narrative presented in the article's second section that the integration of the GDR into the EC "has been an unusually smooth process" (Falke, 1994: 164). During the meeting, Powell emphasised the UK's dissatisfaction with Kohl's "heady" behaviour that was lacking "sensitivity and consideration" towards others. The UK was not generally opposed to reunification but would demand an "orderly process" with encompassing negotiations about the implications for NATO and the EC. Eventually, Powell threatened to activate the four-power rights: if the FRG was "not prepared to consult collectively with us, then we would have to talk to the others, including the Russians, without the Germans". Teltschik responded that the FRG was not acting unilaterally but reacting to "an ever-worsening crisis in East Germany", which was close to collapse due to the migration "exodus". In the prospect of the upcoming elections in the GDR, Teltschik emphasised that the elections could yield a result in which the new GDR government might declare its accession to the FRG under Article 23 of the FRG's constitution. Teltschik stated that in this case, "the German government would be unable to refuse", which is the threat to pursue reunification unilaterally with unclear consequences for NATO and EC. This dialogue between the two high-level advisors is evidence of what has been predicted under NR-2B. Moreover, it proves that both a unilateral move by the FRG and the reactivation of the four-power rights were realistic. The European Commission found that "the worst scenario would be one in which the Federal Republic had to choose between the constitutional call for unity and its commitment to European integration. In strictly legal terms the former would have precedence".[76]

### 3.5.6 Green light from Dublin

In early 1990, the efficiency of Kohl's 10-point-programme became increasingly clear. The persistence of the status quo was impossible so the question was less if the German separation should be overcome but how. Kohl supported the Article 23 solution and opposed neutrality as, for instance, promoted by the opposition.[77] Kohl's subsequent tactic to pose a neutralisation threat was already rooted in the take-it-or-leave-it-character of the 10-point-programme. In a phone call, Kohl reminded Mitterrand of the drastic geopolitical consequences a neutral

[75] NA-PREM-19/2998: "Germany: Meeting with Herr Teltschik", 09.02.90.
[76] HAEU-CEUESEGE-SEC(1990)0433: "Note de la Representation de la Commission", 27.02.90.
[77] BA-B102/41076: "Kabinettsausschuss Deutsche Einheit, Untergruppe Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik", 06.02.90.

Germany would have.[78] The minutes from a conversation between the French foreign minister and UK officials prove that both sides were impressed by Kohl's rhetoric and very concerned about a neutral Germany.[79] Still the UK upheld its resistance.[80] For Thatcher, it was impossible that the GDR, "which has been either communist or nazi since the 1930s" would be accessed to the EC straightaway.[81] This is evidence that also for the UK the accession of East Germany into the EC was not just an afterthought of reunification but distinct issue of concern.

Eventually, a row of diplomatic initiatives launched by the FRG convinced the UK (in accordance with NR-3) that the integration of the GDR did not violate the UK's core national security interests. Instead, the enlargement would be in line with them, in particular, compared to the alternative outcome. The UK's consent was strongly influenced by the USSR expressing its support for reunification, which the FRG achieved on 10 February.[82] With both superpowers supporting reunification, the FRG possessed a strong bargaining chip. A second instance is the FRG's diplomatic engagement against the conclusion of a trade and cooperation agreement between the EC and the GDR. Whereas the FRG had supported the negotiations (started in December 1989), there were worries shortly before conclusion that "the envisaged ten-year duration of the contract sends an untimely signal".[83] Accordingly, the agreement could be misunderstood as a signal that a fast-track accession of the GDR into the FRG and the EC is no longer desired.[84] The FRG managed to delay the initialling of the agreement and negotiated the addition of a clause in the treaty that precluded ambiguities with regard to reunification.[85]

The third instance concerns the GDR elections in March 1990. The victory of the "Allianz für Deutschland" ensured the fast-track reunification as favoured by Kohl. In the electoral campaign, Kohl's party had shown massive engagement in the electoral campaign by initialising district partnerships or rallying across the GDR (Gibowski, 1990; Kohl, 1996: 288–298). Eventually, the EC decided at the extraordinary Council in Dublin (28 April 1990) that the GDR would be integrated into the EC as soon as the German reunification was realised.[86]

[78] In Küsters and Hofmann (1998) Doc-Nr. 203: "Telefongespräch des Bundeskanzlers Kohl mit Staatspräsident Mitterrand", 05.03.90.
[79] NA-PREM-19/2998: "Call on Dumas: Developments in Europe", 02.02.90.
[80] NA-WRL-020/1: "Secretary of State's meeting with President Bush: Germany", 30.01.90.
[81] BA-B136/20242: "Großbritannien und die Deutsche Frage", 26.02.90.
[82] BA-B136/20225: "Deutschlandpolitik und Deutschlandfrage", 10.02.90.
[83] BA-B136/21520: "Sonderstatus des innerdeutschen Handels", 19.02.90; HAEU-CEUESEGE-SEC(1989)2277: "Recommendation de decision du Conseil", 12.12.89.
[84] BA-B136/21520: "Sonderstatus des innerdeutschen Handels", 19.02.90; HAEU-CEUESEGE-SEC(1989)2277: "Recommendation de decision du Conseil", 12.12.89.
[85] BA-B136/21521: "Paraphierung eines Handels- und Kooperationsabkommens EG-DDR", 13.03.90.
[86] HAEU-DORIE-567-3800: "Conseil Européen – Dublin", 28.04.90.

## 3.6 Discussion of Alternative Explanations

Following the introduced constructivist approach (Schimmelfennig, 2003), states form their preference regarding enlargement based on material considerations. Allowing geopolitical motives to fall under material interests, expectation C-1 can be confirmed based on the above evidence. The finding that the FRG and EC have different material interests rules out C-2A and C-3A so we would expect what is captured in C-2B and C-3B. The FRG in its role as the proponent of enlargement should aim at rhetorically entrapping the other member states based on their previous statements. The FRG should refer to the EC's liberal-democratic values and put a shaming mechanism at work so that the other states consent to the enlargement, even if it is against their interest. Throughout the Cold War, leaders from all member states of the EC were constantly reassuring their will to overcome the separation of Germany. In June 1989, Thatcher declared that the UK aims to overcome Germany's separation.[87] The French foreign minister confirmed on 7 November 1989 that "the Germans' quest for rapprochement is legitimate" but that the "development in the German Question depends on the development of Europe".[88] The UK's foreign minister took a similar position one day later.[89] Internal documents prove that the FRG was aware of the tactical usefulness of these previous statements.[90] The first EC summit after the fall of the Wall shows the first German entrapment attempt. After harsh criticism by Thatcher, Kohl referred to her earlier statements in support of reunification (Weidenfeld, 1998: 88–96). At the same time, the FRG tirelessly emphasised that the EC should have an active role in the reunification process. Evidence from the Chancellery demonstrates that this was instrumental.[91] On all occasions, publicly or in exchange with colleagues, FRG officials referred to the importance of European integration.[92] In fact, FRG officials adopted a language that inextricably linked German reunification with the "constitutive values and norms" (Schimmelfennig, 2003: 7).

These observations support the process expectation C-2B. After several EC states voiced opposition to reunification and the GDR's direct integration into the EC, the FRG government engaged in rhetorical action. It attempted to shame resistant member states for their opposition to enlargement based on their previous statements concerning the German Question. The constructivist theory of Schimmelfennig (2003) is, therefore, useful to understand why the FRG

[87] BA-B136/34467: "Haltung dt Wiedervereinigung Großbritannien und Frankreich", 10.11.89.
[88] BA-B136/34467: "Haltung dt Wiedervereinigung Großbritannien und Frankreich", 10.11.89.
[89] BA-B136/20224: "Wiedervereinigung – Die Britische Position", 08.11.89.
[90] Poltisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes (PA AA)-B38/Ref. 210, Bd. 140717:"Gedanken zur deutschen Außenpolitik im Jahre 1990".
[91] In Küsters and Hofmann (1998) Doc-Nr. 151:"Aufzeichung des Ministerialdirigenten Hartmann", 29.01.90.
[92] NA-PREM-19/2672: "European Community Heads of Government Meeting in Paris", 19.11.89.

constantly referred to the importance of common European values and norms. However, I do not find evidence for the FRG's rhetorical action being successful. The FRG's references to past statements and EC norms did not drive the EC to consent to the GDR's immediate EC accession. Instead, as revealed by the empirical analysis, this decision was driven by geopolitical concerns. Therefore, I reject C-3B. Constructivism struggles to fully account for the GDR's integration into the EC.

One limitation of the article lies in the limited scope, which makes it difficult to comprehensively present the full range of theoretical approaches. As outlined in the theoretical section, Schimmelfennig's (2003) constructivist theory represents just one variation, differing from those that allow ideas and values to shape preferences directly (Sedelmeier, 2005; Sjursen, 2002). Under the neoclassical realist premise, it is also possible for values to shape preferences, though through a different causal mechanism, where values are intervening variables. This suggests, nevertheless, that there is a potential for neoclassical realism to accommodate constructivism. Further research on the dialogue between these two theoretical camps is needed.[93]

Liberal intergovernmentalism expects states to form their preferences predominantly on economic considerations (LI-1). Since the GDR is a market of 16 million people with high growth potential, all states should economically benefit from integrating the GDR. In the short term, the integration is rather costly. The GDR would be eligible for aid, making an extension of the Community's funds necessary. I find no proof for member states making these considerations. Instead, security concerns dominate, which supports my realist premise that security trumps economic interests. The evidence speaks against LI-1 and already dismisses liberal intergovernmentalism as the explanation for the GDR's accession. If the FRG's interest in accessing the GDR to the EC was economic, it would have no reason to insist on a fast-track solution but also be d'accord with medium/long-term accession. The take-it-or-leave-it-nature of the 10-point-programme is also difficult to understand from an economic perspective as it included the risk of overturning the EC and losing all economic benefits.[94]

[93] I thank an anonymous reviewer for raising this issue.

[94] Given the limited scope of the article, I am unable to provide an in-depth analysis of factors beyond the economy that influence negotiations within the liberal intergovernmentalism framework (see discussion in the theoretical section).

## 3.7 Conclusion

The article has provided a hitherto missing link in the understanding of the EC's role in restructuring the European security order post-Cold War: the integration of the GDR into the EC. Explaining this enlargement is only possible due to the recent declassification of confidential documents previously under lock and key in archives for three decades.

In a nutshell, the article leaves established regional integration theories behind as they have difficulties accounting for this outlier of EC enlargement. In alignment with neoclassical realism, I develop a new synthetic model to argue that the integration of the GDR was an exercise of high politics with core national interests of security and relative power at stake. I claim that the EC's consent to integrate the GDR into the Community was driven by a confrontative take-it-or-leave-it-offer that precluded conventional accession procedures. The EC was forced to consent to a fast-track accession of the GDR to prevent a German opt-out from the Community that would create a security threat. The empirical analysis does not only confirm the neoclassical realist explanation but also supports the theory of "nested games" (Tsebelis, 1990: 1). Accordingly, the GDR's accession to the EC was not negotiated in a vacuum but influenced by dynamics from other "games" such as the FRG's negotiations with the US and the USSR about reunification.

The article contributes empirically to the literature in explaining a so far disregarded enlargement case. Even though the article explores enlargement in a special context, the findings carry important implications for ongoing enlargement debates. Historically and in the present, enlargement rarely follows a "standard" path. A case is at hand with the Northern Ireland question, for which the GDR's integration could resemble a precedent. Article 3 of the Irish Constitution is comparable to the former Article 23 of the West German Constitution, as both outline a path towards peaceful reunification.[95] The reunification of Cyprus and the subsequent integration of the island's northern part would also closely resemble the GDR's EC accession. Returning to the security dimension of enlargement, the GDR case demonstrates that EC and NATO enlargement must not co-occur. Whereas the integration of the GDR into the EC was agreed on by April 1990, its NATO integration was subject to the 2 + 4 negotiations concluded in September. Eventually, both enlargements were executed on 3 October 1990, but for a long time, the expansion of NATO to the former GDR was unclear. Thus, the unified

[95] See Article 3 of the Irish constitution, which formulates the aim of peaceful reunification resembling the former version of Art 23 of the German *Grundgesetz* (https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/cons/en/ html#part1, accessed 22.11.23; https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/06/its-closernow-than-its-ever-been-could-there-soon-be-a-united-ireland, accessed 22.11.23).

Germany could have been part of the EC in its entirety but no NATO member or only Germany's West (Plato, 2003: 394–410). In current enlargement debates concerning candidates with contested internal borders, such as Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia, EU membership appears more feasible than NATO membership.

The article contributes theoretically to the literature by emphasising that enlargement is a high politics exercise. Realism's explanatory power concerning the enlargement of international organisations is underscored. Going forward, academic inquiry should consider the full range of realism, and more specifically, the plurality of neoclassical realist approaches. Contemporary debates address the evolvement of neoclassical realism and its role in the "end of IR debate" (Dunne et al., 2013; Meibauer et al., 2021). A central debate revolves around the nature of neoclassical realism as a theoretical framework and the direction in which it should evolve (Juneau, 2023). While some view it as a mid-range theory for foreign policy analysis (Rathbun, 2008; Rose, 1998), others have more recently advertised its development into a theory of international politics (Ripsman et al., 2016). The findings of my article, in fact, support both approaches as neoclassical realism provides an explanation for states' strategic foreign policy but also broader implications of systemic change. The development into a theory of international politics should be encouraged as this can also help neoclassical realism to address ongoing criticism of overcomplicating realism and misusing liberal variables (Meibauer et al., 2021: 275).

Future research will have to deliver a complete account of the GDR's integration into the EC. My article focuses on the political decision of the extraordinary European Council in Dublin on 28 April 1990, according to which the EC decided that the territory of the former GDR was to be integrated into the Community as soon as the reunification of Germany comes into effect. As a result of the Dublin Council, the European Commission gained the mandate to prepare the GDR's integration into the Community. Since the Council's decision precluded the change of primary law, the integration was about to be arranged through the flexible application of the *acquis communautaire*[96] to the GDR's territory. Given the GDR's preconditions and the immense time pressure, this task constituted a Herculean effort.

[96] The *acquis communautaire* is "the body of common rights and obligations that is binding on all EU Member States and that is constantly evolving". https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/pages/glossary/euacquisen, accessed 10.06.22.

*"Mitterrand emphasised once again that the process of German unification and European development must proceed harmoniously. He compared the situation to a team of horses. If the horses do not run at the same speed, an accident will happen." (Teltschik, 1993: 83)*

# 4 Between Playing Hardball and Accommodating Generously? The Terms of Enlargement for the Integration of the German Democratic Republic into the European Community

**Abstract**

Do norms impact state action, or are they purely instrumental and subordinate to material interests? I approach this long-standing debate by analysing the EU's enlargement terms. When the prospect of enlargement arises, the EU faces the dilemma of minimising resulting financial implications while fulfilling normative obligations to support new members. Historically, the EU responded both by discriminating new members from benefits or by exempting them from obligations. I claim that understanding the determinants of enlargement requires bridging theoretical divides in European Studies. I argue that states' material interests and norms are equally influential, resulting in enlargement terms being painstakingly negotiated compromises balancing both. The analysis focuses on the GDR's integration into the EC, where the EU's dilemma between material interest and normative principles was particularly pronounced. The mixed-methods analysis reveals nuanced enlargement terms with unprecedented exemptions, albeit of short duration.

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## 4.1 Introduction

Do norms impact state action, or are they purely instrumental and subordinate to material interests? I approach this long-standing IR debate concerning the influence of norms by analysing the terms of enlargement the EU imposes on new member states. While enlargement is beneficial for all EU member states in the long run, such as by expanding the Single Market, it represents a major burden for the EU's budget in the short term, which forces states into a conflict between material interests and normative obligations (for a discussion of the benefits and costs of enlargement see Schneider, 2009: 41–47). Member states face the dilemma of minimising the costs associated with the accession of typically poorer new member states and fulfilling the normative obligation to support these new members with whom they share a common identity. Throughout its history, the EU has been ambivalent towards new member states. On the one hand, the EU has played hardball, imposing temporal discrimination from membership benefits (Schimmelfennig, 2014). On the other hand, the EU has generously accommodated new member states by temporarily exempting them from obligations. What are the determinants for the EU's terms of enlargement? Under which circumstances does the EU play hardball with new member states and when does it accommodate them generously?

The prevalent dichotomy in European Studies between rational and normative institutionalism yields contrasting assumptions regarding the politics of EU enlargement. Rational institutionalists posit that states are self-interested utility maximisers, suggesting that new member states are likely to encounter discriminatory treatment during their initial membership years (Moravcsik, 1998; Schneider, 2009). Conversely, normative institutionalists argue that states are guided by norms and a sense of shared European identity. This entails that new member states are generously accommodated with temporary exemptions from membership obligations (Sedelmeier, 2005; Sjursen, 2002).

I contend that while longstanding debates between rationalist and normative institutionalists are intriguing, they fall short of providing comprehensive explanations for real-world phenomena (Friedrichs and Kratochwil, 2009; Lake, 2013; Moravcsik, 2003; Yoder and Haynes, 2025). Building on "analytic eclecticism" (Sil and Katzenstein, 2010: 411), I develop a theoretical framework that integrates rational and normative institutionalism to postulate more complex and, thus, more realistic testable expectations. While analytic eclecticism is widely appreciated in IR, its application in practice remains sparse (Chernoff et al., 2020: 385–386). Particularly within the regional integration literature, integrative theorising remains uncommon with scholars predominantly adhering to a single theoretical approach (an important exemption is

Schimmelfennig, 2003, 2014). One central aim of this article is, therefore, to further establish integrative theorisation in the regional integration literature.

Building on the fundamental assumption that human behaviour is always a combination of rational cost-benefit calculations or ideational factors (compare March and Olsen, 2011), I argue that the process of preference formation among member states regarding the enlargement terms for a new member state is shaped by both material interests and a sense of common European identity and related norms. Intergovernmental negotiations are characterised by episodes of tough bargaining with material interests at stake but also deliberative exchanges about norm-guided behaviour. The resulting enlargement terms are a painstakingly negotiated compromise respecting the normative and material interests of all member states to a sufficient degree.

I test this integrative theoretical approach by analysing the terms of enlargement for the integration of the GDR into the EC. This often-overlooked enlargement, performed concurrently with Germany's reunification, constitutes the EC's first expansion after the fall of the Iron Curtain amidst the Community's evolution to an ever-closer political Union. This enlargement holds significance not only substantially but also theoretically, as the tension between material interests and norms is more pronounced than with other enlargements. The ongoing democratic transition in the GDR and its pioneering role in overcoming Europe's division provided a normative justification for generous accommodation. Simultaneously, the economic reconstruction of the GDR required vast financial outlays, which raised concerns among existing member states.

The findings of the article contribute to the regional integration literature that has so far disregarded the GDR's exceptional and momentous accession. EU enlargement remains topical with today nine states holding official candidate status. Furthermore, the article contributes to scholarly discourse in European Studies concerning the EU's normative foundations and the influence of norms on political decision-making (Hyde-Price, 2006; Manners, 2002; Thomas, 2009).

The article is structured as follows. In the first section, I discuss EU enlargement and its implications on the validity of EU law under the conceptual framework of differentiated integration (DI). The next section engages with established rational and normative institutionalist theory for the terms of enlargement. Since I claim that none of these theoretical approaches provides a sufficient explanation for the terms of enlargement the EU imposes on

new member states, I develop an integrative approach by combining elements from both camps. The third section establishes the article's research design. Before I conclude, the fourth section discusses the results of the mixed-methods analysis. The quantitative analysis compares the GDR's enlargement terms to other rounds and finds a trade-off consisting of an unprecedently high number of derogations with few discriminations but comparatively short durations. This assessment is supported by the qualitative study using recently declassified archival documents as evidence.

## 4.2 The Terms of Enlargement and Differentiated Integration

As a result of several enlargement rounds the EU has grown to a size of nowadays 27 member states and 448 million inhabitants (European Union, 2024). The benefits the EU provides for its member states constitute a major incentive to apply for membership. Before being rewarded with access to the Union's club goods, candidates have to master a long and rocky road. The major hurdle in the application process is to adopt all the legislation of the *acquis communautaire*.[97] Nevertheless, the exact terms of enlargement for new member states are not entirely predefined. The member states possess leeway to introduce the *acquis* in the new member state flexibly, meaning that the *acquis* does not apply in its entirety from the outset. The resulting incongruence between "the territorial extension of the European Union (EU) membership and EU rule validity" (Holzinger and Schimmelfennig, 2012: 292) is termed differentiated integration (DI).

In contrast to primary law, in which noteworthy differentiation only emerged in the 1990s, the secondary law has been featured by differentiation clauses since the Treaties of Rome. Enlargement has always caused temporary increases in secondary law DI (Duttle et al., 2017). This enlargement related DI has two forms. The EU can either introduce "exemptive differentiation" (Schimmelfennig, 2014: 682) in releasing newcomers from obligations or impose "discriminatory differentiation" (Schimmelfennig, 2014: 682) and exclude states from membership benefits. The proportion of exemption and discrimination provides a meaningful understanding of the conditions a state is accessed to the EU. When using the "terms of enlargement", I also refer to the absolute number of differentiations, their duration and distribution across policy fields. The exact composition of the transitionally introduced

[97] The *acquis* is the "constantly evolving body of common rights and obligations." More information: https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-asylum-and-migration-glossary/glossary/union-acquis_en, accessed 10.04.24.

differentiation clauses is subject to intergovernmental negotiations. Thus, "the terms of enlargement are endogenous to the accession negotiations" (Schneider, 2009: 4).

## 4.3 Establishing the Terms of Enlargement

Before enlargement takes place, the EU and the acceding state sign a treaty specifying the terms of enlargement. The treaty enters into force after ratification by the EU members and the accessions state.[98] Despite this unanimous decision-making mode, the bargaining power within the negotiations is de facto unequally distributed to the disadvantage of the candidates because they lack alternative options besides membership (e.g. Moravcsik and Schimmelfennig, 2009). Except for the Northern enlargement 1995, candidates have typically lagged behind the EU average in economic terms and faced structural deficits. For example, the combined GDP of the Eastern enlargement states (2004 and 2007) accounted for five percent of the existing member states' GDP (Moravcsik and Vachudova, 2005: 201). For candidates with structural deficits, the benefits of membership such as support from the regional and agricultural funds or gaining access to the Single Market are extraordinarily and unattainable through any other option than membership. Thus, candidates are in a weak bargaining position vis-à-vis the EU during the accession negotiations (Moravcsik and Vachudova, 2005: 199–203).

### 4.3.1 Rational Institutionalism and the Terms of Enlargement

From a rational institutionalist standpoint, the EU member states are expected to leverage their favourable bargaining position and play hardball with candidates by imposing tough enlargement terms. The prevailing logic of action in the negotiations assumed is a "logic of consequences" (March and Olsen, 1998: 950). From this perspective, states are rational utility maximisers that pursue outcomes satisfying their material interests. Liberal intergovernmentalism, a prominent rational institutionalist approach in the regional integration literature, understands EU decision-making as a three-step process of national preference formation, interstate bargaining, and institutional choice (Moravcsik, 1998). States are expected to form their preferences primarily on material aspects. When interests diverge, actors are expected to prioritise their material interests and engage in hard bargaining. This involves calculated moves like the positioning of threats, competitive exchanges or coercive tactics. As powerful actors are unhesitant to exert their influence, institutional choices closely reflect their positions (Moravcsik and Vachudova, 2005: 199–203)

[98] Even though the accession treaty eventually requires the EP's consent, the Parliament is not a decisive player as it lacks formal amending power European Union (2012), Art 49. Thus, I focus on the member states.

To comprehend the economic implications of enlargement, it is essential to distinguish between short-term and long-term effects. While both existing and new member states benefit from enlargement in the long run, short-term impacts differ (Schneider, 2009: 41–47). The accession of new member states represents a major burden for the EU budget as new members (usually) become net recipients. Enlargement forces the existing members into "distributional conflicts" (Schneider, 2009: 60). To guarantee the payments to which new members are entitled, the existing member states must either increase their contributions to the EU budget or accept reduced payouts. There exist two solutions to mitigate short-term enlargement-related costs: increased budget contributions from particularly benefiting members or temporary exemptions for new members.[99] I focus on the latter option as outsourcing the costs of enlargement to the newcomer is usually the first choice.[100] This institutional solution corresponds to discriminatory differentiation (Schimmelfennig, 2014). Under the premise of rational institutionalism, states are inclined to discriminate the new member if this avoids costs. Distributional conflicts are resolved to the detriment of the candidate. Given the newcomer's weak bargaining position, it can hardly contest discriminations and also not influence their durations. In fact, prolonged discrimination clauses reduce enlargement-related costs for old member states while increasing the costs for the newcomer. Generally, the EU can be expected to impose as many discriminations for as long as necessary to compensate for short-term enlargement-related costs. Furthermore, new members cannot expect exemptions from the *acquis* if these are costly for existing members. The differentiation clauses resulting from the accession of new members should, therefore, be predominantly discriminatory. The EU is expected to play hardball.

*Expectations*

*1. State preference formation is guided by material interests.*

*2. The intergovernmental negotiations are dominated by the states with the highest relative bargaining power.*

*3. The terms of enlargement are tough with discriminatory differentiations prevailing over exemptions and enduring until short-term enlargement-related costs are compensated.*

### 4.3.2 Normative Institutionalism and the Terms of Enlargement

The rational institutionalist perspective faces criticism for its narrow focus on material interests and bargaining power. Normative institutionalists emphasise the influence of a common European identity, shared values, historical traditions and norms on the EU's enlargement

[99] Schneider (2009: 4) highlights that states may benefit differently from enlargement and distinguishes between "relative winners and losers" of enlargement.

[100] Only if discriminating the new member state is not sufficient the EU might opt for "intra-union redistribution" Schneider (2009: 11).

politics (Sedelmeier, 2005; Sjursen, 2002; Thomas, 2009). Norms "specify standards of proper behaviour" (Katzenstein, 1996: 5). From the normative institutionalist perspective, the EU's intergovernmental negotiations follow a "logic of appropriateness" (March and Olsen, 1998: 949). During the preference formation stage, states are expected to respect their normative obligations. They generally prefer those enlargement terms that align as closely as possible with the norms they are committed to.

States should be more open to accommodating new members with whom they share a common identity and that adhere to the EU's fundamental norms of peace, liberty, democracy, the rule of law and human rights. Furthermore, preference formation is impacted by "minor norms" (Manners, 2002: 242) such as solidarity or anti-discrimination, as well as specific enlargement-related norms like legal unity and equal treatment across enlargement cases (Schimmelfennig, 2014). During negotiations, actors are guided by the norm of legal unity[101] and collectively strive to apply the *acquis* as comprehensively as possible to the accession territory. When considering discriminatory or exemptive differentiations, the member states assess if the differentiations are normatively justifiable. In cases of disagreement, actors do not resort to a logic of consequences but adhere to substantive and procedural[102] norms (Heisenberg, 2005; Lewis, 2005). Conflicting issues are resolved through deliberation consistent with Habermas' discourse ethics (Habermas, 1985, 1996; Mansbridge, 2015; Steenbergen et al., 2003). Accordingly, actors are expected to engage in open discussion, carefully weighing arguments until a shared agreement is reached. Rather than relying on threats or coercive tactics, participants seek to persuade one another through normative reasoning and argumentation.

New member states are well-positioned to request exemptions. The EU consents to differentiation clauses whenever it is normatively justifiable. Still, there should not be an overwhelming number of differentiation clauses because the norm of equal treatment stipulates equal treatment of candidate states over the various accession rounds. Moreover, the norm of legal unity motivates the member states to minimise exemptions (Schimmelfennig, 2014: 682). Additionally, the new member state is also committed to the EU's norms and only asks for exemptions if this is normatively justifiable and necessary, for instance, until capacity issues are resolved (Winzen, 2016). The same logic applies to discriminatory differentiation clauses,

[101] The norm of legal unity stipulates that differentiation is undesirable (Schimmelfennig, 2014: 685–686).
[102] For this distinction see Thomas (2009). Example of procedural norm: the Council's consensus norm (e.g. Heisenberg, 2005).

for which the normative hurdle is generally high. Therefore, the enlargement terms should represent a generous accommodation instead of the EU playing hardball.

*Expectations*[103]

*1. State preference formation is guided by norms and identity.*

*2. The intergovernmental negotiations are a joint, deliberative effort to ensure that the terms of enlargement align with the EU's norms.*

*3. The terms of enlargement predominantly accommodate the new member state. Exemptive differentiations prevail over discriminations. All differentiations and their length are justifiable with the EU's norms.*

### 4.3.3 Eclectic Approach to the Terms of Enlargement

The opposing process expectations derived from rational and normative institutionalism are characteristic of IR, which continues to be dominated by paradigmatic grand debates. After decades of certainly intriguing and scholarship-advancing controversies between theoretical camps[104], these debates have left little room for novel insights and have largely become dogmatic, repetitive and ultimately "inconclusive" (Lake, 2013: 567). An increasing number of IR scholars emphasise that theoretical discussion should not be the final destination but rather a vehicle to explain real-world phenomena (Cornut, 2015; Friedrichs and Kratochwil, 2009; Jupille et al., 2003; Maher, 2021; Moravcsik, 2003; Yoder and Haynes, 2025). By adopting a pragmatic approach to research, "analytic eclecticism" (Sil and Katzenstein, 2010: 411) has been well received.[105] While analytic eclecticism acknowledges the value of theoretical proposition, it explicitly encourages scholars to transcend "paradigmatic boundaries" and combine components from ostensibly opposing camps. This facilitates to account for the "messiness and complexity of concrete dilemmas facing 'real world actors'" (Sil and Katzenstein, 2010: 411). As previously discussed, the EU's process for establishing enlargement terms for prospective member states exemplifies such a multifaceted dilemma.

Drawing on the innovations of analytic eclecticism, I integrate rational and normative institutionalism. My objective is not to propose yet another comprehensive theory of international relations but rather to build upon established theories to derive more complex, and, thus, more realistic process expectations concerning EU enlargement (compare

[103] As specified earlier, the three-stage decision-making model was originally introduced by Moravcsik (1998) for his theory of liberal intergovernmentalism. The intuitive three-stage decision-making structure can, however, also be applied under the premise of normative institutionalism. Moreover, it allows for precise identification of the differences between rational and normative institutionalism.

[104] Compare, for example, the intriguing debate about the "normative power Europe" between Manners (2002) and Hyde-Price (2006).

[105] Analytic eclecticism has also been received critically, compare Chernoff et al. (2020: 389–390); Cornut (2015: 52–54).

Katzenstein and Sil, 2009: 116–119). While the potential of analytic eclecticism is widely recognised, the majority of IR scholars practically remain within the narrow boundaries of one theory or resort to competitive theory testing (Chernoff et al., 2020: 385–386).

The underrepresentation of studies acknowledging the simultaneous influence of norms and material interests on decision-making is particularly evident within the regional integration literature, where analytic eclecticism has yet to gain traction. There are, however, meaningful exemptions demonstrating the potential for integrating normative and rational institutionalism (compare Schimmelfennig, 2003). Focusing on the intergovernmental negotiations concerning the terms of enlargement, Schimmelfennig (2014: 695) finds actors' material interests to be "normatively constrained." While this illustrates the value of bridging divides between existing theoretical camps, the relationship between normative and rational institutionalism remains hierarchical (compare March and Olsen, 2011: 492). My theoretical innovation lies in transcending this hierarchical framework by assigning equal significance to both norms and material interests. I argue that norms are ends in themselves, meaning they advance normative arguments without material ulterior motives (compare Sjursen, 2002).

The norms the EU member states adhere to reside at different levels. The EU's fundamental norms of peace, liberty, democracy, the rule of law and human rights are enshrined in the Treaties, for example, in Articles 2 and 3 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU).[106] The EU's commitment to these norms dates back to the 1950s. The preamble to the Treaties of Rome pledges to "preserve and strengthen peace and liberty" and commits to the UN Charter.[107] Since then, the EU's norms consolidated and consistently evolved. Both, fundamental and "minor norms" (Manners, 2002: 242), such as solidarity or anti-discrimination, reside in the legislative output the EU produces but also, for example, in declarations or public statement statements of EU officials (Manners, 2002: 242–244). Procedural norms such as the Council's consensus norm may not be codified but are firmly established (Heisenberg, 2005). Being a club of democracies, similar norms also reside at the national level, for instance, in member states' constitutions. Many states also recognise the norm of solidarity and practice redistribution towards poorer regions, similar to the EU's social and cohesion funds.[108]

[106] The Treaty is accessible under: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:2bf140bf-a3f8-4ab2-b506-fd71826e6da6.0023.02/DOC_1&format=PDF, accessed 03.06.24.
[107] The Treaty is accessible under: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A11957E%2FTXT, accessed 03.06.24.
[108] E.g. Germany's "Länderfinanzausgleich" or France's procedure under Article 72(2) of its constitution.

Throughout all stages[109] of the decision-making process, I expect elements of rational action and normatively guided behaviour. In the preference formation stage, states assess anticipated material costs and benefits. For the likely case that accession candidates have structural deficits, enlargement yields more short-term costs than benefits for existing member states, thereby incentivising them to favour the discrimination of applicants. Based on their material interests, the candidate states should of course prefer exemptions from the *acquis*. At the same time, the preference formation is equally and simultaneously influenced by what is normatively "appropriate." Existing member states should encounter difficulties in discriminating candidates with whom they share a common identity. If a candidate demonstrates substantial efforts to comply with the EU's norms, the member states should be inclined to offer generous concessions. The EU's norms, which the candidate has internalised, equally influence its preference formation. For instance, the candidate should be influenced by the norm of equal treatment and strive for the full implementation of the *acquis* upon accession (compare Schimmelfennig, 2014). When material interests and norms align, preference formation is straightforward. When they diverge, states seek middle-ground solutions that satisfy both sets of motivations.

I expect intergovernmental negotiations to involve both tough bargaining over material interests and deliberative exchanges on normative principles. The nature of the negotiations is influenced by the policy to which the potential differentiation pertains. Differentiations in policy fields strongly impacting material interests are more likely to result in tough negotiations. Differentiations in these policy fields are closely linked to enlargement related, "distributional conflicts" (Schneider, 2009: 60). These conflicts cluster in policy areas such as the EU's agricultural subsidies or structural funds but also the free movement of workers. Other policy areas are less related to distributional conflicts such as the EU's regulatory policies or environmental and technical standards (Schneider, 2009: 57–65). When differentiations concerning these policies are discussed, material interests are less at stake so that negotiations are either uncontroversial or resolved deliberatively. Yet, even in the latter scenario, states do not entirely disregard their material interests. Even in episodes dominated by normative deliberation, states only agree to outcomes that do not fundamentally oppose their material interests. Conversely, since states are normatively bound by the EU's foundational and procedural norms, tough bargaining over material aspects is mitigated by norms.

[109] For reasons of consistency, I apply again Moravcsik's three-stage decision-making model.

Ultimately, I expect the terms of enlargement to be a painstakingly negotiated compromise[110] respecting material interests and norms. Addressing the material interests and normative obligations of all involved states to a sufficient degree represents a necessary condition for the EU to agree on enlargement terms. To mitigate the risk of states vetoing, actors engage in compromises both across and within differentiation clauses. Compromising across clauses means that if clause A was resolved disadvantageous to a state's material interests or normative obligations, it will be compensated for that in clause B. Compromising within clauses may involve adjustments to duration and financial implications.

*Expectations*

*1. State preference formation is guided by material interests and norms equally and simultaneously. When these material interests and normative obligations conflict, states prefer middle-ground solutions respecting both.*

*2. The intergovernmental negotiations are featured by episodes of hard bargaining about material interests and episodes of normative deliberation.*

*3. The terms of enlargement are a compromise respecting the material interests and normative obligations of all states. Compromising occurs across and within differentiation clauses and may include duration.*

## 4.4 Research Design

### 4.4.1 Case Selection: The GDR's Accession to the EC

To assess the derived expectations, I conduct a case study analysis of the integration of the GDR into the EC. While it is beyond the scope of this article to test theoretical expectations for all EU enlargements, the analysis still considers all enlargement rounds and compares prevalent enlargement terms across several indicators. This approach seeks to determine whether the GDR's accession was indeed an outlier, a premise that has led many regional integration scholars to exclude the GDR from analyses (e.g. Winzen, 2016: 109). Beyond addressing the gap in regional integration literature on the GDR's accession, there are two main reasons why this case is ideal for studying the EU's enlargement terms.

Firstly, unlike other enlargements, the membership question of whether enlargement occurs can be distinctly separated from the question of under which terms. For the GDR, both questions were resolved sequentially rather than simultaneously. This guarantees that the empirical observations succeeding the Dublin summit most certainly concern the enlargement terms. The GDR's accession was arranged without an enlargement treaty specifying the conditions (Klein, 2024). At the Council in Dublin (28 April 1990) the EC agreed that the GDR territory would

[110] For an elaborated discussion on "compromises" consult Pruitt and Carnevale (1993: 16–18).

be incorporated into the Community upon Germany's reunification without discussing the precise enlargement terms.[111] This agreement and the absence of an accession treaty deprived the EC member states of the opportunity to prevent or at least delay enlargement. In legal terms, Germany was not sovereign because of the reserved rights of the former occupational forces. However, it was beyond their influence to rule about the exact form and date of reunification.[112] Under Article 23 of the FRG constitution, the GDR could declare to join the FRG, and upon the latter's consent, both reunification and EC enlargement would occur.[113] Furthermore, the EC treaties are based on the principle of flexible treaty boundaries, meaning that the Community territory is determined by its member states and not a precise territorial definition (for a discussion of this aspect: Jacqué, 1991; Randelzhofer, 1991; Timmermans, 1990; Zimmermann and Eiken, 2021).[114]

Secondly, negotiating the terms of enlargement for the GDR compelled the EC member states to navigate a more pronounced conflict between material interests and normative obligations than with other enlargements. The GDR's accession held symbolic significance being the first enlargement after the fall of the Iron Curtain. Throughout the Cold War, the EC consistently emphasised the shared identity of states on both sides of the divided Europe. Moreover, the socialist states' "return" to Europe, including EU membership, was promised once the continent's division was overcome (Grabbe and Hughes, 1998; Piedrafita and Torreblanca, 2005). The pan-European vision mattered for the accession of the CEEC (Schimmelfennig, 2003; Sedelmeier, 2005; Sjursen, 2002). Similarly, the events in the GDR in 1989/1990 directly appealed to the EC's fundamental norms of democracy, the rule of law and human rights. The ongoing democratic transformation in East Germany provided a normative justification to support the GDR generously through favourable enlargement terms. Indeed, the GDR's accession can be seen as a precedent for the EC to fulfil its Cold War promises of "reuniting Europe and making up for the painful divisions of Yalta" (Grabbe and Hughes, 1998: 1).

In light of the GDR's disastrous economy and enormous structural deficits, the enlargement was related to immense financial costs. Later the GDR's transformation cost was estimated at almost two trillion euros (Schroeder, 2014: 41). As the GDR would foreseeably be a net

[111] HAEU-DORIE-567-38_00:"Conseil Européen – Dublin", 28.04.90.
[112] This was, for instance, discussed among high-level government advisors. The UK advisor pointed out the limited influence: NA-PREM19/2998:"Germany: Meeting with Herr Teltschik", 09.02.90.
[113] Article 23 as valid in 1990: https://www.bundestag.de/webarchiv/textarchiv/2013/46662599_kw46_grundgesetz_23-213482, accessed 17.12.22.
[114] Note that the principle of moving treaty frontiers led to EU enlargement in other cases, including the Saarland in 1957 or Mayotte in 2014.

recipient of the budget, this triggered "distributional conflicts" (Schneider, 2009: 60) and strong incentives for the EC to play hardball with Germany and impose tough enlargement conditions. The GDR's capacity issues were exacerbated by the short preparation time to comply with the *acquis*. While candidates typically have years to prepare and resolve capacity issues, the GDR had only eleven months from the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Overall, the member states faced a greater dilemma between generous accommodation and playing hardball compared to other enlargement cases. Because of the pronounced conflict, the GDR's accession is particularly well suited to test my eclectic approach. How the tensions between material and normative obligations were resolved offers valuable insights. Likewise, to the GDR, the integration of the current enlargement candidates would possibly constitute a major financial burden to the EU budget until structural deficits are compensated. At the same time, enlargement might be normatively desirable and force the EU into a dilemma.

Despite its historical peculiarities, the bargaining setup for negotiating the terms of the GDR's enlargement resembled that of other enlargements. The outcome of the Dublin summit precluded regular enlargement negotiations between the GDR and the EC so determining the enlargement terms was an internal Community matter. The influence of GDR officials was negligible. The government formed after the GDR's first free elections in March 1990 was like-minded with the West German government so similar preferences can be assumed. Moreover, the GDR government consisted of "political greenhorns" (Patel and Schulze, 2022: 67). The UK's FCO judged the GDR's influence "next to none."[115]

The enlargement terms for the GDR were established in a legislative package requiring unanimous consent among the member states. Although all states held veto power, the bargaining constellation was de facto asymmetrical. Since enlargement was irrevocable, the fall-back option after negotiation failure would imply the immediate validity of the *acquis*. This outcome would create significant difficulties for Germany, as it could be accused of breaking EC law and face complaints before the European Court of Justice. Consequently, Germany had a stronger interest in reaching an agreement with its fellow member states than vice versa resembling the asymmetrical bargaining constellation of "regular" enlargement negotiations (compare Moravcsik and Schimmelfennig, 2009).

[115] NA-FCO 30/9170:"EMU and the GDR", 27.07.90.

### 4.4.2 Mixed-methods Approach and Data

The empirical analysis applies a mixed-methods approach and comprises two parts. The first part provides a detailed quantitative assessment of the GDR's enlargement terms compared to all other enlargement rounds. I disaggregate by examining discriminatory/exemptive DI, as well as the duration of exemptions and policies. Drawing on statistical outlier and trends analyses, I also provide a comparative assessment of whether the enlargement terms for East Germany were particularly tough or accommodating. The latter assessment would not be possible if only focusing on the GDR case.

I rely on the updated version of the EUDIFF2 dataset (Duttle et al., 2017), which captures differentiations from the EU's secondary legislation (1958 – 2018), supplemented by my own data collection efforts. The EUDIFF2 data allows for a precise assessment of DI across years and states. If for example, Germany is granted a derogation from a legislative act in the year 1991, this is coded as one differentiation. However, the EUDIFF2 dataset excludes differentiation directed at a single member state and legislative acts that "merely amend, supplement, extend or suspend existing legislative acts" (Schimmelfennig and Winzen, 2022: 8). After coding all legislative acts introduced in the context of the GDR's accession to the EC, I count 187 differentiations whereas the EUDIFF2 dataset only counts 96. My coding closely follows the instructions of the EUDIFF2 codebook (Schimmelfennig and Winzen, 2022) with the exception that I include legislative acts directed to only one member state (Germany) and acts amending, supplementing, extending or suspending existing ones and thereby introducing differentiations.

The first part of the analysis offers a comprehensive comparative understanding of the GDR's enlargement terms, primarily focusing on outcomes while providing limited insights into preference formation and negotiations. To address this, the second part employs a process tracing analysis following Bennett and Checkel's (2015a) best practices, which involve considering alternative explanations and acknowledging the varying inferential weight of observations (for recent advancements of process tracing relying on Bayesianism see Fairfield and Charman, 2022). The analysis is foremost informed by archival data. After decades under lock and key, strictly confidential documents have been declassified that prior publications could not draw on. Due to their original confidentiality, archival files are more trustworthy than other data typically used, such as memoirs, interviews or newspapers (Klein, 2025a; Moravcsik, 1998: 77–85; Trachtenberg, 2006: 147). The archival material for this analysis was collected from the Historical Archives of the European Union (HAEU), the National Archives of the UK (NA) and the German Federal Archives (BA), ensuring a strong basis for robust findings

through triangulation.[116] The analysis draws from more than 400 files, each comprising several hundred pages. Given the article's limited scope, I am selective on some illustrative examples that, nevertheless, effectively test the process expectations.[117] The supplementary material in the Appendix includes more extensive citations from the respective archival documents.

## 4.5 Analysis

The results generally support the expectations derived from my integrative theoretical approach. Neither rational nor normative institutionalism alone but a combination of them convincingly explains the GDR's enlargement. The quantitative assessment substantiates the exceptionalism surrounding the GDR's enlargement. Not only was the absolute number of differentiations unprecedently high compared to other enlargement rounds but also almost exclusively exemptive. The phasing-in period of the former GDR was, however, exceptionally brief. When disaggregated to the policy level, the differentiations cluster around the same policy areas as in other enlargement rounds. Evidence from previously classified documents elucidates the dynamics of the intergovernmental negotiations.

### 4.5.1 The GDR's Enlargement Terms in a Comparative Perspective

The top graph in Figure 1 shows valid differentiations across all member states over time. There is a connection between enlargement and high differentiation levels, which is consistent with prior findings (Schimmelfennig and Winzen, 2014). The most remarkable peak in secondary law differentiation around 1990 can be attributed to the GDR's accession. This is further illustrated in the bottom graph of Figure 1, where differentiations for Germany are distinguished from those for all other member states. Differentiations concerning Germany remain relatively constant from the 1970s onwards before they skyrocket in 1990. For the subsequent two years, Germany had more differentiations from secondary law than all other member states combined. After that, the differentiations for Germany declined but remained higher than pre-1990.

[116] The translation of non-English archival sources is my own. I have used the help of the software DeepL.
[117] Consult the supplementary material in the Appendix, which provides more extensive citations from the archival sources used.

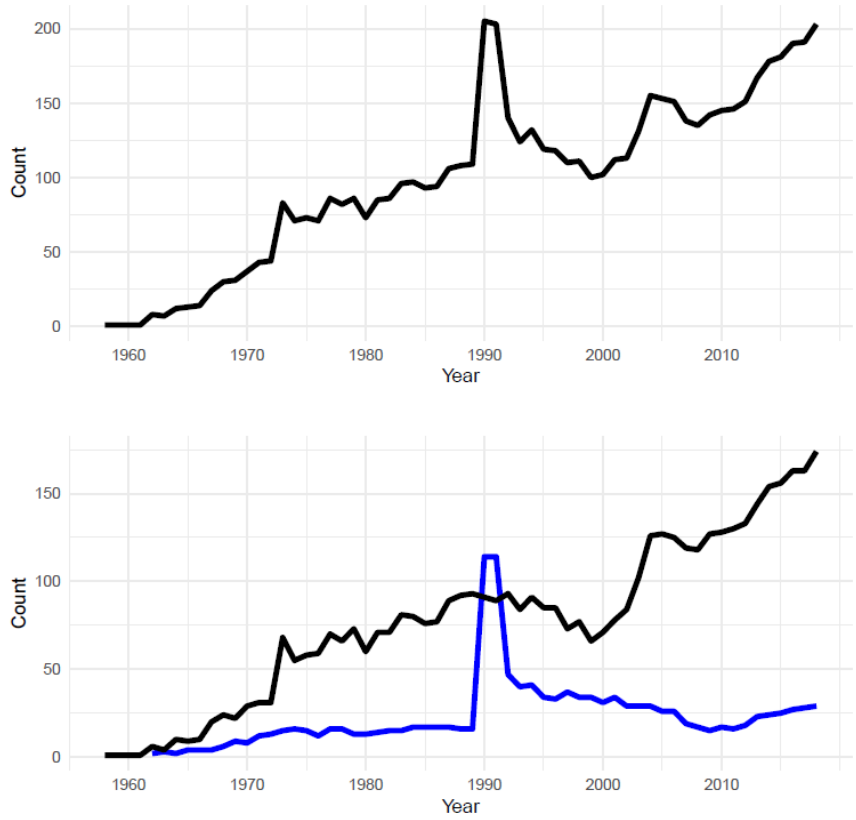



*Figure 1 Top: Actual differentiation in secondary legislation across all states (1958-2018). Bottom: blue line: Germany, black line: all other member states.*

The graphs in Figure 1 indicate a positive relationship between time and the differentiations in force, which can be explained by the continuously advancing European integration leading to a growing body of secondary legislation (Duttle et al., 2017: 408–410). There are, however, outliers to this trend that can be detected through computing z-scores, which capture how many standard deviations an observation (here: year) is from the mean. Observations more than 1.5 standard deviations from the mean are conventionally considered outliers. In the underlying sample this applies to 1990, 1991 (both 1.8) and 2016, 2017 (both 1.6), 2018 (1.8.).[118] Thus, the z-scores support the graphical interpretation that the GDR's accession led to an exceptionally high number of differentiations.

Disaggregating the differentiation clauses reveals a clear surplus of exemptive over discriminatory differentiation. Of the 187 clauses, 186 are exemptive and only one is

[118] Z-scores for 1958-62 also exceed 1.5 but their interpretation is less meaningful due to the little secondary legislation.

discriminatory. In fact, the proportion of exemptive to discriminatory differentiation clauses is comparable to the EFTA and Northern enlargement (Schimmelfennig, 2014: 689).[119]

Figure 2 captures the duration of the enlargement-related differentiations. The graphs demonstrate with EUDIFF2 data for each enlargement round how the number of valid differentiations evolved in the first ten years post-accession. Only legislation introduced before a state's accession is considered. Among the five enlargement rounds, excluding the GDR, three have fewer differentiations after ten years.[120] Phasing-in patterns are most obvious for the EFTA and the Eastern enlargement. The GDR has a unique pattern: an extraordinarily high level of differentiations is followed by a sharp decline after two years. After that, the pattern aligns with other enlargements such as the Eastern enlargement. Turning to the 187 differentiations I have coded for the GDR, the average duration is 2.3 years. This is significantly shorter than the average of 3.6 years across all rounds, indicating an extraordinarily short phasing-in period (Schimmelfennig, 2014: 688). I find no long-lasting differentiations known from other enlargement rounds such as the 17 years exemption of Romania and Bulgarian from Schengen.[121]

[119] The Appendix specifies, which states the enlargement rounds include.
[120] The Appendix includes a version of Figure 2 with the five rounds excluding the GDR and smaller y-axis scales.
[121] https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/news/schengen-area-controls-air-and-sea-borders-bulgaria-and-romania-will-be-lifted-2024-01-03_en, accessed 09.01.24.

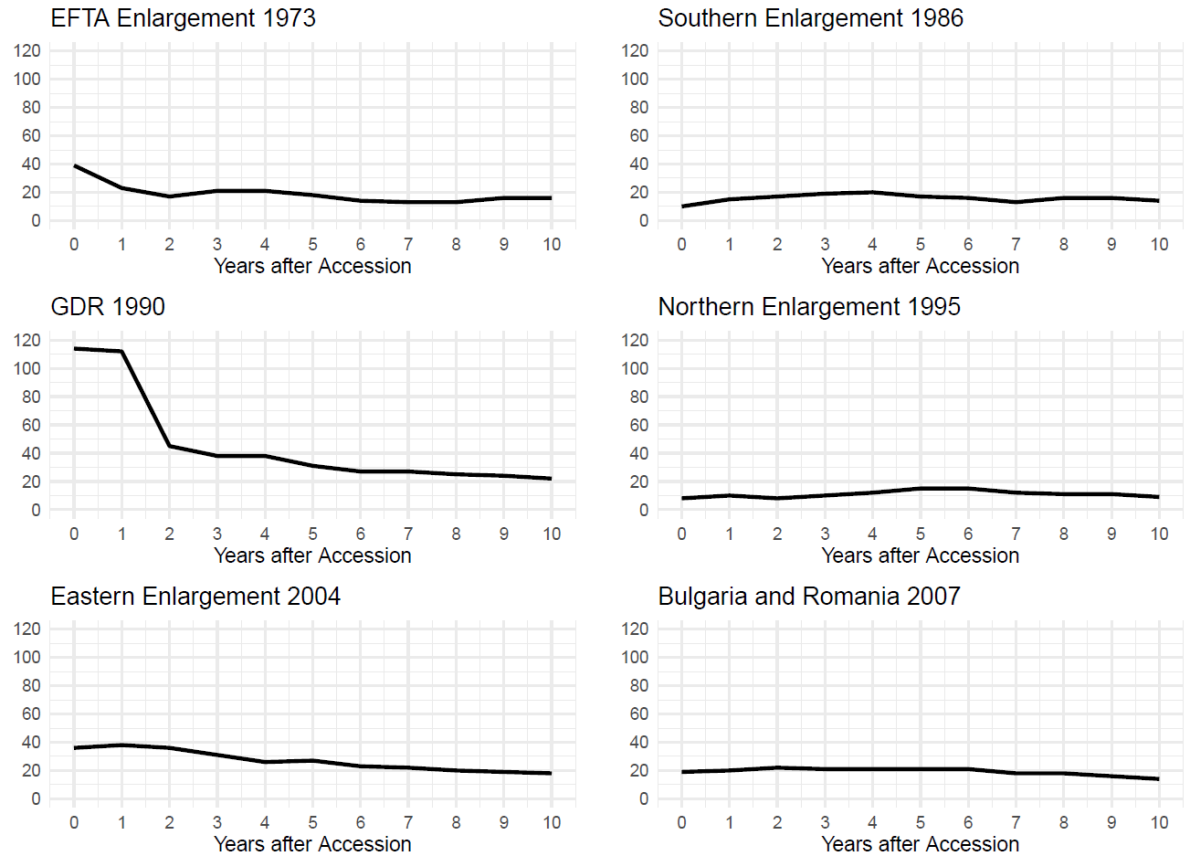



*Figure 2 Phasing-in/out across enlargement rounds. Note: includes only differentiations concerning legislative acts introduced before the year of accession.*

For a more sophisticated understanding of the GDR's phasing-in/out pattern, I conduct survival analyses. The results are plotted as Kaplan-Meier curves in Figure 3. The y-axis of these graphs measures the probability of survival for all differentiation clauses introduced upon accession, while the x-axis represents time in years. The Kaplan-Meier curves visualise estimated survival probabilities over time. Horizontal survival curves at survival probability one would imply that all differentiations introduced upon accession remain valid throughout the observation period. None of the enlargement rounds exhibits this pattern, as all graphs steeply decline. The slope of the curves varies, however, which can be investigated with the intersection of the survival curves with the horizontal dashed line, representing the point at which half of the differentiations vanished.

Across enlargement rounds, the time required for half of the differentiations to phase-in/out reduces. For the EFTA enlargement, this point was reached after 13, for the Northern enlargement after seven years. In the two most recent enlargements, half of the initial differentiations vanished within five years. The GDR deviates from this trend, as 50% of the exceptions were no longer valid after just four years. Notably, more than one-eighth of the GDR's differentiations vanished in the first year as indicated by the comparatively low starting

point of the curve. To account for the robustness of these results, I compute correlation scores and a linear regression analysis. The results are included in the appendix and support the results from the survival analysis.

The longest exceptions for East Germany lasted five years and clustered in problem areas such as the environment. The GDR's disastrous environmental condition and necessary derogations from the *acquis* were, for example, discussed during a closed-door meeting of the European Commission with Klaus Töpfer, the FRG's Minister of the Environment.[122] Töpfer highlighted that the GDR's sulphur dioxide emissions were the highest in the world and there was an extensively "high use of lignite, energy- and raw material-intensive processes in heavy industry, high energy consumption and outdated production processes." Moreover, 30% of all waters were "ecologically dead" and 45% of all "watercourses were no longer usable for drinking water production." Consequently, East Germany was, for instance, exempted from the EC standards for surface and bathing water quality until the end of 1995.[123]

Other areas of concern were agriculture and fisheries. The Commission noted in an internal document that "[t]he integration of the German Democratic Republic into the fisheries policy will pose some awkward problems."[124] Due to the existing planned economy, the agricultural sector was organised in collective farms[125] and had close ties to the Comecon[126] states.[127] Introducing the EC's common agricultural policy required major adjustments in East Germany, which explains long last-lasting differentiations. The former GDR was, for example, exempted from regulations concerning plant seeds until 1995.[128]

[122] BA-B136/34468:"Sitzung der Bangemann-Gruppe mit BM Toepfer", 03.04.90.
[123] CELEX-31990L0656 accessible under https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A31990L0656&qid=1698914784474, accessed 05.01.24.
[124] HAEU-CEUE_SEGE-SEC(1990)0751:"The Community and German Unification", 20.04.90.
[125] The GDR's agricultural sector was collectivised in the form of LPGs (Landwirtschaftliche Produktionsgenossenschaft) and VEGs (Volkseigenes Gut).
[126] Comecon stands for "Council for Mutual Economic Assistance". It was the economic organisation of the Eastern bloc states during the Cold War.
[127] BA-B102/410765:"Verflechtung der DDR in die RGW", 23.02.90.
[128] CELEX-31990L0654 accessible under https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A31990L0654&qid=1698914784474, accessed 05.01.24.

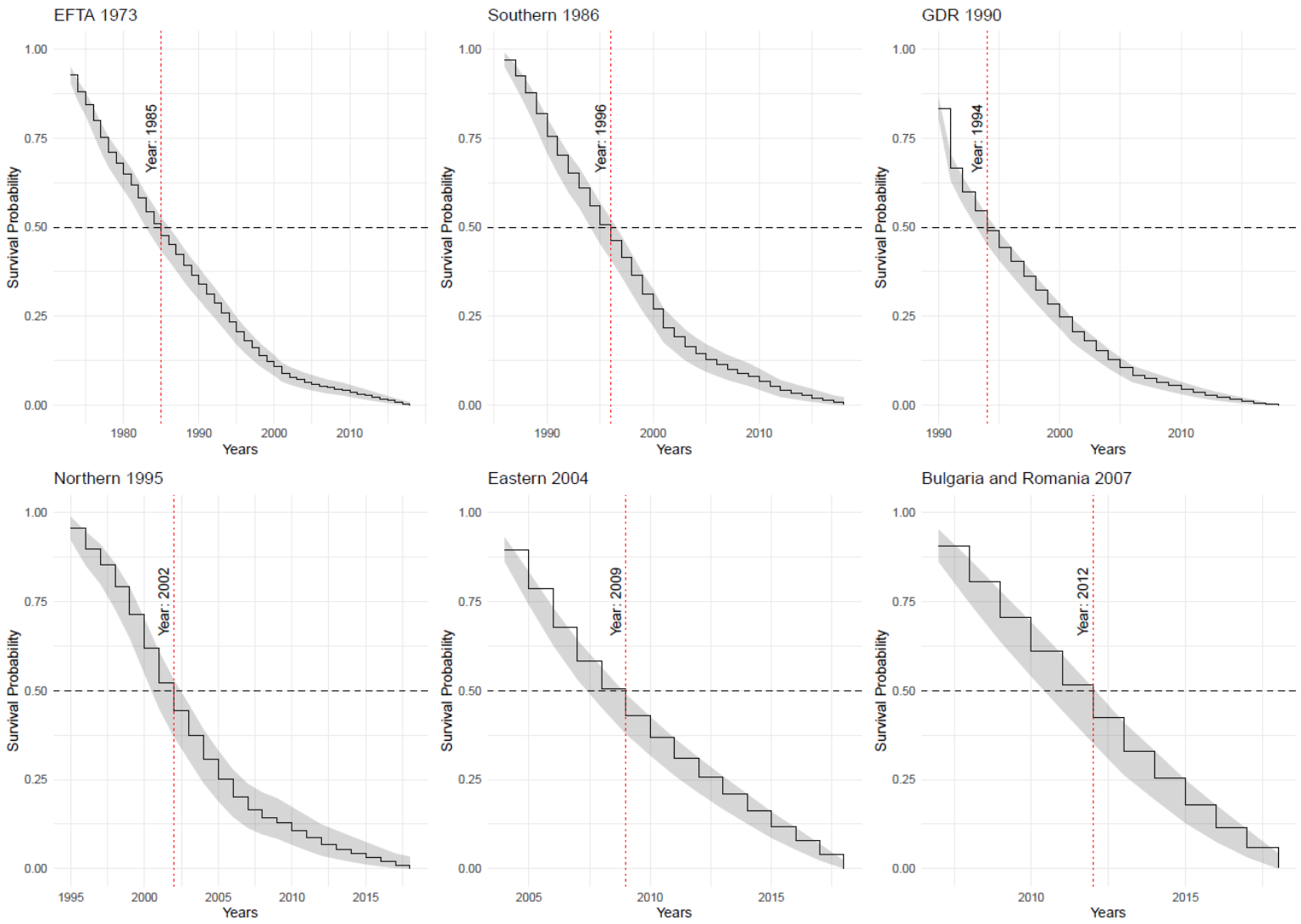



*Figure 3 Kaplan-Meier survival curves with 95% CIs. Red line indicates year, in which half of the differentiations have disappeared. Note: includes only differentiations concerning legislation introduced before accession.*

Disaggregating the differentiation clauses further to the policy level is possible with the policy_txt_aggregated variable in EUDIFF2. The graphs in Figure 4 show that certain policy areas account for more differentiation than others across enlargement rounds, notably agriculture, the market, and, in recent enlargements, justice and interior. These patterns generally align with the aggregated observations. The EFTA and Eastern enlargement, as well as Bulgaria and Romania, are predominantly characterised by exceptions in agriculture and justice/interior, and to a lesser extent, the market. In contrast, the Southern and Northern enlargements do not exhibit clear phasing-in/out patterns. However, as with other enlargement rounds, the majority of derogations are concentrated in agriculture and the market.

Similar to other enlargements, the GDR's enlargement terms included many derogations in the agricultural sector and the market. However, the accession also featured numerous differentiations concerning health/consumer protection and environment/energy, which is less common in other enlargements. The aggregated pattern (Figure 2) with the sharp decline of differentiations after two years, can be attributed to the rapid disappearance of exemptions in agriculture and health/consumer protection, as well as in the market and environment/energy.


*Figure 4: Phasing-in across enlargement cohorts, disaggregated by policy. Note: includes only differentiations concerning legislative acts introduced before the year of accession, also note the different scale for the GDR. Colours: blue (agriculture), green (environment and energy), red (health and consumer protection), orange (market), purple (transport), brown (institutions), grey (justice and interior), black (monetary policy)*

### 4.5.2 Compromise: Many Derogations, Few Discriminations but Short Durations

In the following section I focus on the GDR's accession. How can the terms of enlargement decided for the GDR's integration into the EC be interpreted in light of the three sets of expectations in the theory part? The unprecedently high number of differentiations, almost exclusively to Germany's advantage, speaks in favour of a generous accommodation. This finding contradicts the rational institutionalist expectation of tough enlargement terms with predominantly discriminatory differentiation clauses and, instead, supports the normative institutionalist expectation. This interpretation is corroborated by archival evidence showing that the EC member states were aware of the significant capacity issues prevalent in East Germany resulting from the economic and political transformation. There was agreement that derogations from the *acquis* were necessary.[129] That the EC refrained from imposing far-reaching discriminatory discrimination on Germany indicates a logic of appropriateness. Unlike other new members, East Germany was, for instance, not exempted from the free movement of workers, which is remarkable in light of the ongoing migration from the GDR. Contrary to what rational institutionalism would predict, the EC also refrained from imposing discrimination in other policy areas. The market access of the former GDR was, for example, not restricted despite concerns that existing trade agreements with the Comecon states might allow products non-conform with EC standards to enter the market.[130] Similar concerns were raised about agricultural products from the GDR. The UK government worried, for example, about "East German agricultural products which do not conform to EC standards to circulate freely" after accession.[131] Yet, no discriminatory clauses were introduced.

The interpretation of the findings becomes more nuanced when considering the length of the differentiations. Given the GDR's capacity issues and the lack of preparation time, the relatively short duration of derogations is surprising, particularly because longer derogations are frequent in other enlargement rounds. From a comparative angle, the average duration of derogations concerning East Germany is discriminatory, which challenges the normative institutionalist explanation. Normative institutionalists might still argue that the norm of legal unity motivated the EC to minimise the duration. However, this would violate the norm of equal treatment

[129] NA-FCO30/9155:"EC implications of German Unification", 08.03.90; NA-FCO 30/8826:"Dublin European Council, institutional questions: French views", 12.04.90.
[130] HAEU-CEUE_SEGE-SEC(1990)0415:"Compte rendu de la reunion du groupe de travail charge d'examiner les consequences des relations interallemandes sur les competences communautaires", 22.02.90; BA-B136/20243:"Ad hoc-Gruppe "'Deutsche Einheit' - externe Aspekte", 05.09.90.
[131] NA-PREM 19/3000:"EC Implications of German Reunification", 25.03.90.

across enlargement rounds, weakening the normative explanation again (Schimmelfennig, 2014).

Process evidence from archival documents supports this assessment. In many instances during the negotiations, Germany requested longer exemptions than were eventually granted. Concerning the problematic environmental situation mentioned earlier, German Minister Töpfer emphasised East Germany's environmental recovery might take until 2000, necessitating ten-year derogations.[132] Yet, the maximum length of derogations granted was only five years. Rational institutionalists would argue that this reflects member states' concerns about the material implications of excessive and prolonged derogations. Internal German assessments confirm that other member states were worried about prolonged exemptions providing economic advantages to East Germany.[133] Rational institutionalism struggles, however, to explain the surplus of exemptive over discriminatory differentiations. Why did the EC, for instance, grant the five-year derogations from the environmental standards despite material concerns? My integrative theoretical approach offers an explanation. The solution is a compromise that respects both the material and normative obligations of all involved states. Germany's request for a ten-year exemption was met with a five-year exemption, balancing the competing interests. Materially, the compromise was achieved by settling in the middle between the EC's preference for zero years and Germany's preference for ten years. However, norms are an integral part of the compromise. From an exclusively material standpoint, it would have been rational for the EC to make use of its bargaining power and deny Germany's demand entirely. The granting of the exemption suggests that normative obligations significantly influenced member states' preferences. Consequently, only a combination of normative and rationalist institutionalism explains this differentiation clause.

Similarly, the overall picture aligns with my expectations outlined in the theory section as I find evidence of a trade-off pattern involving many derogations, few discriminations but short durations. The evidence supports not only the expected outcome but also the expectations derived from my eclectic approach to preference formation and negotiations. The preference formation of the involved actors was guided by material interests and normative obligations. On the one hand, important member states like the UK and France were materially motivated and concerned about "additional burdens on the Community budget", to which they were net

[132] BA-B136/34468:"Sitzung der Bangemann-Gruppe mit BM Toepfer", 03.04.90.
[133] BA-B136/20243:"Ad hoc-Gruppe 'Deutsche Einheit' - externe Aspekte", 05.09.90.

contributors.[134] Net beneficiaries like Portugal raised similar concerns.[135] Minutes from a meeting between the UK Secretary of State and his French counterpart reveal an agreement that "derogations should be as short as possible" and "transitional costs must be primarily for the Germans to bear."[136] Conversely, Germany's material interests were the opposite. In a cabinet meeting, it was concluded that "the most important issue is the question of transitional measures" and explicitly mentioned that these derogations are linked to Germany's "economic interests."[137] This opposing set of material preferences led to episodes of hard bargaining, as I expected. Negotiations in the Council were, for example, "very lively"[138], including "significant disagreements"[139], "extensively and partially controversial"[140] exchanges and "building up of strong pressure."[141]

On the other hand, I find proof for the impact of a sense of a common European identity and norms, to which decision makers referred to during the negotiations. The German delegation noted that the actors in the Council were aware of the generally "special historical situation."[142] Despite repeated heated exchanges in problem areas such as the fisheries, the German delegation sensed an "unbroken commitment to help us overcome the problems arising from the unification process."[143] Internal documents also state that "[the] course of discussions in the Council and the European Parliament (EP) shows that the Community as a whole remains determined to make swift and constructive progress with the integration of the five new federal states into the territory of the Community."[144] This prevailing logic of appropriateness explains why the negotiations were also partly smooth and uncontroversial.[145] There is also evidence that conflicting issues were resolved through deliberation. In a conversation with Margaret Thatcher, who was generally sceptical of derogations, Helmut Kohl sought to persuade her with normative argumentation. The Chancellor invoked the norm of equal treatment across

[134] NA-FCO30/8905:"French EC priorities for 1990", 05.03.90.
[135] BA-B136/34468:"1426. Tagung des ASTV", 05.04.90.
[136] NA-FCO30/8905:"Secretary of State's visit to Paris", 28.03.90.
[137] Referred meeting took place on 03.05.90. The document is accessible under https://www.bundesarchiv.de/cocoon/barch/0000/k/k1990k/kap1_1/kap2_15/para3_1.html, accessed 10.12.23.
[138] BA-B136/34469:"Ad-hoc Gruppe Deutsche Einheit Umweltschutz, 07.09.90.
[139] BA-B136/34468:"Handelspolitische Übergangsmaßnahmen im Zusammenhand mit der deutschen Einigung", 31.07.90.
[140] BA-B136/34469:"Ad-hoc Gruppe 'Deutsche Einheit' übrige Bereiche des Gesamtpaketes", 10.09.90.
[141] BA-B136/34468:"Handelspolitische Übergangsmaßnahmen im Zusammenhand mit der deutschen Einigung", 31.07.90.
[142] BA-B136/34469:"Vorläufige Maßnahmen zum Vorschlagspaket der KOM für die deutsche Einigung: hier Sonderrrat und AstV", 12.09.90.
[143] BA-B136/34469:Ad-hoc Gruppe Fischerei", 21.09.90.
[144] BA-B136/21523:"Stand der Diskussion über den EG-Kommissionsvorschlag", 23.10.90.
[145] BA-B136/34469:"Sitzung Ad-hoc Gruppe Deutsche Einheit des Sonderausschusses Landwirtschaft", 12.09.90.

enlargement rounds (compare Schimmelfennig, 2014: 658-6), claiming that "transitional measures like back then for Spain and Portugal were necessary."[146]

There are two idiosyncrasies to the GDR's accession that might at least partially influence the results. Firstly, East Germany's accession was completed within only 329 days after the fall of the Berlin Wall, which is about one-tenth of the time a successful enlargement process takes on average.[147] This short preparation time combined with the transformation of the political, economic and social system in the GDR caused capacity issues far exceeding those of other enlargements. While other former socialist states faced similar capacity issues, they had years to resolve them. Additionally, these states took intermediary steps towards full membership such as trade and association agreements with the EU. In contrast, the GDR had no institutional relationship with the EU prior to the fall of the Wall (Graf, 2019). Therefore, it is unsurprising that the GDR's accession caused a massive spike of differentiations.

Secondly, the high number of differentiations, particularly the predominance of exemptive differentiation, can be partially attributed to political associative obligations (Gilbert, 2006; Leuffen, 2021; Simmons, 1996; van der Vossen, 2011). Normally, the EU's associative obligations – meaning the duties and responsibilities EU member states have towards one another – are neglectable for the study of enlargement. However, for the GDR's integration, associative obligations are relevant because of Germany's status as a particularly powerful member state. Due to their associative obligations towards Germany, the EC states might have been more willing to accommodate than if Germany was a regular third country applying for membership. At the same time, the associative obligations might have prevented the EC from playing hardball with Germany. The norm of solidarity, which is entailed in the EU's associative obligations should be particularly crucial as it might "constrain choices of differentiated integration" (Lord, 2015: 783). The Treaties contain several references to "solidarity" among members, such as in Articles 3 and 4 of the TEU.[148] Article 112 (2) on the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU)[149] explicitly calls for member state solidarity, "[w]here a Member State is in difficulties or is seriously threatened with severe difficulties caused by natural disasters or exceptional occurrences beyond its control."

[146] In Küsters and Hofmann (1998) Doc-Nr. 238:"22. Deutsch-britische Konsultationen London", 30.03.90.
[147] On average enlargement takes 3041 days (own computation): https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/history-eu_en, accessed 02.12.23.
[148] The Treaty is accessible under: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:2bf140bf-a3f8-4ab2-b506-fd71826e6da6.0023.02/DOC_1&format=PDF, accessed 03.06.24.
[149] The Treaty is accessible under: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:12012E/TXT:en:PDF, accessed 03.06.24.

## 4.6 Conclusion

Due to its commitment to a norm-based order, liberal-democratic values, and the shared identity of its member states, the EU is regarded as the "most normatively structured transitional space on earth" (Thomas, 2009: 344). This view is strictly opposed by scholars who argue that norms are cheap talk and are outweighed by states' material interests (e.g. Hyde-Price, 2006). In this article, I offer a fresh perspective on this long-standing IR scholarly dispute by investigating the terms, under which the EU integrates new member states. By developing a theoretical approach that combines elements of normative and rational institutionalism in an analytically eclectic manner, I argue that material interests and norms hold equal importance. I test this approach for the enlargement terms of the GDR's integration into the EC. The distinctive characteristics rooted in this enlargement make it a well-suited case for investigation. The dilemma the EU faces when accessing new member states between minimising the financial costs of enlargement and accommodating newcomers on normative grounds was particularly pronounced for the GDR.

The mixed-methods analysis reveals that the terms of enlargement under which the GDR was integrated into the EC are exceptional and characterised by an extraordinarily high number of differentiations, predominantly exemptive. Compared to other enlargement rounds, differentiations cluster in similar policy fields but last for a shorter time. By analysing previously confidential documents, I prove that the GDR's enlargement terms were a painstakingly negotiated compromise resulting in neither particularly tough enlargement terms nor exclusively generous accommodation. Returning to the originally posed research questions, I conclude that both material interests and norms determine the enlargement terms the EU imposes on new member states. This implies that the EU does not exclusively play hardball or accommodate new member states generously but instead seeks to compromise between the two. Further research is needed to investigate the exact negotiation dynamics of other enlargement rounds apart from the GDR.

Besides contributing to the literature concerning the impact of norms in international relations, the article enriches the regional integration literature by examining a so-far overlooked enlargement case. Despite the historically exceptional circumstances, the GDR's accession offers important lessons for future enlargements. Among the current enlargement candidates, there are states with enormous structural deficits whose integration would cause pronounced distributional conflicts within the EU. Simultaneously, integrating these states – potentially under favourable terms – may be both normatively desirable and geopolitically necessary.

Policy-makers can therefore draw valuable insights from the GDR's accession on how to balance the material interests and normative considerations of the states involved. My findings also emphasise that enlargement rarely follows a standard path. In fact, the GDR's accession to the EC might serve as a precedent if reunification becomes a realistic option for Cyprus and Ireland. With DI, the EU possesses a powerful institutional tool to facilitate horizontal integration, which might otherwise be hindered by the concerns of member states or the capacity limitations of applicant states.

*"Durch eine gemeinsame Anstrengung wird es uns gelingen, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Sachsen-Anhalt, Brandenburg, Sachsen und Thüringen schon bald wieder in blühende Landschaften zu verwandeln, in denen es sich zu leben und zu arbeiten lohnt."*
*(Helmut Kohl in a television address on the occasion of the entry into force of the Monetary, Economic, and Social Union on July 1, 1990.)*[150]

# 5 Two States, One Voice? The Integration of the East German Länder into the European Community's Regional Policy

**Abstract**

This article examines the initial integration of the five new East German *Länder* into the EC's regional policy. Following the reunification of Germany and the concurrent accession of the former GDR to the EC in 1990, the East German *Länder* qualified for significant structural funds support due to their weak economy, vast structural deficits, crumbling infrastructure and widespread environmental pollution. Yet, despite these circumstances, the EC excluded the East German *Länder* from its regional policy until 1994, providing only a symbolic minor sum of financial assistance. Drawing on recently declassified archival documents, I offer a comprehensive analysis of the political dynamics underlying this decision. I find that the outcome was primarily driven by FRG Chancellor Kohl's chequebook diplomacy approach. Concerned that prolonged budget negotiations would delay reunification and provoke electoral backlash in the upcoming elections, Kohl firmly opposed EC financial support. He vigorously upheld this position against internal opposition and the GDR government's efforts to gain full access to the structural funds. I find no evidence of meaningful attempts by the two German governments to overcome their differences and develop a common position. As the other EC member states welcomed the FRG's rejection of financial assistance, the exclusion of the East German *Länder* from the structural funds was ultimately decided for three years.

[150] "Through a joint effort, we will soon succeed in transforming Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Saxony-Anhalt, Brandenburg, Saxony and Thuringia back into flourishing landscapes in which it is worth living and working." Retrieved from https://www.bundesstiftung-helmut-kohl.de/helmut-kohl/zitate/deutsche-einheit, last accessed 10.11.24.

## 5.1 Introduction

Access to the structural funds is among the most significant benefits the EU offers to its member states. The regional policy[151] has historically played a crucial role in fostering regional cohesion by channelling substantial financial resources to economically disadvantaged regions. Following the reunification of Germany and the simultaneous integration of the former GDR into the EC in 1990, the five new East German *Länder* were obviously qualifying for significant structural funding. After decades of socialist governance, the former GDR faced severe economic challenges, including vast structural deficits, crumbling infrastructure, and widespread environmental pollution (Falke, 1994: 179–184). Yet, despite these circumstances, East Germany did not initially emerge as a major beneficiary of the structural funds. Until 1994, the East German *Länder* received less than one-third of the funding allocated to comparable regions (Anderson, 1996: 181).[152] While temporary discrimination against newcomers in the regional policy is not unusual (for a list of examples see Schneider, 2009: 21–22), the underfunding of the East German *Länder* is puzzling given two interconnected aspects. First, the FRG was an established and powerful EC member with institutional leverage to demand greater support and veto discrimination. Second, the FRG was the largest net contributor to the EC budget and paymaster of the regional policy.

This article provides the hitherto missing explanation for the integration of the East German *Länder* into the EC's regional policy. The regional integration literature considers the integration of the GDR into the EC an "unusual instance of EU enlargement" (Duttle et al., 2017: 415) precluding further inquiry (for instance Winzen, 2016: 109). Even though historians have extensively studied Germany's reunification and its broad international consequences, they have largely disregarded its implications for the EC (a recent exemption is the edited volume by Patel, 2024b). This neglect is surprising, as East Germany's integration into the EC was a cornerstone of the restructuring of the European security architecture after the Cold War (Klein, 2024).

To achieve a comprehensive understanding of East Germany's integration into the regional policy framework, I design this article as a theory-guided idiographic analysis (compare Eckstein, 2000; Levy, 2008). Given the complex interplay of domestic and international actors

[151] The EU's regional policy is also known as "cohesion policy" or when referring to the funds implemented by the policy as "structural funds". The composition of the regional policy has historically changed. For the current funding period 2021-7, the structural funds consist of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the Cohesion Fund (CF), the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+), and the Just Transition Fund (JTF).

[152] In the three years 1991-3, the Eastern Länder received 64 ECU per capita. The average payment to Objective 1 regions was 130 ECU per capita, with Portugal receiving even 200 ECU per capita (Anderson, 1996: 181).

involved in this historically exceptional enlargement case, a strictly deductive theoretical analysis could be overly reductionist. In choosing this approach, I do not seek to dismiss the importance of theory or the value of creating general knowledge. Rather, I align with a growing number of political scientists who emphasise the importance of holistic analyses of specific events in the prevailing "culture of generalization" (Humphreys and Suganami, 2024: 4).[153] While the creation of general knowledge remains crucial, case-centred studies are equally essential for providing richer and more nuanced explanations of complex empirical phenomena.

For an in-depth analysis, archival research is indispensable. Like no other type of data, archival files enable the accurate tracing of processes in highly complex environments and avoid shortcomings of other commonly used material (Frisch et al., 2012; Klein, 2025a). For this article, I studied a large number of recently declassified documents from different European archives.[154] The files are of greatest relevance for the integration of the Eastern German *Länder* into the EC and were unavailable to previous publications (Meyer, 1993; Toepel and Weise, 2000). In addition to archival documents, I rely on other primary sources such as interviews or monographs and sporadically on the secondary literature for triangulation.

The analysis reveals that although the GDR and the FRG broadly aligned on the objective of achieving reunification as fast as possible, significant differences emerged over the integration of the Eastern *Länder* into the EC's regional policy. While the GDR demanded the immediate inclusion of the East German *Länder* into the regional policy, the FRG opposed any form of EC financial assistance. After significant contestation within his cabinet, the Chancellor exercised his *Richtlinienkompetenz*[155] to override opposing voices. Kohl's rationale was rooted in domestic and party politics: he feared that protracted renegotiations about the multiannual structural funds budget could jeopardise a swift reunification, which he regarded as essential for his re-election in the upcoming federal elections. Throughout the negotiations, the two German governments made no effort to speak with one voice. On the contrary, they actively undermined each other's initiatives. The FRG leveraged its superior bargaining power and

[153] The prevailing culture of generalisation in political science and international relations, in particular, is the "tendency to prioritize the production of 'general' knowledge over knowledge of 'particular' (also:'specific', 'unique', 'individual', 'local') facts and events" (Humphreys and Suganami, 2024: 4).
[154] These include the Historical Archives of the European Union (HAEU), the German Bundesarchiv (BA), the German Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes (PA) and the National Archives of the United Kingdom (NA). All translations from non-English sources in this text are my own and have been created with the help of the software of DeepL.
[155] The *Richtlinienkompetenz* is outlined in Article 65 of the German *Grundgesetz* and states that:"The Federal Chancellor shall determine and be responsible for the general guidelines of policy". The *Grundgesetz* is available in English at https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/englisch_gg/englisch_gg.html#p0304, accessed 14.01.25.

relied on established diplomatic channels that were inaccessible to the inexperienced GDR government. Despite its considerable diplomatic efforts, the GDR was ultimately unable to prevent the exclusion of the Eastern *Länder* from the structural funds until 1994. Although a symbolic sum was allocated to East Germany, the overall arrangement was welcomed by other EC member states, as it prevented budgetary increases and avoided disruptions to the existing funding framework. The findings, thus, provide further evidence of the FRG's long-standing practice of making financial side payments – commonly referred to as "chequebook diplomacy" – for achieving foreign policy objectives (Sperling, 1994).

The article is structured as follows. First, I examine the historically exceptional circumstances under which the integration of the East German *Länder* into regional policy occurred. Next, I study the process of national preference formation within the two German states in analysing the positions of different actors and stakeholders of the national arena. After that, I investigate the negotiation dynamics between the two German states and the efforts of both governments to shape the outcome in their favour. I conclude by discussing the impact of the findings on the broader context of Germany's reunification and Europe's transformation in the post-Cold War era.

## 5.2 East Germany's Path into the EC

The fall of the Berlin Wall on 9 November 1989 constitutes a watershed moment in modern history. Just as Germany's division had symbolised the world's bipolarity, its reunification on 3 October 1990 expressed the inexorable transformation of the international system. In the only 329 days between the fall of the Wall and reunification, change unfolded dramatically, presenting decision-makers with a host of complicated issues to resolve under immense time pressure. Central international consequences of Germany's reunification were addressed in the 2+4 negotiations, which tackled key issues such as the restoration of Germany's sovereignty, the determination of its eastern borders, the continued presence of Allied troops and, eventually, whether the reunified Germany would uphold the FRG's *Westbindung*[156] and remain NATO member (Geiger et al., 2021b; Küsters et al., 2000). On the national level, the GDR's democratisation was rapidly advancing with Lothar de Maizière taking office as the GDR's first freely elected Prime Minister in April 1990. Both German governments first established the monetary, economic and social union before ultimately achieving unity through the unification treaty (Weidenfeld et al., 1999; Zelikow and Rice, 1997). The complex network of intertwined national and international negotiations resembled a constellation of "nested games" (Tsebelis,

[156] The term refers to the FRG's post-war policy of aligning politically, economically, and militarily with the West initiated by Chancellor Konrad Adenauer.

1990: 1). In such scenarios, the interdependencies between various negotiations mean that overlooking potential overlaps and spillovers can result in misinterpretations (Tsebelis, 1990: 6–18). To fully understand the developments following the fall of the Berlin Wall, it is essential to consider this complex network of negotiations – including hitherto largely overlooked processes that led to the GDR's integration into the EC.

By early 1990, the prospect of German reunification began to appear increasingly inevitable. As a result, the EC dismissed initially discussed options, such as formal enlargement negotiations with the GDR as a prospective 13th member.[157] In February 1990, the European Commission adopted the working hypothesis that the GDR would be integrated into the Community through joining the Federal Republic under Article 23 of the FRG's constitution.[158] This approach was formally endorsed at the EC extraordinary Council in Dublin on 28 April 1990 when the member states decided that the EC's first Eastern enlargement would proceed without official enlargement negotiations. Instead, the *acquis communautaire*[159] would apply immediately to East Germany upon reunification.

To ensure a seamless enlargement, the member states tasked the Commission with drafting a legislative package including necessary temporary derogations from the *acquis*. While differentiations, both exemptive and discriminatory, are a common feature of enlargement processes, they are typically established in the enlargement treaty (Schimmelfennig, 2014; Schimmelfennig and Winzen, 2017). As the treaty requires ratification by all member states, the applicant state is placed in a weak bargaining position vis-à-vis the existing member states (Moravcsik and Vachudova, 2005: 199–203; Schneider, 2009: 53–73). For the integration of the Eastern *Länder*, the bargaining constellation was, however, not asymmetrical.[160] As an established EC member, the FRG held veto power over the legislative package governing the integration of the Eastern *Länder* into the Community. Furthermore, the FRG had historically been the largest net contributor to the EC budget and, therefore, the principal paymaster of regional policy (Anderson, 1996: 168–175).

[157] Commission President Delors discussed this option among others in a speech to the European Parliament, which is available in European Commission (1990).
[158] HAEU-CEUE_SEGE-SEC(1990)0415:"Compte rendu de la reunion du groupe de travail charge d'examiner les consequences des relations interallemandes sur les competences communautaires", 22.02.90
[159] The *acquis* is the EU's "constantly evolving body of common rights and obligations." More information: https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-asylum-and-migration-glossary/glossary/union-acquis_en, accessed 10.04.24.
[160] Moravcsik and Vaduchova (2005, 199-200) introduce "asymmetrical interdependence" in the EU enlargement context.

The drafting of the legislative package was inherently challenging due to the lack of reliable data on the GDR, such as GDP figures. Nonetheless, the GDR's economic difficulties and its substantial structural deficits were impossible to overlook and generally undisputed. In particular, the environmental conditions and underdeveloped infrastructure caused concerns. For instance, half of the "watercourses were no longer usable for drinking water production"[161] and only 9% of the East German households had a landline phone in 1988 (European Commission, 1991: 78). In light of the GDR's disastrous economy and enormous structural deficits, the enlargement was related to immense financial costs. The total transformation cost was later estimated at almost two trillion euros (Schroeder, 2014: 41).

As the Eastern *Länder* were expected to become net recipients of structural funds, their integration into the EC sparked "distributional conflicts" (Schneider, 2009: 60) among the EC member states. To ensure that the Eastern *Länder* received the payments they were entitled to after accession, the existing EC members had to either increase their contributions to the budget or accept funding reductions. Unsurprisingly, the integration of the Eastern German *Länder* into the regional policy became one of the "really thorny issues"[162] of the enlargement negotiations. The Community faced this politically and administratively challenging task during a transformative period with several major integration projects in the pipeline. To realise the ever-closer political Union, significant resources were pooled, and further enlargements were explicitly precluded following the credo "deepening before widening" (Spence, 1992: 141).

One of the central reform issues was the regional policy, which underwent comprehensive restructuring after the implementation of the SEA in 1987. Through a painstakingly negotiated compromise, the EC member states agreed on a revised multiannual funding framework for 1989–1993, allocating one-third of the Community's entire budget to the structural funds (Brunazzo, 2016: 22–24). The hard-fought agreement was threatened by the integration of the East German *Länder* in need of significant financial assistance.

[161] BA-B136/34468:"Sitzung der Bangemann-Gruppe mit BM Toepfer", 03.04.90.
[162] NA-PREM 19/2980:"Informal European Council, Dublin", 24.04.1990.

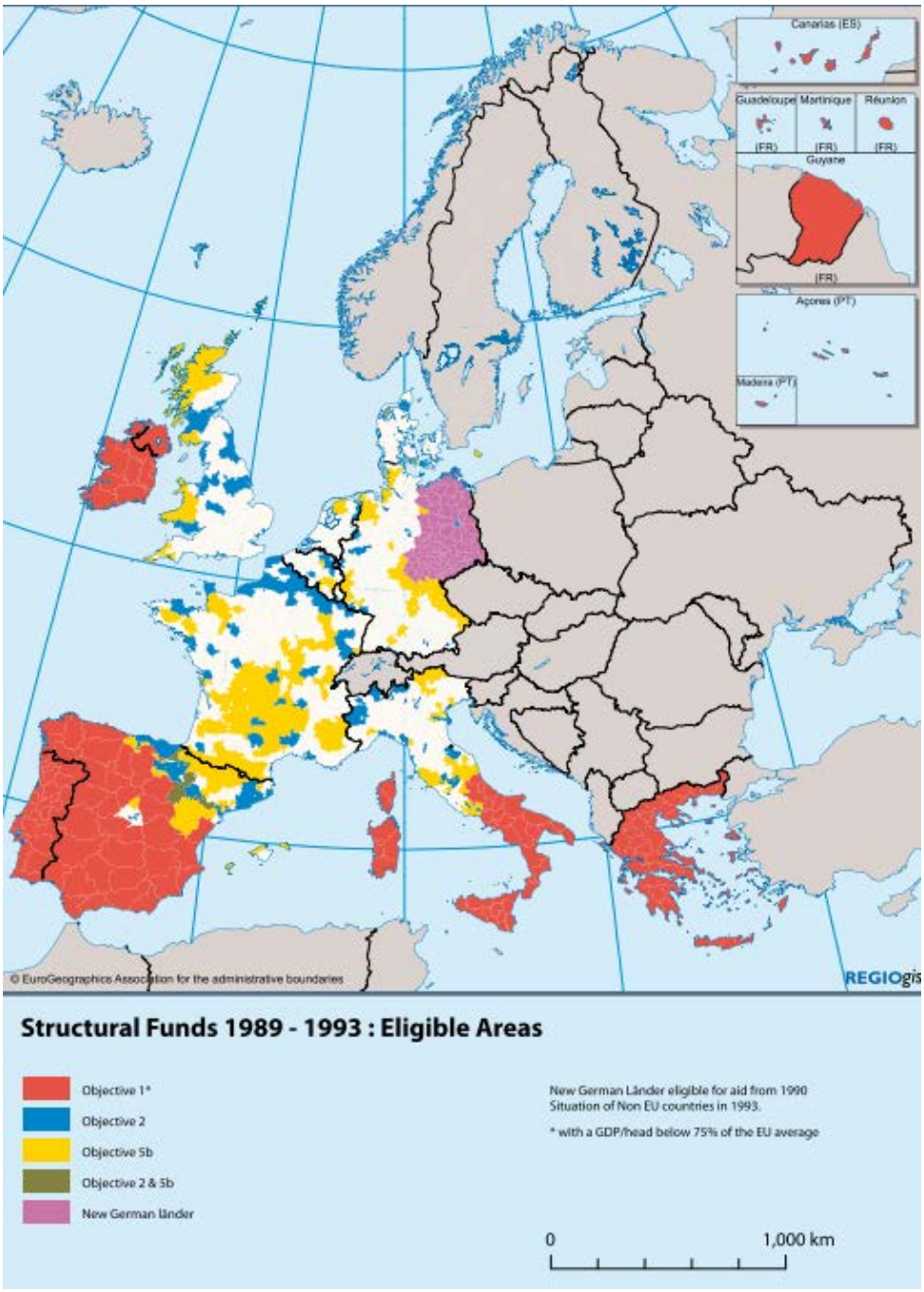



*Figure 5 Structural Funds allocation 1989-1993 (European Union, 2008: 1).*

The map in Figure 1 illustrates the EC's decision to delay the integration of East Germany into the structural funds until the beginning of the next regular funding period in 1994.[163] This decision effectively placed a temporary discrimination on Germany's membership benefits. While Germany received 1 billion ECU[164] annually from the EC between 1991 and 1993, this

[163] The Commission's final proposal involving this solution is included in HAEU-CEUE_SEGE-COM(1990)0400.COM(1990)0400_5:"The Community and German Unification Volume III Financial Aspects", 21.08.90.

[164] The European Currency Unit (ECU) was the unit of account used by the EU until the introduction of the Euro. It was replaced by the Euro in 1999 at 1-1 parity.

compensation amounted to only a fraction of what the East German *Länder* would have received had it been fully incorporated into the regional policy framework from the onset. Other Objective 1 regions, which the Eastern *Länder* would become from 1994 onwards, received 120 ECU per capita during the same period, double the allocation for East Germany (64 ECU per capita). Portugal, classified entirely as an Objective 1 region, received even more substantial support, amounting to 200 ECU per capita. In relation to the total transformation costs of approximately 2 trillion euros, the 3 billion ECU provided by the EC appear negligible.

Why did Germany agree to shoulder the majority of the transformation costs arising from reunification almost entirely on its own until 1994? Why did it not demand greater assistance from the EC's structural funds? Why did the FRG refrain from using its institutional power to challenge the discrimination against the Eastern *Länder*? Were meaningful efforts made to craft a unified German position or to ensure coordination throughout the negotiations? What role did the GDR government play, and how did it influence the outcome? I address these questions in the following.

## 5.3 Swift Reunification at All Costs – Helmut Kohl's Political Calculus

The FRG's stance on integrating the East German states into the structural funds evolved from its overarching reunification strategy established in the autumn of 1989. After the prompt opening of the inner-German border, the German Question turned into the dominant issue of world politics leaving politicians unprepared and without preformulated strategies – a situation that has been compared to actors being asked to perform a play without a script (Schabert, 2021: 1–10). Federal Chancellor Kohl was surprised by the fall of the Wall during a state visit to Poland (Gunkel, 2009). Despite being caught off guard, Kohl and his inner circle sensed a window of opportunity to resolve the German Question. Only two days after the fall of the Wall, Kohl proposed the prospect of reunification in a phone call with the GDR's leader Egon Krenz.[165] In the meanwhile, Kohl's closest staff prepared a major attempt towards reunification, which the Chancellor presented to the *Bundestag* on 28 November 1989. The 10-point-programme formulated the aim to overcome Germany's separation and culminated in stating that "unification will appear if the people in Germany want so".[166] The fait-accompli-like move had been prepared under utmost secrecy to ensure a surprise effect. Neither Kohl's coalition partner nor the FRG's close European partners had been briefed about the Chancellor's

[165] In Küsters and Hofmann (1998) Doc-Nr. 86:"Telefongespräch Kohl mit Krenz", 11.11.89.
[166] BA-B136/32696:"Kohl 10 Punkte Plan", 28.11.89.

speech.[167] In particular, the latter responded reservedly and displeased, as they were concerned about the resurgence of great power ambitions of the reunified Germany.

The reasons for Kohl's confrontative proposal were predominantly rooted in domestic and party politics. Having just survived an inner-party coup[168], the 10-point-programme was an attempt to show leadership (Blumenwitz, 1990; Spohr, 2000). Survey data from the fall of 1989 indicates that Kohl and his centre-right party, the CDU/CSU[169] were lagging far behind the Social Democrats in terms of voter support with a gap of eleven percentage points in November 1989 (Jung et al., 2019). With federal elections approaching in autumn 1990, Kohl grew increasingly preoccupied with his re-election prospects. According to Horst Teltschik, one of the Chancellor's closest advisors, Kohl's decision-making was persistently shaped by his preoccupation with elections:

> Helmut Kohl was in fact always focused on domestic politics and, of course, party politics. He always had election dates for years ahead in his mind. He never decided without knowing when and where elections were taking place – a part of his success.[170]

While the 10-point-programme caused tensions internationally, it was domestically well received. By the end of 1989, 57% of the West German population considered reunification the single most important political issue. Hence, the Chancellor's initiative towards reunification significantly narrowed the gap in the polls for the CDU/CSU to the Social Democrats from eleven percentage points in November to less than three in December 1989 (Jung et al., 2019). Furthermore, Kohl increased his popularity measured by voter satisfaction. Compared to November, he reduced the gap to his rival Oskar Lafontaine by half (Gibowski and Kaase, 1991: 4).

Although no survey data is available for East Germany, the desire for reunification was equally pronounced and continuously expressed at mass gatherings with appeals such as "Wir sind ein Volk" or "Deutschland, einig Vaterland". Both slogans were also proclaimed during an enthusiastically received speech Kohl held in Dresden on 19 December 1989. Later he described this speech as a key moment in consolidating his general line toward reunification (Kohl, 2005: 1020–1032; Tischner, 2014).

[167] NA-FCO-33/10383:"FRG/GDR", 30.11.89; only the US was informed beforehand and a group of journalists (Teltschik, 1993: 52).
[168] https://www.spiegel.de/politik/blamierte-frondeure-a-2bf8a260-0002-0001-0000-000013507081, accessed 03.01.25.
[169] The CDU/CSU is a political alliance of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and the Christian Social Union (CSU). The CDU does not run in elections in Bavaria, the CSU's homeland.
[170] HAEU-INT651:"Interview with Teltschik, Horst", 09.07.90.

The effect of the 10-point-programme on the polls proved to be short-lived. Due to the rapidly progressing change, the impact of the 10-points dissipated, shifting the voters' favour towards the opposition. By January 1990, the Social Democrats were polling more than ten percentage points ahead of the CDU/CSU (Jung et al., 2019). The European Commission, found it likely that "Kohl like Churchill in 1945, could be removed from power precisely after his 'finest hour'".[171] In May 1990, the federal government lost its majority in the Bundesrat following unsuccessful state elections in Lower-Saxony and North-Rhine Westphalia (Gibowski and Kaase, 1991: 9–10).[172] Six months before the upcoming federal elections, Kohl and his inner circle concluded that the only chance to avoid an electoral defeat was quick reunification – only as "Kanzler der Einheit"[173] would he emerge victorious from the elections. The British government assessed Kohl's situation in the following way:

> The other point that strikes you is how much unification is a party-political issue. Kohl feels he has pulled off a masterstroke by putting himself at head of the movement for unification […]. Having taken the lead, Kohl is now under enormous pressure to keep it, by constantly pressing ahead with unification and avoiding any hold-up or delay. The politics of it mean that he cannot falter or stop if he is going to win his election in December. These two reasons do much to explain – but not justify – Kohl's annoyance with our approach, which is perceived as one trying to hold back a tidal wave which Kohl believes will catapult him to be first Chancellor of a newly united Germany, which will in turn be a global power.[174]

A swift reunification through the accession of the GDR to the FRG was possible under Article 23[175] of the West German constitution (*Grundgesetz*).[176] Kohl's support for Article 23 conflicted with the solution proposed by the opposition Social Democrats. Their leader, Oskar Lafontaine, endorsed Article 146[177] of the *Grundgesetz*, which envisioned the establishment of a unified Germany based on a newly drafted constitution – a process that would naturally require considerable time (Schlieben, 2007: 305–309).

[171] HAEU-CEUE_SEGE-SEC(1990)0315:"Note from the Commission Representation in the FRG", 13.02.90.
[172] HAEU-CEUE_SEGE-SEC(1990)1038:"Note from the Commission Representation in the FRG", 22.05.90.
[173] The term is still attributed to Kohl because reunification was achieved under his Chancellorship, compare Clemens et al. (2018).
[174] NA-PREM19/2998:"Meeting with Herr Teltschik", 09.02.90.
[175]Article 23 was later changed into the "Europaartikel", see: https://www.bundestag.de/webarchiv/textarchiv/2013/46662599_kw46_grundgesetz_23-213482, accessed 03.01.25.
[176] BA-B102/410765:"Bericht der Arbeitsgruppe des BMI", 05.03.90.
[177] The original version of Article 146 is available here: https://www.bgbl.de/xaver/bgbl/start.xav?start=%2F%2F*%5B%40attr_id=%27bgbl149001.pdf%27%5D#__bgbl__%2F%2F*%5B%40attr_id%3D%27bgbl149001.pdf%27%5D__1736871673189, accessed 14.01.25.

For Kohl's re-election plan to succeed, major obstacles on the national and international level had to be overcome. A key issue concerned the financial costs of reunification, with the structural funds playing a decisive role. The Federal Chancellery perceived the regional policy as a highly sensitive issue due to "higher burdens on the EC budget to be expected"[178] if the Eastern *Länder* were immediately integrated into the regional policy framework. There were concerns that the issue would potentially delay reunification resulting in electoral punishment. Kohl's closest staff in the Chancellery, therefore, emphasised that "due to the 'sensitivities' of other member states (not just the UK!), caution should be exercised" in demanding short-term financial support.[179] Internal government documents from other member states demonstrate that this German line of thinking was not unfounded. The UK's aim was "least money for East Germany"[180] and that the "transitional costs must be primarily for Germans to bear".[181] France similarly aimed to avoid any "additional burdens on the Community budget"[182] and net beneficiaries such as the southern member states were concerned that the structural funds would be "diverted at their cost to help rebuild the GDR economy".[183]

To relax these concerns, Chancellor Kohl repeatedly emphasised that the integration of the East German *Länder* should not become a financial burden for the Community. At the European Council on 28 April 1990, Kohl underscored, with regard to potential special financial support for Germany: "He was grateful for his colleagues' support but did not want special funds. He did not want the Mediterranean states, for example, to suffer […]. It was not Germany's prime aim to get money from the Community."[184] At a meeting with representatives of the European Parliament, Kohl explicitly emphasised that it was not his government's intention to seek support from the structural funds after reunification.[185]

The approach established in the Chancellery to forgo any financial support for the Eastern *Länder* from the structural funds faced opposition within the federal government. The Ministry of Finance, in particular, advocated a different approach. The minutes of a departmental meeting capture the Ministry's general position: "From the very first day of accession full

[178] BA-B136/34467:"Anpassung des EG-Rechts bei Einbeziehung der DDR in die EG als Teil der Bundesrepublik Deutschland", 28.02.90.
[179] BA-B136/34467:"Europäische Einbettung des deutschen Einigungsprozesses", 28.02.90.
[180] NA- FCO30/9178:"Ad hoc group on German Unification: The structural funds", 13.09.90.
[181] NA-FCO30/8905:"Secretary of State's visit to Paris", 28.03.90.
[182] NA-FCO30/8905:"French EC priorities for 1990", 05.03.90.
[183] HAEU- DORIE-567:"Rapports des bureaux-representations à la veille du Conseil européen spécial de Dublin", 28 28/04/1990", 28.04.90; see also BA-B136/34468:"1426. Tagung des ASTV", 05.04.90.
[184] NA-FCO 30/8828:"European Council: 28 April: German Unification", 28.04.90.
[185] HAEU-SP(90)1424:"Déclaration de la Commission et du Conseil sur les résultats du sommet européen de Dublin du 28/04/1990", 18.05.90.

payment of additional own resources to the EC and full disbursement of returns from the EC budget."[186] This position was also supported by the Ministries of the Economy, Agriculture and Labour. Chancellor Kohl was informed about this in a memorandum in July 1990.[187] Accordingly, the mentioned Ministries supported the European Commission's proposal to establish a special fund for East Germany. The Commission proposed that the funding framework for the structural funds would remain unaltered until 1994. The East German *Länder* should instead be supported through a special fund, financed by an increase in member states' contributions. This implied, as stated in the memorandum, that "in 1991, all member states would have to contribute more money to the EC, 'particularly due to German reunification.'" Furthermore, the document proposed a strategy change: "Our position from the spring of 1990 (renouncing special EC funds [...]) primarily applied to the period before the 'accession of the GDR.' Due to the rapid accession and the interest in ensuring equal treatment and the early integration of the GDR, this position is, if not entirely outdated, at least untenable in practice."

Chancellor Kohl expressed profound dissatisfaction with the memorandum. In response to an assessment by a staff member of the Chancellery in the document that the Commission's proposal could "revive fears and concerns regarding German reunification," Kohl agreed, writing, "Yes, certainly!". He also rejected the position that the renunciation of EC structural funds could no longer be upheld, stating, "No, that is not correct!".

In response, the Chancellor immediately sent letters[188] marked as "urgent and immediate" to those ministers who had supported aid for the Eastern *Länder* through the EC. One such example is the letter addressed to the Minister of Labour:

> Dear Mr. Blüm,
>
> Just before my departure for holiday, I was informed that the Federal Ministries for Labour and Social Affairs, for Economic Affairs, and for Food, Agriculture, and Forestry have initiated discussions with the EC Commission in Brussels regarding transitional arrangements for the GDR, particularly concerning the structural funds. I am also told that the Commission is preparing a package on this matter, which it intends to present to the Council in early September.
>
> The outcome of the Commission's efforts will almost certainly lead to an increase in the EC's own-resources ceiling in 1991. In practice, this means that the financial requirements will be publicly attributed to German

[186] BA-B 136/34468:"Vermerk über eine Ressortbesprechung im BMF", 13.07.90.
[187] BA-B136/34468:"EG und deutsche Einigung", 19.07.90.
[188] All of the letters sent by Kohl to his Ministers or the Commission mentioned in the following are available in BA-B136/34468:"Briefe des Bundeskanzlers an Minister und Mitglieder der EG-Kommission", 20.07.90.

> reunification, both within the EC and in the capitals of all EC member states. Naturally, I am aware that this is not accurate, but the psychological impact in an already challenging overall situation is undeniable.
>
> I therefore urgently request that you issue instructions within your ministry to immediately halt the efforts described above. Upon my return, we will hold a conclusive meeting on this matter. I have sent similar letters to the other responsible federal ministers.
>
> Best regards, Yours,
>
> Helmut Kohl

Similar letters were also sent to members of the EC Commission, in which Kohl reaffirmed that his position remained unchanged and that he rejected any support from the structural funds. In his letter to Commissioner Bangemann, Kohl once again clarified the reasoning behind his refusal of financial resources: "The last thing we need, given the current mood in Europe, is the argument: 'We must pay for German reunification.'"

This intervention by the Chancellor demonstrates that the FRG's preference formation was not straightforward and Kohl's was position contested. Beneath the surface, there were significant internal tensions within the government. Ultimately, Kohl's involvement in the negotiations between his Ministers and the Commission exemplifies the rare exercise of the Chancellor's *Richtlinienkompetenz*. This measure highlights Kohl's firm commitment to his stance of not requesting support from the structural funds for the East German *Länder*. Ultimately, Kohl regarded this as a necessary condition for ensuring a swift reunification and, by extension, securing his re-election. Kohl's decision, though harmful to the FRG financially, is consistent with the vote-seeking behaviour that characterises politicians in democracies (Downs, 1957). When elections are imminent and expected to be closely contested, politicians' responsiveness to the electorate intensifies even further (Müller and Strøm, 1999; Nguyen, 2008).

## 5.4 De Maizière's Government: Political Greenhorns Demanding Influence

The GDR government faced markedly different starting conditions compared to the FRG when developing preferences for integrating the Eastern *Länder* into the EC's regional policy framework. The first democratic *Volkskammer* elections held on 18 March 1990 resulted in a landslide victory of the centre-right Alliance for Germany.[189] For much of the campaign period, opinion polls had predicted a win for the Social Democrats, which would have posed a significant threat to Chancellor Kohl's fast-track reunification and re-election strategy. The East

[189] The Alliance was led by the East German Christian Democratic Union (CDU), the German Social Union (DSU) and the Democratic Awakening (DA).

German Social Democrats had advocated for reunification through Article 146 of the *Grundgesetz*, a more time-intensive process. To turn the tide, the West German CDU played an active role in the final phase of the *Volkskammer* electoral campaign, notably through initiatives like establishing district partnerships between East and West German electoral districts. Chancellor Kohl himself campaigned in large and well-attained election rallies at which he effectively framed the elections as a referendum about his fast-track reunification approach, which ultimately resonated with the electorate (for an extensive analysis of the elections see Gibowski, 1990; Heydemann, 2013: 101–108; Kohl, 1996: 288–298; Stuhler, 2010: 30–38).

On 12 April 1990, CDU politician Lothar de Maizière was elected Prime Minister with the support of a super grand coalition comprising the Alliance for Germany, the Social Democrats, and the Liberals. The foremost task of the GDR government was to manage the GDR's transition and its disappearance as an independent state – eventually, 173 days remained to fulfil this task between the government's inauguration and Germany's reunification. In the first cabinet meeting, the Prime Minister addressed his team with the following words: "Gentlemen, from this moment on, from the very first moment, we must not forget that our task is to make ourselves obsolete, to abolish ourselves!".[190]

Unlike the FRG government, the de Maizière cabinet was not composed of seasoned career politicians but rather of "political greenhorns" (Patel and Schulze, 2022: 67). The majority of cabinet members assumed their roles unexpectedly and were also unfamiliar with one another. Prime Minister de Maizière met some of his cabinet members for the first time on the day of their inauguration (Stuhler, 2010: 16). This rather unusual situation naturally impacted the government's internal functioning and approach to policy-making. A key distinction – or rather, a direct contradiction – between the GDR government and its West German counterpart was the lack of long-term political ambitions among GDR politicians. In fact, re-election was not an option, as the GDR and its government, including the ministerial posts, would be dissolved. Furthermore, the all-German federal elections had no noticeable impact on the government. Instead, holding a political office in the final months of the GDR was widely regarded as a transitional role. Prime Minister de Maizière stated in his biography: "I was not a politician, and perhaps I never fully became one" (Maizière, 2011: 8).[191] When leaving his actual job as lawyer de Maizière emphasised: "My desk remains vacant, I will return. This is not my profession."[192]

[190] In Stuhler (2010: 22).
[191] Note that the digital copy of the book has no page numbers so I refer to the pages of the PDF document.
[192] In Stuhler (2010: 19).

The behaviour of the de Maizière government was, hence, not vote-seeking, but instead closely resembled the positions typically adopted by EU enlargement candidates (compare Schneider, 2007: 87–95). Like such countries, de Maizière and his government were primarily concerned with the economic benefits that would be available to the Eastern *Länder* upon their integration into the EC. The government's coalition agreement demanded the "full adoption of membership obligations and rights" – mirroring the stance taken by the West German Ministry of Finance, as discussed earlier.

In terms of regional policy and the integration of the Eastern *Länder* into the EC's framework, the government was focused on securing support through the structural funds. "We believed that we needed resources from these funds to finance the necessary transformation in East Germany," remembers the then-involved State Secretary, Petra Erler.[193] This strategy of utilising all available EC funds for East Germany's transformation was also supported at lower political levels, as evidenced by the minutes of a meeting between representatives of district administrative authorities and central Ministries.[194]

The government, however, recognised the practical challenges of fully integrating the Eastern *Länder* into the regional funds upon accession. Such an integration would have required extensive and time-consuming negotiations over the entire funding framework, which conflicted with the government's primary objective of achieving reunification as quickly as possible. Despite these challenges, the government maintained that the Eastern *Länder* should receive support from the EC, linking this request to the European norm of solidarity:

> It was clear that we had no interest in burdening the entire process with budget negotiations or something like that. But we wanted symbolic recognition that, from the very beginning, it would also be clear in this part of this new big state that Europe […] shows solidarity with us. And that it wouldn't just be funds flowing from what was then still Bonn, but that all of Europe would participate so that the East German *Länder* would also experience solidarity.[195]

The European Commission's proposal of creating a special fund for East Germany, which Helmut Kohl had heavily opposed, was supported by the GDR. Furthermore, the government deemed the proposed amount of 1 billion ECU per year insufficient, as highlighted in a

[193] The interview is available here: https://deutsche-einheit-1990.de/ministerien/amt-des-ministerpraesidenten/interministerielle-arbeitsgruppe-europaeische-gemeinschaft/, accessed 20.01.25.
[194] BA-DC20/18516:"Notiz über eine Beratung von Vertretern der Bezirksverwaltungsbehörden der DDR und zentraler Ministerien", 16.08.90.
[195] Interview with Petra Erler in Kunter and Paulmann (2023: 69).

memorandum from the West German Chancellery: "In preliminary discussions, the GDR described the planned sum as insufficient and asked for more aid."[196]

Despite its inexperience and lack of established relationships with the EC, the de Maizière government undertook significant diplomatic efforts to advocate for its positions, as reflected in an extensive list of diplomatic visits.[197] The West German Foreign Ministry recognised this as an attempt "to compensate for the lack of professionalism through exceptional diligence."[198] Nevertheless, GDR representatives faced significant challenges in promoting their stance. Trying to address this issue, Lothar de Maizière authored a letter to Commission President Delors, emphasising the importance of ensuring "that the GDR's independent representation of interests is guaranteed." On other occasions, de Maizière also expressed concerns that his government was not being adequately informed about critical developments by the Commission. [199] At a meeting with the Commission on 1 June 1990, he criticised the fact that the GDR received most of its information indirectly through Bonn:

> Mr de Maizière emphasised that the GDR has a vested interest in developing and improving the information structure. He explains that so far, information has been provided via the Federal Republic of Germany; it would be beneficial to consider more direct channels or a triangular information structure.[200]

## 5.5 Inner-German Frictions

The GDR government's lack of influence over the transformative processes remained no secret to the public. After just a few days in office, an influential West German newspaper described Prime Minister de Maizière in terms that evoked the image of a lame duck during his first visit to the Kremlin: "And Moscow, of course, knows exactly how the cards are dealt: the centre of gravity is Bonn not East Berlin. Thus, de Maizière's visit was primarily symbolic."[201]

The relationship between the two German governments was marked by increasing tensions. While there was consensus on the overarching goal of a swift reunification, significant and increasingly pronounced differences emerged regarding the details of how the process should unfold. Notable efforts to develop a joint position – including on the topic of EC regional policy – were not meaningfully pursued by either government. Initial discussions, such as those between representatives of the two foreign Ministries, were at first characterised by a positive

[196] BA-B136/34468:"Vermerk für den Kabinettsausschuss Deutsche Einheit", 24.07.90
[197] BA-DC20/18520:"Stand der Beziehungen und aktuelle Kontakte DDR-EG", 01.07.90.
[198] PA-B130/VS-Bd13524(210):"Gespräche im MfAA über mögliche künftige Zusammenarbeit", 03.05.90.
[199] HAEU-FL-209:"Entretien Président - L. de Maizière", 21.05.90.
[200] SEC(1990)1110:"Bericht über das Treffen zwischen Herrn de Maizére und der Kommission", 01.06.90.
[201] The article by "Die Welt" is included in: HAEU-JD-158:"Nichts ohne Bonn", 30.04.90.

atmosphere, with participants reportedly being "on the same wavelength."[202] However, a proposal from the West German side to provide press spokespersons to assist the GDR Foreign Ministry was sharply rejected by Foreign Minister Meckel referring to "political optics".[203] According to GDR State Secretary Petra Erler, the GDR government was determined to "have its own voice" and "not be represented solely by the FRG".[204]

Neither Bonn nor East Berlin made any notable efforts to develop a unified German position. On the contrary, both governments partially pulled in different directions, hindering each other's initiatives. The lack of coordination was particularly evident in the lead-up to the extraordinary Dublin Council on 28 April 1990, which focused on the implications of Germany's reunification for the EC.

Before they met with the Irish Presidency on 25 April, the GDR delegation learned that the FRG government prepared arrangements with the Presidency for the upcoming summit, which the GDR found unacceptable. This also included potential transition periods for integrating the Eastern *Länder* into the regional policy. In a defiant response, the GDR delegates presented alternative proposals, arguing that they had a better understanding of East Germany: "The relationship between Genscher and Markus Meckel was not good. We deliberately intervened, fully aware of what we were doing. […] We are here to represent, after all, nearly 17 million people. And we know our stuff."[205] Surprised by these intra-German differences, the Council Presidency inquired whether the agenda presented by GDR Foreign Minister Meckel had been coordinated with FRG Foreign Minister Genscher, which Meckel denied.[206]

The Kohl government showed little interest in incorporating distinct East German interests into its policies, particularly when Helmut Kohl feared that the actions of the GDR might hinder his plan for swift reunification and his associated re-election prospects. In such instances, the federal government knew how to leverage its diplomatic network and institutional power to intervene effectively. One example of this can be seen in the aforementioned letters from Kohl to members of the Commission.[207] Another example concerns the trade and cooperation agreement between the GDR and the EC, negotiated without West German involvement. As

[202] PA-B130/VS-Bd13524(210):" Gespräche im MfAA über mögliche künftige Zusammenarbeit", 03.05.90.
[203] PA-B130/VS-Bd13524(210):" Gespräche im MfAA über mögliche künftige Zusammenarbeit", 03.05.90.
[204] The interview is available here: https://deutsche-einheit-1990.de/ministerien/amt-des-ministerpraesidenten/interministerielle-arbeitsgruppe-europaeische-gemeinschaft/, accessed 20.01.25.
[205] Interview with Petra Erler in Kunter and Paulmann (2023: 71–72).
[206] Interview with Petra Erler in Kunter and Paulmann (2023: 71–72).
[207] All of the letters sent by Kohl to his Ministers or the Commission mentioned in the following are available in BA-B136/34468:"Briefe des Bundeskanzlers an Minister und Mitglieder der EG-Kommission", 20.07.90.

the agreement approached ratification in spring 1990, the Federal Chancellery expressed concerns in an internal document stating that "the envisaged ten-year duration of the contract sends an untimely signal".[208] The concerns were based on ensuring Kohl's superior objective of being re-elected. The document proves, however, that care was taken to avoid a public perception of Western paternalism towards the East:

> The initialling of a long-term agreement with the GDR just before the election can be misunderstood and on the other hand, we must not give the impression to the outside world – of 'paternalism' or a 'diktat', the question should be raised at a high political level (e.g. by Minister Genscher) to the Commission.[209]

Naturally, such interventions were met with strong disapproval by the GDR government. This is evident in Lothar de Maizière's accounts, in which he highlights the sense of being treated as inferior. De Maizière felt that the "Bonn Adenauer House wanted nothing to do with the 'Blockflöten' from the East" (Maizière, 2011: 63). The lack of mutual respect also manifested in the personal dynamics between de Maizière and Kohl (for an extensive analysis of the relationship between both politicians see Stuhler, 2010: 56–66). In his biography, de Maizière recalls a moment during the EC Council in June, for which he was invited: "I gave a brief speech, which Helmut Kohl was obviously pleased with. He treated me like a teacher showing off his star pupil" (Maizière, 2011: 206).

## 5.6 Chequebook Diplomacy Prevails

The EC ultimately decided to establish a special fund for the integration of the Eastern *Länder* into regional policy, allocating 3 billion ECU to Germany until 1994 (see Figure 5). In response to Kohl's initial rejection of this funding, the Commission developed a solution to finance the support using existing, unutilised budgetary funds. As President Delors explained to Chancellor Kohl in a letter "[a]n amendment to the own resource ceilings, which the European Council decided under your chairmanship in 1988, will not be necessary on this occasion. Within this ceiling, the available funds will be entirely sufficient."[210] In the same letter, Delors also reaffirmed that the Commission considered support for the Eastern *Länder* as a vital demonstration of the regional policy's foundational principles of "cohesion and solidarity".[211]

[208] BA-B136/21520:"Sonderstatus des innerdeutschen Handels", 19.02.90.
[209] BA-B136/21520:"Sonderstatus des innerdeutschen Handels", 19.02.90.
[210] BA-B136/34469:" Brief Delors and Kohl", 01.08.90.
[211] References to these principles in the context of the regional policy can be found in the EU treaties beginning with the Treaties of Rome, the Single European Act and today Article 3 of the Treaty on the European Union or Article 174 in the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU.

Although this proposal did not fully align with Kohl's longstanding position – no EC money for East Germany – he nonetheless expressed satisfaction. The agreement averted the need for protracted re-negotiations of the funding framework, which could have posed a significant obstacle to the swift reunification process and Kohl's re-election. In a phone call with Delors, Kohl conveyed his support for the Commission's proposal, while emphasising that his general position on the matter remained unchanged:

> He wanted to emphasise once again that German unification must under no circumstances be associated with an increase in financial contributions. President Delors responded that he would hold a press conference the following day to make two points clear: First, Germany's unification would be achieved without increasing the Community's financial resources. Second, that the funds allocated for Greece, Italy, Portugal, etc., would not be reduced [...] and reiterated that he fully understood the Federal Chancellor's concern that German unification should not be tied to an increase of contributions.[212]

Having gained assurance that the integration of the Eastern *Länder* into the EC's regional policy would not hinder his re-election, Kohl initiated a slight adjustment to his government's position. The updated position of the Federal Chancellery was: "We should not demand more than what the Commission proposes, but also not less. We will wait to see if other member states feel overwhelmed by the Commission's proposals and how the Commission responds to any potential objections."[213] Thus, at a late stage in the decision-making process, economic considerations began to influence the FRG's position, which had, since the fall of the Wall, been primarily defined by Kohl's re-election concerns.

The Commission's proposal was also welcomed by the other EC member states, as it ensured that the special funds for the Eastern *Länder* would not lead to increased contributions or require changes to the regional policy framework until 1994.[214] In fact, the outcome was financially exceptionally favourable for the EC, as acknowledged by the UK Treasury: "The costs to the EC budget of German unification will be small compared to those which will be borne by the new German state itself."[215] Kohl's chequebook diplomacy facilitated the smooth integration of the former GDR into the EC, but the price for this success was paid by the German taxpayer. Germany took on substantial debt, increased taxes, and introduced special levies, such as the "Solidaritätszuschlag". Notably, these new taxes were implemented only after the 1990

[212] BA-B136/34469:"Telefongespräch Kohl Delors", 21.08.90.
[213] BA-B136/34469:"EG-Sonderverordnung Strukturfonds/DDR", 14.08.90.
[214] NA-FCO30/9170:"Frame Structural", 27.07.90.
[215] NA-T 577/121:"TCSC: section on German Unification", 08.01.90.

elections (Zinsmeister, 2009).[216] It was not until after 1994 that significant assistance from the EU arrived when the Eastern German *Länder* were fully classified as Objective 1 regions. In the funding period 1994-99, the Eastern *Länder* received 13.6 billion Euros from the structural funds, turning them into one of the main beneficiaries of the regional policy (European Union, 2008: 14–18; Toepel and Weise, 2000: 186).

The GDR government was entirely dissatisfied with the outcome. Although the de Maizière government had been consulted during the negotiation process, it lacked a formal role in the decision-making and institutional power to influence the outcome. Lothar de Maizière felt, particularly, betrayed by the FRG government, viewing their approach as an infringement on the sovereignty of the GDR:

> It appears that members of the Commission had discussions with Helmut Kohl, during which my concerns and requests were conveyed. Since Kohl did not want to jeopardise the European Community's support for the German unification process, he seemingly downplayed the matter and assured them that these issues could be resolved solely by the Germans. He asserted that assistance from the European Community was unnecessary. Unfortunately, I only learned of Kohl's unilateral actions once all the agreements had already been made. Even in retrospect, I am outraged that he presumed to speak on our behalf – on behalf of the GDR – and, worse still, failed to inform me of this. It was clearly an infringement on our sovereignty (Maizière, 2011: 191).

## 5.7 Conclusion

With few exceptions, EU enlargement has always involved the accession of regions with significant structural deficits. These regions have typically benefited substantially from financial support through the EU's regional policy. However, this was not the case for the EC's first eastern enlargement. This article has provided the first comprehensive explanation of the EC's decision to exclude the East German *Länder* from the regional policy framework until 1994, drawing on recently declassified confidential documents from different archives.

In summary, I find that the temporary discrimination against the East German *Länder* was primarily the result of Chancellor Kohl's chequebook diplomacy approach, which involved rejecting any financial assistance from the EC's regional policy for the East German *Länder*. Kohl's rationale was rooted in domestic politics as he feared that prolonged budgetary negotiations could delay reunification and jeopardise his re-election prospects. Internal disagreements within the FRG government were ultimately overridden by the Chancellor

[216] Note that the Solidaritätszuschlag was also introduced to finance the German expenses for the second Gulf War; yet another instance of chequebook diplomacy (Sperling, 1994).

through his *Richtlinienkompetenz*. Despite their shared objective of a swift reunification, the two German governments did not speak with one voice on the integration of the East German *Länder* into the regional policy framework. In fact, the government of GDR Prime Minister de Maizière actively advocated for the immediate inclusion of the East German *Länder*, exacerbating tensions between the two administrations. The politically inexperienced de Maizière government was desperately looking for influence but ultimately lacked the institutional leverage to prevent the FRG from securing an agreement with the other EC member states. Consequently, apart from a small symbolic sum, the financial burden of transformation was borne almost entirely by the German taxpayer until 1994. The fiscal implications of this decision became only evident after the elections on 2 December 1990. Helmut Kohl's political calculus ultimately proved successful, allowing him to be re-elected as "Kanzler der Einheit". Based on the findings of this article, it is evident that Germany's decision to forgo substantial structural funds for the East German *Länder* contributed to ensuring that the EC member states did not delay or even obstruct reunification. From this perspective, the agreement on the EC regional policy was a necessary condition for the swift German reunification achieved in just 329 days, as well as for Kohl's re-election.

The findings of this article contribute to regional integration literature by explaining a critical aspect of a so-far overlooked enlargement case. Among the many temporary derogations introduced with the GDR's accession to the EC, the exemption from structural funds represents the only instance of discriminatory differentiation (see *chapter 4*). Furthermore, this article advances the knowledge about the regional policy. By renouncing financial support, Germany prevented the collapse of the 1988 landmark reform, which shapes the policy until today. Additionally, this decision safeguarded the painstakingly negotiated multiannual funding framework, averting a crisis that could have disrupted not only the regional policy but also other key integration projects essential to the EC's transformation into an ever-closer political union.

More broadly, the article enhances our understanding of the far-reaching transformations of the post-Cold War period. The findings underscore the exceptional causal complexities of the GDR's accession to the EC arising from the interplay of various national and international actors. Designing the article as a theory-guided idiographic analysis has proven highly effective. The article, therefore, highlights the value of context-sensitive, in-depth investigations, demonstrating that such comprehensive analyses yield insights that would otherwise remain incomplete in the still-prevailing "culture of generalization" (Humphreys and Suganami, 2024: 4).

*"Enlargement used to be driven by hope; now it is driven by fear." (Diplomat from an aspiring European state in The Economist (2023))*

# 6 Conclusion

Never before since its creation has the modern international system undergone such a rapid and profound transformation as in the late 20th century. This dissertation has provided a comprehensive examination of a previously underexplored chapter in this remarkable period of change: the integration of the GDR into the EC.

The EU's first eastern enlargement, completed 35 years ago, represents an exceptional and multifaceted historical case. Unlike most other enlargement processes, which were marked by prolonged negotiations and extensive preparatory steps, the GDR was integrated into the EC in less than a year after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Before its accession, the GDR had no institutional ties to the EC such as trade or association agreements. Becoming part of the EC necessitated a comprehensive and rapid transformation of the GDR's political, economic, and social structures to comply with the stringent requirements of the *acquis communautaire*. Given East Germany's precarious state at the time, organising the enlargement posed a formidable challenge, requiring extraordinary adaptability from both policymakers and administrators.

While this dissertation has taken a case-centric approach to analysing the complexities of the GDR's integration into the EC, I have consistently situated this process within its broader historical context. The integration of the GDR was not an isolated event but a pivotal moment in shaping Europe's post-Cold War order. The fall of the Berlin Wall set in motion the collapse of the Iron Curtain and a wave of democratic transitions across Central and Eastern Europe, fundamentally altering the continent's (geo)political landscape. The subsequent eastern enlargements of NATO and the EU further consolidated the emerging European security and political architecture. The fast-track integration of the former GDR into both NATO and the EC certainly influenced the trajectory of future enlargements.

The decision to integrate the GDR into the EC upon the reunification of Germany played a crucial role in securing Germany's *Westbindung*, alleviating concerns that a reunified Germany might diverge from its post-World War II path and pursue a more assertive, independent role in Europe. By ensuring that Germany remained firmly embedded within European structures, the GDR's accession reinforced a central pillar of the European integration project – namely,

the pacification of Germany and the containment of its great power aspirations. For the EC as an international organisation, the challenge of integrating the GDR came at a decisive moment in its evolution. The enlargement occurred amid a critical, transformative phase, during which the EC was in the process of redefining its purpose and future institutional design. Within this critical phase, the fast-track accession of the GDR to the EC secured Germany's commitment to the EC, which proved instrumental in advancing the Treaty of Maastricht and the subsequent development of the EU.

The remainder of this concluding chapter is structured as follows. First, I summarise the central empirical findings of this dissertation and assess whether the GDR's accession to the EC constituted a truly unique case. I then reflect on the dissertation's limitations, highlighting aspects that remain unexamined and suggesting avenues for future research. Finally, I move beyond the specific case of the GDR to consider broader implications. In particular, I discuss what lessons can be drawn for contemporary enlargement debates.

## 6.1 Summary of the Findings

This section summarises the dissertation's main findings in relation to the research questions outlined in the introduction, structured according to the four key aims of the dissertation. These aims were: first, to examine the rationale behind the enlargement decision; second, to analyse the enlargement process; third, to assess the financial implications; and finally, to evaluate whether the GDR's accession to the EC constituted a truly unique case.

*Chapter 3* provided crucial insights into the EC's decision to integrate the GDR into the Community directly upon German reunification. This decision was shaped by the immediate developments following the fall of the Berlin Wall, which overnight transformed the German Question into the dominant issue of international politics. While the peaceful revolution in the GDR was broadly welcomed by the EC member states, their initial response to the issue of Germany's reunification and potential EC enlargement was characterised by caution and a preference for the status quo. Many leaders feared that taking rapid steps toward German reunification and EC enlargement could destabilise Europe.

The FRG, in contrast, viewed the unfolding events as a window of opportunity and was dissatisfied with the reluctance of its European partners. Chancellor Helmut Kohl, under domestic pressure to take decisive action, was particularly disappointed by the initial hesitancy of the EC. In response, Kohl presented a 10-point-programme, in which he not only outlined a roadmap for German reunification but also linked it directly to the automatic integration of the GDR into the EC. This proposal was effectively a take-it-or-leave-it offer: either the EC

accepted this course of action, or Germany would proceed with reunification independently and turn its back on the EC with potentially unpredictable consequences for European stability.

Despite initial resistance, Kohl's 10-point-programme proved highly effective in shaping the enlargement decision and ruling out alternative scenarios that would have implied a more stepwise approach. One initially discussed option involved formal accession negotiations, at the end of which the GDR would become the 13th member of the EC. Another less far-reaching option was a trade and association agreement between the GDR and the EC.

The FRG ultimately secured the EC's support for the GDR's fast-track accession through a series of strategic manoeuvres. France was persuaded by the FRG's commitment to intensified European integration, reinforcing already planned initiatives. The UK's support was secured by making the implicit threat of the 10-point-programme more explicit: the FRG signalled that failing to integrate the GDR into the EC could prompt Germany to reconsider its *Westbindung*, potentially destabilising Europe. With the FRG government having also gained Moscow's approval for reunification, the EC member states endorsed the GDR's fast-track accession in April 1990, recognising it as the most effective means of preserving geopolitical stability in Europe.

*Chapter 4* shifted the focus from the enlargement decision to its practical implications, specifically the drafting of the terms of enlargement. I find that the GDR's accession to the EC resulted in a significant surge in the overall number of valid differentiations from the EC's secondary legislation. In comparative terms, no other enlargement round has involved such an extensive number of temporary exemptions from the *acquis communautaire*. However, within the first two years, a substantial share of these derogations had already been phased out. Beyond this initial period, the GDR's integration followed a phasing-out trajectory largely in line with patterns observed in other enlargement rounds.

A closer examination of the enlargement terms reveals that the vast majority of these differentiations were exemptive in nature, granting (East) Germany temporary exemptions from EC obligations rather than restricting membership benefits. Similar preferential conditions had been granted in previous enlargement rounds. Moreover, my analysis shows that the average duration of these exemptions was shorter than in other cases, further reinforcing the notion that the GDR's accession terms were not exceptionally accommodating. The distribution of differentiations across policy sectors mirrors patterns observed in other EC enlargements.

My findings on the negotiation process leading to these enlargement terms indicate that the final agreement was shaped by both material interests and normative considerations. While the material interests of EC member states played a crucial role, the exceptional historical circumstances of Germany's reunification and the dire economic situation in East Germany were also key factors. The resulting terms of enlargement thus reflect a carefully calibrated compromise, balancing material interests with normative obligations.

In *chapter 5*, I further examined the terms of enlargement by focusing on the financial implications of the GDR's accession for the EC. Notably, the integration of the new Eastern *Länder* into the EC's regional policy framework represented the only instance of discriminatory differentiation within the enlargement process. In the crucial early years of membership, East Germany remained significantly worse off than other economically comparable regions in the EC, as it was excluded from the structural funds' regular financing framework until 1994.

I demonstrate that this decision was primarily driven by Chancellor Kohl's re-election strategy and his chequebook diplomacy approach. Kohl deliberately rejected EC financial assistance, fearing that the necessary budgetary adjustments would require protracted negotiations and risk delaying reunification – an outcome he believed would jeopardise his re-election in the upcoming federal elections. My findings reveal that this approach was contested within his cabinet, yet Kohl ultimately imposed his position by exercising his *Richtlinienkompetenz* to overrule internal opposition.

Despite their shared goal of a fast-track reunification, including the immediate integration of the GDR into the EC, both German governments adopted opposing stances concerning the structural funds matter. The GDR government, led by Prime Minister de Maizière, strongly advocated for the full and immediate integration of the Eastern *Länder* into the EC's regional policy framework, leading to serious tensions with the FRG government. My findings suggest that neither side made meaningful efforts to reconcile their differences or develop a common position. Instead, both governments actively worked against each other, deliberately undermining one another's initiatives.

Ultimately, the GDR lacked both the political leverage and diplomatic experience to influence the outcome in its favour. As a result, the East German *Länder* did not emerge as a major beneficiary of the EC's regional policy in the first years of membership, despite their severe structural deficits. Instead, the overwhelming burden of financing East Germany's transformation fell on the German taxpayer.

The findings of this dissertation challenge the prevailing notion in the social scientific regional integration scholarship that the GDR's integration into the EC represents a unique enlargement case that does not merit comparative investigation (e.g. Schimmelfennig and Winzen, 2020: 104). While the historical context was undoubtedly exceptional, my findings indicate that this alone does not make the enlargement "sui generis" (Spence, 1992: 143) or warrant its exclusion from comparative analysis.

*Chapter 4* demonstrates that when contextualised in their specific historical setting, the GDR's terms of enlargement are consistent with those of other enlargements. Much like "regular" enlargement candidates, the FRG was in a weak negotiating position and had little leverage to secure exemptions from the *acquis* for East Germany. In *chapter 5*, I further highlight how the financial implications of GDR's accession triggered significant distributional conflicts among EC members, just as with other enlargements (Schneider, 2009: 57–73). Consistent with previous enlargement rounds, these conflicts were resolved at the expense of the new member state – in this case, effectively the GDR – through East Germany's temporary exclusion from the EC's regional policy framework.

What truly distinguishes the GDR's integration is its unprecedented speed. Integrating the GDR into the EC within less than one year was made possible by the decision to forgo formal enlargement negotiations, which deviated from the standard EU enlargement process. However, even in this regard, the GDR's accession is not entirely unique, as similar approaches were taken in previous and subsequent enlargements, such as the Saarland in 1957 and Mayotte in 2014.

## 6.2 Limitations and Future Research

The dissertation offers the so-far missing comprehensive examination of the GDR's integration into the EC. Naturally, due to its limited scope, the dissertation could not explore all aspects of the enlargement process and the findings remain far from being exhaustive. In the following, I reflect on the dissertation's limitations and outline opportunities for future research.

As with any case study, the findings of this dissertation must be interpreted with caution regarding their generalisability to other enlargement cases. While the internal validity of the findings – derived from causal process analyses based on reliable archival sources – can generally be considered high, the external validity remains inherently limited (compare Schimmelfennig, 2015). Nevertheless, as discussed in the preceding section, the GDR's integration into the EC does not constitute a unique case. This has important implications for future research as scholars of regional integration should be encouraged to incorporate the GDR

into comparative analyses (see also Heydemann and Vodicka, 2013). A particularly valuable avenue for comparison lies with the CEEC, given the shared historical experience and common socialist legacies. Investigating whether these states faced similar challenges in their enlargement processes and how they addressed them could yield important insights. However, as demonstrated in *chapter 4*, comparative analysis should not be limited to post-socialist states. Comparing the GDR's integration with other EU enlargement rounds can also provide meaningful contributions to our understanding of the broader dynamics of EU enlargement.

Furthermore, several aspects of the GDR's integration into the EC remain underexplored. One particularly important issue is the institutional impact of the enlargement on the EC itself. Germany's reunification increased its population to 80 million, making it the EC's largest member state and prompting concerns over its growing influence.[217] These concerns were linked to the enlargement's institutional ramifications such as the adjustment of German seats in the EP or Germany's vote share in the Council. Both issues can be assumed to be just as politically sensitive as the financial implications discussed in *chapter 5*. Future research should therefore explore these institutional aspects and assess how the GDR's integration influenced the EC's institutional dynamics.

This dissertation predominantly focused on intergovernmental negotiations. While government-level decision-making was undoubtedly central to the enlargement process, the role of supranational EC institutions – particularly the EP and the European Commission – also warrants further investigation. Although the EP's influence on EC policymaking was more limited before Maastricht than it is today, its consent to the GDR's enlargement terms was still required. In fact, the EP was actively involved in the GDR's accession process, notably by establishing a temporary committee to assess the implications of German reunification for the EC (European Parliament DG for Research, 1990). Future research will need to determine whether the EP genuinely influenced the enlargement process and intergovernmental negotiations or if its role was predominantly consultative (compare the important contribution on the issue by Birchen, 2009).

Similarly, the influence of the European Commission warrants closer examination (compare Jaeschke, 2024). My findings indicate that the Commission played a pivotal role in drafting the

[217] This concern was, for instance, expressed by Thatcher in an interview, which is available in: BA-B136/30501:"Bilaterale Beziehungen zu Großbritannien", 25.01.90.

legislative package[218] that defined the GDR's terms of enlargement – an administrative tour de force given the complexity and scale of the necessary legislative adjustments. To facilitate this process, the Commission established several ad-hoc working groups, including a high-level steering group comprising representatives from all Directorates General (DG) and the Task Force on German Unification.[219] Investigating the internal workings of these groups, the bureaucratic dynamics within the Commission, and its cooperation with national ministries would provide valuable insights into the administrative dimension of enlargement.

Another limitation of the dissertation relates to its empirical foundation. While the evidence drawn from declassified archival documents is generally highly reliable, archival research is resource-intense and time-consuming.[220] For the purpose of this dissertation, I travelled to three archives. Expanding this archival base to include records from other European states would certainly be beneficial, as this could reveal whether other states that are not in the focus of my analyses held similar positions or pursued different strategies with regard to the GDR's integration into the EC. Additionally, incorporating more data sources could help triangulate the findings from archival document analysis more effectively. One potential avenue is conducting interviews but the pool of potential interviewees is steadily diminishing as an increasing number of key decision-makers from that period pass away.

## 6.3 EU Enlargement after the *Zeitenwende*

My dissertation promotes greater interdisciplinary collaboration as it aligns with a broader trend of historians and social scientists engaging more deeply with each other's work. There is a growing intersection between both disciplines, with social scientists increasingly studying historical cases, even far beyond contemporary history (e.g. Bueno de Mesquita and Bueno de Mesquita, 2023; Gingerich and Vogler, 2021), and historians engaging with theory (e.g. Patel, 2024a). Against the backdrop of this rapprochement, my dissertation serves as an example of how a historical case can be examined with theoretical rigour and modern social scientific methods, both qualitative and quantitative, or through a combination of both. Historians and social scientists alike should, therefore, feel encouraged to transcend disciplinary boundaries and integrate the strengths of both fields. However, as my research demonstrates, this endeavour requires a certain degree of pragmatism.

[218] The Commission's proposal: HAEU-CEUE_SEGE-COM(1990)0400:"The Community and German Unification Volumes I-III", 21.08.90.
[219] HAEU CEUE_SEGE-SEC(1990)0912:"Note à l'attention des Directeurs Généraux et Chefs de service Objet: unification allemande - organisation des travaux des services de la Commission ", 04.05.90.
[220] The limitations of archival research have been discussed in *chapter 2*.

The same pragmatism is also required when applying theory to the analysis of complex processes such as EU enlargement. My dissertation highlights the immense value of theoretical explanation – an issue that historians have traditionally struggled with – while also demonstrating that a more flexible approach to theory proves effective. At least in the case of the GDR's integration into the EC, strict adherence to the boundaries of a single theoretical approach would likely have resulted in a weaker explanatory capacity. Instead, a pragmatic approach, drawing on multiple theoretical perspectives and crossing boundaries, enables the development of more nuanced and, therefore, more realistic process expectations (see Hakansson, 2024, who likewise advocates pragmatism).

These insights have important implications for the currently revitalised EU enlargement scholarship, which has yet to develop comprehensive theoretical models for the currently discussed enlargement. A natural starting point is to engage with well-established theoretical frameworks formulated in the context of the EU's big bang enlargement. Leuffen et al. (2024) demonstrate that Schimmelfennig's (2003) theory of "rhetorical action" remains relevant to contemporary cases. Similar assessments still need to be conducted for other theories, such as liberal intergovernmentalism (Moravcsik, 1998). Scholars working to refine or develop new theories of enlargement can learn two key lessons from my dissertation. First, in the trajectory of Schimmelfennig's rhetorical action theory, combining elements of rational and normative institutionalism can be highly effective in explaining the terms of enlargement granted to new member states. Second, incorporating (neoclassical) realism into the theoretical canon of EU enlargement, which has thus far been dominated by liberalism and constructivism, is a promising endeavour. Given the renewed emphasis on geopolitics in recent enlargement studies (Karjalainen, 2023; Orenstein, 2023; Panchuk, 2024; Vaduchova and Koval, 2024), scholars can be anticipated to move in this direction.

Beyond its academic contributions, this dissertation also offers several practical and policy insights for EU enlargement. In the current debates, the security dimension of enlargement is constantly emphasised and linked to the outbreak Ukraine war. Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 has widely been recognised as a moment of systemic change – famously termed a *Zeitenwende* (historical turning point) by Germany's Chancellor Olaf Scholz.[221] While the precise trajectory of the *Zeitenwende* is still unfolding, it is evident that it has ended the EU's "enlargement fatigue" (Szolucha, 2010: 107). In response to the new

[221] The speech is available here: https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-en/news/policy-statement-by-olaf-scholz-chancellor-of-the-federal-republic-of-germany-and-member-of-the-german-bundestag-27-february-2022-in-berlin-2008378, accessed 21.03.25.

geopolitical reality, NATO has already gained Sweden and Finland as new members, and EU enlargement now appears a matter of time, with nine states currently holding candidate status. Throughout its history, the EU has responded to crises in various ways (Schramm, 2024) – at present, integration appears to be the predominant course of action.

There exist parallels between current developments and the GDR's integration 35 years ago. Then, as now, the EU was confronted with the question of enlargement as a direct consequence of a fundamental transformation of the international system. Then, as now, enlargement affected the core security interests of member states. Current advocates of enlargement argue that enlarging the EU can prevent destabilisation of the European continent.[222] The case of the GDR demonstrates that enlargement can indeed play a pivotal role in stabilising Europe's security architecture.

A common argument against near-term enlargement is that it should be preceded by EU institutional reforms (Costa et al., 2025; Hoxhaj 2025). Another frequently raised concern is the financial burden of integrating a large and structurally deficient state like Ukraine into the EU (for a discussion of this argument see Lindner et al., 2023). The GDR's accession to the EC demonstrates that such concerns need not be insurmountable obstacles if there is sufficient political will to move forward with enlargement. Before the GDR joined, similar arguments were made, suggesting that enlargement should be postponed until the Single Market was completed in 1992 (Spence, 1992: 141).

Regarding the financial implications of enlargement, the GDR's accession to the EC illustrates that even substantial financial repercussions do not necessarily constitute a major obstacle. Moreover, the overall budgetary impact of enlargement on the EU is often overstated (Lindner et al., 2023; Rubio et al., 2025). Nevertheless, as seen with the Eastern *Länder*, new member states can be temporarily excluded from certain EU benefits, such as the structural funds, to ease immediate fiscal pressures. Additionally, member states that stand to gain the most from enlargement could provide compensatory transfers to those less advantaged (for these two mechanisms to resolve distributional conflicts see Schneider, 2009). The FRG shouldered the financial burden of the GDR's accession almost alone. For Ukraine's potential accession, a similar mechanism could involve Central and Eastern European member states contributing to

[222] For overview of these arguments consult: https://theloop.ecpr.eu/tag/eu-enlargement-dilemmas/, accessed 21.03.25.

Southern European countries, assuming that proximity to Russia remains a key factor in shaping support for Ukraine's EU membership.

More broadly, the GDR's integration into the EC demonstrates that the EU can take extraordinary decisions when exceptional circumstances demand it, such as proceeding with enlargement without primary treaty change. Furthermore, the EU can effectively implement such extraordinary decisions, highlighting both its political flexibility and administrative capacity. The European Commission played a pivotal role in the GDR's accession, demonstrating significant administrative capacity and flexibility, which will likely be essential for future enlargements. This institutional adaptability may also prove crucial for advancing vertical integration. Recent proposals and initiatives indicate that, as in the past, horizontal and vertical integration may advance simultaneously (Schramm, 2025). Within this process, the Commission is poised to play a leading role. Due to Europe's changed geopolitical reality, the Commission has not only advocated enlargement but also intensified cooperation in the field of security and defence. For the first time, the EU has appointed a Commissioner for Defence, and the Commission has launched "ReArm Europe" – an initiative that could mark a significant step toward enhancing Europe's defence capabilities (European Commission, 2025). Due to Russia's war in Ukraine and the US withdrawal from the transatlantic alliance, the EU is likely to undergo changes. In the near future, the EU could look significantly different, not just in size but also with broader competencies in security and defence.

# Appendix
## Appendix to Chapter 4

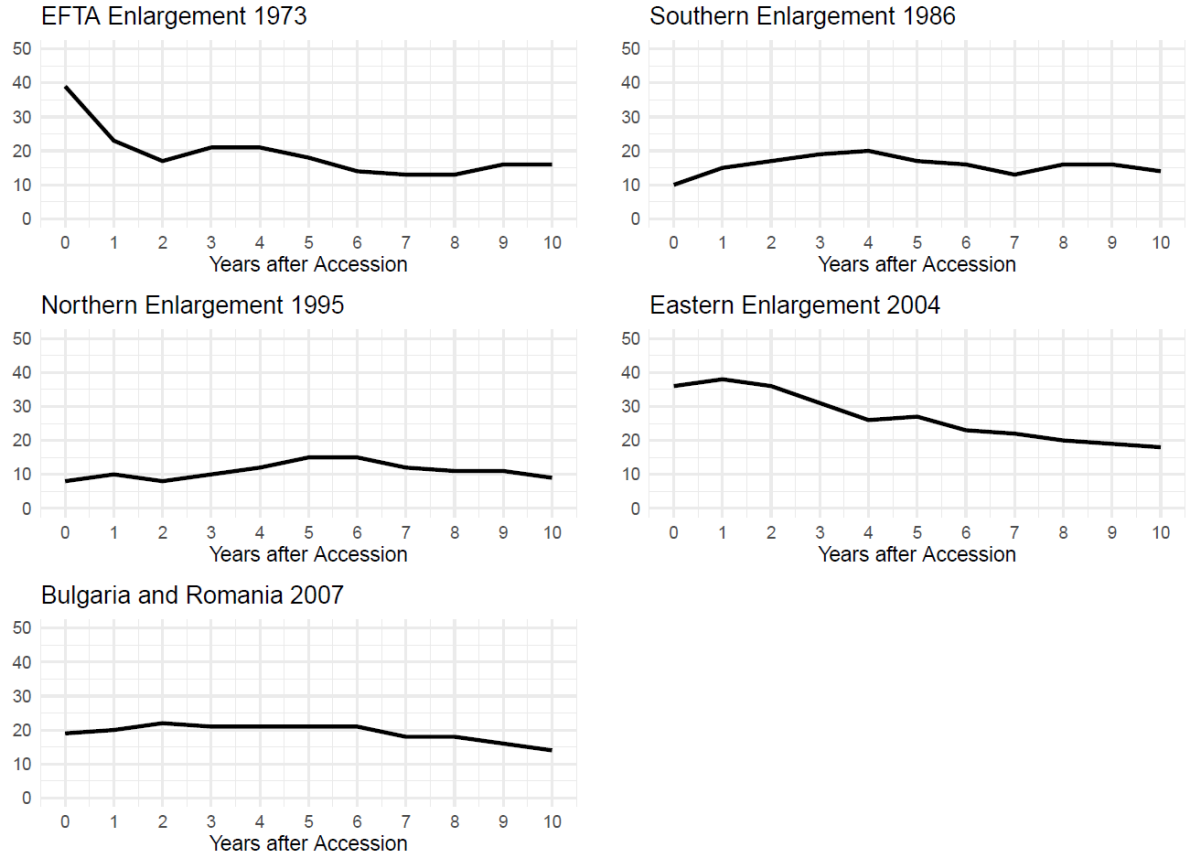
### Appendix 1: Rounds of EU Enlargement

| | |
|---|---|
| EFTA enlargement 1973 | Denmark, Ireland, UK |
| Southern enlargement 1986 | Portugal, Spain |
| Northern enlargement 1995 | Austria, Finland, Sweden |
| Eastern enlargement 2004 | Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia |
| Romania and Bulgaria 2007 | Romania and Bulgaria |

Greece 1981 and Croatia 2013 were accessed on their own and are, therefore, not included.

### Appendix 2: Phasing-in/out Patterns across Enlargement Rounds

Below is a variation of Figure 2, which does not include the GDR. In this way, a smaller scale on the y-axis can be used, enabling a clearer identification of the trends across the enlargement rounds. The graphs visualise the duration of enlargement-related differentiations, depicting how the number of differentiations evolved across different enlargements in the first ten years post-accession. The graphs are based on EUDIFF2 data and include only differentiations concerning legislation introduced before the year of accession.



**Appendix 3: Trend and Outlier Analyses**

**Correlation Results**

| Enlargement Round | Pearson's Correlation Coefficient |
|---|---|
| EFTA | -0.882*** |
| Southern | -0.899*** |
| GDR | -0.758*** |
| Northern | -0.823*** |
| Eastern | -0.962*** |
| BG & RO | -0.788*** |

*Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01*

*Pearson's R correlation coefficients. Note: includes only differentiations concerning legislative acts introduced before the year of accession.*

| | EFTA | Southern | GDR | Northern | Eastern | Bulgaria and Romania |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) |
| Years after Accession | -0.476*** | -0.581*** | -2.447*** | -0.524*** | -1.714*** | -0.612*** |
| | (0.038) | (0.051) | (0.406) | (0.077) | (0.136) | (0.151) |
| Intercept | 20.889*** | 18.718*** | 57.428*** | 12.780*** | 36.000*** | 22.115*** |
| | (1.003) | (0.944) | (6.614) | (1.035) | (1.117) | (0.982) |
| N | 46 | 33 | 29 | 24 | 15 | 12 |
| $R^2$ | 0.778 | 0.809 | 0.574 | 0.678 | 0.925 | 0.621 |
| Adjusted $R^2$ | 0.773 | 0.803 | 0.558 | 0.663 | 0.919 | 0.583 |
| Residual Std. Error | 3.457 (df = 44) | 2.774 (df = 31) | 18.273 (df = 27) | 2.614 (df = 22) | 2.273 (df = 13) | 1.809 (df = 10) |
| F Statistic | 153.84*** (df = 1; 44) | 131.23*** (df = 1; 31) | 36.40*** (df = 1; 27) | 46.28*** (df = 1; 22) | 159.32*** (df = 1; 13) | 16.37*** (df = 1; 10) |

*Note:* *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

*Linear regression for years after accession on differentiations per year. Observation period 1958-2018.*

## Appendix 4: More Extensive Quotations from Archival Documents Referred to in the Article

Footnote 111

HAEU-DORIE-567-38_00:“Conseil Européen – Dublin“, 28.04.90.

“GERMAN UNIFICATION

4. We are pleased that German unification is taking place under a European roof. The Community will ensure that the integration of the territory of the German Democratic Republic into the Community is accomplished in a smooth and harmonious way. The European Council is satisfied that this integration will contribute to faster economic growth in the Community and agrees that it will take place in conditions of economic balance and monetary stability. The integration will become effective as soon as unification is legally established, subject to the necessary transitional arrangements. It will be carried out without revision of the Treaties.

5. During the period prior to unification the Federal Government will keep the Community fully informed of any relevant measures discussed and agreed between the authorities of the two Germanies for the purpose of aligning their policies and their legislation. Furthermore, the Commission will be fully involved with these discussions. In this period the German Democratic Republic will benefit from full access to the European Investment Bank, EURATOM and ECSC loan facilities, in addition to Community support in the context of the coordinated action of the Group of 24 countries and with participation in EUREKA projects. As regards the transitional arrangements, the Commission will as soon as possible, and in the context of an overall report, submit to the Council proposals for such measures as are deemed necessary and the Council will take decisions on these rapidly. These measures, which will enter into force at the moment of unification, will permit a balanced integration based on the principles of cohesion and solidarity and on the need to take account of all the interests involved, including those resulting from the “acquis communautaire”. The transitional measures will be confined to what is strictly necessary and aim at full Integration as rapidly and as harmoniously as possible.”

Footnote 112

This was, for instance, discussed among high-level government advisors. The UK advisor pointed out the limited influence: NA-PREM19/2998:” Germany: Meeting with Herr Teltschik”, 09.02.90.

“More generally, no-one had any idea what would happen after the election of 18 March in the GDR. It was perfectly possible that the new Parliament would meet and, rather than elect a government, simply vote to join the FRG, immediately under Article 23 of the FRG constitution. The German government would be unable to refuse. Alternatively, the GDR Parliament might propose the establishment of a constituent Assembly to adopt a new constitution for Germany as a whole, with elections throughout a united Germany early next year. No-one could control what might happen. It was difficult to consult in a situation of incipient crisis. The Federal Government was fully occupied with preparing to cope with the imminent breakdown of the GDR.”

Footnote 115

NA-FCO 30/9170:“EMU and the GDR“, 27.07.90.

“EMU AND THE GDR

1. Mr Garel-Jones has asked what influence, if any, de Maizière has on the FRG’s approach to economic union.

2. The answer is next to none. De Maiziere’s instincts would probably be to echo the FRG line, on the basis that a more integrated Europe would help to make the GDR’s new democracy more secure. But it is not a subject with which the GDR has concerned itself in detail. It has never had to acquire the expertise needed to contribute to the formation of German policy on the issues, and has other overwhelming preoccupation in the remining few months of its existence.

[handwritten comment] I agree. GDR politicians have tried to contribute to the formation of policy towards NATO, where they also lack expertise, but fortunately they have so far had no influence either.”

Footnote 122

BA-B136/34468:“Sitzung der Bangemann-Gruppe mit BM Toepfer“, 03.04.90.

“1. Federal Minister Töpfer gave a comprehensive description of the environmental situation in the GDR. He pointed out that environmental data had previously been kept secret. By revealing the pollution and destruction, people had now become aware of the health risks they were exposed to. The joint German-German goal was to create a situation comparable to that of the Federal Republic of Germany by the year 2000 through an environmental union in the GDR. Environmental protection would serve to encourage people in the GDR to stay. Overcoming the problem of environmental refugees was not only a German task, but a European task of the first order. However, this dimension should not be limited to the GDR. Comparable tasks had to be tackled in Poland, the CSR and other Comecon countries.

2. Minister Töpfer’s detailed description of the situation, which was followed with great attention by all participants in the discussion, should be emphasised:

- in the GDR there is a dramatic concentration of pollutants in the air, water and soil, which not only puts a strain on the national and global natural balance, but also directly results in considerable health hazards for people in the GDR. The causes are the high use of lignite, energy- and raw material-intensive processes in heavy industry, high energy consumption and outdated production processes. The GDR's previous economic system subsidised production and passed on the costs to health and the environment.

- The GDR's water system is severely damaged over long stretches. 30% of the water bodies are ecologically dead, 45% of the watercourses can no longer be used for drinking water, even with the use of advanced technology.

- The problem of air pollution is even more serious. Around 5-6 million tons of sulphur dioxide are emitted from GDR factories every year. Per square meter and per capita, the GDR leads the world with this amount, the main cause being lignite.”

Footnote 124

HAEU-CEUE_SEGE-SEC(1990)0751:“The Community and German Unification”, 20.04.90.

“The integration of the German Democratic Republic into the fisheries policy will pose some awkward problems. German unification will result in a substantial increase in the capacity of the Community fleet, whereas resources are already very limited. The capacity of the German Democratic Republic’s fleet (which is roughly twice the size of that of the Federal Republic) is out of all proportion to the resources to which it can have access. As regards markets, fundamental adjustments to the production and marketing structures in the German Democratic Republic are clearly essential. The integration of the German Democrat Republic’s fleet into the fishing industry’s structural arrangements will also require adjustments to the existing set-up. In terms of internal resources, unification would mean a small increase in the Community fishing zone in the Baltic. Allowing the German Democratic Republic’s fleet access to the other zones could jeopardise the balance In fishing capacity currently in use and the existing balance between Member States. This is especially the case with precautionary TACs, which are not shared out between Member States, given the size of the German Democratic Republic’s fleet and its tendency to concentrate on certain stocks (blue whiting, horse mackerel, etc.). On the external front, the Community will have to take over the bilateral agreements concluded by the German Democratic Republic and this may entail complex negotiations.”

Footnote 127

BA-B102/410765:“Verflechtung der DDR in die RGW“, 23.02.90.

“Interdependence of the GDR with Comecon

The unification of Germany under the umbrella of the EC leads to the adaptation of the economy in the former territory of the GDR to the world market. Purchasing interests and production will be orientated towards the world market and invoicing will be in DM. In view of the close links between the GDR and the Comemcon states, this reorientation could lead to considerable changes in the existing flow of goods:

- The GDR's trade with the Soviet Union alone accounts for around 40% of its total foreign trade volume; if the other six Eastern European Comecon states are included, this figure rises to around 65% in 1987.

- The Soviet Union and the other Comecon states are highly dependent on deliveries of capital goods and machinery from the GDR, which are difficult to replace due to their high technological level in the Comecon (25% of agricultural machinery in the Soviet Union comes from the GDR). Some of the deliveries probably fall under the COCOM-term ‘dual-use technology’. The GDR, in turn, mainly imports industrial raw materials and energy (one of the questions here is whether the prices charged by the Soviet Union are below or above world market levels)

- The economies of the Comecon member states are linked to each other by a close institutional network”

Footnote 129

NA-FCO30/9155:”EC implications of German Unification”, 08.03.90.

“ 4. The key issues you may wish to explore are:

- handling and timing: a tidy EC negotiation seems unlikely, for the reasons set out in paras 9-10 of the paper; the Commission have already begun work and will produce a paper for discussion at the special Dublin Summit on 28 April; we will want to ensure that the Council is fully engaged from an early state; but we will also need to keep in close touch with the Commission to ensure that our specific concerns are met;

- amendments to EC law: much EC secondary legislation will need to adapted, or provision made for derogation and transitional periods (para 12). The Germans claim that Treaty amendment will be unnecessary, but temporary derogations from e.g. Treaty rules on the free movement of goods would require formal Treaty provision. You may wish to ask the Attorney-General to comment: and then to check that colleagues agree with the suggestion in para 11 that it would be preferable to wrap all the changes up in a single Treaty instrument (even if Treaty amendment does not prove technically necessary, a single instrument could be the tidiest solution; an IGC would be necessary, but quite separate from discussions on EMU, and should prove mere formality). Colleagues may also wish to underline the importance of mechanisms for ensuring proper implementation."

Footnote 129

NA-FCO 30/8826:"Dublin European Council, institutional questions: French views", 12.04.90.

"Dublin European Council, institutional questions: French views

Summary

1. MME Guigou speaks on same lines as Boissieu. French thinking at an early stage, and the President, mainly interested in moving forward EMU, has not taken up a position on the details of non EMU related institutional reform. Duma's speech in national assembly firms up French line for Dublin Council.

Detail

2. The Minister talked with MME Guigou on 10 April about EC implications of German unification (your telno 172 to Dublin), going on to cover institutional questions.

3. On EC/GDR, MME Guigou said that the essential point was that the acquis applying to the Federal Republic should be maintained. We should be talking about derogations for the former territory of the GDR only. She agreed that is was for the Germans themselves to pose the questions, that there should be transparency and that the full Council should be involved. She agreed also that the Dublin summit should not get into detailed discussion of the issues of substance."

Footnote 130

HAEU-CEUE_SEGE-SEC(1990)0415:"Compte rendu de la reunion du groupe de travail charge d'examiner les consequences des relations interallemandes sur les competences communautaires", 22.02.90

"Mr. TIETMEYER stresses the need for a solid initial structure to limit the risks of the proposed operation as much as possible. This implies knowledge of the GDR's monetary situation. However, monetary statistics only exist up to 1988, the definitions they use are different from those used in the West and some of them have been deliberately distorted. We do not know the

balance sheet of the State Bank, nor the relationship between it and state institutions, nor the financial reserves of companies. The same is true of the external debt and the commercial and financial obligations deriving from COMECON. Everything therefore needs to be verified, and existing statistics cannot be relied upon."

Footnote 130

BA-B136/20243:"Ad hoc-Gruppe "Deutsche Einheit" - externe Aspekte", 05.09.90.

"Initial discussion of the external aspects of the Commission's proposals on German unification revealed that all delegations agreed in principle with the Commission's proposal. However, all delegations requested additional clarification from the Commission and Germany on important aspects, in particular waterproof controls on the consumption of favoured eastern imports on the territory of the GDR. Here, permanent representative DG Cadieuk and the German delegation pointed to functioning existing EC rules and planned monitoring measures. France expressed concern about the distortion of competitive conditions in trade with the East (imports and exports). In addition to the assurance of compliance with EC competition law already demanded by Germany in the Coreper, France would like certainty that measures under the protection of legitimate expectations will not distort trade flows to the detriment of the other 11 member states.

[...] French delegation asked about possible preferential conditions for GDR exports to Comecon countries. '"

Footnote 131

NA-PREM 19/3000:"EC Implications of German Reunification ", 25.03.90.

"- on the agricultural side, it is difficult to reach a firm judgement about derogations and transitional arrangements until we know what the DM/Ostmark conversion rate will be: and know more, too, about East German prices and how they are calculated. But assuming GDR prices are judged to be lower than EC prices, we shall want only a short transitional period to raise them to EC levels, because it would be hard to have much confidence that exports of East German food to rest of the EC could be policed effectively.

- the balance of the judgement both on trade and agriculture is therefore that there is little to be gained from pressing for maintenance of inner-German border controls.

- we shall want to resist derogations from EC standards which would allow East German agricultural products which do not conform to EC standards to circulate freely."

Footnote 132

BA-B136/34468:"Sitzung der Bangemann-Gruppe mit BM Toepfer", 03.04.90.

"1. Federal Minister Töpfer gave a comprehensive description of the environmental situation in the GDR. He pointed out that environmental data had previously been kept secret. By revealing the pollution and destruction, people had now become aware of the health risks they were exposed to. The joint German-German goal was to create a situation comparable to that of the Federal Republic of Germany by the year 2000 through an environmental union in the GDR. Environmental protection would serve to encourage people in the GDR to stay.

Overcoming the problem of environmental refugees was not only a German task, but a European task of the first order. However, this dimension should not be limited to the GDR. Comparable tasks had to be tackled in Poland, the CSR and other Comecon countries.

2. Minister Töpfer's detailed description of the situation, which was followed with great attention by all participants in the discussion, should be emphasised:

- in the GDR there is a dramatic concentration of pollutants in the air, water and soil, which not only puts a strain on the national and global natural balance, but also directly results in considerable health hazards for people in the GDR. The causes are the high use of lignite, energy- and raw material-intensive processes in heavy industry, high energy consumption and outdated production processes. The GDR's previous economic system subsidised production and passed on the costs to health and the environment.

- The GDR's water system is severely damaged over long stretches. 30% of the water bodies are ecologically dead, 45% of the watercourses can no longer be used for drinking water, even with the use of advanced technology.

- The problem of air pollution is even more serious. Around 5-6 million tons of sulphur dioxide are emitted from GDR factories every year. Per square meter and per capita, the GDR leads the world with this amount, the main cause being lignite."

Footnote 133

BA-B136/20243:"Ad hoc-Gruppe "Deutsche Einheit" - externe Aspekte", 05.09.90.

"4. end-use controls for imports from third countries: the French question centred on the specific mechanisms and quantities involved. UK referred to the same problem with GDR goods not meeting the Community standard in the transitional period. NL and UK raised the issue of further processing. The Commission pointed out that the transitional period was limited to one year and that contacts were still taking place between DG 21 and the German authorities regarding control mechanisms. Representative DG 21 explained the application of the existing Community system based on Regulation 4J41'87, which allows for a strict control mechanism. The German delegation added that there are border controls on the basis of accompanying documents and that a national regulation with a catalogue of fines and a national instruction for random checks by the trade supervisory authorities would enable further controls. For an appropriate economic categorisation of the problem, the German delegation referred to the low quality of products from Eastern Europe and the resulting drastic decline in imports from the Comecon countries. Overall, the problem is less serious than the concerns of the member states would suggest."

Footnote 134

NA-FCO30/8905:"French EC priorities for 1990", 05.03.90.

"German Unification

5. The French have not yet, it seems, done any serious thinking about the EC implications of Germany unification. Their views ought to be similar to ours, particularly on the question who pays. As net contributors like us, the French ought not want to see additional burdens on the Community budget. But there have been one or two signs of weakness on the point recently: the sooner we can engage them on the substance the better."

Footnote 135

BA-B136/34468:"1426. Tagung des ASTV", 05.04.90.

"2 On German unification

All permanent representatives who spoke emphasised the importance of the German unification process for the future architecture of Europe and consistently expressed a positive attitude towards it. This also applied to Portugal, which also expressed some concern that there was not yet sufficient clarity about the effects of German unification on the EC, including any necessary institutional adjustments. No experience had yet been gained with transitional arrangements of varying duration, which would only be applied to part of a member state. Another important question was whether a united Germany would be eligible for economic and social cohesion programmes (Portuguese view: no). Spain pointed out the question of whether the integration process of the EC should not be accelerated in view of the great weight of a united Germany."

Footnote 136

NA-FCO30/8905:"Secretary of State's visit to Paris", 28.03.90.

" – A number of difficult issues – agriculture, environment, competition, budgetary. But strong UK-French common interest in two basic principles – viz:

- derogations should be as short as possible, and apply to the ex-GDR only. No question of reopening the Community acquis in respect of current GDR territory;

- transitional costs must be primarily for Germans to bear, for the medium/long term benefits will accrue primarily to the German economy. […]

3. The French broadly share our views, but we do not think they have yet done as much detailed work. It serves their interests, as ours, if the Germans continue not to seek major institutional changes; they, like us, want proper EC consideration of the issues; and they share our aim of minimising the Community Budget costs of integration, and ensuring that any transitional arrangements do not create loopholes in Community competition rules."

Footnote 138

BA-B136/34469:"Ad-hoc Gruppe Deutsche Einheit Umweltschutz, 07.09.90.

"The group had a very lively debate in which essential questions remained unanswered. Key points of the discussion were the control of the final destination of non-EC-compliant products in the GDR, concerns about distortions of competition in favour of GDR products due to exemptions in production processes, the scope of the adjustments that are possible in the committee procedure, the delimitation of old and new plants, the question of the legal basis 100a or 130s for waste regulation. [...] The Commission reacted negatively to Germany's request to extend the transitional solution for water protection from 5 to 10 years and pointed to the possibility of a later extension under the normal Council procedure. [...] Italy, Great Britain, France, Belgium and Spain are concerned about the high level of environmental protection in the GDR areas; they called for the exemption to be limited to old plants and for a strict definition of new plants, unless this is applied in other Member States. Germany and the Commission opposed a specific definition for GDR installations, but under strong pressure from the Chairman, the Commission will consider a solution."

Footnote 139

BA-B136/34468:“Handelspolitische Übergangsmaßnahmen im Zusammenhand mit der deutschen Einigung“, 31.07.90.

“The Commission’s concept was approved in principle by the German delegation, even if further examination was reserved. Significant disagreements became apparent with regard to the question of the duration of the transitional periods until the elimination of special regulations for imports from Comecon countries in particular (1 year transitional period with a one-year extension period, or 2 years transitional period). There are still uncertainties regarding a number of detailed questions.”

Footnote 140

BA-B136/34469:“Ad-hoc Gruppe ‘Deutsche Einheit‘ übrige Bereiche des Gesamtpaketes“, 10.09.90.

“The outstanding areas of the ECSC, fisheries agreements, plant protection/animal nutrition and the other internal market aspects of competition policy and statistics were discussed extensively and partially controversial. Some member states still have a considerable need for clarification. At this meeting, Member States also raised cross-cutting issues relating to end-use controls and the scope of traditional trade flows.”

Footnote 142

BA-B136/34469:“Vorläufige Maßnahmen zum Vorschlagspaket der KOM für die deutsche Einigung: hier Sonderrrat und AstV“, 12.09.90.

“After the first reading of the ‘provisional measures’ in the EP plenary on 11 September 1990, the Special Council convened by the Presidency at short notice for this purpose agreed on a common position which accommodates the EP’s main requests for amendments. At the preparatory meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, agreement was also reached on those amendments requested by the EP which had only become known yesterday. The Commission, which had fully adopted the EP’s amendments in its proposal for provisional measures, with the exception of amendment no. 8 concerning the budget and the financial perspective, played a particularly constructive role. The delegations consistently praised the work of the Commission and the Presidency, which had made a significant contribution to such a rapid decision. They explained that, in view of the special historical situation, they were also prepared to involve the EP as far as possible in the decision-making and information process. Minister of State Adam-Schwätzer paid particular tribute to the achievements of the Commission and the Council Presidency and thanked the other Member States for their great understanding.”

Footnote 143

BA-B136/34469:Ad-hoc Gruppe Fischerei“, 21.09.90.

“In view of the difficult situation in which fisheries currently find themselves, even the prospect of a change to or in the carefully balanced structure of the common fisheries policy seems to be seen as a potential threat to their own opportunities. This sensitivity is evident time and again, despite all the goodwill towards us and our concerns and the unbroken commitment to help us

overcome the problems arising from the unification process in the fisheries sector. In this respect, the concerns expressed by the Irish delegation appear to be symptomatic."

Footnote 144

BA-B136/21523:"Stand der Diskussion über den EG-Kommissionsvorschlag", 23.10.90.

"3 Assessment

The course of discussions in the Council and the European Parliament shows that the Community as a whole remains determined to make swift and constructive progress with the integration of the five new federal states into the territory of the Community. However, there may be certain changes to the timetable. As the Council will not be able to adopt its 'common position' by the end of the EP session week on 26 October 1990 as originally planned, it cannot be ruled out that the 2nd reading of the Commission package in the European Parliament may be postponed until October. In any case, the European Parliament's rapporteur, Mr Donelly, has referred to a possible adoption. In such a case, final adoption of the Commission's package of measures at the Foreign Affairs Council on 4 December 1990 would no longer be possible. In this case, efforts would have to be made under all circumstances to achieve adoption of the overall package at the Council of Foreign Ministers on 18 December 1990. This is necessary because of the time limit on the provisional transitional measures until 31 December 1990."

Footnote 145

BA-B136/34469:"Sitzung Ad-hoc Gruppe Deutsche Einheit des Sonderausschusses Landwirtschaft", 12.09.90.

"Die Beratung des allgemeinen Teiles des Kommissionsvorschlages für eine Verordnung über die für die Landwirtschaft erforderlichen Übergangsmaßnahmen und Anpassungen aufgrund der Eingliederung des Gebietes der DDR in die Gemeinschaft in der ad hoc-Gruppe des Sonderausschusses Landwirtschaft ergaben keine Einwände von grundsätzlicher Bedeutung, wobei allerdings die finanziellen Aspekte des Vorschlages heute nicht vollständig zur Sprache kamen. Alle Delegationen äußerten Verständnis für die Notwendigkeit vorn Übergangsmaßnahmen und konnten dem Kommissionsvorschlag grundsätzlich zustimmen."

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