



The Widening of European Union to Post Soviet Countries: Case Study of Bulgaria Acceptance and Ukraine Accession

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Abstract

To be a part of the European Union must follow complex procedures. Before joining the institution, candidate countries must meet the Copenhagen Criteria. Then fulfill membership obligations contained in Acquis Communautaire. Once fulfilled, candidate countries can join the institution. However, in contrast to Bulgaria, Bulgaria was unable to fulfill it but was given the easiness by providing CVM assistance. Bulgaria's acceptance violated the EU agreement, disappointing several members, especially the UK. The peak of UK disappointment occurred in 2016, and the UK stated its exit from the EU. Then in 2022, Ukraine, amid the Russian invasion, applied to join. EU agreed to grant the candidate State status immediately without an in-depth administrative review. A country applying for EU First should be on the waiting list with the status as potential candidate countries and then go to the following status as candidate countries. The last was finally in the first line as a union member. However, Ukraine directly jumps up to second status.

1. Introduction

There is no prediction UK (United Kingdom) decided to leave the EU (European Union). It happened because the principle EU had formed was to unite all European countries with the motto Unity in Diversity after the end of World War II. Based on this motto, the European nations designed the Schuman Plan to establish the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1952 which was initiated by Belgium, Italy, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and West

Germany which later changed its name to the European Community Coal (ECC) in 1957. The ECC then became the forerunner of the harmonizing of European economic union and growth because it regulates indirect taxes, industrial regulations, agriculture, fisheries and monetary policy among its members (Bechtold et al., 2017).

In general, economic benefits are more interesting to urge countries to join EU to face market liberalization. It became an opportunity for European countries to integrate with the EU. Hence the UK decided to join in 1963 and 1967, which later became official members in 1973, followed by Denmark and Ireland at the same time. The expansion was then carried out again in 1981 by Greece, in 1986 by Spain and Portugal, and Germany in 1990 after German unification over the fall of Berlin wall. Then in 1993 the ECC changed its name to the European Union, since its change in 1995 Austria, Sweden and Finland have integrated (Taydas & Kentmen-Cin, 2017).

Thus its peak in 2004 EU carried out the most extensive expansion by accepting member countries of the Central and East European Countries (CEEC), some of them also known as post-communist countries, such as Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovenia, Estonia, Cyprus, Lithuania, Latvia, Slovakia, and Malta. Initially, Bulgaria and Romania expected to accept in 2004. (Jovanović, 2004) However, democratic reforms and the rule of law in those countries did not meet the EU standards, so the membership of those countries had postponed. However, in 2007 Bulgaria and Romania officially became EU members. Next, in 2013 the widening was held, and Croatia officially declared as a member, but three years later, in July 2016, the UK declared its exit (Menon, 2023).

If deeply observed, UK's alertness about expansion was anticipated since 2004, when the CEEC was accepted, and increased in 2007 when Bulgaria and Romania officially joined. That alertness shows the UK's skepticism of EU policies which seem to simplify the membership of these countries, such a Bulgaria. The UK indicates the simplification of membership procedures because Bulgaria has not been able to meet the Copenhagen Criteria as an absolute requirement to join the Block. Also, the fulfillment of rules and regulations on *Acquis Communautaire* cannot comply until 2015, which should meet before its membership in 2007. Every member should meet the requirements and criteria listed in Copenhagen Criteria without exception, followed by compliance *Acquis Communautaire*. However, the EU decided to accept Bulgaria by providing CVM so that it could meet the Copenhagen Criteria after its membership.

Quit differently about Ukraine, whose borders directly to Russia, has shown interest in joining since 2014. However, the EU took a stand in 2022 amid the Russian invasion. Without a doubt, the EU immediately gave status as a candidate country. Administratively, a country that proposes to become part of the institution should follow three levels: first, as a potential candidate, the second level as the candidate country, and finally, as the official member (Von Bogdandy et al., 2021).

Ukraine's accession amid invasion is relevant to Rational Choice Theory analysis, which says the state's strategy must be chosen based on the same assumption. Namely, the state is a rational actor who behaves in an actual manner and can evaluate. Every choice must have a motive that can influence other actors' choices or behavior, so it becomes more strategic. It's because every choice will

affect the enemy's behavior, including in issuing policies. Then a country implementing those principles will seek security to change the status quo. Quo status will be closely related to considering beliefs about motives affecting the balance between cooperative and competitive strategies (Glaser, 2010).

Based on the facts, this research aims to explain acceptance EU's membership acceptance since 2004 is no longer synonymous with economic interests but has shifted to politics. This argument arises because liberal institutionalism and neofunctionalism also explain the expansion of the EU's territory to post-Soviet countries. However, the rational choice theory is most needed to determine why the European Union wants to expand its territory to post soviet-communist countries.

The approach social interaction idea is also an economic action as a choice in terms of considering Costs and Benefits. Rational Choice actors will choose more profitable actions to maximize benefits and minimize losses. Rational Choice will also provide a benchmark to see how an institution can influence a political system by determining policies. In making decisions, Rational Choice will take action based on most rational and calculative choices. All social activities are motivated by rational choices as instrumental actions, even though they do not look rational. Rational Choice is very calculated in deciding a policy orientation, and economic calculations will take precedence. This tendency is a rational action that can affect all fields. Rational Choice also argues that individuals must have choices for the actions to want to take. Rational Choice will choose an alternative that gives the most significant advantage (Oppenheimer, 2012).

2. Methods

The research in this article will conduct using qualitative methods. Qualitative research intends to understand phenomena about what is experienced by research subjects, for example, behavior, perceptions, motivations, and actions holistically. Furthermore, it employs descriptions in words and language in an extraordinary natural context by utilizing various natural methods. Qualitative research also aims to obtain a complete picture from the point of view of the human being studied. Qualitative research in this study uses secondary data (Abdussamad, 2021).

Secondary data is a data source that does not provide information directly to data collectors. Secondary data sources are the results of further processing of data obtained from literature studies from various existing literature. Data obtained through library research. Library research is conducted through books, journals, and other documentation materials to obtain and deepen information and concepts related to the issues discussed. In addition to materials obtained from the library, the author also uses other material sources from magazines or news from the internet. The materials that support the research collected are beneficial in completing the research (Sugiyono, 2012).

3. Findings and Discussions

3.1 Findings

The Case of Bulgaria: European Union Acceptance of Bulgaria To Form Collective Identity

Membership granted to Bulgaria is advantageous for achieving political stability and economic prosperity in the EU. EU hopes Bulgaria's transition to

democracy and economic market will provide a better life, including respect for civil rights, freedom of expression, and a standard of living comparable to Western European countries. EU's main agenda in accepting Bulgarian membership is part of the idea to unite Europe by equalizing economic and political status. Bulgaria, as a post-communist country, should have a close identity economically and politically with Europe through the single market and the upholding of democratic norms deliberately instilled by EU. So, Collective Identity eliminates Bulgaria's dependence on Russia as inherit of the Soviet Union in making policies (Shepherd, 2007).

The EU carried out this improvement by reconstructing several countries in the Eastern European region through territorial expansion. EU will facilitate intergovernmental cooperation, provide information and help reduce transaction costs for consistency achieved by countries, so agreements between countries can be centrally reached. Consideration of long-term stability and prosperity is also the main reason for the EU to expand its territory to Eastern Europe, in this case, Bulgaria, and the main factor causing Eastern European countries wanting to join the club. In this way, the EU's political authorities have pushed to agree to reach approval to achieve the EU's main interests. However, the fulfillment of the agreement will likely be delayed for years by candidate countries. If this happens, the EU have to make accelerated steps for European integration in order to achieve expansion to Bulgaria. If the expansion does not occur quickly, it is worried that EU politics will become more complicated (Baldwin, 1995).

By accepting Bulgaria as a member of the EU, Bulgaria bound to the rules set by the EU. Bulgaria cannot remove or reduce any EU regulations from being applied in its country. Following EU regulations before membership, each candidate country cannot bid on or even reduce EU rules. Supporting factors for Bulgaria joining the EU include: 1) Having a representative in EU bodies, 2) Being able to join Schengen, 3) Having a chance to join the Eurozone, and 4) Making the path easier to become a member of NATO.

Even though it has yet to be able to fulfill the reforms and is still under EU monitoring until 2015, the EU cannot predict the failure of Bulgaria's reforms. However, it is more to the EU's prediction that the reforms carried out by Bulgaria will take a short through CVM assistance, but Bulgaria still needs to.

However, Bulgaria's membership actually makes it easier to EU to reforming every regulation such as economic and political regulations in that country. If Bulgaria experiences a problem it will not affect other countries in European territories. EU as an institution makes it easier for a country to regulate and renew an action without being influenced by outsider, EU will appear as the main actor that will adjudicate and handle cases of every member state as of spillover effect can be avoided.

The Case of Ukraine: Accelerating Integration of Ukraine By Implementing Collective Identity Under EU Standard

In February 2022, President Volodymyr Zelensky registered Ukraine to join the institution precisely five days after the Russian invasion. In this condition it's clearly known Ukraine's motivation in join is not about economic motivation. As is well known, joining the European single market, free movement people is the motivation for Eastern European countries which are generally post Soviet in join to

boost national economy status. Candidate countries status held by Ukraine is more politically motivated, especially as response to Russian invasion (Mankoff, 2022).

Tendencies between Kyiv and Moscow began to attract European attention in 2004, Viktor Yushchenko's presidency; a pan-European movement emerged, and the people stated Ukraine was part of European democracy. But in 2010, President Viktor Yushchenko lost the general election to Viktor Yakunovich. Viktor Yakunovich is considered pro-Russia, and mass protests have risen during its presidency. In 2014, Viktor Yushchenko was deposed. As a result of this shift, Russia began to take military action so that Ukraine would not try to get closer to the West. Crimea annexation began, followed by the liberation of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions from Ukraine in February 2022.

From that sequence, the EU placing Ukraine as a potential candidate is a rational choice. Rational choice argues any time actor's actions should evaluate according to the interests of the organization or the state to its current needs and advantages. If institutional cooperation is profitable politically, then economic interests will be put aside and vice versa. The EU pursues political interests to accelerate the European community's recognition of the existence of Ukrainian as European citizens. The accession cooperation scheme will give its intended military, humanitarian assistance, and institutional financial support. Where will this accession collaboration be a reference for obtaining financial assistance provided by EU community funds (Bugriy, 2018).

EU has disbursed funds since Ukraine's announcement as a potential candidate amid the Russian invasion amounted to €19 billion in financial assistance, humanitarian, emergency, and exceptional support funds. They added another €3 billion for macro-financial assistance. Then added €2.2 billion for macro-financial assistance, a budget of € 120 million has been disbursed, followed by another € 5 billion for macro-financial assistance at the end of 2022. International donors are also increasing and using for housing improvement, education, and agriculture for €500 million. Especially to repair schools EU allocated € 100 million. EU is also providing military assistance of €2.6 billion (Commission, 2022).

Long-term stability and security considerations were the main reasons to expand its territory into post-Soviet countries. EU political authorities push for an agreement to reach a deal in achieving its goals. However, the fulfillment of the agreement will likely be delayed for years. To prevent that, the EU should make accelerated steps toward European integration in order to widen or save its territory. Suppose the expansion or the widening of territory takes time to occur. In that case, it has feared EU politically will become more complicated, take sides, and not have a homogeneous voice in responding to external conflicts, especially in facing Russia.

This is also what Neofunctionalism proposed by Fawcett and Hurrell; it will lead to interdependence among members, which affects the collaboration that will be carried out next. From the cooperation designed to develop, political integration will emerge, which will influence the political attitudes of countries to collaborate at the global level. It is considered that delaying expansion into the Eastern European region, especially countries with high political value, such as Ukraine, will only hinder the achievement of European prosperity and security in the long term.

3.2 Discussions

EU Decision Accepts Bulgaria Under CVM Assistance

As a member of the EU, Bulgaria supports Lisbon Treaty Reform but does not show any reform changes towards its accession. So it needs to clarify the political integration process between Bulgaria and the EU. Bulgaria's accession should fulfill the pre-accession agreement to obtain equality and eliminate social class differences in achieving uniformity. EU uniformity, such as single market, Eurozone, and Schengen, can promote new member countries with old member countries. So uniformity is widely made as the EU's center of decentralization under the same arrangement according to the *Acquis Communautaire* (Gawthorpe, 2010).

There, decentralization can be hampered because the reform of new members cannot meet Copenhagen Criteria and *Acquis Communautaire*. Copenhagen Criteria itself is an absolute requirement to join the EU. It contains the first, state institutions must be stable and guarantee democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and respect and protect minorities. Second, Have a functioning market economy and have an excellent capacity to cope with competition and market forces in the EU. Third, the ability to take and carry out the obligations of membership effectively, including compliance with the EU's political, economic, and monetary objectives.

Compliance with Copenhagen Criteria will take candidate countries to the *Acquis Communautaire* agreement. The summary of *Acquis Communautaire* is in the following table, as points of agreement arising from negotiations between the EU and Bulgaria to reform its country so it conforms to EU standards. Before joining the EU, commitments and conditions arising from the accession negotiations, Bulgaria must meet amount to 29 Chapter *Acquis Communautaire*. The table below shows the *Acquis Communautaire* of Bulgaria (Szarek-Mason, 2010).

Table 1. *Acquis Communautaire* of Bulgaria

Chapter	<i>Acquis Communautaire</i>
1	Free Movements of Goods
2	Free Movement of Person
3	Freedom to Provide Services
4	Free Movement of Capital
5	Company Law
6	Competition Policy
7	Agriculture
8	Fisheries
9	Transport Policy
10	Taxation
11	Economic and Monetary Union
12	Statistics
13	Social Policy and Employment
14	Energy
15	Industrial Policy
16	Small and Medium Sized Enterprises
17	Science and Research

18	Education and Training
19	Telecommunications and Information Technologies
20	Culture and Audiovisual Policy
21	Regional Policy and Coordination of Structural Instruments
22	Environment
23	Consumer and Health Protection
24	Cooperation In The Field of Justice and Home Affairs
25	Costums Union
26	External Relations
27	Common Foreign and Security Policy
28	Financial Control
29	Financial and Bugetary Provision

Source: Commission of The European Communities (2004)

However, until 2006, down on preparations to join the EU. Bulgaria is still taking action and improving the Six Chapters, which the EU considered weak. First, Acquis Chapter 7 on agriculture concerns preparing administrative integration with the EU control system. Second, adequate facilities regarding livestock and product abattoirs. Third, Acquis Chapter 24 on law concerns investigating and prosecuting organized crime networks. Fourth, the implementation of laws to combat fraud and corruption. Fifth, enforcement of anti-money laundering. Sixth, regarding Acquis Chapter 28 concerning financial and financial matters (Communities, 2006).

On January 1, 2007, the EU officially accepted Bulgaria's membership even though the fulfillment of Acquis Communautaire of each Chapter did not meet EU standards. After joining the EU from 2007 to 2015, Bulgaria still required to improve reforms until Acquis Communautaire was fulfilled under Cooperation and Verification Mechanism (CVM). CVM is a collaboration established by the European Commission to assess the commitments made to Bulgaria after joining the EU to reform its justice, combating corruption and organized crime. European Commission regularly reports Bulgaria's progress reforms according to EU standards. Report assessment based on Bulgaria's progress and information obtained from EU member states and international organizations (European Union, 2022).

Bulgaria is required to issue regular reports every year. In 2007 CVM set Bulgaria reform targets, such as an independent and accountable judicial system, justice system reform, justice reform, and transparency, eradicating corruption and eradicating corruption at the regional level, the lastly, eradicating organized crime. Only in 2015, Commission monitoring under CVM on Bulgaria had changed, exiguous. Reforms are still carried out in almost the same areas, such as: First, freedom, accountability, and integrity of the judiciary, and second, reforming the justice system. Third, the efficiency of the justice system. Fourth, eradicating corruption. Fifth, war against criminal organizations. Regarding commitments and conditions arising from the accession negotiations, Bulgaria must fulfill all of them before becoming part of the EU; there are 29 chapters. It is inconsistent with EU regulations which are that each Chapter must be met based on the performance and criteria demanded before the benchmark is closed (European Union, 2022).

Those deficiency doesn't meet *Acquis Communautaire* in Chapter 3 regarding freedom to Provide Services, Chapter 21 regarding Regional Policy and Coordination of Structural Instruments, Chapter 24 regarding Cooperation in the Field of Justice and Home Affairs, and Chapter 28 regarding Financial Control. Exiguous reforms Bulgaria had made even after joining the EU. Compared to t widening in 2004, the membership expansion in that year met the Copenhagen Criteria. It fulfilled the *Acquis Communautaire* without having to carry out monitoring or controlling after joining the EU. Countries that joined the EU in 2004 are Cyprus, Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Estonia, and Malta (Carmin & Vandever, 2004).

Costs and Benefits Calculations of Bulgaria Membership

Bulgaria's membership is also considered to provide economic benefits that affect European regional security formation in the future because it will reduce Russia's influence on post-communist countries. For example, in the case that happened in 2014 in eliminating Russia's influence, the EU argued with Russia about Armenia and Ukraine because Russia offered economic cooperation that could distance these countries from the trade agreement with the EU in 2013. Russia offered to gain access to the Russian market, obtain subsidized prices for energy, and cooperate on security and immigration. Based on this, European Union Council said it would urge Russia to stop intimidating and approaching post-Soviet and post-communist countries (Jovanović, 2004).

EU's rational choice in accepting Bulgarian follows Glaser's statement, that the enemy in the context of rational choice is motivated to undermine security. The state or institution must anticipate it with greater cooperation. In this case, the possibility of resistance from enemies motivated by greed will be minimized because there is already greater cooperation among countries, so it can refrain from joining an agreement with Russia.

Ukraine's Accession amid the Russian Invasion and Ukraine's Candidate Country Status

The EU widening has occurred seven times until 2013. The successive widening occurred in 1973, 1981, 1986, 1995, 2004, 2007, and 2013. The essence of widening was to create peace on the European continent. Politically the widening of the EU helped change the government of European countries, such as bridging the government process from dictatorship to democracy and eliminating communist influence. It should be conducted based on consolidating democracy, human rights, and security guarantees on the European continent. Reading Ukraine's situation, which is currently in the grip of war, it is necessary to look at a Post Soviet that gained its independence in 1991. Ukraine's position, directly adjacent to Russia, is a new source of tension in European regionalism. Russia obsesses that the former Soviet countries have strong historical links with Russia as the primary heir of the Soviets. There is pressure from Moscow that Kyiv must be pro-Russia (Hunter, 2016).

In the 2014 Crimea invasion, the Annexation of Crimea occurred because Russia considered Crimea has strong nationalism against the Soviets. It was necessary to intervene militarily so integration into Russia could be carried out without hindrance from the West. Annexation went according to Moscow's plans. Annexation in March 2014 resulted in the ratification of regional integration, which

the Russian parliament passed, marked by a promulgation of Law to integrate Crimea into Russia. Then in 2022, in February, Russia invaded Ukraine again (Cordesman & Hwang, 2022).

The most fundamental reason behind the invasion was Ukraine's eagerness to join Western-affiliated institutions that sidelined Russia, such as NATO and the EU. Moscow argues that Ukraine's actions undermined the agreement between Russia and the West. Ukraine should be a neutral territory with no affiliation to no institution in the Western region, especially with NATO. Long before the invasion, Russia had given an ultimatum away from NATO. Russia does not want post-Soviet countries directly adjacent to its territory made as a new satellite for Western countries to face Russia in the future (Kuzio, 2022).

Ukraine's application in NATO is considered a long way and potentially threatens regional security. Moreover, those who support Ukraine's membership in NATO are only European countries with small and insignificant military forces, including the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia. Ukraine's desire for instant membership acceptance is considered too risky by the Secretary General of NATO. But some steps can accelerate Ukraine's integration into the club, namely the membership accession to the EU. As previously explained, to become part of the EU, each candidate state must follow all rules listed in the Copenhagen Criteria. Copenhagen Criteria has concerns about a free market economy, democracy, and the stable rule of law, including how to apply EU laws. Countries wishing to join the EU must apply for membership to the Council of the European Union. The European Union Council will ask European Commission to assess the ability of the applicant country to meet the Copenhagen Criteria.

After the procedure is completed, in general, to join the EU, the candidate country completes several stages, namely first, when the applicant country is already an official candidate member, formal negotiations will not necessarily be carried out. Second, the applicant country will move into formal membership, slowly but surely running EU regulations. Therefore, candidate countries must implement and enforce judicial, administrative, and economic reforms to prepare for being an EU. Third, negotiations and reforms demanded by the EU are completed following the agreement that had been negotiated, and candidate countries will be officially a part of the EU.

In the process of joining the EU, or accession, a country must pass three stages; first, a country officially has candidate country status doesn't mean formal negotiations will be opened. In this case, two statuses appear on the road to the EU: First, potential candidates and candidate countries. Potential candidates are countries that the EU has promised to join if they have met all the predetermined conditions, and candidate countries are countries in the negotiating process in their readiness to join the EU. Second, candidate country status will be ushered into formal membership negotiations. This process involves the adoption of EU laws. The candidate country must implement all the regulations as a sign of its seriousness in implementing and enforcing judicial, administrative, economic, and other regulatory reforms required from every candidate country, as state conditions are already stable when finally in the EU.

Seeing Ukraine's situation, where economically and politically are unstable amid a war with Russia, it even requires international assistance to save its life. This condition made the EU issue a decision that was considered to damage the existing regulatory framework. Ukraine is currently a candidate country as a priority country to obtain membership status as set on June 23, 2022. Administratively, a country that has applied to become part of the EU is in the position of a potential candidate. Ukraine's candidate status in the EU is now on par with Albania, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Turkey, stepping over Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, and Kosovo status (Duleba, 2019).

4. Conclusion

Monitoring under CVM after acceptance of membership by EU is an accelerated way to acknowledge Bulgaria's existence institutionally so that it's recognized in international level as part of EU. In the research, founds acceleration of Bulgaria's in EU actually hadn't met the standards was taken in order to secure Europe territory efficiently. Through the results of research, also found until 2015 Bulgaria hadn't been able to met *Acquis Communautaire* and was still below EU standards. If EU waits until Bulgaria's situation is in accordance with EU standards then Bulgaria has yet to obtain official membership. This will result in losses on the part of EU itself in reference in fact that Bulgaria is an economically and politically unstable country and is even a post communist Soviet. It's feared, it will again influenced of Russia through cooperation of natural resources and gas, as happened in Ukraine in 2014. This is was anticipated and predicted by EU so it decides to immediately accept Bulgaria's membership, so that Bulgaria which is already the part of EU, has every procedure and regulation regulates its country to interact with other countries under EU monitoring, especially to Russia.

As well as Ukraine, instant membership candidates as candidate country and also a priority candidate are given, so EU can influence Ukrainian government in issuing foreign policies in response to Russia. As well as the EU's efforts to get the European community to accept Ukrainians coming to their country during the invasion. If instant membership status is not granted, it is feared EU member states will refuse to be involved either economically, politically, socially or even humanitarially because there are no regulations or laws that allow them to pay special attention to Ukraine.

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