

**Is ‘nominal convergence’ a sufficient condition for ‘successful’ EU
enlargements?**

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The aim of our work is to explore some criteria for present and future EU enlargements from a strictly theoretical point of view. The decision to include several Central and Eastern Europe countries in the European Union has already been made, but the success of this enlargement is still under discussion. The candidates for future enlargements include the Balkan region, Turkey and former Soviet Republics, with Russia among others. The mere consideration of Russia and Turkey as future European Union members deserves a careful analysis of the relevance of ‘nominal convergence’ as a criterion for these enlargements. In these scenarios, several and top geo-strategic decisions must be made in the years to come by the new Europe, as well as a complex re-organization of the political foundations of the European peoples.

Our analysis try to explore some of the theoretical criteria which must be taken into account in order to secure ‘successful’ present and future EU enlargements, and to establish some kind of hierarchy among them. Although there exists, at least, three of these criteria, geographical, cultural and economic, up to the present time ‘nominal convergence’ (public debt, inflation, and so on) criterion have become one of the more relevant. But, as everybody can easily understand, in the case of Russia and Turkey this criterion will not be as important as has been in present and past enlargements. So, in the consideration of these scenarios, the question now is: must Europe adopt an ‘opportunist’, ‘pragmatic’ and *ad-hoc* position in every enlargement? Or must face the critical

and painful task of clearly state what is Europe and what not? The answer to this question requires an exhaustive and systematic analysis of the relationship among the above mentioned three criteria

Our exposition is organised as follows: first, we are to going to discuss in some detail the character of the criteria and the alternatives opened according to them. Second, we proceed to the analysis of the relationship between the economic and cultural dynamics from the Economic Theory point of view. This analysis is a brief discussion of more general and comprehensive work carried out by Rubio de Urquía (1991, 1992), which is, in part, available in English (Rubio de Urquía (1998) and Rodríguez (2002)). And, finally, following these lines, we will show that ‘nominal convergence’ are *necessary but not sufficient* conditions for successful EU enlargements. This necessary but not sufficient character can only be correctly observed, as we will show, in facing the analysis of the possibilities of an enlargement to Russia and/or Turkey.

Reconsidering the selection criteria

In order to make a systematic analysis of every UE enlargement process, we need to start by looking carefully at the criteria and the relationship between them. These criteria will define and shape *what Europe is* and *what Europe will be*. To identify what is Europe there are, as a minimum, three criteria: geographic, cultural and economic. This statement appears to be non controversial, but when we put them in practice, a lot of clashes and asymmetrical effects between them come into sight. In this section we will briefly explain these problems.

From a geographical point of view, Europe is just a peninsula of Eurasia, which stretches from San Vicente Cape to the Caucasus and Urals. But we can see that this last border seems quite artificial, because Russia covers two continents. Let consider now a hypothetical EU enlargement including only the geographically European part of Russia; in this case, the whole Siberia will remain in a geo-strategic no-man’s land. Some European politicians, for instance De Gaulle, have shared this position, but, in practice, is untenable because Russia will have to be split into two separate countries.

In the case of Turkey, its main city, Istanbul, belongs to Europe, but the majority of the country belongs to Asia. So, it is also impossible to plan a “limited enlargement”. Letting aside these cases, the countries of North Africa and the Middle East (including Israel) do not belong to Europe from the geographical point of view. There exist strong links between Europe and these countries but the Mediterranean Sea is a clear-cut physical border. On the other hand, Europe includes not only the countries which will join the UE in 2004, but also the rest of Eastern Europe: Belarus, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Rumania, Moldavia and the Balkans.¹

It is much harder to define Europe from a cultural point of view and it would deserve a closer and wider analysis that we cannot develop in this short paper. But we can identify the main characteristics of the “cultural deposits”² shared by European countries.

There exist in these deposits two salient characteristics due to its historical relevance and present influence: Christianity and Modernity. The influence of these two *weltanschauung* have been and still are so pervasive in the process of formation of the European “cultural deposits”, that we can firmly state that they constitute the European cultural axis. We do not deny neither that its influence fluctuates in different countries and historical circumstances, nor that there are “local” versions of them. Even in several cases, they combine in such a way that they are not fully compatible. But it remains the fact that they are widely shared.

This couple of cultural characteristics allow us to define what Europe *is* what is *not* from the cultural point of view and to classify nations. Taking this into account, the South and East of the Mediterranean Sea are not Europe, on the one hand because their “cultural deposits” are Islamic (except Israel) and on the other because the main elements of the Modernity have never reached a significant influence.

¹ It is also necessary to take account of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaiyan. The Caucasus is the southeaster border of Europe, and from this point of view the three countries can claim to be Europeans. The Georgian claims are better supported by geography than the others.

² The “cultural deposits” are the whole of subjective elements that the people of a nation share broadly speaking.

Turkey must to be let aside: its “cultural deposits” are not Europeans, but from Mustafá Kemal to our days some features of the Modernity worldview (not the whole) have taken root and develop in a similar way. Russia belongs to Europe from this point of view, and so does the whole American continent: their languages are European and their “cultural deposits” include a wide range of combinations of Christianity and Modernity.

Last, but no least, we have to mention Australia and New Zealand both with a strong presence of European population (although in regression). Anyway, from a cultural point of view Europe is much wider than its geographical border. In fact, we are talking about an entity that includes all the countries where the majority of its population has got European roots.

Finally, the “economic” criterion, that in fact is a “macroeconomic” criterion, is the easiest to classify the countries: if their selected macroeconomic indicators exhibit a pattern of stability for a period of time they can enter the UE. So, every part of the world that can probe its fulfilment of the economic criteria belongs to Europe, including of course, the countries of the South and East of the Mediterranean Sea. If this is the only relevant criterion not only Turkey, but Israel, Egypt or Morocco can aspire to join the UE. The necessary and sufficient condition is the fulfilment of the so called ‘nominal convergence’

But these “economic” criteria contribute very few, if any, to establish the path that Europe have to follow if *it is willing* to open its common space to other nations. On the one hand we have stated that culturally Europe is something wider than a continent. On the other hand the economic criterion opens the way to many countries to demand its entry in the UE, even these that do not belong to Europe neither geographically nor culturally.

These flaws have not posed any significant problem until now because the successive enlargements of the UE have incorporated countries that *are* Europeans, no matter the criterion used to classify them. The enlargement that will take place in 2004 has only to overcome the

'nominal convergence' problem, an easy one. All the countries that enter the UE are Europeans, so it is no necessary to change the definition of what Europe *is*.

But letting aside the cases of Belarus, Ukraine and the Balkans, the future UE enlargements entails a major change in the definition of Europe. It will be necessary to accommodate some countries that are *not fully Europeans*. Russia is not geographically Europe and Turkey is *only partially* Europe, both from the cultural and the geographical point of view. There is an open discussion about the integration of both countries. If the final answer is yes in both cases, which are the reasons to deny the request of, for instance, Chile?

These facts shed light over the problem of the definition as clear and as definite as possible of *what* the UE *is* and *what is not*. This is a prerequisite to evaluate if "nominal convergence" must be applied or not. We will not analyse in this paper the first problem. We will study the second one: the relationship between the cultural dynamics and the economic processes and we will explain why, in our opinion, the first are more important and better than the second in order to define what Europe is.

The Global Dynamic of Societies: a theoretical approach.

The analysis of the relationships between economics and culture could be tackled from several methodologies and scientific areas. Here we have adopted Economic Theory as starting point because what we intend to do is to identify the role of 'nominal convergence' in the particular case of enlargement processes to countries and peoples which are not entirely homogeneous with the rest of European Peoples. Nevertheless, this is just merely a 'thematic' starting point, because a sound analysis requires, first, a proper understanding of the role of the economic processes within the more general processes of 'deployment' of societies. Therefore, we have to begin with the

discussion of what we understand by this ‘deployment’ o, more correctly, by the ‘Global Dynamic’ of a society.³

Theorizing about the Global Dynamic of a society is an extraordinary complex process which, in many cases, have been mistakenly understood as a Philosophy of History. In this work, we are going to confine ourselves to what the Global Dynamic *is, i.e.*, to the analysis of how people and societies actually deploy their plans and aims in what we could call ‘the production of History’ (Theory of History). This does not mean that the quest for some kind of teleological design in the deployments of societies (Philosophy of History) is useless or nonsense, quite the contrary: theorizing about society is, mostly, to theorize about what should be an ideal society. But this research is farther from our starting point, economic theory, than the analysis of how societies actually behave and this is the reason why, quite artificially, we must maintain ourselves within this domain. Once this has been made clear, we can proceed to the analysis of what the Global Dynamics is. By Global Dynamic of a society we mean a process that consist of the sequential deployment of the human action in society. History must be understood as *produced* by people actions, that is, as the *outcome* of a Global Dynamic. So, the *outcomes* of Global Dynamics will *entirely* depend on the sequential deployments of the actions of the agents embedded in those Dynamics.

But, which is the place of economic processes within this general framework? Economic processes belong to the class of processes which produce human action and involve some kind of interaction between those actions. Therefore, in order to identify the place of economic processes within the processes which constitute the Global Dynamic, we will need first some kind of *map* - i.e., a *model*- of human action.

³ The ideas that we are going to use here, have been developed by Rafael Rubio de Urquía, in his research on the foundations of economic theory. Cf. Rubio de Urquía 1991, 1992 and 1998.

Human action is the outcome of three distinctive features of the people: freedom, intelligence and will. These features make up, dynamically, the deposits (assemblage, in Rubio de Urquía's words) from which people set up their action plans: beliefs (which could be religious and non religious), values (which involve some kind of rational thinking), attitudes (psychological and quasi-biological features of people) and theoretical and technical representations (which include all kind of views about what the world is). These four elements do not necessarily remain unchanged during a period of time. In their continuous interaction with reality, people could change not only the significance but also the substantive meaning of these elements. These changes are ruled by what Rubio de Urquía calls ethical, cognitive and cultural dynamics whose external manifestation is the ongoing transformation of the elements of the 'assemblage'. These dynamics are, in turn, the outcome of freedom, intelligence and will, so the process is embedded in a continuous updating.

The elements of the 'assemblage' and their dynamics, produce the sets of ends and means which give rise to action, that is, the bundle of objectives that the agent wish to fulfil and the bundle of means which, presumably, are under her/his control. Once these elements are defined in some sense, people set up a bundle of alternative actions plans (again, as an act of individual freedom, intelligence and will) which, *a priori*, she/he thinks they are feasible. Of course, this belief does not necessarily correspond to the facts: plans are, generally, unfeasible in varying degrees and we could no assure *a priori* that our plans are feasible in an absolute sense. But let us notice that the *feasibility or unfeasibility* exclusively depends on the structure of the plans and, consequently, on the structure of the ends and means bundles which means, in turn, that depends on the structure of the "assemblage".

Once the bundle of *a priori* feasible plans have been set up by the agent, she/he must choose one of them in order to carry it out. And it is in this moment where the "economic" feature of the human action comes on stage. People choose an action plan which, according to his "assemblage", seems optimal. But this optimality does not assure at all the *feasibility* of the plan, because, as we

have seen, depends on the structure of the “assemblage”. Once the plan is chosen, the “economic” process stops working and the deployment of the plan begins. So, the *locus* of the “economic processes” within individual action is restricted to the choice of *the* action plan which the agent actually takes on. It is worth to mention the secondary role that economic processes play in the general process of human action and, therefore, in the “deployment” of Global Dynamics. And also that there no need of money in explaining these processes: it could be present in the plan or not, but the valuation of means and ends in monetary terms turns out to be a contingent matter from a strictly economic point of view.

Finally, let us briefly outline the main features of the processes of interaction among agents. Usually, economic theory has classified these processes in two separate classes: markets and institutions. Of course, markets are a special kind of institutions, those in which money prevails as valuation instrument and, as a general convention, economic theory has attach herself the task of explain it.⁴ Nevertheless, it is hard to find great economic scholars which did not devote some significant part of his work to the study of the origins, evolution and reform of social institutions. From Smith and Menger and Walras to Friedman, Veblen, Hayek or even Keynes. Two of them, Menger and Hayek,⁵ dealt specifically with cultural evolution as the source of institutional evolution which seems to be a promissory starting point for further analysis; but, for the sake of the discussion, let us point out the role of cultural dynamics in the deployment of human action according to our present approach.

Cultural dynamics not only give rise to institutions. They consist, mostly, in the transmission of specific elements of the assemblage through the society. Beliefs, values and theoretical and technical representations which order, structure and nourish the ends and means sets of individual agents, are culturally spread by several ways and channels. These culturally shared

⁴ In his comprehensive treatise *The Human Action*, von Mises confined the domain of economic theory to the analysis of market –*chrematistic*- dynamics, which, according to his own categorical presuppositions, seems extraordinarily restrictive (Mises 1966: 213-215).

⁵ Specially, Cf. Menger [(1883)1990] and Hayek (1988)

elements reinforce the institutional and markets interaction dynamics, lessening the impact of the hypothetical conflicts which could arise from the co-existence of opposing elements. On the other hand, freedom, intelligence and will, as an inherent features of human beings, could promote new, and possibly conflictive, elements which deteriorate the previous institutional and market dynamics which pave the way for a new kind of dynamics. The tension between these tendencies exerts a strong influence in the Global Dynamic of a society and, therefore, deserves a careful and separate analysis which cannot be carried out in this brief outline. Here, we just need to take notice of them.

But, what does all that have to do with ‘nominal convergence’ and ‘successful’ EU enlargements? First, we must take into account that the ‘nominal convergence’, broadly speaking, could be consider as the outcome of a belief considering economic phenomena –macroeconomic in particular- as something which we can isolate from the Global Dynamic and, in some sense, put down to varying degrees of control. Nevertheless, as we have seen, the opposite is true: the nominal economic or “macroeconomic” processes and dynamics, are just the *consequence* of the key processes which nourish human actions and their interactions in the monetary realm. As we can see, the economic dynamics are the outcome of the interactions of multiple factors, including cultural as *deposits of subjective elements shared by people*.

The “nominal convergence” becomes a scarcely important element, because this criterion just take notice of proven trajectories (and, therefore, historical) of financial and monetary soundness, which, of course, are not irreversible.⁶ Nevertheless, the degree of cultural cohesion of the European Peoples could provide the basis for a sound political project which will go far beyond the mere introduction of a single currency. It is true that there not exists a full cohesion and, even within the European Peoples themselves, there exists strong internal inconsistencies among their cultural deposits. But it is impossible to understand the European Union without taking into account its common cultural substratum.

⁶ As the present situation of France and Germany shows.

In short, this analysis shows that European Union enlargements which take the “nominal convergence” as the *sole* criterion for admission, could endanger the Global Dynamics of European Peoples as a whole and also could preclude further processes of stronger integration. In this sense, the “nominal convergence” is a *necessary but not sufficient condition* for European Union enlargements. We will next discuss the implications of this statement exploring the alternatives open by future enlargements.

Nominal Convergence as necessary but not sufficient condition

As we have seen, it would be a hazardous and quite complex task to provide even a very synthetic characterization of the Global Dynamics of European Peoples within or outside the European Union. We should take into account cultural, ethical⁷ and cognitive dynamics and try to establish their outcome in terms of Global Dynamics under different assumptions. But in order to establish some kind of criteria about future enlargements from the economic point of view, we must, at least, try to draw the main lines of such characterization.

Europe merely as a Monetary Union

The process of implementation of the Euro should not conceal a number of properties which will allow us, in a very tentative manner, get some insights of the Global Dynamics of a Europe whose only defining note would be just the single currency.

As a matter of fact, a currency, as such, has not the property of producing convergence towards a common European project: even belonging to a common substratum, the cultural diversity of European peoples is still so different that the process of consolidation of a political union is more or less an utopia. In spite of the leadership of Paris-Berlin axis, the differences between the members will grow as more countries get into the Union. The german-french hegemony could be frequently questioned, as we have seen during the Iraq war, which, of course,

⁷ In the general sense of elements which arrange the system of objectives or ends.

just reinforce the idea that the Euro does not mean that Europe will become a major player in the international scene.

On the other hand, the constitutive elements of the European cultural deposits have been strongly shocked during the last century. What in some moment in the past could be called the common European conscience, is still under a deep and probably irreversible historical crisis. The two axis of the European cultural deposits are, gradually, and in varying degrees, loosing their role as ‘directors’ of the Global Dynamics of Europe, which amounts to say that not only the Christian, but also the Modernity *weltanschauung* are becoming less and less relevant in the formation of the ethical, cultural and cognitive personal dynamics of a great number of Europeans. This leads to disorientation and confusion, bitterness, historical indifference and hedonism in its diverse forms (irrational consume, etc.) And these negative trends will prevail in the Global Dynamics of Europe in so far as the crisis would not be solved, whatever that means (replacing those *weltanschauung* by some others, or by recovering them under a new form, etc.) Anyway, these trends, as a whole, are producing a loosing of quality and range of the action plans of the Peoples in this situation, which, in turn, reinforce a hesitant and short-range Global Dynamics.

And finally, within this situation, and probably due to it, there seems to be a tendency to consider the macroeconomic stability as the sole common identifying mark of the European Union. According to this view, the only possibility of getting some weight in the international stage relies upon the preservation of a coherent pattern of ‘GDP’ and ‘inflation rate’ between European countries. The unification of these dynamics under the rule of European Central Bank, it is said, assures the construction of a strong Europe. But our analysis of the previous section, in identifying the place occupied by ‘the economicity’ within the far-reaching Global Dynamics of a society, tells us a quite different story. In fact, it is highly unlikely that a macroeconomic objective, say, a 2% of inflation rate, turns to be the starting point of a number of dynamics capable of take the European cultural deposits out of their crisis. This idea comes from those who tend to see ‘the economicity’

as something separate and controllable by governments. This does not mean that the macroeconomic stability is undesirable; quite the contrary: the nominal convergence criteria are highly convenient in any case. They guarantee a proper working of some of the subsystems which operate within the Global Dynamics. What we are saying is that the nominal convergence could not provide, by itself, the kind of substantive meaning needed by the European's cultural deposits in the present crisis of the core European *weltanschauungen*. That is to say that they must not, and could not, provide the backbone of the European project. Nominal convergence is *a necessary* but not *sufficient* condition for European Union.

In so far as these tendencies are at work, that is to say, meanwhile Europe is merely a Monetary Union or a kind of 'macroeconomic stability club', Europe will never be *more* of what is now and it is quite possible to be *much less*. It will never be more, first, because due to its low-range dynamics, it will be strategically dependent from the United States, assuming that these still accept this duty (which is a highly doubtful presupposition). Second, because the raise of the new Asian superpowers could endanger the feasibility of its common 'economic' space, subject to the growing pressures coming from globalization (lower wages, unemployment, etc.). And Europe could easily be *less* because both demographically and politically, its role in the international arena will be more and more reduced if the growth of the Asian superpowers is going to be maintained (which seems to be quite probable).

The role of 'nominal convergence' in future enlargements of European Union.

The character of necessary but sufficient condition of the 'nominal convergence' is better understanding if we do the same characterization of the Global Dynamic of Europe as we do in last section but considering now a process of enlargement to Russia and/or Turkey.

Let us consider a Europe including the rest of all the 'European' ex-Soviet Union Republics: Ukraine, Belarus, Moldavia and Russia. Focusing on the problems posed by Russia incorporation,

let us first notice that the same features we have identified in Europe are here at work, but with some remarkable variants. The historical and cultural conscience of Russia is subsumed in a deeper crisis due to the key role of the Communist Party as a purveyor of structuring elements of human action. We do not need here to evaluate the effects of this role (which seems to be as pervasive as harmful): we just have to consider the fact that this supply mission have finished. As the elements providing by the Communist Party belonged, with a great deal of qualifications and exceptions, to the Modernity, there seems to be a double crisis in this *weltanschauung* in ex-Soviet Republics. The re-enactment of the Orthodox Church has got significant effects, but there seems to be little evidence supporting the existence of a strong trend towards a reconstruction of the Russian cultural deposits along Christian lines.

But, as we have stated above, although Russia is clearly a European country, and suffering from the same kind of illness, there exists a huge extension of Russian territory which does not, geographically speaking, belong to Europe. And here we find the true nature of the ‘nominal convergence’ as criterion for further enlargements: could we say that in the case of Russia the macroeconomic stability would be enough to consider its incorporation to the European Union? Past or present enlargements have never posed this question; maybe never in the European History this question have been posed peacefully. Cultural and geographically, Slovenia, Hungary or Poland, are, strictly speaking, Europe. So, the ‘nominal convergence’ seems to be the sole criterion because the other ones are fulfilled. But, with a territory going from San Vicente Cape to Vladivostok, could we seriously think of a Union in terms of a single currency area?

Similar questions, but a quite different analysis, deserves the enlargement to Turkey. As we have seen, Turkey is geographically as European as Russia but, its cultural deposits are quite different. In spite of the huge efforts made by the Turkish administration during the last decades, the influence of the Modernity *weltanschauung* is not as pervasive as it would be desirable for the authorities. The Islamic *weltanschauung* is much more deep-seated, and still supply a lot of

structuring elements of human action (ethical and cognitive dynamics, attitudes, beliefs, etc.). The working of this process, and the interaction between this two *weltanschauung*, seems to characterize the Turkish Global Dynamics. So, in posing the Turkey incorporation to European Union, are the European policy makers considering the same kind of ‘nominal convergence’ as in, say, the Slovenian one? Or is one of the two Turkish *weltanschauungen* exercising an external influence on their analysis? Here we can see, again, the secondary role of ‘nominal convergence’, which, according to our view of the economic processes, is the proper one.

Concluding remarks

Considering the Europe’s present state, the Global Dynamic which characterize the Union in the years to come will not be more stable than the present one. In spite of the processes of enlargement and the nominal convergence of the European economics, there still be a structural crisis in the elements which nourish the human action of most Europeans. The alternatives seem to be extraordinarily complex and future enlargements, particularly Russia and Turkey, raise, at least, preoccupant dynamics. But their analysis has proved to be useful in showing that ‘nominal convergence’ must be considered just as a necessary but not a sufficient condition (and, in those particular cases, scarcely significant).

But, additionally, this analysis has raised several and highly complex lines of research for economic theory, at least in which economic theory concerns. The first of all them must, obviously, focus on the analysis of the kind of dynamics which could arise from EU enlargements to Peoples endowed with quite different cultural deposits from those of the Europeans. These analysis will be of a extraordinarily importance in the hypothetical case of EU enlargements to Turkey and, by extension, to the Mediterranean South Rim Peoples, because, as we have seen, their success will come not as much in terms of ‘nominal convergence’ but in terms of cultural dynamics. Their

different Global Dynamics could not be as compatible with the European one as one could think to be from the narrow and ‘economicist’ point of view of the ‘nominal convergence’.

The second line of research arises from a more theoretical issue: are the structure and the scope of agents’ action plans and objectives a decisive factor in the ‘economic growth’? Having in mind the historical crisis of Europe’s *weltanschauungen*, and the gradual loss of the ethical and cultural elements which have ordered the action plans of Europeans in the past, one is tempted to think about the effects of this crisis on what is commonly labelled as ‘economic growth’ and/or on what we have called the Global Dynamic. This idea is not so far from some of what Keynes pointed out in his *General Theory*, but needs, of course, a much more systematic and structured work than Keynes did.

And, finally, and this is a more ‘empirical’ research, a prospective analysis about the Global Dynamics of the several possible situations we have identified here. The first focusing on a Europe confined to its present borders which, in itself, appears to be a quite complex affair due to the particular dynamics of its twenty-five members. Second, Europe plus Russia, adding to the previous complex dynamics those coming from the Russian situation. Third Europe plus Turkey without Russian, pointing towards an even more remote enlargement to Northern Africa and Middle East and losing, therefore, the cultural factor as a selection criteria, and finally, the possibility of a double enlargement to both Turkey and Russia.

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