

The struggle over EU enlargement: a historical materialist analysis of European integration

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ABSTRACT This article argues with the help of a neo-Gramscian perspective that neo-liberal restructuring is the social purpose underlying Austria's and Sweden's accession to the EU in 1995 as well as future enlargements towards Central and Eastern Europe. The way in which enlargement has come about has differed, however. On the one hand, class struggle occurred mainly at the Austrian and Swedish national level. While a historical bloc in favour of EU membership was established in Austria by internationally oriented capital and labour, Swedish transnational capital and labour only formed a strong pro-EU alliance, because transnational capital favoured the EU for its neo-liberal restructuring, while transnational labour hoped to regain control over capital at a higher level. On the other hand, neo-liberal restructuring in Central and Eastern Europe has to be secured externally via EU membership, based on an alliance between Central and Eastern European state élites and transnational capital, represented by the Commission and the European Round Table of Industrialists.

KEY WORDS Austria; Central and Eastern Europe; EU enlargement; integration theory; neo-Gramscian perspectives; Sweden.

I. INTRODUCTION

After successfully deepening European integration from the mid-1980s onwards around the internal market programme, institutionalized in the Single European Act (SEA) in 1987, and Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), part of the Treaty of Maastricht in 1991, the European Union's (EU's) agenda in the 1990s was then dominated by the issue of enlargement. In 1993 and 1994, negotiations were conducted with the four European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries, Austria, Sweden, Finland and Norway, leading to the accession of the first three to the EU on 1 January 1995. Already during these negotiations, it became apparent that the Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries, suddenly able to conduct their own foreign policy after the end of the Cold War, also wanted to become EU members. Currently, the EU is negotiating with Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia,

Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia as well as the Mediterranean countries Cyprus and Malta. Turkey too is included in the group of potential future EU members, which implies that the EU could grow from fifteen to twenty-eight members over the next years.

The goal of this article is to analyse the underlying rationale of this continuing enlargement process. Austria and Sweden are chosen here from the EFTA enlargement round for a most-similar comparative study. In contrast to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) member Norway, they are both neutral countries. In contrast to Finland, their neutrality was not tied to a special relationship with the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Historically, membership had been rejected in both countries, first, for being incompatible with their neutral status and, second, because social democratic led governments feared that the EU, dominated by big capital and christian democratic parties, would undermine their achievements of full employment and social equality. Hence, it is a paradox that Austria and Sweden joined the EU at a moment when it had moved towards a position which contributed even further to these dangers. The internal market focused on the deregulation and liberalization of national economies leading towards the free flow of goods, capital, services and people. Employment is assumed to be the result of tougher competition, not of state intervention. EMU further intensified the neo-liberal economic direction by entrusting an independent European Central Bank with a monetary policy focusing on low inflation and price stability and committing states to a restrictive fiscal policy by obliging them to remain within the neo-liberal convergence criteria. In short, the revival of European integration revolved around neo-liberalism and therefore endangered even more the Austrian and Swedish economic-political model. Moreover, the Treaty of Maastricht established the common foreign and security policy including the possibility of a common defence policy, which clearly threatens Austria's and Sweden's neutral status (Bieler 2000: 1–2).

In the case of enlargement towards Central and Eastern Europe, it similarly has to be asked what the underlying rationale of these countries' application to an EU dominated by neo-liberalism is. Nevertheless, the additional puzzle here is the question of the social purpose driving the EU's readiness for further enlargement, despite the relative economic backwardness of the applicants. Unlike the EFTA countries, which are net contributors to the budget, the CEE applicants are less developed countries in need of significant financial assistance (Holman 2001: 182).

It is argued that EU enlargement has to be studied against the background of globalization. At the material level globalization is defined as consisting of the transnationalization of production, expressed in the increasing importance in size and number of transnational corporations (TNCs), and the transnationalization of finance, which has led to the emergence of a global financial market due to the successive deregulation of national financial markets and the increasing importance of off-shore markets since the early 1970s. At the ideological level, a shift from a Keynesian to a neo-liberal economic policy

rationale can be identified, involving the abandonment of a full employment policy in favour of price stability and low inflation levels (Cox 1993: 259–60, 266–7). European integration has been part and parcel of this process of transnational restructuring. The free movement of capital was institutionalized by the internal market programme and the programme itself led to a wave of mergers within the EU, increasing drastically the significance of European TNCs (Laffan 1992: 89; Marginson and Sisson 1994: 18–23). At the ideological level, neo-liberal economics was the underlying driving force of the revival of European integration.

Established approaches to European integration are problematic on two accounts in respect of analysing EU enlargement against the background of globalization. First, neo-functional and intergovernmentalist approaches alike are unable to account for structural change, because they take existing social and power structures as given. Neo-functional analyses incorrectly assume an automaticity of integration through the concept of spill-over, based on an objective economic rationale, and neglect the wider world within which integration takes place. Intergovernmentalist approaches, including the most developed liberal intergovernmentalist variant, consider states to be the most important actors at the international level and, consequently, overlook the importance of supranational institutions, transnational actors and the independent role of ideas. Moreover, they incorrectly concentrate on inter-state negotiations as the most important instances of integration. Second, established approaches concentrate on the institutional development of the EU, i.e. the form of the EU, but not the content. The social purpose, underlying European integration, is overlooked (van Apeldoorn 2001: 71; for a criticism of established integration theories, see Bieler and Morton 2001b). In contrast to established European integration theories, this article is based on the assumption that European politics/integration is an open-ended process, the outcome of which is the result of class struggle. The dominance of neo-liberalism, referred to above, is not set in stone. Class struggle continues around the question of the exact shape of the future economic-political model of the EU. The terms and conditions of both the 1995 EFTA enlargement and the future enlargements towards Central and Eastern Europe are part and parcel of this struggle.

After an initial consideration of rationalist political economy approaches, which attempt to incorporate recent developments within the international political economy in their analysis, the next section will develop a historical materialist approach of European integration based on neo-Gramscian perspectives. The third section looks then in more detail at the underlying rationale of Austria's and Sweden's accession to the EU. The fourth section turns to the current enlargement round and examines the social purpose of integrating CEE countries in the EU. The conclusion summarizes the results of the article and assesses whether and to what extent these enlargement rounds have supported neo-liberalism within the EU.

II. ASPECTS OF A HISTORICAL MATERIALIST ANALYSIS OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

Political economy approaches

In response to the failure of established integration theories, several rationalist political economy approaches have emerged specifically also in relation to EU enlargement. For example, Fioretos (1997) rejects the intergovernmentalist assumption that governments had supported further integration since the mid-1980s in order to strengthen their position *vis-à-vis* domestic interest groups. Focusing on the domestic balance of power between governments and business and considering that increasing levels of international economic interdependence resulted in new domestic coalitions dominated by export-oriented companies, he argues that revived European integration was the result of a politics from below, in which economic interest groups constrained and pushed governments towards further integration (Fioretos 1997: 295–7). In relation to Swedish accession to the EU, he concludes that EU membership ‘was not designed to increase the government’s domestic autonomy, but rather was a policy directed at satisfying the demands of Swedish companies’ (Fioretos 1997: 311). The importance of Swedish TNCs for the domestic economy made it simply impossible for the government not to follow the TNCs’ wish to join the EU. Ingebritsen (1998: 26–47) similarly concentrates on the importance of leading industrial sectors, i.e. those sectors which contribute the most to national welfare, in her explanation of why some Nordic states such as Sweden decided in favour of membership, while others such as Norway remained outside the EU. Norway’s economy relies very much on petroleum. Since the determination of the oil price is, however, international and, therefore, not affected by EU membership, little pressure towards EU membership emanated from this sector. At the same time, the state-supported agricultural and fisheries sectors openly opposed membership and its liberalizing implications. On the other hand, in order to guarantee access to its export markets, Swedish TNCs in the leading manufacturing sector had started in the second half of the 1980s to transfer production units to the EU in tandem with a political strategy for closer integration, resulting in accession to the EU. In sum, ‘the political influence of leading sectors defined the capacity of governments in each state to pursue political integration’ (Ingebritsen 1998: 152).

There are, however, three main problems with these attempts to incorporate global structural change in the analysis of EU enlargement. First, despite acknowledging the increasing levels of TNCs’ structural power resulting from the possibility of moving production units from one country to another, rationalist political economy approaches still treat TNCs as domestic actors. Nevertheless, globalization as a new phenomenon is first and foremost characterized by the transnationalization of production, not merely by increasing levels of economic interdependence. TNCs are transnational actors, not domestic actors, and therefore clearly differ from export-oriented companies, the production facilities of which are still located at the national level. The analysis

of Austria's and Sweden's accession to the EU below will demonstrate the significant difference in the two countries' road to membership resulting from the transnational Swedish production structure and the export-oriented Austrian production structure. Second, both Fioretos and Ingebritsen neglect the continuing importance of labour in the process of further integration. Labour is either regarded as being constrained by the changes in the international economy in a similar way to governments (Fioretos 1997: 302), or as a monolithic domestic actor, which became part of the pro-EU alliance in Sweden in view of the structural power of manufacturing (Ingebritsen 1998: 147–9). As will be shown below, this overlooks the rift in Sweden between transnational sector unions and national sector unions over membership. Moreover, the importance of transnational labour in the successful pro-EU referendum campaign is not acknowledged. Finally, phrasing their analysis in terms of governments being constrained by business, rationalist political economy approaches fall into the trap of taking the separation of states and markets, historically specific of the capitalist mode of production, as their ahistoric starting-point of analysis. As a result, the inner connection between the political and the economic cannot be problematized by these approaches. 'Instead the "state" is fetishised whilst "the market" is dehistoricised and viewed as a technical arena in which the "external" state "intervenes"' (Burnham 1995: 136).

Neo-Gramscian perspectives

A set of different, yet related (see Morton 2001), historical materialist approaches to European integration emerged recently from neo-Gramscian perspectives (e.g. van Apeldoorn 2002; Bieler 2000; Bieler and Morton 2001a; Bieling and Steinhilber 2000).¹ Drawing on the work of the Italian Communist Antonio Gramsci (1971) as interpreted by Robert Cox (1981, 1983), these perspectives conceptualize the historical specificity of capitalism by taking the sphere of production as the starting-point of their analysis. The social relations of production are considered to engender social forces as the most important actors. Importantly, production is to be understood in a wide sense including the production and reproduction of knowledge, institutions and the social relations involved in the production of physical goods (Cox 1987: 1; 1989: 39). The relations which organize material production are, thus, considered to be crucial for the wider institutional reproduction of social orders on both a national and an international level, which allows us to perceive entities such as 'state' and 'market' as different forms of the very same capitalist social relations of production. Moreover, a neo-Gramscian analysis is open-ended through an emphasis on class struggle. It 'rejects the notion of objective laws of history and focuses upon class struggle [be it intra-class or inter-class] as the heuristic model for the understanding of structural change' (Cox with Sinclair 1996: 57–8). The essence of class struggle is exploitation and resistance to it, and this confrontation of opposed social forces in concrete historical situations implies

the potential for alternative forms of development. Class can be identified by relating social forces to their place in the production process. This makes structural changes such as globalization accessible. The capitalist mode of production is organized around wage labour and private property. This leads to the opposition between the bourgeoisie, the owners of the means of production, on the one hand, and workers, who can only sell their labour, on the other. The partial transnationalization of national production systems due to globalization, however, implies that there is not only class struggle between capital and labour at the national level, but also between national capital and labour and transnational forces of capital and labour. The former can further be subdivided into nationally oriented social forces, engendered by production processes organized at the national level producing predominantly for domestic consumption, and internationally oriented social forces, stemming from national production, which is geared towards export markets. Hence, in contrast to the rationalist political economy approaches, the partial transnationalization of national production systems is conceptualized. Globalization has not only strengthened social forces of export-oriented sectors. It has also engendered new, transnational social forces. Importantly, while the position within the sphere of production shapes the behaviour of social forces, it does not determine it. How social forces operate in a particular situation has to be established in an empirical investigation.

Moreover, class membership does not automatically imply class consciousness and common class identity and interests (Ste. Croix 1981: 44). Rather, class consciousness is the result of class struggle around exploitation and resistance to it in a particular historical context. It is not determined by a particular location in the production process (Thompson 1978). This focus on exploitation and resistance allows us further to extend the notion of class struggle beyond the immediate sphere of production and the workplace. As van der Pijl has argued, neo-liberal capitalism is characterized by the fact that capitalist discipline has now also been extended to the entire process of social reproduction, involving the exploitation of the social and natural substratum. In response to the commodification of social services and the intensified destruction of the biosphere as well as the disruption of traditional life, a whole range of new, progressive green but also nationalist right-wing social movements has emerged to defend the environment and individuality (van der Pijl 1998: 46–8). This has to be analysed as class struggle as much as exploitation and resistance to it in the workplace. The resistance by the Austrian Green Party and the right-wing Freedom Party is a good example for both forms of this type of class struggle against neo-liberal restructuring (see below).

The focus on social forces and the sphere of production, however, does not imply that the state is overlooked. Neo-Gramscian perspectives distinguish several forms of state, which are defined in terms of the apparatus of administration and of the historical bloc or class configuration that defines the *raison d'état* for that form (Cox 1989: 41). Importantly, for Gramsci the form of state consists of 'political society', i.e. the coercive apparatus of the state more

narrowly understood including ministries and other state institutions, and 'civil society', made up of political parties, unions, employers' associations, churches, etc. (Gramsci 1971: 257–63, 271). In sum, the form of state is regarded as a structure within which and through which social forces operate.

The neo-Gramscian concepts of historical bloc and hegemony are crucial for the understanding of class struggle. Various social forces may attempt to form a historical bloc to establish preferable forms of governance at the national and/or international level. It is, however, more than simply a political alliance between social forces represented by classes or class fractions. It indicates the integration of a variety of different class interests that are propagated throughout society 'bringing about not only a unison of economic and political aims, but also intellectual and moral unity . . . on a "universal" plane' (Gramsci 1971: 181–2). It forms a complex, politically contestable and dynamic ensemble of social relations which includes economic, political and cultural aspects. Hegemony describes a type of rule, which predominantly relies on consent, not on coercion. It 'is based on a coherent conjunction or fit between a configuration of material power, the prevalent collective image of world order . . . and a set of institutions which administer the order with a certain semblance of universality' (Cox 1981: 139). A fundamental class exercises a hegemonic function when it transcends particular economic-corporate interests and is capable of binding and cohering diverse aspirations, interests and identities into a historical bloc. 'Organic intellectuals', the representatives of a class or class fraction, play a crucial role in achieving hegemony. They do not simply produce ideas, but it is their task to organize the social forces which they stem from and to develop a 'hegemonic project' which is able to transcend the particular interests of this group so that other social forces are able to give their consent. Such a hegemonic project must be based on 'organic' ideas, which stem from the economic sphere. It must, however, also go beyond economics into the political and social sphere, incorporating ideas related to issues such as social reform, moral regeneration and national security, to result in a stable hegemonic political system. It 'brings the interests of the leading class into harmony with those of subordinate classes and incorporates these other interests into an ideology expressed in universal terms' (Cox 1983: 168). In other words, neo-Gramscian perspectives avoid economic reductionism through a focus on political aspects as part of a hegemonic project. It is especially in times of crisis resulting from contradictions in the production process that hegemonic projects may result in the formation of a historical bloc and obtain a hegemonic position at the form of state and/or world order level leading towards structural change.

In the next section, a neo-Gramscian perspective is applied to Austria's and Sweden's accession to the EU. In relation to enlargement, it is important to note that a neo-Gramscian perspective, rejecting economic determinism, does not argue that globalization caused Austrian and Swedish membership. Rather, the analysis first has to investigate the way production is organized in both

countries in order to identify the relevant social forces. Then, it has to be examined which social forces were in favour of membership, who developed which hegemonic project on their behalf and whether this led towards the formation of a pro-EU historical bloc. A related question also asks: who were the opposing social forces and why did they fail to develop a successful counter-hegemonic project? Finally, as a 'critical theory', a neo-Gramscian perspective also focuses on the underlying rationale driving the pro-EU projects in order to establish the social purpose of enlargement.

III. THE 1995 ENLARGEMENT: AUSTRIA'S AND SWEDEN'S ACCESSION TO THE EU

From a neo-Gramscian perspective, an analysis starts by identifying social forces as the main actors through an examination of the two countries' production structure. Austria's post-war production structure has been predominantly characterized by small-scale industry and the absence of significant TNCs (Breit and Rössl 1992: 191). Importantly, about 50 per cent of Austrian domestic production was completely sheltered against international competition with regulated supply and production quotas (Luif 1994: 26). As a consequence, the main line of division is likely to be between nationally oriented capital and labour and internationally oriented capital and labour. While the former may reject EU membership since this implies the end of their protection against international competition, the latter most likely support accession to the EU since this guarantees access to their export markets. Their actual position, of course, has to be asserted in an empirical investigation.

Unlike Austria, Sweden's production structure has always been characterized by TNCs (Andersson *et al.* 1996: 27–47; Braunerhjelm *et al.* 1996: 2). The degree of transnationalization, however, increased dramatically in the second half of the 1980s, when there was a drastic upturn in outward foreign direct investment (FDI). While inward FDI had only risen from US\$ 396 million in 1985 to US\$ 2,328 million in 1990, outward FDI increased from US\$ 1,783 million to US\$ 14,136 million during the same period (Luif 1996: 208). As a result, the main line of division in Sweden is likely to be between national capital and labour, on the one hand, and transnational capital and labour, on the other.

Austria: the formation of a pro-EU historical bloc

The main actor to start the debate was the Austrian Federation of Industrialists (VÖI). Representing the export sector of the Austrian economy, it was deeply concerned about the possible barriers implied by the EU internal market project. After careful consideration, it published a statement on 14 May 1987 and asked the government 'to do everything possible for Austria to become a full member of the EU as soon as possible' (VÖI 1987: 42; author's transla-

tion). The argument went along neo-liberal economic lines. Only membership would guarantee full participation in the dynamic process of European integration and the required dismantling of Austria's sheltered sector would bring about restructuring and increased competitiveness. In short, the neo-liberal restructuring of Austria's production system was the social purpose behind EU membership. Nevertheless, the VÖI realized that the main obstacle to membership could be Austria's neutrality. It consequently commissioned a study by two experts in international law, which concluded that membership was compatible with neutrality (Hummer and Schweitzer 1987). Two more publications dealing with the economic and constitutional aspects of membership followed soon (Breuss and Stankovsky 1988; Öhlinger 1988). The goal of these publications was to establish a basis for discussion on membership, which had not existed before (Interview No. 2). In sum, it becomes clear that the officials of the VÖI can be regarded as 'organic intellectuals' of internationally oriented capital. Stemming from the same industrial sector, they used the VÖI as an institutional platform in order to formulate for their social group a pro-membership 'hegemonic project', which went beyond mere economic issues by including neutrality and constitutional problems. The VÖI's strategy did not lead directly to membership. Nonetheless, it provided a coherent project around which various fractions of social forces could rally.

It was, first, supported by internationally oriented capital. In particular the textile industry declared membership to be a vital issue for its economic survival. Some textile employers even threatened to transfer production units to the EU in case of non-membership (Interview No. 4). They gained the upper hand in the Chamber of Commerce, which demanded membership at its annual general conference on 9 December 1987 (BWK 1987: 457–9). The trade unions found it more difficult to support accession to the EU. Eventually, labour from the internationally oriented sectors determined the support for application by the Chamber of Labour and the Austrian Federation of Trade Unions. In talks with the employer associations, high-ranking trade union officials had realized that they were unable to suggest an alternative to membership, which would offer the same kind of economic benefits (Interview No. 1).

Internationally oriented capital and labour had similar success in the two main parties, the Austrian Social Democratic Party (SPÖ) and the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP), which formed a coalition government from January 1987 onwards. The latter decided in January 1988 to push for membership (ÖVP 1988). It had already adopted a neo-liberal strategy in 1982, when it demanded budgetary cuts, tax reform, flexibility, deregulation and privatization (Meth-Cohn and Müller 1994: 162–3). Membership appeared to be a logical step along these lines. Although slightly later than the ÖVP, the SPÖ also accepted neo-liberal ideas against the background of economic recession. In the government's economic report to parliament in 1985, Chancellor Fred Sinowatz (SPÖ) indicated a departure from the budget deficit spending of the 1970s, which could only be a short-term measure (Seidel 1993: 146). From

early 1988 onwards, the economic wing around the then Chancellor Franz Vranitzky and Finance Minister Lacina was convinced that membership was necessary to ensure full participation in the internal market and some even followed the argument that this would bring about the urgent restructuring of the sheltered sector (Interview No. 6). Once a report by the international law office in the Foreign Ministry in November 1988 had declared that membership and neutrality were compatible (Völkerrechtsbüro 1988), the road was clear for a pro-EU course of the SPÖ. What is clear from both party internal struggles is that international forces of capital and labour successfully rallied the parties round a strategy towards membership, which was based on the neo-liberal rationale of opening up the sheltered sectors to international competition in order to overcome economic recession.

Both labour and capital related to the sheltered production sectors opposed membership. This included mainly the food processing industry, customs officials, transport companies and the agricultural sector. Some of the employers and employees in these sectors worked together in individual instances and tried to influence their respective Chamber. They raised their voices in opposition whenever they could, but were eventually outnumbered (Interview No. 3).

In 1988, publications first appeared which criticized the argument that membership was a natural necessity and outlined alternative strategies. Althaler *et al.* (1988: 44–5), for example, pointed to a range of different options such as a further development of the 1972 free trade agreements between Austria and the EU or association with the EU instead of membership, which would promise similar economic gains. Such criticism was supported by the Austrian Green Party (GA), which vehemently opposed membership. The internal market programme was accused of merely aiming at economic-industrial expansion at the expense of high environmental and social standards. Additionally, the GA criticized the EU's democratic deficit and perceived military component (GA 1989). Overall, however, neither the criticism of the neo-liberal economics of EU membership nor the alternatives to accession were accepted by a wider audience. They seemed to lack 'common sense' in an ideological environment, in which neo-liberalism had become part of the overall structure. Conversely, the neo-liberal rationale of the pro-EU project fitted into the overall structure and could easily be sold as a 'common sense' solution to domestic economic problems.²

Finally, the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ), under Jörg Haider, had surprisingly changed course and started opposing membership from 1992 onwards. Most importantly, the surrender of national sovereignty and the idea of a multi-cultural European society were rejected (FPÖ 1993: 2–3). Nevertheless, while the about-turn of the FPÖ strengthened the no-side quantitatively, in practice it undermined the opposition. Progressive forces such as the GA constantly had to distance themselves from the extreme right, xenophobic rhetoric of the FPÖ instead of concentrating on the campaign itself (Interview

No. 5). In the end, the yes-group won in the referendum on EU membership on 12 June 1994 with a clear majority of 66.6 per cent to 33.4 per cent.

Sweden: the structural power of transnational capital

It was the Swedish Social Democratic Party's (SAP's) original decision that membership was incompatible with neutrality, which prevented any debate on membership between 1987 and 1990 (Bieler 2000: 75–7). Although capital did not pursue a political strategy towards membership, it did not remain inactive either. Swedish TNCs realized that they must be part of the internal market because of possible discrimination. As outlined above, there had been a drastic increase in outward FDI between 1985 and 1990. This increase went predominantly to the EU. 'Whereas in 1985, only 21.4 per cent of all Swedish direct investments abroad went to the [EU] countries, in 1989 the share was 50.1 per cent and in 1990 it even attained 70.4 per cent' (Luif 1996: 209). While there were other factors for the increased Swedish FDI in the EU, there is a strong indication that 'a major cause for this shift was uncertainty about a future Swedish Union membership and a fear of Fortress Europe' (Braunerhjelm and Oxelheim 1996: 114).

The transfer of production units had a significant impact on the SAP government. The exact timing of the announcement in parliament on 26 October 1990 was because of renewed pressure on the Swedish krona and the rumours about an imminent currency devaluation in mid-October (Interview No. 12). The longer-term reasons for application were, however, the ongoing capital flight of Swedish TNCs to the EU, rising unemployment and the government's concomitant loss of economic credibility (Interview No. 8). The idea of application emerged as a joint effort of the Ministry of Finance and the Prime Minister's Office, both closely linked to the global economy, and was regarded as a way of regaining economic credibility, stability and budgetary discipline (Interview No. 14). Hence, application cannot be solely explained by referring to the structural power of Swedish manufacturing to which the government was forced to succumb, as it is attempted by rationalist political economy approaches. Rather, the push for membership by the Finance Ministry and Prime Minister's Office signifies that neo-liberal restructuring had become, to some extent, internalized within the Swedish form of state in view of domestic economic recession. Nevertheless, the SAP as a party was not united on the question of EU membership. While transnational social forces supported the government's position, national social forces continued to regard the EU as a threat to social democratic achievements and aligned themselves with national labour (see below) in the no-camp during the referendum campaign.

The trade unions had generally been surprised by the SAP decision. After the announcement in parliament, a union internal discussion started. Against the background of globalization, the peak organizations, the Swedish Trade

Union Confederation (LO), the blue-collar workers' union, and the Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees, the white-collar workers' union, supported the quest for membership. They argued that Sweden had to deregulate its economy in any case due to globalization. Co-operation at the European level offered a way of regaining some control over capital lost at the national level (Interview No. 7; Interview No. 10). Within the unions, however, there was a split between transnational, industrial unions and unions in export-oriented sectors in favour of membership, on the one hand, and national unions opposing it, on the other. In particular the LO affiliates, the transnational sector Paper Workers' Union and the Metal Workers' Union, supported EU membership. Considering that the Swedish TNCs had already established themselves in the internal market, they argued that it was economically impossible to remain outside the EU (Interview No. 13). On the other hand, national sector unions such as the LO affiliates, the Municipal Workers' Union and the Commercial Workers' Union, spoke out against membership. Jobs, in particular in the public sector, did not depend on exports or transnational production and the pressures of globalization hardly played a role. Rather, it was feared that future decisions taken by a neo-liberal EU would undermine the Swedish system with its generous welfare provisions and policy of full employment (Interview No. 11). The referendum result on 13 November 1994 was very close: 52.7 per cent voted 'yes' versus 47.3 per cent 'no' (Luif 1996: 214). The main problem of the no-forces was the lack of a hegemonic project, which went beyond the rejection of membership and provided a clear economic and political alternative (Bieler 2000: 118–20).

Historical bloc versus strong alliance of social forces

In sum, in Austria, a historical bloc in favour of membership was firmly established by June 1989. The 'hegemonic project', devised by 'organic intellectuals' of internationally oriented capital located in the VÖI, was based on economic neo-liberalism and the idea that neutrality was compatible with membership. It provided the basis for an alliance of internationally oriented capital and labour, which gained control of the two governing parties and the corporatist interest associations. Similarly, in Sweden, transnational capital demanded EU membership. Nevertheless, unlike in Austria, there was no institution of transnational capital, which provided the platform for 'organic intellectuals' to form a pro-membership project. The reason can at least partly be found in the two countries' different production structures. Swedish TNCs simply did not have to bother with mounting a political challenge to the SAP's initial anti-membership course. They had the structural option to transfer investment and production units to the EU and, thereby, counter possible threats of exclusion. Austrian internationally oriented capital, on the other hand, did not have this option at its disposal owing to its domestic

production structure. A carefully prepared and carried out political strategy was, therefore, the only possible way to achieve participation in the internal market.

The lack of a pro-EU project points to a further difference. While internationally oriented capital and labour formed a historical bloc in Austria based on a common hegemonic project, transnational Swedish capital and labour had a completely different rationale for their support of EU membership. Transnational labour formed its own pro-EU campaign group including the pro-EU wing of the SAP. This was done partly in order to attract workers, something the pro-EU group was unable to do by transnational capital. The different group structure was, however, also due to a different economic rationale. While transnational capital regarded membership as a safeguard against future Swedish experiments different from other countries' neo-liberal course (Interview No. 9), transnational labour regarded the EU as a lever to regain control over capital lost at the national level.

In short, EU membership was in both countries regarded as a way of securing the implementation of a neo-liberal economic-political model, which allowed the continuation of capitalist accumulation after the post-war Keynesian arrangements had run out of steam at the national level. This was supported by a historical bloc of internationally oriented capital and labour in Austria. The different rationale behind Swedish transnational labour's support for membership indicates, however, that there was only a strong alliance in favour of EU membership, not a historical bloc. The struggle over the future Swedish form of state has not been solved but postponed and transferred to the European level. By overlooking the new transnational production dimension as a part of globalization, the rationalist political economy approaches cannot identify these differences between Austria's and Sweden's road to EU membership.

Austria's and Sweden's membership is frequently explained as a result of the change in Soviet foreign policy under Gorbachev and the end of the Cold War in 1989 rather than as a consequence of economic factors. A detailed analysis shows, however, that while the end of the Cold War facilitated the redefinition of neutrality to make it compatible with membership and, thereby, incorporate it into a hegemonic project as in Austria, it did not push the two countries towards the EU (Bieler 2000: 122–37). A hegemonic project cannot solely consist of an economic rationale. Pro-EU social forces in both countries knew very well that it also needed to include a security component taking into account both countries' neutral status in order to have a chance with the population in the referenda on membership. In the end, the people in both countries accepted that the continuation of neutrality was guaranteed and security policy did not become a prominent aspect in the referendum campaigns.

The next section will turn to the potential future EU enlargements towards the CEE countries. Only a brief overview can be attempted here. The task is

to establish the general social purpose of these countries' bids for EU membership for a comparison with Austria's and Sweden's accession to the EU.

IV. THE RESTRUCTURING OF CEE COUNTRIES AND THE QUESTION OF FUTURE EU ENLARGEMENT

After the end of the Cold War in 1989/90, the social relations of production in CEE countries were restructured with the goal of integrating them into the global economy. In what Holman (1998) describes as 'double transformation', liberal democracies were established in tandem with the introduction of market economies through the transnational restructuring of the CEE economies. In the transnationalization of finance, the CEE financial markets were incrementally liberalized and deregulated and national banks made available for foreign take-overs.³ Moreover, based on aggressive privatization programmes, national production was opened up to foreign investors and became, thus, transnationalized. The social consequences of restructuring were dramatic. In the case of Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary, three of the more developed CEE countries which are, therefore, often perceived as the frontrunners among the CEE countries in relation to EU membership, transformation led initially to a drastic economic downturn. In 1991, GDP levels declined in Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary by 7, 11.5 and 11.9 per cent respectively. While economic growth had recovered by 1998, unemployment rates remained high with 10.4, 7.5 and 9.1 per cent respectively (Bieler 2000: 140–8). The result has been social hardship for large parts of the population (Pollert 1999: 76–80), which can potentially lead to political instability.

The decision on membership in the CEE countries was taken by cadre élites within state institutions. Membership was perceived as the historical 'return to Europe', thereby fulfilling the psychological need to break with the Communist past and belong once again to Europe. Unsurprisingly, although to a different extent in different countries, at least initially popular support for EU membership has been high in the CEE countries (Grabbe and Hughes 1998: 82). Additionally, however, 'across central and eastern Europe there has been enthusiasm for joining international organizations to facilitate and consolidate re-integration into the world economy and a departure from the Soviet sphere of influence' (Grabbe and Hughes 1998: 6). NATO was considered to be the most important institution to join for security reasons; the EU was regarded as the best solution in respect of economic restructuring owing to its geographical proximity and its promises of wealth. Neo-liberal restructuring had created groups of winners and losers in Central and Eastern Europe, which threatened to undermine both democracy and the market economy. 'The risk is either that the winners will force adaptations that are unnecessary or detrimental to society as a whole, or that the losers will block adaptations that are necessary and beneficial' (Cecchini *et al.* 2001: 157). CEE countries are characterized by relative economic backwardness and the lack of an established

civil society with consolidated structures of party systems and interest groups. In Poland, for example, it was not until the 1997 elections that a more solid party system emerged (Król 1999). And even this is questionable, considering that the Solidarity Electoral Action, which won the 1997 elections, not only lost the most recent elections in September 2001, but even failed to re-enter parliament (BBC Monitoring Service, 26 September 2001; <http://global-archive.ft.com/global/>, 11/01/2002). CEE forms of state, in short, are not consolidated enough to accommodate these political risks to democracy and a neo-liberal market economy (Cecchini *et al.* 2001: 157–9). Transnational economic restructuring could not be based on a firmly established alliance of social forces or historical bloc around a hegemonic project at the national level. Instead, cadre élites within state institutions had to secure their neo-liberal project externally through EU membership. According to Bohle, this strategy can be explained by what Gramsci labelled a ‘passive revolution’ (Bohle 2000: 318). In a ‘passive revolution’, ‘the important thing is to analyse more profoundly the significance of . . . the fact that a state replaces the local social groups in leading a struggle of renewal’ (Gramsci 1971: 105–6; see also Cox 1983: 165–7). Structural change is not the result of domestic economic development. Rather, domestic social relations of production are restructured through the incorporation of international ideas and adoption of foreign production methods by national cadre élites (Bohle 2000: 318–19). In Poland, neo-liberal restructuring was initially secured externally through links with the global economy. Shields illustrates well how the post-Communist élite in Poland around Balcerowicz, the architect of Poland’s rapid neo-liberal restructuring plan in 1990, was integrated into a network of international academics and worked closely together with the International Monetary Fund, rather than relying on support from national forces (Shields 2001). EU membership can be seen as a further attempt to secure restructuring more firmly at the external level. The prospect of EU membership and the expected economic benefits deriving from it make it easier to cope with the social hardship resulting from neo-liberal restructuring. This explains the social purpose underlying the CEE countries’ applications. What remains is the question as to why the EU is prepared even to consider the accession of as poor countries as the CEE applicants. It is for this reason that the analysis turns here to the EU.

EU pre-accession strategies have not only secured but clearly intensified the neo-liberal restructuring of CEE economies. Initially, this was not done in a systematic way. The EU’s Phare programme, for example, financed foreign consultants, which had the task of advising CEE governments on economic restructuring in general and privatization in particular (Bohle 2000: 310–11). Moreover, the Europe Agreements firmly redirected CEE trade to the EU. Through alignment of the applicants’ laws with EU norms, in particular in the areas of competition and state aid rules, ‘they can tie the CEE countries into trade liberalization and counter domestic pressure for protection’ (Grabbe and Hughes 1998: 33). It was, however, the promise of membership, made at the

1993 European Council summit in Copenhagen, which systematically pushed CEE countries towards adopting the neo-liberal economic-political model of the EU (Holman 2001: 178). It was stated that potential new members had to achieve a stable democracy, a functioning market economy, the ability to withstand competition within the EU, and to take on the full *acquis communautaire* including the aims of political and economic and monetary union (Gower 1999: 7). Thus, the elements of the enlargement strategy of the EU clearly demanded adaptation to EU rules and therefore measures of liberalization and deregulation. In June 1995, the Cannes European Council passed the internal market White Paper, which extended the alignment process to the free movement of services and capital. It identified the key areas of legislation and the necessary administrative and technical structures for its implementation (Preston 1997: 202–3). Applicant countries were left with the task of drawing up programmes and timetables for implementation of the respective legislation. Adaptation to the EU has been further intensified since December 1997, when the Commission was given the task by the European Council of publishing regular reports on the progress made by the applicant countries in relation to the fulfilment of the Copenhagen criteria (Holman 2001: 180).

At the political level, this pre-accession strategy was devised by the Commission with the support of the European Round Table of Industrialists (ERT). The latter consists of the chief executives of European TNCs and represents the interests of transnational capital. While the Commission relies on the ERT's structural power, being able to address several national governments at the same time, the ERT needs the Commission and its power to initiate legislative proposals within the EU. The ERT intensified its lobbying from 1997 onwards, urging the EU to reform its institutional structure to facilitate enlargement and to work closely together with the governments of applicant countries towards meeting the EU conditions for membership. Additionally, the ERT has worked towards the establishment of so-called Business Enlargement Councils (BECs) in CEE countries. The Hungarian BEC, for example, brings together representatives from the head offices of ERT companies and senior management officials from local companies, as well as government and Commission officials, and has the task of facilitating accession. At the level of social relations of production, this political strategy was supported through an increasing transnationalization of CEE countries' production structure due to foreign investment by TNCs (Holman 2001: 174–7; Cecchini *et al.* 2001: 161–2). Overall, the promise of membership has ensured a restructuring of Central and Eastern Europe in line with the EU's own development and satisfies the need of European transnational capital for further expansion of capitalist accumulation. As a result, EU enlargement with the social purpose of securing and intensifying neo-liberal restructuring in Central and Eastern Europe fulfils the objectives of both CEE state élites, who want to secure restructuring externally, and of the EU and European transnational capital, which wants to expand capitalist accumulation to Central and Eastern Europe. Importantly, this does not signify that transnational restructuring has been

enforced on CEE countries from the outside. According to Holman (2001: 169), 'the state forms the political framework within which internationally operating concepts of control can be synthesized with particular national political cultures, attitudes, constitutional arrangements and so on, or, conversely, the very medium through which hegemonic concepts of control can transcend national frontiers.' Transnational forces of capital have become internalized within the CEE forms of state through their co-operation with state élites and their participation in the transnationalization of these countries' production structure via FDI.

The transnationalization of CEE countries' production structure differs, however, from country to country, as does the way in which neo-liberal restructuring is internalized in the various forms of state. It is the task of future research to analyse more precisely which production sectors have become transnationalized in the individual countries, and which political alliances have been forged between transnational capital and national state élites as well as the emerging national bourgeoisie. The role of the ERT as highlighted by Holman is clearly important. Future research, however, needs to ask additionally whether there had been similar strategies by transnational capital before the ERT's pro-enlargement drive in 1997 and whether there are additional strategies parallel to the ERT's current involvement. In other words, much more research is needed to establish how exactly transnational class formation takes place across national borders in Europe in order to explain the specificities of each CEE country's road to EU membership.

V. CONCLUSION

The neo-Gramscian analysis of the 1995 EU enlargement and the potential future enlargements towards Central and Eastern Europe against the background of globalization clearly identifies the neo-liberal restructuring of the new members' and applicant countries' economic-political system as the underlying social purpose of enlargement. How these processes of restructuring have been brought about differs, however, in the two instances. As Cox points out, the formation of a historical bloc and the establishment of hegemony are a national phenomenon (Cox 1983: 168, 174). The case of Austria's and Sweden's accession confirms this. Class struggle took place predominantly at the national level between nationally oriented, internationally oriented and transnational social forces. Only when the dominance of internationally oriented social forces had become internalized in the constitution of the Austrian form of state could Austria accede to the EU. In Sweden, the pro-EU project was only based on a strong alliance of transnational capital and labour and did not include a common social purpose. The fact that transnational capital favoured membership for its neo-liberal restructuring, while transnational labour hoped to regain control over capital at a higher level, indicated that neo-liberal restructuring had not yet been fully internalized in the Swedish form of state.

Unlike in Austria and Sweden, it was not alliances of social forces but state élites in Central and Eastern Europe who initiated the process towards EU membership. Due to the lack of a well-entrenched capitalist market economy, a liberal democracy and a developed civil society, the process of neo-liberal economic restructuring after the end of the Cold War could not be grounded in the support of an alliance of social forces at the national level. Instead, the restructuring project had to be secured externally in a 'passive revolution'. EU membership offered the best way forward in this respect. This coincided with the objective of European transnational capital, which had heavily invested in Central and Eastern Europe and was interested in maintaining the extension of capitalist accumulation to this region. It was strongly involved in a political strategy via the ERT, working closely with the Commission on the EU's pre-accession strategy. Rationalist political economy approaches, which had already failed to detect the difference between the Austrian and Swedish accession to the EU, are even less suitable in the case of future enlargements. Their sole focus on domestic politics and the competition between leading sectors over governmental policy does not allow them to conceptualize this type of transnational class formation.

Through neo-liberal restructuring as underlying rationale, enlargement clearly reinforces the hegemony of neo-liberalism within the EU. As mentioned already in the introduction, however, hegemony is always contested by rival social forces and their projects, indicating possible alternative developments in the future. In this respect, Austrian and Swedish national forces of labour and, to a lesser extent, capital continue to be potential members of a counter neo-liberal hegemonic project, as are those social forces organized by the Green parties in both countries. Moreover, Swedish transnational labour, owing to the counter neo-liberal rationale underlying its support for EU membership, may also be a potential force for a counter neo-liberal movement.

In CEE countries, the more the accession negotiations proceed and illustrate who will be the winners and losers of membership, the more intensive the discussion about the EU will become. Stronger alliances of social forces are the likely result. As Bohle (2000: 322–3) points out, the transnationalization of CEE countries' production structures does not lead to their general peripheralization, reducing Central and Eastern Europe to the supply of cheap labour for labour-intensive production processes. Rather, there is a dualization of production, in which CEE countries are selectively integrated into a transnational production regime. The so-called diamonds of the former state sectors, such as telecommunications companies and banks, are sold off to foreign investors, while the CEE countries are left to cope with the problems of unproductive industrial sectors, such as mining and the steel industry, themselves. Forces engendered by the former sectors are likely to favour membership. Future research must investigate the emerging projects in the various applicant countries around which support for the EU is rallied in view of the referendum on membership. Neo-liberal economics is likely to be a part of such projects, but they need to go beyond economics and include issues of identity, as, for

example, the notion of the 'natural return to Europe after the Communist aberration'. Forces engendered by the latter sectors, which have to be further restructured in view of membership, are most likely to form a resistance. This includes agriculture, the mining and steel sectors, and also the public sector in the case of Poland (Szczerbiak 2001: 108, 114). The danger here is that resistance to globalization and EU membership will rally around a nationalist, traditionalist and/or xenophobic agenda. The election of two nationalist, anti-EU parties, Samoobrona (Self-defence) and the League of Polish Families, to the Polish parliament in the elections in September 2001 does not bode well in this respect (*Financial Times*, 25 September 2001). It is the task of future research to identify more clearly those social forces and projects within the EU and the applicant countries which may become part of a progressive alternative project to neo-liberalism.

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NOTES

- 1 For alternative historical materialist approaches to European integrations, see the contributions in Bonefeld (2001), and for a critical engagement with them, see Bieler and Morton (2001c).
- 2 For a neo-Gramscian conceptualization of the role of ideas, see Bieler (2001).
- 3 Due to the financing of economic reform in the 1970s and 1980s via foreign debts, Poland and Hungary had already been integrated into the global financial market prior to the collapse of the eastern bloc. This locked them even more into a course of neo-liberal economic restructuring (Holman 1998: 18).

INTERVIEWS

- 1 Section for National Economy, Austrian Federation of Trade Unions; Vienna, 12/05/1995.
- 2 Director of the Europe Information Service, Federation of Austrian Industrialists (VÖI); Vienna, 22/05/1995.
- 3 Director of the Economic-Political Section of the Chamber of Labour (1985–1993); Vienna, 23/05/1995.
- 4 Section for International Trade and Environment, Association of the Austrian Textile Industry; Vienna, 24/04/1996.
- 5 Political Adviser on Europe in the Green Alternative Party (GA) faction of the Nationalrat/Europe – Co-ordinator of the GA; Vienna, 02/05/1996.

- 6 State Secretary for Integration and Development Co-operation in the Chancellor's Office, responsible together with Dr Mock for the accession negotiations (1993–1994), State Secretary for European Affairs in the Chancellor's Office (1994–1995), Managing-Director of the SPÖ (since 1995); Vienna, 08/05/1996.
- 7 International Secretary, Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees (TCO); Stockholm, 11/11/1996.
- 8 Europe Co-ordinator, Swedish Social Democratic Party (SAP); Stockholm, 12/11/1996.
- 9 Political Co-ordinator of European Affairs, The Moderate Party, Political Adviser to Prime Minister Bildt, responsible for co-ordination of coalition partners in the areas of foreign affairs, defence, labour and trade (1991–1994); Stockholm, 15/11/1996.
- 10 Political Adviser, International Department, Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO); Stockholm, 21/11/1996.
- 11 International Secretary, Municipal Workers' Union (LO affiliate), member of the LO Committee on the EU; Stockholm, 26/11/1996.
- 12 President of the Swedish Trade Council, high civil servant under SAP government (1987–1991), Chief Negotiator of EEA (1989–1992), Chief Negotiator of EU accession treaty (1993–1994), Minister for Trade and European Affairs (1991–1994); Stockholm, 26/11/1996.
- 13 EU Co-ordinator, Research Department, Metal Workers' Union (LO affiliate); Stockholm, 29/11/1996.
- 14 State Secretary, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Chief Negotiator in the 1996 IGC; Head of Foreign Affairs Department, Ministry of Finance (1982–1988), State Secretary, Ministry of Finance (1988–1991); Stockholm, 02/12/1996.

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