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What is the relationship between widening and deepening in the European Union (EU)? Does the addition of new member states affect the process of centralization – that is to say, whether and how member states transfer ever more authority over a greater range of policy areas to the EU level? While the relationship between widening and deepening has been recognized for many years as one of the ‘big questions’ in the field of European integration, the existing literature on it suffers from a number of theoretical and empirical shortcomings and has left important questions unanswered. Many discussions of this relationship are based on dubious ‘common wisdoms’ – above all the assumption that widening necessarily impedes deepening. Early enlargements spawned fears that the functioning of EU institutions would be adversely affected as a result. By the time of the enlargement of 1995 to Austria, Finland and Sweden, and with the prospect of Eastern enlargement on the horizon, concerns grew over how widening might generate gridlock, undermine the functioning of EU institutions and prevent deepening. This has been encapsulated in recent years in discussions concerning the ‘absorption capacity’ of the European Union.

While some scholars reject the idea of a necessary trade-off between widening and deepening and argue that the two can go hand in hand, the literature has not systematically explored the causal processes through which and the conditions under which widening may either encourage or discourage deepening. Moreover, the literature on widening and deepening in the EU has remained isolated from more general studies of the relationship between size and centralization in other political organizations. EU scholars have neither learned from, nor contributed to, the literatures on the relationship between width and depth in international organizations or federal systems.

This collection brings together a group of EU scholars with the objective of significantly advancing our understanding of the relationship between widening and deepening. The contributors offer nuanced theoretical and empirical analyses of this relationship, focusing on institutions, individual preferences, partisan politics and sensitive policy areas such as human rights. Their analyses cover various timescales, examining how widening may have varying impacts on deepening in both the short and long term, and even through an

anticipatory effect. Collectively, the contributions offer the most comprehensive picture of the multi-faceted relationship between widening and deepening available to date.

In their contribution, Kelemen, Menon and Slapin present an institutionalist account of the conditions under which widening either impedes or encourages deepening. They argue that the impact of widening on deepening depends on the position of the enlargement state relative to the preference distributions of existing member states. They also highlight the distinction between the short-term and long-term impact of enlargement, showing that while enlargement may in some cases create short-term gridlock, it may provide the impetus for institutional changes that facilitate deepening over the long term. They place the EU in comparative perspective, assessing their arguments with evidence not only from the EU, but also with data on federal systems and international organizations.

Frank Schimmelfennig explores the impact of EU enlargement on the phenomenon of 'differentiated integration' – a process that involves the adoption of policies that are not uniform for all member states, but instead allow for a variety of opt-outs, derogations and forms of enhanced co-operation for subsets of states. He shows that widening has been an important driver of increases in differentiated integration. Because enlargement leads to increased heterogeneity of preferences and capacities, states turn to differentiation as a way to either exempt or to exclude new member states from certain policies.

Sara Hobolt examines public attitudes toward widening and deepening, and asks whether citizens perceive a trade-off between the two. She argues that country-specific factors, such as eurozone membership and net beneficiary/contributor status, are crucial for understanding when and why citizens perceive the existence of a trade-off. Using Eurobarometer data, she finds that approximately one-third of respondents perceive a trade-off, and generally favor deeper integration while opposing enlargement.

Christina Schneider's contribution examines the relationship between enlargement, preference heterogeneity and co-operation among EU member state governments. While greater ideological diversity among member state governments can hamper co-operation, she argues that preference heterogeneity often fluctuates over time owing to changes in domestic politics. These domestic-level changes are more important for determining the level EU co-operation than the preference heterogeneity that arises as a result of enlargement. She tests her argument using data on EU budget negotiations from 1977–2006. She finds that increases in partisan heterogeneity reduce the willingness of governments to contribute to EU co-operation, but these increases cannot be attributed to enlargement.

Lisa Conant shows how EU enlargement to Central and Eastern Europe led to a deepening of the EU's involvement in the protection of human rights. She explains that the prospect of widening the EU to include fledgling, potentially unstable democracies in Central and Eastern Europe led the EU to deepen its commitment to the protection of human rights within its member states.

Nevertheless, she identifies significant shortcomings in the EU's efforts to promote respect for human rights in transitional democracies.

Julia Gray and Jonathan Slapin, for their part, seek to place the EU in comparative context by exploring the relationship between width and depth across a variety of regional economic organizations (REOs). The authors use new cross-sectional data on width and depth in REOs collected through expert surveys. They find that while there is no relationship between width and depth across agreements, organizations with more members tend to have more ambitious goals and broader scope. The relationship between ambition and number of members may contribute to the perception of a width/depth trade-off.

Eva Heidbreder argues that widening is a cause of deepening, with the latter being an unintended consequence of the former. The European Commission is frequently given powers during the accession process that exceed those formally provided to it under the treaties. Whether these powers outlive accession is largely a function of the kind of policy that is being institutionalized. However, empirical evidence suggests that such a logic was present during recent enlargements, which led to a concomitant increase in supranational policy making capacities.

Maurits van der Veen makes the case for 'anticipatory deepening'. Current member states, having some idea about the policy preferences of accession states, negotiate further deepening before enlargement, which would change the voting balances in the Council and potentially makes such deepening impossible. He illustrates his case by means of a simple spatial model, which he tests against two cases of anticipatory deepening: the Hague summit of 1969 and the Intergovernmental Conferences of 1991.

Edoardo Bressanelli explores how political groups in the European Parliament have responded to an expanding EU. In particular, he asks whether the need to incorporate new national parties from Central and Eastern Europe led European Parliament groups to adapt their organizational structure. Through the examination of party documents, the careful tracing of rule changes and the use of semi-structured interviews, he finds that the enlargement rounds of 2004 and 2007 were a catalyst for organizational change that arguably led to greater deepening.

These various findings are important not only in terms of their contribution to scholarly knowledge and debates, but also in terms of their implications for the future development of the EU. While the financial crisis and its continuing impact have dominated the Union's agenda for the last few years, debates about enlargement are not about to disappear. Expansion into the Balkans has begun with Croatia and looks set to continue to Serbia, meaning the issue of what to do with the Union's difficult neighbors to the East will be an object of debate for many years to come. Consequently, it is as important as ever for social scientists to provide solid evidence of the potential impact that enlargement might have on the nature and functioning of European integration.

The findings of this collection indicate that although there are clearly instances in which enlargement can impede deeper integration among EU

states, there is little reason to believe that this trade-off represents the norm. The relationship between enlargement and integration is more complex than much of the existing research leads us to believe. In many instances, enlargement has little impact on integration. In other instances it leads to the transfer of more competences to Brussels. The nuanced theoretical approaches presented by the authors in this collection improve our understanding of the conditions under which enlargement impedes, has no effect on and fosters deeper co-operation among EU states.

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